

**A  
NON-ANTHROPOCENTRIC APPROACH TO MODERN  
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS : A CRITICAL SURVEY**

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*Dedicated To:*

*In Memory of my Loving Mother and the  
Departed Soul of My Deceased Father*

## Preface

*The prime objective of my thesis is to unravel the disastrous consequences arising on account of man's unlimited and unwanted intrusion and interference with nature and the role of philosophy or more precisely the role of environmental ethics with a non-anthropocentric approach in tackling and bringing about an amicable solution to the global environmental crisis.*

*The unprecedented rate of scientific and technological development without a metaphysical base is primarily responsible for the ecological crisis. The concept of 'conquest of nature' by technologically oriented man and the visualization of nature as a 'storehouse of materials' to be exploited and plundered has driven the whole world into a paradoxical situation of global environmental crisis.*

*Environmental ethics is a branch of applied ethics which endeavours to restore and preserve the dignity of all biotic species, humans as well as non-humans. This specific branch of applied ethics took its birth in protest against traditional anthropocentric or human centred ethics which recognizes superiority of humans over non-humans fostering conquest or plundering of nature ending up in ecological disaster of the greatest magnitude.*

*In the Introductory chapter we propose to examine the environmental problem or crisis the world is facing. Alarming and uncontrolled population growth promoting industrial expansion, expansion of transportation network, agricultural expansion, deforestation, growth of slums and bustees have polluted the environment's air, water and soil to such an extent that nature's self 'homeostatic mechanism' fails to repair the lost ecological balance. The failure of humans to respond to the Gandhian axiom that there is enough in the world to satisfy one's need and not one's greed, and the relentless march of humans towards materialism, consumerism, individualism and egoism have brought the life of every species at the brink of extinction.*



*The world needs to be saved from this catastrophe. The first order solutions in the form of environmental laws, media communication and other scientific environmental protection activities have proved futile. In this context we have proposed the role to be played by environmental ethics with its non-anthropocentric approach.*

*In the Second Chapter entitled “Human Attitude Towards Nature”, we propose to highlight that an attitudinal change of humans towards nature is essential for proper curing of the diseased environment. A respectful, reverential, caring and loving attitude towards all species of the biotic world can save the world from further degradation. The attitude of mastery over nature which is in fact backed mainly by Judeo-Christian tradition and traditional man-centred ethics is primarily responsible for the world environmental catastrophe. Human beings ought to realize that as moral agents they have an obligation and responsibility towards all living species and the abiotic world. They also need to realize that all species have inherent worth and are flourishing in their own natural manner. That all species including man are interdependent and survive through the natural prey-predator relationship is a matter of realization. Humans ought not to inflict harm or damage the environment conducive for the natural flourishing of living species for the satisfaction of his greedy and luxurious need. He needs to confine himself within his satisfaction of basic needs and curb his materialistic and consumerist desire.*

*In this respect we would like to focus on the teaching of Lord Buddha. Buddhism as a religion is very much relevant to environmental studies particularly when the world is facing such environmental crisis. The religion is in fact based on true wisdom (bodhi) and not on any blind faith or dogma. True compassion, sympathy and respect towards all living species, care for the abiotic environment and self-realisation or a feeling for oneness with the Greater Self forms the core philosophy of Buddhism. The religion spreads the notion of kindness (maitrī), compassion (karuṇā), joy (mudītā) and equanimity (upekṣā). Therefore, the cultivation and culture of Buddhism as a*

*religion by individuals brings about an attitudinal change within them. Individuals gradually develop a feeling of oneness with all species of the natural world; learn to treat all species with love, respect, care and sympathy setting aside his materialistic and consumerist desire and lifestyle by exploiting nature. Thus, his attitude towards nature gradually changes from an 'ego centric' one to an 'eco-centric' one which will gradually restore the lost ecological balance.*

*In the Third Chapter bearing the title "The Value of life: A Biocentric Approach", we propose to make a theoretical discussion on the bio-centric approach which is a new dimension of environmental ethics. In this respect, we have highlighted the thoughts of Paul W. Taylor who rules out the superiority of humans over non-humans and confers equal moral dignity to all species of the biotic community including humans. It is said that all living species, humans as well as non-humans, are members of the earth's community of life and are an integral part of nature. They are all teleological centres of life flourishing in their own-natural manner and humans are by no means superior to non-humans. This is reality according to Taylor and human beings by virtue of their rationality and consciousness should be aware of this reality which in turns restores the dignity of all species. The biocentric approach pleads for a universal community of life.*

*I intend to concentrate on the question of value in the Fourth Chapter of my thesis entitled Searching Intrinsic Value in Nature. Values may be classified into two main types- intrinsic or non-instrumental value and non-intrinsic or instrumental value. Any object possesses instrumental or use value if it satisfies a given end, i.e. it is a means to an end. For example, petroleum which is utilised as a power resource in many industries and a fuel for transportation is of instrumental use to man. Intrinsic value refers to the value an object possesses which is an end in itself and not a means to an end. The aesthetic value of nature is in fact intrinsic. The concept which requires clarification is that nature not only possesses instrumental value for man but is also intrinsically valuable. In fact both instrumental and intrinsic value*

*exists side by side in nature. A goat may be of instrumental use to a lion and grass may be of instrumental use to the goat. But this does not mean that goat and grass possess only instrumental value. Both are good in themselves and their life possesses intrinsic value. Thus, both intrinsic and instrumental value exists side by side in nature and such values exist irrespective of human presence or absence. Environmental ethics with its non-anthropocentric approach is closely associated with intrinsic value of all living species including humans which ignores subjugation of one species by another and thereby promotes coherent association of all biotic species which in turn restores the dignity of all species.*

*Thus, by establishing the fact that all natural entities possess intrinsic value and therefore deserve moral consideration and respect, the problem of environmental degradation can be tackled to a great extent.*

*Discussion on Ecofeminism, a twin concept of ecology and feminism, which looks into the domination of both nature and women, is outlined in the Fifth Chapter. This particular field of study brings out the interconnectedness between women and nature and shows that both women and nature are dominated and exploited for their distinct and similar qualities. Ecofeminism is therefore a movement which endeavours to eradicate the domination of women in a patriarchal society and exploitation of nature together and inculcate a loving and sympathetic attitude towards all life forms.*

*Ecofeminism not only brings out the parity of domination between women and nature, it also explores various ways and means through which such types of domination can be regarded as morally unjust. By making such connections and comparisons between women and nature, it tries to restore the dignity of nature in moral context. Ecofeminism seeks to understand better the scope of moral respect, the sort of entities that can and should receive moral attention and the true natural world which morality is supposed to promote. We propose to examine and highlight in what sense the connection between women's oppression and environmental degradation are interlocked, the problematic philosophical foundations of several popular*

*ecofeminist theories and the ways to restore respect and dignity of nature through care ethics.*

*Environmental holism, an extension of the non-anthropocentric approach of environmental ethics takes the whole biosphere into moral consideration. It enlarges the boundary of moral community by encompassing the abiotic environment which includes land, water and soil. In fact environmental holism leads to the Gaia hypothesis where the earth behaves like a single living organism.*

*Therefore, considering the whole of nature as a single family without any subjugation and exploitation of one species by another is the true message of non-anthropocentrism. The Hindu concept of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ exemplifies this feeling of oneness. This is the deep ecological movement which rests on environmental holism and the extension and realization of the self. Deep ecology which rests on environmental holism states that everything is fundamentally one and nothing can be separated from the whole. Thus, there remains no isolated thing in the whole world, but an interlocking web of relations in a constant state of flux in which individuals are centres of interaction. Human beings ought to develop a feeling of oneness with nature, world or cosmos which will bring out his true meaning of life. This is self-realisation which is the core word of deep ecological movement. Through self-realisation or identification of the relation one holds with every part and parcel of the cosmos, one strengthens ones urge to survive in oneness with the cosmos through more and more widening of the sphere of relation with the world. Thus, it may be understood that self-realisation involves the identification of smaller human self with the Greater Self. Such a feeling of oneness with the cosmos will gradually bring about the realisation that the good of one is intimately wedded to the well being of the rest. Thus, one ought not to insult, unduly exploit or violate the dictation of nature or harm the species within it. We have discussed this view of deep ecology vividly in the Sixth Chapter of this thesis bearing the title “Deep Ecology Movement”.*

*The discussion on non-anthropocentrism as the most amicable solution for the present environmental crisis will remain incomplete if we fail to include the issue relating to the revival of the lost spirituality in man. This line of thinking has been discussed in the Seventh Chapter of this thesis bearing the title “A Spiritual Approach of Non-anthropocentrism from religious perspective”. The spiritual relation which existed between man and nature is lost due to the predominance of the concept of conquest of nature by man which has led to unprecedented rate of scientific and technological development in an attempt to artificialise the natural environment. The lack of metaphysical base in modern quantitative science is said to bring destruction to the spiritual bridge that existed between man and nature.*

*Such a paradoxical situation calls for the revival of eco-spirituality which is echoed in the ancient religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and many others. The universal acceptance of the holistic world view which echoed in the ancient religious thought will help to create a society free from domination and exploitation of society by man which will enable him to live in peace and harmony with nature.*

*To bring about an attitudinal change towards nature the inner minds of the individuals need to be cultured. This requires cultivation of the thoughts embedded within the ancient religions. The concept of Ṛta in the Upanishad, the dictation of Manu Samhita, the zoomorphic nature of Hindu deities, the worship of Uṣā, Aranyāni, Agni, Sūrya etc bear evidence about the respect and reverence for nature by individuals in ancient times which enabled maintenance of ecological balance. The cordial relationship between man and nature has been marred due to blind faith in quantitative science lacking metaphysical base. Revival and re-culture of Upanishadic and Vedic thoughts can bring back the respect which man once paid to nature. Buddhist teachings revolving around love, care and compassion bear immense value in environmental concerns. Various ecological and environmental problems can be gradually tackled if the concept of environmental holism through merging of one’s self with the Greater Self*

*which is the core philosophy of Buddhism is once again accepted by the masses, Concern about the environment is found in most of the religions of the world. We may therefore say that world religions provide constructive framework for changing human attitudes towards nature from an 'ego-centric' to an 'eco-centric' one.*

*Finally, the requirement of environmental justice and sustainable development for maintenance of ecological balance is brought into light in the Concluding Remarks. In writing this thesis, I have tried my level best to make it flawless theoretically as well as grammatically. However, if there still remains any flaw, I myself owe responsibility for this.*

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*Arpana Dhar (Das)*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## General Introduction

### **Global Problem:**

Degradation of the environment has assumed a cause of global concern and in the threshold of the twenty first century man has learnt to realize the ill consequences of his conscious and unconscious activities for the fulfillment of his never-ending desires. The one time cordial man-environment relationship has been marred due to increased human greed, prominence of materialism, individualism and egoism, ruthless use and misuse of nature, irresponsible attitude of technologically innovative and economic man towards the same. We may say that the environmental picture of the present century is an unbalanced one where the life of every species of the biosphere, even the minutest one is endangered. The rapid pace of scientific and technological development has undoubtedly made human life much comfortable and easier, but their negative implications have driven us into a paradoxical situation of global environmental crisis. In fact with the onset of the concept of 'conquest of nature' which encompassed the technological oriented man, the balance of ecosystem and therefore the environment was shaken which ultimately led to environmental degradation or disaster which is affecting the survival of every organism including man.

In order to comprehend the meaning of the term global environment crisis, it is very necessary to clarify the term environment and environmental or ecological balance and the role of human being in creating the above mentioned crisis.

In general the term environment is equated with nature or surroundings wherein physical components of the planet earth viz. land, air, water and soil support and affect life in the biosphere. Environment is, in fact, a totality of physical, biological and cultural

elements which are constantly and systematically interacting with each other. The physical elements including space, landforms, water bodies, climate, soil, mineral, rock, etc determine the complex character of human habitat, whereas the biosphere is composed of plants, animals, micro-organisms, birds and human beings. The cultural elements (economic, social and political) are completely man-made features which make the cultural environment.

A delicate state of ecological balance exists in nature amongst the living species including man and the non-living environment which are mutually interdependent and constantly interacting with each other. Such a state of balance or stability is subject to relativities of space and time which imply that the state of balance is not equally stable or persistable at all times. In fact, ecological balance is an internal aspect of nature and its maintenance depends on the lifestyle followed by the different species, especially man, residing within it. One needs to point out that such a state of balance is often disturbed by physical or biological processes which nature is capable of regulating by its negative feed back mechanism known as homeostatic mechanism. When unwanted human intervention with nature with the intention to satisfy his unlimited desires greatly disturbs the ecological balance, the homeostatic mechanism fails to function which results in environmental degradation of the greatest magnitude. In the blind race for the fulfillment of his materialistic desire man has gradually cultivated an intense, individualistic outlook and attitude which has made him forget the famous dictum; 'live and let others to live'. He even fails to remember the Gandhian axiom that there is enough in the world to satisfy his needs but not his greed. His relentless march towards scientific and technological development has marred his caring attitude towards nature.

The present century is marked by ecological, scientific and technological development on one hand, whereas it is plagued by serious environment problems on the other. The basic reason behind this environmental crisis is the rapid increase in world population

which has led to rapacious exploitation of the earth natural resources and speedy rate of urbanization and industrialization. Estimating the rapid rate of environmental degradation due to interference of man with nature, R.F. Dassman inclines to say that “.....the human race is like an ape with a hand grenade. Nobody can say when he will pull the pin of the grenade and the whole world will be destroyed.”<sup>1</sup> In the following few paragraphs we propose to focus on some of the causes and harmful consequences leading to environment degradation.

## **Population Growth and Related Environmental Crisis:**

Industrial expansion, modernization of agriculture, urban growth, expansion of transportation network etc consequent upon alarming rate of population growth through decades is the major reason behind environmental degradation. As long as the number of human beings interacting with nature remains within specific limits the ecology is balanced and everything works well. But when the number increases by geometric proportion and the man-land ratio becomes adverse, as in the developing countries severe ecological and environmental problems crop up. The global environmental crisis confronted today is partly rooted in rapid population growth of the south and partly in the consumerist culture of the north.

High rate of population growth in the developing countries since 1930 and its resultant pressure on the earth's finite resources has led to over exploitation of the exhaustible resources. Moreover, acceptance of the western mode of advancement with major insistence on mass production and consumption has further accelerated the above-mentioned crisis. As human population increases, its need for food and energy increases as well as the amount of waste it produces. Feeding the ever expanding population puts economic pressure on the earth's ability to regulate its own system. The marginal lands are

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<sup>1</sup> Dassman, R.F. *Environmental Conservation*, Wiley, New York, 1976. p.20.

utilized to hasten agricultural production through the application of chemical fertilizers which pollutes air, water and land.

A gloomy picture of intense poverty and congestion is visualized in the urban centers where people from different areas flock in search of employment. The urban centers with limited space are unable to hold the teeming millions which force them to settle in slums and shanty towns of cities characterized by sub-standard living condition. The towns and cities are highly polluted with industrial and domestic waste. All these lead to human drudgery, deprivation and indignity.

In the rural areas increase in human population has led to deforestation for the purpose of habitation and agriculture which has resulted in ecological imbalance, deforestation, soil erosion, increase of wasteland and devastating floods.

### **Deforestation and its Impact on Environment:**

The utility of forest resource cannot be underestimated. It provides a natural habit for millions of animals and micro-organisms, builds up soil rich in organic matter, binds soil through the network of roots, increases infiltration of water, reduces flood risk, increases precipitation, acts as the natural sink of carbon di-oxide, provides firewood for millions and timber for industries.

This forest resource, which is so useful for the biotic community is mercilessly exploited for fulfillment of the ever increasing desire of 'modern', 'economic' and 'technological' man due to which the natural balance of the ecosystem is disturbed, inviting severe environmental problems.

Vast tracts of virgin forest areas have been cleared for agricultural purpose and human habitation due to enormous pressure of population on land. Mass deforestation takes place due to transformation of forest areas into pastures, overgrazing by animals, forest fires, lumbering for industrial and household purpose and due to several other anthropogenic activities.

The adverse impact of deforestation is highly alarming and a matter of serious global concern. Rampant felling of trees accelerates the rate of soil erosion, increases the load of the river due to heavy siltation thereby increasing the frequency and dimension of floods and reduces soil fertility which hampers agricultural production.

In fact the most disastrous effect of deforestation is its impact on climate. The amount of precipitation lowers due to reduction in the rate of transpiration by trees and increase in the percentage of greenhouse gas, chiefly carbon-di-oxide which induce global warming. Due to destruction of forest the carbon stored in the plants and wood decays, giving off carbon-di-oxide which absorbs more terrestrial radiation accelerating the rate of global warming.

### **Agricultural Practice and Associated Degradation of the Environment:**

Environmentalists are of the opinion that technological developments in agriculture are largely responsible for large scale deterioration of the environmental quality. Mass clearing of virgin forest areas for agriculture, expansion of irrigation facilities, immense use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides and increased use of high yielding variety of seeds to boost agricultural production for satisfying the hunger of the teeming millions has ended in severe environmental crisis.

Modern man is bewildered as he has to fulfill the requirements of the ever increasing hungry millions by acceleration of agricultural production through the adoption of scientific techniques on one hand, while on the other hand he ought to be conscious about the irreparable environmental damages caused by such techniques.

Massive deforestation for increasing agricultural land in order to augment food supply accelerates the degree of soil erosion, reduces soil fertility, and increases the load of the river- thereby amplifying the possibility, frequency and dimension of flood.

Irreparable loss of bio-diversity, biomes and extinction of several animal species is consequent upon the practice of monoculture in several parts of the world. The conversion of the steppes of U.S.S.R, Prairies of N. America, Pampas of Argentina, Veld of Africa and Downs of Australia into the granaries of the world, virgin Mediterranean woodlands into vineyards and orchards adversely affect the balance of the forest eco-system. Such practices have definitely increased productivity, efficiency and yield, but it has also increased ecological vulnerability and instability.

Intensive methods of cultivation increases agricultural productivity rendering large scale environmental degradation. The 'Green-Revolution' launched in India to boost agricultural production since 1960 can be cited as an example. The term 'Green-Revolution' signifies agricultural production brought about by modern scientific techniques like increased irrigation facilities, use of high yielding variety of seeds and application of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. Adoption of such technique has undoubtedly doubled or trebled crop production on one hand, but on the other hand it has increased the magnitude of serious environmental problem.

Large scale application of synthetic, toxic chemical fertilizers has raised agricultural production, but huge accumulation of unused chemicals in the soil has increased its toxicity making it unfit and sterile for further cultivation. The eluviations of such accumulated chemicals to groundwater level adulterate ground water used for drinking and irrigational purpose.

Some of the toxic chemicals used as fertilizers in agricultural fields reach the food chains of human beings and animals through vegetables and food- grains and endanger life. Nitrates, for example, when consumed indirectly through food matter perform complex chemical reaction within the human body, which increases the possibility of cancer.

The transport of toxic chemicals from the agricultural fields to ponds and lakes through rain and surface run off has led to phenomenal



growth of certain plants in the water bodies, known as 'Eutrophication' and the phenomenon has proved fatal for several valuable species of plants, animals and micro-organisms.

Agricultural production has to be boosted up in order to satisfy the hunger of the multiplied millions, but the adverse consequences of scientific techniques on environment should be kept in mind before adopting such measures.

### **Industrialization and Environmental Crisis:**

Rapid pace of industrialization since the dawn of industrial revolution has raised the material standard of living of the people at the cost of the balanced natural environment. The adverse effect of rapid industrialization has led to severe environmental pollution which has ruined man's delicate relationship with nature. Reckless plundering of forest cover, excavation of land for mining, collapse of land for drilling of oil, excessive withdrawal of groundwater for industrial purpose has its fatal effects on the environment. Production of industrial wastes, poisonous gases released from human volcanoes (industrial chimneys) toxic chemicals, polluted water, aerosols, smoke and ashes are some of the undesirable harmful elements released due to industrialization. Such harmful elements pollute the environment imperiling human health and mind.

The hydrological environment presents a deteriorating scenario wherein the stagnant water of the lakes and ponds is contaminated due to the release and dumping of industrial effluents and wastes resulting in the death and disease of aquatic ecosystem. Some of the products of chemical industry, like different types of fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides applied to the crops and soil to hasten and enhance agricultural production reaches the food chain of human and animal population indirectly bringing about their fatal disease and death.

Intensive burning of forest, fossil fuels and rapacious exploitation of forest-cover in the name of industrialization has increased the

concentration of carbon-di-oxide content of the atmosphere. As this gas traps much of the terrestrial radiation, a rise in the magnitude of carbon-di-oxide level in the atmosphere leads to global warming which in turn causes major shift in weather patterns, with rainfall increasing in some parts, droughts in another and hurricanes becoming more stronger and frequent. Discharge of several other toxic gases, smoke and aerosols into the atmosphere from human volcanoes pollutes the air we breathe bringing about severe environmental problem.

Rapid pace of modernization and industrialization has led to greater utilization of fire extinguishers refrigerators, air conditioners and spray can dispensers emitting halos and chlorofluorocarbons (CFC). Jet plane flying through the atmosphere releases nitrogen oxide. These gases released into the atmosphere are harmful in the sense that they deplete the stratospheric ozone layer which plays a vital role in filtering and absorbing the ultra-violate rays of the sun. The creation and destruction of ozone is a natural process, but when the level of ozone depletion exceeds its creation, chiefly due to the aforesaid anthropogenic activities, global warming results due to more entrance of ultra-violet radiation which eventually disturbs the global radiation balance affecting the overall natural ecosystem. The creation of ozone holes in the industrial hubs increases the incidence of skin cancer chiefly among the white skinned masses. Releases of sulphur di-oxide from the industries bring about 'acid rain' which is very harmful for plant, animal and human life.

Noise pollution specially in the vicinity of industrials centers is a serious form of environmental disturbance. It affects the brain, auditory mechanism and some time causes hyper-tension.

### **Urbanization and Associated Pollution:**

The level of urbanization is very much related to socio-economic development. Rapid pace of socio-economic development, mainly in the form of industrialization, has led to unplanned and mushroom growth of urban centres. A series of serious environmental and

ecological problems consequent upon the rapidity of the twin process of urbanization-industrialization have emerged. Air and water pollution, overcrowding and growth of slums and energy crisis are some of the vital environmental problems arising from urbanization.

Huge accumulations of wealth and ample job opportunities in the urban centers have attracted population from the surrounding rural areas. Consequently, the quality rural population is drained, the rural traditional industries are ruined and the agro-industrial base is crushed.

Overcrowding and congestion of population in the towns and cities due to continuing rural migration and natural growth process has created a situation where the number of people penetrating the labour market exceeds the available job opportunities. Shortage of housing, mushroom growth of slums and bustees with substandard and unsanitary living condition, large scale unemployment and poverty are the adverse consequences of overcrowding of population in the urban centers.

The twin processes of industrialization-urbanization has led to the havoc increase in the number of vehicles (emitting carbon-monoxide, sulphur dioxide and hydro-carbons), buildings, roads and streets, urban waste, sewage, aerosols, smoke and dust. Sewage water, if not treated scientifically, flow through the city and drain into the rivers, bringing about contamination of fresh water used for drinking and other domestic purpose.

Huge amount of poisonous aerosols emitted from the chimneys of 'human volcanoes' results in the occurrence of pollution domes' over the industrial cities. The air quality thus deteriorates, bringing about serious health hazards. The deadly 'urban smog' formed due to the mixing of smoke and sulphur-di-oxide spreads over the industrial city centers imperiling human life.

Reduction in the rate of infiltration of water consequent upon increased construction of 'pucca' structures lead to increased run-off which increases the frequency and dimension of flood. Increased

withdrawal of ground water for domestic and industrial purpose in the congested urban centers leads to formation of huge cavities, which ultimately bring about collapse of ground surface. Improper disposal and unscientific treatment of urban solid and industrial waste degrades the environment to a great extent.

Human beings have come to realize that this plagued environment needs a proper treatment. He has become conscious and alert about his misdeeds and has become aware that he should take a drive at the global level to solve the above mentioned problems. It is facts that progress in science and technology cannot be renounced altogether as it is very necessary for the solution of certain acute problems like poverty, hunger and deprivation of the teeming millions of the world. What ought to be done is to strike a balance between environmental protection and scientific development. Scientists and technologists of today are trying to employ soft and eco-friendly technologies so that earth's natural resources can be used sustainably as far as possible. Environmental laws, mass education on environment, media communication and environment protection activities of various social groups, political parties and educational institutions are some of the mentionable endeavours on the part of human beings to safeguard the degraded environment. It needs to be mentioned here that all these first order or empirical solutions are not enough to revive the lost ecological balance or treat the diseased environment. The pertinent question at this juncture is what ought to be done to solve this crisis? In this perspective it is very necessary for man to change the attitude towards nature. There is a need of a philosophy of life based on symbiosis, i.e. cordiality between man and nature. Here lies the role or relevance to be played by ethics which is related to environmental studies.

### **Objective of the Thesis:**

The prime objective of my proposed research work is to find out an amicable solution to overcome the present environmental crisis

through the application of non-anthropocentric approach of modern environmental ethics. Environmental ethics is, in fact, a branch of applied ethics which tries to protect, restore and preserve the dignity and sanctity of all the species of the biotic community- animate as well as inanimate. This branch of applied ethics is a slogan against the man or human centered traditional ethics which is anthropocentric in nature. Man centered traditional ethics actually recognizes the domination and subjugation of humans over non-human species of the biotic community. It recognizes that human beings by virtue of possessing humanity as well as rationality are supposed to be the only legitimate moral agents. Morality is judged not in terms of irrespective agents, but in terms of agents having or possessing rationality by means of which what one ought to do, what is good or bad, right or wrong can be judged. Since only human agents have this quality, so human beings alone are supposed to be the legitimate moral agents. This is the single line verdict of traditional ethics which is therefore called man centered ethics too. It is anthropocentric in nature which encourages, supports and favours materialism in which only instrumental or consequential values are regarded to be only moral values. Such an objective of traditional ethics favours the 'conquest of nature' by admitting the superiority of man over nature. This in turn encourages scientific and technological development at the cost of nature or more precisely at the cost of the non-human species of the biotic community. The result is environmental degradation as mentioned in the earlier paragraphs. Environmental ethics is a cry against the traditional approaches which promotes anthropocentrism. The new promising branch of applied ethics, with non-anthropocentric attitude as its central theme and objective, emerged as a protest against human propensity to conquer nature or administer superiority over non-human nature that tends to extinct a harmonious life within the biotic community. Instead of instrumental values, it encourages the intrinsic value, i.e. the non-instrumental value of all entities of the non-human natural

world and thereby claims that all entities deserve due moral respect and consideration. This radical branch of ethics completely rejects the domination and subjugation of man over non-human nature and thus paves the way for the development of an attitude of respect for nature within human mind. This is where the relevance of environmental ethics actually hinges on. It is highly concerned with the moral grounds for protecting the welfare of the non-human species of the biotic community. It tries to restore the moral or ethical foundations for laws protecting endangered species and the ethical basis for preserving and restoring degraded environments. Environmental ethics, in fact, centers round the question how to create a social order that protects the nature and basic human rights at the same time or how to integrate the economy and ecology, material and ethical progress, science and spirituality. Environmental ethics has a potential to help and to create such an order. It is an internalized code of behaviour that produces an ecological sound development process. Adoption of such a code of behaviour by human beings of different cultures enables the maintenance of harmonious relationship between man and nature ensuring continuing material and cultural enrichment of the society.

The problem of environmental degradation is threatening the very existence of life on earth. Scientific solutions, enactments of various laws and endeavour of different social groups to find an amicable solution to the above mentioned global crisis is on the move, but none of the attempts is truly fruitful or successful. In fact the ethical responsibility of man towards nature or a biocentric outlook of individuals towards nature is the only way to minimize environmental or ecological problems.

Modern man is quite conscious about the fatal consequences of his notorious actions. However, by virtue of his instinctive nature of enjoying happiness, failing to apprehend the subtle margin between needs and greed, he is reluctant to sacrifice the benefits of his environmental harmful activities. This is where the relevance of

environmental ethics-an ethics which makes the distinction between the right and the wrong and thereby translates values into options for actions hinges on. It is a man, the only decision making body, who should choose the correct option not only in terms of instrumental value, but in terms of non-instrumental values as well. Degradation of the environment can be controlled to a large extent if the members of the human society at large adhere to ethical provisions which substantially ensure environmental stability. A vast social space not governed by human laws still remains void and it is the ethical and moral values, which guide people in this place. Therefore the prime concern of environmental ethics is to secure, accept and follow the ethical code of behaviour, which plays an important role in regulating cordial man-nature relationship.

One of the most important components of environmental ethics is the attitude of respect towards nature by moral agents. So long the human's attitude towards nature would not be changed; it would be difficult to control the so-called environmental crisis. Here we propose to analyse how the attitude of respect for nature by moral agents would bring about a change and improve the present deteriorating man-environmental relationship. Once the moral agents adopt an attitude of respect for the non-human natural world, they ought to follow certain ethical principles or code of conduct. It is therefore necessary to assess how a person's character expresses the attitude of respect for nature. A person by virtue of his good moral character will definitely deliberate his actions correctly or in the right direction in a situation of choice. Proper or good character traits enable one to visualize clearly the necessary duties, obligations and responsibilities one ought to take towards the earth's wild living things. True respect towards wild living things is ultimately expressed when normative rules or laws are linked with ethical conduct and character of individuals. Biocentrism is another important dimension of environmental ethics in which the dignity and moral standard of non-human natural entities can be uplifted and honoured. Human beings

who are the only moral agents are rational and by virtue of his rationality they have cultivated a high degree of reality awareness. Thus, understanding biocentrism is nothing but the realization of reality. Human beings, the possessors of rationality should realize that they are the members of the earth's community of life. Since human beings by virtue of rationality are fully aware of reality, they must be conversant of the common relationship with other non-human beings. Human beings must realize themselves as one species population amongst many and thereby corroborate kinship with them as equal members of the whole biotic community. Thus we can say that biocentric approach pleads for a universal community of life.

Environmental ethics is a normative commitment to the intrinsic value of non-human nature. The non-human natural entities deserve due moral consideration on account of their possession of intrinsic value irrespective of how such value bears on human interest. The objective of environmental ethics is based on the very division of values into intrinsic or non-intrinsic, instrumental or non-instrumental values. Anthropocentrism which deals with instrumental or non-intrinsic values interprets values in terms of practice, consequence and rules. On the contrary, non-anthropocentrism, which is associated with non-instrumental or intrinsic value completely, ignores the domination and subjugation of one species by another. It tries to annihilate value-dualism, individualism and hierarchies within the biotic community. It tries to establish the coherent association of all species of the biotic community and thereby restores the dignity of all members of the biotic community. In the modern era, when modernization has crept in, fallacious human activity is continuously degrading the environment by destroying nature. All biotic natural entities have life and therefore possess intrinsic value, a value which is attributed to any entity being good in itself, i.e. a value which is good not as a means, but as an end in itself. The destruction of nature means disrespect of intrinsic value of a biotic community. The basis of environmental ethics rests on the



fact that all forms of life including humans possess intrinsic value and thereby deserve moral consideration and due reverence. Moral consideration and reverence towards non-human natural entities by human beings, the only moral agents, is the only way through which the problem of environmental degradation can be tackled.

Virgin nature is always beautiful. The natural environment insofar unconquered and unexploited by human possesses positive aesthetic qualities or has aesthetic value. We often refer to nature as graceful, delicate, beautiful and soothing, which express our aesthetic appreciation of nature. Thus we see that nature possesses aesthetic value which is positive and negative aesthetic judgments like description of nature as bland, dull, fearful and chaotic have little or no place.

The intrinsic value of nature can be substantiated in terms of aesthetic value of nature, which deserves appreciation, honour and respect. Although aesthetic value cannot be measured in terms of instrumental use, one cannot ignore the natural dignity of non-human natural entities possessing aesthetic value. Any form of scientific upliftment of the society at large tends to degrade the aesthetic appreciation of nature by moral agents. Human beings by and large apprehend the aesthetic value of nature and their appreciation of aesthetic value in the present scenario is expressed when they decorate their drawing room with a bunch of artificial roses or marks of greenery in the form of stunted plants in pots. This attitude of humans, i.e. their aesthetic appreciation of nature has been marred due to modernization through scientific advancement. There is no question of doubt that without science, it would be difficult to cope up with many first order crisis. But at the same time scientific development actually creates a large gap between man and nature. The aesthetic appreciation of natural rose can never be substituted by an artificial rose. So the vital question that needs to be addressed here is whether the artificial bunch of roses can substitute natural roses, which actually deserve aesthetic appreciation from all moral agents.

The aesthetic appreciation of nature which has been annihilated mostly by scientific advancement and technological development should be revived once again. Moral agents should recognize the natural world as beautiful and appreciate its beauty by restoring its virginity.

Deep ecology movement has emerged as a distinguished philosophical approach to combat with the present environmental crisis. Deep ecological movement is said to be the radical interpretation of modern environmental ethics based on non-anthropocentrism. Deep ecology, in fact, takes a holistic view of nature. It views the whole biotic community as an organic total in which each and every species, animate as well as inanimate, is considered to be its integral part. It encourages us to seek our true identity by identifying ourselves with the wider circle of nature. Here the interest of human beings are conversant with those of nature and thereby becomes incumbent on us to respect and serve the common interests of all species of nature. Deep ecology takes a rational perspective which is very much directed towards non-anthropocentrism.

Deep ecologists try to think about an alternative philosophical world view that is holistic and not human centered to replace the dominant world view that is responsible for the present environmental crisis. The alternative philosophical world view to be adopted by individuals to meet the challenges can be achieved by following the spiritual ideals of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism.

Ecofeminism is another important addition to modern environmental ethics. Ecofeminism is the twin concept of both ecology and feminism and it has been currently emerging as a very forceful approach in environmental ethics. Ecofeminism is an environmental issue in which the domination and subjugation of women by men on many accounts can be established at par with the domination and exploitation of nature. These connections are relevant because both women and nature are categorically devalued due to their distinct and similar qualities. The theory of ecofeminism may have its echo in the

*Sāṃkhya* system of Indian philosophy where Prakṛiti stands for nature and is compared to women. In this context the *Sāṃkhya* philosophers have highlighted the creative aspect of Prakṛiti for the enjoyment of *Puruṣa*, which stands for male. In fact, *Prakṛiti* works keeping the satisfaction of Purusa in view who is indifferent and inactive. Here due honour is shown towards Prakṛiti who is neither oppressed nor degraded by *Puruṣa*. Hence it is seen that in ancient India there is no evidence for exploiting environment or nature by an individual.

A central position grounding ecofeminism is the belief that values, notions of reality and social practices are related, and that forms of oppression and domination, however, historically and culturally distinct are interlocked. It holds that connection between women and nature exists because women are part of nature and the oppression of nature is played out in specific ways on women's bodies, activities and conceptual framework. Thus, understanding ecofeminism equally means understanding nature. Ecofeminism not only finds out the parity of domination between women and nature, it also explores various ways and means through which such types of domination can be regarded as morally unjust. By comparing women with nature, it tries to restore the dignity of nature in moral context. In this regard we can say that ecofeminism is largely about ethics, norms and values that will support well-being of the whole biotic community. Thus, any attempt to cohere feminism with nature is to value nature. Ecofeminism seeks to understand better the scope of moral respect, the sort of entities that can and should receive moral attention and the true natural world which morality is supposed to promote. Here we propose to highlight in what sense the connection between women's oppression and environmental degradation are interlocked.

One of the major aspects of my work is to substantiate the relevance of non-anthropocentric approach of environmental ethics from a spiritualistic perspective of Indian thought. The relevance of non-

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anthropocentric approach lies submerged in many Indian religious thought like Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism in particular.

If one goes through the Vedic literature, Upanishads and *Puranas*, one may perceive the role Hindu religion once played with respect to human treatment of the natural environment. In the Vedas, respect for nature was expressed through reverence for the five *Mahabhutas* or cosmic elements, i.e.- *Pr̥thivī* (earth), *Vāyu* (air), *Akasā* (space), *Apah* (water) and Agni (fire), which played a major role in sustaining the environment . In the Vedas, *Pr̥thivī* is referred to as *Devi Vasundharā* (Mother Earth) who provided nourishment and place of habitation to the entire family of human and non-human beings referred to as ' *Kutumbakam*'. This is the concept of ' *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' which actually brings out the relationship which the early Hindus maintained with nature. We thus see that Hindus worshipped nature as their God and therefore never thought of harming or exploiting it.

The *Puranic* concept of life after death or the cycle of birth and rebirth or transference of soul from one body to another in which humans took rebirth in the forms of animals and birds showed reverence and equal respect for all creatures of the universe.

Similarly, Jainism and Buddhism, the religious faiths adopted in ancient India spread the doctrine of *Ahimsā* or 'non-violence' which actually visualizes their sincere concern for nature. Now the question which needs to be answered is why in spite of all such rich tradition and philosophy India is facing environmental crisis? Centuries of cultural and social dominance by Islamic and Christian tradition and the invasion of the forces of materialism, consumerism and individual greed following urbanization and industrialization has shaken the noble values which were once possessed by Indians on account of their rich cultural heritage.

In fact, a desirable achievement of non-anthropocentric approach of modern environmental ethics can be obtained by adopting and implementing sustainability, seeking environmental justice,

enlightenment of spirituality and above all universal benevolence  
towards nature.



## SECOND CHAPTER

### Humans' Attitude Towards Nature

#### **Introductory:**

It is a well accepted fact that human beings are the integral part of the nature and they are tied to it through a serious of interactions. Amongst all the species of the biotic community human beings occupy a supreme position on account of his rationality and intelligence which account for its greatest responsibility towards maintenance of ecological balance. Their role as members of the biosphere and their attitude towards the same, however, has changed with the passage of time. The friendly attitude towards nature which man once possessed has gradually and in recent times drastically changed with more and more inventions in science or precisely with the rapid pace of scientific and technological development. The attitude of mastery over nature by modern man, spearheaded with advanced technologies has greatly affected the so-called ecological or in a broad sense environmental balance. It may be said that "for modern man nature has become like a prostitute- to be benefited from without any sense of obligation and responsibility toward her. The difficulty is that the condition of the prostituted nature is becoming such as to make any further enjoyment of it impossible" <sup>2</sup> From this respective quotation it can be well understood that nature is conceived of as a *storehouse of materials* for mere use and exploitation by humans and this exploitative attitude of man towards nature has led to environmental degradation of the greatest magnitude. Human existence and the existence of all biotic species is in fact sacrificed to the advantage of

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<sup>2</sup> Nasar, S. Hossein: *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Calcutta, Kanpur, 1968, p.18.

blind technological progress and unbridled appetites for luxury, profit and power.

Man is gradually becoming conscious about his misdeeds and fallacious treatment of nature and therefore seeks to take a drive at the global level to solve the crisis. In this respect it is very necessary for man to change his attitude towards nature. He should develop an attitude based on justice and ethical insight. Adoption of an ethical code of conduct by human beings of different cultures enables the maintenance of harmonious relationship between man and nature ensuing continuing material and cultural enrichment of the society.

In Paul Taylor's vision, an attitude of respect for nature by humans occupy a pivotal place in the foundation of a life-centered system of environmental ethics. He conceives that a set of norms or an ethical code of conduct is needed to guide human beings in his treatment of the natural world. The human beings in turn need to abide by the moral norms and thereby adopt an attitude of respect for nature as his ultimate moral attitude. Taylor further seems to have conceived that life centered of environmental ethics<sup>3</sup> need not centre around a holistic approach of nature where all species-animate as well as inanimate- including man are considered to be the integral part of nature nor around the concept of ecological balance or equilibrium which is not considered to be the moral norm. The attitude of respect for nature by humans who are seen as moral agents revolves around the concept of good of a being where all natural species are considered as entities possessing 'inherent worth' which in actuality determines our moral relations with the Earth's community of life.

From the above discussion it seems clear that life centered system of environmental ethics which centers on the attitude of respect for nature is quite contrary to the concepts of traditional or human centered ethics revolving around the notion of anthropocentrism.

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<sup>3</sup> See Taylor, P.W. *Respect for Nature, A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1986, pp.59-90.

## **Traditional Human Approach towards Nature (Anthropocentrism)**

The anthropocentric approach is, in fact, a traditional approach going back to Protogoras who said that man is the measure of all things; of what is, that it is; of what is not, that it is not. Anthropocentrism is a view where value is conceived instrumentally or non-intrinsically, where nature is conceived as a storehouse of materials to be used exploited and satisfies the needs of human beings, the unique creation of God possessing rationality. Nature according to the anthropocentric outlook is therefore used as a means to satisfy ends. This anthropocentric attitude towards nature is further strengthened with the advancement of science and technology and the rise of materialism and consumerism. The ancient book of Genesis describes the unique position of human beings in relation to the rest of the species in nature. According to the content of the book God says to the human beings, "Be faithful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have domination over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God even said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the force of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; and you shall have them for food."<sup>4</sup> Such ancient writings clearly reflect the notion of anthropocentrism.

In the past people thought that the natural process were intentional and could be thus modified through prayer and entreaty. But this conception of nature was not well accepted in the Gracio-Christian western world. In the later period it was further believed that nature has the power to take revenge on human beings for his misdeeds. In Ibsen's Wild duck old Ekdal believed that the forest would take revenge for having been too ruthlessly thinned.

This belief that nature is capable of taking revenge on humans for his misdeeds bears great value in recent environmental literature. The

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<sup>4</sup> Subbarao,S. : *Ethics of Ecology and Environment*, Rajat Publications, New Delhi ,1997, p. 4



Stoic Christians believed in the absolute uniqueness of man. According to their view nature was created by God for man to use in accordance to his free will. They thought that God created man to serve him and He only created the natural world of plants and animals to serve man in turn. Every natural process like volcano, flood, and tempest is not intentional, it attempts to aid man or guide him spiritually. Although such a view about nature, God and man can be traced back to the *Old Testament*, that everything in nature exists to serve man is not a regular teaching of the *Old Testament*. On the other hand, it has been said that that God causes it to rain on Earth for nature to survive, make the buds spring forth, flowers bloom, and grasses grow and satisfy the dry and desolate land. Thus, the view of nature focused by the Stoic Christian was contrary to the teachings in the Old Testament. Moreover, the dictum that everything in nature has been created by God for man to use does not entail that man should go forth and transform the world according to his needs. God has created both man and nature, He has created nature in accordance to the needs of man; therefore “sinful corrupt men ought not to attempt to reshape the world in their own image.”<sup>5</sup>

The invention of machines and scientific and technological progress and development was witnessed in Europe after the crusades. Machines like water wheels, wind mill, compass etc reduced human labour. It was believed that such intentions displeased God as He provided everything readymade on earth for man to utilize and consume. Hence artificiality through mechanization obviously went against God’s will. Thus, the view that nature was created by God for human utilization clearly bears the notion of anthropocentrism which is the actual cause behind the present day crisis of environmental degradation. Such an anthropocentric outlook failed to induce respect in humans for nature as it was seen as something created only for utilization. Nothing in nature was thus considered sacred, hence

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<sup>5</sup> Passmore, John. : *Attitude to Nature from Environmental Ethics*, edited by Robert Eliot, Oxford University Press, Published in 1995, p. 131.

felling of tress or mercifulness killing of animals was not considered as a sinful act.

Inventions and progress in science and technology seemed to be a distinctive feature of Christian civilization. Act of modification or transformation of nature by man for his use was not at all considered sacrilegious. In the other way it may well be said that according to the Christian view ‘ no moral consideration bear upon man’s relation to natural objects, except where they happen to be someone else’s property or except where to treat them cruelly or destructively might encourage corresponding attitude towards other human beings.’<sup>6</sup>

According to the stoics, cruelty or brutality to animals is not wrong in itself, but it is wrong in the sense that such an act on the part of man towards animals might make them act in the same manner with other human beings. The Jewish Christians, however, advocated and maintained a more cordial and considerate attitude towards non-human nature. A philosopher like Emanuel Kant reaffirms the Stoic Christian thought by saying that brutality to animals is wrong only in virtue of its effects on human beings. He condemned the act of killing animals on the ground that such an act effects human interest and is therefore intrinsically wrong. Though Kant’s conviction is intended towards protection of human’s interest, it enables one to be governed by moral consideration in their attitude towards nature.

Rene Descartes, a French philosopher and scientist of the 17<sup>th</sup> century denied the fact that it is wrong to cause suffering to animals because according to him animals cannot suffer. All suffering in the world is due to Adam’s sin and since animals were implicated in that sin they cannot suffer. Thus, according to Descartes, the act of killing or treating animals, i.e. nature brutally is not wrong or sinful. Both humans and animals are a part of nature, but the unique characteristic of human beings is their consciousness which is outside nature. Thus, human body though united with nature was for Descartes “unique in being in some way united with consciousness;

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 132.

the human person, conjoining mind and body, would thus be set in total opposition to the non-human world it encounters.”<sup>7</sup>

From the above lines one can easily say that man though united with nature is not subjected to any sort of moral obligation in his treatment or confrontation with nature. That every resource in nature is meant for human use is considered ‘absurd’ or ‘childish’ by Descartes. Everything existing in nature is not utilized by man, nor can all things existing naturally be used by man immediately and effectively. Man needs to modify or transform nature in order to utilize it effectively. It is possible for man to artificialise or modify nature only when he thinks himself to be the master and possessor of nature. This intention of man to utilize nature by transforming and modifying it reflects the exploitive attitude of man towards nature. Descartes calls this method of exploitation of nature through artificialisation and modification ‘practical philosophy’, which is based on scientific and technological advancement of man. Human beings, the possessor of supreme intellect at the outset acquire a first hand knowledge about the wild nature and then moulds natural things in order to make them work in the manner more comfortable with human interest. Such an attitude of exploitation of nature by man formed the basis of western sciences.

Most of the philosophers during that period were not prepared to accept the Cartesian mind-body dualism; the theory according to which mind or consciousness was taken to be equivalent to reason and body equivalent to matter or nature. Descartes advocated an absolute anthropocentric approach by making a rigid partition between nature and consciousness and it was neither difficult to bring them together. Philosophers went against the mind-body dualism of Descartes. To them nature appeared to be more human like but they denied the fact that nature is wholly independent or a ‘thing in itself’, i.e. denying the fact that nature possesses intrinsic value. Nature, therefore, was still of instrumental use for them.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 133.

Hegel and Marx emphasized on this negative aspect of nature which implies that the existence of nature is only for human utilization. The post Cartesian philosophers and metaphysicians denied absolute partition of mind from body or reason from nature. They emphasized that wild nature appears to be weird (strange) to man, but man makes it less strange by working on it and moulding it in accordance to his own desires thereby destroying its actuality or rationality. According to Hegel this depreciation or devaluation of nature is actually appreciated by man since nature is humanized or made less strange or weird to man by his own self. Such artificialisation or humanization of nature gives more scope of human invasion into nature which allows him to conquer and tame it according to his desires.

From the above paragraphs it seems to be quite clear that though both Descartes, through his theory of mind-body dualism and Hegel through his concept of humanization of nature were strong supporters of anthropocentrism, yet both differ greatly in their views. Descartes held nature equivalent to body which is inert, intuitive or passive and therefore completely dominated by man seen as equivalent to mind or reason. Such a view advocated human mastery over nature. The Hegelian philosophy is somewhat different as it propounded the humanization of nature through man's intellect and labour

### **A Modified Version of Anthropocentric Approach (Attitude) towards Nature:**

From the above section we come to understand that a strong form of anthropocentrism persisted in society, particularly in the western society which generated degradation of the environment. It was gradually felt that such an anthropocentric philosophy of life needs to be replaced by a new one.

The new philosophy which gradually emerged tried to accept the strangeness or wildness of nature. By following such a philosophy concerning nature man had to learn how to co-exist with wild and

weird nature instead of transforming it totally. Human beings tried to be aware of the fact that the natural processes continue and they will continue in their own natural way despite the presence of human beings. He even realized that it was not possible for him to neglect or ignore science or scientific theories since such theories give us a detailed knowledge about every aspect of nature. What man actually did and is still doing is, his interaction with a system of already formulated natural interpretations which sets in a new series of interactions that may carry any sort of risk unable to be predicted by man himself. This inability to predict the consequence of his conscious actions stem out from his limited knowledge of science and his unawareness about nature and its processes. This actually induces exploitation of nature.

The new philosophy of nature should be non-anthropocentric or at least weakly anthropocentric which needs to accept the changes and complexities of nature and natural processes. This new philosophy of nature needs to take it for granted that natural processes are independent of man's existence on earth, that nature is not malleable and should not be reshaped, transformed or modified in accordance to the will of man and it is not constructed to guarantee the continued existence of human beings and their civilization.

The naturalistic philosophy, however, is not new. Its foundations have been laid since the time of Darwin when he propounded the 'theory of survival of the fittest.' According to his theory, natural processes go on and the species which are able to adjust to their environment or surroundings are able to survive. The new philosophy of nature which should be adopted follows the same line. This philosophy tries to reduce the strangeness of nature by proposing that man is a part of nature and therefore nature is not alien to man, neither strange to him. Thus all plants and animals and even human beings are therefore subject to natural laws.

In the natural world, human beings subject to natural laws and natural processes survive at the cost of other species. They are

different from the other species in the sense that they possess the power to observe the disappearance of certain species in the competitive natural world, ascertain the reasons for such disappearance and even predict the consequence of such disappearance. They also possess the power or capacity to give protection to such species or preserve them by modifying their own behaviour towards them by being less destructive towards nature.

Thus, the central theme of the new ethics or philosophy of nature is human responsibility towards nature. It is therefore high time for human beings to realize and to be conscious that he is a part of the biotic community and every member of that community, be they plants, animals, insects or birds have a right to survive and deserve respect from every other member of the community. But one thing which must be remembered is that, all species of the biotic community survive through the prey-predator relationship amongst them. It is a natural process and therefore has to continue. Thus, it should be taken for granted that human beings to a certain degree are predators, i.e. they are dependent on other species for their survival. This role of predatorship of the human beings is permissible as far as their survival is concerned but not beyond that. Human beings, apart from being a predator for their survival, need to act justly and humanly towards all other species of the biotic community.

The only way to co-exist in harmony with nature is to abandon the Augustinian principle which advocates that nature is there to be used, and not enjoyed. Moral notions like vandalism and philistinism expose man's cruelty towards nature. Such attitudes should be vehemently discarded. The contribution of Romanticism, which encouraged human beings to look upon nature not merely as an instrument, is considerable to build up a relationship of harmony with nature. What ought to be our attitude towards nature can be put down in the following manner- "if we can bring ourselves fully to admit the independence of nature, the fact that things go on in their own complex ways, we are likely to feel more respect for the ways in which

they go on. We are prepared to contemplate them with admiration, to enjoy them sensuously to study them in their complexity as distinct from looking for simple methods of manipulating them.”<sup>8</sup> To develop such an attitude nature should be looked upon as something less ‘strange’ which could enable us to be concerned or take interest or even care for it.

## **What ought to be Human Attitude towards Nature:**

As already discussed, a life-centered theory occupies a very important place in modern environmental ethics. The theory states that every human being by virtue of being a moral agent have moral obligation towards plants, animals and all living species since all are members of the biotic community. We are morally bound to protect and promote their good for their own sake. In fact the healthy survival of all species within the environment depends largely on human attitude towards them. An attitude of respect towards all natural species on the part of human beings enhances their healthy and proper survival within the natural environment. If the life-centered theory of environmental ethics needs to be accepted, “a profound reordering of our moral universe would take place. We would begin to look at the whole of the Earth’s biosphere in a new light. Our duties with respect to the ‘world’ of nature would be seen as making *prima facie* claims upon us to be balanced against our duties with respect to the ‘world’ of human civilization. We could no longer take the human point of view and consider the effect of our actions exclusively from the perspective of our own good.”<sup>9</sup>

Two concepts need to be clarified and analyzed in understanding the attitude of respect towards nature. These two concepts are first that of the good of being and second the concept of inherent worth.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.141.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, W. Paul : “ The Ethics of Respect for Nature”, included in *Environmental Ethics* by David Schmidly and Elizabeth Willot, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 83.

## **The concept of good of a Being and Inherent Worth:**

Any entity is said to have a good of its own when any positive endeavour by any moral agent furthers its good without reference to the satisfaction of human wants. For example, routine physical exercise by a human entity may promote his or her health directly. Thus, the said entity possesses good of its own. The regular pruning and caring of rose trees in a garden for which the trees bear more flowers to provide aesthetic satisfaction to the viewers cannot be considered as an ideal example of a being or entity possessing good of its own. A machine is oiled, not for the true well being of the machine itself, but for the efficient work it can perform for some human purposes or ends.

To promote a being's good is intimately related to the good of a being. An entity's good may be promoted or protected by either avoiding causing it harm, or by keeping it safe from danger, or by providing a condition which is favourable for its existence, or destroying a condition unfavourable or detrimental for its existence.

The foremost question which strikes our mind is, what sort of entities possess good of their own. From the above examples it may be said that those entities which have their own interests or ends or those affected by positive or negative actions by any agent can be said to possess good of their own. Thus, a heap of sand, a machine or a stone have no interest of their own, nor are they satisfied or dissatisfied by any action of any agents.

But is it really true to say that only entities having interest possess good of their own? The answer is certainly not. Even those entities which experience neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction, neither fulfillment nor frustration are living things possessing good of their own. Such entities may be unconscious or even conscious, but unable to express their consciousness. Therefore, it may be said that all



members of the biotic community of natural world including all forms of life, whether plants or animals, possess good of their own.

In this perspective one needs to understand the distinction between one's apparent good and one's true good. When an entity values something and believes that it can bring about good to that entity, then that something which an entity values is apparently good for that entity. On the other hand, whatever is conducive for the realization of one's good directly is said to be one's true good or is objectively valuable and can be referred to as human good.

Thus, any condition which leads to the true realization of one's good or in fact human good, or in other words any condition bringing about human flourishing or true happiness is objectively valuable. As an individual gains more rationality, autonomy and factual knowledge, he becomes more mature in choosing an ideal condition which is favourable for his own living and the true realization and achievement of that ideal condition becomes his ideal goal of life.

Now the question which needs to be answered here is whether the non-human living entities can realize the conditions favourable for their existence or put value on something which will bring about their true good. The theory of respect for nature states that plants and animals, i.e. the non-human living species possesses good of their own and it is correct to apply the concept of objective value on them.

The good of an insect or the well being of that particular insect can be fully realized if one has or gains a proper knowledge about the full life cycle of that insect and the environmental conditions favourable for the prosperous existence of that insect. If the insect thrives under favourable environmental conditions then it can be safely concluded that the good of this particular insect has been fully realized. A good knowledge about the environmental conditions conducive for a non-human entity's well being will enable one to make proper moral judgment towards them. When an individual is fully acknowledged about what conditions promote the welfare or what conditions are detrimental to the non-human natural entities, he or she can make

proper value judgments from the perspective of the organism's life, even if the organism can neither make nor understand those judgments. The underlying theme of the theory of respect of nature is that the moral agents, i.e. human entities capable of making moral judgment must be dutiful towards natural objects and refrain from actions detrimental to the healthy existence of those entities. Thus as moral agents, it becomes obligatory for human beings not to harm or destroy plants or animals or any sentient beings who possess good of their own. If human beings are capable of promoting the welfare of individual organisms then it is also possible for them to promote the welfare of the whole species population. Individual organisms are components or members of the species population and hence promotion of their well being furthers the well being of the whole species population although the species population itself does not possess good of its own. Similarly, the good of the whole biotic community can be realized by promoting the good of the individual members of the community. But this statement is quite confusing since if the good of all members of the biotic community is to be realized, it may cause harm to the community. Now the question that requires clarification is that how the community is harmed when the well being or good of all its individual members is realized. The proper functioning of the ecosystem is maintained by the pre-predator relationship. Now if one tries to protect the prey from the grip of the predator, then it may cause harm to the predator, i.e. its natural existence would be at stake which in turn could cause harm to the biotic community at large. That is why Taylor rightly puts, " Thus the reality of the community's good, like that of the species population, can be found nowhere, but in the lives of individual organisms, even though when we speak of the good of the community we are not referring to the good of each individual member taken separately."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor, P.W.: *The Attitude of Respect for Nature: Respect for Nature, A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, pp.70-71.

After careful analysis of the first concept, i.e. the concept of 'good of a being', let us discuss in detail the concept of inherent worth. In fact the attitude of respect for nature stems from the fact that plants and animals, like humans possess inherent worth or some value which is not always instrumental. Since the non-human living members of the biotic community possess worth or value, therefore they deserve respect from the moral agents.

A distinction can be brought between the two concepts, i.e. the concept of 'good of a being' and the concept of 'inherent worth'. That entity possesses good of their own does not entail that moral agents ought to respect them or promote their welfare. Moral agents may protect, care or bring about welfare to those entities or may not do so, i.e. they can even harm or destroy those entities possessing good of their own. Possession of good of a being only does not make an entity worthy of respect by moral agents. An entity, whether human or non-human, deserves respect from moral agents when it possesses inherent worth along with having a good of its own.

Two other concepts which often seem to be synonymous to the concept of inherent worth and are frequently referred to in environmental ethics are the concepts of 'intrinsic value' and 'inherent value'. A proper analysis of the aforesaid concepts will help us to make a distinction between them.

### **Intrinsic value:**

It is the value which one places on an object which is valuable in itself and is not valued simply for its uses. An object or entity possessing value is not a means to an end but an end itself. Thus, all natural objects- whether plants or animals possess intrinsic value and they all owe respect from moral agents. Both plants and animals possess instrumental or use value too, but they are also the possessors of intrinsic value. In the biotic community all the members survive through a prey-predator relationship. Thus, one member may be of instrumental use to the other, which in turn may be of use to the

superior predator and so on. But, while recognizing such relationship one must not forget that such individual member of the community has value in itself ,i.e. they are not only valuable as means to an end, but they are all an end in themselves.

### **Inherent value:**

This is the value which one places on an object or place because of its cultural significance, historical importance or aesthetic beauty. One feels or knows that such objects or places need to be preserved or one should refrain from destroying or damaging such places or objects. Thus, the great Taj Mohal of India is preserved, protected or repaired and looked after for its aesthetic beauty or inherent value. A small ring not having much price value in the market may be of inherent value to an individual since it was presented to him/her by someone who loves him/her. Thus, the object possesses inherent value for that particular individual. Such an inherent value may be placed on living objects like animals kept as pet, or flowers and trees grown in one's garden or even wild animals in forest or zoo. But such objects bear inherent value when one places value on it. Thus, such value depends simply on the valuation of respective individuals which does not depend on the commercial worth or usefulness or instrumentality of the object. Therefore, it is the humans who endow the plants and animals and many other objects with inherent value. As soon as inherent value is endowed on an object, whether living or non-living, animate or inanimate, that object or entity is preserved, protected or respected by that individual. Inherent value has a close tie with intrinsic value in the sense that such value is endowed not on the basis of the object's commercial worth or instrumental usefulness.

### **Inherent worth:**

This term is applied only to those entities that possess good of their own. Any living thing has inherent worth if it possesses good of its

own regardless of any instrumental or inherent value and without reference to the good of any other being. The term inherent worth is in fact applied to the possessors of absolute intrinsic value. Thus, the entity having inherent worth should be treated as a moral subject which deserves care and consideration from moral agents. The moral agents therefore have a duty to preserve and protect the entity's good as an end in itself. Or in other words, it can be said that the humans have a moral obligation to respect all entities possessing inherent worth.

The concept of inherent worth should be separated from the concept of merit both from human-centred judgment and from the non-human standpoint. Those entities possessing inherent worth, all have the same worth irrespective of differences in merit. Thus, all human beings possess inherent worth since it is their simple personhood itself which is the ground of their worth. One individual may be superior to the other on the basis of merit, or individuals may be graded in the order of merit, but such gradation does not hold good when we say that all those individuals possess inherent worth.

In the non-human world also, one animal species may be better than the other as a prey for a predator population, and that particular predator population may itself have merit in relation to the biotic community of which it is a part. But when the question of moral judgment or consideration comes, all species should be treated or considered equally as all possess inherent worth irrespective of their inferiority or superiority.

The distinction between inherent worth and merit has very important implications in both environment ethics and human centered traditional ethics. Let us consider its implications in environmental ethics for the time being.

In the first place, if inherent worth is attributed to all plants and animal species of the biotic community, then each plant or animal is to be treated as moral subjects having equal status and therefore

deserve or owe duties by moral agents. None are considered to be superior or inferior to others on the basis of merits.

Secondly, the non human members of the biotic community should not be treated as objects for satisfaction for mere human wants. In other words, plants and animals should not only be put to instrumental use for human beings who are the sole moral agents.

Thirdly, the preservation, promotion and protection of natural entities should be taken as an ultimate end by the moral agents.

And lastly, it can be said that the moral agents have a duty on principle to give moral consideration to moral subjects whether non-human or human. The moral agents are bound to show respect towards moral subjects irrespective of whether they like, love or dislike the entity possessing inherent worth.

From the above discussion it is quite clear that the core theme of environmental ethics, i.e. the attitude of respect to be bestowed on moral subjects by moral agents, centers on the concept of inherent worth. To accept the theory of environmental ethics means to hold that all plants and animals of the natural world have inherent worth and therefore deserve respect from moral agents which in other words mean that moral agents ought to have a biocentric outlook of life.

The ultimate moral attitude of moral agents as said earlier ought to be the attitude of respect towards non-human nature. Once such an attitude is adopted by the moral agents they ought to follow certain ethical principles or code of conduct whereby they express their ultimate attitude.

### **Different Dimension of an Attitude of Respect for Non-Human Nature:**

The attitude of respect for nature by moral agents has four dimensions- the valuational, connative, practical and effective dimension. A clarification of each dimension needs detailed discussion. According to the valuational dimension all natural entities

are regarded as objects possessing inherent worth. They are therefore worthy of deserving respect, moral concern and care from moral agents. In other words, it may be said that the moral agents are disposed to show an attitude of respect towards all natural entities.

The second dimension, i.e. the connative dimension in the disposition of the moral agents, is to aim to certain ends or goods and to strive towards the achievement of that goal. The two purposes of the moral agents who strive to respect nature are (i) avoid harm, injuring or bringing about destruction to the natural entities and (ii) preserving the existence of all non-human entities. If all moral agents adopt such an attitude then they are set to follow certain rules or ethical principles which will ensure proper preservation of the biotic community.

The practical dimension deals with the practical decision to be taken by moral agents regarding the attitude they are to undertake towards natural entities. This dimension actually incorporates the decision making capacity of moral agents which in turn encompasses their rationality, power of judgment and exercise of will. The question of practical decision comes when a choice has to be made amongst various alternatives. In such situation the moral agent chooses to undertake that action which according to his rationality and moral judgment he considers to be the best or most appropriate. Thus, before taking any decision in practical life the moral agents think the questions: whether they ought or not ought to take such an action, what are the possible future consequences of the action to be taken or whether his action will bring about harm or encourage flourishing of natural entities? The decision taken by one is considered to be morally good if the action taken according to the decision bring about no direct or indirect, present or future harmful impact on any natural entity. Actions taken by individuals are morally good if they encourage flourishing, promote welfare and preserve the existence of all living entities or members of the biotic community. If the ultimate goal of the moral agent is to respect nature then all those actions aiming towards

the achievement of that end are morally justifiable and the actions which go against the achievement of that end or purpose are considered to be morally justifiable. Thus in the words of Taylor “ When moral agents have the ends mentioned in connection with the connative dimension, and when they do things or abstain from doing things for the reasons just given, they have the attitude of respect for nature.”<sup>11</sup>

The fourth and the last one is the affective dimension or the disposition of feeling or affection for living things on the part of moral agents. When any moral agent shows respect towards any moral subject he or she has a soft feeling or affection for that moral subject and he or she wants its existence to continue. This disposition of affection is very closely related to the valuational, connative and practical dimension mentioned in the earlier paragraphs. The affective dimension is the ‘sign that one does regard wild living things as possessing inherent worth, that one has the appropriate ends and purposes, and that one is disposed to act for the relevant reasons. The feelings go with these other dispositions, and all of the dispositions together comprise the unified attitude of respect for the natural world.”<sup>12</sup>

## **What ought to be the attitude of respect for nature?**

Having discussed the four dispositions, such as, valuation, connative, practical and affective, one can clearly understand what it means to have an attitude of respect for nature. Now the question arises: how this attitude of respect can be expressed in the conduct and character of moral agents?

When an individual performs action or refrains from performing actions on the basis of the above mentioned four dispositions, he

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.83.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.84.



expresses the attitude of respect for nature in his conduct. For example, if an individual values a rose plant, if he wants its existence to continue and if he possesses a feeling of affection for the plant and starts watering, pruning, manuring and caring for the plant then his action expresses the attitude of respect for the rose plant. Thus, when he is concerned about the existence of any natural living entity and acts in accordance to such concern or consideration, then he expresses the attitude of respect for that living entity.

Some of the actions performed by the supporters of anthropocentrism may also encourage the well being of non-human natural entities. But it cannot be said that such actions express an attitude of respect for nature because the ultimate objective or end of the people supporting human-centred viewpoint in environmental matters is to bring about human welfare at the cost of non-human living entities. Thus, they express respect for humans and therefore cannot express the attitude of respect for wild living natural entities. According to them, humans are the sole possessors of inherent worth and therefore their conduct cannot express the attitude of respect for non-human entities as they are not the possessors of inherent worth according to them.

Moreover, the action showing respect for nature should be taken on the basis of certain moral principles and not on the basis of one's context or inclination. An action taken on the basis of one's context or inclination will obviously reflect one's personal affection or love for that entity and not the attitude of respect. An action expresses the attitude of respect when it becomes ethically obligatory on the part of the moral agents to preserve, protect and care for the good of all members of the biotic community for their own sake or an end in themselves.

It is now time to understand how the attitude of respect for nature is reflected in one's character. The two aspects deliberative and the practical are the two aspects visualized in a person's character. The deliberative aspect incorporates a person's rationality in deciding what he ought to or ought not to do in a situation of choice particularly

when he is influenced by non-moral wants and desires. A person is said to possess an honest character if he has the power of deliberative rationality. This means that a truly honest person never gets confused or gets involved in duplicity and biased judgment but takes a rational decision and always comes at a correct conclusion.

The practical aspect of a person's character reflects the capacity of an individual to act in accordance to deliberate rationality, reasoning and judgment. In order to perform such actions a person should possess enormous will power and should exercise his will power and self mastery in performing any action in practical life.

In the arena of environmental ethics our prime concern is to assess how a person's character expresses the attitude of respect for nature, person of good character or a person of virtue will deliberate his actions correctly or in the rigid direction in a situation of choice. In the words of Paul Taylor 'virtues give one the steady ability to do the right thing with the right aim and for the right reasons in situations where mere failure due to confusion of mind and weakness of will are not uncommon.'<sup>13</sup> Thus, proper or good character traits enable one to visualize clearly the necessary duties, obligations and responsibilities one ought to take towards the non-human entities of the biotic world. The attitude of respect for nature can also be expressed through moral rules or through certain ethical systems. The true respect towards wild living things is finally expressed when the normative rules or laws are linked with the ethical conduct and character of individuals. Thus, if moral agents act in accordance with the normative rules and principles that define a 'possible world', the true attitude of respect towards nature is expressed. Summing up, it may be said that moral agents ought to follow the 'rules' and standards of a valid system of environmental ethics in order to give due recognition and respect to the inherent worth of living natural entities.

True respect for nature is the most fundamental kind of moral commitment that one can make. This moral commitment of moral

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* p.88.

agents should not be misunderstood as love for nature. Love for nature expresses one's personal affection or feeling or one's fondness for a particular breed of animal or a particular plant species or whatsoever natural object it may be. But such love or affection for natural objects is not understood as a matter of moral commitment, i.e. it is not universally adopted by moral agents, but repulsive to others which allow one to adopt an attitude of love for some objects and dislike for others. But if one expresses the attitude of respect for nature, then he ought to be concerned about the well being of the whole nature in general irrespective of repulsiveness of specific species. To adopt the attitude of respect for nature is to abide by certain moral norms or ethical norms which are morally binding upon him, he also feels that such norms should be binding upon all moral agents, i.e. such an attitude ought to be universally adopted by all moral agents. All moral agents should therefore give due recognition to the inherent worth possessed by all natural entities. Since all natural entities are true possessors of inherent worth, a worth or value irrespective of any subjective interest of any human beings, they all deserve concern, respect, and care from all moral agents.

Apart from the attitude of respect towards nature, several other attitudes towards nature can be taken by moral agents, like the attitude of scientific curiosity, the aesthetic attitude of appreciation of nature's beauty, the attitude of deriving enjoyment or pleasure from nature and so on. If any of those attitude are taken along with the attitude of respect for nature then the well being of nature is not adversely affected. In another way it may be said that such attitude should not supercede the moral attitude of respect for nature in any way.

In certain instances it may be seen that two moral attitudes, i.e. the attitude of respect for persons and attitude of respect for nature come in conflict with each other. Certain scientific experimentation may be carried out which may adversely affect nature, but prevent human beings from certain unwanted danger. Under such circumstances,

when the two moral attitudes come in conflict with each other, it is morally difficult for moral agents to decide which attitude ought to be adopted. Some of the hedonistic, aesthetic or scientific attitudes sometimes directly harm nature. For example, setting up a hotel or resort in a forest area. In order to establish that resort the forest area has to be cleared up, which means felling of innumerable valuable trees and destruction of natural habitat of wild animals and plants simply to provide aesthetic satisfaction to the handful of human beings. In this situation when moral agents are in a dilemma whether to build up the resort or protect the natural habitat of wild animals and plants, priority should be given to the protection and preservation of nature. In fact the above mentioned attitudes, i.e. scientific and aesthetic and hedonistic should be resorted to with great care so that such attitudes do not seriously harm wild creations and natural ecosystems.

Although a discussion of different types of attitudes towards nature, including the attitude of respect has been taken up in the former paragraphs, the most common attitude undertaken by man towards nature is the exploitive attitude. Nature and its wilderness is visualized by man as a storehouse of resources which only possess instrumental value to meet human ends. Human beings, in general, therefore exploit natural resources to satisfy their own wants, desires and needs. With the advancement of civilization which actually involves scientific and technological progress and development, man has mastered the technique to 'subdue' and 'conquer' nature for his own benefit.

This exploitive attitude of man is always in conflict with the moral and ethical attitude of respect towards nature. Human beings recognized wild creatures and plants as objects of consumption possessing instrumental value or objects possessing inherent value insofar as human finds satisfaction in observing them, learning about them or interacting with them in some way. Thus, they are not treated as subjects or objects possessing inherent worth which is the 'core word'

or 'core philosophy' of the attitude of respect towards nature. The absence of this 'core word' in the exploitive attitude brings it into deep conflict with the attitude of respect towards nature.

Now how shall one justify that the ultimate attitude of moral agents should be an attitude of respect towards nature. As said by Taylor, '...in order to justify the attitude, then, we must show that the whole ethical system that embodies it is a valid one. How can this be done? The only way is to set forth the belief system that underlies and supports the attitude and show that it is accepted to all who are rational, factually informed and have a developed capacity. In the case for the attitude of respect for nature, this involves examining the way of looking at nature and the place of humans in it which makes intelligible and taking of that attitude. We must then show why every rational being who is factually informed and open to the reality of life would accept the outlook as a part of their own total world view.'<sup>14</sup>

### **Buddhist Approach towards Nature:**

In the perspective of environmental studies the religious movement that has its greatest impact is Buddhism. Buddhism as a religion originated in India several centuries ago and with the gradual passage of time its mission spread throughout the world. The only reason for its wide acceptance is that Buddhism as a religion is based on true wisdom and not on any blind faith or dogma. To accept or to follow Buddhism means to strive towards ones own self realization (atmadipo bhava). The main intention of Buddhism as a religious faith was to reduce the sorrows and sufferings of human beings. In fact, the guidelines prescribed by Lord Buddha for reduction of human sorrows and sufferings are of great significance in present environmental studies.

Buddhism predicts, "When humanity is demoralized through greed, famine is the natural outcome; when moral degradation is due to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.98.

ignorance, epidemic is the inevitable result; when hatred is the demoralizing force, widespread violence is the outcome.”<sup>15</sup>

The above statement clearly brings out the picture of ecological devastation. But to be just an observer of the present situation will not bring a solution to the present crisis. Human beings as active members of the biotic community should come forward and search for ways and means for maintaining the ecological balance between man and nature.

According to Buddha, human sorrow or suffering is the outcome of intense craving or desire. Intense greed for material benefits increases mental agony and tension which is the sole cause for human suffering. The best way to bring down such suffering is by regulating one's desire. Buddha's teachings have clear indication of maintenance of one's mental balance (*kaśula citta*). The global environmental crisis can be tackled if such a state of mental balance is attained not only at individual level, but at the universal level. *Atmopolabdhi* or 'self-realization' through self regulation of desire is actually *nirvāṇa* in the words of Buddhism. Attainment of *nirvāṇa* from individual platform to universal level will surely bring down environmental crisis gradually according to Buddha.

Protection and preservation of nature which is the key to the maintenance of ecological balance is clearly brought into focus through two expressions of *Shantideva*, a prominent Buddhist exponent: (i) '*parātmāsamatā*'- i.e. feeling of oneness with others and (ii) *paratmaparivartana* -i.e. identification of oneness with other selves. Love and respect for others, which not only incorporates love for human beings alone, but love and respect for plants, animals and nature as a whole is expressed vividly in Buddhist literature which expresses Buddhist's concern for protection of nature. Buddhist literature also enumerates that nature is the greatest teacher spreading the notion of kindness (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekṣā*). Such faults clearly indicate that

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<sup>15</sup> Rhys Davids, T.W. & Stede, W. ED. *Digha Nikaya*, London, PTS, 1970-71, Vol. iii, p.80.

Buddhism as a religion encouraged collective life and corporate living of fellowmen with the rest of nature.

Buddhism as a religion or the preaching of Buddha prescribed in Pali language forms an important part of Pali literature where environmental problems and their ethical solutions are highlighted. Through Pali literature Buddha propounded harmonious living of human beings with the rest of nature, i.e. with the animate and inanimate species of the biotic community. Green forest areas where nature survived with its full purity were chosen as places for meditation. Buddha too, like ancient *munis*, *seers (rsi-s)* and saints selected the forest of Uruvela and the river Niranjana for meditation and attainment of *Nirvāṇa*. Buddha realized the contribution of the natural surroundings towards attainment of peace. He comprehended the necessity of nature for the promotion of human welfare. In fact, a full chapter- '*Opammakatha*' in the *Milindapanha* in Pali literature is devoted to Buddhist awareness of nature. As emphasized in Buddhism, nature and its components guide every human being towards attainment of peace and morality and therefore development of a purified personality. While residing in the forest Buddha visualized and hence realized that each and every species of the natural world live in harmony with each other and the natural order or the balance of nature is well maintained through the complex prey-predator relationship. While living with nature, men are bound to develop a caring attitude for the harmless flora and fauna around them. He even realized that each species draws its sustenance from nature, therefore men can also live by acquiring his basic needs of food, clothing and shelter from nature, but his intention should be devoid of greed and lust which is the actual cause behind destruction of nature and deterioration of environmental quality. The forest according to Buddha is an unusual or exceptional organism having unlimited kindness or benevolence which has no demand for its own subsistence. It offers generously its products to all natural species

including human beings; it gives protection to all even to the axeman who tends to destroy it.

In the present day context of acute environmental degradation, the notions of Buddhism enumerated in Pali literature finds its importance. With more and more advancement in information technology, the world has become a global village and people have come to know about the facts and occurrences in every nook and corner of the world. Such informations have revealed to the masses the present scenario of extreme ecological crisis which made them aware of the fact that unlimited exploitation of nature through the progress of science and technology should be stopped or halted somewhere. Instead, nature needs to be protected, to be looked after, to be cared for, which would bring about universal welfare.

Although nature is useful to man from various aspects, the value of nature should not only be judged from its instrumental aspect. Such a fallacious view leads to rapacious exploitation which in reality leads to global environmental crisis. Nature, in fact, needs to be valued for its inherent worth. The greeneries are in a way, our benefactor and Buddha's preaching through Pali literature and sermons show proper respect to them with a sense of gratitude. The Buddha expresses his respect, love and gratitude towards nature by prohibiting cutting down of trees and plants and destruction of all types of fauna and flora, even the minutest one.

Buddha's love and concern for nature or the concept of human beings living in harmony with nature is revealed through the Jataka stories of rebirth. Buddha practiced various *Pāramitās*, e.g. *dāna*, *sita*, *khanti*, *viraya*, *jhana* and *panna* by taking birth as different living species in the lap of nature.

Through Pali literature Buddha expressed that love and concern for nature can be exhibited by living in harmony with it. One needs to identify him as a part of nature, as a member of the whole biotic community and in this respect nature should be revered and treated with kindness and benevolence for its invaluable services extended



towards human welfare instead of its ruthless exploitation carried out through the progress of science and technology. The practice of *Arannikanja* (living under some tree) encouraged by Buddhist teachings revealed his respect for nature. He encouraged meditation in the deep forest without harming fierce animals unless harmed by them. According to Buddha, meditation by which he means 'one-pointed concentration' makes a man psychologically balanced, which will gradually enable him to refrain and restrain himself from unwanted desires and live in harmony with all social beings and nature. Buddha has gained that external environmental pollution is primary due to pollution of internal environment, i.e. the inner mind of specially the human beings. This opinion of Lord Buddha is evidenced in the *Dhammapada*. Thus, according to him the first and foremost step towards blocking environmental degradation should be to simplify one's mind, which is uncontrolled and fickle. He therefore encouraged meditation in the calm and cool atmosphere of the forests and mountains which would enable one to develop his inner mind and ultimately feel for the society at large and live in harmony with all species of the biotic community. In this connection he emphasizes on the threefold training of human mind and the seven factors of enlightenment. The three fold training of mind enumerated in *Mahāparinibbānasutta* of the *Dighanikaya* incorporates civilization of ethical conduct (*śīla*), meditation (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*pañña*). This is intensely connected to Buddha's doctrine of seven factors of enlightenment- mindfulness (*sati*), discrimination of principles (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy in pursuit of the good (*virya*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*pasaddhi*), concentration (*Samādhi*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). These are, in fact, essential for enhancement of one's moral development.

The *Tanhavagga* chapter of *Dhammapada* clearly states that pollution of one's inner mind crops up due to his intense thirst for worldly enjoyment and pleasure which he endeavours to quench even by adopting injury to human and non-human beings including

environment. He therefore advises individuals to eradicate the root of such greed and lust by adopting the three fold path and following the doctrine of seven factors of enlightenment or in other words through the weapon of wisdom which he calls *panna cchindatha*. Thus, the true solution to the present global crisis involves the rectification of individual's inner self the path of wisdom which would gradually lead to the evolution of a significant number of human beings to a higher level of awareness and a higher ethical sensibility. Every individual possesses the potentiality to reach to the aforesaid high level of ethical sensibility. Such a state can be attained, according to Buddha, by following the path of wisdom which incorporates *ahimsā*, *maitrī* and *karuṇā*. Buddhism, as a religious path therefore strives hard to devise effective methods for transformation of one's inner self.

That Buddhist teachings are related to ecology or maintenance of ecological balance are revealed through the prescriptions of Ashoka the Great, the emperor of India during 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Ashoka became a disciple of Buddha after the Kalinga war. The merciless killing of innumerable soldiers in the battlefield greatly affected Ashoka. He became an ardent devotee of Lord Buddha and transformed himself to a saint from a warrior. He became aware and concerned about the environment around him and therefore prescribed planting of trees along the roadsides, prohibited indiscriminate killing of birds and animals for food and merciless plundering of trees and plants for instrumental use. Moreover, he opened up hospitals for treatment of sick animals. Such actions amply display Ashoke's concern for environment and maintenance of ecological balance.

The sermons delivered or advocated by Buddha included strict rules and regulations for Buddhist monks which prohibited them from harming and destroying the natural environment. *Brahmajalasutta* of *Suttapitaka* too refers to the Buddhist concept of *śīla* (virtue) that incorporates abstinence from injuring or destroying seeds and plants.

Application of at least some of the Buddhist sermons will gradually bring down the problem of environmental degradation to some extent. Maintenance of ecological balance or a proper natural order for healthy habitation of human beings along with the animate and inanimate species of the natural world was emphasized in the teachings of Buddha. According to him, human beings were considered to be a part of nature, and destruction of nature, even a blade or lump of grass, which is a form of life was forbidden. These were considered as pieces of evil work and strict codes of punishment were laid down by Lord Buddha, especially for the Buddhist monks. Through his teachings he propounded the concept of modest life with a minimum necessity. Such a thought in the early past is very much relevant today when the world is facing acute environmental problems. Buddhist prescriptions through Pali literature highlighted appropriate use and consumption of nature in such a manner so that a continuity of a beneficial relationship of man and nature is not threatened. Such a way of life (*dharma*) portrays the modern concept of social ecology that tends to safeguard the social balance and thereby forbids plundering of nature.

According to Buddha, all species of the natural world are for the welfare of the society and therefore subject to moral sensibility. His religion advocates the attitude of love, care and co-operation among all members of the biotic community through the four types of virtue called *brahmavihāra*. Mutual co-operation between the species is a necessity on account of mutual interdependence for survival (*pratītasamutpāda vāda*). This is in fact the principle of dependence arising in Buddhism which states that all entities within the biosphere are interdependent. This further indicates that all biotic entities are equally valuable and each need to exist for the other as none of the species can afford to live all by itself.

According to Buddha, the four evils which destroy the harmonious balance of nature are bias (*chanda*), ill-will (*doṣa*), fear (*bhaya*) and delusion (*moha*). Eradication of these evils through purification of

human soul and conduct will surely bring about a change in human behaviour and attitude towards nature. Buddhism as a religious faith advocates an ideal way of living in the world on the basis of interdependence and interconnectedness. Its emphasise on interconnectedness of life, guides one to develop a mutual sensitivity towards all living species which in turn forbids individuals to harm living creatures including even the micro-organisms. The present global crisis, as said earlier, arises from self-centred greedy attitude of individuals, rampant consumerism and non-ethical use of technologies. The religion therefore advocates regaining of balance between plants, animals and humans through a change of our mindset by self cultivated virtues of love, kindness and compassion. It may therefore be said that Buddhism pleads for an ethics for mutual co-operation and interdependence where there is no place for human subjugation over nature.

Harmonious living if humans with nature can be made possible by following the four '*samyak karmānta*'- constitutes of performing right action. They are '*ahimsā*' or non-violence; the precept of not taking what is due to others (*adattadānavirati*), not performing sensual or sexual misdeeds (*kāmasumicchavirati*), and abstaining from all forms of intoxication (*sura-moureya-madamadakantha-virati*).

The first precept, i.e. '*ahimsā*' or non-violence which forms the keynote of Buddhism preaches individuals to abstain from killing and slaughter of animals, birds, pests and even the smallest insect. He strongly recommended a purely vegetarian diet which was strictly followed by his disciples. Life of every creature living on earth was considered precious which expressed his attitude of care and respect for the environment and the total biotic community. This is inevitably tied up with the self cultivated virtues of love, kindness and compassion which unify the religious and cultural tradition of Buddhism with the bio-ethical ideal of living non-violently and developing a reverential attitude towards all forms of life.

The second precept of 'non-taking' recognizes the right of other's possession. This actually emphasized the fact that none possesses the right to exploit nature and its resources at the cost of the basic needs of others. The use of nature's resources beyond one's necessity is considered as a kind of theft according to Buddhism.

Similarly, sensual and sexual misdeeds and intoxication is condemned by Buddha since it affects nature adversely directly or indirectly.

Love and compassion for nature in Buddhism is expressed through certain strictures for Buddhist monks and recluses who are advised to remain within the monastery particularly during the rainy season since their footsteps may cause injury to the newly grown lush green grass and the small insects numbering in that season. The monks are even forbidden to harm or destroy even a single leaf or plant without necessity (*petavatthu*). Buddha was fully aware of the direct and indirect utilities of forest and its importance in human life. He therefore propagated prescriptions on conservation of reserved forests (*rakkahitavana*). Influenced by his teachings, the Maurjana king Ashoka the Great, a renowned disciple of Buddha, encouraged large scale plantation of trees and preservation of medicinal plants for curing of ailments. All such prescriptions go against deforestation. Thus, it may be said that Buddhist teachings advocates conservation of forest and preservation of bio-diversity.

As said earlier Buddha encouraged meditation which fostered the cultivation of four cordial virtues, i.e. loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuṇā*), emphatic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekṣhā*). By practicing *metta bhāvanā*, one is in such a state of love that the boundaries amongst oneself, the beloved and the foe are gradually obliterated. All seem to be equal and therefore subject to equal treatment with love and respect. Similarly, practice of *karuṇā bhavana* or compassion enables one to come out from the boundaries of 'self happiness' and think about the happiness of all. Such a dedication is to be followed by *muditā bhāvanā* that enables one to experience

emphatic joy by seeing others and making others happy. Such a feeling of oneness through meditation of the cardinal virtues can be applied to meet the ecological challenges which the world is facing at present. Such meditation practice enables individuals to overcome jealousy, hatred, greed and violence which will bring down exploitation of nature and its species. The attitude of possession according to Buddhism is the prime cause behind the global ecological crisis. The teachings of Buddha therefore advocate 'a sense of belongingness' as an ideal relation on our part to nature. It encourages us to change our mindset from 'having mode' to 'being mode' of life. Human beings ought to realize that they are an integral part of nature due to interconnectedness and interdependence of different animate and inanimate species.

In the blind race for fulfillment of his materialistic desire man has gradually cultivated an intense individualistic outlook and attitude which has made him forget the famous dictum 'live and let others live'. His relentless march towards scientific and technological development has marred his caring attitude towards nature. The present force of materialism has made him a ruthless exploiter of nature. He uses nature for his own individualistic benefit but fails to perform his duty towards the same. Man's endeavour for the fulfillment of his materialistic greed is expressed through his notorious actions like deforestation, utilization of chemical fertilizers in agriculture, greater use of hydrocarbons, more industrialization and urbanization. Such fallacious human activities have damaged the environment. The ozone layer has been depleted, the air is full of noxious gases where living species find it difficult to breathe, there is global warming, melting of glaciers, increase in the frequency and dimension of floods, devastating earthquakes, reduction in the fertility of the soil and several other stories of environmental degradation. His gallop towards individualism and consumerism has destroyed his inner self or inner environment.

The present situation is alarming and is in dire need of the proper solution. It is high time for man to realize the causes behind the present environmental crisis and bring about the change of his inner self. In such a situation, the noble ideas and preaching of Lord Buddha comes with a shining light. An ethical approach towards nature based on the precepts of non-violence, love and compassion advocated by Buddhism can be made applicable to solve the present ecological crisis. As mentioned earlier, nature, according to Lord Buddha, is there to satisfy the basic needs of the people but not to satisfy the greed of the masses possessing a consumerist outlook. Buddhist ways of life based on noble precepts guides individuals to restrain themselves from satisfaction of greed. The practice of non-slaughter days and vegetarianism are active and positive steps towards maintenance of non-violence. Exploitation of nature leads to the destruction which eventually impairs the smooth livelihood of its species. In this respect Buddhism advocates a 'co-operative' instead of an 'exploitative' attitude towards nature which encompasses forgiveness (*kasma*), fearlessness (*abhaya*) and universal loving kindness (*metta*). The noble Eight-Fold path of Buddhism guides an individual to develop a balanced personality and a good mentality. The ideals of *Brahmavihara* meticulously guide individuals to think about the betterment of the society at large. The Buddha and his followers opine and emphasize that the planet earth can be saved from catastrophe through development of a strong bondage or linkage between commerce and morality, science and technology with humanity, knowledge with character and work with pleasure and conscience. Buddha beautifully compares the collection of nectar by bees with man's utilization of nature. According to him bees accumulate nectar from flowers and convert it into sweet honey by not disturbing the beauty and fragrance of the flowers. He advised human beings to utilize nature and accumulate wealth in a similar manner without disturbing or destroying nature. Such a protective utilization of nature will only be possible through a change of human attitude

towards nature, i.e. from an 'ego-centric' to an 'eco-centric' one, based on forgiveness, kindness, non-violence and compassion. Thus, in order to make the planet earth a peaceful abode of all living creatures, human beings ought to utilize skillfully, rationally and judiciously the unique powers achieved through the progress of science and technology so that nature's harmony remains undisturbed and such a state of harmony can be attained by linking ethical elements of restraint and virtues to our newly acquired scientific and technological powers. Buddhism encourages individuals to follow the ethical path which leads to the development of a healthy and peaceful environment and society. The noble sermons of Lord Buddha are capable enough to guide individuals even today to remove ecological imbalance and restore a healthy and worthy living environment.





## CHAPTER THREE

### The Value of Life: A Biocentric Approach

#### **Introductory**

In the foregoing chapters we have discussed that the most crucial problem the world is facing today is the problem of environmental degradation which is consequential upon the unprecedented rate of technological and scientific development. The materialistic outlook of modern man giving more weight age to the instrumental value of nature rather than the intrinsic value of the natural world is primarily responsible for the present environmental crisis. In such a situation of crisis we ought to think about our attitude towards nature which obviously depends on our relationship with the natural world and the moral significance and the role it plays in our lives. Our attitude towards nature ought to be of respect and reverence instead of an attitude of mastery over nature. Yet justifiability for adopting such an attitude towards nature is the biocentric outlook which is in fact a belief system where the dignity and moral standard of all non-human species of the natural world or biosphere is uplifted and honoured. Biocentrism or biocentric ethics is therefore contrary to traditional or humanistic ethics where only human species are thought to be the object of moral consideration.

The biocentric approach which looks upon all biotic species- humans as well as non-humans as members of the biosphere enjoying equal status rest on the four key points as suggested by Paul Taylor. They are as follows:

- (a) All living species, humans as well as non-humans are members of the earth's community of life.

- (b) All living species being the members of the biotic community are integral and inevitable part of nature and their survival in the biotic community are completely interdependent.
- (c) All organisms are teleological centers of life in the sense that each is a unique individual which is flourishing in its own natural manner and pursuing its own good.
- (d) Human species are by no means inherently superior to other living organisms of the biotic community.

On careful examination of the above four key points, one can successfully draw coherent outlook on the natural world which focuses on the relationship between man and nature from moral perspective. The attitude of respect for nature by human beings is very much related and is successfully based on the biocentric outlook of nature.

According to Taylor these four beliefs as cited above are acceptable to human beings on account of their higher degree of reality awareness which they have cultivated by virtue of their rationality. Thus understanding biocentrism is nothing but the realization of reality. By virtue of this rationality and consciousness human beings can take the burden of these beliefs. Human beings, the possessors of rationality, should realize that they are the members of earth's community of life like the other non-human species. In this regard, opines Taylor, 'human life' is nothing but 'an integral part of the natural order of Earth's biosphere.'<sup>16</sup> The relationship of oneness of the homo-sapiens with wild animals and plants forms the basis of the biocentric approach which is reflected in the following paragraphs.

In the first place one must realize that each species of the biotic community, humans as well as non-humans, enjoy equal moral dignity and thereby share a common relationship with each other. Since human beings by virtue of their rationality are fully aware of reality, they must be fully conversant of the common relationship they

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<sup>16</sup> Taylor, Paul, W.: *Respect for Nature, A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, op.cit. , p. 65.

bear with the non-human species, i.e., plants and animals. In spite of the innumerable differences existing between human and non-human entities of the biotic community, human beings ought to put aside those differences and accept the fact that they are the same biological organisms or creatures like the non-human species. Human beings ought to develop a community feeling with all other members of the biosphere which in other words mean a feeling of unity within diversity. They ought to realize themselves as one species population amongst many and thereby corroborate kinship with the non-human species as equal members of the whole biotic community. Thus by propounding the biocentric approach, Taylor pleads for a universal community of life that is ingrained in the following five realities:

(i) Every species possess certain biological and physical requirements for their own existence or survival. Moreover, the existence and survival of one species depends largely on the surrounding environment. The existence of all biotic species including human beings as 'functioning organisms' largely depend on their ability to respond to environmental changes whether drastic or slow and maintain a cordial relation amongst themselves. Certain physical and biological circumstances promote and enhance the well being of living things and hence are very much inevitable to both humans as well as non-humans. This means that in order to live and maintain a prolonged healthy life at the high level of biological flourishing, it is necessary for the human beings to maintain a peaceful ecological co-existence with the other members of the biotic world. This needs to be treated as a very necessary precondition for a biological healthy human life. Unquestionably, human beings, do, of course, possess a purposive life beyond its existence, but such purposive life can be met substantially only if they maintain a co-existential relationship with the non-human species of the natural world. The acceptability of this fact leads to pursuit other human values.

It is important to point out here that by advocating biocentric approach-an approach in which the moral dignity of all species can be

honoured, Taylor, however, does not rule out individual free will and autonomy. Arguably, humans, unlike non-humans, enjoy the freedom to decide and choose the way of their survival or existence, to set ends for themselves and take decision about their future. However, individual free will and autonomy has both its positive and negative aspects. Through utilization of this power, human beings possess the capacity to build a healthy and aesthetic environment. On the other hand through misuse of this power the homo-sapiens are capable of bringing destruction to the environment. Thus, it is up to the human beings to decide whether to care for and respect the environment and all its species and make it a healthy and peaceful abode of the biotic community or bring about termination and extinction of the non-human species which eventually threatens the survival of human beings themselves. Therefore human beings must decide whether to preserve their existence at an optimal level of well being for which one needs to make the biological requirements of survival and physical health one's normative guide.

(b) In the second respect it may be said following Taylor that every biotic species in isolation possess good of its own or in other words every life in isolation is intrinsically good. Taylor says that 'everything that is alive can be correctly said to have a good.'<sup>17</sup> Practically one may achieve or fail to achieve one's good or one may be benefited or harmed by achieving or not achieving one's own good. All these things are relevant to the meaning of our everyday existence and this is equally true about plants and animals. The other key point to be noted is that our existence not always depends on our control since existence of all living organisms including humans depend on their adjustment to environmental changes, i.e. the lives and well being of all organisms depend on environmental accidents and contingencies. Thus, it is a great mistake on behalf of the humans to run with the conviction that it is possible for them to conquer nature and thereby manipulate or artificialise or use nature to meet their greedy ends.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.143.

Human attitude of mastery or conquest of nature is merely an illusion and a matter of self-deception. It is a matter of reality that nature existed on earth prior to the arrival of human beings and it will continue to exist even without the presence or existence of human beings. On the contrary, it is impossible for human beings to survive alone in nature. This would make sense to say that human attitude needs to change not because of the benefit of other non-human species, but because of the welfare of humans' itself.

© The third linkage between humans and non-humans is centered on the concept of free will and autonomy or more specifically in the idea of freedom. Human activities as we have seen earlier solely enjoy social and political freedom which is not enjoyed by the non-human species of the biosphere. This kind of freedom enables human beings to take proper decisions in a situation of choice. By virtue of this power human beings are capable of determining their own future and strive towards the realization of values which are set forth by them. This implies that they are free from constraint in the social and political arena.

There is another sense of freedom which is both common to humans as well as non-humans. This concept of freedom is of utmost value to all living species of the biosphere possessing good of its own and striving towards the realization of such good. Freedom in this sense implies that each living creature is able to preserve its own existence and further its own good. Thus, we may say that freedom in this sense provides bondage between the human and non-human species of the biotic world. Enjoyment of such freedom means one's enjoyment of life completely free from constraint. According to Taylor 'an organism may be said to be free if it has the activity and opportunity to promote or protect its good according to the laws of nature.'<sup>18</sup>

But in many cases it has been seen that organisms or living species- humans as well as non-humans are unable to promote or protect their good or carry out their existence due to certain internal and external,

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<sup>18</sup> , Ibid. p.109.

negative and positive constraints. Sometimes an unsuitable or incongenial environmental or even some disease may not allow a species to carry out its existence or survive properly. Animals kept in cages or the zoos or trained in the circus cannot exist or survive freely on account of the constraint imposed on them. Similarly the free growth of a plant is restricted when it is planted in a pot from the field. It has to grow in a limited area of the pot and depend on artificial supply of water and manure, the absence of which will bring about its death.

Absence of constraints is an instrumental good for all organisms as it creates an impediment for enjoying good life. That is why Taylor rightly points out that 'to be free is to have a better chance to live the best kind of life we are capable of'.<sup>19</sup>

(d) Anthropologically it may be said that human beings are relatively new comers to the order of life that had been established millions of years ago. It is a fact that the same order of evolutionary process dictated by the same laws of natural selection and genetic transmission applies to both humans and non-humans species of the biotic community. Thus it may be said that as far as the evolution of living species is concerned there is no difference between the humans and non-humans. Humans are in no way superior to non-humans in this very respect. In other words, the theory of evolution, in fact, gives a unified explanation for the existence of humans as well as non-humans.

It also needs to be pointed out that the appearance of the homo-sapiens into the biotic world is a recent phenomenon, a matter of 400,000 to 500,000 years. Even before the appearance of human beings there was life on earth and species evolved following the natural laws of selection and transmission. Human beings stepped into the already existing natural world when they were dictated by the natural laws of selection like the other organisms of the Earth's community of life.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 111.

The theory of evolution, in fact, forms the base underlying one part of the biocentric outlook on nature. To think ourselves superior to other non-human beings is simply a humanistic bias based on groundless assumption and misconception.

(e) Since a proper habitable biotic society is the outcome of coherent co-existence of all living species, it is not possible for any species to survive by forfeiting the existence of others. It is a biological truth that the survival and well being of the human community is completely and absolutely dependent on the soundness and good health of the earth's biosphere. On the contrary, since the human beings are new comers to the biotic world the existence and well being of the non-human species is by no means dependent on human existence. The demise or disappearance of humans will have absolutely no effect on the biosphere. On the contrary, the biosphere or the environment which is continuously being degraded and polluted due to anthropogenic activities will be able to restore or heal itself without the presence of human beings. Taylor thus conceives, "Our presence, in short, is not needed. And if we were to take the standpoint of that life community and give voice to its true interest, the ending of the human epoch on earth would most likely be greeted with a hearty "Good riddance!"<sup>20</sup> It seems clear from the above observation that the biocentric outlook of nature anticipates the natural world as a system of interdependence of living things in which no community can be marked off as an isolated unit. Since each living entity is dependent on the other, accordingly whatever happens to one will have consequences for other. That is why, it has been rightly pointed out that the biosphere of our planet comprises a single unified whole which may be designated as the 'natural world'. Within the natural world human beings like all other non-human species is an integral part. Human beings are nothing but an active an essential part of the natural world and hence they have to play a role in the web of life. Instead of uniting with the other members of the biosphere, if we tend

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.115.

to disrupt the ties or bond that bind the fabric together, we will thwart our chances for pursuing our unique human values.

### **A Plea for Teleological Centres of life:**

The biocentric approach of Taylor, so far as we have seen, exemplifies our relation with the non-human living creatures of the natural or biotic world. In fact, one of the most important aspects of this approach is to view individual organisms as teleological centres of life. To say any individual living organism of the biosphere is a teleological centres of life is to say that its internal function as well as external activities are all goal oriented or in other words it may be said that each individual seen as teleological centre of life strives to preserve itself and realize its good in its own unique manner. With the advancement of physical and biological sciences, our knowledge about internal systems and external activities of individual organisms has increased rapidly. We have come to realize how each individual exists in the biosphere as physical and biological systems. As our knowledge about their life cycles, their mutual interactions with other organisms and with the environment expands, we become increasingly aware of how each of them carries out its life functions according to the natural laws. As one becomes more and more familiar with the organism through acquisition of knowledge, one acquires or develops a sharp awareness of the individual's unique or particular way of living its life. Consequently, one appears to conceive of the organism as a teleological centre of life which strives to preserve its existence and relation and realize its own good in its own unique manner.

Thus, one's teleological centre of life, opines Taylor, is directed towards the realization of that organism's good. Does it make sense to say that the concept of teleological centre of life circles around conscious individuals or in other words is directed towards human beings who are so-called conscious living creatures? Does it mean that this concept excludes the non-human species that lack consciousness? In this context Taylor opines that all living organisms



whether conscious or unconscious are in the true sense teleological centre of life. Non-humans living things like a tree or an animal or even the simplest single celled protozoa can not think or feel, nor they are conscious about the occurrences in the world around them, yet they are conceived of a teleological centre of life since they have a good of their own around which their behaviour is organized. It is important to point out here that the teleological centers of life as echoed by Taylor does not incorporate any teleological structural mechanism, rather it is relevant only to living things which seek their own ends and also realize what is good or bad to them for their own survival.

Objectivity and wholeness of vision are the two general features or characteristics of teleological centre of life as exemplified by Taylor. With regard to our awareness of life of a particular organism seen as a teleological centre of life is objective in the sense that the individuality or uniqueness of the organism is not distorted by our likes or dislikes, hopes and fears, interests, wants and needs. This individuality of a particular organism is preserved by its own existence in itself.

In most cases human's view of plants and animals is distorted by their feelings, emotions and desires. We view certain animals like wild elephants, tigers etc with fear and therefore want them to be killed or driven away. This is, in fact, our feeling of fright which makes us think that way. But are they really harmful if we fail to harm them? Certainly it would not be the case. They live peacefully in their abode with other living organisms through prey-predator relationship. They become ferocious only when caged by humans for fulfilling their ends. More examples may be cited to exemplify our negative feelings about plants and animals. Moreover, destruction of trees and plants for fulfilling human intention reflect the negative visions of humans regarding trees and plants. Destruction of weeds and pests by farmers reflect their negativity instead of objectivity. In other words, it may be understood that human beings view animals and plants through their distorted lens of feeling and desires. Such a negative view about nature can be overcome by developing or increasing our objectivity

through acquisition of more scientific knowledge about nature. Our objective view about nature can be furthered by becoming more aware of the distortions we are prone to and making utmost efforts to free ourselves from them.

Wholeness of vision, the second main feature of reality awareness can be acquired by human beings by understanding animals and plants not only in terms of their role played by them in human life but by understanding of the whole character or 'personality' of the species. Thus, the role of wholeness of vision often rules out the relevance of instrumental value and frees humans from one-sidedness which enable them to realize what should be their mode of treatment of non-human species of the biotic community. We as humans need to view nature with its entire species as many faceted beings existing for their own good and responding to all environment changes in their own unique way.

Therefore, one can say that the objectivity and wholeness of vision, the two attributes of teleological centres of life give rise to a complete realization, both cognitively and imaginatively, of what it is to be a particular individual. It overcomes the barrier of anthropocentricity and thereby helps us to realize other members of the biotic community as ourselves.

## **Non-Acceptance of Human Superiority in Biocentrism:**

Human superiority is a forbidden issue in biocentric approach as proposed by Taylor. Biocentric approach which vehemently rejects human superiority stands contrary to traditional or humanistic ethics which tries to hold the superiority of humans over non-humans. This approach restores the moral dignity of all living species as an integral part of nature. The power of reasoning and free will of human beings has placed them in a much higher position than the non-human species, i.e., animals and plants which are considered as 'lower form

of life'. However, this approach has been outrightly rejected by Taylor in his biocentric approach.

The reason placed in favour of human equality with the non-human species by the followers of biocentric view is that the unique traits of human beings only like rationality, creative autonomy and free will cannot make them superior than the non-human species since they also possess certain unique characteristics which humans do not possess like the speed of cheetah, photosynthesis of leaves, flying capacity of birds, etc. These characteristics can obviously be taken as signs of superiority of the nonhuman species over the humans. The point to be noted in this context is that the unique human characteristics are valuable only to the humans and the unique non-human traits are valuable only to the non-humans. So the question that human characteristics are more valuable than non-human traits is completely uncalled for. It is absolutely funny to claim that the value of mathematics is superior to the value of climbing a tree by a monkey. The relevance of superiority on the basis of merit can only find its foothold if the comparison is confined only to the same species. It is unreasonable to think about a monkey sitting in mathematics examination with an intelligent human being who will surely score higher marks. To confer superiority on the human being on this ground is surely a category mistake. Thus, it is absolutely preposterous to compare human civilization with non-humans.

Mainstream philosophers further argue that humans are superior to non-humans as they only enjoy the status of moral agents by virtue of their capacity of free will, accountability, practical reason, deliberation etc. Taylor rules out this proposal. For him the question of moral superiority comes into being only if there is a valid moral standard which can equally be applied to both types of agents under consideration. That means both types of moral agents must fall within the same range of application of moral standards. Human superiority cannot be established by means of inherent worth, nor can it be simply established on the basis of humanity. If humanity is supposed

to have inherent worth and thereby to be determined as a criterion of superiority over non-humans, then it surely opens up an opportunity that goes in favour of humans only. This means that plants and animals, although they possess certain degree of inherent worth, are considered inferior to human beings and in case of a conflict between their well being and human interest, the later would surely outweigh the former.

Taylor vehemently rejects this view. To accept the fact that humans by virtue of humanity are superior to plants and animals have no real foundation or sound logical reasons. Instead the fact that human beings as well as plants and animals or precisely all the members of the biotic community possess inherent worth and thereby are all equal and therefore should desire equal moral consideration. Such a view would change our relation towards the non-human species of the natural world. Hence it may be said that the biocentric approach rules out the doctrine of inherent human superiority and opens up a new dimension where human beings can find their proper place in the natural world.

## **Past philosophical background of human superiority: A reflection**

The concept that human beings are inherently superior to non-human species has a prolonged philosophical background. If we look back into the history of philosophy, we can find at least three dominant trends in support of this claim, such as, (i) the view of classical Greek Humanism, (ii) the view of traditional Christian monotheism and (iii) the mind-body dualism of Rene Descartes. These three views will be discussed in turn in the following few paragraphs.

### **(i) The view of classical Greek Humanism:**

The rationality of human beings has made him a superior animal as witnessed in the classical Greek Humanism. Barring rationality and

capacity of reason man is very much like an ordinary animal. It is rationality and the power of reasoning which has conferred nobility and dignity to human beings and has placed them on a higher platform than all other species of the natural world. In fact these two qualities enable human beings to show their mastery or superiority over other natural species. The philosophical outlook of classical Greek humanism linked up the idea of human good with the essentialist definition of humans as rational animals. The capacity of reasoning enables humans to live a rational life which brings out his essential nature. The essence of being human, therefore, endows man with a kind of moral worth and dignity that are not common to beings lacking that essence.

There is nothing wrong in claiming that reason guides our lives towards realizing the Human good. Human life by virtue of possessing rationality always pleas for worthy living and human happiness is thought to be the highest good, the supreme value which applies only to the life of human beings. Taylor himself seems to conceive that realization to supreme good is the proper culture of reason. Human beings unable to live a rational life cannot develop nobility or greatness of character. The idea of 'Human Good' of classical Greek humanism is obviously linked to rationality which is the essence of human character. The classical Greek humanists and the western philosophers, however, opine that human beings are superior to non-human non-rational beings by virtue of their rationality. In this context Taylor says that such a view does not provide any argument for human superiority over non-humans. The realization of human good by living rationally applies only to human beings and not to the other species and thereby cannot be taken as a criterion of human superiority over non-humans. Human beings exercise reason for their well being; non-human living species can achieve their well being without reason. Thus, there underlies no point of claiming, Taylor suggests, that the humanistic apprehension of classical Greek which

subscribes an objective ground for the doctrine of human superiority over non-humans.

### **(ii)The view of traditional Christian monotheism:**

The second claim that human beings are inherently superior than other earthly species can be traced back in the concept of Great Chain of Being, a concept which formed the basis of metaphysical outlook of the Middle Age. According to this view every entity holds a particular place in the hierarchical ladder extending from the most perfect, i.e. God to the least perfect, i.e. mere matter. In between the various levels are occupied by angles, human beings, followed by animals and plants. This hierarchical order is both an ontological one and a valuational one. Each grade occupied by particular species represents particular degree of inherent worth. It may therefore be said that the world and the God together comprise the totality of existence that constitute a great hierarchy from the lowest form of life to the highest. Within the above mentioned ontological hierarchy human beings occupy a place between the angles and the beasts. Angles being immortal are spiritual and are hence closest to God. In the holy Bible, it has been mentioned that the angles acted as messengers between God and human beings. The human beings in fact have two sided existence. On the one hand they have immortal souls like angles and on the other hand they possess animal bodies like beasts. Humans are thus inferior to the Divine both in respect of their being contingent as well as limited virtue but are nonetheless superior to all other creatures God placed on Earth. By virtue of being placed on the higher scale of existence than other forms of life in the Great Chain of Being, human beings are empowered by God to dominate over all the inferior living species of the biotic community.

If we carefully notice the force of the metaphysical outlook, it appears clear that the concept of superiority of human beings over non-humans is being determined by the position that has been assigned by God. By virtue of being placed at a higher level by God, the Creator,

human beings obviously possess greater inherent worth than the other non-human forms of life on Earth. The good qualities of mercy, love, justice possessed by God himself and implanted in humans make them possess more inherent worth than the others, i.e. non-humans. This idea of God, i.e. attributing moral qualities only to humans and making them superior than non-humans is an act of partiality. It can therefore be said that God, the so-called creator of the Universe himself made the non-humans inferior by not attributing the moral qualities mentioned above to them. This clearly exposes the biased outlook of God which goes in favour of the humans alone. Arguably, this propensity of degrading animals and plants by their Creator surely casts doubt on the supposed absolute perfection of his love for all his creatures. The charge of biasness cannot be avoided by appeal to the Creator's goodness without begging question. How does the Supreme Creator allow humans to eat plants and use animals to work? Is it not the same to say that creatures were placed on the Earth for our benefit? Is it not true to say that God Himself introduces a mythological form of anthropocentrism in which humans are placed higher than non-humans? Does it not vitiate the perfection of God? Surely, God lacks mercy and justice for failing to treat all his creatures equally. That is why Taylor vehemently rejects the metaphysical picture of the Great Chain of Being in which human beings enjoy more inherent worth than others by virtue of occupying a higher order of life.

### **(iii) The Mind-Body Dualism of Descartes:**

The metaphysical dualism of Rene Descartes, philosophically known as mind-body dualism is another philosophical doctrine in which humans are placed at a much higher level than non-humans. The basis of the theory lies in the fact that human possesses mind and body whereas animals and plants are only the possessors of body. Descartes points out that minds or souls give human beings the power of reasoning or free will without which humans would be mere

automata or physical mechanism. Hence animals and plants devoid of matter and soul be compared to an automata or physical mechanism having properties of matter, size, shape, and weight and made up of chemical components. Plants also live their life, but are incapable of conscious expressions. A human being who is the possessor of both mind and body has the power of thought, imagination and moral judgment. He can feel pleasure and pain, has emotion and desires, can perceive things and so on because he has a mind or soul. It is our mind which alienates us from the non-humans. It is the presence of mind which makes humans consciously aware about everything and hence elevates him to a higher level or grade than the automata like non-human species. Thus, it is the presence of mind which accounts for inherent superiority of humans over the non-humans.

Taylor, however, rules out the metaphysical mind-body dualism of Descartes and thereby rejects human superiority over non-humans on this ground by giving three reasons. The first point or question that searches a reasonable answer is that whether mind and body which make up the humans are two distinct and separate subjects with entirely different properties. Some other begging questions in this respect are-where does mind exist? Is it located within the body of the human beings or anywhere outside? Does it occupy any space? According to Cartesian doctrine mind is non-spatial and cannot be located anywhere, whereas the body is a three dimensional structure that is devoid of consciousness and reasoning power. The logical query which immediately crop-up is how these two objects, viz, the mind and the body, having different properties are interconnected with each other to form one individual person? In what sense a non-spatial entity, i.e. mind produce changes in the physical state of something occupying space, i.e. within the body? Descartes answer to this question seems illogical and contradictory since he says that mind directly causes changes in the body at a certain point in the brain. But such response of Descartes has been proved to be untenable and uncalled for to the contemporary philosophers.



Secondly, the Cartesian dualism creates a gulf between humans and animals which goes against the recent biological investigations. Although Descartes proposed that humans alone possess mind along with body which enables them to think, feel and reason and animals possess body but not mind, it has been recently found that even animals have the capacity to feel pleasure and pain, their brain mechanism and nervous system enable them to experience varied emotional feelings like anger, fear, anxiety and they are even capable of feeling for other members of their own kind. Certain animals are highly intelligent and even thoughtful. A gorilla or chimpanzee behaves very much like a human. They are able to master the taught sign language and communicate their demands and desires to the humans living close to them. This clearly brings out the fact that they possess a mind capable of thinking, feeling and reasoning. The investigations in the field of biochemistry reveal similarity between human and animal cell. Thus, the biological kinship between humans and non-humans cannot be ruled out, opines Taylor, if we go through the genetic make up of human life.

Finally, if we pay due respect to the Cartesian dualism, then a still more viable question can be raised against it. Why do we think that the incorporation of mind in a body makes a person or being inherently superior to the entity having a body alone? Of course, a human cannot be designated as a human without a mind. On the other hand, a wolf does not require a mind. It can realize its potentialities and capabilities and is designated as a wolf without a mind. Then why cannot a wolf or any animal possess the same inherent worth as a human?

Ironically, the Cartesian mind-body dualism is directed to the upliftment of human beings both inherently as well as instrumentally. It is a distinct form of anthropocentrism which upholds human beings over the non-humans. One may, however say, that all living organisms possess inherent worth, but the inherent worth as possessed by humans are far more superior than the inherent worth possessed by

non-humans. This point can be justified only if the concept of inherent worth is measured on the basis of capabilities of humans and non-humans. But is it not illogical to correlate wide range of capability or capacity to greater inherent worth? Unless this connection between inherent worth and range of capacities is made clear, no conclusion concerning human superiority over animals can be established without begging questions. Taylor himself conceives that the concept of human superiority is an outcome of an unfounded dogma embedded in our culture. The rejection of human superiority can be justified by taking into consideration the principle of species impartiality in which every species of the biotic community has the same value and therefore deserve equal common concern and consideration from moral agents. Every living organism has a good of its own and therefore possesses the same inherent worth. Therefore the question of superiority of one species over the other, i.e. humans over the non-humans simply appears to be otiose if we adhere to the principle of species impartiality. We may thus say that the principle of species impartiality is very much linked to the attitude of respect for nature.

From the above consideration, it may be said that the three basic principles on which the biocentric approach towards nature stands, i.e. human beings like the other living species are member's of the Earth community of life, all living things are related to each other in an order of interdependence, all living species are teleological centres of life and the principle of species impartiality which admits equal inherent value of all biotic species are strong enough to deny human superiority over non-humans.

### **A Comprehensive Outlook:**

The biocentric outlook as propounded by Taylor exemplified in the above discussion deserves special philosophical attention as it attempts to restore the dignity and morality of all living species. It attempts to form a comprehensive view of the entire realm of life and

nature in terms of inherent worth. This approach helps us to visualize and find out our position in the world representing the totality of phenomena by repudiating the so-called traditional background. It helps us in realizing the true nature of life which has to be lived through interdependence, love, care and mutual co-operation with the other species of the biotic community.

The biocentric outlook interprets human beings as biological creatures without forfeiting their uniqueness and special capacities. It guides the rational human beings to adopt a proper and respectful attitude towards all members of the biotic community who also belongs to the category of biological creatures. Oneness or unity with all the members of the Earth's community of life is confirmed through the biocentric approach of Taylor. This outlook of Taylor reaffirms that human beings are an integral part of the biotic community where all species - humans as well as non-humans are functionally and mutually interdependent and intimately related to each other.

To accept biocentrism means to regard each biotic species, humans and non-humans, as teleological centres of life. The existence of all species is centered on the realization of their own good of humans and non-humans differ a lot, yet both are designated as teleological centres of life which signifies a fundamental reality common to all species. As all are existing in their own way realizing their own good and none can be designated as more worthy of existence than another. All species possess inherent worth and since they are all an end in themselves, all deserve equal value. Human beings as rational moral agents should therefore treat all non-humans with equal moral respect and consideration. Human beings ought to recognize and accept the fact that all living entities possess inherent worth and therefore an attitude of respect for nature ought to be their ultimate moral attitude. Taylor distinguishes between objective and subjective value concepts and admits objective value concept in explaining the biocentric approach. The recognition of all entities as teleological centres of life is a case in point. Like Aristotle, Taylor inclines to say

that every species has a distinctive nature that determines the specific good for that particular species. Every species has its specific end. The end is growth, development, sustenance and propagation. In this regard, every organism as mentioned earlier is the teleological centre of life. In this context the name of Schweitzer, a biocentric ethicist may be remembered, who says, "I am life which wills to live in the midst of life which wills to live"<sup>21</sup> From this very sentence one can comprehend the similarity between Schweitzer and Taylor in this issue. Like Schweitzer, Taylor seems to conceive that each living species has its own good, because as a living organism each life has a goal has a telos. This view again recalls the remark of Regan who once says that all beings that are subjects of life have an inherent value which qualifies that being for moral standing. However, Taylor's concept of teleological centre of life is more relevant and meaningful than Regan's subject of a life in this context.

There is one important question that still remains to be answered. Why this approach is morally justified? Why does it deserve philosophical attention? In fact Taylor's biocentric approach exemplifies a set of properties that satisfies certain classical, well established criteria for judging the acceptability of philosophical world views. Since Taylor's biocentric approach focuses on the unity of diverse living species of the world, it is supposed to be comprehensive and complete. It gives rise to a total philosophical perspective on the whole realm of life and thereby draws our relationship with others as an essential part of the whole. It helps us to locate our place within the biotic community, not by isolating ourselves, not by forfeiting the existence of others but by adopting an attitude of love and respect towards others. It helps us to realize that every living species of the biotic community are just like different members of the same family where they ought to live together in co-operation with each other. Another commentary aspect of Taylor's biocentric outlook is that it is by far systematic in order. It preserves coherence and internal

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<sup>21</sup> Schweitzer: *Out of My Life and Thought*, p.130.

consistencies among all members of the biotic community by systematizing a set of ideas which he calls a 'belief system'. As it is both comprehensive and systematic in order, it is completely free from confusion and semantic vacuity. Although this approach deals with many abstract concepts, the concept may be exemplified with a fair degree of clarity and precision. Since this approach of Taylor is firmly rooted in the findings of physical and biological sciences, there underlies no scope of confusion and impracticability. It enhances our understanding of nature in a true sense and thereby sharpens our focus on the natural world which in turns helps us to locate our proper place within it. It therefore maintains parity with all known empirical truths which are the experimental findings of physical and biological sciences. Thus, one may say that the biological outlook deserve scientific acceptability. To be an ideal and competent evaluator of Taylor's biocentric approach the moral agents, i.e. the human beings should possess the following capabilities or satisfy certain criteria, viz, rationality of thought and judgment, future enlightenment and a developed capacity of reality awareness. Rationality, in fact, encompasses a number of interrelated capacities and dispositions which enable a moral agent to take rational decision. A rational evaluator, opines Taylor, should possess lucidity, clarity and preciseness in thinking and understanding of any world view. Rationality also focuses on the critical reflection and independence of judgment of oneself and thereby ensures full autonomy of the reasoned. Rationality further encompasses objectivity which implies consideration of the merits or advantages of any argument. In order to be a competent evaluator, to accept and justify the so-called belief system or the philosophical world view of Taylor, the moral agent should be able to take a rational and logical decision following any argument which he can take up if he has full grasp and lucid understanding of the argument in question.

Secondly, an ideal and competent evaluator must acquire well established empirical knowledge of all relevant matters as

presupposed by the system of beliefs whose acceptability is being judged.

Finally, a moral agent has to acquire the capacity of reality awareness to a great degree which will make him fully conscious and aware of the lives of all living species. As soon as the world view, i.e. biocentric approach, is accepted by an individual, who is supposed to be a competent evaluator, it comes to have a direct bearing or influence in his practical life which in turn guides the moral agent's conduct and attitude. World view has a direct consequence for the good of living things. If this is taken into account, then we have a complete argument for the justifiability of acknowledging the biocentric outlook. Thus, from a philosophical point of view, we can accept the biocentric outlook on nature as a legitimate world view. If the relation of humans with all living species of the biosphere is understood in terms of the four components of the biocentric approach as cited earlier, then surely the attitude of respect for life is seen to be the only appropriate attitude to be taken by any moral agent towards the natural world. Thus, apprehending this philosophical world view within the domain of biocentric outlook is equal to understanding the attitude of respect for life. In this respect Taylor's biocentric approach is supposed to be an outstanding philosophical contribution through which the dignity and moral identity of all living organisms can equally be protected and preserved.

Although Taylor's biocentric approach is commendable and deserves outstanding philosophical attention, still it faces some serious challenges. In one context he recognizes human beings as an integral part of nature and in another context he inclines to say that human beings ought not to interfere with nature. We think that these two standpoints are in a strict sense contradictory in nature. If human beings are supposed to be an integral part of nature, then they ought to be allowed to act with nature and if human beings are not allowed to interfere with nature then they are somewhat distinct from nature. In this context it may be said that environmental degradation due to

human interference with nature is considered to be an act of misdeed on the part of humans. The two phrases, i.e., 'act with nature' and 'interfere with nature' are undoubtedly confusing and contradictory. In order to combat with the deterioration of the environment humans may be allowed to act with the environment, but not interfere with the environment since according to Taylor human's interference with nature leads to environmental degradation.

Another environmental point of Taylor's biocentric approach is that he emphasizes on individual organisms as teleological centres of life. Here he inclines to say that the so-called inherent worth resides only in individual organisms. One may however raise a quip at this juncture by saying that although Taylor himself tries to introduce a non-anthropocentric flavour in his biocentric approach by vehemently rejecting or criticizing the so-called anthropocentric approach, he himself unknowingly introduces the flavour of anthropocentrism in his biocentric approach and thereby involves himself in a vicious circle. His biocentric outlook on nature remains an individualistic approach. By advocating the concept of teleological centre of life Taylor conceives an adversarial relationship between individuals. He appears to conceive that every individual seeks his own telos and thereby assumes a conflict and competition as a natural state of life. The great burden of Taylor's biocentric ethics is to find out a solution for resolving this conflict impartially. We think, unlike Taylor's biocentric ethics which is individualistic in nature, a holistic form of biocentric approach is more preferable and acceptable which will surely be based on mutual co-operation and dependencies rather than conflict.

Moreover, the recognition of species as teleological centres of life as mentioned earlier drives Taylor into serious dilemma. For example, an attempt to construct a concrete patio in the lawn full of grass would lead to destruction of innumerable living species ranging from individual blades of grass to millions of microbotic organisms. Such an action would surely raise a moral conflict. We think that Taylor

cannot possibly give priority to human interest without forfeiting his biocentric egalitarianism. This means that his concept of teleological centres of life cannot possibly be accommodated within the biocentric approach. In this context he needs to rely on the distinction between basic and non-basic interest and the principle of proportionality, minimum wrong and restitutive justice in order to resolve the conflict. In this situation, Taylor ought to choose one among the two alternatives, i.e. either to build a patio or not. If one is not allowed to build a patio, Taylor's ethics may require too much for us. Taylor's biocentric approach would require a level of attention and care which is far beyond the abilities of most people. It is really difficult to see how we could ever be justified in doing much of anything if we did treat all non-human life forms as deserving moral consideration.

On the contrary, if one is allowed to build a patio, which is supposed to be non-basic, then the question which arises is-why such a non-basic interest overrides the basic interest of the grasses and millions of micro-organisms? From the environmental perspective, the mass killing of these non-human species cannot be allowed for the sake of constitution of the patio. In trying to overcome the above mentioned conflict, i.e. whether to build a patio or not, Taylor seems to conceive the principle of restitutive justice which explains that one can build the patio as long as one can restore the balance of justice between the humans and the non-humans. But one thing that has to be remembered is that no justice can be done to the living species already destroyed during the construction of the Patio. What one can do is to replant some grasses elsewhere in one's yard.

Does it then makes sense to say that Taylor's biocentric approach loses its foothold in failing to overcome the problems raised above? Certainly not. Since Taylor's biocentric approach appears as a resolution against the traditional humanistic approach, it is quite obvious that the approach will have to counter negative criticisms. It may be said that the biocentric view of Taylor is highly appreciable and very much successful in restoring the dignity of all non-human



living species of the biotic community. But his theory would be more effective and more philosophically commendable if it stands with the holistic approach rather than the individualistic one.

At this juncture, it can be said that our discussion on biocentrism shall remain incomplete if I fail to take Schweitzer's 'reverence for life' into account. Let us say once more that modern technological development has turned the world into a global village, but still life on Earth remains tremendously diverse and complex. Knowingly or unknowingly tremendous medicinal, agricultural, economic, aesthetic and scientific potential lies in the rarity and diversity of life. Unquestionably, we depend on other life forms for our existence. But the most pertinent question is: should we have any ethical relationship with the living species on the basis of the fact that they are living beings? Is it reasonable to speak of biocentric ethics at this point? Any positive answer to this question requires ethical extensionism simply because of the fact that standard or traditional ethical theories based on humanistic approach have little room for such concerns. Philosophers mainly applied ethics to solve specific problems but they made no attempt at building a coherent and comprehensive theory of environmental ethics. The extension of ethics in this direction preserves the value of good life for all biotic community. It strives to rethink about the coherent human-nature relationship as an inevitable part of human existence.

It is even important to remember here that the traditional domain of morality completely sidelines the relevance of biocentric approach. Morality has always taken human well-being and the relationship between humans as its focus. Biocentric approach deals with more legitimately ethical concerns because it raises a wide variety of value questions that establish norms how we ought to live. It deals with the nature and scope of value, tries to define what objects have moral relevance or deserve moral consideration.

The very term 'biocentric' means life centred. Accordingly, biocentric ethics deals with the value of life. It refers to any theory or approach

that views all life as possessing intrinsic value. In this context Albert Schweitzer's 'reverence for life' is an ideal approach of biocentrism. He may be called the precursor of modern or contemporary biocentric ethics. According to Schweitzer modern industrial society has ignored the true world view that once connected the goodness of life with the goodness of nature. The rapid progress of science and technology snaps or disunites the connection between ethics and nature by viewing nature as an indifferent, value free mechanical force guided by physical and mechanical laws. Naturally, it absolutely means that there is nothing intrinsically valuable in nature itself. Ethical values mean nothing more than personal opinion or sentiment.

The sole objective of Schweitzer's biocentric approach is to re-establish the bond between nature and ethics. Schweitzer apprehends nature as benign and gentle even though he was aware of the destructive and arbitrary force of nature. He holds that nature is intrinsically valuable, i.e. good in itself. Such type of understanding regarding nature actually gives rise to a basis for human ethics as captured by the phrase 'reverence for life'. He expresses this phrase by saying that 'at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase 'Reverence for life'.<sup>22</sup> What does the phrase 'reverence for life' mean? It implies an attitude of awe and wonder; it also suggests a combined attitude of honour and fear. According to Schweitzer, the most fundamental aspects of human consciousness is the realization that "I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life that wills to live"<sup>23</sup> He further says, "The man who has become a thinking being feels a compulsion to give to every will to live the same reverence for life that he gives to his own."<sup>24</sup> He ought to realize that every other life, be it human or non-human, is just like his own life. Even he has to comprehend that to preserve, to promote life and to realize the values of life has utmost moral worth. On the

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<sup>22</sup> Schweitzer: *Out of my Life and Thought*, P.130

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.130

<sup>24</sup> ibid. p.130

contrary, to destroy life, to injure life and to repress life is morally bad. This is mandatory and hence absolute and fundamental principle of the moral.

Schweitzer inclines to say that all living species possess intrinsic value and therefore owe respect. According to him, no life is mandatory, value free 'fact' of the universe. Every form of life is good in itself and hence deserves respect, love and care from its fellow beings. One may, however, raise a quip at this juncture by saying that in attributing life as good in itself, does Schweitzer include the life of virus or bacteria to be as worthy as human life? In establishing his approach of equal respect for all forms of life does he say that the life of ant is treated with equal respect as life of humans? In fact, then does he offer any formula for resolving the conflict between human life and the life of any virus or bacteria? Since Schweitzer is a proponent of biocentrism, he does not oppose different moral standards for different forms of life. He was against the killing of a small ant or even a mosquito. He holds that it is morally good to carry an ant out of the room rather than kill it. He was even against the usage of DDT which inevitably destroys lives of innumerable living species beyond the purpose for which it is used. However, he does not rule out the necessity of killing lives at times, especially out of reverence for other lives. He holds that at times to maintain life, other life forms must be sacrificed as food, i.e. he supported the view that life is maintained through the prey-predator cycle. He has also proposed that life of any living species may be put to an end to bring an end to its suffering (euthanasia)

It seems clear that Schweitzer does not apprehend reverence for life merely as a rule which can be applied in a specific situation; rather he undertakes it as an attitude that determines who we are rather than a rule of determining what we should do. It describes a moral virtue and not a rule of action. A morally good person naturally stands in awe of the inherent worth of each life.

If we endorse the biocentric approach of Schweitzer, then how do we justify the cases where a morally good person is bound to destroy life?

What can we say about a doctor who kills a virus, a butcher who kills a pig or a farmer who cuts down a tree? According to Schweitzer any form of killing whatsoever the situation may be is morally condemnable and one cannot deny the moral responsibility of these killings. He says that when anybody moves to kill a life, he surely moves with consciousness and responsibility. Reverence for life, says Schweitzer, being an attitude sensitizes us to the responsibility of these decisions. It guides us as well as makes us disinclined to kill life at random or callously and thereby helps us to live an authentic, true and normal life.

It has already been mentioned in the previous paragraphs that the biocentric approach of Schweitzer is absolutely different from many defenders of traditional ethical theories, viz, utilitarianism, deontology etc which are guided by rules or principles. But Schweitzer does not establish 'reverence for life' as an ethical rule. For him 'reverence for life' is a fundamental attitude towards the world. Accordingly, it focuses not on the question of what one should do, but on the question what type of person one should be. By advocating the phrase 'reverence for life' he addresses an ethics of character of morally good people in terms of their character, disposition and values rather than in terms of their action. His approach, however, does back to Plato and Aristotle who emphasized on the ethics of virtue rather than values or principles. Virtue based ethics constructs a philosophical account of a morally good person, describing and defending certain character traits of that person. Most of the virtue based ethical theories are teleological. Virtues are distinguished from vices by their connection with attainment of some human telos or goal. For Aristotle, virtue meant those character traits and dispositions that enable people to live a meaningful life.

Some environmentalists, namely, Sagoff holds that a satisfactory environmental ethics must address not only those values that determine what we want, but also those values that determine what we are. That means implicitly that our identity as a person is made up

in part by our values and attitudes what might be called 'personality'. It is not something that remains independent of that person's identity. Since it is the outcome of a person's disposition, attitude, value and belief, it is supposed to be an inherent quality of a person. But above all these things mentioned above, how do we justify the reverence for life? The only way to answer this question is to show how it is in your self interest to adopt such an attitude. Reverence for life may at times be reducible to some instrumental value, but this is exactly what biocentric ethics denies. Life has intrinsic value and therefore needs to be revered by every other form of life.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Searching Intrinsic value in Nature

#### **Introductory**

In the previous sequel it has been established that all biotic community in the biosphere deserves equal moral status. In this chapter we propose to explain in what sense natural entities do possess intrinsic value. The prime objective of environmental ethics is to restore the intrinsic value of nature. There is no question of doubt that natural entities do have instrumental value or use value. But if we confine ourselves within the instrumentality of nature or natural entities, then the question of regarding all biotic species as equal appears to be otiose. This is what, we have already stated, that traditional ethics have recognized. In traditional ethics, it has been recognized that only human beings are the legitimate moral agents by virtue of possessing humanity as well as rationality. Hence everything is there for humans, for the utilization of human's needs and desires. So barring humans, all other sentient beings deserve only instrumental value. So there is no point to equate other sentient beings with humans. Unlike traditional ethics, environmental ethics has appeared and emerged as an important branch of ethics which tends to hold that all natural entities or non-human beings have intrinsic value. In fact environmental ethics is a normative commitment to the intrinsic value of non-human nature. This statement, however, implies that non-human natural entities deserve moral consideration due to their possession of intrinsic value irrespective of how such value bears on human interest

The main objective of this chapter is to highlight the significance of nature's intrinsic value. This is mainly because of the fact that as long as the intrinsic value of nature cannot be established, the significance of environmental ethics as a whole remains groundless. However, before delving into this issue, we have to clarify the concept,

classification, varieties, sources and the distinctive features of intrinsic value. In the first section we propose to analyze the concept of intrinsic value and non-intrinsic or popularly known as instrumental value. In the next three sections, we shall confine our discussion on the varieties of intrinsic value; sources of intrinsic value and the distinctive features of intrinsic value. Then we will delve into the main theme of the chapter in what sense nature does possess intrinsic value. In the concluding section we propose to incorporate the importance of intrinsic value of non-human entities in environmental ethics. In this section, we propose to show how respect and moral consideration towards non-human nature by humans helps to promote a peaceful co-existence of humans with nature.

### **The Concept of Intrinsic Value:**

The genesis of ethics is linked with morality which aims to objectify values on many accounts. That is why ethics at times is called normative science. Irrespective of many classifications and subdivisions of values, one can broadly outline ethical value in two senses, viz., intrinsic as well as non-intrinsic value. Intrinsic value is objective in nature, whereas non-intrinsic value lacks objectivity to a great extent. Since environmental ethics is a recent development or edition of ethics in general, it is predominantly concerned with the two classifications or forms of values, namely, instrumental as well as non-instrumental. Intrinsic value is on a par with non-instrumental value and non-intrinsic value is on a par with instrumental value. Instrumental value again is linked with non-anthropocentrism and non-instrumental value is linked with anthropocentrism. The prime objective of environmental ethics is based on the very division of anthropocentrism as well as non-anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrism which deals with instrumental values interprets values in terms of practice, hierarchies as well as in derivative sense. On the contrary, non-anthropocentrism which is associated with non-instrumental value completely ignores the domination and subjugation of one

species by the other. It tries to annihilate value dualism and value hierarchies within the biotic community. It tries to establish the inherent association of all species of the biotic community. The very objective of this section is to explain the fundamental distinction between instrumental value and non-instrumental or intrinsic value.

In environmental ethics, values, whether it is intrinsic or extrinsic, can mostly be interpreted in terms of the relationship between human and the rest of the nature. The relationship between man and nature, though maintained from primitive ages, was not recognized before the appearance of environmental ethics at the early 70's. With the emergence of environmental ethics the relationship between man and nature has been focused to tackle the environmental degradation cropping up due to the advancement of science and technology. The introduction of instrumental value is the outcome of technological development. Although instrumental value existed within the biosystem along with intrinsic value, it was not recognized in its proper sense before the emergence of environmentalism.

A clear discussion of instrumental and intrinsic value with certain examples will bring out the true meaning of the said values. Instrumental value is related to the usefulness of the object in question or in other words, one can say that an object has instrumental value if it is used to satisfy a given end or is used to attain something else of value. Thus, coal is useful to man since it can be burnt to cook food or run railway engines or used in various industries to produce goods. Thus, coal is valuable to man or coal possesses instrumental value for human satisfaction. Now, if coal is substituted by something else, for example, petroleum, the usefulness of coal is reduced, i.e. its value decreases, whereas the instrumental value of petroleum increases. When we speak of natural resources we speak about the instrumental value of resources, since the very term 'resource' denotes usefulness of an entity or object. Thus, many of the environmental concerns are related to the instrumental value of nature. Speaking in the direction of many environmentalists, nature



and its wildness needs to be preserved since it is a vast storehouse of resources to be used by humans for their own satisfaction. Clear air and water is required for good human health, the fruits of the trees are required to satisfy their hunger, different species of flora and fauna are required to manufacture medicines or many other examples of the utility of nature to meet an end can be cited. But to focus only on the instrumental value of nature and to build up an environmental ethics concerning only instrumental value will make it unstable in the long run. Therefore it is necessary for the environmental ethicists to give due attention to the other type of value, as already stated earlier, i.e. non-instrumental or intrinsic value.

What is intrinsic value? Intrinsic value of an object is that value which is recognized or found in that object rather than given by any valuer. In other words, it can be said that an object possess intrinsic value if it is good in itself and is not valued for its uses. More specifically, it can be said that a value is used in two senses. In one sense it is used not as a means to an end and in the other sense it is used not as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. Intrinsic value is a kind of value that can be used not a means to an end, but as an end in itself. This point needs to be clarified with an example. If we value nature for its aesthetic beauty, we may say nature has intrinsic value as an end in itself. But instead of that if we use or consider nature as a storehouse of resources and ascribe value for the usefulness of natural resources to meet an end then the value is said to be instrumental as here nature is used as a means to fulfill some needs. It is, however, incorrect to conclude that nature possesses only instrumental value for humans and therefore humans are the sole holders of intrinsic value. In reality nature also possesses both intrinsic as well as instrumental value going side by side without human presence and existence. In an ecosystem, organisms value other organisms and they use the resources of nature instrumentally for their survival. This has been justified and exemplified by Holmes Rolston 111. Here we quote a few lines from Rolston. Rolston says,

“Organisms are selective systems. Plants make resourceful use of water and sunshine. Insects value the energy that plants have fixed by photosynthesis; warblers value insect protein; falcons value warblers. Value capture and transformation propel an ecosystem. An organism is an unit on the hunt for instrumental values.”<sup>25</sup> It thereby follows that organisms value natural resources or other organisms belonging to lower tropic levels instrumentally. The warbler feeds on an insect because it is the warbler’s food for the warbler’s own survival and for the increase of its own kind within the ecosystem. Thus, many one say that being a warbler is a good thing. Life of the warbler possesses intrinsic value and therefore should be defended without any contributory reference. Although the warbler is good in itself and its life possesses intrinsic value, it is however, instrumental to the falcon who feeds on the warbler. Thus, both intrinsic and instrumental values are present with the ecosystem and both the values were present before human existence. Rolston III therefore utters “the system in a web when loci of intrinsic value are meshed in a network of instrumental value.”<sup>26</sup>

In the present era, when modernization has crept in, fallacious human activity is continuously degrading the environment by destroying nature. All biotic natural entities have life and therefore possess intrinsic value. Thus, destruction of nature for satisfying one’s interest actually reveals disrespect for intrinsic value. The main theme of environmental ethics thus holds that all forms of life including humans possess intrinsic value and therefore deserve moral consideration and due reverence.

## **Understanding various senses of Intrinsic Value in Environmental Ethics:**

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<sup>25</sup> Rolston III, Holmes: *Environmental Ethics*, Temple University Press, 1988, pp.186-87.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 187.

Although the concept of intrinsic value has been discussed vividly in the last section, but there are many senses of intrinsic value. So when it is claimed that nature does possess intrinsic value, it is very necessary to specify in what sense nature possesses intrinsic value. So before delving into this question it is necessary to spell out the various senses of intrinsic value available in the discourse of ethics. Only after that we would be in a better position to claim that nature or natural entities do possess intrinsic value in a very specific sense for which natural properties deserve moral respect like human beings. It is important to note here that in traditional ethics the concept of intrinsic value has been discussed, but what has been ignored is that nature or natural properties do not possess intrinsic value at all. They have only instrumental or use value. So the question of conferring moral dignity to nature or natural properties simply does not arise. Since environmental ethics confers or recognises equal moral dignity of all biotic community by virtue of having or possessing intrinsic value, it tries to establish or has to establish the view that nature possesses intrinsic value without valuers. Let us examine the various senses of intrinsic value. Broadly speaking there are three different senses of intrinsic value. These are as follows:

In the first sense, intrinsic value is understood to be synonymous to non-instrumental value. As already discussed that an object possesses instrumental value because it is a means to an end, or in other words it satisfies the demands or desire of other beings, whereas an object has intrinsic value if it is an end in itself. One can say that the universe is occupied by entities possessing not only instrumental value but also intrinsic value. The proponent of environmental ethics holds that non-human natural entities or states of affairs possess non-instrumental or intrinsic value.

In the second sense it may be said that an object possesses intrinsic value by virtue of its intrinsic properties. The value possessed by an object can be identified as intrinsic or degree of intrinsic value can be ascribed to an object in question as proposed by Moore. Here intrinsic

value means non-relational property of an object. Thus, one can conclude that non-relational natural objects are intrinsically valuable because of their non-relational property.

In the third sense intrinsic value is equated with objective value, i.e. a value which an object possesses irrespective of the valuations of the valuers. This opposes the subjectivist view which imposes value on objects in accordance to valuation or preference of the valuers, i.e. an object has subjective value if it is given preference by the valuer or if it satisfies its demand.

In environmental ethics the term intrinsic value is used in all three different senses. Very often it has been seen that the first and the third sense of intrinsic value has blended and is used interchangeably. The whole issue of intrinsic value hinges on the question whether nature has an order, a pattern which has been abided by the humans. In traditional ethic the concept of intrinsic value is understood subjectively. Intrinsic value is subjective in the sense that it has no value irrespective of the valuers. That is to say that the so-called intrinsic value as interpreted in the traditional ethics is based on the valuers. If there were no valuers, there would not be any intrinsic value at all. Such kind of intrinsic value is not well accepted in the environmental ethics. Environmental ethics seeks a kind of intrinsic value which is non-instrumental, objective. The so-called subjectivist's interpretation of intrinsic value is contrary to objectivists' interpretation of intrinsic value, because the objectivists' interpretation of intrinsic value can be substantiated without a valuer. If we adhere to Moorean view of intrinsic value where he defines intrinsic value as non-naturalistic properties, it seems to us that such kind of value may be independent of the valuers. But the view that nature may have intrinsic value irrespective of valuers finds strong challenge from traditional ethicists. They maintain that it would be ridiculous to ascertain that nature has intrinsic value irrespective of valuers. In fact traditional ethicists admit only instrumental values of nature or natural properties. So when we delve into the relevance of

environmental ethics, we have to establish that nature has intrinsic value irrespective of valuers.

Regarding the question that nature has an order; a pattern there underlies two options, namely, positive and negative. That means one can affirm or deny the above question. If one affirms the above question, he thereby confers the intrinsic value of nature. On the contrary, if he denies it, he thereby rules out the intrinsic value of nature. Those who admit the intrinsic value of nature belong to non-instrumental camp and those who deny the intrinsic value of nature belong to the instrumentalist camp. Instrumentalists conceive nature as a 'storehouse of resources'<sup>27</sup> to be utilized by people. The vital point that needs to be addressed here is that if anybody adheres to the view that nature is a mere storehouse of resources for human use, then it directly turns down the natural order. So as far as the natural order is concerned there we have two options, viz. nature has its own independent order by means of which nature decides its own course and secondly nature has no independent order and it is there for the use according to humans' desire. We think no body would deny the independent order of nature. Even the believers of traditional ethicists hardly deny it, but what they deny is that nature or natural properties are not moral agents by virtue of lacking rationality. Since they are not moral agents, the question of morality, or perhaps the question of intrinsic value in the objective sense simply does not arise in these properties. Worster seems to have conceived the third sense of intrinsic value as non-instrumental and 1 and 2 jointly apprehends as instrumental value. Here instrumental value is understood specifically in the sense of denying natural patterns and orders. This kind of instrumental value in another word may be called a subjectivist meta-ethics which claims that non-humans only have instrumental value. Thus, there we have an apparent conflict between subjectivist meta-ethical standpoint and objectivist standpoint regarding the question whether nature has intrinsic value in isolation or not.

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<sup>27</sup> Worster, D.: *Nature's Economy*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p.xi.

We think that the question cited above is based on an important point. In order to solve the above question, we have to dig out the source of values regarding the objects. According to the subjectivist the source of value lie submerged in the evaluative attitudes of humans. But from this it does not follow that the only ultimate objects of value are the states of human beings. Objectivists, on the other hand incline to say that the source of value does not depend on the attitudes of valuers. Thus, there again arises a conflict between the subjectivists and the objectivists regarding the source of value. Subjectivists take the standpoint of anthropocentrism which is closely affiliated with emotivism. On the contrary, an objectivist takes the standpoint of non-anthropocentrism and thereby denies emotivism.

It is important to note here that by admitting the attitudes of valuers in determining the source of value a subjectivist takes a clear shelter under emotivism. In this regard we can call upon the name of Stevenson who himself voices the relevance of speaker's attitudes in determining moral judgments. According to him since moral judgment is the outcome of emotion, it is no longer related to facts. However, Stevenson himself outlines a clear account of intrinsic value by saying that an intrinsic value is on a par with non-instrumental value-a value which is intrinsically good, i.e. not good as a means to something else, but good for its own sake. This definition of Stevenson again recalls the Kantian definition of good. According to Kant something is good if it is good in itself.

We think that there underlies some serious difficulties if we stand by the emotivist account of intrinsic value. It appears from the above emotivist interpretation that humans alone are the locus of all values. If human alone are said to be the locus of all values in the emotivist line of thinking then we have to say that a world without humans contains nothing of value. But environmental ethics in no context admits the above standpoint as propounded by the emotivist. The basic tenet of environmental ethics is to cohere all biotic communities in the same level of dignity of value.

So far we have discussed and examined the first sense of intrinsic value which is predominantly based on the principle that the intrinsic value is something which is good for its own sake. Now let us pass 'on to the second sense of intrinsic value which is solely based on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question'.<sup>28</sup> Here intrinsic value is understood on the basis of the properties of an object which are non-relational properties. What is meant by non-relational properties? Regarding the question there we have at least two interpretations namely weak interpretation and strong interpretation of non-relational properties. According to the weak interpretation a non-relational property of an object is the kind of property which can exist or persist independent of the existence or non-existence of other objects relating to that object. On the other hand, the strong interpretation of non-relational properties of an object is that which can be designated and characterized by forfeiting the reference of other objects.

In order to understand the non-relational property of an object one must first grasp the meaning of what is meant by relational property. Rarity, for example, possesses irreducibly relational property. Rare value can be assigned to an object in the absence of other objects or without reference to other objects. Such value assumes a special status and is assigned to disappearing of unusual species of fauna or flora within the ecosystem and the rarity of such objects demands its preservation. Thus, we can say that a high status of value is assigned to rare objects in nature which are often related to diversity. Thus, we may say that rare objects do not have intrinsic value by virtue of the relational property and therefore finds no proper place in environmental ethics.

An object having instrumental value or all objects of non-instrumental value do not possess intrinsic value in the Moorean sense. An object may be valued by virtue of its relational property, as for example, rarity despite its non-instrumental value, i.e. its inability to satisfy

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<sup>28</sup> Moore, J.E. *The Conception of Intrinsic Value*, Philosophical Studies, London: Routledge and Keganpaul, 1992, p.260.

human demand. This point can be explicated more by distinguishing the following senses regarding value objects as expounded by O' Neil. These are as follows:

- (i) Value objects can have in virtue of their relations to other objects;
- (ii) Value objects can have in virtue of their relations to human being;
- (iii) Value objects can have in virtue of being instrumental for human satisfaction.

If we carefully focus on the above three senses of valuing objects, it appears clear to us that second sense of set of value is the proper subset of the first sense of value. However, the second set of value is no longer co-extensive with the third set of value. It is important to note here that an object may be valued by virtue of its relation to human beings without being instrumental for human satisfaction. As for example, Himalayan beauty is valuable in spite of much imprint of human activity or despite of its non-instrumental value. Thus, we may say that Himalayan beauty is valued in spite of the absence of human beings and their activity. We may also say that such beauty is valued by virtue of its relation to human beings without being instrumental for human satisfaction. Hence the third set of value is a proper subset of the first and the second set. All objects possessing non-instrumental value may not be intrinsic in the Moorean sense. Since Moore completely ignores intrinsic property of instrumental values and also claims that some non-instrumental value as well may not have intrinsic property, it is therefore needed to be explored under what condition some non-instrumental objects do possess intrinsic value. We have already pointed out that an object possesses intrinsic value solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties, according to Moore.

Now the question is: what is the relation between Moorean sense of intrinsic value and objective value? There is no question of doubt that both the Moorean sense of intrinsic value and objectivism are completely different from subjectivism in which value is determined



instrumentally. But if an object has value only in virtue of its intrinsic nature, does it mean to say that it has value independently of human valuations? We think that the answer of this question actually hinges on the clarification of the phrases 'depends solely on' and 'only in virtue of'. If the above two phrases are being interpreted irrespective of human valuation as understood by Moore, then the answer to both these questions would be yes. But one cannot evade at this juncture the subjectivist account of intrinsic value in which valuing agent assigns value to objects solely in virtue of intrinsic nature of the object. Thus, there we find a considerable relevance between the subjectivist interpretation of intrinsic value and the Moorean sense of intrinsic value. If we adopt the subjectivist account of intrinsic value, then in at least some cases we may claim that some objects have intrinsic value in Moorean sense. Thus, we can say that Moore takes a liberal stand of interpreting intrinsic value. His notion of intrinsic value is a mixture of both objectivism and subjectivism. He does not take the full force of objective interpretation of intrinsic value by ignoring the intrinsic value of all non-instrumental objects and thereby comes close to the subjectivist interpretation of intrinsic value. But he is neither a subjectivist, nor an objectivist in accounting intrinsic value in nature.

So far we have discussed the two senses of intrinsic value. Now we pass on to discuss the third sense of intrinsic value, viz., the objectivist account of intrinsic value. According to an objectivist account of intrinsic value the evaluative properties of objects are real properties of objects which are possessed independently of the valuation of valuers. Here human beings have no role in determining whether something has objective value or not. An object has intrinsic value in the objective sense if it is valued in itself, i.e. if it is valued not as a means, but as an end in itself. We shall return back to this discussion more elaborately later on.

## **The Sources of Intrinsic Value:**

In the previous two sections we discussed about the concept of intrinsic value and its various sense available in the field of ethics. Let us pass on to discuss the sources and locus of intrinsic value. Environmentalists at times distinguish between the source and locus of intrinsic value. There are two diametrically opposite views of which one holds that biotic nature is the locus of intrinsic value and human consciousness is the source of all values. The other view holds that since values are not subjective feelings of humans, humans alone cannot be the source of intrinsic value. According to this view values exist independent of humans. Environmentalist like Callicott seems to have conceived that a world without human consciousness is a world without values. Callicott's own observation actually suggests that humans alone are the source and locus of intrinsic value. Does it make sense to say that non-human natural beings do not possess any value according to Callicott? Non-human natural beings are valuable not 'in themselves', but 'for themselves'. In this regard, we can remember the famous dualism of Hume in between fact and value based on the two points such as (a) that human feelings create and endow the world with values and (b) that the world of nature studied by science is devoid of all value. We think that Hume's own observation is anthropocentric in nature and loses its ground in the eyes of modern environmentalists. Morality in the eyes present environmental outlook is not something human centred rather it is based on the sentiment of sympathy humans possess. The so-called sympathy is extended even through Darwinian thesis which states that natural selection leads to an increase in both the extent and the intensity of sympathy in the human species. This web of sympathy is further strengthening with the appearance of environmental ethics which adheres to the view that all natural beings are members of the same biotic community. Thus human sympathy gradually leads to and transforms into bioempathy which states that values can be conferred by humans without being necessarily homocentric.

Rolston, a leading environmental ethicist, expresses Callicott's own conception of bioempathy as he feels that such way of interpretation of value ultimately fail to serve the ultimate objective of environmental ethics. For Rolston so long values are to be treated as anthropocentric or human centered, it would be regarded as a 'truncated sense' of intrinsic value even though they are not necessarily tied up with human interest. Rolston further claims that such type value theory is unsound as it commits 'a fallacy of the misplaced location of values.'

<sup>29</sup> For Rolston humans can discover the values in natural world, but in no sense create or generate value in natural world. So it would be a great mistake on the part of philosophers who adhere to the view that humans are the locus of values. It is true to say that the value of a tree is different from the value of the greenness of tree leaves. The greenness of tree leaves is in fact conferred by the humans on the basis of their observation in different situations, but the value of a tree cannot be conferred by the humans. Unlike the greenness of tree's leaves, the value of a tree is valuable in itself irrespective of the presence of humans or not in the natural world. This leads us to say that humans are merely the beholders of the value, but in no sense would be the value holder. In our example, tree is the value holder of its leaves, but humans are merely value beholders of conceiving the leaves as green. That is why, philosophers like Lee following Rolston, says, "...non-human nature is not merely the locus, but also the source of value, if sources means "generator" rather than "discoverer". Humans may discover such values but do not generate them."<sup>30</sup>

Thus, as far as the source and locus of intrinsic value is concerned, there we find at least two contradictory views in nature of which one holds that humans are the source and locus of intrinsic value (i.e. value holder) and the other holds that natural world is the value

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<sup>29</sup> Rolston, Holmes, III, *Environmental Ethics*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988, pp. 212-217.

<sup>30</sup> Lee, K. "The Sources and Locus of Intrinsic Value: A Reexamination" included in *Environmental Ethics: Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p.155.

holder and humans at best can merely be the value beholders. Which view is correct is a matter of great discussion and we shall try to make a way out from this dichotomy. We think this issue should be looked at not in terms of the Humean thesis of projectivism, but rather in terms of the thesis of the rational linguistic capacity possessed by humans. We must also specify the subtle distinction between two sense of intrinsic value, such as being valuable 'for itself' and being valuable 'in itself'. The phrase 'being valuable for itself' is associated with biotic components and is connected with their capacity for maintaining their functional integrity. But the phrase 'being valuable in itself' is associated only to humans and their unique type of consciousness, reason as well as language. Now every value has two aspects of which one is known as 'recognized articulated values' and the other is known as 'mutely enacted values'. Recognized articulated values are associated with a cluster of characteristics such as consciousness, reason and language and are unique to humans. So it is valuable in itself. However, mutely enacted values are associated with non-human nature, so it is valuable for themselves. Since mutely enacted values are associated with non-humans, it can therefore exist independent and irrespective of the presence of human consciousness. So it can be said that humans are the source and locus of recognized articulated values which are valuable in itself and nature is the locus and sources of mutely enacted values which are valuable for themselves. In this regard, it can be said that nature is the holder of intrinsic values and humans are the beholders of the same. Recognized articulated values are anthropogenic, whereas mutely enacted values are non-anthropogenic.

We have already conceived that instrumental and non-instrumental values exist side by side in nature irrespective of human existence. A goat may possess instrumental or use value for man as it satisfies his hunger. Grass, in turn, is of instrumental use to goat who feeds on it. In this example, it is quite clear that instrumental value not only exist between human agent and nature. In fact one natural entity may be of

instrumental use to another natural entity irrespective of human presence or absence. In continuing the above example it may be said that goat feeds on grass not only to become food for higher level animal like lion or tiger, but it feeds itself to maintain its own functional integrity. Thus, it may be said that goat possesses intrinsic value in itself, i.e. recognized articulated value. The goat equally possesses instrumental value for a lion who in turn tries to maintain its own functional integrity. Thus, here lion too possesses intrinsic value in itself. Even this would be true in the case of a plant as well. Plants use nature's abiotic resources like water, soil, carbon-dioxide and nitrogen from air, sunlight and soil nutrients to flourish not only to be food for cows, goat or sheep, but to maintain its own functional integrity. In this sense grass is the possessor of both instrumental as well as intrinsic value. Thus, from the above consideration we can formulate a logical argument in the following manner through which it can be established that natural world does possess intrinsic value irrespective of the valuers. The argument is as follows:

- (i) Instrumental or use value exists in nature irrespective of human existence and in this regard natural world is the holder of instrumental value.
- (ii) Recognized articulated values exist in nature without the presence of human agents.
- (iii) From (ii) it can be said that humans are not only the source of values.
- (iv) From (i) and (ii) it can also be concluded humans are not the locus of bearers of intrinsic value even in the sense of recognized articulated values.

From the above examples, one can easily conclude that humans are not the sole source and bearer of intrinsic value. However, humans are of course unique in the sense that they possess consciousness, rationality, reason and the capacity of language which uniquely enables them to recognize not only what is instrumental for them in nature, but also the instrumental value in one part of the nature for

another part of nature. An animal, a non-human natural entity, can only recognize what is instrumental for itself. For example, a cat can recognize a mouse for the satisfaction of its hunger, but it does not know the usefulness of the higher animals, plants or humans for itself. Thus, human beings have the capacity to recognize or identify entities that have 'good of their own' or the bearers of intrinsic value (a). This unique capacity of recognition possessed by humans enable them to decide reasonably whether to destroy the bearers of intrinsic value (a) with their built up science and technology or to refrain from destroying those natural entities. Non-human entities are unable to take such decisions due to the lack of reasoning capacity and consciousness. They, however, destroy other bearers of intrinsic value (a) for their own instrumental use but cannot refrain from destroying others with 'goods of their own' since they are unable to recognize other bearers of intrinsic value which humans can do. Thus, humans who are valuable 'in themselves' and 'for themselves' not only have 'good of their own', they can also recognize natural entities who also have 'good of their own'. This exceptional capacity gives them the reasoning power to take a decision about the destruction of nature or natural entities or instrumental usage of nature through advanced technology or to treat the bearers of intrinsic value (a) with moral considerability. This view about the humans is comparable to Kantian or Cartesian ethics according to which humans are the sole species among all species that possess 'rationality necessary to be capable of morality'.

From the above discussion it is clear that humans may be the sole source and locus of intrinsic value (b), because of their rationality, consciousness and language capacity, but it is, however, wrong to say that humans are the sole source and locus of intrinsic value in general since we have already discussed that nature and all non-human entities are the possessors of intrinsic value (a). In other words, in a world without humans there will be entities that are valuable for themselves but not valuable in themselves.

From the above consideration, it seems clear that nature has intrinsic value in the sense (a) as discussed above and it has been recognized by human beings as well. But quite importantly, it is to be noticed that from the very recognition of human beings regarding the intrinsic value of nature, does not mean to say that human beings, even consciously, are liable to respect nature. Human beings in general are very much aware regarding the contributions as well as participation of nature in maintaining a proper biotic community. But this cannot refrain human tendency to disvalue nature by extinguishing or destroying them. This is mainly because of the fact that the notions of intrinsic values are not the arbitrary projections of human feeling and emotion. This point can be justified and defended by calling upon the remark of Callocott who says, "Objective personal world is value free from a scientific point of view" as "though, sensation and value have ever seen been .....regarded as confined to the subjective realm of consciousness."<sup>31</sup> But whatever the significance Callicott's remark deserve, many proponents of environmental ethics does not admit the theme of the metaphysics of scientific naturalism as expounded by Callicott. Truly speaking, although natural individuals, such as, plants and to some extent animals do not possess high degree of rationality and consciousness like the humans, still they do strive to maintain their functional integrity and thereby possess intrinsic value (a). Alternatively, it can be said that plants and animals have some needs which is required to be fulfilled consciously or unconsciously for their own survival. If these needs are not met, they become extinct because of human intervention. This point can be explicated with the help of an example as cited by Lee. The application of insecticides like D.D.T by humans for protection of agricultural crops from insects may cause harm to birds or even other animals if it spreads into their environment. The birds which have inhaled too much of this harmful chemical may produce eggs having thin shells which crack before they are hatched. These harmful effects of D.D.T. can remain even after the

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<sup>31</sup> Callicott, *On the Intrinsic Value of Non-Human Species*, p.141.

extinction of human species who introduced it. Moreover, the damage caused to the eggs of the birds cannot be reduced even if human beings begin to realize and conceptualize or become conscious about the harmful aftereffect of their action. Thus, we may say that there is disvalue created in the world due to human and such devaluation continues irrespective of human consciousness, his presence or absence. However, the birds which produce damaged eggs cannot realize the harm caused to them by the humans. The absence of humans will however not change the fact that the needs of the birds have been disrupted which in turn has brought about disvalue in the world.

In the previous example, it has been observed that the needs of non-human species has been disrupted or subverted. Such subversion of need can be brought about in any of the two ways, namely, through human intervention as cited in the above example or through natural processes which further may be of two kinds, such as, (a) any natural disaster like volcanic eruption, earthquake, flood or landslide and (b) the natural process of extinction or through a prey-predator relationship of life where a bird feeds on a rat or in other words where species belonging to higher trophic levels feed one species belonging to lower trophic levels. In both cases disvalue is created in the natural world. But if disvalue is generated through human intervention, human beings ought to become conscious and prevent themselves from bringing about disvalue in the world. However, if disvalue is generated in terms of natural processes, i.e. in terms of evolution, it cannot be prevented. One cannot interfere natural evolution as it is desirable for nature as such. But what is wrong with the disvalue arising out of human intervention? This is supposed to be wrong as human intervention is non-natural, artificial, arising out of fulfilling unlimited greed instead of need. So humans' as such in isolation has no moral right to intervene in to the natural order and in isolation has no right to disvalue anything and thereby tries to generalize it. Natural intervention cannot be prevented as to prevent such disvalue will



mean to destroy life. This point is justified by Lee as he says, "The process of life and evolution are such that without the destruction of life there can be no life. In other words, value is predicted upon disvalue, we human, as a part of those process, also have to destroy life in order to sustain life."<sup>32</sup>

Disvalue created due to human intervention can be admitted or as ethically acceptable as long as nature is used instrumentally for their survival or for the maintenance of their functional integrity. But when humans through their super intellect and advanced technology utilize nature for their material benefit, they destroy life or create disvalue by violating ethics or denying the fact that non-human natural entities possess intrinsic value (a). Although human beings, the only possessors of intrinsic value (b), are consciously destroying nature for their own benefit and thereby creating environmental and ecological problems, it is again the human beings themselves who can realize and ask themselves the moral question whether nature is there to serve or satisfy only human ends or whether it is their moral duty to preserve nature or recognize and respect the possessors of intrinsic value (c) in order to maintain a proper balance of the biotic community. The human beings are capable of realizing the significance of nature as they are the unique possessors of consciousness, rationality and language capacity, i.e. intrinsic value (b) or recognized articulated value. Thus, we may say that human consciousness is the source of recognized articulated intrinsic value.

The distinction between intrinsic value (a) and (b) as cited above can further be illustrated by considering the outer and inner meaning of a sentence along with its content. Let us consider the sentence S which stands for: Snakes feed on / eat insects. As far as the environmental survivability is concerned there we find some hierarchical steps in context of both snakes and insects which can be valued both in the sense of intrinsic as well as non-intrinsic. The outer meaning of the

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<sup>32</sup> Keekok, Lee: "The Source and Locus of Intrinsic Value: A Re-examination", included in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, Blackwell Publishing, 203, p.159.

sentence which reflects the surface level of the sentence is determined by a linguistically competent speaker and is related to the fact that Snakes eat insects. This surface level of the sentence leads us to the next immediate level of sentence through which it can be apprehended that insects possess instrumental value for Snakes. This again helps us to realize that Snakes can survive and preserve their functional integrity by eating insects, which means that Snakes are conscious for themselves for preserving their functional integrity and survivality and thereby possess intrinsic value (a). It is interesting to note here that there underlies value up-down process in the sense that by generating intrinsic value the Snakes, equally disvalue the insects which also possess intrinsic value for themselves.

Thus, it seems clear that independent of human consciousness, rationality and decision there always underlies a value transmission process among the species of the biotic community in order to preserve their own integrity and survivality. That means the locus of the so-called mutely enacted value is non-humans, i.e. it cannot be based on human consciousness and attitudes. Of course, humans can play a significant role only by determining and recognizing the so-called mutely enacted values of the sentence S. In this regard, humans can be considered to be the source and locus of only recognized articulated values. Accordingly, it can be said that humans cannot only generate intrinsic value (a), but also (b). That means humans are valuable not only for themselves but also in themselves. Since value determinism is a coherent process among all the species of the biotic community, humans, though not the locus of value (a), but may not be isolated from the locus of value (a). Understandably, humans of course do value instrumentally certain plants attacked by insects in uttering S and according consider insects as morally bad and Snakes as morally good. It follows that any attempt of devouring insects by Snakes is also a good thing. Thus, there underlies a gulf between Snakes and insects as far as value-free datum is concerned. When Snakes eats insects independent of human consciousness for

maintaining their own survivality, it is supposed to be value free to the human beings simply because it does not draw human attention. But when it is claimed that 'Snakes eat insects' is a good thing, it reflects human preferences and attitude on nature. By devouring insects Snakes generate indirect instrumental value to man since insects destroy plants instrumentally valuable to humans. Humans generate intrinsic value (a) as well when they eat the fruits of the plants attacked by insects. Although, it is supposed that humans can generate intrinsic value in the sense of (a), this point is highly debatable whether humans can at all generate intrinsic value (a), still humans cannot be supposed to be the locus of intrinsic value (a). Since value determination process goes along with the coherent system among the species of the biotic community, there underlies the concept symmetricity in between them. Unquestionably, human beings by virtue of their unique characteristics of consciousness, rationality and linguistic capacity are possessors of recognized articulated values without which no mutely enacted values can be articulated and recognized. Mutely enacted values, though related to recognized articulated values, are by no means dependent on human presence or existence.

The above observation certainly goes against the metaphysics of scientific naturalism which upholds the distinction between mutely enacted values and recognized articulated value in an arbitrary fashion based merely on human consciousness. Upholding the view of scientific naturalism equally means to uphold the view of human consciousness as the source of value. But we do not consider such view as tenable in perspective to environmental ethics. We have seen in the course of our discussion that by possessing unique consciousness and rationality, human beings at certain level may create or generate intrinsic as well as extrinsic value. But at the same breath, we derecognize that human consciousness is the sole agent of considering the locus of intrinsic value.

We have repeatedly asserted in the course of our above discussion that during the life process of the biotic community, each and every species, animate or inanimate, can generate instrumental as well as non-instrumental values. This means to say that the value generating process existed before the appearance of human beings in the natural world and perhaps will continue to exist even after the disappearance of human beings from the natural world. This gives us the guarantee that human beings can never be the sole source and locus of recognized articulated values; every living organism can generate recognized articulated values in its life process. So, it would be wrong to suggest that humans alone are the source and locus of recognized articulated values. Furthermore, humans cannot be considered as the source and locus of mutely enacted values. Mutely enacted value is not something that can be generated, rather it is something which is valuable as an end in itself. We therefore conclude that the sole loci of mutely enacted values are non-humans. Lee says, "The source and locus of recognized articulated values are indeed humans; the source and locus of mutely enacted values are, in addition, other natural non-humans beings."<sup>33</sup>

We think that the whole debate of intrinsic value is centered on the conception of Callicott and Rolston. In fact it is true to say that Callicott is right in distinguishing between the source and locus of values as well as his own apprehension of the distinction between the phrases 'valuable for themselves' and 'valuable in themselves'. However, Callicott is wrong in failing to distinguish between recognized articulated values and mutely enacted values. That is why he seems to conceive wrongly that human consciousness is the source of all values. If we adhere to the view of Callicott, then we are forced to conceive that humans' consciousness is the source and locus of recognized articulated values and in this regard humans may be said to be valuable for and in themselves. Moreover, Callicott is right when he say that non-humans are the loci of mutely enacted values, i.e.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 160.

they are valuable for themselves, but unlike humans they are not valuable in themselves. Callicott certainly overlooks the fact that non-humans are not only the loci of mutely enacted values, but they are also their source.

We think in this regard Rolston is right in pointing out the mistakes or laps of Callicott as unlike Callicott, Rolston conceives nature as the holder and humans are the beholder of intrinsic values. However, Lee observes that even Rolston fails to conceive the subtle distinction between mutely enacted values and recognized articulated values. Lee inclines to say that Rolston, of course, is right to conceive that nature is the value holder, i.e. nature is valuable irrespective of its valuers. Humans are value beholders in the sense that humans are in no position to generate intrinsic value in the sense of mutely enacted values, rather humans can discover the values already there in the nature. So there is no harm to adopt a resolution that nature is the value holder of instrumental as well as intrinsic value. In fact it is not a serious task to establish the view that nature is the value holder of intrinsic value. In fact the object of environmental value is not anthropocentric. The objective of environmental ethics as we stated in the earlier is to examine and establish whether nature has intrinsic value as a value holder. Rolston raises a charge against Callicott, because for him Callicott at times conceives values anthropocentrically. But for Rolston mutely enacted values are necessarily non-anthropogenic, only recognized articulated values are anthropogenic.

Many environmentalist would like to say that Callicott is right in criticizing Kantian ethics which is centered to rational being with language, but he is wrong about intrinsic value (b) where there underlies the relevance of metaphysics. Lee observes that Callicott is unnecessarily over impressed by the thesis of projectivism which ignores the capacity of reason and language and reason based morality unique to humans. Callicott rejects human's capacity of bioempathy which is directed towards an arbitrary human preference

and is also committed to the view that both humans as well as non-humans are intrinsically valuable (a), that humans as well as non-humans can be of instrumental value mutually to and for each other. Rolston, on the contrary, says that it is better to realize this unique form of human consciousness without conceding anything to the thesis of human projectivism. So, one would like to say that as far as the conceivability of nature's intrinsic value is concerned Rolston is more right than wrong, while Callicott is more wrong than right.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Ecofeminism

#### **Introductory:**

'Ecofeminism'- a very specific term used by D' Eaubonne in 1974 reconceives feminist principles and tries to construct an environmental ethics by taking into account possible connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature. All ecofeminists, however, agree that there underlies a close link between the domination of women and the domination of nature, and one can gain a clear understanding of one by acquiring knowledge about the other. This movement, in fact, gained impetus in the recent decades in the form of innumerable protests against the burning problem of environmental degradation. According to the ecofeminists' view an environmental philosophy which fails to attend to or inculcate the possible connection between the subjugation of women and nature is undoubtedly deficient and incomplete. The interconnectedness between women and nature can be traced backed to the historical past and the shift in the world view from the organic to the mechanistic was the root cause for the degradation of both.

According to the Samkhya system of Indian philosophy, Prakrti or Nature has got certain characteristics that are common to woman-in-general. Just as woman can make a person happy, unhappy or infatuated with her three qualities-satta, rajas, and tamas; Prakrti is also having such characteristics of happiness, misery and infatuation due to having same quality. Moreover, both are reproductive (prasavatmika) and creative in nature.

According to prominent ecofeminists, exploitation and subjugation of women prevailing in the patriarchal society is very much associated with the domination and massive exploitation of nature by human

beings. Just as the domination of women by men is detrimental to the society, at least morally, similarly the exploitation and domination of nature by man is detrimental to the whole biotic community. Thus understanding ecofeminism, i.e. the interconnection between women and nature helps one to comprehend the value, dignity and the basic necessities of all forms of life within the biotic community. Ecofeminism, a feminine movement which strives to rule out the twin domination and exploitation of women and nature helps one to develop a caring, loving and sympathetic attitude towards all life forms, thus, cultivating the ground for peaceful <sup>34</sup>mutual co-existence of man with nature and women.

### **Feminist ethics and Ecofeminism:**

Feminism or feminist movement, however, is a totalitarian or mass movement undertaken by women of all sects to bring an end to all forms of feminist oppression by men prevailing in a patriarchal society. Amongst all forms of domination, sexist oppression- which is morally unacceptable in all its forms – is vehemently protested by all feminist groups. The feminist aims to terminate or obstruct all forms of male domination and thereby remake the living planet, which according to them is in the danger of dying. The chief motto of all feminists is to “..... snatch the car’s steering wheel from the hands of the male society .....”<sup>35</sup>

Searching for firewood, caying water and providing minimum sustenance for the family constitute a women’s primary responsibility and due to her participation in the above mentioned activities, she fails to take part in the so called cream activities like decision making and income generation. The egoist man engages himself in these activities and thereby occupies a high status or position within the family and consequently within the society, thereby making it a male

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<sup>35</sup> Francoise D’Eaubonne, Translated by Ruth Hattell “ The Time of Ecofeminism” included in *Key Concepts in Critical Theory Ecology*, edited by Carolyn Merchant , Rawat Publication, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1996, p.174.



dominated one. In fact most of the feminist issues depend largely on the above mentioned historical and material condition of women's live. The two immediate problems imperiling mankind and the root causes of environmental degradation are – over population and consequent destruction and over exploitation of earth's natural resources – the outcome of male hierarchy or patriarchy and domination. Man's power to reproduce and his ability to sow the earth are the prime factors behind this menace.

Fifty centuries ago women enjoyed monopoly in agriculture and men believed that women were impregnated by God. But with the discovery of his dual power- i.e., agricultural and procreational- man seized control of the soil (fertility) and women's womb (fecundity). In fact the overexploitation of the two by men has resulted in overpopulation and consequent destruction and degradation of the environment. The wisest solution to this grave problem according to the feminists is the destruction of the male power by women in the form of mass totalitarian movement.

The above paragraphs clearly indicate that over exploitation of nature and thereby deterioration of environment are somewhat feminist issues and a proper understanding of the aforesaid issue paves the way for a better understanding of female oppression in a male dominated society. Urbanization, industrialization, commercialization of agriculture, massive deforestation- all leading to environmental degradation are reflection of advancement of science and technology which deprive women from their original right. Rampant felling of trees for commercialization of agriculture in the form of cultivation of monoculture species has led to destruction of virgin forest areas, thereby destabilizing women's ability to maintain a subsistence household. The scientific and technological advancement in fact "destroyed women's productivity by removing land, water and forests from their management and control, as well as through the ecological

destruction of soil, water and vegetation systems so that nature's productivity and renewability were impaired."<sup>36</sup>

Many of the ecological disasters, like the leakage of methyl isocyanides gas from the Union Carbide Pesticides plant in Bhopal on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1984 and the consequent death of around 3000 people provoked the female force to protest against the disastrous consequences of the so called advancement of science and technology undertaken by the masculine force. According to the feminists, it was a war against nature and therefore against women. Today's women have realized that the recent developments in biotechnology, genetic engineering and reproductive technology whose paradigms are essentially patriarchal are all against the reproductive and regenerative capacities of nature and women in particular. Degradation of the environment which is equalized with subjugation, devaluation and demoralization of women is thus the outcome of patriarchy or masculine domination of the society at large. In this connection Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva quotes -"We see the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors, and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns. It is the same masculine mentality which would deny us our right to our own bodies and to our own sexuality and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its way."<sup>37</sup>

### **Logical foundation of female domination:**

The feminist issues discussed so far are very much related to ecological issues. The domination of feminine by masculine and its parallelism to nature is an age long historical fact grounded in logic. All feminist issues therefore are conceptual. Hence feminist revolution including its extension to ecofeminism is a protest against the logic of domination and value dualism forming the basis of the conceptual

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<sup>36</sup> Shiva, Vandana. : "Women, Ecology and Development" in *Staying Alive*, London: Zed Books Ltd, 1988, p.172.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. , p.498.

framework. The meaning of the term 'conceptual framework' needs to be clarified at the very outset. The term denotes "a set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world. It is a socially constructed lens through which we perceive ourselves and others."<sup>38</sup>

The oppressive and patriarchal are the two classifications of conceptual framework. The former explains and justifies the logic of domination amongst the different species of the biotic community. The latter justifies and maintains subjugation of feminine by masculine. Both forms of domination are basic concerns of environmental philosophy and environmental ethics as both are detrimental to the society and environment at large.

The three basic features or characteristics of oppressive conceptual framework are as follows:

- (i) Value hierarchical thinking: Within the biotic community some species are conferred higher value and placed at a higher status or position than the others. Human beings, for example, enjoy higher value, status and prestige amongst all species of the natural world or in other words they are at the top of the hierarchy. Accordingly, human beings are morally allowed to oppress or subjugate all other species of the biotic world.
- (ii) Value dualism: Value dualism admits disjunctive pairs within the biotic community. The disjuncts are oppositional and exclusive rather than complementary and inclusive. One disjunct possesses higher value and therefore enjoys superiority over the other. 'Male' and 'female' are the disjunctive pairs within the community of human beings. Value dualism bestows or confers higher value to male identified with 'mind' and 'reason' than to female paralleled to 'body' and 'emotion'. In fact, 'ecofeminism' as a movement

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<sup>38</sup> Warren, J. Karren. : 'The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism' in *Environmental Ethics*, Vol.12, No.2, summer 1990, quoted from *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book* by Donald Vandevener and Christine Pierce, North Carolina State University, 2003, p.283.

originated as a revolt against the concept of value dualism. Many ecological feminist conceive that a reason/ nature dualism persist within the conceptual framework of western cultures. The dualised pairs include not only reason/nature, masculine/feminine, mental/manual, mind/body, civilized/primitive and many others. The existence of these disjunctive pairs makes different forms of oppression like sexual, racial, class etc. very much legitimate. All these lead to a typical form of argument, i.e. the logic of domination which is the third basic characteristic of the oppressive conceptual framework.

- (iii) Logic of domination: The logic of domination justifies and legitimizes subordination and subjugation. Justification of domination is based on some alleged characteristics possessed by certain species of the biotic or natural world. As for example, within the class of human beings, 'rationality' forms the specific or alleged characteristic of the masculine mass which empowers them to dominate over the feminine lacking these characteristic, and such domination or oppression is absolutely justified.

The chief arguments justifying the logic of domination may be stated in the following manner:

- (A1) Humans do, plants do not, possess the capacity to consciously transform the community in which they reside.
- (A2) Whoever possesses the capacity to transform is superior to whoever lacks it.
- (A3) Hence, human beings are morally superior to non-human nature like plants and rocks.
- (A4) Therefore, for any x and y, if x is morally superior to y, then x is morally justified in subordinating or dominating y.
- (A5) Human subordination of non-human nature like plants and rocks is, therefore, morally justified.

Argument (A4) is very much relevant to the ecofeminist's discussion of oppression of feminine and nature. Since women are identified with nature, the same logic of domination of women by men can be stated in the following manner.

(B1) Women are identified with nature and the realm of the physical, and men are identified with the human and the realm of the mental.

(B2) Whatever is identified with nature and the realm of physical is inferior to whatever is identified as human and the realm of mental.

(B3) Thus, women are inferior to men or conversely men are superior to women.

(B4) For any x and y, if x is superior to y, then x is justified in subordinating y.

(B5) Thus, men are justified in subordinating women.

The above argument B is truly patriarchal in nature as it admits and justifies systematic subordination of women by men. All the three features of oppressive conceptual framework are embedded within argument B. Though both arguments A and B, i.e. oppressive and patriarchal conceptual framework have functioned historically, all feminists including ecofeminists agree that both arguments ought to be rejected.

From the above stated argument it seems to be clear that domination of nature by human and subjugation of women by men have the same conceptual base. Ecofeminists therefore bear the opinion that devaluation of women is actually rooted in devaluation of nature. If we accept a conceptual link between domination of women and domination of nature, then it follows that a movement that is not feminist will yield at best a superficial understanding of the domination of nature and consequent environmental degradation. It is a well established fact that the primary deterioration of environment is domination of nature by humans. Thus, one possibly way to safeguard our environment, or in a broad sense nature as a whole, is to

overthrow or uproot the conceptual base of domination, i.e. patriarchy. This seems to be the prime task of the ecofeminists. Or in other words, it may be stated that an ecofeminist endeavors to protect the environment by uprooting patriarchy.

### **Maldevelopment in the name of development: A deep concern for ecofeminists:**

Scientific and technological development promoting capital accumulation, commercialization of economy, creation of surplus and profits actually brings about devaluation of nature as well as women. Such development schemes and process displace people living sustainably, create poverty, induce destruction to the environment and crumble the regenerative capacity of the environment. An amicable solution to the global crisis of environmental degradation is through revival and recovery of the feminist principle which advocates an attitude of care and revival of spirituality. The notion of development is, in fact, based on exploitation and exclusion of women and degradation of nature and erosion of other creatures. Thus, ecofeminists are greatly concerned about development, not only for the fact that women take inadequate and insufficient participation in development programmes, but because of the fact that they bear the costs without deserving the benefits.

In this connection, Vandana Shiva, a celebrated ecofeminist, in her book '*Staying Alive*' goes on to say that material development, which in actuality or reality is maldevelopment destroys sustainable lifestyles, displaces women from their feminine job and thereby create true material poverty. Natural resources required for the purpose of sustenance are chiefly utilized for commercial benefits, i.e. for earning profit. The most vital point in commercialization of economy is production of surplus and earning of profit. Hence, people living in subsistence economies are seen as poor, because they do not produce surplus, nor do they gain any profit. By standard of western

developments, these people are poor by definition. Commercialization of agriculture crushed women's productivity on one hand by taking away land, water and soil from their management, and on the other, nature's productivity and regenerative capacity were impaired through over use and destruction of soil, water and vegetation system. Shiva blames patriarchal culture imported through development projects responsible for devaluation of both women and nature. In a patriarchal society nature is valued instrumentally and the different projects undertaken for economic, development through modern scientific techniques undermines women and their traditional practices by destroying sustainable lifestyles. Most ecofeminists, including Shiva, therefore remarks that in order to tackle ecological crisis, it is necessary to regenerate or revive values devalued in a patriarchal society. Revival of nature's value can come through revival of the feminine principle, i.e. to value or celebrate women's activity or experience. A woman capable of bearing and breeding a child with love, care, and affection brings new life into the earth. She is a symbol of love and affection and through the revival of these principles or feminine characteristics, by living in harmony and co-operation with nature instead of over exploiting it, the grave ecological crisis which the world is facing today can gradually be tackled.

Ecofeminists,, therefore vehemently rejects domination of women and nature by men. They try to admit some essential attribute as shared by women and nature. Both women and nature are categorized as static, real, metaphysical and unproblematic. When it is claimed that women are closer to nature, it means that there underlies some essence possessed by women which establishes the close link between women and nature.

### **Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology:**

Since ecofeminism is a twin concept of both ecology and feminism, one cannot rule out the assimilation of ecofeminism and deep ecology. It is important to note here that the movement of Deep Ecology

actually takes an extremely holistic view of nature in which individual self merges with ecosystems. In this regard we find a close proximity between ecofeminism and deep ecology. Like ecofeminism, deep ecology is a philosophical movement which aims to present a critique of dominant world view and thereby proposes an alternative message. "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>39</sup> Deep ecology, thus, desires for an integral or organic whole of the biotic community.

It is important to note here that although the objective of deep ecology and ecofeminism are somehow or other coherent as both stands against mainstream view, but there underlies a certain distinction in the approaches of ecofeminism and deep ecology. According to ecofeminists, although every species within the biotic community is related to each other, they are distinct from each other. Since they are distinct from each other, ecofeminists suggest that one ought to respect the individuality of these beings rather than seeking to merge with them. Therefore, our mode by relating to them should be via open-minded and alternative encounter, rather than through abstract metaphysical pre-conceptualization as suggested by deep ecologists. Unlike ecofeminists, deep ecological movement is directed towards an integral relation of all species of the biotic world where self-identity of each species is ignored. Thus one can conceive a theoretical conflict between ecofeminism and deep ecology, because deep ecological movement is directed towards metaphysical pre-conceptualization where individual self merges with ecosystems and ecofeminism is based on kinship and care of each species of the whole biotic community. Deep ecological movement hinges on the slogan: 'nature knows best'. On the contrary, ecofeminism is directed towards the interconnectedness thesis based on self-realization, mutual trust, care and respect towards others. Unlike deep ecological movement

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<sup>39</sup> Warwick, Fox. : "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of our Time" included in *Environmental Ethics*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston 111, Blackwell 2003, p.258.



ecofeminism does not identify us directly with nature as a whole, that is to say ecofeminism does not make us identify ourselves with monolithic nature. According to the ecofeminists, nature 'is the product of a re-awakening or revival of our kinship with our individual non-human realities. It is very much familiarized with our individuality rather than any kind of our cosmic identification. It actually emerges out of a sense of solidarity with our fellow beings.

Does it make sense to say that ecofeminism is contrary to deep ecology? On the basis of the above consideration it can be said that the objective of ecofeminism is somehow or other different from deep ecology, as ecofeminism is directed towards care and kinship and deep ecological movement is directed towards identification of nature as a whole. Having said this, one would still like to say that both ecofeminism and deep ecology are the two important wings of environmental ethics. Both ecofeminism and deep ecology form an important part of our metaphysical and ethical relationship with nature- with their complementary interpretation of the interconnectedness thesis. If reality is based on internal connections as suggested by deep ecologists, and again if reality consists of a web of relations as suggested by ecofeminists, then it may be seen as both a whole and as a manifold of individuals. Accordingly, reality appears to qualify as a moral order. Any attempt to relate human beings with nature, both historically as well as individually need to be taken into account. This attempt leads us at the end to an irreducible moral conflict (ambivalence) consisting of compassionate intervention on behalf of nature on one hand and natural tide of destruction on the other. We have no option but to accept moral conflict and thereby try to discover that it is our humanity that compels us to act on behalf of our embattled fellow creatures. In this regard the moral standard of deep ecology is brought down to the ground. On the contrary to discover that our compassion, the value taken for granted by ecofeminism, is not beyond moral. Moral compassion always comes down to our love for the familiar, our solidarity with the natural things

that are associated with us. Ecofeminism in this regard diverts from its root. Thus, the relationship between ecofeminism and deep ecology can be visualized with the slogan: Ecofeminism humanizes deep ecology and deep ecology does indeed deepen ecofeminism.

On the basis of the above slogan we can say that our grounds for ecological resistance for environmental degradation in general actually hinges on our humanity, love, care and most importantly realization for our fellow beings- an ethical commitment which is underlying in one sense or other both in ecofeminism and deep ecology. In fact, whatever we wish to endorse, either in holistic or individualistic way, we have to give up the dualistic thinking prevailing in mainstream ethics, between human beings and nature. We have to realize the true affirmation of life, i.e. the meaning of life can not be conceived without foregoing the so-called dualism prevailing in first order life. Anticipating the view that our humanity is the well spring, not only of consuming destructiveness but also of the previous compassion which encounters it, one may say that it will help to lead us out of the moral deed lock of the divorce between humanity and nature.

## **Ecofeminism and its Connection to Social Ecology:**

Both ecofeminism and social ecology deal with environmental and social issues. Although there are considerable discrepancies between ecofeminism and social issues, both share common views which make it appropriate to discuss them in this chapter. The analytical aspect of both social ecology and ecofeminism analyses the causes and issues underlying the contemporary ontological crisis. Moreover, both the fields have programmatic aspects that offer alternative versions of an ecologically sound future. Both share the view that environmental degradation and ecological problems are related to social problems of control and dominance. However, their explanations and analysis concerning social problems and their programs for social change

differ. That human centredness or egoistic attitude is the major cause behind ecological crisis, although focused by proponents of Deep Ecology, is vehemently rejected or denied by ecofeminists and deep ecologists. They are of the opinion that the root of our ecological crisis hinges on certain social factors. Both bear the opinion that subjugation of nature and its eventual deterioration arise from social patterns of domination and hierarchy, patterns of social life in which some humans exercise domination and subjugation over other species of the biotic community or even on humans as such. From the above observation it seems to be clear that both the approaches have tried to shift attention of philosophy towards social and political philosophy instead of metaphysics and ethics. They hold that traditional theories of social justice can be utilized in analyzing and solving environmental problems. Therefore, the primary task of these views is to analyze the relationship between man and the social organization or society by large in which he resides. In this context the question that needs to be answered is-how a society is created and for what purpose is it created? A society is, in fact, an organization created by human beings themselves for fulfilling or satisfying their ends. Thus, when environmental degradation is seen as a social problem or when it is said that the present global crisis is the outcome of social structures of dominance and control, we should enquire about the ends generated by the particular institution causing the problem.

What do the societies in general do or do to people? Who is benefiting from and who or which section of the people is harmed by various social practices? Such pertinent questions demand proper answers for solution of ecological problems cropping up from social practices and prejudices. Both ecofeminists and social ecologists are conscious about the existence of different social organizations and structures responsible for their oppressive or dominating attitudes towards a section of the society for the benefit of another section of the same society. Such social structures are referred to as 'oppressive' social structures' which indulge or encourage the domination and

subjugation of life forms including the domination of the species of the biotic community. Bookchin, a renowned social ecologist, narrates this point by saying, "The very notion of domination of nature by men stems from the very real domination of human by human."<sup>40</sup> Radford Reuther expresses a similar view as he says, "Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socio-economic relations and the underlying values of the society."<sup>41</sup> This view of Reuther brings into focus that the social dominance of the female population, i.e. a section of human population, which is at par with the domination of nature is responsible for ecological destruction and such a form of destruction can be tackled by mass movement of women against the so-called domination. The prime task of ecofeminists and social ecologists is to identify and analyze patterns of domination and oppression within different societies and evaluate these problems in terms of philosophical accounts of justice in which all species of the biotic communities are free from oppression and domination. Here lies the relevance of environmental justice.

## **The relevance of Environment Justice in Social Ecology and Ecofeminism:**

Although similarities exist between social ecology and ecofeminism, there are considerable differences or dissimilarities between their aims and attitudes. Environmental or ecological crisis, in the view of social ecologists, arise from societal domination and existence of hierarchies within the social system. The different social organizations or institutions, varieties of social practices, as well as private ownership,

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<sup>40</sup> Bookchin, Murray. : *Ecology of Freedom*, Polo Alto, Chief Chesire Books, 1982, p.1

<sup>41</sup> Reuther, R.R. : *Now Earth*, New York, Scabury, 1975, p.204.

capitalization and even creation of nation states establish social hierarchies in which some humans exercise power and domination over others. Existence of such hierarchies and domination can be overcome through practice of the anarchist external control and psychological manipulation, according to the social ecologists. Ecofeminists, on the other hand, identifies the domination of women as the only form of social domination. According to them, the domination or subjugation of women by men is at par with the domination and exploitation of nature by human beings which is the root cause behind environmental destruction. Here lies the necessity of social justice.

### **Necessity of Social Justice: A Parameter of Ecofeminism:**

Before analyzing the necessity of social justice, it is essential to tackle the question: What is meant by social justice? The ethical question underlying the concept of social justice is how we ought to live collectively or how should we live individually. The question, how we ought to live individually actually refers to morality and the question how we ought to live collectively refers to social justice. But what do we mean by social justice? A partial answer to this question is that we ought to respect the right and responsibilities that each of us individually possess. Accordingly, justice is concerned with giving each person his or her due. This actually recalls the view of Aristotle who once says justice means to treat equals equally. This principle is called the formal principle of justice which differs from the utilitarian approach of justice which stands with the principle that the interest of each person should be treated as of equal value. Unlike the formal principle of justice, utilitarian justice argues that environmental resources should be distributed in ways that maximize the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers.

The objective of ecofeminism is directly associated with environmental justice where one can investigate the social distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. A society that distributes the benefits and burdens unequally is *prima facie* unjust. For example, environmental racism is a case in point, in which society places the burden on people in the least advanced position- the poor and the people of colour. Here we can also mention the chipko movement which stands with the view that women do bear a greater environmental burden than man. This again induces the point of sexism or gender differences. In fact those who advocate the view that population growth is one of the prime cause of environmental destruction often set aside the cultural and economic factors that encourage the poor, specially poor women, to value more children rather than fewer children. It has been historically witnessed that oppressive population control policies often target minorities and it includes slavery, Nazism and apartheid.

There is no question of doubt that women and children are the most sufferers in any form of environmental degradation, even though women's contribution in the environmental arena is noteworthy. Women are primarily responsible for domestic chores such as rearing of livestock, tending crops, cooking and maintenance of home, taking care of children. Moreover, women have greater responsibility for the non-mechanized harvesting of crops and thus face risk associated with exposure to pesticide. Women also have less mobility than men to escape pollution and insanitary condition. Women also take responsibility for gathering fuel wood and water without hampering environmental balance. Thus, any industrial advancement which stands to deplete forest lands and also pollute water leads to the exploitation and subjugation of women. We find sufficient evidences in Chipko movement which support in what senses environmental degradation and development in many underdeveloped and developing countries create particular burden for women.

## **Ecofeminism- Making connections:**

We have seen in what sense social ecology has attempted to make a connection between social domination and the domination of nature and thereby is linked with the ecofeminism. Let us pass on to examine in what sense ecofeminism establishes the connection between these two forms of domination.

Ecofeminism, an important and recent branch of environmental ethics, holds important connections such as historical, experiential, symbolic, and theoretical between the domination of women and the domination of nature. The theory of ecofeminism is deeply rooted in feminist ethics, which explores a wide variety of viewpoints concerning the nature and analysis of women's oppression. Ecofeminism, as said earlier, goes a step forward and analyses the link between the domination of women and exploitation of nature.

We have already discussed in the introductory section how the logic of domination justifies domination of both women and nature. Masculine domination over ecofeminism is justified on the ground that men are rational and women are emotional. The characteristic of rationality possessed by men makes them superior to women and hence they are justified in subjugating women according to the logic of domination. Feminist's thinkers vehemently oppose and reject the logic of domination as discussed earlier. Such an opposition against the logic of domination has given rise to different forms of feminism, namely, liberal, Marxist, radical and socialist forms, each of which offers an account of the aggression of women and an alternative social philosophy. Liberal feminists deny gender differences. According to them, all human beings, whether men or women are equal since they all possess the same nature as free rational beings. Accordingly, any differential treatment of women leading to their degradation or devaluation is against moral equality and is therefore unjust. Thus, liberal feminists fight for equal rights and equal opportunity of women. The confinement of women in domestic and household work and in dependent forms of labour make them subjects of oppression

by man, as opined by Marxist feminists. Such feminine form of labour are ignored by men who takes part in the decision making procedure, accumulation of land, property right of ownership over the home, independent and productive form of labour and so on. Such rights and ownership make them exploit a woman which is considered to be unjust. Marxist feminists therefore suggest and encourage active participation of women in independent and productive forms of labour which will give them freedom from economic and political exploitation by men. Social ecofeminists reject the class concept as offered by the Marxist. In their opinion the notion of feminine oppression lies submerged in the complex web of social relationship which includes both economic factors and traditional patterns of gender roles. The Chipko movement is a socialist movement where social feminists tried to liberate women from social and economic oppression by establishing a more autonomous, independent and responsible role of women in the society. Radical feminist's view of female domination lie rooted in biological or sexual differences between men and women. Women are traditionally dominated by men in the society for their inherent status as mother, wife and sex objects. Their child bearing, child raising and sexual capacities make them objects of masculine domination as they are defined as emotional and passive objects, more controlled by body than by mind. Radical feminists, however, claim that the oppression of women by men can be abolished if the gender roles are totally prohibited. They seem to have conceived that feminist's movement should be directed towards a unisex or androgynous culture.

A somewhat different view is held by a different wing of radical feminists. Instead of ignoring the biological differences between men and women, they encourage and celebrate the feminine role arising out of such differences. This view of the radical feminists holds immense importance in the context of ecological crisis. According to the cultural ecofeminists there is a particular women's way of understanding and viewing the world around them. They identify



feminine qualities with nature and hold that nature like women is systematically oppressed. Thus, instead of denying the link between women and nature, cultural ecofeminists aim to rectify ecological and other environmental problems by creating an alternative women's culture based on valuation of the so-called feminine characteristics interconnected to nature, so long devalued by the patriarchal society. Recognition and establishment of the link or interconnection between women and nature has given rise to an ecological ethics based on care and relationship and women's spirituality movement. Both these concepts offer paths leading to solution of ecological crisis which the world is facing. The visualization of women as sexually weak, emotional and overly concerned with the personal and men as sexually strong, rational and objective make them subjugate women and create a patriarchal society. The feminine qualities of love, care and benevolence, sympathy and responsibility etc. arising out of the domestic role of women as mother and wife are ignored and therefore remain outside the area of mainstream ethical theory. Mainstream ethics is based on rational, abstract and universal principles. Many feminists try to go beyond mainstream ethics and evolve an 'ethics of care' based on values traditionally associated with women's role. Such an 'ethics of care; de-emphasizes the so-called abstract roles and principles and thereby plea for a conceptualized ethics based on care and kinship. Moral laws, rights, duties, obligation and justice, the primary convictions of traditional ethics postulates a world where there is a conflict of interests, where demands of justices restrict human freedom and where morality battle egoism. Ethics of care based on values of love and relationship replaces conflict with an attitude of co-operation, confrontation with relationship and right and duties with an approach of love and care for others. Thus care ethics tries to introduce a new dimension to moral philosophy where love, care and motherly attitude, affection and kinship etc. serve as moral ideals instead of abstract principles.

Now the question is: why an ethics of care is introduced or studied only in a women's perspective. According to many ecofeminists, an ethics of care is more compatible with the life experience of women, particularly as those experience follow from both reproductive biology and experiences of women in being a mother. Such experiences of women are natural. Therefore, the vocabulary of rights and duties, autonomy and justice, rules and laws is highly artificial and inappropriate within the context of mother-child relationship. Cultural ecofeminists, the believer and promoter of an ethics of care, acknowledge that women are historically closer to nature than men. Therefore, there underlies a benevolent relationship between women and nature. In this regard, it may be rightly said that an ethics of care covers or incorporates human-nature relationship very much alike mother-child relationship. Accordingly, women, who are thought to experience this caring more directly and more immediately than men, are the more appropriate voice for the protection of nature's interest. In this regard, feminism comes more near to ecology.

An ethics of care is very much related to virtue ethics and in this present context of environmental crisis they replace the traditional abstract and general principles. Accordingly, moral agents confronting with the pertinent question what ought to be done by them, are guided by the affiliation of love and attitude of care and compassion. In this context, the most pin pointed question that needs an immediate answer is, how an ethics of care is related to environmental issues? An ethics of care related to virtue ethics is very much relevant to the prevailing situation of environmental degradation. It guides moral agent to love and care for nature and thereby safeguard nature from deterioration. We have already discussed that an attitude of love, care and compassion very much related to the feminist nature actually gives birth to an ethics of care. The application of care and virtue ethics very much related to the feminine principles of love and care is likely to block environmental degradation to a greater extent. In other words, we may say that 'care ethics' forms an integral part of

environmental ethics where the main objective is to block environmental degradation. Assimilating the points of the aforesaid paragraph it may be said that the objective of ecofeminism, care ethics and environmental ethics is more or less the same and they are very much related to each other. In fact, ecofeminism is an integral part of environmental ethics in which the domination and exploitation of both women and nature is vehemently protested through the application of a kind of ethics based on love and care which is very much situational and does not get bogged down with abstract questions related to non-situational traditional ethics. Rather, an ethics of care deals with the issue: Do we care about nature? What relationship do we hold with the natural surroundings including its entire species? An ethics of care is mostly concerned with the question: how we ought to exist in relationship with our natural surroundings? The application of care ethics is well illustrated in Leopold's injection where he says that we must first come to 'love, respect and admire the land;', before applying the abstract principles of land ethics. The 'Chipko Movement' where women were found embracing trees in order to protect them from rampant felling or exploitation is another glaring illustration of the application of care ethics.

Besides care ethics ecofeminism further extends environmental movement towards women's spirituality in which a spiritual bond between women and nature is pleaded for. This view, of course, stands against western mainstream religion where God is seen outside nature. In western mainstream religion, nature is supposed to be mere matter which is passive, inert, shapeless and dead. Nature is something created by God who has breathed life into it. If women are associated with nature, women are identified as passive, dependent on their bodies. In this regard, mainstream religion very often sees women as lacking the special spirituality that would qualify them as priests, popes, ministers and so on. Thus, there underlies a duality between women and nature. Cultural ecofeminists oppose mainstream

religious stand by bringing the concept of women's spirituality. They intuit a trio-conceptual identification amongst women, nature and the Divine. Recalling ancient religious where God was identified both as the Earth itself and as women, cultural ecofeminists honour spirituality where Goddess is immanent in nature and the natural world is revealed as Divine. Accordingly, the Earth itself is worshiped as Divine and caring for and loving the earth is an ecological responsibility and spiritual upliftment of women. Celebrating Mother Nature (the Greek Goddess Gaia) becomes the way for women's spirituality to rejoice in the sacredness of women and nature.

### **Transformative Feminism: A New Wing of Ecofeminism:**

Very recently, we witness a new form of ecofeminism which is theoretically called 'transformative ecofeminism' which somehow or other attempts to modify the existing form of ecofeminism. Although much literatures are not available on this issue, however its objective is to separate women from men by introducing care ethics. It attempts to establish the close proximity between women and nature and thereby tries to annihilate the so-called dualism between men and women. It also rules out the logic of domination prevailing in mainstream ethics. This view is propounded by Plumwood who intuits transformative feminism as the feminism of uncritical reversal, and sees it as perpetuating women's oppression in a new subtle form. Instead of cultural ecofeminism rooted in radical feminism, ecofeminists like Plumwood and Warren seem to have conceived a third wave of feminism known as integral and transformative feminism. We have seen that the first wave of feminism is rooted in liberal feminism which seeks to end any form of discrimination between men and women and thereby tries to attain equality for women. However, the problem of liberal feminism is that, within the masculine domain equality of women amounts to little more than

requiring women to adopt dominant male traits. This means to say that women can be equal to men only if they become masculine which, in fact, would literally be impossible.

The second wave of feminism is presented by the uncritical reversal of some feminists who promote and celebrate a distinctive female point of view. However, this view again is subjugated by the dominant culture via the logic of domination which justifies women's oppression by men. The third wave of feminism as cited above, therefore, pleads for an alternative to both liberal and radical versions of feminism which views that the domination of nature as well as the domination of women are inextricably connected. Here women have been identified as closer to nature and nature has been identified as feminine and thereby seeks to develop in union an environmental philosophy where the interest of all biotic community can be preserved and honoured. Transformative feminism, thus, tries to reveal the pattern of domination common to the oppression of women and nature and thereby proposes an alternative and non-dualistic way of thinking both for human and non-human nature. It is true to say that a good number of feminists have conceived that culture has identified women with nature. Even, Bacon, a philosopher of the past conceived nature as a woman and nature is to become married to men who will subdue her and turn her into a slave. In this regard, Bacon attempted to associate nature not only with man and marriage, but also with a particularly and abusive type of marriage. Transformative feminism vehemently opposes and criticizes such view. Instead of domination and subjugation of one species by other, transformative feminism celebrates unity within diversity. It is therefore said to be holistic in the sense that it encourages us to realize human beings as essentially a part of natural communities. According to this view human beings should not be conceived in terms of their personal consciousness, thoughts and choices, rather they should be evaluated as an integral part of their social and natural environment.

## **Ecofeminism and its Relation to the Value of Nature:**

Since the domination and exploitation of women on many accounts is at par with the domination and exploitation of nature, understanding ecofeminism equally means understanding the value of nature. Ecofeminism not only explores the parity of domination between women and nature, it also explores various ways and means through which such type of domination can be regarded as morally unjust. It equally tries to restore the dignity of nature in moral context. Thus, it can be said that ecofeminism is largely about ethics, norms and values which could support well being of the whole biotic community. Thus, any attempt to cohere feminine with nature is to value nature. Ecofeminism, therefore, seeks to understand the scope of moral respect, the sort of entities which can receive moral attention and the nature of God which morality is supposed to promote.

In fact writing on the value of nature first appeared in Leopold's Land Ethics in which Leopold holds that current needs and values demanded further extension of moral community to include the biotic community. Leopold's apprehension is not only directed towards the inclusion of ecosystem into the domain of environmental ethics, it also restores equal worth to all species. By attributing value to nature ecofeminism rejects speciecism which stands with the belief that human beings are superior to any other form of life. Since human beings, according to speciecism, are superior to any other form of life, only humans have moral value. Transformative feminism, particularly, rejects the view of speciecism as stated above. Nature for them is no longer a constructed concept, rather it ought to be recognized and valued as an end in itself. Any prolonged and critical pre-occupation with values concerning nature and human interaction with non-human organic reality is likely to lead to some recognition of the strange conceptual genesis, history and the force of nature. Unfortunately, men, the possessor of reason exploit nature as a

means to themselves and as a matter of fact the meaning of nature has undergone innumerable transformations. William Cronon, an eminent historian recently says that 'nature is not merely so natural as it seems. Instead, it is a profoundly human construction.'<sup>42</sup>

According to the ecofeminists any form of oppression or its expression is morally illegitimate. Such rejection is basically rooted in the belief that oppressive practices and ideologies harm something of value. Thus oppression and subjugation of women virtually means devaluation of women who individually and categorically share historical, social and political identities with natural communities and environment. The foundation of ethics according to ecofeminists begins with the assertion of the value of our lives, our environment and nature.

According to ecofeminists, ethical interpretations are centred on women's lives, their oppression and nature. Ecofeminists claim that women possess value which is non-instrumental. Since women are akin to nature and hence nature too possesses non-instrumental value. Since women, human beings at large, communities and natural objects and systems possess instrumental value, one should avoid harming them.

Ecological feminism or ecofeminism begins with the conception of human wellbeing which directly follows from the normative implication of feminism which desire to promote the flourishing of women and others. Flourishing of both women and nature is the prime objective of ecofeminism. The underlying philosophical commitment of ecofeminism is to confer moral value on women as well as on nature and identify both as moral agents. In this regard, it may be said that ecofeminism conceives of a moral community with both human and biotic species as its members enjoying moral value. In this regard, feminist ethics appears to be ecological feminism. In trying to confer moral value on women and nature, ecofeminism tries to

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<sup>42</sup> Cronon, William (ed.). : *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 1995, p.25.

highlight the interest of the oppressed communities (nature and women) and treat them as ethically significant. Historically, socially, economically and even philosophically women and nature are not treated as significant moral agents who have become objects of oppression and subjugation. Even mainstream and traditional ethical theories justify mistreatment and exploitation of women and nature. Ecofeminism revolts against the devaluation of both women and nature and strives towards bestowing moral value and treating both as significant moral agents deserving adequate honour and respect to be treated and handled with care and compassion. Thus, the goal or objective of ecofeminism is to construct, uncover and articulate ethics that addresses the patterns and particularities of human agency that create a world riddled with an incredible degree of environmental degradation and human oppression. It tries to correlate women and nature and restore the value of nature as well as the women.

### **Observation:**

We have examined and outlined the objective of ecofeminism in many contexts and thereby cognized that there underlies a close proximity between women and nature. We have no doubt in mind that any form of exploitation and subjugation of women equally leads to the exploitation and extinction of nature and vice versa. However, one thing which is important to note here is that whether the relationship between women and nature as marked by ecofeminism is universal or historical (cultural) is a matter of controversy that deserves a clear cut verdict. Divergence of opinions have been found and discussed. If the relationship between women and nature is based on essence, then the supposed relation is called universal and if it is based on culture, it is called historical. In fact those who stand by the universal relation between women and nature would like to say that any attempt to glorify the motherhood or feminity stems from a reliance on essentialising concept. It may be criticized by saying that any attempt of equating women with nature, women with mother and women with



feminism is not a sound idea either practically or theoretically. If there is any parallelism between women and nature, it actually hinges on essentialism. However, the essentialist approach may not be uncritical and its criticism is theoretically known as anti-essentialism or post modernism. Anti-essentialism or post modernism stands with the idea that the view that women-nature relationship based on essence is uncalled for. It holds that there underlies no essence in context of external, universal and no truths about women relying on essences. This means that a woman is a fiction and the concept of women and gender is nothing but a social construction and in no sense based on metaphysical truth. It further holds that women's universal similarities actually supercede their differences from each other. Thus the claim that woman is closer to nature than men attribute some essential features to women by means of which women are identified with nature. However, such view is not tenable.

We think that the relationship between women and nature cannot be justified by denying either any one of the views stated above. If we look back to the religions and scriptures of the ancient past, it appears that there are plenty of literatures that favoured the essentialistic approach of the relationship between women and nature. Accordingly, we can say that the concept of essentialism in its true sense is not inherently problematic. Equally, the view of post modernism is not altogether irrelevant. In fact in the prevailing patriarchal society, we witness many instances of domination of women based on culture. Thus, we can say that although ecofeminism pleads for essentialism, we have witnessed some conceptual connections and practical relationships articulated by ecofeminists not based on essentialism. Barring essentialism, women and nature are interwoven through cultural construction, practices and biological constitution. In fact when ecofeminists draw the essentialistic apprehension or when they claim that 'women are the mother of earth', they certainly do not take the monolithic stand regarding women, rather they intend to have multiple intentions and meanings

that mothering is necessarily connected to being female and that the female relationship to the planet and its inhabitants ought to be material (post modernism).

Thus women are usually mothers who give birth to future generations and are uniquely relevant to taking care of life on earth. This again confirms that women are socially constructed and are to be identified with mothering in most cultures, perhaps in all. In fact within the prevailing socio-political background, the problem of ecofeminism is more relevant in context of social factors. Accordingly, the relationship between women and nature can be approached pluralistically rather than in a monolithic manner. Indeed we cannot ignore the ways in which these and other subjugating concepts and categories are parasitic and symbolic upon each other. They are enacted on each other and become refined through practice. They even criss-cross in and through people's lines, conceptual schemes and socio-political situations.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Deep Ecological Movement

#### **Introductory:**

The objective of non-anthropocentrism can further be strengthened with the introduction of deep ecological movement. Deep ecology is an umbrella concept as it has been used in a variety of ways. Unlike Land Ethics of Leopold, deep ecology has not been developed out of one primary source; rather it incorporates a general description of all non-anthropocentric theories. The term 'deep ecology' was coined by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher, and the concept was subsequently developed and comprehended by many environmental philosophers and ethicists.

#### **What is deep ecology?**

The term Deep Ecology was coined by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in his "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary." Naess says, "The essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions. The adjective 'deep' stresses that we ask why and how, where others do not."<sup>43</sup> Naess further says that the deep ecology movement tries to clarify the fundamental presuppositions underlying our economic approach in terms of value priorities, philosophy, and religion. As deep ecology asking deep questions, it refers only to the depth of questioning and not to the contents of any answer to these questions. Deep ecologists typically do have substantive views that can be characterized as nonanthropocentric or ecocentric. According to Devall and Sessions deep ecology subscribes to two fundamental norms, such as, biocentric egalitarianism and self-realization. In fact Fox singles out the idea of self-realization as

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<sup>43</sup> Naess, Arne, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary", *Inquiry* 16(1) spring, 1973. p.43

central to his views and renames his development of the idea 'transpersonal ecology'.

Biocentric egalitarianism is the claim that all living things are of equal moral worth or equal intrinsic value. Here the term 'living' or life is used in a broad sense. It includes the land as such which incorporates watersheds, landscapes, ecosystems. The central idea is that human are in nature and in no way "above or outside of nature."

<sup>44</sup> In outlining the concept of biocentric egalitarianism, Naess says, "The ecological field-worker acquires a deep-seated respect ...for ways and forms of life. He reaches ...a kind of understanding that others reserve for fellow men and for a narrow section of ways and forms of life. To the ecological field-worker, the equal right to live and blossom is an intuitively clear and obvious value axiom. Its restriction to humans is an anthropocentrism with detrimental efforts upon the life quality of humans themselves. The quality depends in part upon the deep pleasure and satisfaction we receive from close partnership with other forms of life. The attempt to ignorance our dependence and to establish a master-slave role has contributed to the alienation of man from himself."<sup>45</sup>

So our prime task, Naess conceives, is to motivate people, influence people towards beautiful acts by finding ways to work on their inclinations rather than their morals. In fact Naess borrows the phrase "beautiful action" from Kant who says that a moral act is one done out of duty, not out of inclination. Acts done out of inclination, Kant opines, are suspect from the moral point of view.

At the very outset it can be said that deep ecology differs from ecology. By the term 'ecology' we mean the problem relating to environment. But unlike ecology, deep ecology is ecologically deep. It addresses a second order interpretation of environment. Deep ecology involves a cultivation of ecological consciousness; it is associated with an ecological, philosophical and spiritual approach where the unity of

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<sup>44</sup> Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement", *Natural Resources Journal* 20(2), April, 1980p.303.

<sup>45</sup> Naess, Arne, op.cit. Pp. 95-96.

humans, plants, animals and the earth are taken as relational whole. Deep ecology argues that the environmental movement must shift from an anthropocentric to a biocentric perspective. It focuses on the preservation of unspoilt wilderness.

Deep ecological movement appeared as a slogan that goes against shallow ecology which committed to the fight against pollution and resource depletion. More specifically, it can be said that deep ecological movement being the genesis of non-anthropocentrism actually appeared to encounter the so-called anthropocentrism. In this regard, it can be said that deep ecological movement is a second investigation regarding ecology. Shallow ecology, a nominee of anthropocentrism or modified anthropocentrism, has attempted to protect the health and affluence of the people in developed countries. Contrary to shallow ecology, deep ecology takes a 'relational total field' image by repudiating or rejecting the anthropocentric 'man-in-environment image' in favour of a more holistic and non-anthropocentric approach. As the environmental crisis is the outcome of modernization of industry, agriculture, excessive scientific innovations and demonstrations, an attempt has been made to tackle environmental crisis through scientific means. That means to say, on one hand, in order to tackle the so-called materialistic problems, such as the problem arising out of over population, the decision making body at times is bound to take up such measures which may be particularly beneficial to the environment in general.

Although one can apprehend the adverse impact of industrialization, it seems inevitable for the over populated countries suffering from unemployment and under development to still march towards industrialisation despite its adverse long term impacts on environment since it provides job opportunities for many. Through such activities the environment gets damaged. Some scientific measures are adopted to heal the damaged environment, but such endeavours are mostly futile. Development of the society cannot be halted; it should be carried on to meet the needs of the people. The question then is: what

development procedure or process should be adopted to keep the environment safe? It is really high time to realize that if development is still carried out without any thought about the environment, the world would face a total disaster without any chance of revival

So the question that needs to be addressed here is that in what sense the term 'development' is taken care of? We do develop, we need development, a cultural upliftment and this is a part of human innovation and it would perhaps be required in order to tackle some contextual materialistic demands and needs. But the term 'development' should not be conceived in terms of the phrase 'how we can develop', rather it should be conceived in terms of the phrase 'how we should develop'. Unfortunately, modern man in most cases use the term development in terms of can, rather than in terms of should. This is the nature of anthropocentrism, shallow ecological perception which is vehemently rejected by deep ecological movement. Unfortunately, instead of exploring the underlying environmental causes shallow approach looks at the immediate effects of environmental crisis arising out of an extreme form of anthropocentrism. That is why we propose to designate deep ecology as a modified version of anthropocentrism. It is really a dilemma to the most educated, affluent class of the globe, decision making bodies, the representative of the government, who on the one hand either directly damages environment or take a decision that would unknowingly damage the environment for fulfilling their unlimited greed, either in terms of money or in terms of fame. With the advancement of science and technology they sometimes take some ad hoc scientific measurements in order to cope up with the adverse impacts on the environment. Superfluously, this is the common practices that are mostly done. The net loss is the deterioration of our natural environment.

Here lies the importance or necessity of deep ecology that incorporates a wide variety of approaches. The objective of deep ecological movement is to investigate and unearth the so-called causes of

environmental crisis and thereby proposes a way out of this crisis through the process of self-realization where an individual can itself realize that his own self can attain highest level of joy by incorporating or merging with greater Self. But such realization requires a radical change in our existing traditional philosophical outlook, particularly the outlook of the so-called traditional ethics where man is supposed to be the measure of all things. In fact deep ecology brings a u-turn attitude towards nature and that is why the movement of deep ecology is known as radical movement. This sort of radical movement can only be achieved through the process of realization where one can realize that any attempt to conquer nature, to reorder nature is a false belief or false attitude of man as nature can never be conquered, it can never be reordered by the tiny individuals. Thus, deep ecology brings a radical approach that would require personal and cultural transformations which go against "the basic and ecological structures."<sup>46</sup> So the existing nature of individuals or humans and the traditions and cultures through which we are brought up requires a radical change and that change would transformation our prevailing attitude towards nature. This change, however, is definitely not a creation of something new, rather a very 'rewarding of something old' which would come through the cultivation of ecological consciousness. Thus, deep ecological movement hinges on ecological consciousness which pleas for the 'unity of humans, plants, animals, the Earth.'

The above remarks of Devall and Sessions clearly suggest that deep ecological movement actually presents a critique of what is called the dominant world view- a brand of anthropocentrism. Instead of the dominant world view, deep ecological movement as a messenger of ecocentrism and non-anthropocentrism gives rise to an alternative world view which is comprehensive as well as holistic unlike the so-called dominant world view. Thus; Deep ecology proposes a radical form of alternative world view that legitimizes the activism of human

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<sup>46</sup> Naess, Arne : " A Defense of the Deep Ecological Movement", *Environmental Ethics* 6 (fall 1984), p.246.

beings. In adopting such interpretation, deep ecology proposes and uses a variety of strategies to meet these challenges. In this regard deep ecology takes the insight from various isms such as poetry, Buddhism, spiritualism, and political activism including acts of civil disobedience and ecosabotage. Since deep ecology as a whole is the outcome of ecological consciousness, the alternative world view as sought by deep ecological movement hinges on some common principles. Following Naess and Sessions we can specify and analyze the principles of deep ecological movement in the following:

### **The Platform of Deep Ecological Movement:**

- (i) The well being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves and these values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes. We have already outlined and established the point that nature has intrinsic value independent of valuers. That means nature is valuable both as a value holder as well as value beholders. Here the term 'value' is conceived as intrinsic value or as inherent value. In fact when we are talking of the well being of both humans as well as non-humans, it actually refers to the whole biosphere or more specifically to the whole ecosphere. It includes the earth or land as such. In Gandhian sense when we are talking of *Sarvodaya*, we thereby exclude nothing from the biosphere. It includes all pervasive intimate relationship among all biotic species.
- (ii) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of those values which are also possess values in themselves. The richness and diversity of life is the contribution of the entire life process including simple, lower, or primitive species of plants and animals. They are valuable in themselves, but in no way valuable for the presence of human beings. According to deep ecological movement life itself implies an increase of diversity and richness.



- (iii) Since life is valuable in itself, humans have no rights to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs. The term 'vital need' means the basic needs, i.e. needs required for ones minimum survival. Darwin's principle of evolution actually suggests this.
- (iv) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. In fact the flourishing of non-human life requires a smaller human population. Ironically people of the rich countries cannot be expected to reduce their excessive interference with the non-human world. They consciously or unconsciously fail to realize that the whole world is nothing but a single whole, a single family where everything is running according to the natural world. So it would be futile to make **changes** the natural order. Thus, humans' attitude requires a deep – a deep change in order to have substantial richness and diversity. This will require a substantially lesser human population.
- (v) Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. Human being the citizens of the biotic community or being the child of **Devivasundhara** may utilize nature. But there must be a limit. In the present consumerist environment, nature has been used as a mere storehouse of material and it is conceived unfortunately that nature is there for the utilization of humans. Such brute interpretation of nature leads the mankind in general towards its inevitable destruction. It destroys the richness and diversity of natural life. It violates the golden principles which states that 'live and let other to live'.
- (vi) Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present. No one can deny the relevance of technological implication. The present generation does require growth, but

one has to keep in mind at what cost the desired growth to be accumulated. Growth without sound moral principle, without sustainability, without protecting natural communities, would no longer be considered as desirable growth, because it would annihilate or extinct the natural communities whose presence is a must for maintaining bio-diversity. Present growth system is consumerist in nature, it is subjectivist, it is directed towards self-determinism, associated with local-community instead of global community, it is not as much as deep rather it is superfluous lacking sound moral ground or foundation. Development without morality is like a ship without a captain. So we do require development, but it should be sustainable and this sustainability can be retained if the development process would be a deep one where the planner of this development is a virtuous being. The planner or the developer comes to realize why and how one should develop in order to mitigate the first order requirement arising out of over population. So long the development process maintains sustainability, visualizes the relevance of bio-diversity, there is nothing wrong with it. Unfortunately, the present ecology of human society is mainly attached with self-determination, local community, and thereby prefers to act locally rather than globally. It is the individualist or subjective act that runs with false belief. It is revealed that world body as such and the governments of third world countries in particular are very much reluctant regarding deep ecological issues and principles. The so-called cultural diversity is measured in terms of technological development, and truly but unfortunately where there is technological development; there is absence of sustainability, absence of morality, absence of caring, mutual trust and co-operation and above all absence of universal holism.

- (vii) The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering to an increased higher standard

of life. There will be profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness. Modern society conceives the quality of life in terms of cultural development, but the concept of quality of life is something different. In fact the phrase 'quality of life' should not be comprehended in terms of first order material objects, rather then is something that underlies in the deep concept. Many would like to say that the quality of life is measured in terms of per capita income of the people or in terms of GDP of the country. Environmental ethics in fact goes beyond that. The concept of quality of life is a matter of realization where everything is measured not in terms of economic wealth, but in terms of the safety of the Nature as such. Quality of life of each biotic community can only be maintained where the natural order runs smoothly without inference of humans. Increasing per capita income with the process of excessive interference of nature in no way maintains the quality of life. In recent time, it is revealed that the people of Bangladesh, one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world, are far happier than India and the people of the so-called developed countries are no longer happier in comparison to other underdeveloped countries. This reflects that wealth creation may increase per capita income of the people of a particular country, but in never develops the quality of life where the so-called quality of life is defined in terms of peace and happiness.

- (viii) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes. Deep ecological movement actually wants to change the human attitude towards nature. Since it is deep, it will require an anti-dimensional change quite contrary to shallow ecology. So long such turn would not be materialized; it is hard to resist the so-called environmental degradation. Fortunately, around the globe presently people have come to realize the loopholes of

materialistic form of development, but it has already damaged a lot of the ecology as such and its repayment is out of control. So, the best message to the mankind in general is to change their attitude and approach towards nature, forget the false conviction that nature is there for the mere use of humans, realize the real that all biotic community is just like a single family and mutual love, trust and care is the meaning of life, accumulating more wealth is the cause of destruction of the universe. Deep ecological movement emphasizes on these issues and thereby tries to promulgate a system of life rooted in the deep sense of realization.

The points discussed above are said to be the kernel points of deep ecological movement through which the message of deep ecology can be comprehended. However, there still underlies disagreement whether such points are necessary as well as sufficient of comprehending the deep ecological movement. In fact in environmental ethics, deep ecology is conceived differently by different environmental philosophers by using different terminology. Some would understand deep ecology as 'ecological resistance'; some would coin the term deep ecology as; 'the new natural; philosophy'. Many would like to conceive deep ecology as 'eco-philosophy' or 'ecosophy' or 'sustainable earth ethics'. Ecosophy means eco-wisdom, an inner realization of the nature as such. This can be made clear if we make a comparative study between deep and shallow ecology.

### **A Contrast between Deep and Shallow ecology:**

Many environmentalists would like to conceive deep ecology not in terms of philosophy, rather in terms of a movement. For them deep ecology is no longer a philosophy, nor it is institutionalized as a religion or an ideology, but something that hinges on some fundamental attitudes and beliefs that would motivate for doing an action. Shallow ecology is humanistic, but deep ecology is not humanistic, rather it is ecocentric. An ethic that calls for humane

treatment of sentient beings would have to be radically different from an ethic that calls upon us to respect the integrity of insentient ecosystems. More specifically, it can be said that an ethical system calling for respect for the interest of environmental wholes are necessarily inconsistent with ethical systems calling for respect for the interest of individual organisms, because wholes and individuals have inconsistent interests. An ethic which deals with ecosystems as a whole is called deep ecology and an ethic that deals with individual organisms is called shallow ecology.

In the case of shallow approach technological help is required to purify the air and water and to spread pollution more evenly. Laws limit permissible pollution. Polluting industries are preferably exported to developing countries. On the other hand, pollution is evaluated from a biospheric point of view in the case of deep ecology. Deep ecology looks at the impact of pollution not exclusively in the context of human interest; rather it looks on life as such. In this regard, it can be said that shallow ecology is humanistic unlike deep ecology as it gives special attention to humans. The shallow reaction to acid rain is to tend to avoid action by demanding more research and the attempt to find species of trees which will tolerate high acidity etc. On the contrary, the deep approach concentrates on what is going on in the total ecosystem and calls for a high priority fight against the economic conditions and the technological responsibility for producing the acid rain. Unlike shallow approach, deep ecology claims that any form of exporting pollution is not only a crime against humanity; it is a crime against life in general.

According to shallow approach, natural resources are there for the use of humans, especially for the present generation in affluent societies. It holds that the resources of the earth belong to those who have the technology to exploit them. It further maintains that the resources will not be depleted because a high market price will conserve them and substitutes will be found through technological progress. According to shallow approach natural objects are valuable only as resources for

humans. They have only instrumental values. Accordingly, if no human use is known, it does not matter if they are destroyed. Deep ecology holds just the opposite view. It holds that natural resources are there not only for the humans alone, rather natural resources are there for the sake of all life forms. In fact no natural object is conceived of solely as a resource. Natural resource, from a deep perspective, is not there for consumerism; rather it is there for sustainable development which would be useful for the present and future generation as well.

There is no question of doubt that technological development is mostly needed in order to mitigate the excessive demands of over population particularly in the developing countries. In fact shallow approach at times applauds over population as according to this approach an increase in the number of humans is considered as valuable in itself or as economically profitable. It suggests the destruction of wild habitats in order to cope up with the demands of over population. As the social relations of animals are ignored in the shallow approach, decreasing wild habitat areas is economically acceptable. But deep ecology runs the other way round. It tells us that excessive population is environmentally unwanted as it will bring human population explosion. It holds that proper biotic society can be only be sustained by population reduction.

As far as cultural diversification is concerned, there underlies a subtle distinction between deep and shallow approach. Present society conceives cultural diversification in terms of wealth, in terms of scientific and universal adoption of western technology. Here cultural diversification is comprehended in terms of articulation rather than creation. Consumerist approach or domination is the key to shaping cultural diversification of modern man. It is very often said that a particular family is culturally sound, because of the fact that it is not only educationally sound, but also economically affluent. Deep ecology, on the contrary, seeks for creative and aesthetic values in determining the cultural diversification of a society. It holds that

without cultural realization, without creation, no society can be regarded as culturally sound. So protection of non-industrial cultures from the invasion of industrial societies is the main objective of deep ecology. Unlike shallow ecology, deep ecology gives importance on the biological richness as well as diversity of life forms. Shallow ecology, on the contrary, tries to establish a monolithic type of life system which can only be attained by a considerable extinction of other forms of life. Thus, it can be said that deep ecology tries to maintain its deep relation with other natural beings and shallow ecology exactly tries to do the other way round as it tries to alienate man from nature. So deep ecology tries to bring a cultural anthropology along with sound education in the prevailing industrial societies so that sustainable development can well be taken up for the generation to come.

Unlike shallow ecology, deep ecology is very much concerned with land and sea ethics. The celebrated article of Leopold also recalls the sensitivity of land ethics. Shallow ecological movement tries to conceptualize the land as such in terms of its fragments which is very much detrimental to nature as such, because such an attempt encourages individualism instead of holism. It goes against the law which states 'united we stand, divided we fall'. Naess says, "Shallow approach cuts landscapes, ecosystems, rivers and other whole entities of nature conceptually into fragments and thereby disregarding larger units and comprehensive gestalts."<sup>47</sup> Shallow ecology not only fragments the nature as such, it equally regards natural properties, resources as the properties of individuals, organisms and states. Here conservation of natural properties is conceived in terms of multiple use and cost benefit analysis. In doing so it completely ignores, of course deliberately, the social and long term ecological costs of resource extraction. Deep ecology thinks the other way round. Unlike shallow ecology, deep ecology conceives that the earth does not belong to humans. For example, the Norwegian landscapes, rivers, flora and fauna, and the neighbouring sea are not the property of Norwegians.

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<sup>47</sup> Naess, Arne. "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects", p.269.

time, people-from heads of state to the members of rural communities-will most readily be brought to demand conservation if they themselves recognize the contribution of conservation to the achievement of their needs as perceived by them, and the solution of their problems, as perceived by them.”<sup>48</sup> Unlike shallow approach, the deep ecological approach gives importance on vital needs. It activates mental energy and strengthens motivation. Shallow ecology makes humans more passive and disinterested towards nature, life-style related issues and environmental issues. It only looks at the non-technical aspects of environmental problems. Shallow ecology tries to evaluate environmental issues in terms of use values or instrumental values. On the contrary, deep ecology views dominant economic approach in terms of value priorities. This reflects that unlike shallow ecology, the deep ecological movement senses something deeper. Realizations of the deep changes make us realize the necessity of questioning everything. According to Naess, deep ecology entails, “.....rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total-field image. Organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relationships. 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. The total field image dissolves not only the man-in-environment concept, but every compact things-in-milieu concept-except when taking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication.”<sup>49</sup> So the genesis of deep ecology stands with the principle that there is nothing in isolation, no thing in itself. Deep ecology suggests a deeper, more thoughtful understanding, deeper and more significant values. Shallow ecology, on the other hand, suggests limited awareness and superficial values. Shallow ecologists fight against pollution and resource depletion, on the other hand deep ecologists have deeper concerns, such as, principles of diversity,

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<sup>48</sup> World Conservation Strategy, Section 13.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, Lawrence, E.: *A Morally deep World*, Cambridge University Press, New York, P.241.



complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism and classlessness. That is why Naess rightly says that the tenets of the deep ecology movement are clearly and forcefully normative.

### **Is deep ecology a derivational system?**

So far we have outlined the differentiation between deep and shallow ecology. We have seen that unlike deep ecology, shallow ecology is superficial or alternatively it can be said that unlike shallow ecology, deep ecology is deep. Now let us examine whether deep ecology is derivational or not? We have observed that deep ecology actually hinges on eight points and basic positions and norms which are underlying in philosophical positions can also be found in deep ecological movement. The question then is: can deep ecological movement be derived from descriptive assumptions to the particular decisions in actual life situations? There is no question of doubt that deep ecology deals with ought questions, i.e. sentences at the deepest level are normative and preferably are expressed by imperatives. This in fact makes it possible to arrive at imperatives at the lowest derivational level. So when we are dealing with the question: Is deep ecology derivational? We are thereby deriving an ought conclusion from an ought premise. Here we never move from an 'ought statement' to an 'is statement and vice-versa. In this regard, it can be said that deep ecological movement is derivational.

### **Two layers of deep ecology: Metaphysical and Ethical:**

It is important to note here that deep ecological concept is not a monolithic concept; rather deep ecology is an amorphous cluster of ideas what Sylvan describes as a 'conceptual bog.' It is a continuous upward process of movement and in this process different stages may be witnessed. Two important categories may be mentioned, such as metaphysical and ethical. However, one would like to say that the

metaphysical and ethical stages of deep ecology are so akin to each other that such division at times appears to be futile. They are closely akin to each other or more specifically, it can be said that they are the two sides of the same coin. We think that the ethical outlook of deep ecology is most vital than its metaphysical outlook. Primarily, deep ecological movement is a normative kind of movement where the ethical evaluation takes its precedence. The metaphysical stage comes later. When it is said that nature must be respected because it is valuable in itself; it actually hints the ethical aspect of deep ecological movement. Sylvan argues that deep ecology is fundamentally and originally a normative value system; the metaphysics, he suggests, came later. However, what is notable is that although deep ecology is predominantly in origin a value system, it has been presented as metaphysics, as a consciousness movement and even as a part of religion.

Many environmentalists' philosophers would like to say that deep ecology has been hijacked by metaphysicists. This point, however, is debatable. Fox, a leading campaigner of environmental ethics, holds a diametrically opposite view of Sylvan. For Fox deep ecology renders ethics superfluous. He rejects the intrinsic value approaches and thereby gives importance on ontology rather than ethics. He quotes George Sessions: "The search for an environmental ethics, in the conventional modern sense seems wrongheaded and fruitless....the search, as I understand it, is not for environmental ethics but for ecological consciousness."<sup>50</sup> The position of deep ecology, at least from the above quotation, appears unclear. Is deep ecology a value system, proposing a new ethics of the natural world or is it a metaphysical system which goes deeper than ethics?

Eminent environmentalist and philosopher Naess conceives deep ecology as clearly and forcefully both ethical as well as metaphysical. Searching intrinsic values of non-natural properties assures the ethical aspect of deep ecological movement and rejection of the man-

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p.167.

in-environment image in favour of the relational, total field image confirms the metaphysical aspect of deep ecological movement. So for Naess both ethical as well as metaphysical aspects co-exist in deep ecological movement. The metaphysical aspect of deep ecology is reinforced in subsequent works. Ayer's article on "Intuition, Intrinsic Value and Deep Ecology" also reaffirms the importance of metaphysics. Ayer speaks of a four-level discussion beginning with 'verbalized fundamental philosophical and religious ideas and intuitions' moving through the *Deep Ecology Platform* to general consequences and finally concrete situations. For Ayer everything is derived from the fundamental metaphysics. Even according to Naess 'authentic' deep ecology is strongly metaphysical and cannot be separated from 'Western' deep ecology in the way which Sylvan suggests.

Unlike Sylvan, Naess gives much importance on the metaphysical aspect of deep ecology. For Naess the exact role of ethics is obscure and contradictory. He says, "I have the feeling that morality is not a great force in the world."<sup>51</sup> Naess repeatedly affirms the importance of a pluralist metaphysics by means of which he conceives ecosophical system. The prime objective of deep ecology enterprise is to guide, is to achieve a change in outlook. Fox's fundamental argument seems to be that a change of world-view to 'transpersonal ecology' will issue in a symbiotic approach to the natural world. In these circumstances, ethics becomes superfluous, because the flourishing of others would instinctively be regarded as the flourishing of ourselves.

What we have observed above is that deep ecology seeks to develop alternative world views that echos ecological insights into such issues as diversity, holism, interdependencies and relations. These fundamental questions include what is human nature? What is the relation of humans to the rest of nature? What is nature in reality? These questions are traditionally identified as metaphysical questions. Deep ecology therefore is as concerned with questions of metaphysics

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<sup>51</sup> Naess, Arne. : "Basics of *Deep Ecology*", Resurgence., Vol.126, p. 4.

and ontology as well as questions with ethics. Deep ecologists trace the cause of many of our problems to the metaphysics presupposed by the dominant philosophy of modern industrial society. Deep ecology, therefore, is concerned with a philosophical ecology rather than a scientific one. The dominant metaphysics inherent in modern industrial society is predominantly *individualistic* as well as *reductionistic*. It holds that only individuals are real. It also maintains that humans are fundamentally different from the rest of nature. As an individual human being possesses some distinctive qualities, such as 'mind', 'free-will' or 'soul' which differentiate a man from the rest of the nature. In this sense it can be said that the dominant world-view rejects the so-called metaphysical holism as advocated by deep ecological movement. In fact rejection of the beliefs of dominant world view is the central objective to the metaphysics of deep ecology. Acquiring a clue from ecology, the metaphysics of deep ecology denies the view that humans are completely different from the rest of the nature. Rather deep ecology is committed to implement a version of *metaphysical holism* which rests on the principle that humans are fundamentally a part of their surroundings and in no way distinct from them. Deep ecologists suggest that both biotic and abiotic constituents actually determine what humans are. This view recalls the remark 'relational, total-field image' as given by Naess. Deep ecologists feel that with the relationship that exists among humans and between human and nature, men would be regarded as a different sort of beings. *Dominant world view reduces or annihilates humanity, the genesis of man and thereby reduces humans to individuals.* In this regard, the dominant world view is called reductionistic and individualistic. This view has well been supported by Fox who says, "It is the idea that we can make no firm ontological divide in the field of existence: that there is no bifurcation in reality between the human and non-human realms....to the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of Deep Ecological consequences."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Fox, W.: *Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy for Our Time?* Ecologist, 14, (November-December

It seems clear from the above observation that as metaphysical holism, deep ecology ignores reality of individuals as mostly habituated by Western philosophy. It inclines to say besides a total field image, there are no human beings. In true sense human nature is inseparable from nature. Considering humans as individuals, the dominant world view has broken up reality which is detrimental as it misleads metaphysics. Deep ecology argues that the dominant world view conceptualizes an artificial distinction between individuals and their surroundings and this particular metaphysics has proved dangerous. So an alternative metaphysics based on total field image can offer an opportunity for resisting environmental devastation.

So far we have outlined the metaphysical implication of deep ecological movement. However, one thing should be kept in mind that issue involving to the metaphysics of deep ecology are normative prescriptions and hence ethical foundation is the base of deep ecology. In fact environmental challenges do require not just new ethics, but a new metaphysics. Deep ecology is deep in the sense it starts with new metaphysics and then moves from metaphysical ecology to ethical and political concerns. Thus, the goal of ecophilosophy is to provide a philosophical account of the metaphysics, ethics as an alternative view of reality.

Western philosophical tradition very much anthropocentric in tradition very often makes a distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. When it takes the real world as something different from human beings and human understanding, it conceives the world objectively. On the other hand, human beings interpret the world, conceive it, perceive it, value it and have feeling about it. These human factors are subjective as they depend upon the human subject. Deep ecologists think that this subjective-objective conceivability is detrimental as it creates a bad influence on how we understand nature and how we value nature, a subjective judgment (ought to) cannot be derived from objective descriptions of fact (is). As

deep ecologists challenge the distinction between individual and nature, they equally challenge the distinction between subjectivist and objectivist distinction. Dominant world view conceives evaluative or aesthetic judgment as the outcome of personal opinion which can neither be true nor rational.

From the materialistic point of view one can say that evaluative or aesthetic judgments are the outcome of personal opinions. However, deep ecologists seek a different kind of attitude as contrary to dominant world view. So the prime task of deep ecologist is to rely on stories, poetry, narrative myths and ritual and thereby convince the people to understand these realities. This requires a different outlook towards nature which would be non-anthropocentric, holistic instead of individualistic. In addition to poetry and ritual , the religious concept of bearing witness in the way that we live our lives, along with the 'forceful announcement' of our lives and living in accord with those values, are the other methods for communicating the Deep ecology world view. In concluding this section, we can say that deep ecology is deeply associated with both ethics and metaphysics. They are of central importance in deep ecology and to attempt to strive towards either of them is to present deep ecology only half-clad. The metaphysics of deep ecology should be carried out within an ethical context.

## **Universal Holism and the Extension of Realization of the Self:**

The above observation gives us a clear verdict that deep ecology is a deep ecological interpretation that can be actualized by denying individualism and thereby ascending towards universal holism, by denying the metaphysics of world view means ascending towards the metaphysics of deep ecology. This can be achieved through the process of self-realization. The term 'holism' as conceived by Phillips is composed from five interrelated ideas, such as,

- (i) Rejection of the 'analytic' or 'reductionist' approach of much science
- (ii) Argument that the whole is more than the sum of its parts,
- (iii) Argument that the whole determines the nature of its parts,
- (iv) Argument that the parts cannot be understood in isolation from the whole,
- (v) Argument that the parts are dynamically related, or interdependent.

The distinction between (i) and (ii) is that (i) does not possess emergent properties, whereas (ii) possesses emergent properties. An emergent property is a property possessed by a whole unlike by a part. Emergent property has been emerged in the whole out of its parts which is invisible in its parts. Phillips says emergent properties cannot be predicted from investigation of the parts, but this does not make sense to say after one has the whole, one cannot explain it by examining the parts and their interactions. Just as there are no isolated blocks, but only a great web of relations, likewise there is no isolated being or natural object in the world as a part, but all beings are inter-related with each other. This is also found in quantum theory which shows that sub-atomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities and at the sub-atomic level, the interrelations and interactions between the parts and the whole are more fundamental than the parts themselves. Thus the notion of quantum theory is one kind of holism where parts are dependent on the whole. This is exactly the same thing which happens in deep ecology. Deep ecology as we have already shown has pleaded for a total field image based on the web of relations among all natural communities. Fox says, ".....the idea that there is no ontological divides in the field of existence. In other words, the world is simply not divided up into independently subjects and objects, nor is there any bifurcation in reality between the human and non-human realms. Rather, all realities are

constituted by their relationships. To the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of deep ecological consciousness.”<sup>53</sup>

Although deep ecologists as such has pleaded for holism, but not all of them give the same interpretation of the term ‘holism’. However, some basic or common characteristics can be sorted out of the term ‘holism’. These features can be presented as follows:

- (i) The genesis of holism is that all is ultimately one and the whole or total view is the best.
- (ii) To describe the world as a metaphor of ecology (the web of relation) or as a metaphor of physics (the field of energy) not only interlinks everything, but equally constitutes all that is. Holism actually knots individual organisms in the biospheric web of relations which is a constant state of flux characterized by process, dynamism, instability, novelty, creativity, etc.
- (iii) Since individual organisms are conceived as knots or web of relations, their solidarity within holistic approach disappears. Accordingly, the notion of the world as composed from discrete, compact, separated things should be abandoned.
- (iv) The web of relations must be understood in terms of intrinsic relations, because without this relation two things cannot be conceived as something. This further leads us to say that everything is constituted by its relationship. It also states that relationality is more fundamental than independence.
- (v) The establishment of relationality rules out the subjects-objects distinction, i.e. is-ought distinction.
- (vi) This leads us to say that there is no ontological distinction between humans vs. non-humans, mind vs. body, spirit vs. matter etc. So the two aspects of nature, such as, extension and thought, are both complete aspects of one single reality.
- (vii) So the part-whole division is meaningless as no part has any value irrespective of its whole.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 194.



## **Extension and realization of the Self in Deep Ecology:**

We think that in fulfilling the tenets of universal holism as well as the requirement of deep ecological movement, individual self needs to be opened up. To conceive that all things are ultimately one, one has to open up his own self and it is known as 'extended self' or self-realization. Naess in fact conceives the notion of extended self in this sense and he says that all things are ultimately one. In this regard, he cites the name of Spinoza who also conceives God or Nature as one substance through which everything is manifested. Theory of self-realization suggests that all beings are one; their nature cannot be disjunctive as we conceive in the Western tradition where self is conceived as a narrower constitution. Naess tries to make a contrast between the idea of the self as identified with the human body and to a broader self which stretches far beyond the individual and thereby sensing the vision that all is one and that one's self is everything and everything is in one's self. Humans can develop in such a way that their selves include the other selves in a certain way. Since every individual is physically dissolved, biologically we are just centers of interaction in one great field. Therefore it is physically impossible to draw boundaries of self.

It is important to point out here that when Naess pleads for the identification of self, he thereby means a psychological identification among selves. As per as this identification is concerned if I hurt you, I hurt myself. Here the term myself does not indicate my 'ego' which is generally to be the case, but it refers to something capable of vast development. If we concentrate on developing our greater self, we can come to identify and feel with, not only all other human selves, but with the *Oneness* at the basis of all that is. Naess's twin concept of 'self-realization' is actually based on the intuition that 'all life is ultimately one'. So identification with all means identifying with greater wholes. This leads us to say that the greater our identification

with everything all around us is the greater our self-realization. That is why; the system of self-realization is by far the best system of sensing something deeply. Naess says, "The higher the self-realization attained by anyone, the more its further increase depends upon the Self-realization of others. This leads him to advocate 'Self-realization of all living beings'." <sup>54</sup> Thus, the system of self-realization is the hallmark of the flourishing of all life. Naess says, "The greater our comprehension of togetherness with other beings, the greater the identification and the greater care we will take. The road is also opened thereby for delight in the wellbeing of others and sorrow when harm befalls them. We seek what is best for ourselves, but through the extension of the self, our 'own' best is also that of others. The own/not own distinction survives only in grammar, not in feeling." <sup>55</sup> The above observation indicates that deep ecology insists us to develop our own sense of self until it becomes *Self*. It draws our sense of ecological sensibilities that protection of the natural world is the protection of ourselves and more importantly protection of the non-human world thus can be justified as a protection of one's *Self*. Therefore destroying or reorganizing the natural environment means destroying part of oneself or preventing oneself from reaching the fullest possible self-realization. According to Fox since the world is fundamentally one, one must oppose the destruction of the natural world not because of its usefulness to us, or because of its value in it or to itself, but because 'it is part of my/our wider self. Therefore, its diminishment, Fox opines, is my/our own diminishment.'<sup>56</sup> Self-realization system through deep ecological movement is a transpersonal ecology. It means psychological identity with the ecological world beyond the selfish individual ego. Fox therefore urges

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<sup>54</sup> Naess, Arne. : *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, Translated by David Rothenberg, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.197.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p.175.

<sup>56</sup> Fox, Warwick. : "Approaching Deep Ecology: A Response to Richard Sylvain's Critique of Deep Ecology", *Environmental Studies Occasional Paper*, 20, Hobart: University of Tasmania, 1986, pp.71-72.

deep ecologists to 'realize one's ecological, wider or big self'.<sup>57</sup> Transpersonal self therefore widens individual self towards web like self where ontological and cosmological identification, i.e. impartial identification with all entities, are made possible. Such identification promotes the freedom of all entities to unfold in their own ways what may be called 'symbioses'.

We think that the whole issue of deep ecology actually hinges on two norms, namely, self-realization and biocentric equality. Self-realization is a process through which people come to understand themselves as existing in a thorough interconnectedness with the rest of nature. On the other hand, biocentric equality is the recognition that all organisms and beings are equally members of an interrelated whole and therefore has equal intrinsic worth. It is also noted that self-realization was there in the traditional philosophical system, but deep ecological movement interpreted it in a new way. The term 'know thyself' as used by ancient Greek means that good life involves process of self-realization and self-fulfillment. However, traditional self-realization admits two selves, such as, one is the intention of the ego and the other is the true nature that underlies this person's ego. Deep ecology, on the contrary, conceives one self. It states that the underlying self is the self that is one with the natural self. Self-realization, according to the deep ecologist, 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. It is a process through which we come to know ourselves not as individuals separate and distinct from nature, but as a part of greater 'self'. Self-realization, therefore, is a process through which self comes to understand itself as Self and self-interest comes to be seen as 'Self-interest'. Thus, deep ecology represents and develops a systematic environmental philosophy that is both ecocentric as well as non-anthropocentric.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.268.

Unlike other approaches, deep ecological movement not only confines to ethical issues, it also explores and raises questions of philosophy, such as the questions of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and political philosophy. However, during our discussion, we particularly confined ourself within the ethical and metaphysical issues.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A Spiritual Approach of Non-anthropocentrism from Religious Perspective

#### **Introductory:**

The environmental crisis brought about by the application of modern science is acute, but few have sought the intellectual and historical causes leading to the state of affairs. People are conscious and alert about the present problem of overpopulation, war, pollution of air and water, but at the same time they speak about modern development which in true sense is mal-development or destruction of nature. Human society indeed will never be in peace as long as man's attitude towards nature is based on war and aggression. Seyyed Hussein Nasr says, "To be at peace with the Earth one must be at peace with Heaven"<sup>58</sup> The role, application and function of modern science and technology has become dangerous as it leads to destruction of the sacred and spiritual value of nature.

People living in the urbanised areas of the world feel the lack of something natural due to the creation of an artificial environment by themselves. Even the religious man living in such environment has lost the sense of the spiritual significance of nature. The creation of artificial environment in the urbanized areas resulting from the domination of nature by modern man has in fact threatened his very existence. Modern man has come to realize that "the castles they are building are on sand and there is disequilibrium between man and nature that threatens all man's apparent victory over nature."<sup>59</sup> The domination of nature by modern man resulting in the present environmental crisis can be exemplified in the following manner "for

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<sup>58</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein : *Man and Nature; The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Calcutta, Kanpur, 1968 p.14.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 18

modern man nature has been like a prostitute to be benefited from without any sense of obligation or responsibility towards her. The difficulty is that the condition of prostituted nature is becoming such as to make any further enjoyment of it impossible. And in fact that is why many have begun to worry about its condition.”<sup>60</sup> The same view is also noticed in the remarks of Grahman. He says, “The sense of domination over nature and a materialistic conception of nature on the part of modern man are combined, moreover, with the lust and a sense of greed which makes an ever greater demand upon the environment.”<sup>61</sup> Such a grave situation was expressed by Mahatma Gandhi by saying that there is enough in the world to meet everyone’s need, but not everyone’s greed.

It may be said that scientific development is the main cause of environmental crisis or the crisis between man and nature. “This is due to the fact” Taylor says, “that scientific knowledge of nature is secularized. This secularized knowledge of nature divorced from the vision of God in nature has become accepted as the sole legitimate form of science”.<sup>62</sup> The disharmony between man and nature is due to the destruction of harmony between man and God. For a non-modern man Universe has some sacred aspect. The very structure of the Cosmos contains a spiritual message for man and is thereby a revelation coming from the same source as religion itself. Cosmos is a divine creation, coming from the hands of God where we find the world impregnated with sacredness. Modern science that fails to accept the divine character of the world can come into existence only when the cosmos is emptied of its sacred character. Modern science propagated through its vulgarization has led to secularization of nature. Due to vulgarisation of modern science, cosmos, which was pure and transparent has become opaque, i.e. it has lost its spiritual meaning. In the process of vulgarization of science, nature has lost its sacredness and divinity and has therefore become secular.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>61</sup> Graham, Dom, A. : *Zen Catholicism* , a Suggestion, New York, 1963, pg.38.

<sup>62</sup> Taylor, F. S. : *The Fourfold Vision*, London, 1945, p.91.

Industrialization and modernization, the outcome of the quantitative nature of modern science has created a choking material environment in most of the urban centers today.

The quantitative sciences of nature are accepted as legitimate sciences by modern man and all other knowledge of natural and cosmic order is deprived of the status of legitimate science and accepted as something sentimental or superstitious. Therefore, it can be said that modern quantitative secularized science rejects the knowledge about the root of existence itself. Modern science, although in itself natural, has injected the knowledge of facts into modern man's mentality, but it has failed to inculcate enough knowledge of the underlying nature of existence and this limitation of modern science threatens the very existence of man with all other animate and inanimate species of the natural world.

Cosmology in its actual sense is a sacred science of the world connected to revelation and metaphysical doctrine, which has disappeared specially in the west due to general neglect of metaphysics. The negligence of metaphysics is the outcome of modern science, which is based on the principle of reduction of multiple levels of reality to a single psychological domain. Since cosmology encompasses both physics and metaphysics and modern science ignores metaphysics and is directed towards instrumental values, it therefore neglects cosmology in part. As modern science is based on reductionist principles, it takes no notice of or sets aside degrees of knowledge, the genesis of metaphysics leading to destruction of bondage or harmony between man and nature. Simplicity is the outcome of modern science where there is no place for metaphysics taken as superstition.

Many of the scientists, particularly the physicists, have realized that the quantitative character of modern science has its limitations; it cannot discover the ultimate nature and roots of things. Many agree that science deals with only one aspect of reality, and not its whole. Many of the physicists are now seriously thinking about philosophical

and religious problems and are inclined towards oriental doctrines. They admit either the existence of a real world or that all things and all consciousness are aspects of a single reality, the One.

There are scientists who are least concerned about the relation of science with reality. But many are now concerned about the limitations of science and the problem of the encounter between science, philosophy, and religion. They are conscious about the fact that such problems and complications arise due to the total lack of metaphysical knowledge. They now realize that only this knowledge can reveal the true significance, whether symbolic or spiritual, of the complex scientific discoveries and theories, and in the absence of this metaphysical knowledge the scientific theories and discoveries appear as sheer facts opaque and out of touch with truths of higher order.

The secularized world view of modern science, devoid of reality or nature, when presented before the public after taking it out from the hands of the professional scientists, places obstacle to the religious understanding of things. The scientific theories, laws and technologies of today have taken man far away from nature and the religious and metaphysical conception of the world.

In many instances it has been seen that a very facile or simplistic relationship has been established between science and religion by making superficial comparisons between the two domains. In the process of connecting religion to science, religion is made 'reasonable' by making it appear as something scientific and scientific theories have gone out of vogue. A significant group of Christian theologians have opposed to the simplistic attitude prevalent in certain quarters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even some writers believe in a close relationship between Christianity and science. Some have related the problem of multiplicity and unity in nature to the Trinity in Christianity. Many even say that science has been made possible because of Christianity. In fact few theologians try to bring to life the sacramental character of all creations and to return to things 'the sacred nature of which recent modes of thought have deprived them' They believe that the world is



the creation of God. According to them either all occurrences are in some degree revelation of God, or else there is no such revelation at all.

This view of the theologians, i.e. sacramental or symbolic view of nature pertaining to the relation of man with nature is neither accepted nor properly understood by the modern man. In fact modern man fails to extend this religious or sacred aspect to the realm of nature. Secularization of nature and yielding to the dicta of science in the domain of nature has become significant to the outlook of modern man.

The school of Neo-Thomism, a branch of Christianity holds the view that the scope of science is limited by its method and such methods cannot be applied to solve metaphysical problems. The knowledge of the whole universe does not remain within the domain of science. In fact the principles of metaphysics do not coincide with the principles of science. The New-Thomist view, however, does not provide a true spiritual interpretation of nature, nor does it provide a philosophy of nature for science to show through arguments the drawbacks and limitations existing within the scientific approach. However, the school pays importance to the fact that intelligence and philosophical reasoning should not give up to or yield to the findings of an experimental science.

From the above discussion, it is evident that no such common ground exists in the field of relation between science, philosophy and religion. The metaphysical doctrine, which can be taken as a common denominator of science and religion is forgotten, as a result of which the hierarchy of knowledge has crumbled into a confused mass in which the segments are no longer organically united.<sup>63</sup> The misconceptions and misunderstandings between modern science of nature and the knowledge of natural order which has a theological, spiritual and religious base has led to endless controversies. For this very reason it can be said that today there exists no philosophy of

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

nature which provides a more logical explanation of scientific occurrences despite the philosophies provided by several modern thinkers like Whitehead and Maritain.

One can even say that there exists no theology of nature which provides a spiritual bridge between man and nature or explain the inner meaning of natural phenomena and make them spiritually transparent or understanding. Modern man fails to develop an intimate relationship with nature or be deeply concerned about it due to the loss of symbolist spirit which looks into symbols rather than facts. The loss of intimacy between man and nature is in fact due to the disappearance of metaphysical doctrine and its replacement by rational theology. Modern man lies in the world of phenomena, where each phenomena is expressed in terms of mathematical formulae or nature's material usefulness is explained to man who is considered as a two-legged animal whose destiny does not go beyond his earthly existence. Thus, it can be said that "there seems to be in this movement from the contemplative(thoughtful) to the passionate , from the symbolist to the factual mentality, a fall in the spiritual sense corresponding to the original fall of man."<sup>64</sup> Due to this fall, man has lost the paradise of a symbolic world of meaning and discovered a new earth, full of facts which he is able to observe, remould and manipulate in accordance to his will. In his attempt to manipulate natural phenomena according to his will, he fails to realize that he is in dire danger of being devoured by the earth upon which he tries to dominate.

The quantitative conception of nature by modern scientists has created cracks in the wall of science. In order to fill these cracks science must have a metaphysical base so that all its observations and facts gain spiritual significance. The rise of scienticism in Judeo-Christian tradition, the popularization of the concepts of survival of the fittest, the doctrine of laissez-faire, application of rationality and utilitarianism and above all growth ethic made modern man view the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

natural environment as a machine supplying resources to meet their never ending demand which brought us to the brink of world-wide catastrophe in the form of environmental degradation. Although consciousness about the environment have gained ground among the masses, yet only outer commitments, i.e. environmental laws, policies, scientific measures etc are not sufficient to block environmental degradation. If environmental problems need to be solved, then a transformation in people's dealing and interaction with the environment need to occur. The degradation of the environment is brought by the people and its solution also lies in the hand of the people, which simply means that the destruction of the environment and the restoration of the environmental balance all depend on the attitude of the individuals towards the same. A change in the values and beliefs about the environment is necessary for the treatment of the diseased environment. Restoration of the lost spiritual values which provide a strong bondage between man and nature is the need of the day. A change in the mode or way of living by curbing his unending desire for luxury and confining himself to his basic needs is essentially in bringing about a harmonious living of all species with nature.

In his book *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, Lynn White Jr. remarks that the state of ecological crisis will continue or even worsen until (a) the Christian axiom that nature exists simply to serve man is ontologically rejected and (b) it is high time for man to realize that over-reliance on science and technology without metaphysical base, arising out of Christian attitudes is the primary cause of environmental disaster.

If one has to provide a solution to the present day environmental crisis then search for an alternative world view becomes imperative. This alternative world view based on the holistic approach of the world finds its parallelism with the Upanishadic statement which says, "Brahman alone exists without a second. Atman itself is Brahman. I am Brahman, so art thou, and that which is in microcosm is also in

the macrocosm. Brahman is all pervading; it is subtler than the subtlest and larger than the largest.”<sup>65</sup>

The above statement speaks about the revival of Hindu philosophy where the cosmic consciousness connects every ‘being’ with the rest of the Universe. The holistic world view may be summarized as follows:

- (a) All elements in the natural world are interdependent and are inseparable parts of the Cosmic Whole where the ‘whole’ and the ‘parts’ are constantly interacting with each other.
- (b) Consciousness is the most vital aspect of the Universe.
- (c) Each ‘part’ is contained in the ‘whole’ or in other words the whole is enfolded in each of its parts. All that which exists within the macrocosm is also in the microcosm.
- (d) The ‘whole’ is primary and the properties of the ‘parts’ can only be derived in terms of dynamics of the ‘whole’.
- (e) The essential relationship between the whole and the parts is organic. The whole is not the sum-total of the parts, it is something more.
- (f) The Cartesian division of the world into inner and outer worlds, matter and mind, body and soul, subject and object is unacceptable.
- (g) The holistic approach rejects the domination of nature by man since he is a part of nature and is inseparable. Man should learn to live in peace and harmony with nature.

A proper and a valid socio-economic paradigm can only be built through a proper understanding of the holistic world-view which is well rooted in Hindu philosophy and Hindu religion. The ancient Indian philosophers and sages long ago discovered the fundamental unity of all cosmic phenomena which is very clearly emancipated in the Upanishad. The universal acceptance of the historic world-view will help to create a society free from domination and exploitation of nature by man which will enable him to live in peace and harmony with nature. This can be achieved through an attitudinal change of

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<sup>65</sup> “In Peace and Harmony with Nature” *University News*, 40 (40), October 06-12, 2003, p.17.

individuals. Perhaps our Dharma to the environment may help us to change our behaviour.

## **The position of environment in the eyes of Dharma:**

The very term 'Dharma' is derived from the connotation *Dhṛ* which denotes 'that which holds together the different aspects and qualities of a being or an object into a whole.'<sup>66</sup> *Dharma*, in fact, a system of morality and duty which makes a person follow the path of righteousness. Dharma is very much related to the Vedic notion of *Rta* meaning *cosmic ordinance or law of the universe* which is impersonal in nature. *Dharma* consists of all those personal actions of righteousness which helps in maintaining the cosmic order. It does not allow *Rta* or the cosmic order to be violated.

A brief discussion on the different types of *Dharma*, namely, *Sanātana dharma*, *Sāmānya* or *sadharana Varnāśrama dharma* or *Svadharmā* and *Mānava dharma* is required.

*Sanātana dharma* is the eternal *dharma* prescribed for the Hindus in the Vedas and Upanishads which guide the people to follow the right path in maintaining a proper cosmic order. *Sāmānya* or *Sādhārana dharma* signifies the duties of all people irrespective of caste, creed, and sex. Such duties need to base on the four nobles virtues of truth, non-violence, self-control and purity. *Varnāśrama dharma* or *Svadharmā* is closely related to one's *karma* or activity or activities. The Hindu law-giver Manu held that the followers of the sacred *dharma* or the path of righteousness gain fame in this world and incomparable happiness and peace after death. The Hindu concept of rebirth is also associated with one's *dharma*. It is said that one who follows a *dharmic* life will surely be rewarded and take a proper rebirth in the next life, i.e. a person's form of rebirth depends on his karma of

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<sup>66</sup> Dwivedi, O.P. : *Environmental Ethics, Our Dharma to the Environment*, Sanchar Publishing House, New Delhi, p.7

present life. *Mānava Dharma* or global dharma denotes duties and moral obligations towards the totality of God's creation. *Mānava dharma* is very closely associated with the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*<sup>67</sup> where all living species of the universe are taken to be the members of the large extended family. One can show respect to all the living, i.e. animate and inanimate species by thinking them to be the members of the extended large family. Thus, our *dharma* towards all species of the world is actually *Mānava dharma*. The concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*<sup>68</sup> promotes welfare of all or sarvodaya which is realised through the golden thread of spiritual understanding.

Non-violence, friendship, compassion, attitude of caring, respect for all, broadmindedness and dedication to the Brahman constitute the essence of *Dharma* as enumerated in *Ġitā*. *Dharma* means the totality of one's obligation towards all forms of God's creation which binds individuals with the natural social world. As we have discussed that *Dharma* promotes welfare of all, *adharma* or imperfect performance of one's responsibilities on the other hands inflicts harm to the society and therefore the world as a whole. In the words of Dwevedi, "*Dharma* is rooted in a fundamental view of an ordered life in an ordered world. It is the cohesive ideal in society and the essential virtue of society that makes society dharmic."<sup>67</sup> He further conceives that "Dharma's precept that reward after death can be attained through actions in the world, can provide the incentive for humanity to seek peace with nature."<sup>68</sup>

The role of *Dharma* in solving environmental crisis is of extreme importance. This can be explained with the help of the Hindu concept of *Karma-phala* or the consequences of one's actions. The law of *karma* states that every action creates its own chain of consequences or reactions. Therefore, individuals dominating nature and engaged in *adharmic* activities face the consequences of environmental pollution and various other forms of ecological crisis. This crisis is faced or

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p.14

confronted not only by the individuals performing the action or *karma*, but also by the future generations. Individuals need to realize that the way they are bringing about harm and destruction to the natural surroundings through their *ku-karma*, not only their children or future generations will face the adverse consequences, but they will also face it someday based on the belief that they will eventually return to earth in a subsequent birth. If this belief is strongly seated in one's mind, then he will obviously rectify his actions and restrain himself from harming the environment.

The very word *Dharma* can be used in various senses and in the present day scenario where the world is facing environmental and societal crisis human beings need to follow a dharmic way of life. *Dharma* may mean rituals or specific character of any object or simply the Religion of *Man* or *Manusher Dharma* as expressed by Rabindranath. But to be more specific *dharmā* refers to moral values. Non-violence or *ahimsa* when taken as moral value is *dharmā* (*ahimsa paramo dharmā*). *Dharma* in *Mahabharata* has the notion to bring about welfare of the whole world, not only the humans, but also the non-humans ( *mānusaṃ sarvabhūtanāṃ dharmāhurmanisinaḥ tasmāt sarveṣu bheteṣu manasha śivamacaret and Adroheṇaiva bhutanam yah sa dharmah satam mataḥ*).<sup>69</sup> This sense of *dharmā* as exemplified in the *Mahabharata* is of immense importance in the context of the present day environmental crisis. If 'welfare of all' becomes the guiding principle of *dharmā* of each and every human, the environment will gradually heal itself and become the peaceful abode of all species, humans as well as non-humans. A *dharmic* man or a man guided by *dharmā* leads a disciplined and moral life which promotes harmonious living with all species within the environment. But according to the ancient Indian thinkers, *dharmā* is not fixed or static. It is dynamic and flexible changing in accordance to humans need and temperaments and societal changes.

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<sup>69</sup> Mahabharata, *Santiparva*, 193-31.

As mentioned in the earlier paragraph, *dharma* is related to values. Values regulate a man's life and his activities. Among the three objectives of life – *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*, *dharma* is of greatest significance. In fact all the three – i e., *trivarga* should be in harmony with each other. Dharma needs to aim at the promotion of social welfare which corresponds to the *Vaisesika sutra* '*Yato*' *bhyudaya nih sreyasasiddhih sa dharmah*.<sup>70</sup> If something is related to social well-being, it is called *dharma*. It entails that anything connected with one's well-being is *dharma*. If *dharma* is taken in this sense, it is sure to protect the environment which is very much connected with human welfare.

With respect to our *dharma* towards the environment, Dwivedi remarks "our *Dharma* to the environment can provide a new perception of reality and affirm notions of what is true for an environmentally conscious society. Also the principles upon which *Dharma* rests, such as truth, moral obligation and duty, can be used to mobilize people to take responsibility for social change thereby guaranteeing respect for nature and development on a sustainable basis."<sup>71</sup>

By leading a dharmic way of life one can overcome greed, abuse, maltreatment, exploitation and destructive tendencies towards the environment. A change in the attitudinal tendencies of the society can be brought about only by first disciplining our inner thoughts. Here *Dharma* has a major role to play. *Dharma* which is devoid of any institutional structures, rituals and other religious practices guide people to adopt the right value and the right mode of living which foster respect and reverence for nature. This will obviously enable the maintenance of the cosmic ordinance and the natural or divine law which in turn would save the world from ecological catastrophe. *Dharma* instills among the people reverence and respect for nature

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<sup>70</sup> Vaisesikasutra 1/ 1/2

<sup>71</sup> Dwivedi, O.P. *Environmental Ethics*, op. cit. , p.19.



and strengthen the decision making process for environmental protection.

## **Religion and Environment:**

It has already been mentioned in the earlier paragraphs about the major causes leading to today's acute environmental crisis. The factors leading to environmental degradation may be summed up under the four headings –

- (a) Human's desire to dominate and control nature
- (b) Materialistic approach of human society.
- (c) Blind faith in science and technology lacking metaphysical base.
- (d) An unconstrained growth ethic in a limited world

Humans have become conscious about their misdeeds and feel that it is indeed difficult to survive within a diseased environment. In this situation the question which arises is how can we work up to protect, preserve and sustain our environment and create a cordial relationship with nature, while at the same time enjoy the benefits of science and technology. To develop a harmonious relationship with nature one ought to delve into the religious and cultural imperatives. In this respect Dwivedi remarks, "World religions can provide a framework for changing out attitudes. Our religion teach us that the land, rivers, mountains, minerals, oceans and other species should be held in trust for God, but can be used for the general welfare of humanity. Our religions tell us that we should consider ourselves only as trustees of the universe, of course as trustees, we are authorized by God to use natural resources, but we have no divine power of control over nature and elements. Moreover, from the perspective of many religions, the abuse and exploitation of nature for immediate gain is unjust, immoral and unethical."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid. , p.36.

In the following paragraphs we shall try to analyze the contribution of some dominant religions of the world towards environmental protection and sustainable development.

## **Hinduism:**

Hinduism is in fact the most traditional religion of the world where we find the sanctity of all forms, animate as well as inanimate being maintained. This religion holds that God, the creator of this world is all powerful and has supreme authority over all his creations including man. It therefore follows that man; the possessor of supreme intelligence has no right to confer degrees of relative worth to the different species created by God. This further indicates that no human being can inflict any harm or damage to God's creations which makes us come to the conclusion that all living species, animate as well as inanimate, humans as well as non-humans have the equal right of existence in the world. We may thus say that Hindu religion is centered round the ethics of biocentrism.

Moreover, domination over the non-human species and all other forms of exploitation of nature was totally forbidden in Hindu religion and people were expected to co-exist in peace and harmony with nature. In various Hindu scriptures it is found that everything relating to the Cosmos, everything relating to the nature, i.e. its creation, maintenance and destruction is up to the will of God. Hence one may say that Hindus equate Nature (*Prakṛti*) with God. Human beings by no means can subjugate nature. On the contrary, they have more obligation and duties towards nature.

The incarnation of God in the form of various animals, trees and plants made people show their respect towards the natural world which ultimately lead to the preservation and conservation of nature. The basis of Hindu culture and religion is Ahimsa or non-violence and it gives rise to a system of guidelines for maintenance and conservation of nature.

The land ethic of Leopold which pleads for the preservation of natural species is found in the ecological insights of Hinduism.

### **Man-Nature Relationship in the Vedic Period:**

The first glimpses of reverence for nature or environment can be found in the excavations and findings of Indus valley civilization where Hindu religion had its predominance. The zoomorphic nature of the Hindu deities expressed reverence for animal life during the Vedic period.

The glorification of nature by the Vedic Hindus was expressed through their reverence for *Uṣā* (the Goddess of Dawn) and *Aranyāni* (tutelary goddess of the forest and wilderness). A number of sacred hymns were chanted by the people in respect for *Uṣā* and *Aranyāni*. Subbarao says, "The natural world was not understood as something apart from man, but as a reflection of his moods and passions."<sup>73</sup>

Vedic man utilized nature for his benefit and his life was totally dependent on nature. But his interrelation with nature revealed his respectful attitude towards the same. The Vedic man thought himself to be a part of nature. The history of creation according to Vedic literature states that the source of creation is *yajniya-purusa*, i.e. a person born from the sacrifice. With all natural creations human beings were also created from which it may be concluded that human beings are very much a part of nature and has no supreme status with respect to other members or species of the universe or cosmos. The Vedic man depended on nature for the satisfaction of his basic needs, but not for the fulfillment of his greed. He was indebted to Nature for fulfilling his basic needs and his indebtedness towards nature is revealed variously.

Deification of all natural elements or factors of the environment like *Prthivī* (mother earth) *agni* (fire), *uṣā* (dawn), *suryā* (sun) etc reveals his respect for nature. The sun was considered to be the soul of the

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<sup>73</sup> Subbarao, S. *Ethics of Ecology and Environment*, Rajat Publication, New Delhi, 1985 p.251.

universe and was therefore revered and worshipped. All these natural elements were worshipped because of their supernatural capacities and the role played by them in maintaining the Cosmic order.

The notion of cosmic law or cosmic order is of outmost significance in Vedic religion. People believed that the universe was an ordered whole created and run by the Supreme power, i.e. God and nature had its own system of manifestation. The notion of physical order is combined with a belief in ethical order and both are brought together in the concept of *Rta*. All the components of nature move in a well-defined periphery and there is a definite order in the occurrence of the natural phenomena. Although natural phenomena or occurrences change, there remains something unchangeable behind the changing occurrence. *Rta* is in fact the unchangeable behind the changing occurrence. In *Dharmasāstra* it says, "The concept of *Rta* was a governing or regulating principles, which stood for all regular phenomena. It shows that the Vedic thinkers believed in certain principle governing the universe, the functional energy that was manifested through certain elements which constituted the universe. It also meant the Truth order behind the phenomena." <sup>74</sup>

The genesis of Hindu ethics of environment is also witnessed in the *Upanishads*, the highest ideal of Hinduism where a harmony between Brahman and atman can be realized. According to the *Upanishads* the ultimate reality is unchangeable reality around which the exterior world is constantly changing. The essence of man is identical with the ultimate reality which can be manifested by merging Brahman with atman. According to the *Upanishads*, Brahman, the ultimate source of the external world and the atman, i.e. the inner self of the person are none the less different. The self or *ātman* is indeed Brahman, something manifested through self-realization. As Brahman is equated with *ātman* the macrocosm of Brahman is the macrocosm of *ātman*.

The doctrine of *karma* finds an important place in the *Upanishads*. The doctrine, very similar to the cause and effect theory, states that

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<sup>74</sup> Lalye, P.G. *Environmental awareness on Sanskrit literature: Gleanings from Dharmasastra*, p.252.

each and every action of man, good or evil, has its consequences. The doctrine of *karma* has an intimate relationship with the theory of rebirth. This simply means that the good or evil deed of man is reflected in his rebirth. An individual has to face the ill consequences of his misdeeds in the future. He may take rebirth in any crippled living form. On the contrary, an individual may be rewarded for his good deeds. The Vedic people had a strong belief in the doctrine of *Karma* and the theory of rebirth. In fear of punishment they revered nature due to which the environmental balance was well maintained. As far as the non-anthropocentric approach of ethics is concerned, it can be supported from the Indian standpoint. In *Advaita Vedanta*, body is taken as the substratum of enjoyment (*bhoga-ayatanam*) of the result of *Karma*. The body is of four types, arising from mother womb (*jarāyuja-śarīra*), arising from eggs (*andaja-śarīra*), from moisture (*sredaja śarīra*) and coming through piercing the earth (*udbhija śarīra*). The first category belongs to human beings, second to birds etc., third to mosquito etc., and fourth to trees, plants and the like. From this it follows that all types of body are the substrata of the enjoyment of actions. Animals, birds, reptiles, trees, plants and all forms of living species have got their bodies, because they have to enjoy the result of action done in this birth or previous birth. They have the sense of enjoyment as well as freedom. For the sake of their own freedom, they have possessed bodies and have got existence in this earth, but not for the benefit of human beings.<sup>75</sup>

Sanctity of all forms of life is the essence of Hindu religion. God, the sole creator of the Universe has absolute sovereignty even all living species, humans as well as non-humans. God's creation is absolutely pure and divine, therefore no creature, not even the humans possess any right to inflict harm on any other species without reason. All species are therefore equal and have equal right of existence. This concept of ecological harmony is very distinctively mentioned in the *Īśāvāsya Upanishad*:

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<sup>75</sup> Vedantaparibhāṣā Visayapariçcheda.

“The universe is the creation of supreme power meant for the benefit of all;

Individual species must therefore learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relationship with other species;

Let not any one species encroach upon the other’s right.”<sup>76</sup> (*Īśāvāsya Upanishad*, 1-2).

The principle of unity forms the essence of Upanishads. The Supreme Being is the universal creator and it is the soul which binds all together. As all the spokes are held together in the hub and felly of a wheel, just so in this soul of all things, all gods, all worlds, all breathing things, all selves are held together.

The whole world is seen to be the stage where each living creature comes and plays its part or role and then exits. One Spirit plays many parts. There is one Spirit, one God, one Creature who manifests himself in so many forms. The living creatures have their entrances and exits, i.e. as long as the Soul or Spirit is within them, they play their role on the world and their death means depart of the soul from their body, i.e. matter. We may thus say that, “Matter is in tension with the Spirit, but Spirit, step by evolutionary step, comes into its own.”<sup>77</sup>

The cosmic view of Hinduism visualizes all humans as an intrinsic part of nature. Among all creatures of the Supreme, humans are one and do not occupy any special position by virtue of their special qualities. The unitive view of Hinduism is in close tie with Deep ecology where human beings are also seen as a part of Nature. This view is quite opposing to Shallow ecology which is anthropocentric ascribing to homo-sapiens the power of dominance over nature on account of their superiority.

The unitive thinking of Hinduism is essentially holistic emphasizing the whole over the parts. According to Capra and Steindl , “ The properties of the parts can be understood only from the dynamics of

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 82.

<sup>77</sup> Subbarao, S. *Hindu Ethics of Environment- Ethics of Ecology and Environment*, op. cit. p. 269.

the whole. Ultimately, there are no parts at all. What we call a part is merely a pattern in an inseparable web of relationships.”<sup>78</sup> Therefore, one can say that the micro universe is in union with the macro universe. Each individual living species of the earth is in fact a part of the distant stars.

This unitive view of Hinduism fosters respect and reverence toward all living species of the universe. Each species is a part of the whole and all are equal. This concept of unity of life prohibits one to inflict injury or harm on the other which in turn fosters *Ahimsā* or non-violence which is very necessary for the conservation and preservation of the biotic community. The Vedantic philosophy rules out the possibility of destruction and exploitation of nature by man since it leave no scope for man to think himself to be the sole possessor of nature.

The concept of unity of life is very closely linked to the principle of interconnectedness as exemplified in the Upanishads. *Rta* or the ‘immanence dynamic order’ which makes the universe function in a definite path links cause and effect and all species are subject to this natural order. From *Rta* emerges *dharma* which means the binding force and from *dharma* we find the emergence of the laws of *Karma* which states according as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become.

The doctrine of *Karma* as explained earlier clearly states that every action or every deed that an individual performs has its effects in the world which may be immediate or in the long feature. This theory generates a tendency or *vasana* within the individuals to act in a proper manner with respect to nature and all worldly creatures. In other words we may say that the doctrine of *karma* which forms an important part of the Upanishads guides individual’s action which in turn helps in the maintenance of ecological balance. Environmental crisis in fact crops up due to the two main factors, such as, (a) the tendency of humans to think themselves superior than non-humans

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<sup>78</sup> Capra, F and David Steindl: *Rast, Belonging to the Universe*, New York Harper, 1991, p.83.

and separate from nature and (b) the propensity to ignore the aftermath of his actions.

Consciousness or awareness about the environment is very prominent in many of the *Dharma -sastras* especially in *Manu-Saṁhitā*. *Manu* writes that Bhagwad Brahma, the irresistible powerful creator, first created the earth and the sky, then the family of the Universe with various stars, plants and satellites and then he himself made his appearance. Lord Brahma, the almighty creator, created water through his supreme power of creation. Into the water, he threw the spirit which appeared as a testicle with the rays of the sun. From the testicle Brahman, the father of all creation took his birth. He stayed within the testicle for the whole year till the womb became ripe and divided into two parts. Brahman created heaven in the upper portion of the testicle and world in the lower portion of the testicle. This is, in fact, the story of creation as stated by *Manu*.

The environment thus created with living and non-living objects stayed in close association and interdependence on each other in a state of perfect balance. *Manu* says that all living and non-living objects have a role in protecting the environment.

In the earlier chapters it has been maintained that human beings especially modern man look upon nature as 'a storehouse of materials' to be instrumentally utilized to fulfill his greed. Rampant felling of trees, i.e. , mass destruction of forest has resulted in decreased rainfall which in turn has resulted in water crisis, soil erosion, lack of soil fertility, increase in carbon di oxide, global warming and many other disastrous impact on the environment. Even in the early centuries *Manu* and other *dharma Śāstrakāras* realized the importance of trees and therefore prescribed rules for preservation of forest and fresh plantation of trees.

Consciousness about pollution of water bodies is also found in *Manu Saṁhitā*. *Manu* imposed restrictions on bathing in water used for drinking and other purposes. Discharge of stool, urine, blood, mucus etc, and washing of dirty clothes in water bodies was strictly forbidden



by Manu in his scriptures which would save water from being polluted.

Restrictions against merciless slaughtering of animals and consumption of meat of birds and animals is found in *Manu Samhitā* which reveals promotion of an attitude of love, respect and care amongst humans even during early centuries.

Hence, we see that the true value of nature was well understood by Manu in the ancient period and in order to save the environment from disaster he laid a strict code of conduct to be followed by the people, some of which are discussed in the earlier paragraphs. By following the strictures laid by Manu a man becomes pure through and through which builds in him an attitude of love, sympathy and respect towards the entire environment. Thus, a revival of Manu's code of conduct and its application by humans in the present society can save the environment from further catastrophe. Manu held that there should not be any dichotomy between man and nature, animate and inanimate. The concept of *Rta* which reveals the vision of unity within diversities has made the *Samhitās* meaningful in the present day context.

The revival of *Upanishadic* teachings, especially the principle of interconnectedness is very necessary to overcome the environmental crisis of the present century. The holistic view of the world where there is no compartmentalization of the planet from the civilization should be grasped in its full sense by the people to block environmental crisis. The holistic world view based on the principle of interconnectedness is closely related to the principle of interdependence. Interdependence of man and nature was expressed in Hinduism in the earlier days in the form of sacrificial ritual or *yajna*. Through the preference of this sacrificial ritual people intended to secure the blessing of God, who maintained the generative properties of nature, who in turn depended on individuals to sustain them through obligation.

In the later period interdependence of the biotic species, especially man was expressed in the notion of rina or debt. The notion of rina or debt implied that one ought to return back what one has received. This principle of reciprocity was very helpful in maintaining the balance of nature.

In fact the very term 'ecosystem' reveals the notion of interdependence between the habitat or physical environment and the biotic or the living species of the world. All parts of the ecosystem are directly or indirectly dependent on each other through the food system or food web, energy flow and the biogeochemical cycles whereby the balance of the system is maintained. This is all natural and all parts of the ecosystem exist in a delicate balance of interdependency. Thoughtless human intervention into the natural system disturbs the whole balance.

From the above discussion on Hinduism, we may come to the conclusion that this religion fosters the union of individual atman with the universal Brahma. All entities are manifestations of Brahma having individual and interdependent existence. They emerge from Brahma and are ultimately reabsorbed in Brahma. This philosophical thought behind Hinduism that all is one and there can be no conquest of nature in reality needs to be instilled in the minds and hearts of modern technologically oriented mind to block environmental damage and disaster. Hindu environmental ethics thus upholds harmony between man and nature. Harmony is already there, one needs to discover it, to realize it. Subbarao says, "Since Brahman and Nature are one, we must see the Supreme Being in the whole world, and the whole world in Him".<sup>79</sup>

## **Christianity:**

Thoughts concerning nature and our duties and obligations towards the same are found both in the Old Testament and the New

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<sup>79</sup> Subbarao, S. : *Ethics of Ecology and Environment*, op.cit. p.293.

Testament. Although as said earlier, Christianity advocated absolute human control over nature, there are places where the religion also advocated human responsibility towards nature. The teaching of the Old and New Testaments further uphold that God is the sole creator of Nature and he has entrusted the human beings to take care of nature. These teachings instill in human beings a sense of responsibility towards nature which further promotes faithfulness to God and respect, honour, kind and sympathetic attitude towards non-human nature. Such teachings promote development of harmonious relation between man and environment which is conducive for the maintenance of ecological balance.

The biblical teachings also promote the belief that God is the absolute Creator of the Universe and the human beings are the stewards responsible for caring of nature, but the continuity and preservation of the same lies upon the mercy of God. God has created Nature and instilled life in it in the forms of plants, animals, humans and all living organisms. In this sense humans are not differentiated from the rest of God's creation. The Bible further states that <sup>80</sup>“every speck of the Creation has His divine hand in it; so no human being has the absolute right to destroy it.” One may thus say that environmental crisis of the present century can be solved to a great extent if man follows the teachings of Christianity.

### **Islam:**

In the holy book of the Islam, i.e. the Quran writings on the conservation of nature are found. The Quran admits that all natural occurrences take place due to the existence of natural law or natural order and human intervention into nature with the motive of artificialising it should not cross its limit. Human beings are created by God or Allah, they ought to serve the divine by taking care of God's creation, i.e. nature and thereby “serve as a mirror to reflect the

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<sup>80</sup> Dwivedi, O.P. *Environmental Ethics*, op.cit. p.48.

beautiful image of God.”<sup>81</sup> The writings of Quran uphold the fact that a delicate balance exists in nature and all natural occurrences take place in accordance to the laws of nature. The Almighty or Allah is the Creator of the Universe and human beings are nothing but his creation and are made to serve him. They are not given the absolute ownership of the natural world nor the permission to alter God’s divine creation in accordance to their selfish desire which disturbs the delicate balance of nature. The Quran prescribes punishment for such act on the part of humans, i.e. accountability before God after death. The Holy Quran further states that God has enriched the earth with all His creations meant for proper and judicious utilization. Over utilization of nature’s beautiful resources in the name of development and progress disturbing the natural balance and bringing about deterioration of the environmental quality especially on the part of man is considered as *fasad* in Islam which is a crime and is punishable.

The concept of *tawheed* in Islam meaning unity of God fosters conservation and maintenance of ecological balance. Unity in this sense means unity of mankind and nature, i.e. flora, fauna and the physical environment. Development of harmonious relationship amongst all natural entities including man obviously promotes conservation of nature and maintenance of ecological balance as said earlier.

The Quran further states that all natural occurrences take place due to *sunnah* or the natural law of God and human beings should accept this law as the will of the Creator. Any attempt on the part of the Homo sapiens to change or transform this law will create ecological imbalance or *fasad* which, as already mentioned, is punishable. Respect and reverence for all natural entities is expressed clearly in the verses of the Holy Quran. The Quran also states that God permits judicious utilization of nature without wastage, destruction, over utilization and transformation. God has permitted human beings to

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p.48.

reside on earth as tenant and not as the owner and he has been entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the proper balance of nature through harmonious living and respect for all natural entities. It is the obligation on part of all individuals to respect the God-given environment.

### **Buddhism:**

Love, compassion, respect for life, mutual co-operation and understanding, non-violence are the core words of Buddhism. Various perspective regarding conservation and protection of nature are found in Buddhist literature. The *Metta-Suttam* prayer for example promotes existence of limitless goodwill in the whole world. The *Sutta Nipāta* forbids pollution of water, destruction of forest by cutting down trees, inflicting harm to animals and several other actions on the part of humans which are adverse towards maintenance of environmental balance. Holistic view of the world fostering survival of all species- humans as well as non-humans- in harmony and co-operation with nature is encouraged in Buddhism. Buddhism also prescribes that the biotic community exists and shall continue to exist through interdependence and proper interrelationship amongst the various species.

The notion of compassion forms the core philosophy of Buddhism. The Buddha is seen as an embodiment of compassion and therefore regarded as the compassionate protector of all natural entities- humans as well as non-humans. His valuable teachings spread the notion of loving kindness and respectful treatment of all living species. It is his wisdom through which he equates human beings with the other species of the universe. The welfare of humans and non-humans are very much inter-related, interdependent and inter-connected.

The present day environmental crisis is known to all of us and has been discussed vividly in many chapters of my thesis. The greedy propensity of mankind to over utilized nature in order to fulfill his

consumerist and materialistic desires has led to ecological and therefore environmental catastrophe.

In fact, the pollution of internal mind has led to pollution of the external environment. To block external pollution, the internal mind needs to be purified through proper meditation. The *Dharmapada* reveals the fact that pollution of external environment is brought about by pollution of internal mind. It is said that just as the maker of an arrow makes the end of it straight, so an individual should simplify his mind, which is wavering, fickle, uncontrolled and unprotected.

To simplify one's mind, one need not eradicate all desires, but control them and live in harmony with the society and nature. It is been observed that most of the Buddhist monasteries are found in the mountains and forests where the monks can reside in harmony with nature. The serenity and calmness of the mountains and forests help the monks to culture their inner minds through meditation. The ethics of Buddhism is a matter of understanding a practice of affirming and realising the trans-human potential for enlightenment as an effect. The deeper insight in an individual is generated through the cultivation of it in humans and trans-human species and hence it becomes potential for enlightenment. This is expressed by *Shantideva* in the following way: " Just as a body which is constituted with hands and other limbs should be protected as a single entity, the whole world is divided in so many parts should be treated as undivided one so far as its nature is concerned. If it is taken as divided, it would suffer no doubt. I should remove suffering of others because it is suffering like my own. I should help others too because they exist as I exist."<sup>82</sup>

Buddhist teaching centres around the three fold training of human mind and seven factors of enlightenment. The three fold training of human mind incorporates cultivation of ethical conduct ( *sīla* ), meditation ( *samādhi*), and wisdom ( *paññā* ) as enumerated in

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<sup>82</sup> *Budhicaryāvatāra*, V2i: 91-99, trans. by Kata Crosby and Andrew Skilton, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 96.

*Mahaparinibbanasuta* of the *Dighanikya*. Such three fold training in turn influences the seven factors of enlightenment, viz. mindfulness (sati), discrimination of principles (*dhamma vikaya*), energy in pursuit of food (virya), rapture (pitti) , tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*) and equanimity (*uppekḥā*). These seven factors of enlightenment bring about moral development of individuals. Such moral development enables one to develop an attitude of love and sympathy towards all. Greed and lust which is the sole cause behind environmental and societal crisis can be eradicated through the weapon of wisdom dependent on the seven factors of enlightenment and three fold training of mind. Only advice to follow the path of *Ahimsa* will be futile unless they are entitled by wisdom. This wisdom lifts an individual to a higher level of awareness, to a higher ethical sensibility which promotes sympathetic and loving attitude of individuals towards nature. Culture of the inner mind through concerted practice and discipline following the path of Buddhism can enable individuals to develop the noble qualities of patience, loving kindness and wisdom. With this inner tranquility alone outer tranquility , free from pollution may come into being.

## **Jainism:**

Benevolence, love, *Ahimsā* or non-violence, respect for living creatures is more deeply rooted in this religion. This religion “adheres to the universal law which states that life produces life, order comes of order, and peace can be achieved through peace.”<sup>83</sup>

According to Jainism intense desire for something in this material world is passion which is the sole cause of self injury or injury to others. This needs to be controlled through control over one’s speech, thought and movement. The noble qualities of truthfulness, honesty, chastity, charity, love, respect for all, benevolence should be developed in all individuals to live peacefully and in harmony with the natural

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<sup>83</sup> Nathanien Altman, *Ahimsa* (Dynamic Composition): Wheaton, II. U.S.A., Theosophical Publishing House, pp. 101-102.

world. Himsa or violence through battle, injury, hunting, adultery, and theft should be forbidden by all.

We thus see that the basic tenet of Jainism is non-violence or Ahimsa which is very much related to the three precepts- the right belief, the right knowledge and the right conduct. According to the Jainis environmental harmony can be achieved and maintained through benevolence and love for all creatures, respect, compassion and tolerance for the weak.

From the above discussion we may come to the conclusion that the present ecological crisis calls for promotion of eco-spirituality, a spirituality that desires a creation-centred instead of ego-centric lifestyle. The acceptance of a 'reverend receptive' attitude towards the natural world instead of a consumeristic and exploitive attitude by following the path of *Ahimsa* can gradually solve the present ecological crisis. Subbarao says that "spiritual responses can bring us back that harmony and wholeness between man and man, man and nature, and both with God; that is the liberation and salvation of the whole cosmos." <sup>84</sup>



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<sup>84</sup> Subbarao, S.: *Ethics of Ecology and Environment*, op. cit., p. 107.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Concluding Remarks

In this thesis we have outlined the objective of environmental ethics from non-anthropocentric point of view. One thing must be kept in mind that many traditional ethicists as well as philosophers raise serious objection regarding the feasibility of non-anthropocentric approach. According to them the foundation or more specifically the moral foundation of non-anthropocentrism is question begging. We partially agree with this feeling, but at the same time we strongly believe that so long anthropocentrism in its brute sense cannot be overcome, the objective of environmental ethics would remain futile. In fact environmental ethics, we stated, appeared as a slogan against the dominant world view known as anthropocentrism. It equally distrusted the legitimacy of traditional ethics simply because of the fact that traditional ethics is man-centered and it equally encourages anthropocentrism to a great extent. In this regard it can be said that the objective of modern environmental ethics is not something that can be regarded as an addition of traditional ethics, rather it brings a new dimension in the domain of ethics which either regenerates the dimension of traditional ethics with a new outlook or it forgoes the basement of traditional ethics in the context of intrinsic values bestowed upon nature or natural communities.

The question then is: what is wrong with traditional ethics? The main problem with traditional ethics, at least in the eyes of environmentalists, is that it works under the brand of anthropocentrism. In traditional ethics it is said that human beings are the only legitimate moral agents. The reason for this is that humans do possess rationality and intelligence by means of which they can judge what is good or bad, what is right or wrong, what one ought to do and what not. Barring humans no other natural species

can do this. Such distinctive attribute of humans actually paves the way of occupying the dignity to be moral agent. There is no question of doubt that humans do possess rationality and by virtue of that humans do judge moral actions. However, from this it does not follow that humans should be regarded as the only legitimate moral agents. If this would be the case, then it can be said that *rationality alone* is the mark of considering some agent as the legitimate moral agent. But this should not be the case. Because one's distinctive attribute should not be regarded as the lone criterion of considering some agent as the legitimate moral agent. Instead of that environmental ethics considers every species of the biotic community as the legitimate moral agent. The reason for this is that like humans, every biotic community, either actively or passively, contributes something for the betterment of the natural environment. It is a biologically proven case that not a single tiny species in the globe is appendicitis, redundant. At least science confirms that every tiny species in the globe, either actively or passively, either knowingly or unknowingly, adds something for the benefit of their fellow beings. Can any modern man deny it? If it cannot be denied, then why only humans barring other species can be regarded as the legitimate moral agents? Is it not a monolithic dictation, an irrational verdict coming from the most rational agents? Environmental ethics thus tries to revisit this monolithic propensity of anthropocentrism underlying the base of traditional ethics. Many ethicists, however, would like to say that anthropocentrism, even though not in its brute sense, in the enlightened sense is a must for defending environmental ethics. Even though man would not be the only legitimate moral agents, but surely man holds the key for monitoring what is or what is not. The centrality of man cannot be ignored and anthropocentrism even in the enlightened sense cannot be ruled out. What has been said here is very much relevant, but environmental ethics goes the other way round. It tries to give a way out of environmental degradation through a second order prescription

which would end up in the deep sense of realization, a feeling which would draw a re-looking attitude of man towards nature.

The sole objective of this thesis is to examine and explore a second order way to overcome environmental degradation. It goes against scienticism, materialism, individualism, extintionalism under the brand of anthropocentrism. There is no question of doubt and without science, more specifically, without the outcome of science; the development of modern society cannot be thought about. It has been said by many enlightened group that in the domain of scientific and technological age, talking about metaphysics is pessimistic in thought. Here is a point that needs to be addressed. Science is all right, scientific development is welcome as it is inevitable to cope up with the needs of over population. Nobody can deny it. However, at the same time, it is also true to say that excessive technological practice on Earth actually degrades or deteriorates the biosphere at large and it is really alarming not only for the present generation, but more alarming for the future generation as well. Excessive scientific application within biosphere not only damages the environment, it equally barrens everything in the globe and thereby transforms the natural earth into an artificial one, a fertile earth into a barren one. Robbing naturalism in terms of artificialism or materialism is the harm done by modern science. Everybody knows it is aware of it, but unfortunately, it is the reality that everybody relishes as well. Modern man knows the future consequence of science, but there is no time for re-looking. The attitude of modern man is just like: future problem will be tackled in future, let us strive towards satisfying our present needs. This propensity is factually practical, but morally and ethically not sound. We do not know how to repay our debt, but we are indebting to a great extent which must be paid by the future generation.

So, environmental ethics looks for a way out of this danger arising out of science. It denies anthropocentrism; it starts from bio and finally reaches to the deep sense of self-realization where everyone comes to

realize what he ought to do, where everyone feels for others, cares for others, loves others and defends others as self-thy. It denies anthropocentrism, because it holds that where there is anthropocentrism, there are classes, ups and downs, dualism, materialism, and consumerism. It tries to abolish individualism, subjectivism and instead of that it proclaims universal holism. It holds that as far as natural communities are concerned, humans are in no way superior to others. One's superiority should not be measured in terms of the distinctive property or properties it possesses, but rather on the association of a distinctive whole, i.e. on the basis of a relational whole. It is the principle of morality which hinges on the moral dictum: what is ethically good for me ought to be good for other. That is why the relevance of moral universalisation comes into being. Ethical environmentalists feel that environmental degradation cannot be blocked by scientific resolution of environment. Deteriorated nature cannot be revived in its natural or original form. Artificial resolution what science actually does cannot rebuild nature when badly damaged. Environmental ethics therefore tries to change human's attitude towards nature. Science without morality, without metaphysics causes serious damage of natural environment. So we do require scientific development, but such type of development must be associated or backed up by morality, ethical foundation and metaphysics. Unfortunately, modern science completely forgoes metaphysics and as a matter of fact the outcome of science is aiming to fulfill the greedy propensity of humans in an artificial manner. The problem actually hinges on human attitude towards nature. With the advancement of science and technology, human's attitude takes a u-turn towards materialism as well as consumerism. Humans rapidly are alienated from nature, a gap has been created between man and nature and it is widening day by day. Western traditions and communities now feel, though it is too late, that excessive torture on nature is detrimental and they are now very much eco-sensitive at least theoretically. But there is a serious problem in the third-world

countries, particularly, in the developing and under-developed countries. Because they do require scientific development in order to mitigate the cry of needy people whose per capita income is excessively low. As the third world countries being developing or under-developing are the followers of the west, people of the third world countries adopt modern scientific technologies which alienates them from nature. Thus, environmental degradation stands as a global phenomenon which must be resisted globally for maintaining peace and harmony within the globe. Without proper environment no human peace as such can be sustained.

So we at the very outset deny anthropocentrism and march towards non-anthropocentrism to save our environment, a difficult task many traditional ethicists have challenged. It is indeed difficult to establish non-anthropocentrism within the area of humanism, because many ethicists are in a dilemma about the ethical foundation of non-anthropocentrism. However, we have shown step by step in what sense environmental ethics turns towards non-anthropocentrism and thereby reaches its highest peak. At the very outset environmental ethics denies that humans are the only legitimate moral agents in the moral community. If we look into the history of traditional ethics, we come to know that humans are designated as the only legitimate moral agents in the moral domain simply for their distinctive property of rationality by means of which humans can judge what is good or bad, what is right or wrong, what one ought to do and what not. Environmental ethicists feel that this distinctive property cannot be the mark of designating a species moral. If it does so, then every species has some rare distinctive property and thereby deserves some sort of moral legitimacy. A traditional ethicist would like to say that moral agent must assess the action what one does and only humans can do so by virtue of their rationality and no other species can do it. Therefore, only humans have the right of acquiring the dignity of morality. Environmental ethicists would like to say that determining something as good or wrong is relevant only to the humans; it is not

for other species. Besides humans no other species make anything wrong, they are there in the nature for the good of the nature. Humans try to reorder nature for their own interest, humans count a particular species harmful to them, but it may not be harmful to nature. Nothing in the world exists as to make harm to the nature. This is the true reality. So the moral discourse containing good or bad, right or wrong, is the discourse of humans creation particularly relevant to humans alone, but not for others. So to consider humans as the legitimate moral agents is confined to the human class alone, it by no means includes other species. Environmental ethics is not interested only in one class of the environment, rather it includes the whole biotic community as the moral community based on the contribution every species have towards nature, but not on the basis of distinctive property confined to a particular class as traditional ethicists did in the case of humans.

So, after denying anthropocentrism, environmental ethics looks for a new outlook towards nature, a plea which redirects the arrogant attitude towards nature to the caring attitude towards nature. In this direction, biocentrism is the first major step. We have shown in this thesis why all biotic species have been taken into consideration as the moral community. The biocentric approach holds that all living species, humans as well as non-humans, are members of the earth's community of life. They are integral and inevitable part of nature and are completely interdependent on each other. All organisms are teleological centres of life in the sense that each species is a unique individual flourishing its own natural life and perusing their own good. This leads us to say that no species is inherently superior to other. So to consider natural species as only possessing instrumental value is wrong. In fact all biotic species in isolation do possess intrinsic or inherent worth and therefore is good for its own. We have shown that biocentric outlook of nature anticipates natural world as a system of interdependence of all living things and therefore it completely ignores moral dualism among biotic community. This

realization is made possible only by foregoing anthropocentrism at large. We think there is a strong logic behind it. It is a reality that like humans all other living species do have the right to live for their own sake. So any attempt to extinct non-human species is a bad morality. Everything is in order and it goes or acts according to the natural order. In this process one species survives with the help of other. This is all right. Nobody can deny it, but at the same time it is wrong to say that humans are the sole decision makers and humans alone can order or reorder nature according to their own will and thereby extinct others according to their own will. This attitude is wrong, it has to be changed. Environmental ethics brings the ground for changing this ego-centric human attitude.

By establishing mutual interdependence of all biotic species, biocentric approach equally establishes the intrinsic value of all biotic species. So valuing nature is another dimension in non-anthropocentrism. In the anthropocentric domain or structure, nature or non-human natural community is valued instrumentally. Non-anthropocentrism denies it. Rather it gives equal value to all species because they contribute equally to nature. It holds that each biotic species strives to preserve its existence and realize its own good in its own unique manner. In this regard, we have examined Taylor's 'teleological centers of life' which states that all living organisms whether conscious or unconscious are in the true sense teleological centers of life as they have a good of their own. Taylor's own view of teleological centers of life actually hinges on two important properties, such as, objectivity and wholeness of vision. These two visions give rise to a complete realization both cognitively and imaginatively of what it is to be a particular individual. It therefore overcomes the barrier of anthropocentricity and thereby helps one to realize that all other members of the biotic community are same and bear equal value as humans.

Thus, it seems that biocentrism is one step forward movement towards non-anthropocentrism as besides humans it includes non-

human species as the legitimate moral agents not in the sense that they can judge what is good or bad, but in the sense that each of them contributes something for the betterment of the environment and each of them has their own life and has the equal right to preserve it not as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. After biocentrism, we have discussed the view of Land Ethics as propounded by Leopold. In fact Leopold's article of "Land Ethics" opens a new dimension in environmental ethics. It states that like biotic species, the abiotic components such as land, water, soil, etc are equally important for better environment. Leopold uses the term "land" in a broad sense. He includes everything within the domain of ethics or ethical consideration and thereby proclaims that since everything is part of nature, therefore everything should be treated equally. Everything within the globe belongs to the whole. Leopold's theory is known as environmental holistic theory. His theory is simple. A man cannot live without a tree because a tree gives him oxygen which is a must for his living and takes carbon dioxide from the environment which is detrimental for his living. A tree without soil, without water cannot live. So water and soil contribute a lot for living of the tree. Thus, everything is linked with each other and nothing is redundant in the environment. So nothing is morally superior to other. This is basic science; basic reality and nobody can deny it.

So the question, a very important one: why do we care nature? To value nature must rest on the question: why should we value nature? To say that we should be valuing nature for our own sake is a form of anthropocentrism, because this answer is very much man centric. Humans do respect nature; take care of nature for their own benefit. This is all about science. However, environmental ethics looks the other way round. Environmental ethics at the very outset looks for a different model contrary to the model of anthropocentrism and therefore tries to alter human's attitude towards nature. Environmental ethics denies the moral legitimacy of human's assessment of natural communities. Humans are just like a part of



the nature, a mutual whole where there is no scope of superiority of one species over other. Humans have voice and that is why they can cry, but natural community or biotic community have a silent voice, a silent cry. So voicing in terms of communicable language is no longer important. In fact it is anthropologically true to say that humans did not exist when nature came into existence. They made their entry into the natural world at a much later period. This confirms one thing that without the existence of humans, nature can persist. In this sense humans are created by nature and humans' role is very much secondary as per their existence is concerned. But unfortunately, the present role of humans is *colonialist* in nature. Humans with the help of the advancement of science and technology rob nature, exploit nature, use nature and most dangerously try to conquer nature, and its order. Human attempt to reorganize nature according to their will, but where the will is not to be *goodwill* in Kantian sense, where will is dominated by greedy propensity; such attempt would be detrimental to mankind in general. It is really a big mistake on the part of humans to think that nature can be conquered, reordered.

We think that non-anthropocentrism in environmental ethics may be established under three proposals, i.e. through the principle of sustainable development, self-realization where environmental holism can fully be maintained; and environmental justice. Now we shall develop these three proposals in turn and thereby re-look how far the proposal of non-anthropocentrism can be established.

We in many occasions have mentioned that scientific development in no way loses its relevance if it is applied prudently. In this regard two alternatives seem to be available, i.e. science without metaphysics and science with metaphysics or more specifically, it can be said that when scientific development is associated with morality, with metaphysics, then development of the society can be brought about without disturbing nature. But unfortunately, it is proved that after the industrial revolution most of the nations of the world were inclined towards industrial and economic development by rapaciously

exploiting the God-given natural resources of the world with little thought about the long term ill consequences affecting the environment. Until two decades ago the world considered economic status only as a measure of human progress and development. The economically developed nations like most of the European and American countries carried out development at the cost of their own natural resources and also the natural resources of the third world countries. Consequently, the rich countries became richer economically and the poorer countries became poorer. However, it has been gradually realized that the development strategies so long followed specially by the economically and industrially advanced countries were deteriorating the quality of the life of the people by adversely affecting the environment. The God given environment is the habitat of all biotic species including man, and the natural process as affect the life of all species including man, and its deterioration through unethical and unthoughtful development affects the life of all species. Hence we can say that man is digging his own grave through his harmful activities in the name of development. Development in terms of GDP or per capita income of the people is not all about. Development means all round development, a coherent and mutual way out of development through which not only humans are able to bring about their development, but at the same time other fellow species would be equally protected.

Where lies the solution to the problem of environmental degradation? Can world development be halted to improve environmental quality and the quality of life of all biotic species? The answer was given long time ago by Mahatma Gandhi who said that there are plenty of resources in natural environment in order to cope up with the necessary requirement of all human needs, but not for human greed. In fact Gandhi himself followed a lifestyle which did not bring about any harm or least harm to the environment and he wanted the mass to follow it. Here we cite an environmentally relevant portion of his discussion with Jawaharlal Nehru. One morning during the time of

pre-independence, Nehru came to meet with Gandhi. They were seriously taking about the national strategies. As Gandhi was so involved in this discussion he misused the allotted water by means of which he washed his face. Suddenly, Nehru found that Gandhi's eyes were full of tears. Nehru was surprised and asked Gandhi: what makes you cry? In replying to Nehru, Gandhi said that he made a big mistake by <sup>w</sup>missing the water with which he washed his face. Nehru was astonished and asked Gandhi: Why are you thinking so much about it? We have Ganga, Jamuna and many more, so why are you thinking about? This in fact reflected the environmental sensitivity of Mahatma Gandhi. So for Gandhi realization is the key to protecting nature and restoring its natural properties. Due to lack of realization and awareness about the environment, the people of the world failed to follow him. They believed in short term economic gains and therefore planned out the growth strategies in that very manner which immensely harmed the environment. The world now suffers the consequences of environmental degradation at the cost of loss of quality of life of all biotic species. The world is unable to supply the resources used and wasted by the advanced countries of the world to satisfy their never ending demand and the needs of the teeming millions of the developing or less developed nations. Society must therefore change its unsustainable development strategy to a new form where development or growth will continue without bringing any harm to the environment. This new strategy is known as sustainable life style strategy where each individual practices a *sustainable lifestyle* based on loving, respecting, protecting and caring for the nature or natural environment.

The concept of sustainable development was first expressed in the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, through the Brundtland report entitled, "Our Common Future" which focused the shift in our thinking about the development strategy based on the belief that natural resources are exhaustible and therefore cannot be utilized in abundance for human welfare.

Sustainable development may therefore be defined as the form of development which meets the demands and needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. The strategy of development aims at improving the quality of the life of all without any harmful impact on the environment. It tries to restore the cordial relationship of interdependence between man and environment.

Under such development policy all activities related to economic growth and development should be implemented in such a manner that the environment remains safe and sound. Long term economic benefits for the mass should be kept in view instead of short term benefits for few. Before any project is launched the economic benefit of the project must be weighed against the possible environmental costs. Therefore a scientifically done *EIA* (Environment Impact Assessment) is necessary before launching any development project.

Development projects, like construction of roads, dams, industry without proper EIA as noted earlier destroys ecosystems that support the ecological health of the region. Global warming because of green house gas emissions, acidification of soil and water, drastic decline in the quality of soil, water and air, loss of biodiversity due to over exploitation of resources are the obvious consequences of unsustainable development. We may thus say that sustainable development is the need of the day that will ensure a healthy environment where all living species can lead a health life.

Sustainable development needs to follow certain guiding principles which cut across ecological, economic, social and cultural dimensions.

Some of them may be enlisted below:

- (h) Intergenerational equity – meeting the needs of today while preserving and conserving resources for tomorrow.
- (i) Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity.
- (j) Constant natural capital and sustainable income.
- (k) Anticipatory and precautionary policies approach to the resource utilization keeping in mind the effects on environment.

- (l) Resource utilization and distribution in an equal manner keeping in view the concept of social justice.
- (m) Utilization of natural resources within the capacity of the environment to supply renewable resources.
- (n) Qualitative rather than quantitative development.
- (o) Efficiency of resource use by all societies.
- (p) Strong community participation in policy and practice during the process of transition from unsustainable to sustainable society.

From the above approaches one may say that conservation of resources and sustainable development are two sides of the same coin, i.e. one cannot be achieved without the other. Satisfaction of basic needs in an equitable manner, conservation and maintenance of cultural and biological diversity and preservation of ecological integrity should be the main motive of sustainable development.

In this context, it may be said that revival of traditional and indigenous lifestyle is one way to achieve sustainable development. The traditional wisdom is mainly based on the belief or realization that man and Nature are part of the indivisible whole; they are interdependent on each other and therefore should live in cordial partnership with each other. This view of the traditional societies may be called the eco-centrism view and the revival of eco-centric will be beneficial for the society at large since it will bring about development without any adverse impact on the environment.

Traditional Indian societies have always revered mountains, rivers, trees and different species. The peepal tree, the banyan tree, and the tulsi plant, for example, bear much religious value for the Indians. Therefore, even during the days of rampant deforestation, these trees were not destroyed which ultimately led to their conservation. Patches of forests, known sacred grooves were dedicated to Hindu God and Goddesses. These areas were saved from exploitation due to long drawn local sentiments which led to the conservation of biodiversity in

these areas. Many of the animal species are still worshipped for being the 'vahan' of different Gods.

The traditional societies held that the different biotic species which were considered to be an integral part of nature were the basis of local life-support system. They were looked upon with respect, love and care which promoted protection and conservation of nature. But gradually with the development of modern science and technology the natural resources were exploited and over-utilized which adversely affected nature which in turn affected the harmonious living of all biotic species including man. We are now residing in a degraded environment which needs proper healing and such a healing can come through with the revival of traditional culture and traditional lifestyle which is actually the sustainable lifestyle.

Traditional societies therefore form an integral part of the eco-system functioning. They have their own lifestyle, their own social and cultural basis which promotes enrichment of biodiversity. In such societies ecology is directly linked to economy which in turn fosters strong linkage between biodiversity conservation and economic development.

To attain sustainable development environmental planning and management is very necessary. Planning should be directed towards (i) an overall growth of the society and (ii) removal of socio-economical disparities through proper utilization of resources. We have seen in the previous sequels that industrialization and urbanization along with improper planning and management has degraded our environment. Environmental management which is related to rational adjustment based on the principle of realization between man and nature involving judicious exploitation and utilization of natural resources without disturbing the ecological balance and ecosystem equilibrium is the need of the day. Environment management aims at improvement of man-environmental relationship by imposing a check on destructive human activities, along with conservation, protection, regulation and regeneration of nature. Such management is sure to

bring about socio-economic development on one hand and improvement of environmental quality on the other.

Environment planning and management therefore involves:

- (i) Judicious exploitation of natural resources for socio-economic growth and development.
- (ii) Maintenance of environmental quality.
- (iii) To monitor, guide and restrict the utilization and rampant exploitation of natural resources, especially the non-renewable ones,
- (iv) To control the level of environmental pollution and degradation,
- (v) To make optimum utilization of natural resources through recycling and reusing waste materials produced in one activity to another economically and environmentally viable activity.
- (vi) To assess the impact of proposed development projects on the environment.
- (vii) To carry out scientific research on technologies in order to reduce their harmful impact on the environment.
- (viii) To formulate laws and regulations for implementation with the view to preserve and protect the environment.

Regarding methodology environmental planning and management has two approaches, such as, the preservative approach and the conservative approach.

The preservative approach promotes non-interference of man with nature and total adaptation of man to nature, i.e. man must surrender completely to the whims of nature. This approach is not practicable as it would lead to the total extinction of man.

The second approach, i.e. the Conservative approach is in fact practicable as it advocates man-environmental adjustment in terms of judicious utilization of natural resources for socio-economic development and at the same time maintenance of ecological balance, ecosystem, stability and environmental quality by adoption of eco-friendly and pollution safe technologies.

Environmental planning and management needs to be based on the following ecological principles in order to attain sustainable development-

- (i) The biotic and abiotic components of the environment are interrelated which in turn are related to large scale biogeochemical cycles,
- (ii) Sustained life on earth is a characteristic of eco-system'
- (iii) Resources of the planet are mostly finite'
- (iv) Resources are created over millions of years'
- (v) All living species and the physical environment are mutually reactive.
- (vi) Energy flow in the eco-system are governed by the first and the second law of thermodynamics,
- (vii) Productivity of the eco-systems depends on the availability of solar energy and the ability of the plants to transform solar energy into chemical energy.

Environmental planning and management based on the above mentioned ecological principles will foster harmonious living of all species within an ecologically balanced environment.

### **Sustainability and Eco-system:**

In the previous paragraphs we have discussed sustainability mainly from the view of human way of utilizing resources or human adoption of eco- friendly life-styles in order to protect the environment which at the same time fosters development and growth. The concept of sustainability was also developed during the years of Kennedy-Johnson out of an ecological understanding of both conservation and wilderness preservation. The concept of sustainability needs to reflect an understanding of the systematic connections that sustain the components of ecosystems we call our resources.

The fact that requires acceptance is that all organisms and hence all ecosystems possess good of their own. All living species are disentrophic; they absorb energy from the environment and maintain



their functionability. Organisms capable of absorbing energy and maintaining their functionability possesses intrinsic value, i.e. we may speak about the good of that entity. Therefore we may say that if any entity possesses good of their own, then certainly impairing the capacities that underlie their good means harming that entity. Harming or injuring any entity means loss of functional capacity of that organism. When trees are cut down in a forest area, the functional capacity of the forest like an ecosystem is impaired.

The term 'sustainability' when applied to human beings means sustainability of what human beings treat materials to be utilized by them for their own purpose and is therefore independent of the good or functionability of non-human entities. But Aldo Leopold argues that to ignore the good of non-human entities constituting an eco-system is similar to ignoring the good of the mistreated slave who is human. Scherer Donald says, "If, however, one is to look for duties of human beings towards eco-systems those duties must be relative to the entities ecosystems are, and thus to what the good of an eco-system, amounts to."<sup>85</sup>

The good of non-human entities or eco-system as a whole lies in its functional capacities. Its destruction means degradation of diversity, loss of its sustenance in the biotic world. Hence it is its functional capacities which justify human respect, care and love. Respectful and loving treatment of humans towards the biotic world urges protection of self-sustaining systems. Therefore Donald Scherer rightly says that "respect for an eco-system is respect for the capacities that give it a good of its own, its structure, its resilience, its diversity."<sup>86</sup> Since the concept of sustainability is closely linked to development, the eco-systematic concept of sustainability falls into the discussion of growth and development. It is a well known fact that due to faculty development strategies many environments are degraded. The loss of

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<sup>85</sup> Scherer, Donald: *The Ethics of Sustainable Resource*, *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston 111, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p.344.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* p. 344.

their functionability impairs development and at the same time endangers quality living of the biotic species including man.

Considering the above situation, the question which lies is how sustainable development should proceed? Restoration of environmentally degraded areas along with launching of new development projects in previously developed areas incurs large expenditure and at the same time may not be successful. Such development strategy cannot be called sustainable. In an eco-systemic sense sustainability of both eco-system and human life requires redevelopment over new. Therefore, in order to understand sustainability or carry out sustainable development in the eco-systemic sense, the good of all non-human entities in all eco-systems should be recognized along with the good of human beings. Once it is recognized conditions favouring or assuring the good of all entities should be stably maintained. Thus human actions should be directed not only towards maintenance of human well being or human good but also towards promotion of good or well being of all non-human entities constituting the eco-systems and therefore the environment. Such an endeavour would be sustainable development of the society in the true sense.

The question which now arises is whether sustainable development can be achieved in its true sense without taking environmental justice into consideration? In fact, sustainability, development and environmental justice are all interconnected or interlinked and the discussion of one by forfeiting the other makes our understanding incomplete. We all know that the environment is our habitat and we are all the constituents as well as the observers of the environment. We are therefore entitled to a healthy and protective life in harmony with nature. All biotic species indeed are entitled to acquire proper or qualitative living within a healthy environment. These entitlements involve duties or obligations on the part of international or national organization, governments of different countries with the aim to meet equitably the development and environmental needs of the present

and future generations. An environmental justice is primarily concerned about theories of distributive justice concerning on these vital points-firstly, we need to be more aware about the environment in which we live with more attention to our behaviour or attitude towards it and secondly, environmental concerns incorporate inter-relationships and interdependence of people of the same society, relationship between people of different societies, relationship between people of the present and future generation and at the same time relationship between human and non-human animals and between people and the biosphere in general.

The question of justice comes only when the desire and needs of man exceeds the means of satisfaction. Justice may usually be applied in areas of scarcity of resources. The scarce resource needs to be distributed equitably among the members residing in that area so that each get their fair share. But it is even wrong to think that justice is not required when resources are plentiful. To allow people to utilize plentiful resources according to their desire will eventually jeopardize the environment. The fact is exemplified in Garrett Hardin's "Tragedy of Commons". Let us suppose that a forest area is common for the utilization of a number of lumbermen. We all know that a forest can regenerate itself if exploited or utilized only to a certain or limited extent. Let us suppose that each lumberman utilises the wood of the said forest area to fulfill his basic needs and the forest area after fulfilling the basic needs of the lumberman is capable of regenerating itself. Now let us suppose that one lumberman starts thinking about doubling his income and so exploits double amount of wood. In doing so he may not be directly attacking, brutalizing or stealing anything from the forest. Since the forest area is a common area, other lumberman may wish to do the same thing. This would greatly increase the amount of forest exploitation and therefore cripple its power of regeneration. The harmful long term consequences which would follow are global warming, decrease in the amount of rainfall, increase in soil erosion, and increase in the dimension and frequency

of flood, loss of biodiversity, destruction and extinction of different fauna and flora and many others. This would lead to the production of an unhealthy environment where all living organisms would find it difficult to survive. So in these situations it is practical to determine each person's fair share of common good in order to avoid the tragedy of commons. Such a determination can be made only by reference to an agreed standard of justice.

Now let us think about the components of our a biotic environment, i.e. air, water, soil, etc. All people have a right to use them, yet no one actually owns them. The ozone layer, for example as we all know, protects us from the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun which can cause skin cancer. Owing to faulty lifestyle of the people, the ozone layer is being depleted which is making the environment unhealthy and uninhabitable. Unlimited use of aerosol sprays, CFC's etc by certain groups and societies is responsible for the depletion of ozone layer, but the harmful consequences is not limited to the people using aerosol sprays or CFC's. The burden is felt by all living species throughout the world. The pollution of air, water, soil etc. knows no boundaries. It affects all species wherever it spreads. In other words, it may be said that such pollution is not limited to those people responsible for it. Now if millions of people adopt lifestyles harmful for the environment, like using aerosol sprays or CFC's, some restraint must be exercised, i.e. the use of such chemicals should be limited. But what should be the limit? Here lies the role to be played by environmental justice. Mutually agreeable principles of justice should be discovered and employed in order to determine everyone's fair share and at the same time limit the usage of harmful chemicals degrading the environment. Implementation of environmental justice is one of the best ways to preserve the environment.

Where do we stand now? We have so far outlined the proposal of environmental ethics through sustainable development and environmental justice. We have seen that we require development, which can come through science and technology, but such

development must protect the generative capacity of nature, natural environment in the true sense of the term. If any such development would be detrimental to the natural environment, degrade the so-called biosphere, transform the fertility of natural environment to barren land, such type of development must be resisted. So when we are pleading for environmental development through sustainability, we must resist the so-called modern scientific development based on consumerism, materialism, individual subjectivism where ups and downs, exploitation and subjugation, where superiority and inferiority in terms of material wealth is the sole criterion of cultural development, where development runs with empty ethical foundation, metaphysical basis. Such type of development is no longer sustainable. So sustainability is the criterion of development.

But the question then arises is sustainability a way out of non-anthropocentrism? Is it not an anthropocentric approach? There is no question of doubt that any form of development, whether sustainable or not is anthropocentric in nature. But development with or without sustainability makes lot of difference. Development as we think without sustainability is a brute kind of development through which an extreme form of anthropocentrism has been portrayed. It will hamper all round progress of the environment. However, when we talk about sustainable development, we thereby rationalize ourselves, set a rational criterion of development which is associated with morality, ethics and metaphysics and it will rationalize human's desires. So it can be said that sustainable development in one sense is very much a form of enlightened anthropocentrism or popularly known as weak anthropocentrism, but it would require a different attitude of humans which is unlikely in the domain of rigid anthropocentrism. So sustainable development is definitely a rational movement towards non-anthropocentrism

We have seen in what sense sustainable development is intimately associated with environmental justice. The term justice means what is just for all. Sustainable development can only be fulfilled when

humans come to realize that development must be an all round development whose impact must be equally distributed amongst all. In this regard, it can be said that when we are talking about justice in terms of what is just for all, we mean the concept of distributive justice, because only through this process environmental holism can be restored. It is the highlighting point of this thesis that environmentalism under the brand of non-anthropocentrism actually adheres to environmental holism- an ism where the dignity of all biotic species can equally be restored. Anthropocentrism actually encourages the division of labour on the basis of the distinctive properties, but such type of categorization based on the distinctive property cannot be morally accepted as the outcome of such process or system cannot be enjoyed by all species. Secondly, it destroys equilibrium theory, the balance system theory which is mostly required for peace and harmony. Environmental ethics in the form of non-anthropocentrism actually has tried to bring back humans attitude towards nature in a revolutionary manner. It tries to show or at least it gives opportunity to humans to re-look their own position through the realization process where they stand, what they are doing, what is wrong with them, and how they overcome the harmful actions that give rise to serious threat to the mankind in general.

We think that sustainability is not a pure form of non-anthropocentrism, but definitely it is an enlightened form of anthropocentrism by means of which environmental journey has started. There is no question of doubt that sustainability requires a drastic change of humans' attitude towards nature which is completely foreign in the domain of brute anthropocentrism. Sustainable development is intimately associated with environmental justice, because sustainable development can only be restored through the process of environmental justice. Since every species contributes significantly for the betterment of natural environment. It would seem apparently, that one species is harmful to other and equally useful to other. This is the natural system and one can tackle

this problem in a natural way. A tiger is undoubtedly detrimental to the humans because it will kill a man in the jungle. A poisonous snake is detrimental to a man, but this does not make sense to say that killing of a man or killing of a tiger is the only way out of the danger on behalf of the humans. So anthropocentrism is purely man-centric and it is man oriented ism where everything is said about man. So there is a serious problem within man as far as their realization is concerned. When we are doing environmental ethics, we cannot support consumerism, individualism, subjectivism, dualism, up and downs, rather we have to focus on the environmental holism, environmental justice that will require a drastic change, a radical change on behalf of human so that the gap between man and nature which has already been created needs to be narrowed down.

This gap between man and nature can be narrowed down through the process of self-realization and we think that non-anthropocentrism finds its shape as soon as humans feel that he is no longer superior to others. So in this thesis we have stated with the shortcomings of anthropocentrism and in this way we have criticized the so-called traditional ethics. Then we have spelled out in what sense all biotic species are equal and this theory is known as biocentrism. After establishing biocentrism, environmental ethics extends its scope to a biotic community as well. In this regard we have explained the theory of environmental holism backed up by the celebrated article of Andrew Leopold entitled as 'Land Ethics'. We have shown that before the appearance of environmental ethics, non-humans species were considered to possess instrumental value only. That barring instrumental or use value, they do not have any intrinsic value. Environmental ethics has nullified this cemented view of anthropocentrism. It equalizes the so-called intrinsic or inherent worth among all species, environmental communities irrespective of their distinctive properties.

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