

## **Editorial**

### **ECOSOPHY**

#### **A Fundamental Responsibility**

“Unexamined life is not worth living” is a maxim in the philosophical traditions. We need to examine how we live, move and have our being. We live on earth with other human beings and other living and nonliving beings; we are all interconnected. Living and non living beings are our neighbours together with all human beings. We coexist interdependently in the same home; well being of one is part of the well being of all. No one is an island and the privatisation of life is a myth. Each one of us has to develop and live a life of solidarity with other human beings and other living and nonliving beings. The development of the full potential of all living beings is important for human survival and well being individually and as a species. This is part of the vision and mission of human life on earth – a fundamental responsibility. We depend on the material world as well as other living beings as much as we depend on other human beings. It follows that nature is not something to be dominated or to be conquered: it is something with which we coexist together with all other living beings.

Today we are increasingly aware of the fact that the life on earth is in danger not only for human beings but also for other living beings. Moreover we also understand that the presence of human beings is increasingly a threat to the well being of the earth. We are destroying our home by the way we live. Positively this increased awareness brings to light human responsibility towards all human beings and all living beings. Forms of life, including that of ours, will not be sustained unless we take care of the ecosystems.

Though there is only one earth, we live with different worldviews which design and determine how we live, move and have our beings; how we make sense of our lives. The *Journal of Dharma* explores some of these worldviews in this issue of the *Journal*. We need a shift from science and technology to wisdom.

We need to extend, embrace and expand our worldviews to include more and more the natural world. We cannot afford to leave the natural resources of the earth to those who have the technology to exploit them.

An individualistic-atomistic metaphysics would conceive human beings as separate individuals standing alone, free and unconnected to all other entities within the environment. The opposite is true, however; all entities are interrelated. Taking in to account this existential interconnection of all entities in the natural world is fundamental to an ecological vision. Anthropocentric worldviews often took nature for granted as something for the use of human beings for our wellbeing and survival. We developed science and technology to make better use of the natural resources for our comfort and wellbeing. Economical worldviews put an exchange value to all the products of science and technology, including the natural resources and tacitly accepting the fact that resources and products are only for those who have economic resources. Ecology and economy danced to the tunes of human greed, often forgetting the human beings who do not have the economic resources and other living beings with whom we coexist in the earth. Such worldviews negated or sidelined the right of other human beings and living beings for survival and wellbeing. It is clear now such world views are threat to the survival of species, including human beings.

The ecological crises made us aware that we have to transcend the limited use value of the natural and human resources and see them as partners and fellow beings. An economy with maximisation of profit even at the cost of other human beings and nature cannot be sustained. Human beings have a responsibility towards all creation, and to protect humankind from self-destruction. This will not take place unless we take care of earth, water, air and other living beings. The philosophical wisdom as given in the articles in this issue of the *Journal of Dharma* shows clearly that the latter will not take place, however, without the former.

“Praxis and Theory of Environmental Marxism” by Ferdinand D. Dagmang explores ecological Marxism as distinct from the environmentalists whose main focus is on the wrongness of anthropocentrism. Even with their diverse approaches, the latter have produced a common portrayal of the autonomy or integrity of nature. Their stress on the debunking of the centrality of human beings eventually emphasized on the gaining of new ways of understanding nature. Ecological Marxism, however, followed Marx’s critique of capitalist production and accumulation and challenged the assumptions of capitalist production and consumption patterns as these wreak havoc on people and nature. In their effort to face environmental issues, Marx and Engels have been recognized not just as political economists but also as frontrunners of ecological thought. Marx has emphasized on capitalism’s tendency to undermine its base through labour exploitation and despoliation of nature. This alienating and anti-ecological disposition of capital forms the fundamental source of environmental troubles in modern societies. The Eco-Marxists will no longer just propose a new way of understanding nature, but also a new praxis in dealing with nature—one that stresses on human development as co-evolving with nature. This environmental praxis which takes a socialist-economics turn has followed a leftist (Red) course but may also have arrived at the intersection of the Green Movement.

Paulachan Kochappilly presents a Christian perspective on ecology from three important phases of the history of salvation as recounted in the biblical revelation; namely, creation, liberation, and transformation in his article titled, “All for Life; Life for All.” The Lord God saw everything good in the event of creation; God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to offer eternal life at the event of Incarnation, and the Lord commands the disciples to go and proclaim the good news to all creation in the event of transformation. The Christian perspective on ecology has evolved in the course of the history of salvation. It consists in seeing, loving, and going for the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation, which means contemplating the sacredness of creation,

caring for creation and everything in it, towards the flourishing of life in its fullness, and to be on march to share the joyful good news to the whole of creation so that everything may come to bloom and praise the Lord. Such a perspective on ecology will reveal the image of God inherent in human beings in their everyday life – walking the way of *All for Life; Life for All* – which in turn helps people to glorify the Lord God, to establish peace on earth, and to extend hope to all. The Christian perspective on ecology, the author argues, is a creative, redemptive, and celebrative one, which takes into full account the natural ecology, human ecology, and social ecology.

Deep ecological movement, started in 1972 by distinguished Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, is founded on three basic principles: a scientific insight into the interrelatedness of all systems of life on Earth together with the rejection of anthropocentrism, the need of self realization, identifying with the whole, and Holistic Ontology. If we realize the universe as a self, where we find the interconnectedness of ourselves with the universe then that would involve a radical change of environmental ethics to an environmental metaphysics. That in turn would make our ways of living more consistent with the well being of life on earth. “Environmental Ethics to Holistic Ontology: A Naessian Approach” by Jith Francis, a young scholar from De Paul Institute of Philosophy and Religion, Bangalore, helps the readers to have a holistic approach to our mother earth and to the environment. At the heart of deep ecology stands the insight that the world is a delicately balanced web of life, and the place of human beings is in it, not above it! We extend our selves: we see ourselves more and more connected to the rest of the natural world.

The concept of ‘bio-prospecting’ refers to the activities of utilising planetary biodiversity for commercial purposes. Bio-prospecting itself has been frowned upon in (developing) countries and contexts where impoverished regulation, and both policy and ‘policing’ mechanisms are vulnerable to commercial, corporate and sometimes even, governmental manipulation. The idea of ‘selling nature to save it’ is thus in conflict with many

communities who believe in having a more harmonious kinship with the bio-diverse natural world, through a relationship of respect and reciprocity. “Bio-Prospecting Vs Bio-Respecting: Seeing Forests as Culturally Embedded Spaces” by Maheshvari Naidu focuses on one such community; that of traditional African diviners or sangomas and reveals their perspective of ‘bio-respecting’. The research is positioned through the narrativised lens of the sangomas’ culturally embedded understanding of respectful harmony and represents a perspective of mutually beneficial reciprocity or ‘bio-respecting’. While the agents and various stakeholders within a (legitimate and regulated) bio-prospecting project, might conceive of material well-being that might well benefit various actors in the project (including the local community), the *sangomas* couch and understand this ‘well-being’ as also being sanctioned and guided by the ancestors, as the meta-physical guardians tasked with the well-being of the people. This well-being is in turn conceived in spiritual and sacred terms, and is thus also meant to operate on a humane ethical system rather than (merely) a legal ethical system.

My article, “Theanthropocosmic Vision of the Holy Bible: An Alternative to the Cosmocentric and Anthropocentric Visions” explores the biblical creation accounts and argues that the biblical vision involving God, human beings and earth provides an integral vision regarding the origin, purpose and goal of human life on earth. It is an alternative to the anthropocentric and cosmocentric visions prevalent in the ecological discourses because according to the Bible the cosmos and the humankind have their meaning and purpose because of God’s plan for them. According to the Priestly creation account the creation is internally structured, ordered and reflects God’s power, wisdom, goodness, and purpose in creating a world. By acknowledging and proclaiming goodness of creation the Priestly account attributes value to creation and views the creation in its harmonious integrity. This harmony of God-Human-Earth is complemented by the creation account of the Yahwist tradition. In God’s plan ‘*Ādām*’ gets fundamental meaning and significance in his relation to ‘*adāmāh*’; ‘*Ādām*’ is

created out of 'adāmāh, nourished by 'adāmāh and at death returns to 'adāmāh. The vocation of 'Ādām is to take care of 'adāmāh. Though this harmonious relation was broken with the sin of 'Ādām attempts were done by God to repair the damage through Moses and Prophets and in the fullness of time definitively by Jesus Christ. The angels' hymn at the time of the birth of Jesus presents succinctly the biblical Theanthropocosmic vision: 'Glory to God, Hope to people and Peace on Earth (Luke 2.14). The earth and the human, material and spiritual, secular and the sacred, nature and culture are interwoven in the Theanthropocosmic vision of the Bible. The earth has human and divine dimensions and the humankind has earthly and divine dimension and the divine has earthly and human dimensions.

In the final essay, "Ecology *Vis-À-Vis* Human Ecology after Pope Benedict XVI" Liju Porathur explores the vision of the 'Green Pope' Benedict XVI. The ecology of Pope Benedict XVI is rooted in the biblical vision of nature, showing the earth as the gift of God to human beings, a home to live in, with a responsible stewardship. According to the author, the Pope argues for a human-centred ecological view; though natural ecology is important, it is to serve a human ecology. The book of 'nature' is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development. When "human ecology" is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits. This article sheds light on the two key concepts that the humankind is greater than nature and nature is not a raw material to be manipulated. Human beings and nature are interdependent. The weakening of one, places the other at risk.

Wishing you critical and creative thoughts on the interface between Environment and Philosophy, may I submit this issue of the *Journal of Dharma*!

**Jose Nandhikkara, Editor-in-Chief**