Preface

The present thesis ‘From Ecology to Ecosophy: A Study of Naess’s Environmental Philosophy’ is an attempt to explore Arne Naess’s Deep Environmentalism in a comprehensive manner; it is an attempt to see how Naess’s environmentalism moves from Ecology to Ecosophy, and thus becomes really philosophical.

Present civilisation is faced with a number of problems, and the environmental crisis is perhaps the most alarming one. Contemporary science of ecology has demonstrated that every thing on this Earth is connected to everything else, and that the balance of Nature depends upon the eco-systemic co-operations. Consequently, any major anthropogenic activity into a natural system may be detrimental to the health of that system. But, due to our arrogant and unscrupulous behaviours to the environment, the balance of Nature is seriously threatened. We have already seen many fluctuations in the natural systems that demonstrate that unless we act differently and immediately, doomsday will not be very far.

Being faced with such an imminent catastrophe, responsible thinkers from different spheres of life—both academics and activists—have come forward to find ways in tackling this problem. Philosophers, too, have come out to review our traditional views towards Nature and corresponding normative codes. Moral philosophers, in particular, have found that our traditional (western) Nature-views and normative principles thus far have neither been genuinely eco-friendly nor morally adequate. Even when a norm is made to fit the present-day demand of ecology, then also it fails to rise above the anthropocentric moral framework. Anthropocentrism takes human interests as only morally valuable, while the rest of non-human
Nature is regarded valuable in so far as it serves human purposes only. Such traditional Nature-views fail to block the possibility of anthropogenic environmental pollution and depletion of Nature. This type of ecologically modified ethics is based upon utilitarian, material and consumerist outlook, and it is christened as ‘shallow ecology’ by contemporary environmentalist Arne Naess.

Most of the contemporary environmental thinkers hold that such traditional (western) ethics hails (anthropocentric) speciesism, the position that is based on species-discrimination, which exhibits our moral blindness and shallowness of heart towards the non-human Nature. This attitude goes against developing any healthy environmentalism. This is to be overcome. For that, we require a commitment to consistency and non-arbitrariness in moral reasoning. Also it requires a degree of good faith and the development of a sympathetic moral disposition. Furthermore, unless and until we take a living organism or a plant species or a landscape as having value in itself, we do not really feel direct moral obligation to save them. A genuine ecological ethics demands that, as we are inseparably connected to other things and beings, Nature should be regarded as inherently or intrinsically valuable, irrespective of their usefulness to the members of human species.

A really holistic, ecological ethics expresses itself in 1973 through Naess’s proposal of ‘Deep Ecology’, although the first ecocentric theory—the Land Ethic—was propounded by Aldo Leopold in 1949. The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess first preached his ethics of Deep Ecology through a short article ‘The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary’ published in Inquiry. His Deep Ecology has gradually come out as a comprehensive environmental philosophy that accords moral standing not only to living beings, but also to the whole eco-sphere,
including the abiotic part of Nature. It has helped us to differentiate the modern ecology movement by pointing out its anthropocentric bias, and rejecting the biblical idea of humans as the lord or authoritarian guardian of Nature.

Anyhow, for the last four decades we notice a significant change in the direction of Deep environmentalism: metaphysical or ontological issues (like, ‘what there is’ or ‘how we perceive the Nature’, ‘Self-realisation!’) are drawing more attention than the normative ones. At its initial stage, it was satisfied with suggesting norms to guide our interaction with the Nature. Later it was realised that the isolated ethical concerns about the environment will not do, unless and until they are supplemented by the underlying ontological concerns, or in other words, by some ‘ecosophy’. By ‘ecosophy’ Naess refers to any integrated philosophy of Nature—an ‘earth-wisdom’—of ecological harmony that contains both norms, rules, postulates, value-priority announcements and hypotheses concerning states-of-affairs in our universe, inspired by ecology and Deep Ecology movement. When it is ascertained that we are inseparable from Nature, it would no longer be possible for us to injure Nature wantonly, as that would mean injuring an integral part of ourselves. Naess finds it important ‘to move from ethics to ontology and back’ in his philosophy of environmentalism. It may be said that Deep Ecology by itself does not give an answer to such ultimate questions, like, why, after all, should we care for the Earth? For an adequate philosophy of ecology we must have a Self-realisation or an Identification with the Nature, in addition to admitting its intrinsic or inherent value.

This primacy of the ontological has thus led the environmental philosophers, like Arne Naess, to look into indigenous cultures and religions, mainly into the Eastern cultural traditions for ecologically sensitive world-
views. And the progress of environmentalism will be assured, if we can demonstrate, side by side, that its basic principles can be derived from a variety of world-views and backgrounds. And Naess is on this mission when he treads onto different cultures, philosophies and religions to collect the pearls of ecological wisdom, which are directly relevant for action. Although Naess has his own 'Ecosophy-T', it does not mean that Deep environmentalism is like a closed sect. This ‘T’ in the title rather signifies the personal nature of an ecosophy. One cannot ever be sure that the whole truth is on one’s side rather than on the opponent’s. Hence it is not adequate to insist on a pre-defined single ecosophy. Naess speaks of ecosophies—many other ecosophies (e.g., Ecosophy A, Ecosophy B, Ecosophy C,... Ecosophy X) that each of us may develop for myself. All that is required is an agreement on some basic eco-principles, a kind of meeting-place where we all stand together and share in common into our forward-march to overcome the crisis. At least, two basic principles, of unity and of diversity, are to be agreed upon. The perspectives and means for reaching at agreement may be different. But the differences should not, however, be lost in the oneness. Naess holds that environmentalism will be extensively strengthened if it can be shown that its concise set of minimal principles could be derived from a variety of world-views and backgrounds. This approach seems to be very encouraging, and judicious too. But little has been done in exploring the full potential of this turn of contemporary environmental philosophy.

In our thesis we wish to make a critical study of this turn of contemporary environmental philosophy by exploring Naess's environmental philosophy. We like to explore some, among diverse possibilities, of ecophilosopshies that could supplement the normative environmental discourse. We shall take Naess’s ecophilosophy as the central
point of reference. We shall emphasise that the Eastern insights, spiritualism and moral disciplines are very conducive to 'simple in means but rich in ends' life-styles, to which Deep environmental philosophy is committed. In doing this we like to understand the development of contemporary environmentalism, along with other environmental theories, which is expected to act as the background. This we will do in Part-I of the thesis. Part-II will be concerned with Naess's environmental philosophy, along with some Eastern ecophilo sophies. Part-I will have four chapters (Chapter-I to Chapter-IV) and Part-II five (Chapter-V to Chapter-IX).

The thesis begins with Chapter-I, which is an exposition of the development of contemporary environmentalism, both from the historical and thematic points of view. Historically considered, the questioning and rethinking of our relationship with the natural environment over the last fifty years reflected an already wide-spread perception in the 1960s. The late twentieth century has faced a 'population explosion' that gives a serious threat to health of the environment: Paul Ehrlich published *The Population Bomb* in 1968 warning us how the growth of human population threatens the viability of planetary life-support systems. The initial works that drew our attention to a sense of crisis include Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1963) and Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), beside *The Population Bomb*. Again, Lynn White, Jr. wrote the celebrated article titled 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis' in *Science* magazine in 1967. All these moves hinted at the fact that narrow anthropocentrism should be shunned. John Passmore, however, does not favour a completely new ethic. In his *Man's Responsibility for Nature* published in 1974, he argues that the Judeo-Christian tradition of thought about Nature, despite being predominantly 'despotic', contains resources for regarding humans as
‘stewards’ or ‘perfectors’ of God’s creation. Any change in attitudes to our natural surroundings, he argues, would have to be resonated and have some continuity with the very tradition which had legitimised our practices so far.

But most environmental philosophers contend that a genuine eco-ethics is possible only when we can overcome anthropocentric speciesism. Arne Naess introduced his Deep Ecology into environmental literature through a talk he gave in Bucharest in 1972 at the Third World Future Research Conference. (The content of this talk was published in Inquiry in 1973.) In that talk Naess discussed the long-range background of the ecology movement and its connection with respect for Nature and the inherent worth of other beings. A series of literature therewith followed. Deep environmentalism gradually appeared to be the leading Nature-philosophy on the basis of diverse literature produced by Naess and his followers.

Anyway, thematically considered, we find three types of environmental theories: Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism and Ecocentrism. In Part-I of our thesis we will discuss all these theories of environmental ethics, along with their variety, leaving aside Naess’s ecocentric theory of Deep Ecology, which will be taken up in the Part-II.

In Chapter-II we take traditional Anthropocentrism as our object of discussion. In environmental philosophy anthropocentrism stands for the traditional attitudes, values or practices which promote human interests, even at the expense of the basic, crucial needs and interests of other species or the Nature in general. According to this view-point, the non-human nature acquires value in so far as it serves human purposes. In this way anthropocentrism makes ethics solely a human enterprise. There are various crucial implications of this anthropocentric view, which strongly influence
the ways in which humans interpret their relationships with other species and ecosystems. We shall discuss all these in this chapter.

Anyhow, if we try to put the issue of development of anthropocentrism in thematic terms, we would find some characteristic strands of thought facilitating such a viewpoint. We shall also account for these strands of thought which have been instrumental in integrating anthropocentricity.

It is true that we humans have no choice but to think as humans, to see through our own eyes. This 'perspectival anthropocentrism' is inescapable. Not only that, human-centeredness may in some respects be positively desirable. It could be maintained that only if humans know how to treat their fellow humans decently, they would begin to be able to treat members of other species decently. But what is really wrong in moral anthropocentrism is speciesism and human chauvinism embedded in it. We shall discuss this issue of anthropocentric speciesism, and show the irrational, morally blinded world-view embedded in it.

Chapter-III will be concerned with Biocentrism, a step forward beyond anthropocentrism. Biocentrism considers all living beings as having moral value and humans to be one among innumerable species of organisms that live on the Earth. To accept the biocentric outlook and regard ourselves and our place in the world from its perspective is to see the whole natural order of the Earth's biosphere as a complex but unified web of interconnected living organisms. While anthropocentrism argues in favour of a world-view centering solely on humans and recognises value only in human beings, biocentrism regards every living being in the Nature as having intrinsic/inherent value. This latter view asserts that we have an obligation to the whole biotic community. This obligation is direct, not merely indirect obligation to the living beings via our obligation to humans.
We are morally obliged, e.g., to preserve endangered species, not only because present and future humans would find lives of diminished value unless we do that, but because they are living beings with intrinsic value that demands our moral respect.

Paul Taylor is the champion of this biocentric view of Nature, to whom we owe for its classical version. Taylor made a comprehensive attempt to articulate and defend a biocentric position in *Environmental Ethics* (1981). But the first life-centered concern in Western ethics is found, perhaps, in Albert Schweitzer's *Civilization and Ethics* published in 1923. We shall discuss here the views of Paul Taylor, Albert Schweitzer, Robin Attfield, Kenneth Goodpaster, and Christopher Stone.

Anyhow, the extension of the moral principle of equality towards non-human beings, especially to the relatively higher, sentient ones, was widely debated at the end of the 1970s. Some moral philosophers refer to the notion of rights and argue that animals, like humans, have certain basic rights, which we should take into consideration. Some others, although refrain themselves from directly using the notion of rights, speak of animal liberation and animal welfare. All these have given rise to Sentientism, a variety of Biocentrism, with emphasis on animal issues than the environmental ones. There are, of course, disputes about whether the ethics of animal liberation is a proper branch of environmental ethics. Anyhow, we shall add a discussion on sentientism in this Chapter-III.

**Chapter-IV** will be about Ecocentrism. Biocentrism gives us an account of environmental ethics, according to which our ethical obligations should extend to individual living beings. But the non-living part of Nature or the abiotic features of the non-human world are equally vital for the life and well-being of living beings. Contemporary ecological findings have
clearly illustrated that the division of the biotic and the abiotic is merely an abstraction. As such, the whole Nature, including both the biotic and the abiotic parts, is to be recognised as valuable. This recognition has finally led us to the position of ecocentrism, according to which not only living beings, but the whole universe, including the abiotic part of Nature, is worthy of moral consideration. Ecocentrism maintains that an adequate eco-ethic must include our relations with ecological systems, processes, along with non-living natural objects. The environmentalists, who subscribe to ecocentrism, contend that these things have inherent—and not mere instrumental—value. And so we have a direct moral obligation to them. The supporters of ecocentrism naturally tend to resist the biocentrists’s exclusive concern for living individual organisms.

An early version of the ecocentric view is found in Aldo Leopold’s ‘Land Ethic’. Aldo Leopold is an American forester who is regarded as the single most influential figure in the development of an ecocentric environmental philosophy. We shall discuss critically Leopold’s Land Ethic, but reserve the discussion on Arne Naess’s ecocentric philosophy of Deep Ecology for Part-II simply to avoid repetition. We will also raise the issue that with a paradigm shift of ecology from the notion of static equilibrium to the notion of Nature as dynamic flux, Leopold’s proposal seems outdated. Again, some thinkers, mainly the animal liberationists, have condemned the holistic Land Ethic’s disregard of the rights of the individuals as ‘environmental fascism’. We shall try to give a reply to this criticism on the basis of J.B. Callicott’s reformulation of Leopold’s ecophilosophy of Land Ethic.

As already noted, all these discussions of Part-I will serve as the background for our study of Naess’s ecophilosophy. In Part-II we will be
directly concerned with Naess’s environmental philosophy. We shall attempt to give a comprehensive and critical exposition of Naess’s environmentalism of Deep Ecology, with a special chapter on Eastern ecophilosophy.

We like to start Part-II with a chapter on Ecology, as the environmentalism of Arne Naess has been inspired by contemporary multidisciplinary science of ecology. We shall take a note of the basics of ecology in this Chapter-V. We wish to discuss, in general terms, some important features of ecology so that we can better understand the passage from the science of ecology to Naess’s Ecosophy through his Deep Ecology. In a sense, the study of ecology indicates an approach, a methodology which may be identified by the simple principle that ‘all things hang together’.

A subdivision of ecology, based on its methodology, is very important for us to answer the question, to what degree is ecology helpful in grounding environmental philosophy? We find scientists speaking of ‘hard ecology’ and ‘soft ecology’. Ecology that uses quantitative and deductive methods is regarded as hard ecology, while that which uses qualitative method is called soft ecology. If we look for some general inspirational ideas and scientific principles to base our environmental philosophy then soft ecology will do. In fact, this soft ecology is inspirational for environmentalists.

Another problem is with the ecological notions of ‘balance of Nature’, and ‘Nature as flux’, as there is no precise, confirmed sense in which one can claim that natural ecosystems are in some balance, or tending toward a flux. And as such, there is hardly any consensus in significant important ecological claims. The majority of present-day ecologists supports an ‘ecology of instability’, and they contend that disturbance is almost the normal phenomenon for many ecosystems and that some systems of Nature
do not tend towards the so called stable and integrated states. Of course, present-day ecologists favour a middle path—practical ecology—which is grounded on the rules of thumbs, on rough generalizations and case studies, but highly inspirational.

Nevertheless, on Naess's judgment, ecology as a science is concerned only with facts and logic alone. It can describe objectively about ecological crisis or doomsday, but cannot answer ethical questions about how we should live as member of the Earth community. As this science of ecology does not take us to the deeper question, we have to a shift from factual science to practical wisdom of value, from ecology to ecosophy.

The next Chapter-VI is concerned with Naess's Deep Ecology. Deep Ecology places intrinsic (or inherent) value both on human and non-human species, ecosystems and processes in Nature. It consciously propagates a radical philosophy of Nature, and simultaneously, introduces a new movement of environmental activism under the umbrella of 'Deep Ecology Platform'.

Naess identifies two different strands in contemporary environmental thought and movement. One he calls 'shallow ecology' and the other 'Deep Ecology'. He described shallow ecology as a short-term reform-approach preoccupied with prevention of pollution and resource depletion. Deep Ecology, on the other hand, proposes a major realignment of our philosophy and world-views, cultures, life-styles consistent with the new ecological perspective. It aims at preserving the integrity of the Nature for its own sake, irrespective of its benefits to any privileged species, like humans.

We shall follow the development of Deep Ecology that owes very much to Arne Naess's understanding of the contemporary ecological crisis. In the 1960s, having read Rachel Carson's book Silent Spring, Arne Naess
wakes up to apply his formidable philosophical skills in understanding the eco-crisis and its resolution. We also propose to take notes of the phenomena that have been instrumental in the development of Naess's eco-centric environmental philosophy.

We like to see how identification with Nature and consequent Self-realisation ultimately becomes the basic norm of Deep Ecology movement. We find that, according to Naess, Deep Ecology may have a religious component, fundamental intuitions that everyone must cultivate, if he or she is to have a life based on values and not function like a computer. Shallow ecology, on the other hand, is like a computerised cost-benefit analysis designed to benefit only humans, if taken to its logical extreme.

We also take note of Naess's contention that personal ecophilosphy can give a foundation to our personal commitment into Deep Ecology movement. To illustrate this he develops his own Ecosophy T based on his own deep experience of the greatness and abundance of Nature. In the next chapter we shall try to understand the significance of this personalisation of Deep environmentalism.

In Chapter-VII we like to elaborate on Naess's Ecosophy T. One meaning of 'philosophy' is one's own personal code of values and a view of the world which guides one's own decisions. When applied to the question regarding our attitude towards Nature, this expresses itself as an ecosophy. As an instance of philosophising ecological wisdom, we have Naess's own his individual version of eco-philosophy, arbitrarily called 'Ecosophy T'. In order to understand clearly what ecosophy is, we need to distinguish it from ecology and ecophilosophy, which we do in our discussion.

We shall also discuss the factors that have been active in integrating Ecosophy-T. Again, articulating a system of ecosophy we require, according
to Naess, two classes of sentences, the descriptive and the prescriptive, that may be arranged in a system which shows lines of logical derivation between the statements. First class of sentences is the prescriptive ones, i.e., the norms. We shall have a discussion on such articulation.

Naess, in the long run, understand Ecosophy T in terms of Self-realisation and Identification. But Naess’s formulation of ‘Self-realisation!’ sometimes gives rise to misunderstanding. We shall try to alleviate this misunderstanding. Following Naess we like to argue that ‘Self-realisation’ is a condensed expression of the unity of certain social, psychological, and ontological hypotheses: the most comprehensive and deep maturity of the human personality guarantees beautiful action.

Anyhow, the direction of Deep Ecology’s ‘look to the East’ and its primacy of the ontological over the ethical has initiated a new phase in contemporary environmentalism. It has, at the same time, initiated to look into the non-western cultures, philosophies and religions to overcome this global crisis via eco-spiritualism.

In Chapter-VIII we shall make brief expositions for some of the dominant religions in Asia, such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Taoism and Shintoism to find out their ecosophy. In addition to that, I, personally being a Balinese Hindu, like to rediscover Balinese Ecosophy, which is based on our indigenous Balinese theory of Tri Hita Karana. Anyhow, our selection of religious traditions for discussion may seem arbitrary. But it seems to us that the religions we have taken into account have some string of underlying similarity, while other religions, like Islam, are somehow different.
In Chapter-IX we like to take up the main objections and criticisms made against Naess’s philosophy and his environmental activism. We shall try to answer those criticisms, and make an appreciation of Naess’s environmentalism. We shall reconsider the objection of deriving value from facts and the resulting naturalistic fallacy, sometimes made against Naess’ Deep Ecology. We shall also consider the criticisms of the animal welfarists, of the feminists, of the supporters of social ecology, of Ramchandra Guha from the Third World perspective. We propose to take up also the apprehensions of Deep Ecology’s leading to misanthropy. We shall further discuss the objection of mysticism made against Naess.

We like to emphasise in Conclusion that one of the most important features of Naess’s environmentalism is his liberal, pluralist approach. Guided by the perception that a group of some academics alone cannot make a significant change, he developed his Deep Ecology environmentalism in such a way that people from all walks of life, from different cultures could be accommodated within its fold. For this he sets up a Deep Ecology Platform, and proposed some minimum basic ecological principles. Again, as a supporter of non-violence in his philosophy of action, Naess’s Deep environmentalism strikes a positive note in the midst of some aggressive ‘green’ movements. We shall reiterate that Naess’s Deep Ecology is perhaps the best discovery in contemporary environmental philosophy. But it is a Herculean task for us to awaken the populace in this direction of Naess’s Deep Ecology. But we have no alternative for survival than to follow such a path.

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