

IS ECO-SOPHY A SEQUEL TO PLANETARY HUMANISM?

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Abstract:

There are several theories available to deal with the environmental problems. We also find serious limitations of those theories. The contemporary approach to such problems is remarkably seen in two important doctrines, namely, Eco-sophy and Planetary Humanism. Although both the doctrines aim at the same goal, that is, to find out a proper approach to the issues involved in respect of the ecological imbalances along with safeguarding the common good, but two doctrines differ significantly in some respects. In this paper, an attempt has been taken to spell out the claims of the doctrines briefly and also their features. Further, an analysis has been done to see if eco-sophy is sequel to planetary humanism overtaking the limits of planetary humanism and eco-sophy.

Keywords: *Ecology, Deep-ecology, Planetary Humanism, Eco-Philosophy, and Eco-sophy.*

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Introduction

In order to find out an answer to this question, it is necessary to make an analysis of the concepts related to these two doctrines. And those are ecology, deep-ecology, planetary humanism, eco-philosophy, and eco-sophy.

Ecology

Witnessing the hazardous consequences and unusual happenings in the natural scientists have started their investigations to find out the causes of such unusual occurrences. A branch of science came up to deal with the 'why' related questions regarding the various abnormality in nature and the interrelationship among various species of the earth. This branch is known as 'ecology' or 'the biology of ecosystems'. The term 'ecology' as a descriptive principle seems to have been used by Ernest Haeckel in 1868. Mohanty rightly points out that "Ecology is the study of ecosystems as functional entities, each consisting of the matrix air, landform, soil, and water, plus the associated organic community. An ecology is a scientific approach to the study of the biosphere. Ecology tells us that ecosystems are created by the interrelationships between living organisms and the physical environments (land, water, air) they inhabit."¹

The central principle of ecology is that each living organism has an ongoing relationship with every other element that makes up its environment. This is how it refers to the ecosystem. Here I am in agreement with Sadangi who writes: "For Naess ecological science cannot answer ethical questions about how we should live and allow others to live. For this, there is the necessity of ecological wisdom or ecosophy. Wisdom not only speaks of the theories or principles rather guides us on how to live with the theories. The ecosophy is to explore a diversity of perspective on human-nature contexts and interrelationships."² It may be stated here that the primary consideration of eco-sophy is to obtain that wisdom which bases on the consideration: *all life forms are entitled to have an equal right to live and blossom and the Earth does not belong to humans.*

The most important finding happens to be that man is not only a part of the ecosystem but also a manipulator of the ecosystem. Man is a manipulator in the sense he treats himself to be the master of the nature. It is his careless handling of the nature which has invited an ecological crisis like various environmental pollutions leading to ecological imbalances. Moreover, man is also considered to be responsible for the alarming consequences of environmental pollutions. It is a fact that man has already caused enormous harm to the nature. What to think of the future sustenance of the globe, a standard living is not available to man at times. Water is polluted. Air is polluted. Cyclones are frequent. Vehicles are too many but the roads are not

visible due to unexpected fog. Man thinks himself to be highly civilized, modernized, educated, etc. But the problems before him for a smooth living are uncountable. Both theoretical, as well as a practical approach to the moral responsibility of man towards nature, became imperative giving rise to two branches of study as environmental ethics (eco-philosophy) and deep ecology.

Deep ecology

A practical approach for the solution of ecological problems which was affecting the inter-relationship among different species by curtailing the human supremacy was launched being termed as 'deep ecology'. The slogan was 'the earth does not belong to humans' and the concern was the preservation of the integrity of nature.

The supporters of deep ecology do not focus exclusively on its effects on human life and health, but rather on planetary life as a whole.³ There are eight platform principles formulated for the ecological movement out of which the following five are felt to be very much significant. The Platform Principles of the Deep Ecology Movement:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease in the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.⁴

Eco-philosophy

To the study of common issues faced by ecology and philosophy was preferred by Naess to be called as eco-philosophy with the view "The study of these problems common to ecology and philosophy shall be called Eco philosophy. It is a descriptive study, appropriate, say, to a university milieu. It does not make a choice between fundamental value priorities, but merely seeks to examine a particular kind of problem at the vast juncture between the two well-recognized disciplines"⁵

Eco-sophy

Eco-sophy is that philosophy that examines the relationship between man and nature. It is used as a short form eco-philosophy that deals with ecological philosophy. It is a philosophy that takes into account the ecological harmony or equilibrium. The term was coined or owes its origin to the French post-structuralist philosopher and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari and the Norwegian father of deep ecology, Arne Dekke Eide Næss. Eco-sophy aims at ecological wisdom (*Sophia*). Arne Naess's original definition of eco-sophy is that "By an ecosophy, I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of *Sofia* or wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements, and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities."⁶ Thus, a philosophical approach to the environment which emphasizes on the importance of human action is considered as ecological wisdom. Eco-sophy is supposed to be associated with environmental ethics and deep ecology.

Planetary Humanism Planetary Humanism has been used by Paul Kurtz (2012) for the first time. In his words "What I think is rather unique about humanism today as a first principle is that "we are *citoyen du monde*;" that is, citizens of the world community, members of the human species over and beyond our gender, national, racial, or religious affiliations, which all too often have separated human beings in the past. We are planetary dwellers before we are Americans or Russians, Chinese or Africans. ancients or moderns. We are not confined by our planet or solar system, but are capable of exploring galactic space. Our true identity is universal; we are not defined by the isms of the past, as Christian or Jew, Hindu or Muslim, nonbeliever or believer. Rather we are defined by our humanity, which is open-ended and as such we share a common set of obligations, to the planetary community of which we are each an integral part. Our humanity (human, not male or female per se) is our essential characteristic. This entails the potentiality to actualize the highest potentialities of which we are capable for ourselves and our fellow and sister human beings, past, present and future, our preservation and fulfillment."⁷ It is a kind of faith in all humanity and the progress of mankind. According to this theory in order to protect the environment, we should need a global ethics. A planet consisting of mutual confronting nations and fragmented by mutually conflicting societies and for respective self-interest cannot be protected. The planet needs to be protected for the present generation as well as the future generation. All the people of the world must be

prepared to sacrifice whatever is needed for the protection of planet earth. A global ethics is urgently required to the safeguard of the planet. It is the time for the global citizen to united to fight against ecological imbalances and remove the hazardous activities towards the environment. This theory focuses on the collective activity to check the ecological imbalance. It always focuses on the broadest concept of the nature.

In this theory, we can find that earth is compared with a 'Huge Ship'. If a ship is overloading then it may sink. Likewise, if the planet's earth would be overloaded by the unethical work, pollution, and selfish attitude then it is no longer safe. So this theory suggests that we in order to save the whole plants we should take into account the whole universe. And we should go like a collective mass for the protection. So the approach is that planetary problems can be solved at the planetary level only.

Relationship between Ecosophy and Planetary Humanism:

There are different theories, starting from the western period to the contemporary period, which is more concerned about solving these types of selfish behavior of human beings towards the nature. Out of them eco-sophy and planetary humanism, are the two theories that try to solve ecological problems in the contemporary period. Though the goals are the same, still there are some differences between them if we take their pragmatic aspect into account.

According to Naess philosophy are one's own personal code of values and a view of the world that guides one's own decisions.⁸ When applied to the question regarding our attitude towards Nature, this expresses itself as an eco-sophy. And Naess arbitrarily called his own philosophy as "Ecosophy T".⁹ In other words it is also used by Naess as, personal philosophy of ecological wisdom that sees the earth as an integrated whole¹⁰ whereas planetary humanism is another type of doctrine which takes the whole planet as one abode. In order to protect the whole world, there should be a world view, which can be only shared by planetary humanism. So this is an attitude towards the nature which is not individualistic like that of eco-sophy, rather it is based on world view, which is coming under eco-philosophy. Let us have a detailed look at the two points of view.

Naess has attached emphasis both on human action as well as individual beliefs which brings a distinction between eco-sophy and eco-philosophy. For him, it is not a discipline in the sense of what he called a 'personal philosophy', which guides our conduct towards the environment. "He defined eco-sophy as a set of beliefs about nature and other people which varies from one individual to another. Everyone, in other words, has their own eco-sophy, and though our personal

philosophies may share important elements, they are based on norms and assumptions that are particular to each of us. Naess proposed his own eco-philosophy as a model for individual eco-sophies, emphasizing the intrinsic value of nature and the importance of cultural and natural diversity.”¹¹

Even though both Guattari and Naess are connected with the origin of eco-sophy but Naess’s reason for distinguishing between eco-sophy and eco-philosophy becomes significant in the sense he has attempted at the pragmatic approach to the issue instead of making only conceptual analysis. It is clear from his emphasis on the intrinsic value of nature and the diversities of culture and nature. What is seen is that eco-philosophy makes the critical examination of the cases of the ecological imbalances basing on ecology which is basically a science.

Naess used eco-sophy T as his personal belief towards the ecology, he also states that one can also use X, Y, Z as his personal belief towards the nature. If we adopt the principle of Naess to the ethical approaches of classical Indian and contemporary tradition like Buddhist ethics, Jaina ethics, Gandhian ethics, etc. then as each one is different from the other, they are different by their own believes there will be several eco-sophies. It shows that eco-sophy is a theory that gives importance to the individual beliefs. It is not a personal philosophy rather is a philosophy of regional or national believes for a common good. The merit of this approach is that through this approach the achievement of the goal becomes easier though it appears to be sectarian. The approach of planetary humanism is too ideal to be a practical application.

Out of the brief discussions about these theories, we came to know there are some similarities and differences between them. Though they aim at the same goal i.e., to solve ecological imbalance, but the way of reaching at this goal is different. One is focusing on individual beliefs whereas the other focusing on world view. Ecosophy tries to run with single participation. It focuses on how one can realize the environmental problem and by him, how can we free from these problem. It gives importance to personal or self-realization. Whereas planetary humanism is the theory that focuses on all human beings i.e., how everyone is able to know or realize the environmental problem and go for solution by collectively. If we look deeply we can see that these theories are two sides of the same coin. That means if every group achieves the goal it ends at the global level only.

The positive impact of Ecosophy on Planetary Humanism

Here in this section I am going to discuss the advantages of eco-sophy, if we take it as ultimate theory of environment. And how it also fulfill the aim of planetary

humanism as a whole. Ecosophy gives importance to individual beliefs on the basis of culture which is, in fact, different from region to region. According to this theory, environmental problems are not the same in all regions. By thinking environmental problems can be solved only through a united approach then the problem may not be solved at all. Let us take an instance, all the environmental problems of India are not the same as Australia, America, Japan, and so on. So the dealing of the environmental problem depends upon the percentage of environmental problems in a particular place. For example, if in India the percentages of air pollution are 60%, water pollution 40%, soil pollution 98% , maybe in America the percentage rate of air pollution is 75%, water pollution 30%, soil pollution 60%. Then if we are trying to solve the environmental problem in these two countries then there should not be single solution for the both. Though the environmental problems in these countries are different, there should be different rules and regulations for this. If we promote rules and regulations by looking at a particular region we can very closely solve the ecological imbalance very faster. So there should be different rules for a different region.

As human species, we are not fully different from nature. Every person somehow is connected with each other, connected through nature. If we want to improve our environmental condition, primarily we should start from ourselves. The individual caring mindset or own ecosophy can spread awareness to the whole society or the world to protect the environment. Therefore Eco-sophy even though ‘individual believe’, could be a positive reach at the ideals of planetary humanism to protect the environment. If we can take it for granted as an environmental policy then it can also give a positive effect on the goal of planetary humanism. The aim of planetary humanism is to promote the global awareness of the environmental problem. And it is also possible through ecosophy but in a different way.

If each person realizes the duty towards the environment then the time will come personal realization will become a global realization. Likewise, if every region by their personalized ethics can promote to remove environmental problems then time will come when there would be no problems. The only thing required is that everyone should realize that the environment is like a family and the human beings are like the members of that family. A family goes in the right way if each member of that family realizes his duty towards the family. So environment can be protected from serious hazards by personal realizations.

In this part, I am going to explain how one theory functions as a sequel to another. If we focus on the pragmatic aspect then we can find, Ecosophy believes in individualism i.e., it focuses on the individual’s own outlook or understanding towards the other whereas planetary humanism believes in the collective interest model.

There is an idea in the mind of human beings that collective action brings more positive results in any single action. It is because there is the support of maximum number of people of a single action. But as human beings always want to get more profit without more investment. They take chance in the name of collectivism . But that is a wrong notion man cherishes.

To what we treat to be group thought if we look closely then it may see its universalistic approach. For example, in our personal belief of Vedic and Upanisadic philosophy, there are expressions like “*Lokakalyânatha*” and “*Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*”. The first one says ‘good of everyone and the second one says ‘all human beings including all living creatures belong to one family’. It creates a good ideology of feeling of belongingness. The expressions like: *sahanâvavatu*, *sahanubhutnaktu*, *sahaviryamkarvâvahi* are the finest example of universalistic approach and feeling of togetherness. In a similar vein in every culture of this earth, there are ideals of togetherness. The only requirement is to practice it at individual level which is suggested by the eco-sophy model. Thus the answer is affirmative to our initially raised question.

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