



# **Environmental Ethics**

## **Deep Ecology**

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# Environmental Ethics

- ▶ Environmental ethics is that part of philosophy which considers the ethical relationship between human beings and natural environment.
- ▶ Environmental ethics is the part of environmental philosophy which considers extending the traditional boundaries of ethics from solely including humans to including the non-human world.
- ▶ Environmental philosophies (human-nature relationship)

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- ▶ Development of environmental ethics has been closely linked to growth of the American wilderness movement – i.e. battles over the creation, preservation and extension of wilderness areas from the backdrop against which the environmental community has examined and re-examined its ethical responsibilities.
- ▶ American culture resembles remarkable system of national parks.



- Roderick Nash and Stephen Fox wrote –

The history of American environmentalism as a struggle between preservationists who wish to preserve nature and wild species for their sake and utilitarian's who, with the help of science and rational management, transform nature into useful commodities [maximizes utility] (1967)

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- Contemporary debate on environmental ethics has been a factor which relates to nature rather than to culture.

# Wilderness thinking

- Roderick Nash's (an environmental historian) in his book *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967) concerns the attitude of Americans' toward the idea of wilderness.
- Nash discusses the different attitudes that humans have toward nature. He presents America's anthropocentric view as the main enemy to all wilderness preservation.
- Nash argues that an ecocentric view is ideal and may work in the long run, but perhaps the preservation of nature and wilderness for the sake of holding resources out for the preservation of our own species would be more salient.
- Nash, viewed nature appreciation as an indication of a culture's maturity; here wilderness is not counterpoised to civilization, but is in fact the surest indicator of the flowering of civilization.

# Preservationist/ biocentric vs imperial/ utilitarian/ anthropocentric

- ▶ Two classic polarities of environmental ethics – the opposition of utilitarian to preservationist, and an anthropocentric to biocentric attitudes towards nature
- ▶ Lynn White (1967), a Californian historian located the ‘historical roots of ecologic crisis’ in the Judeo-Christian belief that man was meant to dominate nature.
  - ▶ White’s attack led many Christians to look towards reviving traditions of stewardship that had been suppressed within their own religion [Non-western religions are believed to be more in harmony with nature]

# **Scientific industrialism**

- ▶ Human salvation lies in the future [evolutionism], not in the return to an agrarian or pre-agrarian past. The task is to tame industrialism and temper its excesses, not to turn one's back.
- ▶ Scientific forestry inaugurates a more hopeful stage, but the habits of many lifetimes die hard.
- ▶ Wilderness lovers are in the main quite hostile to agriculture – evidently, going back to nature does not imply going back to the land.
- ▶ The dominant environmental tradition in the US – free flowing rivers and natural forests are cherished by environmentalists for their beauty and ecological value.
- ▶ Support for the national park movement in India comes mainly from the international conservation organisations, and from a class of big game hunters turned preservationist (who include many former maharajahs)

# Deep Ecology and Shallow Ecology

- The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined the phrase **deep ecology** to describe deep ecological awareness.
- Deep ecology is the **foundation** is a branch of philosophy known as **ecophilosophy** [Arne Naess prefers the term **ecosophy**]
- Shallow ecology is **anthropocentric**, or **human centered**. It views humans as above or outside of nature, as the source of all value, and **ascribes only instrumental**, or ‘use’, value to nature.
- Deep ecology does not separate humans – or anything else – from the natural environment. It does see the world not as a collection of isolated objects but as a network of phenomena that are **fundamentally interconnected** and **interdependent**.
- Deep ecology recognizes the **intrinsic value** of all living beings and views human beings as just one particular strand in the web of life.

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Interview with Arne Naess (1982) – “Simple in Means, Rich in Ends” – provides a short, clear introduction to the main ideas of Deep Ecology.

- ▶ Naess claims that the essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions – questioning the values of our society, and to the development of a total view.
- ▶ He discusses the importance of the norms of ecological equality and Self-realization.
- ▶ Naess further argues that science and technology alone cannot solve our environmental problems.
- ▶ Since logic can't prove one's starting point, people must go beyond narrow rationality and reliance on “authorities” and learn to cultivate and trust their basic intuitions as a basis for environmental action and meaningful personal values.

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- As Arne Naess says ‘The essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions.’ It is only by asking deep questions of today's industrialised, growth-oriented, greedy, materialistic society that we will force a paradigm shift.
  - To concentrate not on simple Cartesian solutions to the causes of pollution, but to probe ever deeper to obtain a holistic view Naess claims that the cultivation of an ecological self involves a materially simple lifestyle, and values that maximize the quality and richness of our experience.
  - Another major area of concern for Deep Ecology theorists is now being referred to as “ecopsychology” [ecosophy].
  - Concern with the psychological/spiritual dimensions of humanity's relationship to wild nature, which can be traced back, and ultimately to the primal peoples of the world.

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- Arne Naess's concept of **human self realization** (the “ecological self”) directly addresses the **key issues of ecopsychology**.
  - This recent interest in ecopsychology, and a concern for a renewed sense of connectedness to Nature, has begun to refocus attention on Thoreau's enigmatic statement that “**in wildness is the preservation of the world**”.
  - The **Deep Ecology** movement holds that “**the health of natural systems should be our first concern**” while trying to create a “**culture of wilderness**” from **within civilization**.
  - Naess points out that the **Deep ecology** movement is characterized by the **deep questioning process**, and by environmental activism which is spiritual.
  - **Spiritual activism** means, for Naess, acting from the basis of a fundamental **philosophic/religious ecosophy** (or “total view”) and acting nonviolently.

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# Shallow Vs. Deep Ecology

- The distinction between shallow and deep ecology was made in the early seventies by the philosopher Arne Naess and has now been widely accepted as a very useful terminology to refer to the major division within contemporary environmental thought.
- **Shallow ecology is anthropocentric** – It views humans as above or outside of nature, as the source of all value, and ascribes only instrumental, or use value to nature.
- **Deep ecology** does not separate humans from the natural environment' nor does it separate anything else from it. It does not see the world as a collection of isolated objects but rather as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent.

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- ▶ Deep ecology recognises the intrinsic values of all living beings and views humans as just one particular strand in the web of life.
- ▶ Naess (1973: 95) characterizes the ‘shallow’ ecological movement as one that fights pollution and resource depletion in order to preserve human health and affluence, while the ‘deep’ ecological movement operates out of a deep-seated respect and even veneration for ways and forms of life, and accords them an ‘equal right to live and blossom’ [*Live and let live!*].

# Conservationists and Wilderness

- ▶ In the 1970s, Wilderness Areas, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and other protected areas were still viewed primarily as recreational and scenic resources—not as ecological reserves. Until the 1980s, conservationists argued most frequently from a recreational (including aesthetic) standpoint for the preservation of Wilderness.
- ▶ Such conservationists with a strategic decision – believed that only a limited amount of land would receive Wilderness Area designation; they wanted it to be the areas in which they most enjoyed hiking, camping, fishing, climbing, and hunting.

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- ▶ A different situation exists today in the wilderness preservation movement than ever before.
- ▶ The New Conservation Movement has largely turned its back on the old concept of Wilderness as primarily a recreational resource.
- ▶ Their arguments are solidly based in conservation biology, and recognize biological diversity as the fundamental value [E.g. 'Ecotourism'].
- ▶ The Deep Ecology philosophers and the struggles and arguments which have taken place between them and the Green movement, the Social Ecologists, and the Ecofeminists are all part of the emerging realization that this could be tried.
- ▶ Deep Ecology thinkers insist that the natural world has value in its own right, that the health of natural systems should be our first concern, and that this best serves the interests of humans as well.

# Criticism

- ▶ Some people from the Third World who express a suspicion that Deep Ecology is a new variant of Western domination and "neocolonialism": they fear that people of the Third World will be pushed out of their homes to make more room for spectacular animals.
- ▶ Some authors have expressed the opinion that Deep Ecology is for the rich nations that can afford the luxury of vast wilderness as habitat for wild species.
- ▶ There is a movement toward creating a "culture of the wilderness" from within contemporary civilization.
- ▶ The Deep Ecology philosophers and the struggles and arguments which have taken place between them and the Green movement, the Social Ecologists, and the Ecofeminists are all part of the emerging realization that this could be tried.

- Arne Naess argues that “what we need today is a tremendous expansion of ecological thinking.”
- Most native societies around the world had three common characteristics: they had an intimate, conscious relationship with their place; they were stable "sustainable" cultures, often lasting for thousands of years; and they had a rich ceremonial and ritual life.
- For example: The Tukano Indians of the Northwest Amazon River basin, guided by their shamans, make use of various myths and rituals that prevent over-hunting and over-fishing. They view their universe as a circuit of energy in which the entire cosmos participates.
- For instance, the traditional purpose of seasonal festivals is periodically to revive the topocosm [the Greek word – *topo* for place and *cosmos* for world order].
- All of these aspects of ritual serve to connect-to keep open the essential connections within ourselves.

# Naess' systematization of Gandhian Ethics

- ▶ Self-realization presupposes a search for truth:  
Arne Naess deep ecology is not fundamentally about the value of nature per se, it is about who we are in the larger scheme of things. He notes the identification of the 'self' with 'Self' in terms that it is used in the Bhagavad Gita (that is, as the unity which is one) as the source of deep ecological attitudes.
- ▶ The link between self-realization and Naess' environmental philosophy can be clearly seen in his discussion of the connection between nonviolence and self-realization in his analysis of the context of Gandhian political ethics.
- ▶ As Arne Naess notes for Gandhi “To realise God,” “to realise the Self” and “to realise the Truth” are three expressions of the same development (1965: 28-33).



# Gandhian Environmentalism

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# Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

- The life and work of Mohandas Karamchand ‘Mahatma’ **Gandhi** have had a considerable influence on the **environmental movement in India**.
- “Gandhi is one of the **great thinkers** of our time who, without ever intending it to be so, has become the **man for all seasons, and all things to all men**” – Abu Abraham
- “**Gandhi's ghost** have saved the Himalayan trees” – a journalist
- Gandhi had been a major influence on a number of writers like **E F Schumacher (Small is Beautiful)** and **Arne Naess (Deep Ecology Movement)**.

# Gandhi and Environmental Movement

- A good number of Indian environmentalists and environmental historians such as Vandana Shiva, Anil Agarwal, Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha have acknowledged their debt to Gandhi's ideas.
- In a lecture given in 1993, the Indian historian Ramachandra Guha proposed to inquire whether Gandhi could be considered an "early environmentalist". Gandhi's voluminous writings are littered with remarks on man's exploitation of nature, and his views about the excesses of materialism and industrial civilization, of which he was a vociferous critic, can reasonably be inferred from his famous pronouncement that the earth has enough to satisfy everyone's needs but not everyone's greed.
- Guha has described Gandhi as the "single most important influence on the environmental movement" (2006).

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- From Chipko to the 'Save the Narmada Movement' (*Narmada Bachao Andolan*) of the present time, environmental activists have relied heavily on Gandhian techniques of non-violent protest or satyagraha (*Gandhigiri*), and have drawn abundantly on Gandhi's polemic against heavy industrialization.
- Environmentalists such as Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna of Chipko, or Baba Amte and Medha Patkar of Narmada, all have often emphasised their own debt to Gandhi.
- Their struggle for protecting the livelihood resources eventually led to a form of environmentalism that made it possible for them to see the interconnections among environment, development, survival, sustainability and peace.

# Gandhi's Environmental Ethic

- Many environmentalists today do not merely claim that they are following the example of Gandhi; they go on to argue that the Mahatma himself foresaw the ecological crisis of modern industrial society.
- *Hind Swaraj* (1909) has given us an ‘alternative perspective’ on development while explaining how ‘the current mode of development is exploitative of man by man and of nature by man’.
- Shiv Visvanathan (2006) calls Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* “an intensely naturopathic document” that seeks to achieve harmony – both of the body and its constituent parts and the body and the elements of environment such as air, water, light and soil.

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- ▶ Gandhi was not an environmentalist who, while acknowledging the interconnection among all forms of life, was unconcerned about the survival of the human species. [In fact, ecological concerns emerged from his focus on a basic needs model of social order that would not exploit nature for short-term gains, but take only from it what is absolutely necessary for human sustenance]
- ▶ Gandhi had to concede that life involves a certain amount of violence to nature even if it is unintended – What we can do is to minimise it to the maximum extent.

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- ▶ Gandhian concept of environmentalism relies heavily on moral and religious viewpoints. He viewed environmental degradation as a moral problem. Since environmental problems have an ethical background Gandhiji practiced an environmental attitude, which 'is based on morality, as an alternative for these problems.
- ▶ Ahimsa is treated as an integral part of Gandhiji's moral philosophy, For him non-violence is not only non-killing or non-injury but also an inner feeling of the mind and heart.
- ▶ Gandhiji said: "The largest love and greatest charity – is infinite peace and love for him". [Mahatma Gandhi took the principle of Ahimsa from the traditional systems of India]

# Cont.

- ▶ Complete non-violence is complete absence of ill-will against all that lives. It therefore embraces even subhuman life, not excluding noxious insects or beasts.
- ▶ Gandhi believes in the 'intrinsic value' of everything in this universe. He asserts that ~~everything~~ in the universe have their own place, ~~importance~~ and value beyond their instrumental value. He said God creates everything – have equal importance and they are not merely the objects of human destruction.
- ▶ Gandhiji believed in the interconnectedness of all life in the universe. He developed all of his thought on the basis of the assumption that all the entities in the world endowed with the same spirituality and each entity are interconnected and mutually dependent.

# Relationship between man and nature

- For Gandhi earth or soil is a sacred entity. He believes in the supremacy of earth and accepted the idea that the earth does not belong to man but man belongs to the earth. On the basis of this belief he advocated a method of agriculture, which is nature friendly and non-exploitative.
- The use of chemicals has helped to increase agricultural production. But it destroys the fertility of soil immediately. "Trading in soil fertility for the sake of quick returns would prove to be distress short sighted policy it would result in individual depletion of the soil." (M. K. Gandhi, Harijan, August 25, 1946)

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- ▶ Gandhi believed in the importance of the co-existence of man and nature. Co-existence asserts the mutual co-operation and understanding. [Human beings always neglected the mutual dependence of nature and he tries to alienate from nature]
- ▶ Naturopathy helps human beings to live in accordance with rhythm of nature. "... all the nature cure rules and regulations centres in nothing but living in a natural surroundings in the midst of mountains, valleys or seashores".

# Urbanization and Industrialisation

- ▶ Gandhi's reservations about the wholesale industrialization of India are usually ascribed to moral grounds – the selfishness and competitiveness of modern society – but they also had markedly ecological undertones.
- ▶ “God forbid that India should ever take to industrialization after the manner of the west. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts”. (*Young India*, 20 December 1928)

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- ▶ For Gandhi, industrialisation and profit generation were at odds with moral progress. He said: “The incessant search for material comforts and their multiplication is an evil. I make bold to say that the Europeans will have to remodel their outlook, if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves”.
- ▶ Gandhiji was against the massive industrialisation and mechanisation. He highlights the ills of industrialization, which is the basis of modern civilization. He says that exploitation is the root cause for present environmental chaos.

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- ▶ Gandhi argues, industrialisation and mechanisation leads to centralisation of economic power. It helps to flourish exploitation of both man and nature. And fundamental objection to machinery rests on the fact that it is machinery that has enabled these nations to exploit others (M. K. Gandhi, Young India, 6 November 1924)
- ▶ Gandhi visualised that mechanisation will not only lead to industrialisation and industrialisation to massive urbanisation and unemployment, but also lead to the destruction of environment.
- ▶ Industrialisation on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the village as the problems of competition and marketing come in, therefore, he advocated production by masses in most dispersed diverse location of lakhs of villages.

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- ▶ To Gandhi, the bias towards urban-industrial development could result only in a one-sided exploitation of the hinterland. ‘The blood of the villages is the cement with which the edifice of the cities is built’. (*Harijan*, 23 June 1946)
- ▶ Gandhi had alerted a gathering in Indore to the concentration of resources on which city life has come to rest. ‘We are sitting in this fine pandal under a blaze of electric lights’, he remarked, ‘but we do not know we are burning these lights at the expense of the poor’. (*Harijan*, 11 May 1935)

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- ▶ Gandhi wished that ‘the blood that is today inflating the arteries of the cities run once again in the blood vessels of the villages’. [Pre-eminent here was the decentralization of political and economic power, so that villages could resume control over their own affairs]
- ▶ Gandhi remarked (in words to inspire all proponents of decentralized synergy systems): “If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures”. (*Harijan*, 22 June 1935)

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In 1937, Gandhi defined his ideal Indian village as:

- ▶ It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation, built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottage will have courtyards enabling householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-education will be the central fact, and it will have Panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own Khadi. This is roughly my idea of a model village... (*Harijan*, 9 January 1937)

# Cont.

- ▶ Towards the end of his life, he warned the proponents of the rapid mechanization of agriculture that 'trading in soil fertility for the sake of quick returns would prove to be disastrous, short-sighted policy. It would result in virtual depletion of the soil. (*Harijan*, 25 August 1946)
- ▶ Gandhi was an enthusiastic supporter of organic manure, which enriched the soil, improved village hygiene through the effective disposal of waste, saved foreign exchange, and enhanced crop yields. Gandhi described approvingly and in great detail the methods developed by Howard and his associates to convert a mixture of cowdung, farm wastes, wood ash and urine into invaluable fertiliser. (*Harijan*, 17 August and 24 August 1935)

# Gandhi's critique of modern civilization

- For him, distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization is an 'indefinite multiplicity of wants'. Gandhi's code of voluntary simplicity offers a sustainable alternative to modern lifestyles.
- One of his best known aphorisms, that the 'world has enough for everybody's need, but not enough for everybody's greed' is, in effect, an exquisitely phrased one-line environmental ethic. This was an ethic he himself practiced, for resource recycling, and the minimization of wants, was integral to his life.
- His analysis of macro processes of economic development, his prescriptions for rural reconstruction, and his ethics for living: at all levels, then, Gandhi's writings offer sharp insights into the environmental crisis.

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# Governance and Development

- Gandhi was particularly inspired by Henry David Thoreau and John Ruskin to make the country self-reliant and cultivate indigenous livelihoods and technologies needed for the development of all. It was the most viable and effective way to fight extreme poverty and backwardness that India was facing.
- For Gandhi, this idea of development emerged as an alternative and spiritual way of liberation that would lead India to total freedom both in the external world as well as in the inner realm. This project of nation-building did not see the elites alone as the sole authors of modern India but believed in bringing together the subaltern: the oppressed castes and tribes, the poor peasantry, the minorities and building up a nation where they experienced collective prosperity.

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- ▶ Gandhi often pointed out, “The real India lies in the 7,50,000 villages. If Indian civilisation is to make its full contribution to the building up of a stable world order, it is this vast mass of humanity that has...to be made to live again”(Gandhi 1999).
- ▶ At the core for this transformation to happen he emphasised on adequate representation, dynamic leadership and active participation at the grassroot level.
- ▶ In Gandhi’s opinion, villages are the sole identity of India. “If village perishes, India would perish too. It will no more be India. Her mission in the world will be lost” (Singh, 2009: 5)

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- ▶ To realise this Gandhian vision for rural governance, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was enacted in 1992.
- ▶ Since this provision was enacted, the elected representatives (ERs) of the Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) are playing a role of channel between governments and the villagers—the target-beneficiaries of a number of the governments' development schemes.
- ▶ What makes the Gandhian idea of village and governance unique and different from other approaches in governance is that it is participatory and holistic. It talks about an integrated approach built on the understanding that people at the grassroot level participate only through dialogue, knowledge exchange and mutual learning from each other.

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- ▶ Governance, in the Gandhian view, is not a top-down approach of transferring information and knowledge; rather it is a cross-cutting approach practised in an integrated manner through collective decision-making and collaboration for the welfare of everyone irrespective of caste, religion, class, and ethnicity.
- ▶ The Gandhian understanding of governance and development at the village level is based on the understanding and awareness of the common rural people of their own social, economic and political conditions so that they can deal with their common issues and can consciously take the initiative to seek and find solutions.

# Swadeshi

- ▶ Gandhi introduced and practiced simple technology, which is an alternative to haphazard growth of technology that is *Swadeshi* or self-reliance through self generation.
- ▶ It is a departure from rapid growth by large scale industrialization and return to a need based production by appropriate technologies which yields a smooth relation between man and nature.
- ▶ Gandhiji's concept of Swadeshi was rooted in his philosophy of life. For him, the purpose of production is to provide for essential needs and not in satiable greed. Hence he was opposed to mass production through modern machines in huge mills.

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Gandhian self-reliance reflected in his concept of swadeshi has also lot of implications for the creation of a non-exploitative society. Johan Galtung, the father of modern peace research argues that self-reliance is intimately linked up with ecological balance:

- “Through SR ecological balance will be more easily attained. When ecological cycles contract the consequences of production and consumption, in terms of depletion and pollution, will be not only more visible, but also more direct. The farmer who by and large produces what he consumes and consumes what he produces has the gut knowledge that pollution and depletion will be detrimental to him and his offspring, and this very knowledge initiates the type of negative feedback that may prevent ecological problems from surfacing at all. Depletion cannot be relegated to some far-off corner of the world, because in that corner they are also practising self-reliance and do not let raw materials out except to neighbours at the same level” (Galtung 1976).

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- ▶ In the words of Gandhi: “My definition of Swadeshi is well-known. I must not serve my distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest ... Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us the use and service of our immediate surrounding to the exclusion of the more remote”. [In this sense Swadeshi is a moral law. It denotes service to one's neighbours with the clear idea that they are a part of humanity, which is a part of this cosmos]
- ▶ “Simple living and high thinking” is the implicit philosophy of Swadeshi. Through Swadeshi Gandhi tried to foster a new life style based on simple living and he said the real enemy of environment is within himself that is his unlimited desires and wants.

## Cont.

- ▶ Swadeshi foster the simple technologies based mostly on biological and ecological principles would restore for mankind a condition for comfortable living with dignity, but perhaps not with luxury and ~~would satisfy all their basic needs but perhaps not their greed~~ [Swadeshi ensures economic prosperity of people with ecological security]
- ▶ Through Swadeshi ~~Gandhi~~ emphasises on a non-violent upliftment of village economy by the utilisation of labour intensive techniques of production. The vital principle behind the concept of Swadeshi was that the basic unit of society, viz. the village.
- ▶ The spirit of Swadeshi encourages small scale industries based on indigenous technology and human labour, which never tries to exploit the gifts of God. Swadeshi gives stress upon dignity of human labour.

# Appropriate Technology

- Gandhi is also often called the father of appropriate technology. He advocated small, local and village-based technology that allowed its users to relate themselves with what they produce. For him technological progress was not a sign of progress. The Charkha represented the ideal technological equipment for Gandhi. A technology that would not replace human labour was what was in his mind.
- EF Schumacher was strongly influenced by this idea of Gandhi who popularized it through his concept of "intermediate technology". [The technology of mass production is Inherently violent, ecologically damaging, self-defeating in terms of non-renewable resources and stultifying for the human person." (E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 1973)
- Laurie Becker, who is known for the construction and popularization of nature-friendly and cheap houses using locally available resources, was deeply inspired by Gandhi.

# Trusteeship

- It emphasises the communitarian nature of individual wealth. Those who possess more should function as channels for a just distribution of social resources. Thus the basic criterion of distributing resources become distributive justice.
- Gandhiji wanted that the concept of trusteeship should become a gift of free India to the world so that all the disparities between haves and have not are culminated.
- Trusteeship doctrine was meant to put an end to the institution of private property, while giving the owing class a chance to transfer itself into trustees by voluntary action.

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- ▶ By the concept of trusteeship Gandhi asserts the attitude of stewardship.
- ▶ The sense of stewardship asserts an ecological consciousness.
- ▶ Being a true trustee a man cannot conquer or exploit the nature's resources because he is the steward or custodian of that. As a steward he have the responsibility to protect the natural resources for every one or welfare for all. [A trustee in every sense protects every creation from harm because he can identify the oneness with the entire creation]

## Sarvodaya

- ▶ Sarvodaya signifies the awakening or liberation of one and all without exception (*Uday* means awakening and *Sarva* means all, entire or total). Here 'sarva' denotes not only humanity but the entire beings in the universe. Thus Sarvodaya emphasizes the awakening of humanity along with other species in the earth.
- ▶ Sarvodaya movement relies on its identification of the ten basic needs, which are considered essential to the well being of all (they are – water, food, housing, clothing, health care, communication, fuel, education, and a clean, safe and beautiful environment and spiritual and cultural life).
- ▶ Sarvodaya movement gave much consideration to the protection of nature.

# Gandhian Ecologism

A well-known environmentalist elaborates:

- ▶ “Gandhi’s ecologism (if we can call it that) was about rural peasants eking out their subsistence and necessities from a piece of land. In short, he might not have theorized the mathematics of sustainability but he showed us how to pursue sustainable livelihoods..... Gandhi did not talk much about the abstract notion of earth but he talked a lot about land and soil. To support that economy, he also emphasized artisan economy (spinning of clothes with charkha, repairing of agricultural tools, arts and crafts) that made these rural peasant communities free from depending on machine-made and mass-produced industrial goods and tools. As is happening in India today, he did not want the village cobbler to be replaced by the Bata Shoe factory or the village blacksmith to be rendered obsolete by the Tata Iron and Steel Company” (Parajuli 2002: 61).

## Arne Naess and Gandhi

- Gandhian influence on ecological thinking has been acknowledged by none other than Arne Naess, often seen as the father of the deep ecology movement.
- Self-realisation was a term that Naess borrowed from Gandhi. He conceives the 'ecological self' as the culmination of a process of personal maturation (Naess 1987). This begins with a recognition of the personal self during childhood.
- It then proceeds to the realization of the social self, in terms of being a member of the human society, and finally to an ecological Self, where 'self' locates itself as just a small peck within the entirety of the living world.

## Cont.

- ▶ Besides using Gandhi, Naess also used the Bhagavad Gita which conveys the idea of interconnectedness of all beings. It means that the wellbeing of any living being is equally a part of our own well-being.
- ▶ He notes the identification of the 'self' with 'Self' in terms that it is used in the Bhagavad Gita (that is, as the unity which is one) as the source of deep ecological attitudes.
- ▶ As Arne Naess notes for Gandhi "To realise God," "to realise the Self" and "to realise the Truth" are three expressions of the same development.
- ▶ Gandhi argues, through the real self-realization - the realization of expansive self - identifies the oneness of all the entities in the universe. This identification helps the humanity to live in harmony with the entire beings and works for the liberation of all fellow creatures.



# **Bookchin's Theory of Social Ecology**

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# Background

- The elite class manipulates the natural resources “for their own benefits but only at a substantial cost to the environment and disadvantaged social group”.
- There has always been a tussle between development and the environment.
- It was presumed that industrialization was the major cause for the ecological degradation.

# What is social ecology

- The term “social ecology” was given by Murray Bookchin (1964) in his book *Ecology & Revolutionary Thought*.
- It is the study of the reciprocal relationship between the human society and the ecological infrastructure.

Note: Murray Bookchin was an American anarchist and libertarian socialist

## Cont.

- ▶ Social ecology claims that the environmental crisis is a result of the hierarchical organization of power and the authoritarian mentality rooted in the structures of our society.
- ▶ The Western ideology of dominating the natural world arises from these social relationships.
- ▶ "The domination of nature by man stems from the very real domination of human by human" ('The Ecology of Freedom', 1982, p. 1. Bookchin)

## Cont.

- Social ecology aims to replace our mentality of domination with an *ethics of complementarity*. Such an ethics reflects our true role which is to create a fuller, richer world for all beings.
- This ethics of complementarity has a spiritual dimension that is sometimes described by social ecologists as the "respiritualization of the natural world" but is clearly not a call for a deistic theology.
- The spirituality advanced by social ecology is definitively naturalistic rather than supernaturalistic or pantheistic.

## Cont.

- The alternative is society based on ecological principles; an organic unity in diversity, free of hierarchy & based on mutual respect for the interrelationship of all aspects of life.
- The way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial to addressing the ecological crisis.
- If we change human society then our relationship with the rest of nature will become transformed (to separate ecological problems from social would be to grossly misconstrue the sources of the growing environmental crisis).

# Key principles

- The core principle of social ecology is that ecological problems arise from deep-seated social problems. Ecological problems cannot be understood, much less resolved, without facing social issues.
- Social hierarchy and class legitimates our domination of the environment and underpins the consumer system.
- The root causes of environmental problems are such as trade for profit, industrial expansion, and the identification of "progress" with corporate self-interest. (*What Is Social Ecology?*, Bookchin)

- Social ecology emphasizes that the destiny of human life goes hand-in-hand with the destiny of the non-human world.
- Social ecologists believe that things like racism, sexism, third world exploitation are a product of the same mechanisms that cause rainforest devastation.
- Bookchin calls for a holistic 'ecological sensibility' that would encourage play and celebrate imagination.
- Bookchin claims that most environmentalists focus on the symptoms of our problems rather than the causes, so mistakenly focus on technology or population growth.

- Unless we change society, 'soft' technologies won't make any difference either. Simple technology can still wreak environmental damage if the ideology that uses it is unchanged: The forests of England were cut down with axes that had not changed since the Bronze Age.
- Today's environmentalism is mere "environmental engineering" that is more concerned with "tinkering with existing institutions..and values than changing them." Environmentalism is used to "win large constituencies, not to educate them. (Quotes from 'Open Letter to the Ecology Movement' in Towards and Ecological Society, Bookchin).

# Human and Nature

- The "struggle for existence" or the "survival of the fittest" (to use popular Darwinian terms) explains why increasingly subjective and more flexible beings are capable of dealing with environmental changes more effectively than are less subjective and flexible beings.
- Conceiving nonhuman nature as its own evolution rather than as a mere vista has profound implications-ethical as well as biological-for ecologically minded people.

## Cont.

- ▶ Bookchin emphasizes that human beings are basically just highly intelligent primates. We are a part of nature and suggestions that we are a 'special case' are superficial and potentially misanthropic.
- ▶ Bookchin says that to depict human beings "as 'aliens' that have no place or pedigree in natural evolution, or to see them essentially as an infestation that parasitizes a highly anthropomorphic version of the planet (Gaia) the way fleas parasitize dogs and cats, is bad thinking, not only bad ecology."

# Human as Part of Evolutionary Process

- ▶ Far from being unnatural, humans are an expression of a deep natural process. Bookchin believes that human consciousness is a result of nature striving for increasing complexity and awareness.
- ▶ Humans are nature that has become self-aware. We are part of biological evolution, which Bookchin calls 'first Nature', but also have a unique social awareness which he calls 'second nature'.
- ▶ Our second nature, the development of technology, science, social institutions, towns and cities, all depended on human abilities that evolved from first nature.

## Cont.

- ▶ How these problems emerge, the ideologies they produce, the extent to which they contribute to biotic evolution or abort it, and the damage they inflict on the planet as a whole lie at the very heart of the modern ecological crisis.
- ▶ Bookchin rejects the 'either/or' thinking behind the commonly held opposites anthropocentrism and biocentrism. The opposing principle, biocentrism, claims that all beings have equal intrinsic value and is bound up with the notion of a 'biocentric democracy' which Bookchin describes as 'almost meaningless'.
- ▶ Social ecology integrates first (biotic nature) with second (human nature). Human society and non-human nature are connected in one evolutionary flow.

# Notion of Decentralization

- ▶ To truly know and be able to give interpretative meaning to the social issues so arranged, we should want to know how each idea derived from others and is part of an overall development.
- ▶ Social ecology calls upon us to see that nature and society are interlinked by evolution into one nature that consists of two differentiations: first or biotic nature, and second or human nature.
- ▶ Human nature and biotic nature share an evolutionary potential for greater subjectivity and flexibility. Second nature is the way in which human beings as flexible, highly intelligent primates inhabit the natural world. [That is to say, people create an environment that is most suitable for their mode of existence]

# Environmental changes produced by human

- Humans act upon their environments with considerable technical foresight, however lacking that foresight may be in ecological respects.
- Their cultures are rich in knowledge, experience, cooperation, and conceptual intellectuality; however, they may be sharply divided against themselves at certain points of their development, through conflicts between groups, classes, nation states, and even city-states.

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## Cont.

- ▶ Nonhuman beings generally live in ecological niches, their behavior guided primarily by instinctive drives and conditioned reflexes.
- ▶ Human societies are ‘bonded’ together by institutions that change radically over centuries.
- ▶ Nonhuman communities are notable for their fixity in general terms or by clearly preset, often genetically imprinted, rhythms.
- ▶ Human communities are guided in part by ideological factors and are subject to changes conditioned by those factors.

# Origins of Social Domination

- ▶ How, then, did the social—eventually structured around status groups, class formations, and cultural phenomena emerge from the biological?
- ▶ Biological facts such as lineage, gender distribution, and age differences were slowly institutionalized, their uniquely social dimension was initially quite egalitarian.

## Cont.

- ▶ Later it acquired an oppressive hierarchical and then an exploitative class form – so the social institutions were slowly reworked at various periods and in various degrees into hierarchical structures based on command and obedience.
- ▶ Hierarchy in its earliest forms was probably not marked by the harsh qualities it has acquired over history (geronocracies were earlier form of hierarchy; e.g. tribal councils or council of elders, chiefdoms etc.).

# Male domination

- ▶ Social domination originated with human males dominating females.
- ▶ With the appearance of cattle-drawn plow agriculture, the male begins to invade the horticultural sphere of woman, who had used the simple digging stick, and her earlier economic predominance in the community's life is thereby diluted.
- ▶ Male dominance becomes extremely active and ultimately yields a world that is managed by male elites who dominate not only women but also other men.

# Cont.

- ▶ ‘Why’ hierarchy emerges is transparent enough: the infirmities of age, increasing population, natural disasters, certain technological changes that privilege male activities of hunting and caring for animals over the horticultural functions of females, the growth of civil society, the spread of warfare.

# The Idea of Dominating Nature

- ▶ ‘Nature’, in the broad sense of a biotic environment from which humans take the simple things they need for survival, often has no meaning to preliterate peoples (even when they celebrate animistic rituals and view the world around them as a nexus of life).
- ▶ With the rise of hierarchy and human domination, however, the seeds are planted for a belief that nature not only exists as a world apart, but that it is hierarchically organized and can be dominated.
- ▶ For instance, the study of magic reveals this shift clearly: Early forms of magic did not view nature as a world apart. Its worldview tended to be such that a practitioner essentially pleaded with the "chief spirit" of the game to coax an animal in the direction of an arrow or a spear. Later, magic becomes almost entirely instrumental; the game is coerced by magical techniques to become the hunter's prey.

## Cont.

- ▶ While the earliest forms of magic may be regarded as the practices of a generally nonhierarchical and egalitarian community, the later forms of animistic beliefs betray a more or less hierarchical view of the natural world and of latent human powers of domination.
- ▶ The idea of dominating nature has its primary source in the domination of human by human and the structuring of the natural world into a hierarchical Chain of Being (a static conception, incidentally, that has no relationship to the evolution of life into increasingly advanced forms of subjectivity and flexibility).

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- Social ecology refuses to ignore the fact that the harm elitist society inflicted on the natural world was more than matched by the harm it inflicted on humanity; nor does it overlook the fact that the destiny of human life goes hand-in-hand with the destiny of the nonhuman world.
  - We can only overcome the ideology of dominating nature by creating of a society without hierarchical structures or economic classes.

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# "GROW OR DIE!"

- ▶ But just as hierarchies and class structures tend to acquire a momentum of their own and permeate much of society, so too the market began to acquire a life of its own and extended its reach beyond limited regions into the depths of vast continents.
- ▶ Exchange ceased to be primarily a means to provide for modest needs, subverting the limits imposed upon it by guilds or by moral and religious restrictions.

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## Cont.

- ▶ By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the new industrial capitalist class with its factory system and commitment to limitless expansion began to colonize the entire world, and finally, most aspects of personal life.
- ▶ Unlike the feudal nobility, which had its cherished lands and castles, the bourgeoisie had no home but the marketplace and its bank vaults.
- ▶ As a class, they turned more and more of the world into an ever-expanding domain of factories.

## Cont.

- On the other hand, the industrial capitalists of the modern world spawned a bitterly competitive marketplace that placed a high premium on industrial expansion and the commercial power it conferred, and functioned as though growth were an end in itself.
- It is crucially important, in social ecology, to recognize that industrial growth does not result from a change in a cultural outlook alone and least of all, from the impact of scientific rationality on society.

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## Cont.

- ▶ It stems above all from harshly objective factors churned up by the expansion of the marketes itself, factors that are largely impervious to moral considerations and efforts at ethical persuasion.
- ▶ The key to this law of life-to survival-is expansion, and greater profit to be invested in still further expansion. Indeed, the notion of progress, once identified by our ancestors as a faith in the evolution of greater human cooperation and care, is now identified with economic growth.

## Cont.

- ▶ The point social ecology emphasizes is not that moral and spiritual change is meaningless or unnecessary, but that modern capitalism is structurally amoral and hence impervious to any moral appeals.
- ▶ Maxims like "business is business" explicitly tell us that ethical, religious, psychological and emotional factors have absolutely no place in the impersonal world of production, profit, and growth.
- ▶ It is grossly misleading to think that we can divest this brutally materialistic, indeed, mechanistic, world of its objective character, that we can vaporize its hard facts rather than transforming it.

## Cont.

- ▶ Bookchin claims that industrial growth isn't the result of a change in a cultural outlook alone, nor is it due to the impact of scientific rationality. Rather it stems from the principle of the market itself, the demand to grow or die.
- ▶ A society based on "grow or die" as its all-pervasive imperative must necessarily have a devastating ecological impact.
- ▶ The ever-expanding market system that had its roots in one of history's most fundamental social transformations: the elaboration of hierarchy and class into a system of distribution based on exchange rather than complementarity and mutual aid.

# The Ecological Society

- Social ecology is an appeal not only for moral regeneration but also, and above all, for social reconstruction along ecological lines.
- Although always mindful of the need for spiritual change, social ecology seeks to redress the ecological abuses that society has inflicted on the natural world by going to the structural as well as the subjective sources of notions like the "domination of nature."
- Social ecology challenges the entire system of domination itself and seeks to eliminate the hierarchical and class edifice that has imposed itself on humanity and defined the relationship between nonhuman and human nature.

## Cont.

- ▶ Social ecology advances an ethics of complementarity in which human beings must play a supportive role in perpetuating the integrity of the biosphere, as potentially, at least, the most conscious products of natural evolution. Indeed humans are seen to have a moral responsibility to function creatively in the unfolding of that evolution.
- ▶ Social ecology thus stresses the need for embodying its ethics of complementarity in palpable social institutions that will give active meaning to its goal of wholeness, and of human involvement as conscious and moral agents in the interplay of species.

# Conclusion

- In place of the existing hierarchical and class system social ecology proposes an egalitarian society based on mutual aid, caring and communitarian values. People in this new society would appreciate that the interests of the collective are inseparable from those of each individual.
- Property would be shared and, ideally, belong to the community as a whole. In this "commune of communes" property would not belong to private producers or to a nation-state.

## Cont.

- ▶ This transformation is to be achieved through radical collective action and co-operative social movements. The process of eliminating all domination must begin:

“Not only in the factory but also in the family, not only in the economy but also in the psyche, not only in the material conditions of life but also in the spiritual ones”. ('Open Letter to the Ecology Movement', in *Towards an Ecological Society*, Bookchin)

Bookchin believes that oppressive hierarchies and inequality are at the root of the problem, and that only a true community can solve the environmental crisis.