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THE GITA'S INFLUENCE ON ECOSOPHY FOR ECOLOGICAL HARMONY

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century faces a significant environmental crisis driven by the rapid advancement of science and technology. While modernization, and industrialization have enabled human progress, their unchecked and unethical application has led to severe ecological degradation.is. Issues such as pollution, global warming, climate change, and biodiversity loss stem largely from anthropogenic activities. Environmental sustainability has emerged as a critical framework to address these challenges by promoting ecological balance and conserving natural resources for future generation. The Bhagvad Gita, a revered ethical scripture of Hinduism, offers profound guidance for understanding the distinction between "what is" and "What ought to be". Norwegian philosopher and ecologist Arne Naess, the founder of Ecosophy, proposed a philosophy combining ecological and ethical principles to address environmental concerns. Deeply influenced by the teachings of Bhagavad Gita, Naess incorporated principles like lokosangraha (welfare of the world), self-realization, and nature centric human attitude into his ecological philosophy. This paper explores how Naess adapted these principles into Ecosophy to foster environmental sustainability and proposes their relevance in addressing contemporary ecological crises.

KEYWORDS: *Arne Naess, Ecosophy, Environmental Sustainability, Self-realisation, Lokasamgraha*

INTRODUCTION

The environmental crisis of the 21st century demands urgent attention. While advancements in science and technology have brought development, their misuse has caused environmental degradation. Anthropogenic activities, including industrialization and urbanization, have disrupted the balance of ecosystems, leading to issues such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. One cannot deny the excess and unethical use of scientific and technological growth which is enough to destroy the connection exist between man and nature. Now a days people love to live with robots but not with the natural world. People are focused towards financial growth, mental and physical growth, personal and professional relationships etc. but people have forgotten the most important relation between man and nature for a better society. This is the anthropocentric attitude and cause of major environmental crisis. In the primitive age people lived with nature and also worshiped nature as well as the non-human world but in this modern age people tries to dominate the natural world. Science and technology are good for development but these are unable to solve the environmental crises that the world faces today. Environmental issues cannot be solved without the changing behaviour, attitude and perception towards the environment. As environmentalists seek sustainable solutions, philosophical and spiritual teachings offer a holistic perspective on addressing these problems.

The Bhagavad Gita, an ancient scripture, emphasizes ethical living, interconnectedness, and the responsibility of humans to preserve nature. Arne Naess, through his Ecosophy, highlighted similar principles to promote ecological harmony. This paper explores the intersection of Naess's Ecosophy and the Bhagavad Gita, emphasizing how the Gita's teachings inspired Naess's ideas to address contemporary ecological challenges.

Arne Naess's Ecosophy and Environmental Philosophy

Arne Naess tries to explain the environmental challanges by creating his own philosophy. Naess named his personal philosophy as "Ecosophy T" which is very much practical as Naess holds that, Philosophy is not only love of wisdom but also a love of wisdom which is based on action. Ecosophy T is known as Arne Naess's personal philosophy where "T" means "Tvergastein" a mountain hut where Naess used to live. Naess holds that each and every person can develop his own personal philosophy which may be Ecosophy A, B, C… instead of T (Naess, 1989). Before understanding "Ecosophy T" one must know Naess's view on ecophilosophy. For Naess, "The recognition of the problem and its subsequent study using philosophical methods is called as *ecophilosophy*" (Naess, 1989). Ecophilosophy tries to establish the bonding between man and its physical environment. Naess's philosophy is deeply connected with intuition. The central focus of Naess's philosophy is self-realization but this self-realization is not self-centric rather it includes all the life forms of the nature. Naess believes that all the living creatures are equal and all are possessing the intrinsic value (Nnaemeka et.al, 2016). According to Naess Ecosophy can be understood when it is distinguished from ecology and ecophilosophy. Naess says, ecosophy means a philosophy about the ecological harmony or equilibrium. That philosophy is a kind of wisdom, which is basically normative, and includes both norms, rules, principles regarding the worldly affairs. Ecosophy will show the path to solve the worldly problems with value priorities (Drengson and Inoue, 1995). Naess said "All philosophies of life consist of

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basic value norms and basic hypotheses about the nature of the world. When these philosophies take careful account of ecological responsibilities, they become *ecosophies*, a word coined by Naess for ecological wisdom" (Drengson & Devall, 2008). For Naess, ecology as a science deal with the facts and logic but it is unable to solve the ethical questions like how one can live as a member of the earth community. Thus, a shift is required from ecology to ecosophy. Etymologically the word 'Ecosophy' is combination of two words namely, 'oiko' and 'sophia' which means 'household' and 'wisdom' respectively. Here home means the whole earth which is the home of all the creatures. Ecosophy presents nature as a whole where an interconnectedness is present in the nature. One cannot live without the other and human beings have no right to disturb that natural harmony. Ecosophy is also used as a field of practice by the psychoanalyst, political activist and poststructuralist philosopher Felix Guattari (Guattari, 2000).

The Bhagavad Gita's Ethical Framework

The contemporary society is facing moral degradation day by day. In this era people have achieved success, development is going on but side by side violence, inhumanity, corruption, value degradation etc. are increasing in a rapid speed. To combat these issues the ethical and moral teachings of the Gita can be practically used in daily life. It will be helpful to maintain social and ecological balance. The Gita is considered as a moral and philosophical treatise. It contains all the Upanisadic views within itself (Haldar, 2012). It is termed as 'Yogasasatra' and 'Brahmavidya'. Yogasastra means sastra that contains ethical teaching and Brahmavidya means the sastra which contains metaphysical concepts. Hence, Gita is a philosophical treatise which contains both the ethical and metaphysical teachings (Nagar, 2022). It attracts people from different culture and society of all over the world. It is translated in many languages and respected around the whole universe.

As an ethical treatise, it teaches about the wrongness and rightness of action in a particular situation. Popularly it is known as 'the song of Lord'. It comes under the Bhisma Parva of the great Hindu epic 'Mahabharata' written by sage Vyasa. It is considered as a longest dialogue between the Panduputra Arjuna and Lord Krishna in the battlefield of Mahabharata which is known as Kurukshetra. It makes a difference between what to do and what ought to do. The primary concern of Gita is Lokasangraha or welfare of all people.

The Gita's Influence on Naess's Ecosophy

The Norwegian Philosopher and ecologist Arne Naess very much inspired by the teachings of Gita and gave the concept of 'Ecosophy'. Gita is a practical guide to our daily life. It contains solution to each and every problem. In Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna explains beautifully the concept of self-realisation and the way how man can establish the relationship between Supreme Being and other creatures of the world (Haldar, 2012). By following Gita's view Naess also gave his concept of Self-realisation which holds that there is an interconnectedness present in each and everything of this universe. Naess in his philosophy quotes the verse no 6.29 of Bhagavad Gita which is as follows-

"Sarvabhuta-stham atmanam sarva Bhutani chatmani
Ikshate yoga-yuktatma sarvatra samadarshanah." (Bhagavad Gita 6.29)

He sees himself as in all beings and all beings in himself who has been disciplined by Yoga. There is no dichotomy exists between one self and the others. The nature has certain limitation. Animals and birds live according to the nature while man always tries to cross the limit by thinking himself as superior from others. This type of thinking is the root cause of every problem. Man, alone cannot live in the world. all are interconnected. Nothing is irrelevant. A small insect has also an important role. Again, the verse 6.30 also holds similar views-

"Yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pashyati
Tasyaham na pranashyami sa cha me na pranasyati." (Bhagavad Gita 6.30)

Those who sees me in everywhere and see all things in me, I am never lost, nor are they ever lost to me. Verse 6.31 also represents the interconnectedness exist between the things and beings of the world-

"Sarva-bhuta-sthitam yo mam bhajatyekatvam-asthitah
Sarvatha vartamano pi sa yogi mayi vartate." (Bhagavad Gita 6.31)

The Yogi who is established in union with me, and worships me as the Supreme Soul residing in all beings, dwells only in me, though engaged in all kinds of activities (Nelson, 2000). It gives equal value to all the species. It suggests people to make a balance in thoughts, speeches and actions including both materialistic and spiritualistic consumption and preservation. It advices not to consume excess and unnecessary things in life and man should learn how to live a balanced lifestyle. The Gita guides to follow the path of obligation. It reminds people about the duty towards the plants, animals, and the future generation which in turn protect the rights of all other species (Londhe, 2019). Lord Krishna Suggests in the Gita to be both duty-centric and right-centric. It gives value not only to the mother nature but also to the ecological identity.

Relevance of the Gita and Ecosophy in Contemporary Environmental Sustainability

Environmental problem is the major problem of this age. Ecological crises can be considered as the worst crises in history. Science and technology will not able to solve these crises. It is believed that the Bhagavad Gita contains solution to every problem. The Gita is considered as a sacred ethical text by both East and West. It is the greatest spiritual book in the world. Its inherent beauty is it can be applicable to all the humans irrespective of caste, colour, and creed. The core aim of the Gita is to realize the true nature of humanity and to attain the love of God. The ethical teachings of Gita have a great impact on today's unstable human society which involves, corruption, pollution, violence, environmental issues etc. In the present century the advancement of science and technology changes the people's mentality and their attitude towards life. Man tries to master the nature and use the resources of the mother nature as per his choice for more production and benefit which results in ecological imbalance, species extinction, pollution, climate change and many more problems. Man should learn to differentiate between need and greed to ensure a sustainable life for both the present and future generation. M.K Gandhi once said- "Nature produces enough to meet the needs of all the people but not enough to satisfy the greed of

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everyone". Today's world is the world of Globalisation which encouraged consumerism. Due to consumerism people consumes more and more resources irrespective of their need and requirement. No doubt development cannot be possible without science and technology, it gives more comfort but in the name of development people exploits nature without thinking its consequences.

Naess is famous for his personal philosophy i.e., Ecosophy. Naess differentiates between Deep Ecology and Shallow Ecology. In Deep Ecology, Naess talked about the interconnectedness exist in the nature. For Naess, "this togetherness or unity with nature is a matter of becoming part of what he calls 'the great Self'. This concept of the great self is highly reminiscent if classical Indian Philosophical visions of the ultimate unity of everything" (Londhe, 2019). The respect and love for all living beings is possible only in environmental ethics. Naess developed the concept of "Ecological Self" to make a harmony between the human world and the non-human world as the interconnectedness is lost in this contemporary world. It helps to see the nature within one's own self. One should see others interest as one's own interest and acts accordingly for the betterment of all. It gives equal status and respect to all. In the Bhagavad Gita it is known as "Lokasamgraha" or welfare of all beings.

Environmental sustainability can be possible when the present generation minimize its basic needs in order to ensure the resources of nature are nurtured for their sustainable productivity. The natural resources should be equally distributed among the people of this generation and sustained for future generation. This responsibility does not depend on any individual or society rather it is the duty of the entire world or the global community. Science and technology are not bad but they should be used in ethical way for the development of all.

CONCLUSION

It is very easy to destroy the environment and the natural world but it is quite impossible to create it. The Indian culture and tradition always taught us that the whole world is one family i.e., "Vasudheivakutumbakam". One cannot live without the other. Our motto should be "Live and Let Live". The modern world is based on Bhoga but the Gita teaches about renunciation and sacrifice or tyaga. Life will be peaceful and happy when one will live for others. The most serious problem is people are damaging the ecological harmony and biological processes. Technological advancement is unable to solve these problems. Man should develop an eco-friendly attitude to retrive the relationship between man and nature. The Gita is a universal, devotional, ethical and spiritual textbook for all generation in the whole world. It is so simple that everybody can understand it. Naess tried to create ecosophy following the Gita's view where he mentioned that people should be aware about the interdependence exist in the world. Everybody is the member of the ecological community which must be preserved for future generation.

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