ECOLOGY JOURNEYING: DISCOVERING ECOLOGY AS INTEGRAL PART OF HUMAN LIVING

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Key words
ecocriticism, ecofeminism, ecophobia, ethno-mytho-ecology, harmony.

Abstract

Literature of ancient India verbalizes of collective harmony based on cohesion with the ecology and all beings. It emphasizes on an understanding of the intrinsic interdependence of all beings. According to our ancient literature such an understanding is essential for grasping the truth of the interconnectivity of all life. The assertion of ecology in literature transpires quite organically in our literature it talks of the realization of the essential interdependence, the intrinsic relatedness of all being and ecology. Our ancient Indian literature is filled with evidences of ecological peace, i.e. between human beings and their natural resource environment, requiring non-violence in the relation with the physical environment as well. Michael Foucault and Edward Said*, it is impossible to think of any social situation without relating it to the politics of power and oppression. And of course after the great movements in Feminist thinking it is virtually impossible to understand any situation without relating it to the ideas of gender and politics. In such a situation how could we refer to the idea of nature and culture both eastern and western? What we understand by nature most certainly has a bearing on what we make of ourselves. And our understanding needs necessarily be holistic and not discriminative. The paper attempts to synthesize eastern and western ideas as follows:

Thesis: Western thought of ecocriticism, ecofeminism and ecophobia

Antithesis: Eastern concept of Prakrti, Purusha and Rta

Synthesis: The value which we attribute to the environment cannot be seen distinct from our general ethical frame of reference irrespective of western or eastern culture. Instead of looking for influences and forerunners of environmentalism in literature from various periods, I incline towards a form of study that endeavor a more essential exploration into the potential and confines of human creativity/receptivity, a study of how we use language to figure out our relationship to the earth, the study of ecospeak as a kind of making that honors the search for beauty and meaning in human exchanges with nature. Throughout my paper I intend to keep the earthly other in sharp focus in relation to ecology/mythology and humanity as a holistic loom.

Introduction

Commoner’s First Law of Ecology:
Everything is connected to everything else. ¹

Tobler’s First Law of Geography:
Everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things. ²

Forman and Gordon’s First Law of Landscape Ecology:
An action here and now produces an effect there and then. ³

The suffix to technology & ecology sound same technology overwhelmed ecology as we on occasions failed to decide the scale of logic. We adhered too much to tech & failed to sustain balance of eco and techno, but before it is too delayed let us be logical balancing eco and techno let us be in the middle as middle is the balance.

The paper begins with issue of ecology journeying through ecocritical concepts and finally suggestive of Vedic ethno- eco-logical implications which can lead to a harmonious initiation towards healing of humanity. The paper intends to communicate that wherever the current center is, we humans claim to be the most intelligent species must be logical enough to shift it toward eco/oikos/ nature out true home. In this space I endeavor to address and investigate urgent issues that are the widespread contemporary thinking in environmental philosophy. It would be extremely exaggerated to say that the intentions are to offer solutions to the crisis of the Environment. This is an exploration in what could be best termed as philosophic historiography, i.e. an endeavor to classify positive pattern of ecocentric ideas of our present and pre historic Vedic era which can be supportive in harmonizing our present notion of environmental thinking, may be it can lead us to green living and thinking. Here Vedic eco-logical ideas are dealt in association of western ideas of environment activism. In pre- historic times or in early Vedic era environment problems were not so precise if accessible at all, were hardly understood as such, and at any rate did not subsist in such a conspicuous form as today. Hence, we do not anticipate that the early texts fully explicit an account with regard to the issue of environment problems. But from the study of ancient Indian scriptures we can trace out that there had been some attitude towards nature. Hence there may well have been some kind of spontaneous, non-reflected ecological ethics, or at least estimation and approach that offer a suitable basis on which it might be established today. The major cities of the Indus civilization, namely, Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, with their impressive civic sagacity, mud brick and timber dwellings with baths, far-reaching drainage and sewer systems, disclose remarkable enviro-awareness. The architecture as well as farming practices gave evidence to structural harmony with surrounding and climatic conditions that would optimally conserve natural resources, prevent deforestation, and also appease the gods who were little more than personified symbols of human dependence upon the energies of nature.

In the West, the term 'ecology' was coined only in the latter half of the 19th century from the Greek word Oikos, meaning 'home'. But India has, throughout trackless centuries, provided an ample expanse of friendly space for an open and ongoing discourse of ideas. The Vedic traditions established the principles of ecological harmony centuries ago - not because the world was perceived as heading for an imminent environmental disaster or destruction, nor because of any immediate utilitarian exigency, but through its quest for spiritual and physical symbiosis, synthesized in a system of ethical awareness and moral responsibility. The ancient sacred literature of the Vedas enshrines a holistic and poetic cosmic vision. They represent the oldest, the most carefully nurtured, the most elaborately systematized and the most lovingly preserved oral tradition in the annals of the world. Unique in their perspective of time and space, their evocative poetry is a joyous and spontaneous affirmation of life and nature. The Vedic Hymn to the Earth, the Prithvi Sukta in Atharva Veda, is unquestionably the oldest and the most evocative environmental invocation. In it, the Vedic seer solemnly declares the enduring filial allegiance of humankind to Mother Earth that Mata Bhumiḥ Putroham Prithivyah meaning Earth is my mother, I am her son. Mother Earth is celebrated for all her natural bounties and particularly for her gifts of herbs and vegetation. Her blessings are sought for prosperity in all endeavors and fulfillment of all righteous aspirations. A convention is made that humankind shall secure the Earth against all environmental trespass and shall never let her be oppressed. A soul-stirring prayer is sung in one of the hymns for the preservation and conservation of hills, snow-clad mountains, and all brown, black and red earth, unhurt, unsmitten, unwounded, unbroken and well defended by Indra. The Vedic seers regarded the Earth as sacred space for the sacred accomplishments and aspirations of humankind and for the practice of restraint and responsibility. This affirmative view of the inviolable sacred space in human consciousness is integral to the Vedas and the Upanishads. On it rests the Vedic vision of a world filled with the purity of the spiritual environment and the sanctity of environmental spirituality and morality. ⁴

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Ecology

Ecology (from Greek: οἶκος, "house" or "living relations"; λογία, "study of") is the scientific study of the distributions, abundance, and relations of organisms and their interactions with each other in a common environment. The definition here applies to the study of Nature. Ecology is the study of the interactions between life and its physical environment; the relationship between animals and plants and how one species affects another. A component in ecological study usually focuses on the ecosystem of an area. An ecosystem is the unique network of animal and plant species who depends on the other to sustain life. The interactions between and among organisms at every stage of life and death can impact the system.

Ernst Haeckel coined the term ökologie in 1866. The environment is dynamically interlinked with ecology. Like the term ecology, environment has different conceptual meanings and to many these terms also overlap with the concept of nature. Environment "...includes the physical world, the social world of human relations and the built world of human creation." This section describes the physical environmental attributes or parameters that are external to the level of biological organization under investigation, including abiotic factors such as temperature, radiation, light, chemistry, climate and geology, and biotic factors, including genes, cells, organisms, members of the same species and other species that share a habitat. The physical environmental connection means that the laws of thermodynamics applies to ecology. Armed with an understanding of metabolic and thermodynamic principles a complete accounting of energy and material flow can be traced through an ecosystem.

Vedic Ecology

Ecology is beginning to define how we look at the world and how we look at ourselves. Each geographical region in the world constitutes a special ecosystem-an interrelated habitat for plants and animals shaped by climate and terrain. These ecological factors have a strong effect on culture as well. As part of nature ourselves, society arises out of an ecological basis that we cannot ignore. Most of civilization, both in its advance and decline, reflects how people are able to manage the ecosystems in which they live and their natural resources. Human culture derives largely from its first culture, which is agriculture, our ability to work the land. This depends largely on water, particularly fresh water that is found in rivers and flat land that can be easily irrigated.

The principle guiding this outlook was that the highest good is to be identified with the total harmony of the cosmic or natural order, characterized in the earliest religious texts as Rta. This is the ordered course of things, the truth of being or reality (sat) and hence the ‘Law’. Rta determines the place, entitlement, function and end of everything. But Rta is too subtle for the undiscerning eyes, and its transmission occurs mythically with the dismemberment of the Cosmic Person (Purusha) performed by the gods. The moon was born from his mind; His eyes gave birth to the sun; Indra and Agni came from his mouth; And Vayu (the wind) from his breath was born. From the navel aerial arose; the sky arose from his head; from feet, the earth; from ears, the directions. Thus they formed the worlds. The concept of asu is perhaps the most central in Vedic religious ideology. Indeed, it is seen to have vitally influenced the whole religio-philosophical thought of ancient India. It was believed that an all-pervading magical potency-substance penetrated through the universe and thereby invested it, so to say, with existence and life. This magical potency served as the essential basis of the various aspects of creation such as gods, men, animals, trees, etc. There was, accordingly, an essential quantitative unity throughout the universe... the larger the quantity of asu one possessed, the greater was the magical power he could wield. Varuna could effectively enforce the cosmic law Rta because he was believed to have possessed the greatest quantity of asu - because he was asura. [Varuna] He sits among his people, consistent to Law. Most wise, he presides and governs all things. From there, surveying, he beholds earth’s marvels, both that which has been and that which shall be Supreme Lord, ruling the spheres, hear, O wise God, as you pass on your way. Free us from fetters of every sort. Loosen our bonds that we may live!

Following the differentiation of the cosmos, numerous gods, often in a spirit of competition would claim the title of the supreme enforcer of the Law. This indeed coincides with shifts in the substantial environmental conditions of the Aryans on their further migration towards the seven big rivers (Saptasindhu). Thus, Indra, a human hero who evolves to become the chief of gods, is extolled for his command over the arid forces of nature, especially the thunderstorm and thereby refreshing the earth with rain. The other gods who variously regulate different aspects of the biotic community are perceived as working in unison with the mind of Indra. He claims to have released the Sun from its concealing darkness, and set the solar-disk on its proper course in the sky, making it shine bright so as to give energy to all gradations of sentient and nature - animals, trees, waters, rocks, moon, etc; and in turn the Sun-god, Savitã, looks over to see that all other gods live according to Rta. - the harmonious inter-play of all the elements as forces of nature. Let us worship Indra, the True (satya) and not untrue or disorder (anrta).

From the above explanation we can witness that in ecological terms, the Vedic hymns interweave a number of insights, from a primitive conception of a unique all-being of which everything is a part, to the more complex idea of everything being a part of a unity which is also in everything or in every part that is constitutive of the unique whole. In other words, the Vedas speak of the uncanny unity of creation and, more significantly, the mysterious interconnectedness or co-dependence of everything to everything else. Each thing, element and each species or bio-organism - which we can be characterized as having the mark of being hood, has...
an interest and purpose to fulfill in the larger scheme of things. It is this that makes each thing ‘sacred’ and therefore worthy of moral consideration, by human beings and the gods alike.

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics is the discipline in philosophy that studies the moral relationship of human beings, and also the value and moral status of, the environment and its nonhuman contents. This entry covers: (1) the challenge of environmental ethics to the anthropocentrism (i.e., human-centeredness) embedded in traditional western ethical thinking; (2) the early development of the discipline in the 1960s and 1970s; (3) the connection of deep ecology, feminist environmental ethics, and social ecology to politics; (4) the attempt to apply traditional ethical theories, including consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, to support contemporary environmental concerns; and (5) the focus of environmental literature on wilderness, and possible future developments of the discipline. Although nature was the focus of much nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy, contemporary environmental ethics only emerged as an academic discipline in the 1970s. The questioning and rethinking of the relationship of human beings with the natural environment over the last thirty years reflected an already widespread perception in the 1960s that the late twentieth century faced a “population time bomb” and a serious environmental crisis. Among the accessible work that drew attention to a sense of crisis was Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1963), which consisted of a number of essays earlier, published in the New Yorker magazine detailing how pesticides such as DDT, aldrin and deildrin concentrated through the food web. On the other hand, historian Lynn White Jr., in a much-cited essay published in 1967 on the historical roots of the environmental crisis, argues that the main strands of Judeo-Christian thinking had encouraged the overexploitation of nature by maintaining the superiority of humans over all other forms of life on earth, and by depicting all of nature as created for the use of humans. Central to the rationale for his thesis were the works of the Church Fathers and The Bible itself, supporting the anthropocentric perspective that humans are the only things that matter on Earth. Consequently, they may utilize and consume everything else to their advantage without any injustice. For example, Genesis 1:27-8 states: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over fish of the sea, and over fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” We affirm finally that any deliberate attempt to reach a rational and enduring state of equilibrium by planned measures, rather than by chance or catastrophe, must ultimately be founded on a basic change of values and goals at individual, national and world levels. The call for a “basic change of values” in connection to the environment (a call that could be interpreted in terms of either instrumental or intrinsic values) reflected a need for the development of environmental ethics as a new sub-discipline of philosophy.  

Environmental ethics can be defined, in very general terms, as efforts to articulate, systematize, and defend systems of value guiding human treatment and behavior in the natural world. Philosophical and religious reflection on human obligations toward nature or “other kind” has a long pedigree in human cultures, whether occidental, Asian, or indigenous. Aldo Leopold provided a benchmark against which subsequent environmental ethics can be measured. His short essay “The Land Ethic” in A Sand County Almanac (1949) provided profound effort to articulate ethical guidelines for human interactions with nature. Leopold’s land ethic provided a model of and foundation for a type of environmental ethics now known as “ecocentrism” (ecosystem-centered ethics), or alternatively, “biocentrism” (life-centered ethics). Such ethics assert that the well-being of entire ecological communities, not just individual species (like Homo sapiens) or individual organisms, should be the axial moral concern. Ecocentrism therefore challenges most Western philosophical ethics, which tend to be “anthropocentric,” namely, focused on human welfare. For such ethics, nonhuman life is valuable at most indirectly; to the extent it satisfies some human need or preference. For ecocentric ethics, human interests do not trump that of all other life forms and the well-being of the biosphere as a whole. An ecosystem, rather than its constitutive parts, is the axial point of moral concern. The ecocentric approach presented by Leopold and his progeny, challenges environmental ethics to specify which individuals and groups should be given moral consideration, Following Leopold’s untimely death in 1949; the next intellectual landmark in the development of environmental ethics was the work of ecologist Rachel Carson.

In the late 1950s Carson began publishing magazine articles exposing the dangers of radioactive materials, pesticides and herbicides, the creation and use of which had boomed in America after World War II. In her now-famous Silent Spring (1962), Carson argued that industrial society was decimating avian populations and threatening the health of many other organisms, including humans. Carson not only helped set the stage for explicitly ecocentric environmental ethics, she also criticized the reductive and instrumental methodology that characterized (male-dominated) Western science since Francis Bacon (1561–1626), thus tilting the soil for ecofeminism, which would emerge as a particularly vital form of environmental ethics a decade or so later. Friedrich Schumacher published “Buddhist Economics.” In it he argued that “The teaching of the Buddha . . . enjoins a reverent and nonviolent attitude not only to all sentient beings but also, with great emphasis, to trees” In 1971 philosopher J. Baird Callicott placed environmental ethics as a discipline on the academic landscape, In the following decades Callicott became the world’s leading interpreter and promoter of Leopold’s land ethics. A central part of his constructive efforts was engaging the Lynn White thesis. In his many articles, eventually collected in books, Callicott argued that generally speaking, Asian and indigenous religions provide
more fertile ground than occidental religions for generating an environmental ethics compatible with Leopold’s land ethics. The next watershed in environmental ethics occurred in 1972 when the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined and explained the term “Deep Ecology” at a conference in Bucharest, publishing his thoughts in *Inquiry* the following year. He contrasted “deep ecology” with anthropocentric, “shallow ecology.” “Deep Ecology” rapidly became a catchphrase for most environmental ethics claiming nature had intrinsic value. Deep ecology is equated simply with a belief in the intrinsic value of nature, the trope found a widespread resonance among environmental activists, scientists, and scholars. “Intrinsic value theory” thus became an important element in the growing environmental ethics debate. Indeed, Naess himself was influential upon scientists developing conservation biology, a field which, like environmental ethics, had important antecedents important religion-related issues that emerged in the environmental ethics field since *Environmental Ethics* began publishing in 1979. The major issues are related to (1) ecofeminism, (2) social philosophy, (3) the idea of wilderness and the social construction of nature, (4) the relationship between science and religious ethics and, (5) the relationship between environmental values and practices.

Deep Ecology

Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (b. 1912) coined the term “Deep Ecology” in 1972 to express the ideas that nature has intrinsic value, namely, value apart from its usefulness to human beings, and that all life forms should be allowed to flourish and fulfill their evolutionary destinies. Naess invented the rubric to contrast such views with what he considered to be “shallow” environmentalism, namely, environmental concern rooted only in concern for humans. The term has since come to signify both its advocates’ deeply felt spiritual connections to the earth’s living systems and ethical obligations to protect them, as well as the global environmental movement that bears its name. Moreover, some deep ecologists posit close connections between certain streams in world religions and deep ecology. Naess and most deep ecologists, however, trace their perspective to personal experiences of connection to and wholeness in wild nature, experiences which are the ground of their intuitive, affective perception of the sacredness and interconnection of all life. Those who have experienced such a transformation of consciousness (experiencing what is sometimes called one’s “ecological self” in these movements) view the self not as separate from and superior to all else, but rather as a small part of the entire cosmos. From such experience flows the conclusion that all life and even ecosystems themselves have inherent or intrinsic value — that is, value independently of whether they are useful to humans.

Although Naess coined the term, many deep ecologists credit the American ecologist Aldo Leopold with succinctly expressing such a deep ecological worldview in his now famous “Land Ethic” essay, which was published posthumously in a *Sand County Almanac* in 1948. Leopold argued that humans ought to act only in ways designed to protect the long-term flourishing of all ecosystems and each of their constituent parts. Many deep ecologists call their perspective alternatively “ecocentrism” or “biocentrism” (to convey, respectively, an ecosystem-centered or life-centered value system). As importantly, they believe humans have so degraded the biosphere that its life-sustaining systems are breaking down. They trace this tragic situation to anthropocentrism (human-centeredness), which values nature exclusively in terms of its usefulness to humans. Anthropocentrism, in turn, is viewed as grounded in Western religion and philosophy, which many deep ecologists believe must be rejected (or a deep ecological transformation of consciousness within them must occur) if humans are to learn to live sustainable on the earth. Thus, deep ecologists generally believe that only by “resacralizing” our perceptions of the natural world can we put ecosystems above narrow human interests and thereby avert ecological catastrophe by learning to live harmoniously with the natural world. It is a common perception within the deep ecology movement that the religions of indigenous cultures, the world’s remnant and newly revitalized or invented pagan religions, and religions originating in Asia (especially Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism), provide superior grounds for ecological ethics, and greater ecological wisdom, than do Occidental religions. Theologians such as Matthew Fox and Thomas Berry, however, have shown that Western religions such as Christianity may be interpreted in ways largely compatible with the deep ecology movement. Although Naess coined the umbrella term, which is now a catchphrase for most non anthropocentric environmental ethics, a number of Americans were also criticizing anthropocentrism and laying the foundation for the movement’s ideas, at about the same time as Naess was coining the term. One crucial event early in deep ecology’s evolution was the 1974 “Rights of Non-Human Nature” conference held at a college in Claremont, California. Inspired by Christopher Stone’s influential 1972 law article (and subsequent book) *Should Trees Have Standing—Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects* the conference drew many of those who would become the intellectual architects of deep ecology. These included George Sessions who, like Naess, drew on Spinoza’s pantheism, later co-authoring *Deep Ecology* with Bill Devall; Gary Snyder, whose remarkable, Pulitzer prize-winning *Turtle Island* proclaimed the value of place-based spiritualities, indigenous cultures, and animistic perceptions, ideas that would become central within deep ecology subcultures; and the late Paul Shepard (d. 1996), who in *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*, and subsequent works such as *Nature and Madness* and the posthumously published *Coming Back to the Pleistocene*, argued that foraging societies were ecologically superior to and emotionally healthier than agriculture. Shepard and Snyder especially provided a cosmogony that explained humanity’s fall from a pristine, nature paradise. Also extremely influential was Edward Abbey’s *Desert Solitaire*, which viewed the desert as a sacred place uniquely able to evoke in people a proper, non-
anthropocentric understanding of the value of nature. By the early 1970s the above figures put in place the intellectual foundations of deep ecology.\textsuperscript{15}

A corresponding movement soon followed and grew rapidly, greatly influencing grassroots environmentalism, especially in Europe, North America, and Australia. Shortly after forming in 1980, for example, leaders of the politically radical Earth First! movement (the explanation point is part of its name) learned about Deep Ecology, and immediately embraced it as their own, spiritual, philosophy. Meanwhile, the green lifestyle-focused movement known as Bioregionalism became another physical embodiment of a deep ecology worldview. Given their natural affinities it was not long before Bioregionalism became the prevailing social philosophy among deep ecologists. As a philosophy and as a movement, deep ecology spread in many ways. During the 1980s and early 1990s, for example, Bill Devall and George Sessions published their influential book, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*; Warwick Fox in *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology* linked deep ecology with transpersonal psychology, thereby furthering the development of what is now called “ecopsychology”; David Rothenberg translated and edited Arne Naess’s important work, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*; and Michael E. Zimmerman interpreted Martin Heidegger as a forerunner of deep ecology, thus helping to spark a trend of calling upon contemporary European thinkers for insight into environmental issues. Many deep ecologists have complained, however, that the postmodern thinking imported from Europe has undermined the status of “nature,” defined by deep ecologists as a whole that includes but exists independently of humankind. The deep ecology movement has also been disseminated through the writings of its architects (often reaching college students in environmental studies courses); through journalists reporting on deep ecology-inspired environmental protests and direct action resistance; and through the work of novelists, poets, musicians, and other artists, who promote in their work deep ecological perceptions. Deep Ecology has been criticized by people representing deep ecology, socialist ecology, liberal democracy, and ecofeminism. Murray Bookchin, architect of the anarchistic green social philosophy known as Social Ecology, engaged in sometimes vituperative attacks on deep ecology and its activist vanguard, Earth First!, for being intellectually incoherent, ignorant of socio-economic factors in environmental problems, and given to mysticism and misanthropy. Bookchin harshly criticized Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman for suggesting that starvation was a solution to human overpopulation and environmental deterioration. Later, however, Bookchin and Foreman engaged in a more constructive dialogue. Like social ecologists, meanwhile, socialist ecologists maintain that deep ecology overemphasizes cultural factors in diagnosing the roots of, and solutions to, environmental problems, thereby minimizing the roles played by the social, political, and economic factors inherent in global capitalism. Liberal democrats such as the French scholar Luc Ferry (1995) maintain that deep ecology is incapable of providing guidance in moral decision-making. Insofar as deep ecology fails adequately to recognize that human life has more value than other life forms, he argues, it promotes ‘ecofascism,’ namely the sacrifice of individual humans for the benefit of the ecological whole, what Leopold termed “the land.” Many environmental philosophers have defended Leopold’s land ethic, and by extension, deep ecology, against such charges, most notably one of the pioneers of contemporary environmental philosophy, Baird Callicott. Although some ecofeminists indicate sympathy with deep ecology’s basic goal, namely, protecting natural phenomena from human destruction, others have sharply criticized deep ecology. Val Plumwood and Jim Cheney criticize deep ecology’s idea of expanding the self so as to include and thus to have a basis for protecting non-human phenomena. Moreover, Plumwood argues, deep ecology unwisely follows the rationalist tradition in basing moral decisions on “impartial identification,” a practice that does not allow for the highly particular attachments that often motivate environmentalists and indigenous people alike to care for local places. Warwick Fox has replied that impartial and wider identification does not cancel out particular or personal attachments, but instead, puts them in the context of more encompassing concerns that are otherwise ignored, as when for example concern for one’s family blinds one to concerns about concerns of the community. Fox adds that deep ecology criticizes the ideology—anthropocentrism—that has always been used to by social agents to legitimate oppression of groups regarded as sub- or non-human. While modern liberation movements have sought to include more and more people into the class of full humans, such movements have typically not criticized anthropocentrism as such. Even a fully egalitarian society, in other words, could continue to use anthropocentrism to justify exploiting the non-human realm. In response to the claim that deep ecology is, or threatens to be, a totalizing worldview that excludes alternatives and that—ironically—threatens cultural diversity, Arne Naess responds that, to the contrary, deep ecology is constituted by multiple perspectives or “ecosophies” (ecological-philosophies) and is compatible with a wide range of religious perspectives and philosophical orientations. Another critic, best-selling author Ken Wilber, argues that by portraying humankind as merely one strand in the web of life, deep ecology adheres to a one-dimensional, or “flatland” metaphysics (1995). Paradoxically, by asserting that material nature constitutes the whole of which humans are but a part, deep ecologists agree in important respects with modern naturalism, according to which humankind is a clever animal capable of and justified in dominating other life-forms in the struggle for survival and power. A “deeper” ecology would follow from discerning that the cosmos is hierarchically ordered in terms of complexity, but that respect and compassion are due all phenomena because they are manifestations of the divine.\textsuperscript{16}

Deep Ecology Platform, which Naess developed with George Sessions. Although controversial and contested, both internally and among its proponents and its critics, Deep Ecology is an increasingly influential green spirituality and ethics that universally recognized in environmentalist enclaves, and increasingly outside of such subcultures, as signifying a radical movement that

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challenges the conventional, usually anthropocentric ways humans deal with the natural world. Its influence in environmental philosophy has been profound, for even those articulating alternative environmental ethics are compelled to respond to its insistence that nature has intrinsic and even sacred value, and its anti-anthropocentric challenge. Its greatest influence, however, may be through the diverse forms of environmental activism that it inspires, action that increasingly shapes world environmental politics. Not only is deep ecology the prevailing spirituality of bioregionalism and radical environmentalism, it undergirds the International Forum on Globalization and the Ruckus Society, two organizations playing key roles in the anti-globalization protests that erupted in 1999. Both of these groups are generously funded by the San Francisco-based Foundation for Deep Ecology, and other foundations, which share deep ecological perceptions. Such developments reflect a growing impulse toward institutionalization, which is designed to promote deep ecology and intensify environmental action. There are now Institutes for Deep Ecology in London, England and Occidental, California, a Sierra Nevada Deep Ecology Institute in Nevada City, California, and dozens of other organizations in the United States, Oceania, and Europe, which provide ritual-infused experiences in deep ecology and training for environmental activists. It is not, however, the movement’s institutions, but instead the participants’ love for the living Earth, along with their widespread apocalypticism (their conviction that that the world as we know it is imperiled or doomed), that give the movement its urgent passion to promote earthen spirituality, sustainable living, and environmental activism. The term ‘deep ecology’ has been used in three main ways. First, it refers to a deep questioning about environmental issues. In this it follows the view of historian Lynn White, who argued that environmental problems are rooted in religious worldviews and those real solutions, must involve a change at that fundamental level of shaping the way we view and interact with nature. Second, deep ecology refers to a platform, first formulated as eight principles by Arne Naess and George Sessions in 1984. Those principles are

1. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs. (ii) 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. (iii) Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. (iv) 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. (v) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. Various worldviews, from ethno-vedic views to ecosocialism, could be the foundation of these principles, and the principles could be put into practice in divergent ways. In this sense, deep ecology specifies a common philosophic core while remaining open to a pluralism of worldviews and policies. The third and most common meaning of the term deep ecology is a philosophy of nature that is in line with this platform but is more specific in their views and values. (i) Nature is seen holistically, as an integrated system, rather than as a collection of individual things. (ii) Humans are fully a part of nature, no ontological separation. (iii) Individually, each person is not an autonomous individual but rather, a distinct node in the web of nature. (iv) Nature has unqualified intrinsic value, with humans having no privileged place in nature’s web. (v) A sensuous, intuitive communion with the Earth is possible, and it gives us needed insight into nature and our relationship to it. Scientific knowledge is necessary and useful, but we need a holistic science that recognizes the intrinsic value of the Earth and our interdependence with it. (vi) Nature is undergoing a cataclysmic degradation, at the hands of human societies. (vii) This destructiveness is rooted in anthropocentrism, an arrogant view that we are separate from and superior to nature, which exists to serve our needs. (viii) The goal at a social level is a society that is based on an ecocentric view of nature and that lives in harmony with the natural tendencies and the limits of natural world. (ix) The goal at an individual level is to fully realize one’s identification with nature. This involves neither a sense of an independent self nor the loss of the self in the oneness of nature. (x) It is a realization of our identification with nature which yields a spontaneous, intuitive tendency to avoid harm and to flourish. 17

Ecotheology

It is a form of constructive theology that focuses on the interrelationships of religion and nature, particularly in the light of environmental concerns. Ecotheology generally starts from the premise that a relationship exists between human religious/spiritual worldviews and the degradation of nature. It explores the interaction between ecological values, such as sustainability, and the human domination of nature. The movement has produced numerous religious-environmental projects around the world. The burgeoning awareness of environmental crisis has led to widespread religious reflection on the human relationship with the earth. Such reflection has strong precedents in most religious traditions in the realms of ethics and cosmology, and can be seen as a subset or corollary to the theology of nature. Christian ecotheology draws on the writings of such authors as Jesuit priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, process theologian Alfred North Whitehead, and is well-represented in Protestantism by John B. Cobb, Jr. and Jürgen Moltmann and ecofeminist theologians Rosemary Radford Ruether, Catherine Keller and Sallie McFague. Creation theology is another important expression of ecotheology that has been developed and popularized by Matthew Fox, the former Catholic priest. Hindu ecotheology includes writers such as Vandana Shiva. 18

We must have a fairly crude measure of the parameters of how nature and naturalness are culturally assessed. As Kellert (1996) notes that these terms are just labels of convenience... not terminological straightjackets. This reservation notwithstanding, these "ideologies" or "labels" are perhaps the only way we can coherently approach this diversely perceived subject. Table 1 lists a number
of ideologies or ideological "labels" cited in the literature by various authors attempting to summarize prevailing values or attitudes toward nature. What is striking about this list is not simply its diversity, but also the degree of ambiguity which exists even here, in attempts to simplify and clarify approaches to nature and naturalness. It should also be noted that this listing is not meant to be complete, but rather to be representative of the diversity of terms and viewpoints represented by the literature.29

Table 1. Ideological categories used to describe various perspectives on nature and the relationship between humans and nature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideological Category</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abiologism</td>
<td>Foreman 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animism</td>
<td>Abram 1994; Manes 1994; Taylor 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifactualism</td>
<td>Shepard 1982; Wilson 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicorrect</td>
<td>Caro, Pelkey, and Grigione 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biocentrism</td>
<td>Brennan 1988; Hamicke 1994; Sterba 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biophilia</td>
<td>Orr 1995; Wilson 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biophobia</td>
<td>Orr 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservationist</td>
<td>Eckersley 1992; Gomez-Pompa and Kaus 1992;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructionist</td>
<td>Carlassare 1994; Soulé 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualist</td>
<td>Grizzle 1994; Steverson 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornucopian</td>
<td>Foreman 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Materialist</td>
<td>Worster 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deconstructionist</td>
<td>Hayles 1995; Lease 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep Ecological</td>
<td>Devall and Sessions 1985; Naess 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determinist</td>
<td>Augros and Stanciu 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominionist</td>
<td>Grizzle 1994; Kellert 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dualism</td>
<td>Evernden 1992; Shepard 1982; Whitehead 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-Feminism</td>
<td>d'Eaubonne 1994; Slicer 1995; Soper 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-Humanism</td>
<td>Brennan 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecocentrism</td>
<td>Eckersley 1992; Sessions 1992; Slicer 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecophobia</td>
<td>Sobel 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empiricism</td>
<td>Buttimer 1976; Wright 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Humility</td>
<td>Relph 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalism</td>
<td>Evernden 1985; Grizzle 1994; Wilson 1996b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essentialism</td>
<td>Carlassare 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Extensionism</td>
<td>Des Jardins 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemptionalism</td>
<td>Wilson 1996b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitist</td>
<td>Caro, Pelkey, and Grigione 1994; Reiger 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functionalist</td>
<td>Maltzahn 1994; Worster 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holism</td>
<td>Reiger 1993; Sheldrake 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Bookchin 1990; Brennan 1988; Ehrenfeld 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inherentist</td>
<td>Reiger 1993; Norton 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentalist</td>
<td>Ehrenfeld 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrist</td>
<td>Reiger 1993; Westra 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsicalist</td>
<td>Brennan 1988; Des Jardins 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>Gray 1985; Whitehead 1969; Worster 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanistic</td>
<td>Sheldrake 1990; Shepard 1982; Whitehead 1969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Kellert’s aim was to develop a “taxonomy of basic values” as a way of measuring attitudes; his research showed that while learning, culture, experience, and demographics all influenced people's opinions, it appeared that certain values were basically universal (Kellert 54-9). Specifically, Kellert found that the nine categories he constructed represented values found in all study subjects, although the degree to which they were held or the form of expression they took varied. In brief, Kellert’s categories are listed and described in table 2.

Table 2. Kellert’s typological categories describing attitudes toward nature.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Name</th>
<th>Category Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>Practical and material exploitation of nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalistic</td>
<td>Direct experience and exploration of nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecologistic-identific</td>
<td>Study of structures, functions, relationships in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>Physical appeal and beauty in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Use of nature for language and thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic</td>
<td>Emotional attachment anthropomorphic nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moralistic</td>
<td>Reverence and ethical concern for nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominionistic</td>
<td>Mastery and control of nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negativistic</td>
<td>Fear, aversion, alienation toward nature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Kellert 54-9)

Ecospeak

The nature of nature is a matter of science. The meaning and use of nature is a matter of religion. [1] Religion is concerned with the use and meaning of nature, not the nature of nature. Religion cannot tell science what nature is. Science cannot tell religion what nature means. The limit of technology is set by the nature of nature. The goal or purpose of technology cannot exceed its limit, but the goal is set by religion [i.e., by culture] not by science. Ecology is the nature of nature considered as an entire system. Environment is used nature [i.e., applied ecology] and therefore falls in the realm of religion or culture. Scientists cannot tell us what
Do ecology speak for itself/ we humans interact for ecology in our discourse, is our discourse different from that of nature/ we are the part of ecosystem so we are in harmony with nature the only condition is we need to understand and promote ecospeak to balance ecology. Metzner clarifies his position on this point in his book Green Psychology: Transforming Our Relationship to the Earth, telling us: “While I do not mean to suggest that we must all become pagans and worship the ancient gods again, I do believe that by reconnecting with the nature religion of our ancestors, we can recover something of the imaginal sensitivity and ecological spirituality that is the collective heritage of each of us. A tremendous spiritual revitalization can take place when we recognize the natural world and the divine world as intimately interwoven with each other. I see this as a kind of re-membering through which the dismemberment of human consciousness from Earth could be healed”. This emphasis on re-membering the dismemberment of human consciousness from our awareness of symbiotic relatedness with the natural world harks back to Metzner’s reasons for forming of the Green Earth Foundation; whose broad agenda provides us with a good starting point from which to begin building a multidisciplinary coalition.

Ecofeminism

The Feminist movement is not a unique product of the modern age. Its historical precedents reach back into antiquity. In the Republic, Plato advocated the abolition of the family and social roles determined by sex; in literature, the ancient Greek classical comedy, Lysistrata by Aristophanes preached feminist ideals. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' (1792) which is one of the earliest and famous feminist works. The Victorian economist and philosopher, John Stuart Mill wrote 'The Subjection of Women' in 1869 and the German socialist, Friedrich Engels in his essay 'The Origin of the Family, Property and State' (1884), proclaimed marriage as a 'dreary mutation of slavery,' urged its abolition and suggested public responsibility for the rearing of children.

Feminism is a social theory, movement and way of life informed by the rights, experience and interests of women. The Feminist Movement in west is concerned with individual autonomy, rights, freedom, independence, tolerance, co-operation, nonviolence and diversity. The majority of feminists today reject the relationship between our biological and cultural evolution. Thus implying that our biological makeup has no connection to informing social roles and behaviors. This follows Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that; “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman”. The last decade has seen the appearance of a body of literature whose theme is the link between the domination of women and the domination of nature. This has been labelled ‘eco-feminism’. Ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as myriad forms of feminist and environmental theories and activisms intersected. The term was introduced by Francoise d’Eaubonne in her book Le Feminisme ou la Mort (Feminism or Death) published in 1974. Some theorists, such as Ynestra King, name it as a third wave of feminism, while others place it in the general category of deep ecology. Ecofeminism acts in both and neither of these broad movements, simultaneously serving as an environmental critique of feminism and a feminist critique of environmentalism. Ecofeminist trajectories are varied; there is no one accepted or orthodox “ecofeminism.” Rosemary Radford Ruether, Ivone Gebara, Monica Sjoo, Greta Gaard, Karen Warren and Andy Smith are among the voices speaking from ecofeminist positions. Ecofeminism stress that all forms of oppression are connected and that structures of oppression must be addressed in their totality. In one of the first ecofeminist books, New Woman/New Earth, Ruether, makes clear a central tenet of ecofeminism:Earth and the other-than-human experience the tyranny of patriarchy along with women. Classism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, naturism (a term coined by aren) and speciesism are all intertwined. Ruether, says Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women’s movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] society. The ecofeminist movement traces its origin to the 1970s when feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne invented the expression “ecological feminisme.” There is certainly a variety of opinion within the movement, but there are some basic ideas in ecofeminist ideology that are generally agreed upon.
Lately we have turned to religion for a protective model of environment protection. Science has offered enough solutions and is constantly experimenting for seeking solutions hope for better living confronts us face to face with religion for superior solutions. Here we merely take a suitable metaphor, which crystallizes a insightful truth, though fully conscious of its shortcomings and exclusions. Environmental problems have increased. In uptight times it is only natural to seek a solution wherever one might exist, and particularly in the last few decades the search has turned to the world’s religious traditions in an effort to develop religiously based environmental ethics. This materialize to be an best strategy given that environmental activism is a fairly recent development, and the best way to ensure that the masses become involved is to give the cause the authority of one or more religious traditions that are based in ancient times. As a result, many have sought to encourage the development of an environmental ethic within the Hindu tradition. Opinions fluctuate, but many believe it to be a realistic and worthwhile ambition, and thus they thoroughly study the religion’s sacred texts as well as the behavior and beliefs of practitioners in order to establish a foundation for this environmental ethic. Many have taken up to the feminist cause, believing that its principles have much in common with those of environmentalism. Both causes join forces in point of fact to generate optimistic alter. The result has been a movement marked ecofeminism. This movement, however, is not completely isolated from the religious context, and, in fact, some consider ecofeminism to have a significant place within Hinduism.

One of the most essential of these principles is the idea that the ways in which both women and nature are abused are justified by the “same theoretical structure and often supported by the same religious constructs.” The belief is that if we can abolish or reform these ideological structures, we can halt the detrimental treatment of both women and the earth. For example, hierarchy and authoritarianism are often identified as concepts that should be disposed of in the effort to construct a just society, one that is both truly dedicated to fair consideration for each individual as well as to preserving the earth for future generations.

Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, who have been active in the feminist and environmental movements respectively, co-authored a book entitled Ecofeminism in which they express this concern: In analyzing the causes which have led to the destructive tendencies that threaten life on earth we became aware — quite independently — of what we call the capitalist patriarchal world system. This system emerged, is built upon and maintains itself through the colonization of women, of ‘foreign’ peoples and their lands; and of nature, which it is gradually destroying. In this way, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and hierarchy are identified as cause of dominance. These speculative structures substantiate the subjugation of women and other exposed groups, as well as dominion over the natural world. As Richard Foltz notes that patriarchy is a male-oriented set of values that seeks to dominate, control, and manipulate for its own ends. Thus, these systems put a select group in positions of power while subjugating everyone and everything else in an effort to maintain that power. Ynestra King suggests that patriarchal thought has led people to believe that there is an inherent opposition between nature and culture, between women and men, and between matter and spirit. King, like many others, claims that such dualisms are constructs of human culture rather than intrinsic aspects of existence. She posits that this misconception prevents people from realizing the true nature of reality, which, as she claims, is that life on earth is an interconnected web, not a hierarchy. King explicates that only when we remove the idea of the “other” from our dialogue and make out that everything is connected and interdependent will we be able to attain a more harmonious coexistence on and with the earth.

Vedic texts substantiate and strengthen hierarchies of ecological web, but they also unfold the religious stance of nature of women and the earth. Vedic texts see the male as an embodiment of the spirit, the female as matter or nature, and ultimately place the male in much privileged regard not on cost of debasing of the female. Women are acknowledged as being nearer to the material world, they are often alleged as spiritually inferior or devoid of any real value. They are considered to be disruption on the path to divinity: For Augustine, femalesness itself represents the inferior bodily nature, while the male represents the intellect which is to rule over both his body and hers. He is the collective Adam made in God’s image, while woman as woman does not possess the image of God in herself but images the subordinate body. She is “in the image of God” only when taken together with the male, “who is her head.” There have been many other opinions and speculations by ecofeminists, but this must be adequate to communicate a general idea of what the movement has sought to achieve. It should also be noted that in defying ascendency or subordination in general, ecofeminism is also trying to deal with the substandard status of other minorities and oppressed groups. Thus ecofeminism is not a woman’s or environmental apprehension but it is ultimately pertinent to one and all.

Hindu rituals involve the praising of nature’s beauty and value. Sherma identifies three aspects of Hinduism that fall into this category: (a) the identification of the feminine maternal with materiality; (b) the purity/impurity dichotomy; and (c) the devaluation of the feminine principle (my and prakrti) and of the phenomenal world that it represents, by philosophies of transcendence.
Considering the first point considering earth as mother in Hinduism, it also suggests the idea that the natural world is there solely to cater to the needs of the human race. This depiction risks the assumption that the earth will continue to provide nourishment and protection regardless of how it is treated, just as a mother is likely to love and nurture her children even if she does not always receive equal consideration.  

The second category concerns purity and impurity, a complex topic that pervades Hindu life. The result of this classificatory system is a series of divisions not only between people, but also between people and their environment. These divisions are detrimental to the philosophical ideas upon which an environmental ethic would be founded such as the conception of interconnectedness. The final category deals with the fact that whenever the transcendent aspects of a religious tradition are emphasized, there is bound to be less interest in conserving resources and protecting the earth, since the focus of practitioners will be on goals beyond this world and this lifetime. This point is also connected with the devaluation of the feminine principle: if the natural world is perceived as being feminine in nature, and the natural world is a mere illusion that must be overcome, then notions of the feminine become associated with meaninglessness and a lack of true value.

Vedas may not seem to take a keen interest in the status of women, they do appear to promote environmentally friendly attitudes and they also attribute nature as feminine. The Vedas contain numerous references to the beauty and mysteriousness of the nature, ass mother earth. They include explanations of the creation of the cosmos and describe countless gods and goddesses who are personifications of the wondrous parts of creation, such as the river goddess Sarasvati and the earth goddess Prithivi. Klostermaier even claims that "Vedic Hinduism was very environmentally conscious: pollution of land and water was forbidden and care was taken to preserve the natural fertility of the environment."

One might assume that this necessitates a rejection of earthly life entirely, and thus that Hindus would be likely to ignore any pleas to save the environment, since it is all an illusion anyway. However, there is an alternative interpretation available. Individual can approach Truth from two point of view: that of the Relative and that of the Absolute. From the first outlook, one realize earthly experiences as actual, appropriate, and consequential; from the second, one realizes that all of these experiences are merely virtual, but also that the duality between appearance and reality is in actuality an aspect of the divine Absolute. This way one can comprehend and get pleasure from this life without ignoring the factual, non-dualistic nature of reality. From this perspective, it seems feasible that some sort of environmental ethic could emerge within Hinduism. Earthly way of life, though illusionary in some senses, is not redundant. One could promote environmental protection by balancing it as protection of the apparently varied yet eventually allied attribute of Brahman. "Brahma satyam jagat mithyā, jīvo brahmaiva nāparah" — Brahman is the only truth, the world is illusion, and there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and individual self.

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The Sanskrit word Shakti can be translated as meaning "power" or "energy." It is derived from the parasmaipada verb root "shak," which means "to be able," "to do," "to act." This power is witnessed in all the various phenomena of life. It is the force responsible for the growth of vegetation, animals and human beings. It is what is responsible for the movement of all things. The planets revolve around the sun as a result of Shakti. It is Shakti that makes the winds blow and the oceans churn. Shakti is manifest as the very affective ability of all the forces of nature. She is the heat of fire, the brilliance of the sun, the very life force of all living beings. In human beings, she is seen as the power of intelligence (buddhi), compassion (daya) and divine love (bhakti), among her many other functions. Additionally, the presence of goddesses is seen throughout the long literary tradition of India.

In the Rig Veda, for example, at least 40 goddesses are mentioned. These include: Sarasvati, goddess of wisdom; Ushas, the dawn; and Aditi, who is depicted as "birthless" Rig Veda, 10.7.2. The very word "Shakti" itself appears in the Rig Veda some 12 times. Two of the word's derivatives, "shaktivet" and "shakman," respectively appear twice and five times Part of the Rig Veda is known as the "Devi Sukta" and is certainly a recognition of Shakti as a cosmic principle. Shakti is also seen in the later Itihasas, or Epics of India. She is found in the Ramayana, where "...she is called Devi, and is respected by all". In the Mahabharata there are two hymns dedicated to her. The various manifestations of the goddess are ubiquitous throughout the Puranas. Indeed, the Devi Bhagavata Purana is entirely dedicated to her. One would be hard pressed to find a work anywhere in the entirety of Hindu literature in which there is not at least some mention of a feminine power. Samkhya teaches the dualistic doctrine of Prakriti / Purusha. According to
this theory there are two radically distinct principles at play during the creation of the cosmos: matter (Prakriti) and spirit (Purusha). Prakriti is the primordial matter which is present before the cosmos becomes manifest. It is as a direct result of the devolution of this original material substance that the universe, with all its diversity of names and forms comes into being. Prakriti is seen as being "...the power of nature, both animate and inanimate. As such, nature is seen as dynamic energy" 44. Prakriti is originally passive, immobile and pure potentiality by nature. It is only as a direct result of her contact with the kinetic Purusha that she unfolds into the variagatedness we see before us. this process of devolution from the perspective of a Shakta, or a worshiper of Devi, the Great Goddess: The universe with all its diversity and multiplicity remains equated in the divine volition as conception before manifestation. It is manifested in the course of basic evolution, started under the influence of the creative volition of the Divine Mother. The Universal Mother in Her Absolute Self admits of no mutability, change or division. 45

Thus, Shakti is seen as being antecedent to Prakriti, with Shakti being the instrumental cause, in the form of the Devi, or the Great Goddess, and Prakriti serving as the material cause. The idea of Prakriti / Purusha is seen mirrored in another closely allied concept: that of the Divine Consort. According to Hindu teachings, Shakti, energy, cannot exist in a vacuum. If there is an energy, it must be someone’s energy. Almost every god (deva) of the Hindu pantheon has a feminine companion, a consort, a goddess. This is an idea which is an indispensable element of every major sect of Hinduism. Vishnu, for example, has the goddess Shri (Lakshmi) as his eternal companion. Shiva is accompanied by Parvati, Brahma by Sarasvati, Krishna by Radha. These goddess-consorts are said to personify nothing less than the essential energy of the god. So integral is the relationship between a particular god and his Shakti that one is thought incapable of existing without the other. It is said that in her manifestation as Shiva’s consort and source of energy, Shakti is embodied in the "i" of his name. According to the grammatical rules of classical Sanskrit, if a consonant is not followed by a vowel, it is automatically assumed that this consonant is followed by the vowel "a." Consequently, without this "i" in his name, Shiva becomes shava, or a lifeless corpse. Thus it is the feminine principle which is the animating force of life itself.Both the feminine and the masculine are necessarily present in the Divine. This is dramatically illustrated in South Asia in the image of Ardhanarishvara, the representation of God as being half man and half woman. Veneration of God necessarily entails veneration of the Goddess. They are two aspects of the same being and are, as such, mutually dependent upon one another. The intimacy of god and goddess can be more clearly illustrated by examining one of the stories involving the creation of Devi which is found Devi Bhagavata Purana. Interestingly, although clearly a Shakti Purana, the Devi Bhagavata Purana describes Vishnu / Krishna as being the supreme God, IX. 2. 12 - 23 who "...is said to be the root and creator of all" 46

According to this account, Krishna was at one time the only being in existence. Desiring to create the universe, He divided Himself into two parts, the left being female and the right male. That female was none other than Radha, the eternal consort and Shakti of Krishna, who is described as being the Mula Prakriti, or the root source of all existence. From the conjugal sport of Radha and Krishna a golden egg was born that was the repository of the material from which our universe was created. Creation, then, is depicted in the Devi Bhagavata Purana as proceeding from Krishna, through Radha. The feminine, Shakti, is shown to be crucial and indispensable in the process of creation. This fact very clearly demonstrates the mutual dependence in which god and goddess hold one another.

The relationship that is enjoyed between the gods and goddesses in Hinduism is one of the wielder of power (shaktiman, the masculine principle) and the power itself (Shakti, the feminine). Each is meaningless without the existence of the other. While the possessor of power is the guiding force as to the power’s direction and purpose, it is the power itself which provides the ability to perform any task. To use a crude example, we might say that the deva is the computer while the devi is the electricity that makes the computer’s functioning possible. Shaktiman is the principle that gives guidance and direction to power. Shakti is the vital life-giving force of the god, as well as the personification of his particular power. Together, the deva and devi, the god and goddess of Hinduism, are the able and the ability, respectively. Moreover, this concept is not relegated solely to the realm of the Divine. What is true on the macrocosmic level is also the rule on the microcosmic. Human beings too are said to also participate in the interplay of shakti and shaktiman. For in Hinduism, every woman is said to be a manifestation of the divine Shakti. The power of Shakti, the feminine principle, is believed to be directly present in creation in the form of our mothers, sisters, daughters and wives. As the contemporary feminist author Elinor Gadon explains, “the truth of the Goddess is the mystery of our being. She is the dynamic life force within. Her form is embedded in our collective psyche...” 47

Unlike what is clearly observed in the majority of Western literature, Hindu literature is full of accounts of heroic, strong and brave women. There are many accounts of such women in the Mahabharata. For example, we find Draupadi, who is depicted as a brave and iron-willed woman. There is also Kunti, who perseveres with her honor and her faith intact despite a life riddled with tragedies. In the Ramayana, we meet Sita, the wife - and Shakti - of Rama, an incarnation of God. Though arranged marriages are the norm in Hindu society, we find that Sita chooses her own husband in a svayamvara ceremony. Also of her own free will, she chooses to accompany Rama to the forest when he is sent into exile, thus exhibiting her strength and commitment to loyalty. While living in the forest, she continues to display her independent nature, as when she convinces Rama to chase the gold-spotted deer. Hindu literature is full of such examples of strong, heroic women. Images of powerful women in Hinduism are not limited to the realm of literature. They are also witnessed throughout the living historical record of India as well. Hindu women have historically easily risen
to heights of power within various monastic and religious hierarchical structures, parallels of which would have been unheard of in Western religion and society until only recently. In the earliest Vedic era, for example, women were awarded the sacred thread of priests (brahmans). One text of the Rig Veda (V, 28) mentions that there was a female rishi, or revealer of sacred truth, known as Vishvara. There were also women philosophers such as Vachaknavi, who debated Yajnavalkya, of Upanishadic fame. The famous Sanskrit grammarian, Panini, observed the distinction in the Sanskrit language between “acaryani” (the wife of a teacher) and “acarya” (a lady teacher), indicating that women were accepted as spiritual teachers. Such women saints as Andal and Mirabai were leaders of the devotional Bhakti movement “...that initiated the religious liberation of women [and] was largely promoted and supported by women devotees”. Women have continued this long tradition as leaders of various Hindu communities to this day. Such examples of this phenomenon can be seen in the forms of Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, Amritanandamayi, and Meera Ma, among many, many others. Considering that Indian culture has always been a culture in which religion has always been the most important social institution in society, it is no small accomplishment for women to have risen so high in the echelons of Hindu leadership. Such respect for the feminine has not been as readily visible in the history of the Western world, unfortunately. The Western religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have not had the same abundant degree of examples of women in leadership throughout their respective histories. To this day, for example, women are barred from the priesthood in the Roman Catholic church. It has only been in the latter third of the twentieth century that a reemergence of the feminine has begun to take place in European and American societies. Recognizing the terrible price that this gaping deficiency has wrought upon the world in the forms of war, the environmental crisis and the exploitation of women, many present day women thinkers are openly calling for a reclaiming of feminine values in many different sectors of life. In the words of Eleanor Rae: “while the feminine is not limited in its context, there are nevertheless certain key places where it is most appropriately rediscovered. These are in women, in the Earth, and in the Divinity.”

By recognizing the sacred nature of women as personifications of the feminine aspect of divinity, and by seeing the Earth, not as a lifeless object, there solely for our exploitation, but rather as the living personality of our collective Mother, we can end much of the needless violence and suffering brought about by denying the feminine. Agreeing with this assessment, Vandana Shiva has written: The violence to nature as symptomatized by the ecological crisis, and the violence to women, as symptomitized by their subjugation and exploitation, arise from this subjugation of the feminine principle. crystal-clear display of the ancient concept of Shakti coming full circle to occupy the center stage of current academic debate, it has finally been recognized that the feminine aspect of the very Divinity Him(Her)self has been too long neglected. In the works of such people as Matthew Fox and Vicki Noble, we are now witnessing a call for the reemergence of the concept of the sacred feminine power of God, of Shakti. In such interesting developments as these, I venture to say that we are not so much witnessing the "Hinduization" of Western thought, as we are the rediscovery of the feminine principle as an integral and inseparable part of our very being.

Hindu tradition gives essential prominence on goddess worship and the notion of Shakti. Shakti may plainly be deciphered as supremacy, according to Sara Mitter’s citation of Heinrich Zimmer’s definition, as “ability, capacity, faculty, strength, energy, prowess; regal power; the power of composition, poetic power, genius.” Within the Shaktic tradition the goddess is worshipped in a variety of forms and is appreciated for her multiplicity. In Shaktic Tantra women are perceived as being the goddess in human form and are welcome, even necessary parts of religious ritual. They embody the goddess’s power and wisdom and are even considered to be the ideal gurus. Clearly Shaktism offers an alternative to the orthodox side of Hinduism which, as Sherma claims, often neglects and devalues the feminine principle. However, Shaktism in its tantric aspects also makes giant leaps in deconstructing traditional hierarchies and dichotomies. First of all, tantric rituals are not exclusive with respect to caste and gender. Women and men, shudras and brahmans, all find themselves on equal footing in these rituals and in tantric practice in general (Bhattacharyya 18). The tantric goal is to rise above such deceptive dualistic thinking so that one might see the all-important reality, the underlying essence of the divine in all things.

In Vedic literature (8000–1000 BC), especially in the Atharvaveda (c. 1000 BC), plants are treated as deities. Independent Suktas to Vanaspati like Ashvattha (III 6), Laksha (V 4), and so on are addressed to them superimposing many qualities of living beings on them. Most of these Suktas invoke these ‘deities’ to cure diseases. In Yaska’s Nirukta (A treatise on etymology of Vedic words), ‘being’ (life) is stated to have six modifications (shad bhaaravikaaaradha) which are: jayate, asti, viparinamate, vardhate, apokshiyate, and mriyate (birth, existence, change, growth, decay, and death). Since plants are born, they exist, grow, decay, and die like humans. To quote one example from ancient Indian texts we can quote Kautilya as he entrusted the task of protecting forests and other natural resources with the king [through different state officials]. He prescribed that appropriate plants should be grown to protect dry lands and pasturelands should be properly protected. Kautilya takes into consideration all aspects necessary for perfect harmony in dwelling places of the citizens.

The king should protect different types of forests, water reservoirs and mines. To quote:

II/1/39: The king should protect the product-forests, elephant-forests, irrigation works and mines that were made in ancient times and should start new ones.
II/2/4: And he should establish forests on its border or in conformity with the (suitability of the) land, another animal park where all animals are (welcomed) as guests (and given full protection).

II/2/5: And he should establish forests, one each for the products indicated as forest produce.

II/2/6: On the border (of the kingdom), he should establish a forest for elephants guarded by foresters.

II/2/7: The superintendent of the elephant-forest should, with the help of guards of the elephant-forest, protect the elephant-forest (whether) on the mountain, along a river, along lakes or in marshy tracts, with its boundaries, entrances and exits (fully) known.

II/2/8: They should kill anyone slaying an elephant.

III/8/6: (He should make) the dung-hill, the water-course or the well, not in a place other than that suited to the house, except the water-ditch for a woman in confinement till the end of ten days (from delivery).

III/8/7: In case of transgression of that, the lowest fine for violence (shall be imposed).

III/8/9: He should cause to be made a deep-flowing water-course or one falling in a cascade, three padas away (from a neighbours wall) or one aratni and a half (away).

III/8/10: In case of transgression of that, the fine is fifty-four panas.

III/8/11: He should cause to be made a place for carts and quadrupeds, a fire-place, a place for the large water-jar, the grinding mill or the pounding machine, one pada away or one aratni (from a neighbours wall).

III/8/12: In case of transgression of that, the fine is twenty-four panas.

III/8/13: Between all two structures or two projecting rooms, (there is to be) an open lane one kishku (wide) or three padas.

III/8/14: Between them, the distance between the eaves of roofs (is to be) four angulas, or one may over-lay the other.

III/8/15: He should cause to be made a side-door in the intervening lane, measuring one kisku, for making repairs to what is damaged, not (allowing) crowding.

III/8/16: For light, he should cause a small window to be made high up.

III/8/19: And he should cause that part above the verandah which requires protection, to be covered by matting, or a wall touching (the roof), for fear of damage by rain.

II/36/26: For throwing dirt on the road the fine shall be one eight (of a pana), for blocking it with muddy water, one quarter.

II/36/27: On the royal highway, (the fines shall be) double.

IV/10/4: In case of theft of deer or objects from deer-parks or produce-forests, (there shall be) a fine of one hundred.

IV/10/5: In case of theft of deer or birds (intended) for show or pleasure or in case of killing these, the fine shall be double.

Ecological and environmental awareness can be found in almost all the chapters of Kautilyan’s Arthasastra. From the above quotes we can derive at the point that Kautilya was much concerned about matters pertaining to the protection of environment and ecology. Therefore he lay down various rules and also the disciplinary measures for disobedience of such rules. In this regard like deep ecologists Kautilyas approach was holistic as he considered preservation of environment and ecology as integral parts of human living.

Conclusion

If we want children to flourish, we need to give them time to connect with nature and love the Earth before we ask them to save it. The motive for all this is honorable and just, but what’s emerging is a strange kind of schizophrenia. Children are disconnected from the world outside their doors and connected with endangered animals and ecosystems around the globe through electronic media. What really happens when we lay the weight of the world’s environmental problems on eight and nine year-olds already haunted with too many concerns and not enough real contact with nature. If we prematurely ask children to deal with problems beyond their understanding and control, then I think we cut them off from the possible sources of their strength. We can cure the malaise of ecophobia with ecophilia –supporting children’s biological tendency to bond with the natural world. What a simple solution. No rainforest curriculum, no environmental action, just opportunities to be in the natural world with modeling by a responsible adult. If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the Earth before we ask them to save it. Perhaps this is what Thoreau had in mind when he said, “the more slowly trees grow at first, the sounder they are at the core, and I think the same is true of human beings.” This is what tagore did in his Santiniketan. Maharsi passed away in 1905. But since 1901, with the prior consent of his father, Rabindranath had taken over the responsibility of reshaping the Ashram on the basis of his philosophy of education in which nature and forest had a predominant role to play as educators. This creative reshaping partly manifested itself in the establishment of the present Visva-Bharati, where the whole world meets in one nest and partly in the gradual unfolding of a scenario in which the garden with its trees and flowers provided the necessary backdrop. The love and care with which the poet took up the program of developing the garden which he had inherited from his father can be seen from the trees and flowers that abound at Santiniketan.

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