



RESEARCH ARTICLE

SHIFTING FROM HUMAN CENTRIC TO ECO-CENTRIC PLATFORM-DEEP ECOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

We are moving in an age where the environmental issues are at greater pressure and importance. Deep ecology concept is a very relevant topic to be understood at this stage when humans are playing important roles in the environment every day. Deep ecology is an environmental philosophy and movement initiated by a Norwegian philosopher, Arnie Naess, in 1972. He represented the idea of a radical change in humanity's relationship to nature and coined the term "deep ecology". He helped to give this relationship a theoretical foundation. His philosophy portrays itself as "deep" because it asks deeper questions about the human life and its connection with the environment. Deep ecology is a highly controversial environmental philosophy. It has been put out in eight basic principles as a guide for how human thought needs to be changed towards the environment and the world around us. This paper mainly involves understanding of what deep ecology is, the eight principles suggested in the deep ecology concept, the key issues on which it has been admired and criticized and the difference in the philosophy of deep ecology and shallow environmentalism by Naess.

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INTRODUCTION

Deep ecology is a radical environmental philosophy that was presented in April of 1984 by Arne Naess and George Sessions, to gather up environmental thought with eight basic principles. It has been a compilation of thought and ideas about the environment, which was drawn from many religions and philosophies and has really attributed its influence to many people over time. Arnie Naess cited Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* as being a key influence in his vision of deep ecology. Naess also combined his ecological vision with Gandhian nonviolence and several times participated in direct actions in various environmental movements (Naess, 1986). George Sessions and Arne Naess articulated deep ecology principles in a literal and neutral way, hoping that they would be understood and accepted by persons coming from different philosophical and religious backgrounds. But there have been many criticisms of deep ecology made since its articulation from fellow ecologists and non-ecologists (Devall & Sessions, 1985).

The deep ecology movement dislikes the human-centered value system which is at the centre of the industrial culture across the world. Deep ecologists argue that environmental philosophy

must recognize the values contained in the nature independently of human wants, needs or desires (Zimmerman, 1987). The popularity of deep ecology spans from environmental activists to scholars of different backgrounds and interests. Authors have made connections between deep ecology and many other fields (Dwivedi, 2001).

The deep ecology platform consists of eight basic principles, or guidelines for a reformed way of thinking about our environment. It is based on not being entirely exclusive to the living plants and animals, or thought of the environment but it mainly focuses towards the world around us, the place we live, how we should behave in this world and our relationship to it (Ambrosius, 2005).

Deep ecology is based on two basic principles: one is a scientific insight into the interconnectedness of all systems of life on Earth, together with the idea that anthropocentrism that is "human centeredness" which is a misguided way of seeing things. Deep ecologists say that an "eco-centric" attitude is more consistent with the nature of life on Earth. Instead of regarding humans as something completely unique or chosen by God rather they are integral threads in the fabric of life. We need to develop a less dominating attitude towards the Earth if

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we and the planet want to survive. The second major component of deep ecology is the need for human self-realization. Instead of identifying with our immediate families, we should learn to identify with trees, animals and plants and the whole ecosphere. We should be careful in doing certain things that can damage the planet, just as we cannot harm ourselves or the close family members and friends (Goerner, 1995).

The principles of deep ecology are endorsed by people from a diversity of backgrounds who share common concerns for the planet. Supporters of the platform principles come from different religious, philosophical and political backgrounds. What unites them is a long-range vision of what is necessary to protect the Earth's ecological communities and values (Drengson, Devall & Schroll, 2011). Christianity has stressed the significance of the natural environment as God's creation and the stewardship role of human kind but without abandoning the principle of the central role humanity plays in the divine drama of the earth. The "stewardship view" proposed that humanity is charged by God to take care of the natural world but that we humans are in significant ways separate from it and superior to it (Attfield, 1983). The "deep ecological" view mentioned that we humans are derivative of the natural world that we directly come from it, that its fate is our fate. Deep ecologists believe that the creator God chose a 15 billion year evolutionary process as the mechanism by which life and consciousness could flourish in the universe. The stewardship view, clashed with the deep ecology view which has suggested that nature has an intrinsic value, irrespective of human needs or presence (Cheney, 1987).

The unique concept of deep ecology has been given by Arnie Naess in eight key points in his book "**Basic Principles of Deep Ecology**" where his basic idea is that the natural world is a balance of complex inter-relationships in which the existence of organisms is dependent on the existence of other organisms within ecosystems. Human interference with or destruction of the natural world, pose a threat not only to humans but to all organisms which are the part of ecosystem (Naess & Sessions, 1984).

Eight Points Platform-Deep Ecology

The eight basic principles of deep ecology given by Arnie Naess are as follows (Naess, 1986):

The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes

The first principle of deep ecology is that every living being, human and nonhuman, has its own inherent value, and thus has its own right to live and flourish. Everything has its own right to live, to blossom and to reproduce. Each living thing is independent and separate of its usefulness specifically of humans. Deep ecology is about ecocentrism, and not anthropocentrism, it is against seeing everything in terms of its usefulness to humans. Also it is important to note that not just the actual living beings are the ones that should be considered. The non-living things should be given attention they too have importance of their own.

Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves

This second principle expresses the importance of biodiversity in the world that everything is connected to everything else. There is a reliance of everything upon everything, and therefore nothing can be less or more than anything else in the web of life. Deep ecology tells humans to view everything as in the relationship to each other. In the infinite relationships everything helps to contribute to the richness and diversity in life. We need to value the richness of forms of life, because we humans also rely on them. Ecosystems are self-regulating and self-maintaining because of this biodiversity and interdependence.

Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs

The third principle says to what extent a living being's inherent value can be ignored and controlled. This inherent value is only reducible by vital needs of the individual. It is being pointed here that no human has the right to reduce any other living things right to live, except in the case of its own vital needs. This is a vague area in the sense that individual's interpretation of what they define as vital needs. While some would say that vital needs are just food, clothing, and shelter, many others may say that all of the daily activities and ways of life are vital needs.

The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease

The fourth principle is one of the most controversial parts of the concept of deep ecology. This is where much of the criticism of deep ecology has been done. Because of excessive human interference in the environment, deep ecology calls for a decrease in human population, and this will then lead to a higher quality of life. Increasing population is not best for quality of life, nor is it good for the environment, and thus needs to be significantly cut back. By doing so, this will bring about stabilization of the ecosystems. If this is not done, substantial decreases in richness and diversity will occur. This is supposed to be recognized and started upon as quickly as possible; this will take many years to become a reality.

Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening

The fifth principle identifies it is the human interference from where environmental problems are emerging. Humans being are able to identify that ecosystem is self-regulating. There is no need for human involvement. Humans are a part of nature, and are expected to interfere in their environment to a certain extent. Human interference has done more harm than good. Ecosystems are developed to maintain themselves. Humans have modified the earth and will continue to do so in the future. The fight to preserve and extend areas of wilderness or should continue. There should be focus on the general ecological functions of these areas.

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

In the sixth principle, there is a call for new policies and radical social changes to be made. To make changes, new ideals and mindsets need to come about, new policies will emerge on how humans treat the environment. There is nothing which can be done overnight, but needs to be done over decades. It is not something that can suddenly be made into a law, and it is essentially thought to have a purpose of completely transforming every single part of human life.

The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be an awareness of the difference between big and great

The seventh principle supports a simplified lifestyle. It addresses the fact that quality of life should be more important than quantity of things, to reach a higher level of happiness instead of a higher standard of living. It calls for voluntary simplicity, the human reduction of needs must happen but the usage of minimal things should bring satisfaction and happiness.

Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes

There is ample room for different opinions about priorities: what should be done first, what next? What is most urgent? What is clearly necessary? These questions need to be asked.

Criticism of Deep Ecology

There are many criticisms of deep ecology that have been made since its expression. The key points at which deep ecology has been criticized are:

The notion of intrinsic value

Shallow ecologists criticize the notion that the intrinsic value of ecological systems and its organisms exists independently of humanity. Shallow ecologists feel that the ecosystem's value does not reach beyond our pleasure. They believe in the uniqueness of the ability of humans to create value in anything, as opposed to a collection of attentive beings dependent on a perfectly ordered system of life and ecosystem. They deny the point that intrinsic value exist separate from human thought and it exists naturally independent of modification or application of a substance or entity by humans on the earth.

Interests in nature

For something to require rights and protection it must have interests. Deep ecology is criticized for presuming that every organism has its own interest. It is criticized for assuming that living things such as plants have their own interests as they are visible in the plant's behavior. Deep ecologists claim to identify with the environment to understand what the environment's interests are. The criticism is that the interests that a deep ecologist gives to nature and its organisms that, growth, individuality, balance and fairness are the interests involved are actually human interests and terms. The earth is endowed with 'wisdom', wilderness and 'freedom'. These are all the terms given by humans and are found in human behaviour.

Deepness

Deep ecology is criticized for its claim to be deeper than alternative theories, which as per others is actually shallow. As per others, the use of term like deep and shallow is inappropriate. However despite repeated complaints about use of the term it still enjoys wide prevalence; the term "deep" is an attractive term for many who seek to establish a new ethical framework for guiding human action with respect to the natural world. It may be not so good to declare that one's thinking is deeper than others. When Arne Naess coined the term deep ecology he compared it unfavorably with shallow environmentalism which he criticized for its anthropocentric attitude to nature and for its materialist and consumer-oriented outlook which is highly criticized at many fronts.

Ecofeminist response

With respect to ecofeminism and deep ecology many observers agree that the two perspectives have much in common. However, some ecofeminist writers have begun to perceive a significant difference between their perspective and that of deep ecology, the main ecofeminist argument against deep ecology, deep ecology speaks of a gender neutral 'anthropocentrism' i.e., human-centeredness as the root of the domination of nature, when in fact androcentrism i.e., male-centeredness is the real root. This represents the essential ecofeminist criticism of deep ecology. For ecofeminist the concept of anthropocentrism is extremely problematical. By not excluding women from anthropocentrism, deep ecologists totally condemn women for being as anthropocentric, as ecofeminist condemn men for considering themselves to be above nature and for mastering the mother earth.

Socially biased

Some authors criticize deep ecologists to behave as bourgeois. They support a way of living that is easier for people who are more affluent. It is difficult for certain groups of people like indigenous people, native tribes and others to have healthy diets, in exclusion of animals and plants. But in the answer to it some deep ecologists say that food and hunting practices in the case of the native tribes is acceptable, since it does not endanger the environment on the whole as industrialism does. Their practices are similar to the other animals who diet on other animals to survive. Other authors criticize that, that the prohibition of such rules for one group of people and not for others is no finer. There should be equity in placing a concept for all those who are part of this ecosystem.

Indian Context

Gandhian influence on ecological thinking has been acknowledged by Arne Naess. Naess talked about a shallow ecology movement that fought against pollution and resource depletion for human-centric reasons. Pollution and resource depletion were wrong because they threatened human health and affluence. The deep ecology movement favors some form of biocentric environmentalism as a guideline for environmental action (Naess & Kumar, 1992). Self-realization was a term that Naess took from Gandhian ideology. He believes that the ecological self realization is the process of personal maturation and best for an improved world (Weber, 1999). Besides using

Gandhi, Naess also used the *Gita* which conveys the idea of interconnectedness of all beings is important. It means that the wellbeing of any living being is equally a part of our own wellbeing (Satyagraha Foundation, 2017).

Indian authors like Ramchandra Guha have criticized deep Ecology philosophy on many fronts and as a radical movement. Guha makes the argument that deep ecology is not as radical as it appears. Although deep ecologists share the belief that they are the leading edge of the environment movement they are actually supporting highly Americanized environmental practices. America is a land of abundant resources. It contains numerous natural and man-made resources; there is also the vastness of the land. Wilderness preservation in America is extremely feasible simply because of the abundance of space. For most Americans it is perfectly consistent to drive a thousand miles to spend a holiday in a national park. The national parks are not an example of wilderness preservation, but they are also vacation destinations for thousands of people (Guha, 2006).

While wilderness and ecosystem preservation is very important, this is not necessarily the best method of overcoming the environment crisis in other parts of the world. Guha points to decreased western consumption and demilitarization are the better goals to achieve better environment. The Third World is in many ways limited by economic and political positions. Those who need to eat to survive destroy their environments in the process, and regional and environmental conflicts are devastating to the environment as well. Wilderness preservation is not only inadequate and unfeasible in the Third World, but might also contribute to problems of starvation and poverty. This doesn't mean that the Third World should not be considered responsible for their actions towards the environment. Instead of encouraging Third World nations to preserve entire sections of the wilderness, instead we should guide them to follow sustainable living practices (Guha & Alier, 2013).

In both historically and in the contemporary movement, Arne Naess saw two different forms of environmentalism, not incompatible with each other. One he called the "long-range deep ecology movement" and the other, the "shallow ecology movement" (Naess, Drengson & Devall, 2008)

Deep Ecology and Shallow Environmentalism

The dynamics between deep ecology and shallow ecology can be explained in terms of conservation and preservation. Shallow ecology is more of a controlled usage and systematic protection of natural resources thus conservation can be talked in this sense. The method of conservation is used in terms of humans conserving nature for their own future needs (). Humans conserve such resources so that they will be there for their following generations. Preservation is much more similar to deep ecology, in that it is on the lines of keeping safe or attempting to keep resources unchanged, unbroken. This is more in terms of humans preserving nature from human use (Acott, Trobe & Howard, 1998).

Deep Ecology is best understood when compared to shallow ecology. The "deep" movement involves deep questioning, right down to fundamental root causes. It believes in keeping

nature at its original state, free from human interference and damage, with the idea that nature holds its own right. It is a form of environmentalism that advocates radical measures to protect the natural environment regardless of their effect on the welfare of people (Glasser, H. 2004).

The short-term, shallow approach stops before the ultimate level of fundamental change, often promoting recycling, increased automotive efficiency, export-driven organic agriculture based on the same consumption-oriented values and methods of the industrial economy. Recycle, buy energy, saving light bulbs, buy hybrid cars, don't use plastic bags, plant trees all this is the part of shallow ecology (Drengson, 2012).

None of these methods questions the fundamental beliefs of our culture and how our society is operating. We have a cultural vision which puts man at the centre of the world, somebody who needs to conquer and master the environment. Shallow ecology wants to save the world, but only for us. It wants to preserve wilderness areas of the world so that they can be enjoyed by campers and tourists. It wants us to preserve the rainforests so our children can enjoy them or because we need the oxygen from the trees. Save the ecosystems, but only if they are of value to us. Someday we might want or need them. This view is completely self-centered. If the natural environment is lost then it will be a loss to us. If it is lost then we cannot use it. Shallow ecology cannot save the world. No environmentalism can prevent destruction if a culture believes the world belongs to it (Kevorkian, 2004).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is to be inferred from the concept of the Deep Ecology is that it is a set of indications about the real relations of human beings and nature. Compared to other major theories, Deep Ecology has not been framed into a complete systematic framework but Deep Ecology has earned a well-deserved place in the history of environmental philosophy. A number of academic articles and books in the field of environmental philosophy have been produced to carry on its importance from last many years and even at present as it is very relevant to the prevailing situations on the earth.

Though the term "deep ecology" has been adopted and transformed since its emergence but it is basically there to distinguish itself from shallow ecology. The various critiques have contributed significantly to make deep ecology to reach at significant conclusions. They have exhausted it many times in different ways. Many authors have stimulated new ways of thinking about the ways in which humans experience nature and how they behave. Although, the key distinctions between the deep and shallow ecology movements are very well summarized in Naess' and Sessions' deep ecology platform that most deep ecologists would follow but for many they were just some superficially made concepts. However, the unique features of this concept lie in the philosophical motivations that make this platform a key towards getting a better environment and the earth even in the present era.

Deep ecology can provide a critique of the present modes of life that is formed from a narrow conception of self. This narrow self is viewed as not only damaging for the environment but also for the individual. As individuals we will necessarily be

dominated by our own aims but this should not exclude the welfare of our environment, both living and nonliving. A more ecologically aware consciousness is required for humans and the environment as a whole, which can recognize the environmental problems are the result of our way of life.

Thus, it is to be concluded that ecosystems require every member to function properly and equally there is no need for excessive human interference. World as a whole should be taken care of by the better and responsible individuals. Deep ecology principles are something that should be adopted by all humans, and through living these principles not just the environmental problems will get resolved, but social, political, economical, and human relational problems will also dissolve making earth a better place to live. Learning how to live in harmony with our surroundings is beneficial because for stopping the global extinction crisis and achieving true ecological sustainability will require rethinking our values as a society. Sustainability education will help people understand their interconnectedness with the life, to become creative and active citizens, and to engage personally and intellectually in shaping our common future.

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