

## Deep Ecology in the Philosophy of Spinoza

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### ABSTRACT

Ecology is the study of relation between organisms and their environment. Deep Ecology is a contemporary environmental philosophy. It emphasizes on the inherent worth of every living being regardless of their instrumental use for human benefits and wills. Deep Ecology is a contemporary environmental philosophy. It emphasizes on the inherent worth of every living being regardless of their instrumental use for human benefits and wills. Spinoza is against the man-centered perception of universe. He goes against the view that man has any privileged place in the universe. Spinoza said that ultimate goal, good and joy of human beings laid in the contemplative understanding of Nature. Another aspect of Spinoza's ecocentric environmental philosophy involves his notion of 'conatus'. It means each living being is in itself and endeavors to preserve in its own being.

**Key words:** ecology, deep ecology, Spinoza, Arne Naess, conatus, ecocentrism, anthropocentrism

### INTRODUCTION

Deep Ecology is that aspect of environmental philosophy which is closely connected with ecocentrism which believes that like human beings, the objects of universe both living and non-living has same intrinsic value. Deep Ecology tries to explain the environmental issues in more deeper sense. Deep Ecology tries to explain environmental issues and problems not from human point of view but from environment itself. Though Deep Ecology is an aspect of contemporary environmental philosophy associated with famous environmentalist Arne Naess but the thoughts of this aspect are found in the philosophy of famous modern philosopher Spinoza.

Spinoza is one of the most important and original thinkers of modern philosophy. His philosophy covers almost every area of philo-

sophical discourses including metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind and philosophy of science. Among the modern philosophers Spinoza is best known for his Ethics, where he presents an ethical vision unfolding out of a monistic metaphysics in which God and nature are identified. The environmental philosophy of Spinoza is basically based on his monistic metaphysics.

### METHODOLOGY

This study is completely based on secondary data collected from the books and journals. The methodology that is followed in this study is analytic and descriptive.

### Statement of the problem-

Ecology is 'the scientific study of the

interrelationship among organisms and between organisms, and between all aspects, living and non-living of the environment.' (Michael, A. 1998) Etymologically the word ecology derives from the Greek word 'oikos' means 'household, home or place of live'. This term was coined by German zoologist Ernest Haeckel in reference to the relationship between an animal and its 'organic or inorganic environment'. Ecology is thus the study of the relationship between organisms and their environment.

On September 3, 1972 at the third World Future Research Conference in Bucharest, Romania, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined the term *Deep Ecology* by differentiating between what he called 'shallow' and 'deep' ecological views. Deep Ecology was born after the result of discussion between Naess and his colleagues Sigmand Kvaloy and Nils Faarlund. Deep Ecology is a movement calling for a deeper questioning and a deep set of answer to our environmental concerns. Deep Ecology calls human to live more simply. Its main slogan is 'Simple in Means, Rich in Ends'. Arne Naess, famous article as published in *Inquiry* named *The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecological Movement: A Summary* very elaborately discussed about the ecocentric nature of environment.

Deep Ecology locates the origin of ecological crisis in belief system. They may religious or philosophical. Most particularly Christianity and the scientific worldview as fostering a mindset that seeks to 'dominant nature'. Deep ecologists believe that human centeredness or anthropocentrism is generative cause of ecological crisis. So, it advances the concept of 'ecocentrism' which attributes equal intrinsic moral worth to human and non-human life forms and even to ecosystems. Deep ecology is concerned with the richness and intrinsic value of the nature. Intrinsic value implies in Deep Ecology a sense of value objectivism. Value objectivism posits positive and negative value as independent of the human subjects. As

Naess said,

Animals have value in themselves, not only as resources for humans.

Animals have right to live even if of no use to humans.

We have no right to destroy the natural features of this planet.

Nature does not belong to man.

A wilderness area has a value independent of whether humans have access to it. (Pojman, L. P. 2001)

These statements mean that A is said to have a value independent of whether A has a value for B. The value of A must therefore be said to have a value inherent in A. A has intrinsic value. This does not imply that A has value for B.

Deep Ecology is a contemporary environmental philosophy. It emphasizes on the inherent worth of every living being regardless of their instrumental use for human benefits and wills. Deep Ecology argues that the natural world is a balance of complex interrelationship where existence of each living organism depends on the existence of others within the ecosystem. The core principle of deep ecological movement is the belief that the living environment has certain inalienable rights i.e. rights that cannot be taken away from them to live and flourish regardless of their instrumental benefits for human use. It describes itself as 'deep' because it regards itself as looking more deeply into the actual reality of humanity's relationship with the natural world arriving at philosophically more profound conclusion. The deep ecological movement endorses 'biospheric egalitarianism'. The biosphere is the sum total of all ecosystems. Biosphere also includes the relationship between human beings with other components of the ecosystems. Egalitarianism is a trend of thought which implies equality of all. Biospherical egalitarianism implies that all components within the biosphere are equal. According to Naess, biospherical egalitarianism holds that all human as well as non-human life has equal right to live and flourish. In this principle

all living beings acquire respect in their own forms of lives. Deep Ecology maintains that all living things are alike in having value in their own right, independent of their usefulness to others.

Deep Ecology is concerned with the environmental problems and other issues in more deeper sense. In Deep Ecology pollution is evaluated from a biospheric point of view, focusing its effects not only human health but the life conditions of every species. So, the priority is to fight against the deep causes of pollution not merely the superficial short range effects. Increasing pollution is not only the crime against humanity but against the life in general. But in shallow ecology resources is observed as belong to those who have the capacities to use them or who know the technology to exploit them. Here the plants, animals and natural objects are valuable only as resources for humans. If no human knows how to use it, it does not matter if they are destroyed. In contradictory of this thought, in Deep Ecology no natural object is conceived as a resource. This leads to a critical evaluation of human production and evaluation. Deep Ecology is concerned here with resources and habitats for all life-forms for their own sake. It emphasizes upon the whole ecosystem rather than the consideration merely of human life-form.

The movement of Deep Ecology has sketch vital place in ecocentric environmental philosophy. Generally when we discuss about the Deep Ecology, first name that comes to mind is the philosopher Arne Naess. But Spinoza is appreciated as a philosophical forefather of Deep Ecology. Though, Deep Ecology is a contemporary environmental philosophy but the thoughts of its found in the philosophy of Spinoza. In Spinoza's environmental philosophy, there is a clear sketch of ecocentric approach. Spinoza when discussed about nature, he used capital 'N' for the word 'nature' (Nature). Nature with capital N is intuitively conceived as perfect in a sense. Nature

is perfect 'in itself'. Nature is not something passive, dead or value-neutral. Rather Nature is all inclusive, creative (as *natura naturans*), infinitely diverse and alive in the broad sense. There are three aspects of environmental philosophy of Spinoza. These are his metaphysical monism, his pantheism and the democracy of virtue (power in value).

Rejecting Baconian and Cartesian division of mind and body, man and nature he offers a monotheistic and pantheistic philosophy, where Nature/God is regarded as one and only substance which is in all things irrespective of any difference. The two aspects- extension and thought are both complete aspects of one single reality. Nature is absolutely all-embracing reality. Spinoza collapses the substantive dualism of mind and body. The instrumental value is considered to be inadequate for the protection of natural environment. So, nature is valued intrinsically, and in more objective sense and in non-anthropocentric aspect. Regarding intrinsic value Spinoza does not say that things are good or have value or have rights independent of the human being. Rather by intrinsic value Spinoza means, 'It is good for a man to perceive things as independent of himself. It is good for man, that is, to perceive things as they really are. It is good for man to perceive things truly. (Callicott, J. B. and Palmer, C. 2005)

Spinoza is against the man-centered perception of universe. He goes against the view that man has any privileged place in the universe. So, the celebrated ontology of Spinoza 'is his insistence that man has no privileged position in nature.' (Callicott, J. B. and Palmer, C. 2005) In his environmental ethics, Spinoza said that ultimate goal, good and joy of human beings laid in the contemplative understanding of Nature.

Secondly, Spinoza brings down God from transcendent Judeo-Christian position. God is impersonal and infinite. It is neither human will nor intellect can pertain to the nature of

God. *Dues Sive Nature* i.e. Spinoza's God is all things and thus impartial to all things. So, pantheism of Spinoza provides a strong foundation of holistic environmental philosophy where human being is not superior to nature. As Hampshire reports-

"Spinoza thought of human as greatly limited in their powers to grasp and survey the natural order which must outrun their powers of perception and understanding. His philosophy is by implication a polemic against anthropocentrism. He does represent human intelligence as a unnatural...elaboration of structures found elsewhere in nature; and he always insists that our perceptual apparatus and our intelligence cannot exhaust the infinite variety and extent of nature." (Session, G. 1977)

Another aspect of Spinoza's ecocentric environmental philosophy involves his notion of 'conatus'. It means each living being is in itself and endeavors to preserve in its own being. Arne Naess suggests that it can be applied to all living beings. Regarding Spinoza's 'conatus' Hampshire said,

'The notion of conatus, of which there is no equivalent in Descartes or in purely mechanical and atomistic cosmologies, is exactly the concept which biologists have often demanded as essential to the understanding of organic and living systems.' (Hampshire, S. 1962)

Rejecting Baconian and Cartesian division of mind and body, man and nature he offers a monotheistic and pantheistic philosophy, where Nature/God is regarded as one and only substance which is in all things irrespective of any difference. The instrumental value is considered to be inadequate for the protection of natural environment. Discussing three aspects of Spinoza's philosophy deep ecologist Sessions comments "Spinoza makes it clear that all beings exist for their own sakes, for their own particular and individual forms of completion and self-realization and not for the sake of anything else." (Callicott, J. B. and Palmer, C. 2005)

So, nature is valued intrinsically, in more objective sense and in non-anthropocentric aspect. He is against the man-centered perception of universe As Lloyd said, 'Spinoza sets himself firmly against a man-centered perception of the universe; against the view that man has any privileged place in the universe'.(Genevieve, L. 1980)

The philosophy of Deep Ecology is specially criticized by ecofeminist philosophers. Val Palmwood criticized the Deep Ecology of Arne Naess. Generally Deep Ecology rejects boundaries between self and nature on the principle of indistinguishability account. The indistinguishability account states that humans are said to be just one strand in the biotic web. Human beings cannot be distinguished from nature. It essentially belongs to the biotic web. It rejects man as source and ground of all values. By a 'unifying process' Deep Ecology invokes an ontological unbroken wholeness and rejects nature as separate existing parts. In this indistinguishability thesis Deep Ecology fails to recognize distinct feature and independent status and individuality of things of nature. Jean Grimshaw says that the thesis of indistinguishability hinders the personal development.

## CONCLUSION

In the deep ecology of Spinoza the metaphysical monism and pantheism are seen to be solidarity in an objective non-anthropocentrism. In spite of that there are two particular passages in Spinoza's *Ethics* which could be taken as firmly conclusive evidence of anthropocentric morality where man is regarded as the centre of universe and the environment has only instrumental value as means that fulfils the need of human beings.

"It is plain that the law against the slaughtering of animals is founded rather on vain superstition and womanish pity than on sound reason. The rational quest of what is use-

ful to us further teaches us the necessity of associating ourselves with our fellowmen, but not with beasts, or things, whose nature is different from our own; we have same right in respect to them as they have respect to us. Nay, as everyone's right over beasts than beasts have over men. Still I do not deny that beasts feel: what I deny is, that we may not consult our own advantage and use them as we please, treating them in the way which best suits us; for their nature is not like ours, and their emotions are naturally different from human emotion" (Callicott, J. B. and Palmer, C. 2005)

Again Spinoza in *Ethics* said

'There is no individual thing in universe more advantageous to man than a man who lives by the guidance of reason' (Callicott, J. B. and Palmer, C. 2005)

These statements seem to run directly against the grain of the environmentalist sympathy stated above. Again Spinoza seems to be limiting the moral community entirely to our own kind, who can live under the guidance of reason. So we can say that Spinoza accepts anthropocentric approach of environmental philosophy from the back door.

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