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Eco-Centrism and Transmutation From 'G' To 'C' and Attaining Self- Realization

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Abstract: Eco-centrism is the science of relationship between living organisms and their environment. Everything is tied together in the web of life. For without nature, there will be no mankind. It is believed that the human race have the responsibility to all biological life on Earth because aside from being the most consuming species of all, they are capable of thinking and perceiving Earth as a whole. Eco-centric model of environmental ethics is the holistic theory according to which the whole eco system comprising both the biotic and a biotic parts of nature deserves moral worth. Arne Naess's theory of deep ecology aims to find out a solution to our feeling of emptiness and stress and we can regain a feeling of connectedness with other living and non-living entities. Deep ecology can be considered as the spiritual dimensions of the environmental movement. It is the holistic approach to face environmental problems which brings together seeing, thinking, feeling, spirituality and action. This awareness leads to a deeper connection with all life where we can move from seeing ourselves as individuals towards seeing ourselves as part of the earth along with other living beings. Then only we can apprehend self-realization. Self-realization means broadening and deepening our sense of self beyond the narrow ego to an identification with all living beings where we take the 'G' out of ego make it 'C' that is eco. This is to be done for the betterment of mankind, society and health but also for the betterment of our moral standards and nature.

Key words: Eco-centrism, Holistic, Deep-Ecology, Self-realization, Ego and Eco.

1. Introduction :

The strains of the ecological crisis are so apparent that the task to preserve and protect the environment has become the primary requisite of the economies of development. Only science and technology cannot be blamed for the environmental degradation. Thus environmental crisis is an outward manifestation of the crisis of mind and spirit. It all depends on how we think and act. The concern for environment is needed though it is as old as our life on the earth. Thinkers with environmental concern placed man at absolute, objective centre of the earth. Some thinkers strongly put forward the point that

our moral concern should cover non-human animals too. But there are also some contemporary thinkers who appeal beyond sentience to the capacity of all living organisms to develop and flourish in the manner of their own kind, and claim that rights belong to species or even to eco systems. This direction of thought has culminated in the theory of eco- centrism.

II. Eco- Centrism

Eco- centrism is that holistic theory according to which the whole eco system, comprising both the biotic and abiotic parts of nature, deserves moral worth. It investigates into the interrelationships between animals, plants, and their inorganic environment. Accordingly, ecology is the systematic of all those complex interrelations as the conditions for the struggle for existence.

Eco-centrism finds inherent value in all of nature. It takes a much wider view of the world which sees individual humans and human species as more valuable than all other organisms. It recognizes intrinsic value in all life- forms. Thus by supporting eco-centric theory we feel an urge to extend our moral concern to items that are non- human, indeed to the whole eco system.

The American philosopher, Aldo Leopold, first felt the need for eco- centric environmental ethics. He stated that we need to develop an ethics to deal with man's relationship to land, animals, and plants and to extend our social conscience from people to land. Aldo Leopold in his book *A Sand Country Almanac* said, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." (Aldo Leopold, 1949) 1

III. Arne Naess Ecosophy:

The decade of 1960's witnessed strong ecological revolution—a revolution in consciousness concerning man's outlook towards other species and the need to protect the integrity of nature. This ecological

revolution paved way for the rise of a new ecological movement that is Long-Range- Deep Ecology. Deep ecology arises as a new perception to visualize the inexorable changes that humanity currently confronts. Thus, Naess introduced the term 'ecosophy' to describe the philosophical ecology of which 'Deep-ecology' is a part. Deep ecology plays a vital role in the society from anthropocentric ethic to eco-centric view which rejects humans as the centre of the society, arguing that all life is equally valuable and has equal right to flourish. His whole theory of deep ecology aims to find out a solution to our feeling of emptiness and stress and our current disconnectiveness with nature to its ultimate and where we can regain a feeling of connectedness with other living and non living entities. Thus, reaching the higher level of awareness is pivotal for deep ecology which will enable us to rebuild the relationship with living and non living entities.

So, towards the phenomenon of life, deep ecology is associated with three central ideas —

Firstly, Deep ecology not only asks deeper questions about our relationship with the world around us but also look for the solution to what is causing the problem around us.

Secondly, the attempt to replace anthropocentric forms of thinking, valuing and acting with eco-centric forms of thinking, valuing and acting.

Thirdly, cultivating a particular kind of approach to our personal relationship with the world around us that Arne Naess refers to as 'Self- Realization'.

IV. Transmutation— 'G' to 'C'

'Self-Realization' is the heart and fundamental norm of deep ecology. Realizing the true self will give the equal rights to every species of this ecosystem to live freely in this biosphere. Naess distinguishes between two kinds of self (with a small 's') meaning individual self. The individual self should achieve the universal self through the diminishing of ego or through the narrow self and realizing the maxim "everything is interrelated". By the diminishing of 'G' from 'ego' and implies that if we want to throw away our egotism to receive altruism we have to alter our ego, our self to 'C' (that is to eco). To transform the 'G' to 'C' there should be development of ecological consciousness. Ecological consciousness makes a bond in nature creating ecological balance. A universal holistic approach which draws from religious or cultural values and beliefs may develop ecological consciousness amongst us.

The current capitalist economy is ego-centric. Everyone is structured to satisfy their individual needs. What's really needed is deeper shift in consciousness so that we begin to care and act not only for ourselves but for entire ecosystems. Therefore, the economic imperatives of our time is in need of an evolution of our consciousness from an ego (G) to an eco(C). So, everything is tied together in the web of life. This shift from (G) to (C) requires a journey that involves to develop our ecological consciousness amongst us. To move this economic system to an eco-centric model is impossible without ecological consciousness. Thus without a fundamental

shift in consciousness it will be impossible to sustain eco-centric economy. When the 'ego' and 'eco' are balanced, the creature lives in harmony with the planet.

V. Conclusion: (Self-Realization)

Broadening and deepening our sense of self beyond the narrow ego to identification with all living beings is possible only through self-realization. Naess self-realization refers to the whole of nature and all the human and non-human individuals that it comprises, realizing itself. This identification is grounded in recognition of the metaphysical fact of interconnectedness (Greya Mathew, 1995).

Traditionally, self develops through three stages— from ego to social self, comprising the ego, and from there to metaphysical self, comprising the social self. So, with the growing maturity and identification with others, the self is widened and deepened. We see our self in others. Self-realization is hindered if the self-realization of others, with whom we identify, is hindered. Thus going with the formula- "Live and Let live" (Naess 1989) will derive the norm "Self-realization for every being" and by overcoming the obstacles of our life by assisting in the self-realization of others.

Lastly it can be conclude that the joy and meaning of life can be enhance and towards a new way of seeing the world through increased self-realization. Thus self-realization is the norm which connects all life forms through the ultimate principle, "Life is fundamentally one".

Notes:

[1] Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand Country Almanac*. Oxford University Press, 1949, pp224-25.

[2] Mathew, Freya, *Value in Nature and Meaning in life: Environmental Ethics*, New York :Oxford University Press,1995, p. 143

[3] Naess,Arne, *Ecology, Community and Life Style: Outline of an Ecosophy* Cambridge Press, 1989.

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