UNIT 4: DIFFERENT TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- understand the concept of Environmentalism in an elaborate way
- understand the concept of deep ecology
- explain the concept of social ecology
- discuss the concept of radical ecology.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

Awareness of our delicate relationship with our habitat likely arose among early hunter-gatherers when they saw how fire and hunting tools impacted their environment. Anthropologists have found evidence of human-induced animal and plant extinctions from 50,000 BCE, when only about 200,000 Homo sapiens roamed the Earth. We can only speculate about how these early humans reacted, but migrating to new habitats appears to

have been a common response.Some of the earliest human stories contain lessons about the sacredness of wilderness, the importance of restraining our power, and our obligation to care for the natural world.

According to Del Mar (2014), environmentalism explores recurring tensions between science and emotion, protection and conservation. The former establishes a sensible, sustainable way of interacting with nature which provides humans with basic necessities from building materials to fresh air. Environmentalism is not an attempt to solve specific problems and its not an attempt to protect nature from unnecessary destruction. Environmentalism is a political doctrine. It is an expression of worldview of certain groups. Sociologists have been studying environmentalism since 1970s.The early study was on the radical and conservative form of environmentalism and documented the social basis of environmental concern. In recent years sociologists have tended to set the analysis of environmentalism with broader study of social movements.

The last few decades have witnessed serious concerns at all levels local-regional,national and international regarding the environmental degradation and its cruel impact onboth the human and non-human habitat. The sustainability factor of planet earth hasbecome a point of debate and there has been a reiteration of reviving the local culturesand customs that are eco-friendly. Numerous debates have been on the rise about environmental values, duties and rights. These debates are crucial in the backdrop offast eroding natural resources and the possible debilitating impact on the ecology. Today this relation has taken a strenuousturn, thus leading to pollutions of all kinds- air, water, soil, land etc. Further, there hasbeen an increasing level of consciousness towards environmental protection and saving the planet earth. Several conventions, conferences, debates etc., are being held todiscuss issues related to pollution, environmental degradation, soil erosion, deforestationand so on. Almost all the sections of society like the environmental groups, academicians and policy makers are now showing active interest in restoring the natural habitat. In the previous Units, we have already discussed in brief the concept of Environmentalism.In

this Unit, we shall further elaborate the concept of Environmentalism. We shall also discuss the different types of Environmentalism

4.3.1 Concept of Environmentalism

We have already learned in the previous unit that Environmentalism is a political and ethical movement that seeks to improve and protect the quality of the natural environment through changes to environmentally harmful human activities; through the adoption of forms of political, economic, and social organization that are necessary treatment of the environment by humans; and through a reassessment of humanity's relationship with nature. Environmentalism states that the living things other than humans, and the natural environment as a whole, deserve consideration in reasoningthe morality of political, economic, and social policies.

Environmentalism can also be defined as a theory that views environment rather than heredity as the important factor in the development especially cultural and intellectual development, of an individual or groupand an advocacy of the preservation, restoration, or improvement of the natural environmentespecially the movement to control pollution.

Environmentalism or environmental rights is a broad, philosophy, ideology, and social movement concerning environmental protection and improvement of measures that seeks to incorporate the impact of changes to the environment on humans, animals, plants and non-living matter. Environmentalism focuses more on the environmental and nature-related aspects of green ideology and politics. Ecology is more commonly used in continental European languages while 'environmentalism' is more commonly used in English but the words have slightly different connotations.

Environmentalism advocates the preservation, restoration and/or improvement of the natural environment and critical earth system elements or processes such as the climate, and may be referred to as a movement to control pollution or protect plant and animal diversity. Environmentalism strives to balance relations between the humans and natural systems on which they depend in a sustainable way.

4.4 DEEP ECOLOGY

The concept of deep ecology, it may be noted according to the Wikipedia, is a contemporary ecological philosophy that recognizesan inherent worth of other beings, aside from their utility. It also states that unlike other branches of sciencesthat view ecology more as a biological science, 'deep ecology seeks a more holistic view of the world humans live in and seeks to apply to life the understanding that separate parts of the ecosystem (including humans) action as a whole'.

The term 'deep ecology' was coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, who did not believe in the relative ranking of the beings, such as humans having more claims than other beings in their existence. To him, all have an equal right to life, a right that is universal in nature. No single being or species can claim specific rights to live, while depriving or denying it to others.Similar views have been propounded by Bill Devall and George Sessions in their workon Deep Ecology (1985). Holding the view that everything is connected to everything else, they observe the changing trends of emerging deep ecological consciousness that goes beyond anthropocentrism.Deep ecology contends that the self should identified with all living beings as everything and every being is created by the creator of the universe,the Supreme Being. It is a process of self-realisation and re-connecting with the plant,animal and ecosystem all together. The Indian culture and civilisation has been very much in harmony with this concept if we understand the real meaning of deep ecology. Our ancestors believed in the harmonious co-existence of nature and human beings and had better realisation as to what the ill-effects of the disharmony are, when it arises.

4.4.1 Principles of Deep Ecology

Devall and Sessions elucidated the principles of deep ecology in their mentioned work Deep Ecology (1985). They forward the views of the proponents of deep ecology who believe that the world is not freely available to the human beings to indulge in over-exploitation of resources. The eight-tier platform, as they call it, is given as under:

- The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
- Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
- Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.
- The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
- Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situationis rapidly worsening.
- Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological,and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
- The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situationsof inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living.There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
- Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

4.4.2 Environmental Values: Religious Sources

While much has been debated and discussed on the role of governmental, nongovernmental,judicial and other agencies, inadequate attention has been paid to the role and responsibility of the citizens towards environmental values and behaviour. Some of the environmental threats include excessive emission levels, heavy usage of the energy consuming gadgets, littering one's surroundings, unsustainable consumption levels, increased domestic waste including e-waste and dumping of harmful and hazardous medical waste. Thematerialistic consumption is now being calculated as the measuring standard of human development, leaving behind

the basic issues of health care, sanitation, and hygiene,which are much more crucial to human health. Most importantly, the environmental values are being inadequately inculcated in the present times and generation.

Almost all the religions of the world have, in a direct or indirect manner, referred to the protection of environment as a fundamental duty of the mankind. The philosophy and way of life, especially in ancient India, was 'living in tandem with nature'. The guidelines were based on the Hindu philosophy that enshrined the principles of worshipping nature (other religions were unknown during the ancient times) including rivers, forests, earth, sky, air, water,plants and animals. The cutting of trees, air, water and land pollution were considered as evil acts and the natural calamities like floods, droughts, and earthquakes were considered as violent forms of anger manifested by the gods and goddesses. While worshipping of trees and plants was regarded as bestowing of prosperity, purity of word, thought and action, respect to animals and birds were considered as sacred duty for these were taken as the mounts of gods and goddesses. Violence was also forbidden to animals and other creatures emphasising the principle of equality of all living creatures. Consequently,these acts have taken religious connotations but carried the undertones of utility and medicinal values apart from creating a sense of spirituality.

Christianity underlines the importance of nature and God alone is considered as the sole owner of the nature. As in other religions, Islam too acknowledges God's creation as the foundation of life on this earth. The harmony and balance need to be maintained not only between individuals but also with other creatures. Man is only a guardian of nature, which is God's creation; he is definitely not the owner. Any alteration to God's creation is unacceptable in this religion and is considered as sinful.

4.4.3 Respect towards Environment

Science and Technology have changed the course of our lives in an unprecedented manner. While it is perceived as the cause of the current state of environmental degradation,it is also viewed as an effective way to combat the environmental degradation through environmental-friendly

technology. There is a need for a change in the way 'individualsthink about and interact with their environment. 'If respect for environment is to beachieved an ecological crisis has to be averted'.

4.5 SOCIAL ECOLOGY: MEANING AND CONCEPT

Social ecology studies relationships between people and their environment the interdependence of people, collectives and institutions. Social ecology, which evolved out of biological ecology, human ecology, systems theory and ecological psychology, takes a broad, interdisciplinary perspective that gives greater attention to the social, psychological, institutional, and cultural contexts of people-environment relations.

Social ecology as a concept was introduced in 1965. Social ecology gives an ethical content to the natural core of society and humanity that takes on the responsibility of suggesting and elaborating about man and environment. The philosophical base of social ecology lies in the idea that the real background on which the ecological future of the planet will be decided is clearly a social one. Social ecology rests on the awareness of the interdependence of the biophysical and socio-cultural domains. The significant position of social ecology lies in the association it establishes between society and ecology, the social conceived as a fulfilment of the latent dimension of freedom in nature, and the ecological conceived as the organising principle of social development-in short, the guidelines for ecological society humanity.

An emphasis on small-scale economic structures and the social dimensions of the ecological crisis also is a feature of the school of thought known as social ecology, whose major proponent was the American environmental anarchist Murray Bookchin. Social ecologists trace the causes of environmental degradation to the existence of unjust, hierarchical relationships in human society, which they see as endemic to the large-scale social structures of modern capitalist states. Accordingly, they argue that the most environmentally sympathetic form of political and social

organization is one based on decentralized small-scale communities and systems of production.

The basic categories of social ecology are; culture, polity, social structure, economy and ecological infrastructure. The power of social ecology lies in the association it establishes between society and ecology, the social conceived as fulfilment of the latest dimension of freedom in nature, and the ecological conceived as the organising principle of social development-in short, the guidelines for an ecological society. Social ecology offers a different analysis to understand the development of technology. The comprehensive theory developed by Albert Borgmann (1984) has been recognised by the contemporary scholars for its theoretical significance.

Borgmann's theory of technology argues that every daily life is characterized by events and activities that are attached with significance. They provide focal points from which we evaluate and orient rest of our lives. These focal activities, and other activities to varying degrees, are embraced by contexts that include, depending on individual circumstances, social, cultural, political, economic, spiritual, and ecological factors. In Borgmann's view the contemporary pattern, namely technology, threatens the stability and viability of these practices and contexts. Some of the social ecologists view technology as a force that determines human relationship, ways of life and all the more it is the liberation from technological overinfluence that would ensure freedom. Borgmann and Bookchin have provided certain measures. Borgmann suggests having a reform strategy with a two-sector economy. In this, local community based economy is elevated to a point where large-scale industrial activity serves the interests of local economies. Bookchin suggests 'proposal of flourishing alternative technologies' to overcome this influence and should ensure that any social function should be considered as part of the ecological processes. Murray Bookchin" Critique of Social Ecology The theoretical analysis of 'social ecology', based on social anarchism, has been severely criticised, especially due to its 'too rigid dogmatic approach' to the Marxian ideology.

4.6 RADICAL ECOLOGY

Radical environmental activism is a distinct form of environmental policy that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s. Radical environmentalists protest the methods and policies are conservative and accepted to government and industry and their failure to achieve environmental goals. Radical environmentalists are people who are willing to use direct-action tactics to obstruct and prevent state sanctioned activities that they perceive as being environmentally harmful. Some of the radical organizations are Earth First, Environment Liberation Front and Sea Shepherd Conservative Society.

There is now one dominant global culture, an ever expansionist and predatory industrial capitalism, valuing profit above life. A system that reduces the entire natural world like mountains, forests, oceans, plants and animal species (including human beings) into resources to be ordered, controlled, used and exploited in the pursuit of material growth and economic development - this ever more suffocating technocratic system is destroying the ecology of life. Radical ecology points out that solutions to a crisis of this scale involve far more than technological fixes or market incentives. How can there be market based or consumer driven solutions unless we realise that an economic system that regards the natural world as so many resources to be bought, sold, and co-modified is deeply irreconcilable with a truly ecological sensibility? How can we hope that legislation and regulation will be adequate while our political systems continue to support the disempowerment of the majority of humankind, and drift inexorably towards life boat authoritarianism?

Compared to both deep ecology and social ecology, radical ecology searches for a sustainable and social world from the transformation of the various factors that exist both within our individual consciousness and which are inscribed in our social-economic, political-judicial and technological systems, in a way that highly determines our lives.Radical ecology is a critical encounter, a working out through thought and praxis, of how we can really envision, embody and realise both methods to resist the destructive

march due to growth of industry for increase in socio-economy, and effects that change for a new way of living with the natural world. It includes work and experiments in non-hierarchical social forms, new economics, process oriented science, and a revitalised spirituality. Its visionary nature inspires many people forming the anti-globalisation movement and practitioners of direct action, as well as many working in mainstream political fields, ecological conservation, the organic agriculture and perm culture movements and many fighting for the rights of indigenous people.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: What is environmentalism theory?

Q2: Who started environmentalism?

Q3: What are the chief concerns of environmentalism?

Q4: What is the purpose of environmentalism?

Q5: What are the distinguishing characteristics of environmentalism?



4.7LETS SUM UP

- In this Unit we have learned that, shallow environmentalism is human-centred. It views humans as somehow above or outside nature, the pinnacle of evolution, as the source of all value, and ascribes only instrumental or 'use' value to nature which humans are variously entitled to dominate, control or (in slightly softer terms) steward. In this way it perpetuates many of the fundamental world views which have fuelled our collision course with ecological disaster. Deep ecologists also claim that humans need to regain a "spiritual" relationship with nonhuman nature. By understanding the interconnectedness of all organisms including humans in the ecosphere and empathizing with nonhuman nature, they argue,

humans would develop an ecological consciousness and a sense of ecological solidarity.

- Deep ecology asks ever deeper questions about the very foundations of our modern, scientific, industrial, growth-oriented, materialistic worldview and way of life. It challenges this paradigm from an ecological perspective: from the perspective of our profound interconnectedness with one another, with future generations, and to the web of life.
- Social ecology augments deep ecology with its analysis of the way in which patterns of social organisation such as patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism are central to the current ecological crisis. Social ecologists have pointed out how the exploitation of nature has gone hand in hand with the exploitation of other humans in various hierarchical, militaristic, capitalist and industrialist forms. They point out that social transformation does not simply lead from a change of consciousness, but also requires radical restructuring of the socio-economic system.



4.8 FURTHER READING

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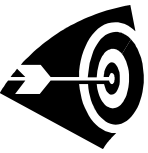
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2) (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/environmentalism).

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4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: A theory that views environment rather than heredity as the important factor in the development, especially cultural and intellectual development, of an individual or group;advocacy of the preservation, restoration, or improvement of the natural environment especially: the movement to control pollution.

Ans to Q No 2: The environmental movement began to take shape in North America when John Muir, one of the earliest environmentalists, convinced the U.S. congress to create the Yosemite National Park to preserve the beautiful valley.

Ans to Q No 3: Concepts dealing with environmental issues include the management of natural resources, overpopulation, commercial logging, urbanization and global warming. The effects of human

development ad activity have harmed and altered the earth's natural state.

Ans to Q No 4: Environmentalism is mainly concerned about creating awareness about the importance of the environment to humans. It aims to: (a) change how people treat the environment, (b) protect the environment through public policy, and (c) make people aware of how they affect the environment.

Ansto Q No 5: Environmentalism is a broad philosophy, ideology, and social movement regarding concerns for environmental protection and improvement of the health of the environment, particularly as the measure for this health seeks to incorporate the concerns of non-human elements.



4.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: What is meant by Deep Ecology?

Q2: Elaborate the principles associated with deep ecology.

Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: What are the different religious sources that enumerate the environmental values?

Q2: Describesocial ecology and radical ecology with examples.

Q3: Describe radical ecology and its significance for environment.

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