

## CHAPTER ONE

### ECOFEMINISM AND DEEP ECOLOGY

Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology are two important philosophies of nature which are very much associated with environmental ethics even though each of them has offered different accounts concerning nature. Deep Ecology, as we shall see, takes a basically holistic view of nature. Its image of the natural world is that of a field like whole of which we and other individuals are the parts. It encourages us to seek our true identity by identifying with wider and wider circle of nature, both animate and inanimate. Here the interest of human beings are convergent with those of nature and thereby becomes incumbent upon us to respect and serve those common interests. Deep Ecology takes a relational perspective which is directed towards non anthropocentrism instead of anthropocentrism or human centeredness. In this sense it is supposed to be a holistic approach. Deep Ecology refers to a platform of basic values that a variety of environmental activists share. These values include an affirmation of the intrinsic value of nature, the recognition of the importance of biodiversity, a call for a reduction of human impact on the natural world, greater concern with quality of life rather than material affluence, and a commitment to change economic policies and the dominant world view of nature. Also, deep ecology refers to different philosophies of nature, i.e. ecosophies that arise out of that deep questioning and that are in concert with the values associated with the platform. The following points may highlight the domain of Deep Ecology:

- an emphasis on the intrinsic value of nature (biocentrism and ecocentrism);

- a tendency to value all things in nature equally (biocentrism egalitarianism)
- a focus on wholes, e.g. ecosystem, species, or the earth itself, rather than simply individual organism (holism);
- an affirmation that humans are not separate from nature (there is no “ontological gap” between humans and the natural world);
- an emphasis on interrelationship;
- an intuitive and sensuous communion with the earth;
- a spiritual orientation that sees nature as sacred;
- a tendency to look to other cultures (especially Asian and indigenous) as sources of insight;
- a humility towards nature, in regards to our place in the natural world, our knowledge of it, our ability to manipulate nature in a responsible way (“nature knows best.”)
- a stance of “letting nature be” and a celebration of wilderness and hunter gatherer societies.

Like Ecofeminism, Deep Ecology is a philosophical movement. It aims at presenting a critique of what is called the dominant world view, which is very much responsible for environmental destruction. The protest of deep ecological movement is reflected through ecocentrism and non-anthropocentrism. By criticizing anthropocentrism deep ecologists attempt to work out an alternative philosophical worldview that is holistic and non-human centered. Deep ecology thus provides a kind of philosophy in which the dignity and contributions of each species can be recognized. The message of deep ecology, Fox says, “is that we ought to care as deeply and as compassionately possible about the fate – not because it affects us but because it is us”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Fox, W, “*Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of our Times*,” included in *Environmental Ethics*, edited by Andrew light and Holmas Rolston III, Black well, 2003, p-258.

Ecofeminism, as we see, in contrast tries to establish the natural world as a community of beings, related in the manner of a family. According to ecofeminists, though every species in the whole biotic community is related with each other, they are distinct from each other. According to ecofeminists we are urged to respect the individuality of these beings, rather than seeking to merge with them, and our mode by relating to them should be via-open mindedness and alternative encounter, rather than through abstract metaphysical pre-conceptualization. Thus, there always underlines a subtle distinction in approaches of ecofeminism and deep ecological movements towards environmental ethics. Ecofeminism is based on care and respect for each species, more specially mutual care and respect of each species of the whole biotic community. The relation to institutions of gender are of central concern to many ecofeminists, which are mostly left unquestioned in Deep Ecology. On the other hand, deep ecological movements plea for an integral or organic whole of the whole biofic community. In ecofeminist movement, the self identity of each biotic community is preserved, but in case of deep ecological movement self identity of each biotic community is ignored. Warwick fox, a deep ecologist, argues that ecofeminism is shallow because it is "logically and empirically simplistic,"<sup>4</sup> posting that one particular perspective of human society identifies the real root of ecological destruction. Ecofeminists, he believes, do not look at the complex network of factors which result in ecological destruction. But the objective of both these movements remains the same. Both the movements go against anthropocentrism and thereby admit intrinsic value of each biofic community. In fact, ecofeminist like Karren J. Warren points out, "a basic implication of nearly all ecofeminist projects is that to treat human social concerns and environmental issues as

---

<sup>4</sup>Fox. W, "*Deep Ecology of our Times*," Black well, 1989, p-280.

disparate is to misconceive the character of such issues since they are intrinsically, historically, practically, and conceptually related.”<sup>5</sup> Given the intricate interrelatedness of so-called feminists and environmental issues, especially evident in conceptual connections, ecofeminist activism aims at all times to dismantle the oppressive frameworks which harm humans and nonhumans similarly. One may, however, claim that there underlies a theoretical conflict between Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology because one is directed towards metaphysical pre-conceptualization and the other is based on kinship and care. The objective of this chapter, however, is not of focusing the conflicting nature of these two systems or philosophies but to *establish an affinity in between* them. According to Arne Naess, the father of deep ecology, ecofeminism is not shallow in so far as it is anti-anthropocentric and acknowledges the moral value of non human entities apart from their usefulness to humans. Although ecofeminists do place primary emphasis on the role of patriarchy in the creation and propagation of ecological oppression, patriarchal thinking is not necessarily considered the root cause of anything. In fact, patriarchal attitude and practices interact with other systems and logics of domination and oppression, such as racism, anthropocentrism, classism to form a decentered matrix of oppressive attitudes, theories and practices. Since ecofeminism has developed partly as a critique of Deep Ecology, the solution cannot be a matter of merely cutting and pasting the theories together rather a kind of dialectical reconciliation of these two views of nature can be achieved. Keeping this objective in mind, let us examine the metaphysical axioms of Deep Ecology. We shall show in the course of our discussion that there underlies a dilemma among deep ecologists regarding the two metaphysical axioms. Our objection here is to resolve this metaphysical dilemma and thereby

---

<sup>5</sup> K. J. Warren “*Feminism & Ecology*” Routledge, London and New York, 1987, p-20.

unearth an ethical perspective which is very much akin to ecofeminist movement.

## The two Metaphysical Axioms of Deep Ecology

### 1. The primary metaphysical axioms of Deep Ecology:

This theory is based on the thesis of metaphysical interconnectedness in which the natural world is understood as a field of relation. Naess says, "Rejection of the man in environmental image in favour of the relational, total field image. An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B so that without the relation A and B are no longer the same things"<sup>6</sup> The image of Naess is also reflected in the writings of Fox who identifies the central tenant of Deep Ecology by saying that "there is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence to the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of deep ecological consciousness."<sup>7</sup> Since metaphysical axiom of Deep Ecology is based on intrinsic relation, it is by and large held that individuals are constituted out of their relations with other individuals. They are no longer discrete substances capable of existing independently of other individuals. Here the whole is understood to be more than the sum of its parts, and the parts are defined through relations to one another and to the whole.

### 2. All versions of the metaphysical axiom:

The second version of metaphysical theory of Deep Ecology is not supposed to be an axiom just like the primary metaphysical axiom. It is unlike the first one-functioning just like a hidden premise. It is taken for granted in all versions of the theory. The second metaphysical version of Deep ecology is based on the third law of ecology: *nature knows best*. This means to say that nature can best

---

<sup>6</sup> Naess, *A Shallow and Deep Ecology*, Cambridge University Press 1989, p-95

<sup>7</sup> Fox, W, *Towards a Transperent Ecology*, Boston Press, 1990, p-196.

10 MAY 2013

250620



look after its own interests. Any intervention on nature on behalf of humans goes against nature and that will bring an ecological disaster. Thus, it is presupposed to let nature to take the lead in ecological matters. This version of Deep Ecology minimizes human interference in nature and thereby tries to shape our interests to those of nature.

We think the objective of two metaphysical versions of Deep Ecology is very much clear from the above explanation. Let us try to address the implication of these two metaphysical assumptions for our relation to the natural world. We think the implication of the primary metaphysical axiom of Deep Ecology is very much significant as it tries to establish the interconnectedness among biotic community. According to deep ecologists, the fact of interconnectedness with nature implies that we are ultimately indentifiable with nature. For them, the fact of the individuality of reality implicates us in wider and still wider circles of being. In this process we the human beings should give up our confining ego identity and gradually open up to nature at large. It tends to have a widest possible identification with nature. It opens up a realization within the individual and thereby comes to know the mutual inevitableness between man and nature. As such it indicates a move beyond the *Cartesian* dualistic worldview of the human as knowing subject and the natural world as simply objects known by the human. Similarly, the Newtonian – Deist worldview of mechanistic science is rejected as a form of ‘Shallow’ ecology that addresses environmental problems from out of a techno-fix mentality. In this respect Arne Naess’s call for a deeper, transformative vision would be worthwhile:

“The central issue is that of transcending ecology as a science, looking for wisdom through the study of eco-philosophy, striving for an ecosophy – a total view inspired in part by the

science of ecology and the activities of the deep ecology movement.”<sup>8</sup>

The process of achieving the widest possible identification with nature is equated in Deep ecology with self-realization. Self-realization is a matter of enlarging one’s sphere of identification. If we are in this sense one with nature, and if we realize that our interests are convergent with those of nature, then surely we shall be called upon to defend nature from human interference just as we are called on to defend ourselves against attack. John seed, a deep ecologist puts it, “I am protecting the rainforest” develops to “I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. Recognition of our identifiability with nature is taken to entail a commitment to ecological resistance.”<sup>9</sup>

### **An Apparent Dilemma:**

What is said above gives rise to a clear intractable dilemma what Mathews calls *identification dilemma*. If human beings are supposed to be identifiable with nature, as the theory of interconnectedness claims, then human interaction with nature certainly includes our exploitation of the environment as natural. Since nature knows best how to look after itself, it follows that whatever qualifies as natural must be ecologically for the best. In short, if we are truly part of nature or one with nature and nature knows best, then our depredations of the natural world must be ecologically and hence morally unobjectionable. The identification dilemma, however, can be formulated like the following way:

If human beings are identifiable with nature, then our exploitation of the environment will continue, and if human beings are not identifiable with nature, then human beings cannot be part of nature.

---

<sup>8</sup> Naess, A: *Outline of Ecosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p-32.

<sup>9</sup> Seed. J. “Appendix E in *Devall and Sessions*,” *Deep Ecology*, p-243-46.

Either human beings are identifiable with nature or not identifiable with nature.

Either exploitation of the environment will continue or human beings cannot be part of nature.

To overcome this dilemma, a deep ecologist might reply that though we are ontologically one with nature, we may not recognize this to be the case. Consciously human beings are identified in opposition to nature. Thus there we find two levels, viz., ontological level in which human beings are part of nature, and conscious level in which human beings are identified in opposition to nature. If the underlying ontological level is held good, then our actions vis-a-vis the environment will reflect this false. If one is thought to be ontologically detached, even though this is not to be the case, then his interaction with nature may apparently appear to be unnatural in the sense that it does not rectify to our actual interconnectedness with rest of the world. There is nothing unusual in claiming this.

It may be the case that there are many species which though ontologically interconnected with the rest of life, nevertheless they appear to act out of narrow self-interest and thereby exploit the environment to the best of their ability for their own ends. Thus, there always underlies a possibility of gaping between consciousness and ontological axiom. Such a gap between consciousness and the ontological underpinnings of a species identity may well serve nature's own purpose. It may be the part of the long term ecological scheme of things. Arguably, if this is to be the case, then such a gap would be ecologically and ethically unobjectionable. The important question then is : Does consciousness reflect our true ontology? If the answer to the question is yes, then we consider it desirable that our consciousness reflect our true ontological estate. If this is supposed to be the case, then ontological fidelity cannot be claimed as natural. Rather we are forced to say that ontological



fidelity is natural because we value truth. Consequently, it can be said that there is no reason to suppose that the present, self-interested exploitative behaviour of humanity is unnatural. But if it is thought to be natural, i.e., if it is in accordance with the ways of nature, it cannot from a deep ecological viewpoint count as wrong.

The key issue, however, is not to discuss human actions in terms of natural or non-natural; what is most reasonable to argue is that in the light of the interconnectedness thesis. Whatever we do in the environment is natural. Since nature knows best, we being the integral part of nature must act in nature's long term interests. As an integral part of nature we must wish to change our way on our own behalf. We have to resist our extinction by protecting the extinction of non-human beings. This is obtained in the process of self-realization and also realization of others. This is justified by saying that we have no grounds for changing our ways on behalf of nature on grounds of ecological morality. Human beings can be a part of nature or even can be an integral part of nature, but from that it does not make sense to say that human beings have the moral legitimacy to conquer nature. Any attempt to conquering nature leads to the extinction of nature which ultimately goes against the slogan: '*nature knows best*'. Alternatively, it can be said that what we are doing to the environment is natural, but it still insists that it needs to be changed by us as it will deny that nature knows best what it is doing. If we adhere to the metaphysical premises of Deep Ecology, if we accept both our oneness with nature and nature's fitness to conduct its own ecological affairs without our assistance, then we should allow our own evolution to run its natural course. It may well be that our massive impact on the planetary ecosystem is paving the way for an epoch making transition in evolution. If it is held that we are one with nature which knows how to look after itself, then it means to say that we have no ecological

nor hence moral grounds for intervening in the spontaneous courses of human affairs as these affect the environment. Thus, there always underlies an apparent inconsistency. Deep ecologists, on the one hand, don't agree on any form of environmental degradation. They must plea for an active ecological resistance. But as we have seen that if human beings are supposed to be one with nature, then any form of activity of human beings directly or indirectly links with environmental degradation. Thus, there underlies an inconsistency at the heart of Deep Ecology. To overcome this inconsistency, a modification of the two metaphysical premises of Deep Ecology has been prescribed.

**Modified form of interconnected thesis:**

We have seen in the above that the metaphysical axiom of Deep Ecology based on interconnectedness leads to inconsistency when it is conjoined with the thesis that *nature knows best*. To overcome this flaw, a modified version of interconnected thesis is being employed. We think there is nothing wrong of the interconnected thesis if it is apprehended holistically. Any partial interpretation of interconnected thesis appears to be otiose. Holistically, nature is supposed to be a metaphysical whole in the sense that nature is logically prior to its parts (species). Accordingly, the identity of each part is functionally determined by the way of its relation to the whole. Here we can call upon the name of Warwick Fox. Fox does clearly emphasize holism. His holism is combined with an affirmation of particularity and relationality. His 'cosmological transpersonalism' explicitly rejects monistic indistinguishability or transcendental holism. In offering metaphors for the structure of the cosmos, Fox approvingly cites David Bohm's image of ripples in the ocean of energy and the image of knots in a cosmological net because they combine both the whole and the individual. However, he finds them insufficiently relational. Instead, he prefers the image of a tree with many leaves on it. One of the

reasons he favours this image is because it clearly suggests that all entities are interconnected (by virtue of the fact that they are all parts of the same tree), it also gives due recognition to the relative autonomy of different entities. In addition, while Fox stresses cosmological identification with all particulars, he notes that such identification is a matrix for realizing individuals and contextual identifications. Cosmologically based identification proceeds from a sense of the cosmos and works inwards to each particular individual's sense of commonality with other entities. Here, at least, Fox is clearly affirming that identification with the whole and with the individual phenomena can co-exist. Ecologists of the metaphysical persuasion, however, give up a degree of autonomy of individuals, but ultimately they hold that autonomy as apparent only without fundamental ontological significance.

The above modified form of interconnectedness thesis actually hinges on a system based theoretic approach which acknowledges and identifies both wholes as well as individuals. In a system theoretic approach the biological world is understood as a field of relations, a web of interconnectedness. It is cohered as a whole within which a genuine form of individuation is nevertheless possible. In the biotic community, an individual is being interpreted as an energy configuration or system which maintains itself by way of its continuous interactions with its environment. Since the integrity of an individual is maintained by way of his continuous interaction with the environment, its existence is, therefore, claimed as a function of its relations, its interconnectedness. Since the existence of an individual is based on an integral relation with nature, it does enjoy a genuine individuality. Accordingly, the whole biotic world may be seen as both a stratum whole as well as a manifold of individuals. In this sense metaphysical interconnectedness implies an irreducible ontological ambivalence at the level of individuals. Here individuals

are analogously compared with the waveicles of quantam mechanics in which light is analysed in terms of wavicles. Here light cannot be reduced to e ther photons field. Ontological ambivalence is thus intrinsic to its nature. Thus it seems clear that deep ecologists under the sway of the interconnected thesis try to visualize natural world from the holistic perspective exclusively. By way of doing this, they treat individuals as fieldlike rather than a particular. This one-sided apprehension of interconnectedness thesis inevitably affects its reading of the principle that *nature knows best*. The principle that *nature knows best* is understood to mean that nature knows best itself as a whole. But this does not mean to say that nature knows best for the individuals that are its elements. Let us focus on this issue whether it can be retained in this thesis: *nature knows best*.

#### **The modified thesis that nature knows best:**

The very meaning of the thesis that *nature knows best* implies that nature is the servant of its own interests. Accordingly, it can be said from environmental ethics that whatever nature tends to do is right. And as such it can extendedly be said that the natural order is a moral order. It means that everything within the natural order ultimately turns out to be the best for the whole biotic society or community. The question is: Can this assumption be defended? To find an appropriate answer regarding this question, let us review this principle under both its holistic as well as individualistic interpretation. Mathews claims that under the holistic interpretation the natural order is a *moral order*, but this is not to be the case under the individualistic interpretation. Comprehension of the ecological reality that people are Earthlings shifts the center of values away from the homocentric to the ecocentric, from Homo sapiens to planet Earth. Any answer to the question whether nature knows best when nature is viewed under its holistic aspect, actually hinges on the empirical question of whether

or not we or any particular life form have the capacity to extinguish or obliterate life from the planet. On evidence it is extremely unlikely. Even full-scale nuclear holocaust would fail to eliminate microbial life forms. Moreover, annihilation of one order of life creates an opportunity for another. What we can best claim is that nature inevitably and continuously works towards its own good, as such for its abundance, vitality and sustenance.

Thus, nature under its holistic aspect knows best not only in the sense that it is capable of looking after its own interests, but also it seems to know how best in a wider moral sense as well. This is justified by claiming that ecological order is not only directed towards its own self-perpetuation, it also exemplifies both justice and generosity. Ecological justice consists in the fact of ecological transgressions by being selected out of existence. The following lines from Arne Naess will illustrate this fact very well.

“Diversity enhances the potentialities of survival, the chances of new modes of life, the richness of forms. And the so-called struggle of life and the survival of the fittest, should be interpreted in the sense of ability to co-exist and co-operate in complex relationship, rather than ability to kill, exploit and suppress ..... Ecologically inspired attitudes, therefore, favours diversity of human ways of life, of cultures, of occupations, of economies. They support the fight against economic and cultural, as much as military invasion and domination, and they are opposed to the annihilation of seals and whales as much as to that of human tribes or cultures.”<sup>10</sup>

Such self elimination of actual individual gives rise to possible individuals in order to get entry into the actual world. Thus, there underlies a perfect impartiality between the actual and the possible individuality which will

---

<sup>10</sup> Naess, A. “*The Shallow and Deep Ecology*,” Cambridge University Press, 1989, P-84.

provide the acme of justice. Since the holistic point of view does not make any absolute distinction between an element and ecosystem, any attempt to extinct an element equally means the extinction of ecosystems which is surely unjust. The various elements or parts of an ecosystem are merely different expressions of its own intrinsic logic or theme. To refer to Vandana Shiva, "nature has created different ecozones which have been basis of diverse cultures and economies. The arid zones have been sustainably used by pastoralism, and the semiarid zones have been used for dry farming, with protective irrigation coming from water storage and water distribution designed according to nature's logic."<sup>11</sup> It does not make any sense from the holistic perspective to say that we are endangering our otherwise ecologically viable ecosystems. As deep ecologists say, in addition to preserving species, an evolutionary and ecological ethic is concerned with preserving natural processes and other biotic wholes. It is concerned with safeguarding genetic diversity and with preserving substantial and widely distributed samples of the hierarchy of eco-systems. As such we are all holistically or internally related and we all belong to those ecosystems. If we deserve to be selected out at our own mistakes, we are sure to close the ecosystems or even the entire order of life. Instead, the whole and the part mutually imply each other, both the earth and organism have unqualified value, and the absolute is nothing other than the concrete phenomenal world. The severity of our situation calls for an increasingly subtle and comprehensive understanding on our part in order to formulate a vision, and a way of life that embody a reverence for the sacred and vulnerable earth. Hence, the vitality of our connection to nature is most obviously signalled by the constant realisation of our dependence on it. Air, water and food, the microbes in our gut, the nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil – without any of

---

<sup>11</sup> Shiva, V. "*Staying Alive*," Kali for Women, New Delhi 1989, P-200.

these, our illusions of autonomy would crumble mighty fast. From these it appears that nature's revelations have some very strong implications for social life. For one thing, the interdependence of different parts of our ecosystem teaches us about the necessity to curb our personal and collective greed, to express the kind of care we seem to have forgotten (or never had), to treasure the multiplicity of species rather than cavalierly eliminating. In this light, every being is precious, just because it is a part of and contributes to the precious, differentiated whole that is the natural world. A realization of this truth is not simply a pleasant intellectual reflection, but a guide to moral behaviour for individuals and groups alike. As such deep ecology is a spiritual answer to the transformation of nature into environment – in which virtually all our earthly surroundings become stamped with a human mark, or threaten to become our pets, raw materials or victims.

Thus, it appears clear from the holistic point of view that the natural order is arguably an order of justice and accordingly it qualifies as a moral order too. Such kind of natural order is also equivalent to the right and equally fulfils the maxim *nature knows best*. The moral significance of nature resides in its boundless generosity; a policy of noninterference in nature or at least a policy of minimal intervention and a desire to restructure human society to be more in harmony with natural process. Etymologically nature, as Holmes Rolston 111 points out, is derived from the Latin 'natur' meaning birth. Accordingly, it can be said that nature is a source of life, and life is, after all, an entirely gratuitous gifts, owed to no one. Rolston says, "When nature stays, she takes only the life she gave ..... and she gathers even that life back to herself by preproduction and re-enfolding organic resources and genetic materials, and produces new life out of it."<sup>12</sup> Nature does not favour those who have life over

---

<sup>12</sup> Rolston, H. III, "Can We and Ought we Follow Nature? *Environmental Ethics*" No.1 spring (1979), P 28-29.

those who do not. Life is dealt out extravagantly or open handedly. Nature is not only just but also infinitely generous. Thus, from the holistic point of view the order of nature is valued as moral not in the sense that it gets hold of the long term good for nature, but also its justice and generosity as well.

The most viable question then is: if nature is examined from the individualistic instead of holistic point of view, does it still qualify as a moral order? It has been revealed from the point of view of the whole that as long as we are identifying with the whole, we can appreciate both the effectiveness and justice of this arrangement. Such an experience can help solve some metaphysical problems. It also helps us realize that we can value both individuals in their concrete relationship as well as the total field of relationships of which we are a part. This way of experiencing the world is to value the individual, and to value the individual is to value the whole. But the situation would be somewhat different if we identify ourselves as individuals. Here we are likely to see things differently. Here nature no longer appears to know best, if by its knowing best we mean that it is capable of looking after the interests of the individuals. Unlike the holistic approach here the situation of actual individuals is importantly different from the possible individuals. As actual individuals, we have actual interests, urgent needs, propensities or desires. Consequently, we are supposed to suffer and suffer terribly. There is neither justice nor generosity introduced in actual individuals. Here the life giving plan of nature as a whole lacks its command. In the domain of individualistic approach the concept of fellow-feeling, familiarity, or interconnectedness of one with all appears to be minimized, if not obliterated. To make clear the nonviability of individualistic approach here we can call upon Callicott who points out Naess's metaphysical doctrine of internal relation, the idea "that a thing's essence is exhaustively determined by its relationships, that it cannot be conceived apart from its



relationship with other things.”<sup>13</sup> According to Naess we cannot speak of the interactions between organisms and their environment or milieu, because an organism is interaction. Organisms and milieu are not two things – if a mouse were lifted into an absolute vacuum, it would no longer be a mouse and as such organisms presuppose milieu. This holds true not just for mice but also for human beings. A person is a part of nature to the extent that he is a relational junction within the total field. This represents, perhaps, the logical extreme of the more general ecological insistence that humans, like all other individual organisms, exist only within tightly connected webs of interdependence. This challenges not only individualism, but also forms of social constructionism that accept the fluidity and contingency of persons only in relation to society and culture.

Ironically, then the impulse to resist the continued destruction of the present order of life springs not as Deep Ecology claims from our identification with nature as a whole though identification is perfectly proper in the light of holistic interpretation of interconnectedness, but rather from our commitment to our individuality. Every individual should feel concerned for other individuals. In defending nonhuman beings against human depredation, we may even in a sense be resisting the greater order, the ground order of ecological justice. The compassion which forms the basis of our environmental ethics, from the individualistic point of view, is a function of our furniture rather than our cosmic self realization. Nature in the holistic aspect is morally far sighted than we in securing the conditions for the ongoing unfolding of life. Being individuals we should give our allegiance to individuals, if necessary, even against the moral requirements of nature as a whole. In this respect, the Gandhian line that people will have to try to be good, or atleast not to do bad,

---

<sup>13</sup> Naess, A. *“Ecology, Community and Lifestyle,”* Cambridge University Press, 1992, P-99-100.

as well as be actively encouraged to do good and discouraged from doing bad will get prominence.

The aim and objective of this chapter we have mentioned, is not to remain confined within Deep Ecology, rather to establish on examination, the view that Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism are complimentary with each other. So far we have examined in great details the various issues relating to Deep ecology. We have seen in the course of our investigation and explanation in what senses the apparent inconsistency in between the two metaphysical theses of Deep Ecology (viz. the interconnectedness thesis and *nature knows best* thesis) can be overcome.

Now we can pass on to examine and explain the meeting points between Deep ecology and Ecofeminism. But before delving into this issue we can make a study of the points of difference between the two from the points of view of ecofeminists. According to Plumwood and Warren, deep ecologists fail to see oneself as distinct from others as such deep ecologists do not separate the wellbeing of others from one's own wellbeing. This can easily lead to a failure to pay attention to, and care about, the needs of others, usually nonhuman natural 'others'. Plumwood is critical about the 'expanded self' of the deep ecologists. For plumwood, the identification becomes not identity (as with the 'indisfinguishable self'), but something more like empathy. PlumWood's criticism is that the 'expanded self' is not a critique of egoism, rather it is simply another expression of egoism. According to Plumwood, obliteration of all morally and metaphysically relevant distinctions is not the answer to the ecofeminists, since recognition and respect of difference is important. To make this exposition clear Plumwood may be quoted: "This treatment of particularity, the devaluation of an identity tied to particular parts of the natural world as opposed to an abstractly conceived whole, the cosmos, reflects the

rationalistic preoccupation with the universal and its accounts of ethical life as opposed to the particular. The analogy in human terms of impersonal love of the cosmos is the view of morality based on universal principles or the impersonal and abstract love of man. Thus, Fox reiterates (as if it were unproblematic) the view of particular attachments as ethically and as oppositional to genuine, impartial "identification", which necessarily falls short with all particulars."<sup>14</sup>

According to Plumwood, a commitment to a 'transcended self' expresses a serious lack of concern for particular individuals and species-topics which are of concern to ecofeminists. What these examples show is how powerful insights regarding various approaches to environmental ethics can be gained by paying attention to ecofeminist insistence on important connection between the domination of women and domination of nature under western patriarchal ideologies. From these it appears that Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism mark serious disagreement concerning the basis of ethics, contextualization of ethical issues, and the interrelationship of ethical issues seemingly confined to human sphere with those that obviously involve nonhuman entities. Deep ecology and Ecofeminism differ greatly in theoretical systems or paradigm. However, ecofeminism is a kind of deep ecology. It is not shallow, it is anti-anthropocentric and as such acknowledges the moral value of the nonhuman realm and engages in extensive questioning about the many factors that contribute to environmental issues. We propose to look after the point in what context there hinges a meeting point between these movements. This is the next point we are going to unearth. It is claimed that environmental ethics is much closer to Ecofeminism rather than Deep Ecology and if we concentrate ourselves within the concept of Deep Ecology, it can be seen that either

---

<sup>14</sup> Plumwood, V: *Current Trends in Eco-feminism*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, 1994, p-45.

implicitly or explicitly ecofeminism has a close proximity to the thesis of interconnectedness. Interconnectedness, as we see, is a thesis in which the relation between humans and nature can be established intrinsically. It cultivates or tends to interconnectedness in the individualistic rather than in the holistic sense. Nature, from the ecofeminist perspective is a community of beings, related in the manner of a family, but nevertheless distinct. As such ecofeminist theory is based on recognition of the ways and contexts that shape our understanding, explanations and interpretations of the world. In addition, ecofeminist theory stresses the importance of concrete and contextual mutual identification and mutual affirmation of interdependence and compassion. Thus ecofeminist philosophy is responsive to the existence and desirability of others regarding interests and is committed to the inclusion of different lives and experiences. Here we are urged to respect and care otherness, the distinct individuality of these beings rather than seeking merger with them in pursuit of an undifferentiated oneness. In addressing human beings as distinct, ecofeminism does not agree with the thesis: *nature knows best*. Self-realization, care and respect towards otherness are the keys to understanding ecofeminism which makes it closer to the interconnectedness thesis.

Since ecofeminism subscribes to or endorses interconnectedness thesis and to some extent denies or does not identify us directly with nature as a whole, it does not fall within the supposed identification dilemma. Since ecofeminism does not make us identified with a monolithic nature, it will not have to see our destruction or predation of environmental as a case of nature. As such, the destruction of the environment in this way renders it morally unobjectionable. On the other hand, since it visualises us as related to nature as the members of a community or family to whom the proper attitude is one of familiar consideration and care, born of an empathetic understanding made possible by

our common origins of our mutually defining relation, ecofeminism is able to condemn our abuse of the environmental outright without treating nature as a whole. According to ecofeminists, nature is the product of a re-awakening to our kinship with our individual non-human realitives. It is very much familiarized with our individuality, rather than in any kind of cosmic identification. It actually emerges out of a sense of solidarity with our fellow beings. As such ecofeminism makes the connections between humans, women, and environmental exploitation central to their position and aims towards an analysis that is inclusive of the many related forms of domination. To call upon Vandana Shiva, "The recovery of the feminine principle is based on inclusiveness. It is a recovery in nature, woman and man of creative forms of being and perceiving. In nature it implies seeing nature as a live organism. In it implies seeing women as productive and active. Finally, in men the recovery of the feminine principle implies a relocation of action and activity to create life enhancing, not life reducing and life threatening societies."<sup>15</sup>

Thus it may be claimed that Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology has a close proximity with each other as both seize important parts of our metaphysical and ethical relationship with nature with their complementary interpretations of the interconnectedness thesis. If reality is supposed to be based on internal connection, if reality does consist in web of relations, then it may be seen as both a whole and as a manifold of individuals. Accordingly, reality appears to qualify as a moral order. But from the point of view of individuals it does not. We think that in any attempt to relate human beings with nature both the holistic as well as individualistic views need to be taken into account. This will lead us in the end to an irreducible moral conflict ambivalence consisting of

---

<sup>15</sup> Shiva, V. "*Staying Alive*," Kali for Women, New Delhi 1989, P-53.

compassionate intervention on behalf of nature on one hand, and an enlightened view ready to comply acquiescence in the natural tide of destruction on the other. We have no option but to accept moral conflict (ambivalence). In accepting this moral conflict we try to discover on the one hand that it is our humanity that compels us to act (moral imperative in Kantian sense) on behalf of our embattled fellow creatures. In this regard, the moral loftiness or standard of Deep ecology is brought down to the ground. On the contrary, we discover that our compassion for the value taken for granted by ecofeminism is not beyond moral either. Moral compassion is always to come down to our love of the familiar, our solidarity with the things that remind us of ourselves. Ecofeminism in this regard is divested of its roots. Here it can be added that actual experiences in community with nature create solid knowledge and value claims in part by challenging traditional assumptions, our construction of ourselves, and the very ways we live on this planet and as such they prove meaningful ways to justify and motivate environmentally sound moral behaviour and allow us to become better people.

Thus ecofeminism humanizes Deep Ecology and Deep Ecology does indeed deepen ecofeminism.

Hence, the effects of ecofeminists' experiences and insights are potentially deep ecocentric. They include ways of being and behaving in the world without which ecocentrism must fail: an appreciation and reassertion, against modernist abstract universalism, the value of life as embodied and embedded, situated and engaged, local and particular and against an inflated rationalism, the value of intuition and feelings, and finally, the potential importance and value of what cannot be rationally calculated, economically or otherwise. Deep ecologists talk of expanded self which projects the structures of ego outwards. Women often feel expanded self in conscious raising groups or in community activism

undertaken in the interest of the whole. Hence both strands of ecofeminism, essentialist and conceptualist, presuppose that environmental ethics will benefit from creating theoretical space for human relations to nature, personal lived experience, and the vocabulary of caring, nurturing and maintaining connection.

Finally, we can conclude by saying that our grounds for ecological resistance which is pleaded both by Ecofeminism as well as Deep ecology hinges on our humanity, love, care and more importantly, realization for our fellow beings. This is what any environmentalist aims at to fulfil. Whatever we endorse, it is either holistic or individualistic, we have to give up the dualistic thinking between human beings and nature. We think and believe that out of such a relapse into dualistic thinking no true affirmation of life can come. We can anticipate the view that our humanity is the wellspring not only of a consuming destructiveness but also of the precious compassion which encounters it. It will lead us out of the moral deadlock by the divorce of dualism between humanity and nature. Hence in a world littered with the wrecks and causalities of grand abstract schemes, it may be the most promising as well as most realistic philosophy (idea).

