

PREFACE

Concern for the degraded environment has become a household topic among the educated people across the world. Human beings' treatment of the natural environment depends on the way they view it. Human civilization has an important bearing upon this viewing. The viewing of the natural world and its relationship with mankind may be seen from different perspectives. These perspectives have led the formulation of different worldviews and some movements, in that way, that rest on the treatment of the nonhuman natural world. "Man in Nature" is one perspective in which one sees oneself as in the system of the natural environment and thereby suggests its treatment to the natural world. The concern for the environment in this perspective rests on the conviction that one is the part of nature along with the other components.

Deep ecology, a variant of environmentalism advocating this perspective, is skeptic regarding the role of science and technology in confronting the problem of environmental crisis. Mankind has become aware of this crisis only in the last few decades of the twentieth century. Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher, took early retirement from his university professorship for the cause of environment and developed the worldview deep ecology. Deep ecology earns an important place in the journey of environmental-talk to the environmental-task. The present study is a critical study of the Naessian ecological philosophy. In this study, the first chapter has attempted to make an exposition of the journey from traditional anthropocentrism to ecocentrism and formation of deep ecology in the history of environmental philosophy. Although Naess acknowledges the historical forebears in conceiving his ideas, he formulates deep ecology in a new way where ecosophy is given a new standard. He presents deep

ecology as an ecological movement which is considered as a paradigm shift in the history of environmental philosophy.

The next chapter, the chapter two entitled, “Deep Ecology of Arne Naess” is an exposition of the meaning of deep ecology under the light of the Naessian perspective. In contrast to anthropocentric ideal, deep ecology offers a radical position of biocentrism or ecocentrism distinguishing between shallow ecology and deep ecology. Shallow ecology also advocates an environmental ethics, speaks in favour of the protection of nonhuman nature, but can never get rid of human-centric approach. Deep ecology, on the other hand, embraces a deep approach by speaking about the intrinsic value of nature. In this connection, Naess advocates the principle of biospheric egalitarianism claiming equal moral worth of all beings, human and non-human alike. It is an approach of realising man’s position in the larger web of things. In practice, deep ecology is a movement which is concerned with the solution of grass-root social and political problems for an ecologically sustainable future. In principle, it upholds a holistic view of nature transcending the narrow ego-centric self that undertakes a thesis of Self-realization or identifying oneself with the greater ecological-Self.

The third chapter of this work, entitled, “Critique of Deep Ecology,” is a critical study of the works of deep ecology. The basic focus of this chapter, centres around the debate among the different schools of environmental philosophy, particularly, the criticism of deep ecology by social ecology as propounded by Murray Bookchin and eco-feminism. While deep ecology believes in anthropocentrism as the root cause of environmental degradation and thereby makes a plea to see all components of the biotic community as part of the natural environment, social ecology sees social inequalities

like hierarchy, domination, class distinction etc. as the main cause of the present environmental crisis. Ecofeminism, on the other hand, views that the psychology of dominating natural environment lies in man's long habituated domination of woman. As such it criticises deep ecology as male-centered philosophy. Again, since social justice is concerned in handling an environmental issue, this chapter also focuses on the debate between the third world critiques of environmentalism led by Ramachandra Guha and deep ecology.

The fourth chapter, entitled, "Naess' Response to the Critics," focuses on the attempts at defending the deep ecology position in response to the criticisms from various corners. In certain positions, they have to undertake the counter-reacting standpoint to nullify the conceptual framework of these critics. In other words, the critical position is tried to be appeased by a counter-attack pointing out the misinterpretation of the critics. Naess has been defended by many deep ecologists like Fox, Devall, Drengson, Zimmerman, Mathews, Clark etc. In defence of the Naessian position, along with Naess himself, these thinkers have offered their views.

The fifth and concluding chapter shows the iconic class of Naess for certain novel ideas in the much needed and very sensitive field of environmental philosophy. It also reflects certain contradictory stands of Naess in his career. This chapter tries to prove that though there are many incompatible stands among the various streams of environmentalism, there are many converging points among the radical schools of environmental philosophy. This chapter is concluded with the belief that deep ecology needs to address social and women related issues pointed out by its critics in order to be considered as an effective philosophy of eco-centric activism.