Rethinking relationships: a critique of the concept of progress

Anandi Gandhi

The University of Toledo

Follow this and additional works at: http://utdr.utoledo.edu/theses-dissertations

Recommended Citation
Gandhi, Anandi, "Rethinking relationships: a critique of the concept of progress" (2010). Theses and Dissertations. 841.
http://utdr.utoledo.edu/theses-dissertations/841

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by The University of Toledo Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of The University of Toledo Digital Repository. For more information, please see the repository's About page.
A Thesis

entitled

Rethinking Relationships: A Critique of the Concept of Progress

by

Anandi Gandhi

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy

Dr. Ashley Pryor, Committee Chair

Dr. Benjamin Pryor, Committee Member

Dr. Ammon Allred, Committee Member

Dr. Patricia Komuniecki, Dean
College of Graduate Studies

The University of Toledo

May 2010
An Abstract of

Rethinking Relationships: A Critique of the Concept of Progress

by

Anandi Gandhi

As partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy

The University of Toledo

May 2010

I focus on a critique of the concept of progress that dominates human interaction and relationships with the non-human world. The aspects of progress I deal with are largely based on Kant’s theory of progress, the ideology of globalization, and a hierarchy between man, the environment and women. These aspects of progress are critiqued by ecofeminism, deep ecology, and eco-movements which argue for a rethinking of human relationships with the environment and women especially in agrarian communities in India. The critique delineates alternate modes of interaction with the environment that challenge hierarchies and promote recognition of humans as within the environment rather than outside it. Eco-movements help deconstruct the gap between theory and action. I argue that change is required at several levels, but most importantly change needs to come from the bottom of the social setup and move upwards which is exemplified through the example of the genetically modified Bt Brinjal seed debate and the seed saving movement, Navdanya.
To Samay and Abha
Acknowledgements

For the beautiful lady, an inspiration and a guide who brought out the best in me.

For my professors at Toledo who helped me question, criticize, and grow philosophically.

For my professors and philosophy friends in India, without whose inspiration I would not be here.

For my sisters who are always looking out for me. I cannot thank you enough.

For my parents who constantly care.

For my loving best friend, who helps me understand where I am and where I want to go.

For the little brained monster, for smashing my philosophical notions.
Table of Contents

Abstract iii
Acknowledgements v
Table of Contents vi
1. Progress or Regress? Different Perspectives 1
2. Kant and Reason: The Foundations of Progress 12
   2.1 The Role of Nature and Teleology in Kant’s Theory of Progress .......... 14
   2.2 ‘Progress’ for Mankind in Kant’s Political Writings ..................... 18
   2.3 Worshipping Reason ..................................................................... 25
3. Globalization and the Monsantosizing of Agriculture in India 34
   3.1 Understanding Globalization and Globalism ............................. 37
   3.2 Monsantosizing of Agriculture in India: Bt Cotton and Bt Brinjal .... 41
   3.3 The Ecofeminist Critique of Economic Globalization .................. 46
4. Rethinking Relationships: Deep Ecology, and Ecofeminism 52
   4.1 Naess and the Philosophy of Deep Ecology ................................. 55
   4.2 The Traditional Roots of Deep Ecology and Ecofeminist Movements in India .... 62
5. Bridging the Gap: Eco-Movements 70
   5.1 The Bt Brinjal Success Story .................................................... 70
   5.2 Looking Forward: Navdanya ..................................................... 76
References 79
Chapter 1

Progress or Regress? Different Perspectives

I was sitting outside my room in Igatpuri, India last summer, taking in the beauty of the distant mountains, the clouds hanging low. Lost in the beauty, serenity and sounds of the countryside, I heard the tinkling of a cowbell. I brought my gaze lower to the fields of wheat that the magnificent mountains protected from the strong winds. Pair of cows toiled on the fields with the plough between them, while the farmer walked behind them urging them on. Not far from them was a small hut where the farmer's wife was preparing food and taking care of her two small children. Soon she joined him in the fields, planting the seeds. Together they worked till the light faded away. The wife returned to the hut to take care of the children. But instead of going home to take rest after a long, hard day, the farmer walked away from the house. My eyes followed him as he walked to the dirt road closest to the house. A contractor came and dumped a pile of bricks near the road and gave him orders to "complete the work by tomorrow morning". The farmer looked around trying to figure out how to efficiently move the bricks from one location to the other where they were supposed to be the foundation of the concrete bridge that was going to be built on the dirt road. He began moving the bricks, a few at a time, wondering how he would finish this work before the sun rose.
The next morning I woke up at dawn. The sun was peeing through the mountains. I looked around and to my amazement found that all the bricks had been laid like they were supposed to be laid. I looked over at the fields, the cowbells were chiming and the farmer was working. His wife was with the children, cooking and preparing for the day and soon she joined him in the fields. For ten days I watched the fields and the little hut. I thought about what I was taught in school. I was taught that India is rich because of its villages and farms. The farmer's life was supposed to be full of hard work, satisfaction, simplicity, and abundance. But this farmer's life was full of toil from morning to night to morning, tiring, unhappy, and meager. Why did that road need to be built beside his house? Did that road beside his fields signify that his village was making progress? Why did his wife have to work not only on the fields but also at home all day and night? Despite being a farmer by profession why was he working on a construction site? One of the answers to these questions is that he and his family are in heavy debt and the (genetically modified seed) crops have failed and so he cannot survive on his farm produce. Unfortunately this is not the story of just one farmer in India. In April 2009, over 1,500 farmers in Chattisgarh state committed mass suicide after being driven to debt due to the Bt Cotton genetically modified seed crop failure. Over 200,000 farmers have committed suicide in India between the years of 1997-2007.¹ The human species is "progressing" technologically by introducing genetically modified seeds, but the damage that the environment suffers and which in turn causes more suffering to people, is mostly ignored. While watching the farmer toil through two jobs, I could not help asking myself,

but is this progress‘? Are we really progressing? If this is what we call progress, what is „progress‘?

*Humanity is on the march, earth itself is left behind.*


While humanity is busy with „progress‘ and forgetful about the earth, it is also equally forgetful and ignorant about the impact of this progress on humanity itself. Today we are faced with monumental problems such as the global water crisis, species extinction, rapid climate change, economic collapse, natural resource scarcity, poverty, and genocide, just to name a few. In the light of the above problems that we are facing, I find myself asking whether we, we as in individuals who are living relatively comfortable lives as compared to those who are not, the rich in the rich countries, the rich in the poor countries, governments, and corporations, can actually say that we have made progress and are progressing. When asked the questions; are we progressing? What future does progress hold for the world we live in? The accepted answer is „yes‘ we are currently progressing and the future will see us progressing even further. This question and the answer imply that we have a concept of progress and that we believe ourselves to be living in a way where our actions support that concept of progress. The reigning concept of progress drives global and local policy decisions for most governments, multinational corporations, and politicians. It guides the policy decisions from town planning boards, to state and federal agencies and is the foundation of globalization today. But what if this concept of progress, one that was forged long before our understanding of how complex
systems function, is flawed? Tom Wessels, the author of _The Myth of Progress_ poses the question; what if our concept of progress is an ill-founded belief – a myth?²

To examine whether progress is a myth or has in fact had harmful consequences, it is important to analyze a concrete situation. The Indian agriculture scene is an example of an ongoing debate about whether Indian farming has seen progress or much of the opposite. In March 2002, the Indian government permitted commercial cultivation of genetically modified Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis) cotton a product of Monsanto an agricultural company.³ Following the introduction of Bt Cotton in Indian agriculture, farmers in India have been succumbing to suicide at an alarming rate, due to a combination of over-indebtedness and Bt Cotton crop failures. These agriculture issues sparked a lot of debates on capitalism and advanced technology. In January and February 2010 India once again was debating the introduction of a new genetically modified seed, Bt Brinjal/eggplant. Monsanto is keen to introduce Bt Brinjal which would increase the number of brinjals produced in a short amount of time. The protests against Monsanto, and the Indian government were raised by several different teams which included farmers, activists, women, former director of Monsanto India, ecofeminists and ecologists. The debates were centered on questions like; will genetically modified crops really help? Who will they help? Are they safe for humans? Have the seeds been tested for long term as well as short term effects? Are they harmful to the environment? What is Monsanto's agenda behind introducing these seeds? Who will it really help to produce genetically modified Brinjal?

² Wessels, Tom. _The Myth of Progress: Towards a Sustainable Future._ (Burlington; University of Vermont Press, 2006) xviii
On the one hand we have Monsanto a multinational corporation which claims that genetically modified seeds are helping farmers in attaining better yields, earning bigger returns on their investment and using less pesticide—which ultimately allows them to afford a much better quality of life for their families. Furthermore, in October 2008, the International Food Policy Research Institute released a study called “Bt Cotton and Farmer Suicide in India” which shows no increase in farmer suicides in India due to Bt Cotton. They argue that if Bt Cotton were the root cause of suicidal tendencies, then why is it that Indian farmers represent the fastest-growing users of biotech crops in the world? Between 2005 and 2006, India’s adoption of Bt Cotton nearly tripled to 9.5 million acres. Bt Cotton is currently used in nine states in India on 14.4 million or 63 percent of India’s total cotton acres which has created economical progress for India.4

On the other hand we have activists argue that the farmers who killed themselves were overwhelmingly cash crop farmers – growers of cotton, coffee, sugarcane, groundnut, pepper, vanilla. (Suicides are fewer among food crop farmers – that is, growers of rice, wheat, maize, pulses.) The brave new world philosophy mandated countless millions of Third World farmers forced to move from food crop cultivation to cash crop (the mantra of “export-led growth”). For millions of subsistence farmers in India, this meant much higher cultivation costs, far greater loans, much higher debt, and being locked into the volatility of global commodity prices.5 The shift from farm saved seed to corporate monopolies of the seed supply is also a shift from biodiversity to monocultures in agriculture. Monocultures and uniformity increase the risks of crop

---

failure as diverse seeds adapted to diverse ecosystems are replaced by rushed introduction of unadapted and often untested seeds into the market.\(^6\)

The specific questions that the Bt Brinjal debate raises are echoed in the bigger questions that structure my thesis. Does progress only mean economic progress as seems to be implied by Monsanto's position? Do we need to take into account the arguments against Monsanto that highlight the inequality that economic progress brings as well as the deterioration of the environment? What is progress? How do we understand progress? How has this concept evolved to what we can call as a contemporary concept of progress? Has this understanding and application of the concept of progress been helpful or detrimental to humans and the world? If the effects of our concept of progress have been good, how are we measuring it? If the effects have been bad, what harm has it caused to our society and our environment? What are the cultural values that accompany different conceptions of progress through different waves of the understanding and application of the concept of progress? Does the concept of progress need to be changed or replaced by a totally different concept? Can the changes in belief systems and lifestyles of people help in bringing about an overall change in the understanding of progress?

I would like to make the case that our current concept of progress is largely based on an ideology that values economic, material growth and globalization and devalues the environment, women and economically poor countries. This kind of progress in turn has led to the huge environmental and societal problems that surround us today. These pressing and urgent problems call for new goals that lay emphasis on developing

---

alternate models of interaction with the environment, and the place of humanity within the environment. Ecofeminism, and deep ecology offer critiques of the concept of progress and alternate modes of living in the world that promote local economies, recognizing the value of communities, realizing the value of nature, deconstructing the gap between theory and action, and a willingness to change the way we currently live. To achieve these goals change is required at several levels, but most importantly change needs to come from the bottom of the social setup and move upwards which is exemplified through the Bt Brinjal case study and the ecofeminist movement, Navdanya.

The literature review begins with an exposition of the concept of progress from multiple philosophical and social perspectives. Progress is a vast concept that encompasses the economical, social, political, environmental, demographic, and cultural aspects of life. For this thesis however, I only focus on the following three aspects of progress;

1. Immanuel Kant's theory of progress and the role of reason/rationality in the conceptualization and application of progress
2. Progress which is material and forms the ideology for economic globalization
3. Progress which sees itself as a mastery over nature and women

When trying to trace the evolution of progress an important stop must be made at Kant who was a foremost thinker of the enlightenment, one of the greatest and extremely influential philosophers of all time.\(^7\) Kant's theory of progress is found in his political essays some of which are: "The Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View", "What is Enlightenment?", and "On the Common Saying". Kant’s political essays

---

are now widely seen as a philosophical origin of cosmopolitan thinking in our own age. His theory posits that the highest purpose of nature—i.e. the development of all natural capacities—can be fulfilled for mankind only in society, and nature intends that man should accomplish this and indeed all his appointed ends, by his own efforts. Man can achieve the best through reason. Reason was man's tool and specialty which is highly valued and trusted. Reason became the justification and driving force behind progress. Kant believed that progress always had been made and will continue to occur.

Even now the ruling concept of progress rests on the idea that for more than a century, things have dramatically improved for people on this planet and will continue to improve as economic systems keep expanding. The fervent faith in unlimited economic growth is based on and supported by the concept of material progress. The measures of material progress are things such as increasing GDP, increases in per capita income, and longer life expectancies rather than happiness, well-being, equality, justice, and self-sufficiency. Economic globalization is rampant and the globalism or ideology that runs the show, gives us an insight into the concept of progress. This kind of progress that is driven by economic growth, is founded on an ideology that creates hierarchies between man, woman and nature. While economic progress was at its peak corporations and industries did not worry about taking care of the environment. Nature or the environment is seen a something external that can be adapted, exploited, and destroyed as per human needs. People assumed that advancing science and technology, by increasing human mastery over nature, would decrease our dependence on it. Nature is given secondary importance. Rarely if at all are there any accounts within economic production about effects of industrialization on nature or the losses and changes in the environment.
Similarly in settings like agriculture in India, women’s work is considered as invisible since there is no accountability for their work, problems, or losses. Women perform specific tasks not only on the fields but also at home and since no economic value can be placed on their chores, they are left out of the discussion of accountability. They are again given a status which is lower to men. These conceptions of progress undergo criticism as the thesis proceeds. The main points of the critique of progress that seem to stand out are:

1. Ecofeminism which critiques our relationship and interaction with the environment, and women.

2. Deep Ecology which examines our place as within the ecological web, rather than outside it.

3. Eco-movements like Navdanya and Chipko which bridge the gap between theory and action.

Ultimately how we relate to the environment and our views on the use of the natural environment for human development will have a major impact on the type of ‘sustainable development’ that we envisage and promote. One of the ways forward is to choose ‘Deep Ecology’ or ‘Strong Sustainability’ as an approach that recognizes the intrinsic value of the environment and our mutual dependency on it and on each other as being part of a community. Economic globalization brings with it a whole new set of values that are becoming global. Both ‘Deep Ecology’ and ‘Ecofeminism’ offer alternate cultural values in these changing times. In this thesis, the strongest critique of progress is provided throughout and at different points by ecofeminist authors. Ecofeminism examines our place in the environment, as well as women’s place within social and environmental
contexts. Ecofeminists argue for a viewpoint that puts nature as not external to humans and Deep Ecology places importance on recognizing our place within nature. Both offer an alternate model of recognizing our interdependence with the environment to our current hierarchical model of looking down on nature and women.

The three main points of progress and the three points of the critique of progress are all interrelated and are interspersed throughout the thesis. While it is impossible for me to tackle each of these six points separately, they will all emerge as major themes. The purpose of this first chapter has been to give an overview of the topic of the thesis which is; what is progress, why does it need to be critiqued, and how is it critiqued. So the first stop in the journey of progress will be in the next chapter which discusses the philosophical interpretation of the concept of progress through Kant’s eyes. This chapter asks the following questions; what does Kant think progress is? What has this concept of progress done for the world? How is Kant relevant to our current context of rampant progress accompanied by serious threats to the human and non-human world? Kant’s idea of progress illuminates the role of teleology and ‘Nature’ in the development of human history and human society. Reason is behind the working of this teleology which determines what progress is for ‘man’. Val Plumwood an ecofeminist author provides an excellent critique of reason. Reason has been given a lot of importance in human behavior and Plumwood argues that it is difficult to find reason in the international policy decisions that have allowed or even led to the ecological crises of the 21st century. So what does Kant’s theory of progress have to do with this thesis topic? Kant theory of progress is not only critiqued, but it is also traced in this thesis to cosmopolitanism and globalization. Current economic globalization and globalism provides an insight into the
material dimension of progress. Globalization is not a new phenomenon at all. However the ideology behind each wave of globalization is different and economic globalization of the 20th and 21st century has a distinct materialistic globalism which finds some of its roots in Kant and the enlightenment. The Bt Brinjal debate is given an in-depth analysis in the globalization chapter and it is used as a case study to highlight the different aspects of the concept of progress behind globalization and the problems with upholding the concept. A materialistic ideology has created hierarchies between men, and women and nature. Why are we upholding a concept of progress which creates inequalities and hierarchies between the rich man and the women, the environment, and the poor in poor countries? What is our current relationship with the environment like? Do we need an alternate model? These questions are explored in final chapter where Deep ecology emerges as one of the alternatives to a hierarchical interaction model of interaction with the non-human world. While Deep Ecology tells us how to understand our relationship with the environment, ecofeminism enlightens us about the place of women within this world and in nature. Finally eco-movements like Chipko, Navdanya, and the fight against genetically modified foods, help deconstruct the gap between action and theory. Deep Ecology and ecofeminism both consider themselves as movements and not just philosophies. The eco-movements stemming from them have helped me conclude that to create a better society change needs to emerge from the bottom of the social and economic ladder.
Chapter 2

Kant and Reason: The Foundations of Progress

It is difficult to conduct any philosophical enquiry about the concept of progress without referring to the Greek philosophers. There has been a debate about whether the ancient Greek actually did have a conception of progress or not. On the one hand Walter Bagehot claimed that they did not even entertain the idea of progress. On the other hand Sir Henry Main wrote a couple of years later in his book that it was precisely the Greeks who ‘created the principle of Progress’. Partly the reason for the debate is due to the fact that there is no word for progress in the Greek vocabulary; though there are close equivalents. The Greek word *epidosis* will not do because it merely means ‘increase’ whether in good or evil or by human agency or other, is unknown. Another word *prokope* which means ‘pushing forward’ comes closer, but it implies a more psychological state than anything else. The other reason for the debate about the ancient Greeks and progress lies in the inherent ambiguity of the concept. Progress implies a goal, or at any rate a direction; and a goal or direction implies a value judgment. By what scale of values, then is progress to be measured? Is happiness to be the yardstick, or

---

8 Dodds, E. R. *The Ancient Concept of Progress: and other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief*. (London; Oxford University Press, 1973), 1
9 Dodds, E. R. *The Ancient Concept of Progress: and other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief*. (London; Oxford University Press, 1973), 1
10 Dodds, E. R. *The Ancient Concept of Progress: and other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief*. (London; Oxford University Press, 1973), 1
power over Nature, or gross national product? Is moral advance the true criterion, or is it
the advancement of learning? On this question the ancients were no more unanimous than
academicians today. Then as now, the field in which past progress was most obvious was
that of technology; but the view that technological advance has been accompanied by
moral failure or moral regress was largely held by the ancient Greek.¹¹

The questions raised above seem to imply that progress that needs to be
understood in relation to its processes and consequences. So what is the process of
progress and what are the consequences of progress? What is the context within which
must the concept of progress be raised? Since, the thesis is focused on the more
contemporary effects and implications of progress, I have decided to explore and focus
mostly on Immanuel Kant’s philosophy of progress. Much of the 20th and 21st century
internationalist thought and globalization ideology finds their roots in the enlightenment
liberalism of Kant, Locke, Mill, and Jefferson.¹² Kant was one of the great minds of the
enlightenment from whom we must begin in order to understand the concept of progress.
Kant attributes a certain form of rationality to Nature. "Nature" is teleological and is that
which compels and guides the individual person towards a certain goal. Kant claims that
mankind throughout history has progressed and will continue to progress. I argue that this
teleological theory of progress that Kant proposes creates hierarchies where the
environment, women, and poor countries are subordinate to the ends of human
development and rationality. Thus progress is always human progress. Attributing reason
or rationality to Nature and thus the human society is itself problematic since our current

¹¹ Dodds, E. R. The Ancient Concept of Progress: and other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief.
(London; Oxford University Press, 1973), 2
¹² Helfstein, Scott. "Has Kant’s Dream Become a Nightmare? Globalization, Interdependence, and
Exporting the Cost of Conflict" 15 February 2009 available from
http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p313951_index.html
ecological crises seem to point to irrational policy decisions from an ecological as well as social point of view. While Kant himself cannot be called a contemporary philosopher, his philosophical views about man and the state have had far reaching effects that can be traced down to our current times. Kant's theory of cosmopolitan right is widely viewed as the philosophical origin of modern cosmopolitan thought.\textsuperscript{13} The chapter explicates and then proceeds to criticize the philosophy of progress that emerges from certain Kantian texts such as: \textit{The Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View’}, \textit{What is Enlightenment?‘}, and \textit{On the Common Saying‘}. Kant's political essays are now widely seen as a philosophical origin of cosmopolitan thinking in our own age.\textsuperscript{14}

2.1 The Role of Nature and Teleology in Kant’s Theory of Progress

Kant's text titled \textit{Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View‘} is a meditation on themes of world history, progress and enlightenment. Kant begins with the individual. Kant's theory of progress is anchored to the human species.\textsuperscript{15} The highest purpose of Nature is that \textit{all} natural capacities of a creature are destined to evolve completely to their natural end\textsuperscript{16} i.e.- the development of all natural capacities- can be fulfilled for mankind only in society, and Nature intends that man should accomplish this and indeed all his appointed ends, by his own efforts. Each individual according to his own inclination follows his own purpose, often in opposition to others;

\textsuperscript{13} Fine, Robert. "Kant's Theory of Cosmopolitanism and Hegel's Critique." \textit{Philosophy and Social Criticism} 29.6 (2003): 609
\textsuperscript{14} Fine, Robert. "Kant's Theory of Cosmopolitanism and Hegel's Critique." \textit{Philosophy and Social Criticism} 29.6 (2003): 609
yet each individual and people feel guided and go towards a natural and unknown goal. Kant writes about the connection between Nature and man in the following words; Nature has willed that man should, by himself, produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical ordering of his animal existence, and that he should partake of no other happiness or perfection than that which he himself, independently of instinct, has created by his own reason. People try to discover a natural purpose in this course of human things. In keeping with this purpose, Kant feels that it might be possible to have history with a definite natural plan for creatures that have no plan of their own. Reason in a creature is a faculty of widening the rules and purposes of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instinct; it acknowledges no limits to its projects. People are not to be guided by instinct, not nurtured with ready-made knowledge; rather they should bring forth everything out of their own resources; securing one’s own food, shelter, safety, defense, amusement, and even goodness of the heart. They need to work themselves upwards and make themselves worthy of life. Series of generations pass on their own enlightenment to their successor in order finally to bring the seeds of enlightenment to that degree of development in the human race which is completely suitable to Nature’s purpose. Kant says in man (as the only rational creature on earth) those natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason are to be fully developed only in the race, not in the individual. A society in which freedom under external laws is associated in the highest degree with irresistible power, i.e., a perfectly just civic

constitution, is the highest problem Nature assigns to the human race; for Nature can achieve her other purposes for mankind only upon the solution and completion of this assignment. The goal is to develop the natural seeds to perfection. This goal requires a master because human beings are incapable of living with each other without exploiting each other. In the course of Nature of many revolutions a best possible civic constitution and common agreement and legislation in external affairs, a state is created which, like a civic commonwealth, can maintain itself automatically. He questions if there is indeed this kind of path and if there is an overall purpose to Nature. Kant's answer to these questions is that, the history of mankind can be seen, in the large, as the realization of Nature's secret plan to bring forth a perfectly constituted state as the only condition which the capacities of human beings can be fully developed and also bring forth that external relation among states which is perfectly adequate to this end. This gives hope finally that after many reformative revolutions, a universal cosmopolitan condition, which Nature has as her ultimate purpose, will come into being as the womb wherein all the original capacities of the human race can develop. "Nature can fully develop and in which the destiny of the race can be fulfilled here on earth". This purpose can be fulfilled only in a society which has not only the greatest freedom and therefore a continual antagonism among its members, but also the most precise specification and preservation of the limits of this freedom in order that it can co-exist with the freedom of others. The highest task which Nature has set for mankind must therefore be that of establishing a society in which freedom under external laws would be combined to the greatest possible extent with irresistible force, in other words of establishing a perfectly

just civil constitution. For only through the solution and fulfillment of this task can Nature accomplish its other intentions with our species.20

Thus Nature is teleological i.e.- it has a goal. Teleology plays a huge role in Kant’s theory of progress. His philosophy of history depends on attributing a natural teleology or unconscious, unintended goal directedness, to historical events. Because the facts to be made sense of involve the behavior over long periods of time of many human individuals, the natural teleology must involve ends that direct the collective actions of many human beings, in fact, of many generations of human beings. But because human beings do not coordinate their actions as would rational citizens of the world,…in accordance with a previously arranged plan,‘ this purposiveness, must be unconscious, unintended, it must be a natural purposiveness like that found in the organic arrangement of plants and animals.21 Kant’s idea for a universal history is a regulative idea for the investigation of history, guided by the heuristic assumption that human history is guided by a natural teleology. Allen W. Wood explains how the one heuristic assumption we employ in the investigation of organisms has to do with the development of individual specimens to maturity. It involves the conception of a natural ‘predisposition‘, - a global tendency of the organism to develop the set of capacities best suited to carrying on its mode of life. The regulative maxim governing the investigation of predispositions is: ‘all creature‘s natural predispositions are destined eventually to develop fully and in

20 Adorno, Theodore W., Can One Live after Auschwitz? : A Philosophical Reader. (California; Stanford University Press, 2003), 128
accordance with their purpose. Being on the path of the accomplishment of our natural dispositions collectively as a human species is progress for Kant.

2.2 ‘Progress’ for Mankind in Kant’s Political Writings

In the ‘Common Saying’ Kant talks about what progress means within the workings of what he calls Nature. The human race is constantly progressing with respect to culture as the natural end. It is also progressing toward the better with respect to the moral end of its existence, and that this progress will occasionally be interrupted but never broken off. Kant begins justifying the teleological aspect of Nature that posits progress as constantly occurring. He claims that there is ample evidence that the human race as a whole has actually made considerable progress morally in our age when compared to all others. At the end of his essay ‘Is the Human Race Continually Improving?’ the second part of The Contest of the Faculties (1798), Kant states that humanity is by its very Nature capable of constant progress and improvement without forfeiting its strength. In his Critique of Pure Reason he states that no one can or ought to decide what the highest degree may be at which mankind may have to stop progressing, and hence how wide a gap may still of necessity remain between the idea and its execution. For this will depend on freedom, which can transcend any limit we care

to impose." He points out that because we have progress we are more aware of the problems of human kind and so are in turn able to see further ahead in order to make moral judgments by comparing what we are and what we ought to be. Our self-censure, becomes all the more critical the more steps of morality we have climbed in the entirety of the course of the world that is known to us.

Kant seems to imply that there is no doubt about human progress because there is a goal towards which history has progressed and humans will progress. It seems as if the progress towards this goal is for humans alone and probably for man alone. For Kant, the more we progress the better moral decisions we might be able to make about what we want to do next. Both the above claims that Kant is trying to prove seem to fail if subjected to analysis of our current times. Progress is in fact getting more and more associated with diminishing moral values and not everybody has progressed.

In the _Contest of the Faculties_ Kant says that the human race has always progressed and will further progress toward the better is not merely a well-intentioned proposition and one to be recommended from a practical perspective, but rather is justifiable even for the most rigorous of theories. When one considers not only what can occur within one person, but rather what can happen among all the peoples on earth, which might gradually participate in this progress, a perspective into an unbound future time is opened. The more people participate in progress, the more progress there will be, and the more progress there will be, more morality will be displayed by human beings. He writes, _progress toward better will yield for the human race not an ever increasing quantity of morality in its disposition, but rather an increase in legality through actions_

---

performed in accordance with duty^27. Kant means that progress will cause an increase in the amount of good deeds that humans will perform, which will hence cause an increase in the moral quality of the human race and lead to the betterment of human kind. The powerful will be less violent and obedience with regard to the laws will increase. There will be more beneficence and less squabbling in legal proceedings, more reliability in keeping ones word and so on, in the commonwealth in part out of love of prestige, and in part out of a consciousness of one’s own advantage. This will ultimately also extend to peoples in their external relations among one another, all the way to the cosmopolitan society.^28

Unfortunately Kant’s vision for a cosmopolitan society has not turned out the way he might have imagined it. At least economic progress in the 20^th and 21^st century does not seem to have caused any increase in the amount of good deeds performed. In fact good deeds towards the environment would have been necessary in order to avoid our current ecological crises.

Kant believed in progress occurring from the top down, rather than the bottom up. In response to the question, ‘in what arrangement alone can the progress toward the better be expected?’ he writes, ‘not by the path of things from the bottom up, but rather from the top down, is the answer.’^29 To expect the education of the youth in intellectual and moral culture, reinforced by religious teachings, through both domestic instruction and schooling, from the lowest to the highest grades, will not only make them good citizens

in the end, but rather also educate them to become good in a way that can continually progress and perpetuate itself, is a plan that can hardly be hoped to deliver the desired results. For it is not enough that the people believe that the cost of educating the youth should fall not on them, but the state. Human beings are fallible and so what they might teach the youth may also be erroneous. Thus it is only in wisdom from on high that hope in the progress of humankind can be found.\textsuperscript{30}

Having established that we have in fact progressed, Kant tries to prove how progress is continual and can be maintained and accelerated. To achieve accelerated progress depends not so much on what we do (for example, on the education that we give the younger world) or the method by which we ought to proceed in order to bring it about, but it depends on what human Nature dictates us to do even if it is not something we necessarily want to do. \textit{For from Nature or, rather (since the highest wisdom is required for the completion of this end), from providence alone can we expect success that affects the whole and from there the parts.}\textsuperscript{31} Human beings on the other hand only work with the parts and are likely only to stick with them, since the whole as such, which is too large for them.

The principle of this progress for Kant is to be considered as humankind’s gradual development of the use of the rational predispositions of humanity. The mixed tendency of humans to socialize but also behave antagonistically toward others leads them to develop their rational potential – they develop skills, prudence, and self-discipline in the

process. But, Kant believes, with general development of their rational capacities even their moral insight will ultimately also develop, and eventually they will gain in moral strength and moral disposition.

Kant always attributed a crucial role in this process to political development. And from the outset he regards the improvement of the political organization at the state and the international levels as inherently connected. He believes that it is only in a state that all _natural predispositions_ of humankind can be fully developed; and he believes that this can happen only in a state that has the stability and security that are impossible without international peace. Kant believes, however, that Nature is teleologically organized in such a way that it promotes peace: even if their moral disposition is lacking, humans will be driven in the direction of peace by the forces of self-interest.

For Kant, in the course of furthering their own purposes, individual historical agents also promote Nature’s _purpose_ of developing humankind’s natural talents or capacities, including the capacity to reason. The means Nature employs to achieve this are social antagonism and strife. So the plan of Nature consists in Nature’s skilful exploitation of our disruptive and destructive traits in order to secure the advancement of the human species. Katerina Deligiorgi quotes Kant as proposing that _the history of the human race as a whole be regarded as the fulfillment of a hidden plan of Nature to realize an internally – and, for this purpose also, externally – perfect political constitution as the_
only condition under which human beings can fully develop all their capacities’. Drawing on the teleological implications of this narrative of human development, Kant concludes that hope regarding further progress in human affairs on a world scale is possible. In ‘Idea for a Universal History’ Kant sets out to show that political justice is achievable. Kant is concerned with the following problem: how can differently motivated individuals who pursue a plurality of ends co-exist within a state that preserves their freedom. Such a state would be one that neither abolishes nor is threatened by the freedom of its citizens. In ‘The End of All Things’, Kant describes this as a ‘liberal’ arrangement that is ‘equidistant from both servitude and lawlessness’. The question is whether such an arrangement is attainable. Kant says that the greatest problem for the humankind which as dictated by Nature, is creating civil society which can administer justice universally.

Kant’s whole philosophy of progress which is connected to the individual, Nature, history, and teleology is solely anthropocentric. Not only is it anthropocentric, it is also at many times ‘man’ centric and ‘west’ centric. Through out the chapter whenever I use the word ‘man’, it is absolutely intentional and is meant to be gendered as man and not as a general way of referring to humans. The reason for this is that Kant uses ‘man’ in a general manner but through his philosophy it does eventually function as being gendered. What I mean is that the discourse is directed towards man, and here man fits into this world. Women are not even implied or given any place in Kant’s world view. Similarly his ideal state is only inclusive of the rich European or Western countries. Kant says ‘in

---

man (as the only rational creature on earth) those natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason are to be fully developed"^{37} and the development is directed by Nature which is also rational and teleological. To imagine that these days what man does is rational is difficult considering all the harm man has caused to the human and non-human world. Probably man is not listening to reason but is being just plain selfish. The fact that the human species is meant to develop its rational and natural capacities to the fullest according to Kant may have been one of the reasons for the _we-can-do-whatever-we-want_ attitude that we seem to posses. This kind of attitude ignores ecology and the interconnectedness between the human and the non-human world completely. Kant completely isolates human beings from the environment within which we are all connected. Nature for Kant is that which guides and directs the actions of man alone and does not includes other species or women or even poor countries without imposing a hierarchy where man is on top. Nature has defined what progress is.

‗Man‘ has always progressed for Kant and he even believes there is adequate proof to show that the human race as a whole has actually made _considerable progress morally in our age when compared to all others_.^{38} Humanity is _by its very Nature capable of constant progress and improvement without forfeiting its strength_^{39} and _no one can or ought to decide what the highest degree may be at which mankind may have to stop progressing._^{40} Kant himself seems to be certain that man has progressed and I

---


^{40} Fine, Robert. "Kant's Theory of Cosmopolitanism and Hegel's Critique." _Philosophy and Social Criticism_ 29.6 (2003): 615
wonder if he may think otherwise in the contemporary world. If man is isolated then he may be said to have progressed. To take no responsibility for setting limits to what Kant calls progress also sounds dangerous and reflective of our current ecological crises situation. The question to be raised here is, who does this theory of progress as proposed by Kant apply to? It does not seem to apply to women or the third world countries since it the theory is based on a very western and materialistic goal. The goal itself is questionable because in trying to work towards achieving our potential, we have embraced unbalanced and harmful growth models. A kind of hierarchy exists where Nature comes second only to serve humanity’s rational goals. Reason is what makes man unique and justifies his goals and progress.

2.3 Worshipping Reason

“All our knowledge begins with sense, proceeds thence to understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which nothing higher can be discovered in the human mind for elaborating the matter of intuition and subjecting it to the highest unity of thought.”

- Immanuel Kant

“Reason” or being “rational” has been and is highly valued in the human society. The human society prides itself on being rational. Progress is considered as a rational process that takes place through rational thought and methods. Val Plumwood who is a well-known ecofeminist intellectual and activist emphasizes the need to take a critical look at what we call reason which is the underlying aspect of all our decisions that affect human progress. According to Plumwood our behavior in relation to the ecological crisis has not been rational if reason is properly understood. The failure of dominant national and international political institutions to meet the situation of ecological crisis could not

---

be more clear, a course likely to ensure our demise even if the world were not overhung by the shadow of continuing warfare. The often invoked term ‘sustainability‘ tends to obscure the seriousness of the situation; clearly no culture which sets in motion massive processes of biospheric degradation which it has normalized, and which it cannot respond to or correct can hope to survive very long.⁴² The deterioration of the global ecological contest of human life demands from our species a clear and adequate response, but we are seemingly immobilized even though it is clear at the technological level we already have the means to accomplish the changes needed to live sustainably on earth. So the problem is not primarily about more knowledge or technology; it is about developing an environmental culture that values and fully acknowledges the non-human sphere and our dependency on it, and is able to make good decisions about how we live and impact the non-human world.⁴³ According to Plumwood developing environmental culture involves a systematic resolution of the nature/culture and reason/nature dualisms that split mind from body, reason from emotion across their many domains of cultural influence. The ecological crisis requires from us a new kind of culture because a major factor in its development has been the rationalist culture and the associated human and nature dualism characteristic of the west. Human/Nature dualism places human life outside and above inferiorized and manipulable nature.⁴⁴ Rationalism and human/nature dualism promote a culture where human identity is seen as outside of nature; where nature is the Other, while minimizing non-human claims to earth and to elements of the mind, reason and ethical consideration. Rationalist culture has distorted many spheres of human life. We are currently living at a time when we are reaching the biophysical limits of the planet.

and this reason-centered culture has become a liability to survival. Its ‘success-making’
characteristics, including is ruthlessness in dealing with the sphere it counts as nature,
have allowed it to dominate both non-human nature and other peoples can cultures.\textsuperscript{45}
Plumwood’s expresses her views on reason and believes that ‘it is not reason itself that is
the problem, I believe, but rather arrogant and insensitive forms of it that have evolved in
the framework of rationalism and its dominant narrative of reason’s mastery of the
opposing sphere of nature and disengagement from Nature’s contaminating elements of
emotion, attachment and embodiment’\textsuperscript{46}.

When we think about the crisis we are currently in we tend to call it a crisis of
ecology, which suggests a crisis of failing of nature. In reality the ‘ecological‘ crisis is a

When we think about the crisis we are currently in we tend to call it a crisis of
crisis or failing of reason and culture. The ecological crisis of reason involves a practical,
ecology, which suggests a crisis of failing of nature. In reality the ‘ecological‘ crisis is a

When we think about the crisis we are currently in we tend to call it a crisis of
crisis or failing of reason and culture. The ecological crisis of reason involves a practical,
ecology, which suggests a crisis of failing of nature. In reality the ‘ecological‘ crisis is a

crisis or failing of reason and culture. The ecological crisis of reason involves a practical,
concrete and material set of crises on multiple fronts, and one of its most important
expressions is the ecological crisis. The tendency of human beings to deny being
embodied as well as being under the illusion of possessing individual autonomy instead
of realizing the interdependence of living in a community, helps to explain why an
economic and social order can continue to be presented as rational when it systematically
erodes biospheric systems such as the ozone shield and unbalances the carbon cycles that
contribute in crucial ways to the survival of planetary life.\textsuperscript{47} The face of global capitalism
shows not ignorance but much of denial. The ecological relationships its disembedded
economic system creates are irresponsible, unaccountable, and especially for those in

\textsuperscript{45} Plumwood, Val. \textit{Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason}. (Routledge; London, 2002). 5
\textsuperscript{46} Plumwood, Val. \textit{Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason}. (Routledge; London, 2002), 5
\textsuperscript{47} Plumwood, Val. \textit{Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason}. (Routledge; London, 2002), 15
privileged contexts, invisible. Plumwood argues that despite the ecological crisis, this rationalistic agency that is in the process if killing its own earthly body sees itself as the ultimate form of reasoning planetary life, and seeks to impose itself universally, prioritizing its models and enforcing them maximally across the globe and even beyond.

Why is reason like this? Plumwood answers, “because concepts of rationality have been corrupted by systems of power into hegemonic forms that establish, naturalize and reinforce privilege.” At the core of development and progress has been rationalism which has given us a deeply anti-ecological narrative of reason with the ecological crisis as its climax. Faced with the decline and disruption of the human sphere, and its likely spillover into our own species decline, Plumwood thus concludes that rationalist rationality is irrational, in the sense that it is maladapted as the environment depends on it. Rationalism sees life as a march of progress, which consists of reason subjugating the supposedly inferior and passive sphere of nature in the body and in non-human life. In the historical rationalist imaginary, women and other ‘lesser beings’ are the Others of reason, which is treated as the province of elite men who are above the base material sphere of daily life and are entitled to transcend it because of their greater share in Reason. Rationalism has created a kind of inability to see human beings as ecological and embodied beings. Humans are seen as the only rational species, the only real

---

subjectivities and actors in the world.\textsuperscript{53} The human species is made to appear as "outside nature", as essentially intellectual being, "rational choosers" calculating maximum satisfaction and not reliant on the earth, beings whose basic ecological demands have no more legitimacy than any other desire, however trivial. Other species appear, when they appear at all, though a reductive and human-centered framework, in a rationalized and commodified form.\textsuperscript{54} This kind of mastery of rational supremacy can be traced in the dominant culture of the west since the high period of classical civilization, as an ideology justifying the dominance of civilized elite and their chief values, identified increasingly with reason.\textsuperscript{55} Reason, also considered as the "manly" element in the soul was opposed to the inferior and corrupting "female" elements, which included "soft" areas of emotions and the senses. Plumwood criticizes this view by arguing that rationality is built on the myth of autonomous reason and autonomous man, inheriting the rationalist failure to situate the human in ecologically embodied and socially embedded ways. It misunderstands both the human and the ecological relationships that underlie human life, just as it misunderstood our dependency on the ecosphere and on each other.\textsuperscript{56}

In contemporary rationalism, the first world unemployed or third world subsistence farmers, are less rational, and in the rational hierarchy are placed in the position of nature. If they lose under the current market rules, they have failed to make of themselves something rational or efficient, something the supremely rational machinery of the free market can use. This kind of rationalism can be seen in the way farmers in

\begin{thebibliography}{10} 
\bibitem{53} Plumwood, Val. \textit{Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason}. (Routledge; London, 2002), 19
\bibitem{54} Plumwood, Val. \textit{Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason}. (Routledge; London, 2002), 27
\bibitem{55} Plumwood, Val. \textit{Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason}. (Routledge; London, 2002), 20
\bibitem{56} Plumwood, Val. \textit{Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason}. (Routledge; London, 2002), 27
\end{thebibliography}
India are lured to take out loans to buy genetically modified seeds that are marketed as technologically advanced and thus more profitable, by companies like Monsanto. Since the market has so much control over so many domains of human existence, economic rationalism has great power to shape culture; its cultural media and ideals can promote identification with the rich and successful 10 per cent who are winning, and reflect their standards and styles of resource over consumption. It can portray poor people and low consumption lifestyles in negative or contemptuous terms.\textsuperscript{57}

So while there is a hierarchy between the rich and the poor, different races, and many others, there also seem to be similar hierarchies in Kant’s rationalism and his cosmopolitan ideals. According to Walter Mignolo, Kant’s cosmopolitan ideals co-existed with \textit{notorious racist underpinnings}\textsuperscript{58} and these have implications on our contemporary situation. So, how could cosmopolitanism be possible when the designer of the project had a hierarchical view of humanity around the planet? According to Mignolo, cosmopolitanism was willingly or not a project of Western expansion (globalization), whose implementation was through the civilizing rather than by free market in economy and democracy in politics. In that regard, Kant’s cosmopolitan ideals were as imperial as the late twentieth century’s march through free-trade, military bases, and \textit{spreading democracy‘}. Mignolo however believes that Kant was an honest and true believer.\textsuperscript{59} In his lectures on \textit{Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View‘} Kant brought cosmopolitanism in the section devoted to the \textit{characters of the species‘}. The characters

\textsuperscript{57} Plumwood, Val. \textit{Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason}. (Routledge; London, 2002), 21
of the species, in relation to his cosmopolitan ideas and ideals, shall be understood through ‘the character of the nations’ and the ‘character of races.’ The characters of the nations are limited to six European nations: France, England, and Germany in the first round; Italy, Spain, and Portugal in the second round. The character of races is that in which ‘Nature’ takes the place of ‘nations’. Kant delimits the question of races by focusing instead on ‘the character of species.’ And in this section, the character of the species human (of the race animals) is scrutinized. Cosmopolitanism then comes into the picture in the section ‘basic features concerning the description of the Human Species’ Characters.’ And here is how Kant envisioned cosmopolitanism, quoted at length:60

The human race taken collectively (as the entire human species) is a great number of people living successively and simultaneously. They cannot be without peaceful coexistence, and yet they cannot avoid continuous disagreement with one another. Consequently, they feel destined by Nature to develop, through mutual compulsion and laws written by them, into a cosmopolitan society (cosmopolitanisms) which is constantly threatened by dissension but generally progressing toward a coalition. The cosmopolitan society is in itself an unreachable idea, but it is not a constitutive principle (which is expectant of peace amidst the most vigorous actions and reactions of men). It is only a regulative principle demanding that we yield generously to the cosmopolitan society as the destiny of the human race; and this not without reasonable ground for supposition that there is a natural inclination in this direction.

Mignolo feels that if cosmopolitan ideals shall be maintained in and for the twenty-first century, cosmopolitanism shall be accountable for its crimes: the very foundation of cosmopolitanism, as envisioned by Kant and explained by Toulmin, was in complicity with the formation of European imperial powers and of European expansion in America, Africa, and Asia, as well as with the continuation of Europe in the United States. Kant’s cosmopolitanism was cast under the implicit assumption that, beyond the

heart of Europe was the land of those who had to be brought into civilization. Jumping from the era of European "cosmopolitan" modernity and the civilizing to a post-modern world guided by "globalism," Mignolo argues we have the sketch of the continuity and diachronic accumulation of the rhetoric of modernity (salvation, conviviality, prosperity, and freedom) and its darker side, the logic of coloniality (discrimination, racism, domination, unilateralism, exploitation).  

This chapter's purpose has been to show the development of the concept of progress. Progress for Kant was intimately linked to the human civilization. Rational Nature provides man with goals which are achieved throughout human history. This anthropocentric view of progress became an exclusive process for the privileged white European and American countries. It also excluded women and the environment from its circle of discourse. Kant's vision of a cosmopolitan world driven by progress as ascertained by Nature has found itself in globalism and the problems associated with globalization today. Some of the biggest problems created by capitalist and consumerist societies have been ecological crises. The justification for human actions has always been reason which is placed on a pedestal since before Kant. However either we have misunderstood what reason is, or maybe we want to reconsider how much importance we give to rationality in human society. I firmly feel that while reason might be one of the important traits that humans possess, there are several other human abilities that also need to be given as much importance. Humans are also capable of compassion, care, and thoughtful innovation which might be better ideals to uphold in our current times. Human society is struggling with a globalized world where a lot of power is controlled by a few

---

corporations. These corporations are driven by economic globalization and material progress. Economic globalization and globalism are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 3

Globalization and the Monsantosizing of Agriculture in India

September 19, 2006 Bhadumari, India — Here in the center of India, on a gray Wednesday morning, a cotton farmer swallowed a bottle of pesticide and fell dead at the threshold of his small mud house. Villagers in Bhadumari gathered in the house of Anil Kondba Shende and looked at his body as the local police investigated his suicide. The farmer, Anil Kondba Shende, 31, left behind a wife and two small sons, debts that his family knew about only vaguely and a soggy, ruined 3.5-acre patch of cotton plants that had been his only source of income. This year, waiting for a tardy monsoon, Mr. Shende sowed his fields three times with the genetically modified seeds made by Monsanto. Two batches of seed went to waste because the monsoon was late. When the rains finally arrived, they came down so hard that they flooded Mr. Shende’s low-lying field and destroyed his third and final batch. Mr. Shende shouldered at least four debts at the time of his death: one from a bank, two procured on his behalf by his sisters and one from a local moneylender. The night before his suicide, he borrowed one last time. From a fellow villager, he took the equivalent of $9, roughly the cost of a one-liter bottle of pesticide, which he used to take his life. The news of Mr. Shende’s death brought his wife, Vandana, back home to Bhadumari. Relatives said she had gone to tend to her sick brother in a nearby village. By the time she arrived, her husband’s body was covered by a thin checkered cloth. A policeman had recorded the death — the eighth in six months for the officer. Ms. Shende, squatting in the narrow village lane, shrouded her face in her cheap blue sari and wailed at the top of her lungs. “Your father is dead,” she screamed at her small son, who stood before her, dazed. 62

The above newspaper article describes just one of the many farmer suicide cases from India. India has seen close to two million farmer suicides between the years 1997 to

2007, an average of a suicide every thirty two minutes since 2002. Farmers are sinking into debts that they cannot pay due to crop failures and are ultimately killing themselves in desperation and shame at being unable to feed their own family. Why are farmers in such heavy debt? Why are their crops failing? Why are Indian farmers using genetically modified seeds when they possess the knowledge of traditional farming methods passed down through generations and have yielded good crops for years on end? Perhaps the answers to these questions can be found in the framework of economic globalization of the 20th and 21st century. Economic globalization is characterized by the emergence and power of multinational corporations over governments and capital flow. Monsanto is an example of a multinational corporation that produces genetically modified seeds and fertilizers in order to expedite and increase the quantity of production of certain crops. Monsanto is an agricultural company that produces genetically modified seeds to create high yielding large-acre crops like corn, cotton, and oilseeds (soybeans and canola), as well as small-acre crops like vegetables. These crops are often called cash crops as they have high economic and trade value. Monsanto is now trying to introduce genetically modified vegetable seeds as well, such as Bt Brinjal/Eggplant which has been highly debated in India after the failure of Bt Cotton. I discuss the various positions within this agricultural debate later in the chapter.

In this chapter I focus on the analysis of the contemporary globalization with a focus on economic globalism. I would like to critique it by drawing attention to often

---

neglected impacts of this ideology on the environment as well as poor countries. Globalization, as I employ the term is defined by *interconnectedness*, and *deterritorialization*. While the two words are positively received, they scarcely live up to their meaning either because of their distortion or the consequences of the actual circumstances within which they are employed. Interconnectedness seems to involve exchange between nations and people that creates mutual interdependencies. However in reality it is more of a corporate ruled hegemony where the poor countries are dependent on richer economies without actually progressing themselves. Similarly deterritorialization suggests a massive melting pot of diversity and global networking. Once again it is uprooting several people from their homes and traditional jobs such as farming, in order to look for jobs that fit into a capitalist world such as urban construction labour. These to me however only serve to highlight the even bigger criticism of globalization. Economic globalization which is driven by capital accumulation has had a big role to play in the destruction and exploitation of the environment, and agricultural soil and communities surrounding agricultural lifestyles; more specifically women and farmers. It is the environment and people that pay for the costs of globalization.

Initially, the chapter aims to explain the widely accepted understanding of globalization and globalism. The focus of this chapter is on economic globalization of the 20th and 21st century. The Bt Brinjal example brings out several aspects of economic globalism and the reasons for the resultant criticism. The critique is focused on certain agricultural issues in developing nations, and the situation of women in these nations. Poor women in countries like India bear much of the brunt of difficult situations and are
often ignored in economic as well as cultural accounts. Ecofeminism offers a critique of
globalism which also helps address the joint issues of women and nature.

3.1 Understanding Globalization and Globalism

Covering a wide range of distinct political, economic, and cultural trends, the term
―globalization‖ has quickly become one of the most fashionable buzzwords of
contemporary political and academic debate. Although it is used in a general manner to
signify one single process, the concept has multiple aspects. Globalization can mean an
economic agenda that traverses the world, promoting market economies and enhancing
trade in the service of capital growth. It could also mean an ideology representing values,
cultural norms, and practices, seen by some as a superior worldview and by others as
cultural hegemony. Globalization can be understood as a corporate structure and
mechanism that may supersede the rule of nation-states and challenge or even threaten
democracy. Or some like to call it a global village, with the consequences of vast cultural
exchanges, communication technologies, transportation, migrations, and a wide array of
global interconnections, including the globalization of ideas. Often it is understood as
grassroots globalization or globalization from below as witnessed in anti-globalization or
pro-democracy movements emerging in resistance to economic and cultural
globalization.

In popular discourse, globalization often functions as little more than a synonym
for one or more of the following phenomena: the pursuit of classical liberal (or -free
market”) policies in the world economy (―economic liberalization”), the growing

---

dominance of western (or even American) forms of political, economic, and cultural life (―westernization‖ or ―Americanization‖), the proliferation of new information technologies (the ―Internet Revolution‖), as well as the notion that humanity stands at the threshold of realizing one single unified community in which major sources of social conflict have vanished (―global integration‖). Although sharp differences continue to separate participants in the ongoing debate, most contemporary social theorists endorse the view that globalization refers to fundamental changes in the spatial and temporal contours of social existence, according to which the significance of space or territory undergoes shifts in the face of a no less dramatic acceleration in the temporal structure of crucial forms of human activity. Since the mid-1980s, social theorists have tried to offer a rigorous conception of globalization. To be sure, major disagreements remain about the precise nature of the causal forces behind globalization. However, an agreement about the basic rudiments of the concept of globalization is slowly being conceived.

Contemporary analysts associate globalization with deterritorialization, according to which a growing variety of social activities takes place irrespective of the geographical location of participants. This means increased possibilities for action between and among people in different countries all over the world. Even though geographical location remains crucial for many undertakings (for example, farming to satisfy the needs of a local market), deterritorialization is found in many social spheres. Business people on different continents now engage in electronic commerce; television allows people situated anywhere to observe the impact of terrible wars being waged far from the comfort of their living rooms; academics make use of the latest video conferencing

---

equipment to organize seminars in which participants are located at disparate geographical locations; the Internet allows people to communicate instantaneously with each other notwithstanding vast geographical distances separating them. Territory in the sense of a traditional sense of a geographically identifiable location no longer constitutes the whole of "social space" in which human activity takes place. Globalization in this sense comes to mean new ways on conducting non-territorial activity.

Globalization is also conceived as being linked to the growth of social interconnectedness across existing geographical and political boundaries. In this view, deterritorialization is a crucial facet of globalization. Yet an exclusive focus on it would be misleading. Since the vast majority of human activities is still tied to a concrete geographical location, the more decisive facet of globalization concerns the manner in which global events affect local functioning. For example, the insistence by powerful political leaders in the First World that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should require that Latin and South American countries commit themselves to a particular set of economic policies might result in poorly paid teachers and researchers as well as large, understaffed lecture classes in San Paolo or Lima; the latest innovations in information technology from a computer research laboratory in India could quickly change the classroom experience of students in British Columbia or Tokyo. Globalization refers to processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organization of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activity across regions and continents.”

---

Manfred Steger highlights the distinction between *globalization, globalism* and *globality*.\(^7^2\) While *globalization* is the process, *globality* signifies a social condition characterized by the existence of global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make many of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant. Thus globality is the resultant condition of the process that is globalization. *Globalism* on the other hand is an ideology that endows the concept of globalization with neoliberal values and meanings. Thus it is the ideology that forms and is formed by the process that is globalization. It underlies the cultural, economic, political, and social values of our society. Globalism, at its core, seeks to describe and explain nothing more than a world which is characterized by networks of connections that span multi-continental distances. It attempts to understand all the inter-connections of the modern world — and to highlight patterns that underlie (and explain) them.\(^7^3\)

Heather Eaton and Lois Ann Lorentzen define globalization as "anything that refers to the economic and technological agenda that alters basic modes of cultural organization and international exchange in many parts of the world".\(^7^4\) The debates about whether globalization is beneficial or not; can be expressed through the following questions; what is economic globalization achieving? Are the consequences as beneficial as the claims? Does deterritorialization and social interconnectedness serve everybody in the world only for the better? Can and do countries take advantage of globalization? Several social and political developments come as part and parcel of economic

---


globalization as governments restructure their services in order to gain access to the global economy. Needed public services such as electricity, water, health, and transportation often are placed in the hands of private companies. The poor find it harder to access these privatized ‘public’ services. With globalization comes what some describe as massive consequences in the area of culture. Values, attitudes, and cultural worldviews are wrapped within the package of globalization. Encounters between the allegedly value-neutral global market and specific cultures particular values and practices have produced all kinds of clashes, including overt resistance. Societies with public religious structure, values, and social patterns may be deeply challenged as they either absorb or resist the values embedded within globalization processes. Globalization is anything but neutral.75

3.2 Monsantosizing of Agriculture in India: Bt Cotton and Bt Brinjal

India is an important grower of cotton on a global scale. It ranks third in global cotton production after the United States and China; with 8-9 million hectares grown each year, India accounts for approximately 25% of the world's total cotton area and 16% of global cotton production. In March 2002, the Indian government permitted commercial cultivation of genetically modified Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis) cotton a product of Monsanto company.

Monsanto is an agricultural company that produces genetically modified seeds to create high yielding large-acre crops like corn, cotton, and oilseeds (soybeans and canola), as well as small-acre crops like vegetables.76 India began planting Bt Cotton in 2002 and various debates have surrounded the decision and the results of that decision.

Monsanto analyzed and tested Bt Cotton and concluded that quantities of insecticide can be reduced by about one third relative to conventional (non-Bt) varieties, and yield gains can be up to 80% in seasons with bad bollworm infestations (a typical increase may be 30-40%).\textsuperscript{77} Other studies have also shown potential gains to producers from growing Bt Cotton in a number of developing countries including South Africa, Argentina, Mexico, Indonesia, China, and India. Monsanto findings appear to show that since its commercial release in 2002, Bt Cotton has had a significant positive impact on yields and on the economic performance of cotton growers in Maharashtra, a state in India. Yields of Bt Cotton are significantly higher than those of non-Bt varieties, and use of insecticide is less—just as important, given insecticides' toxicity and potential for environmental damage. However, the higher profits are not due to reduced costs (i.e., less insecticide) but rather the higher revenue that arises from higher yield if the Bt variety is not disadvantaged in the market.\textsuperscript{78} Monsanto claims that these findings echo the results from a number of other developing and developed countries.\textsuperscript{79}

On the other side of the debate we have activists, ecofeminists, and farmers who argue against Bt Cotton. Farmers in India have lately been committing suicide at an alarming rate, due to a combination of overindebtedness and crop failures. Part of the blame is to be laid on regulatory failures that permitted Monsanto Corporation to sell genetically modified cotton seed representing it as disease resistant and high-yielding,
when in fact it turned out to be neither. Vandana Shiva an ecofeminist and activist argues against Monsanto and Bt Cotton. She says that Indian farmers have never committed suicide on a large scale. This phenomenon is something totally new. It’s linked to the last decade of globalization, trade liberalization under a corporate-driven economy. The seed sector was liberalized to allow corporations like Cargill and Monsanto to sell unregulated, untested seed. They began with hybrids, which can’t be saved, and moved on to genetically engineered Bt Cotton. The cotton belt is where the suicides are taking place on a very, very large scale. It is the suicide belt of India. And the high cost of seed is linked to high cost of chemicals, because these seeds need chemicals. In addition, these costly seeds need to be bought every year, because their very design is to make seeds nonrenewable, seed that isn’t renewable by its very nature, but whether it’s through patenting systems, intellectual property rights or technologically through hybridization, nonrenewable seed is being sold to farmers so they must buy every year. Cotton farmers had to default on bank debt, and then become further indebted to illegal moneylenders. The Indian regulator was apparently persuaded to permit large-scale marketing and distribution of Bt Cotton seed at a time when many other countries were still awaiting further testing. The farmers were left with debts incurred to purchase

---

the seed and to invest in additional irrigation required to grow Bt Cotton, and crop failures leaving them unable to repay the debts.\textsuperscript{83}

Similar to Bt Cotton, one of the recent agricultural debates in India took place over the introduction of Bt Brinjal in January and February 2010. Monsanto, one of the biggest manufacturers of genetically modified food, proposed Bt Brinjal/eggplant as the next genetically modified seed for Indian agriculture to boost the economy. Brinjal has been cultivated in India for the last 4000 years or so and has many historical references in various Indian languages. It is grown all over the country, year-round and is one of the most popular vegetables of India. The area under cultivation is estimated to be around 0.5 million hectares. The total production stands at around 8.2 million metric tonnes. It is mainly grown in small plots as a cash crop by farmers. The average yields of Brinjal in India are reported to be around 200 to 350 quintals per hectare.\textsuperscript{84} There were several arguments that the Foundation for Biotechnology Awareness and Education (FBAE) made for Bt Brinjal in the newspapers. One of the arguments the FBAE made is that Bt Brinjal helps in reducing the cultivation expenses on the use of synthetic pesticides up to 77 percent, benefiting millions of farmers by enhancing marketable yield. The consumer gets healthful fruit and value for the money paid. It also greatly reduces the risk from synthetic chemicals to the farmers, consumers, non-target organisms, soil, water and environment in general.\textsuperscript{85} They pronounce Bt Brinjal safe since it has passed through the prescribed mandatory bio safety tests according to Indian regulations. Two expert

\textsuperscript{85} Dark Clouds Gather over Bt Brinjal, Biospectrum India, 5 February 2010, available from, http://biospectrumindia.ciol.com/content/CoverStory/11002051.asp
committees reviewed the bio safety dossier and based on that the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) approved Bt Brinjal for commercialization.

On the other side, the activists had their own views against Bt Brinjal. Shiva has highlighted that the rationale for the approval is wrong since it has totally ignored organic agriculture as the sustainable system for controlling pests. She says that we neither need toxic pesticides nor toxic Bt. Brinjal. Many farmers produce toxic-free organic brinjal and other vegetables. The argument that without genetically modified seeds, pests cannot be controlled is totally false. Certain statistics in Vidharbha show that pesticide use has increased thirteen fold since Bt. Cotton was introduced. Shiva also pointed out that the so call safety tests have not tested for transgenic Bt. which includes genes for antibiotic resistance and genes for viral promoters. The tests have been done with the safe microbial Bt, which has been used as an organic pesticide for decades. The tests merely show the safety of the organic spray. They have not looked into the risks that transgenic Bt. creates. Shiva says Bt. Brinjal is a test case for the future of our food, our democracy, our science. That is why it should not be introduced in our farms and our kitchens without a proper reassessment, especially in the context of false assumptions made to present Bt. Brinjal as the only alternative available ignoring the proven agro ecological approach to pest control. There is no GM liability framework. This must be put in place to protect organic farmers.

3.3 The Ecofeminist Critique of Economic Globalization

Heather Eaton in her essay titled "Can Ecofeminism Withstand Corporate Globalization?" gives a critique of economic globalization. She says that ideologically economic globalization appeals to an ideal of adventure, entrepreneurship, and superiority. "Gateways to the World," "Go Global," "Track Global Competition," "Spread Global Wings," "CROSSing International Borders," and "BEComing Master of One's Domain"—these slogans invite expressions about global prospects for business. Any mainstream business magazine is filled with these and similar expressions. They create a perception that the world is one homogenous reality that one can exploit economically. The feeling of being able to continue living plush lives, connected to limitless growth is created, which makes us believe that we are able to rise above context and place. Implicit in such an ideological representation of economic globalization is the greatest possible mode of life, far superior to cultures, nation-states, bioregions, and so on. There is no talk of differentiated and distinct cultures, about national or international regulations. The fact that there are limitations to such capital exchange is mostly ignored or passes unacknowledged. In the ideological jabber there is little discussion of the complex issues around government policies on political, economic, and social choices with respect to the terms upon which any given country could or should relate to the globalizing of their economies. There is virtually no discussion of the uneven flow of capital and information. This "globe" of which they speak is an utter abstraction with no accountability to anything but hegemonic economic agenda.90

---

The consequences of this seductive rhetoric are never mentioned. If one considers the Bt Brinjal case, one wonders why farmers would choose to plant genetically modified seeds in the first place. They are also seduced by slogans like “apply innovation and technology while conserving more” when in reality the farmers are not even allowed to conserve their seeds due to “intellectual property rights”. Intellectual property rights refers to the ownership rights that seed companies have on their seeds that prevents farmers from being able to save seeds for the future. India’s agrarian crisis can be summed up in five words the drive toward corporate farming. Further unacknowledged repercussions are the mounting debts due to failure of crops, other family pressures and resultant emotional turmoil that the farmers have to face which ultimately leads to their committing suicide. As a result of this form of economic globalization initiatives that aim to increase cash crop production with the use of genetically modified seeds, there is deterioration in the traditional methods and values that have been a hallmark of Indian agriculture and rural life. In addition, communities and countries are coerced into export-dependent economies. Social norms and fabrics shred under the force of anonymous corporate “restructuring” in the name of globalization. John Jordan comments that transnationals are affecting democracy, work, communities, culture and the biosphere.

One of the biggest unacknowledged repercussions of ecological devastation due to destructive development is on women. Women are forced to work a lot more because they are left behind with their children after their husbands are dead. Shiva talks about

nature’s economy’ which is what ensures environmental regeneration and people’s sustenance economy, within which women produce the sustenance for society through invisible unpaid work are being systematically destroyed to create growth in market economy. Shiva argues for a special place for women within nature and their invisible hand in agriculture. Women’s work and knowledge is uniquely found in the spaces in between the interstices of sectors, the invisible ecological flows between sectors, and it is through these linkages that ecological stability, sustainability and productivity under resource-scarce conditions are maintained. The invisibility of women’s work and knowledge arises from gender bias, which has a blind spot for realistic assessment of women’s contributions. It is also rooted in the sectioned, fragmented, and reductionist approach of progress which treats forests, livestock, agriculture, and other human activities as independent of each other.

Ecofeminism is concerned with women, the environment, the factors that affect women and the environment, and the interconnections between women and the environment. If society is to go forward in a more sustainable path it may be necessary to rethink the relationship between women, their environment, and nature more generally says Mary Mellor, the author of the essay, Gender and the Environment. The impact of globalized development on women has become increasingly important in the critique of progress. Both women’s disadvantage and the environmental impact of the development process were exacerbated by western development agencies and workers who based their thinking on the gendered division of labour in industrial systems and

---

failed to recognize the centrality of women in subsistence farming. When common or family-owned land is privatized and turned over to cash cropping, women lose their right to land use. Women not only practice subsistence production but are often the ones who collect fuel and water. Once common open access land is lost, women have to make more efforts to find these basic necessities. Women are then often forced onto more marginal (and ecologically fragile) ground. They have to cultivate thinning soils or collect green rather than dead wood. As a consequence, women- rather than the process of economic change that has forced them into this position- can sometimes be seen as the cause of environmental damage.99

The impact of the rejection of woman and nature can be seen in the way both are devalued in commercial/industrial economic systems. Neither is accounted for economically or socially. The earth’s resources have been seen as either free or only worth the cost of extraction or the compensation paid to those who own or occupy relevant areas. The prices of primary products are determined by the level of wages that can be set in disadvantaged countries and the vagaries of the financial market in these products. Commercial accounts of companies do not reflect the long-term damage to the environment or take responsibility for it. Equally women’s work has been devalued. Most of women’s work across the globe is either unpaid or paid at a low rate. Ecofeminists argue that this is because women’s work is associated with the bodily process of life, from child care and hygiene to health provision and basic food production. In their

common marginalization, women and nature appear to have been thrown into at least a contingent relation.  

Economic globalization seems to be interested in the increase in overall capital. Multinational corporations like Monsanto are a part of this globalization since they are the means through which deterritorialization and interconnectedness takes place. Globalism or the ideology behind our current economic globalization values consumerism which other than buying a lot involves producing, selling, and buying products which are; cheap; not made in your own city or country; need to be exchanged for better versions etc. Globalism also values having things in abundance and having them produced quickly, which in turn increases capital. It promotes a ‘if you have more, you will be happier’ attitude. The influences of this ideology can be seen quite clearly in the Bt Cotton issue. People in the US need more clothes and so more cotton is required to be grown. The amount of cotton being grown in the US is not adequate and nor is it cheap. So India, which is a big producer of cotton, feels the demand of a growing market. Monsanto steps in to fulfill this demand by producing genetically modified cotton seeds that will produce cotton faster and in larger quantities. However, since increasing capital is the main criteria, their aim is to extract as much money as possible from the Indian farmers and so they charge heavily for the seeds, and fertilizers. Placing intellectual property rights on the seeds ensures that the farmers have to keep buying seeds before each cultivation cycle instead of saving them. Thus an ‘interconnectedness’ can be seen between India and the US, which globalization prides. But while the capital increases, the farmers suffer and die due to debt and environmental damage that the seeds cause. They

---

are forced to leave their villages in order to search for work in the cities. Meanwhile their wives not only continue working on the fields, but also have to find a way to take care of the children, and her husband’s debts. But who cares about the women? Not the corporations or the Indian government. But the women care for the environment and the agricultural land. They strive to save it because they know how much it hurts them and their children to be amidst an ecological crises. They seem to have a different understanding of our relationship with the environment. They raise questions about what our relationship with the environment is really supposed to be like. How are we supposed to understand the human species within the environment? Are we a part of it or outside it? Do we respect nature and ourselves equally, or are we allowed to exploit nature? These questions will be addressed in the following chapter on Deep Ecology.
Chapter 4

Rethinking Relationships: Deep Ecology, and Ecofeminism

“The human race is challenged more than ever before to demonstrate our mastery - not over nature but of ourselves.”101

- Rachel Carson

The manner in which we relate to the environment and our views on the use of the natural environment for human development will have a major impact on the type of ‘sustainable development’ that we envisage and promote. The first set of values that can be established in any study of our attitudes towards environmental issues pertain to our relationship with the natural environment. The aim of this chapter is to explore deep ecology as a philosophical position, as well as the debates within it and the criticisms against it. Deep ecology is not new and has been practiced as a part of the Hindu and Indian culture since much before the colonization of India by the British. The chapter will look briefly at deep ecology in India in the past and the consequent changes that it went through as progress powered by economic globalization began taking center stage. Economic globalization tends to think of the environment as possessing only instrumental value which immediately makes it of secondary importance to the human world. However to think of the environment only instrumentally is to indulge in fallacious reasoning. It implies that we are not actually interdependent on the environment, and the

problems of the environment do not affect us. In light of our current global environment crises which includes climate change, water and soil pollution, species extinction, to name a few, the focus of this chapter is to explore an alternative relationship model between humans and the environment as opposed to the exploitative and destructive relationship that we currently have based on our concept of progress. Deep ecology argues for the intrinsic value of nature and that humans are within nature instead of outside it. It calls for identifying with nature in order to promote compassion and action towards everything that is a part of nature. The terminology of ‘intrinsic’ value remains debatable, and despite arguing for identification with nature, deep ecology remains unable to remove the dualism between the human and the non-human world. Despite these criticisms I argue that deep ecology provides us with an alternate model of our relationship with the non-human world that does not create hierarchies unlike the Kantian theory of progress and economic globalization that uphold human progress above everything else. While I believe that deep ecology and Indian philosophy can provide the philosophical basis to our relationship with nature, ecofeminism manages to remove the dualism between theory and action through eco-movements.

There are different attitudes that one might adopt when it comes to interacting with the non-human world. Dunlap and Van Liere argue that ‘biocentric’ and ‘anthropocentric’ perspectives on the environment are significant in guiding the environmental actions of individuals. These values should be seen on a continuum with extreme biocentric position representing values that position humans as equals with nature and makes no distinction on the basis of hierarchy between human and non-human

---

102 Barr, Stewart. *Environment and Society: Sustainability, Policy and the Citizen.* (Vermont; Ashgate Publishing Company, 1988), 31
world. Extreme anthropocentric position holds that humans are distinctly differentiated from and, in hierarchical terms, ‘above’ nature. This is where the importance of moving beyond such ‘relational’ values is important. What Stewart Barr has termed ‘operational’ environmental values enable us to understand more effectively how values can impact on the decisions that humans take towards environmental issues. Ecocentrists recognize the intrinsic value of the environment, viewing environmental resources as having value in their own right. An ecocentrist would also argue that there are clear and definable limits to human growth, which have been exceeded and have led to irrevocable damage to the environment. An extreme environment ethics would argue for the fundamental rights of the environment and would view any exploitation of the environment as a violation of non-human rights. This environment is valuable in and of itself. At the other extreme technocentrists view the environment as a resource to be exploited and that it is extendible, so long as human interests are not compromised. From this perspective the environment has no intrinsic value, only economic value. This technocentric position shows the total lack of ignorance of the values of community and ecology. There are two approaches to sustainability; shallow environmentalism (weak sustainability) and deep ecology (strong sustainability). At the heart of weak sustainability is the distribution of capital. A weak approach to sustainable development argues that natural capital of any type can be traded-off and substituted with human capital, so long as the total capital passed on to the next generation is a constant or growing. So what is strong sustainability or ‘deep ecology’?

103Barr, Stewart. Environment and Society: Sustainability, Policy and the Citizen. (Vermont; Ashgate Publishing Company, 1988), 31
104Barr, Stewart. Environment and Society: Sustainability, Policy and the Citizen. (Vermont; Ashgate Publishing Company, 1988), 44
4.1 Naess and the Philosophy of Deep Ecology

"The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction."\(^{105}\)

- Rachel Carson

The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, originally coined the term in 1972. Deep ecology offers a normative critique of human activity and institutions, and seeks a fundamental change in the dominant worldview and social structure of modernity. According to Naess, "The aim of supporters of the deep ecology movement is not a slight reform of our present society, but a substantial reorientation of our whole civilization."\(^{106}\)

Naess argued that deep ecology was more of a social and political movement rather than a philosophy. As a movement it advocates among other actions, constituent pressure on elected officials; formation of Green political parties; educational workshops for schools and communities; community recycling programs; protests and boycotts against antiecological industries; and ecosabotage. These activities are compatible with the deep ecology movement because of the deep ecological principles they follow.

Naess talks about the formation of the "total view" of the place of human beings in the world. Naess and George Sessions wrote in the "Platform for Deep Ecology" that, "the flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value. The value of non-human life forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human


purposes. This total view is essentially one that defines human relationship to the non-human natural world and connects this normative understanding directly to action. A commitment to developing and living by a total view is, perhaps, the essential characteristic of deep ecology as it is positively differentiated from a shallow or reform environmentalism. A deep ecological position is a philosophical worldview that includes the nonhuman natural world, the environment or the ecosphere in its normative understanding and value commitments.

Anthropocentrism refers to a human and often man centered attitude towards the environment which when taken to an extreme posits humans as rightful owners of the non-human world. The tendency of many developed nations in the world has more often than not been strongly anthropocentric which in turn has caused enormous ecological destruction. Naess and Sessions write in the platform: present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. Deep ecology rejects strong anthropocentrism and questions this dominant idea in the world. It offers ecocentrism as a replacement for anthropocentrism. Ecocentrism is the idea that the ecosphere and ecological systems are the focus of value. It is a holistic view of value, for entire systems are thought to be valuable, rather than individual humans or individual

---

natural entities (such as animals). For example an anthropocentric attitude will promote commercial farming as it will be beneficial for humans, whereas an ecocentric attitude will condemn commercial farming due to the destructive impact on the soil and other organisms living within the soil. When one identifies with all forms of life in the system of nature, one appreciates that the interest of all other living beings are intimately connected to her or his own interests. Deep ecology promotes the idea of identifying with the environment. The sense of caring for the environment is an essential part of human self-realization. The interests of nature should not be seen as opposed to the interests of humanity. Deep ecology advocates us to expand our circle of concern to the natural world to become more fully realized beings. An important aspect of deep ecology is its critique of instrumental rationality which is the mode of thinking that makes efficiency and quantifiable results the goal of human activity. This rationality has been an important part of the evolution of the concept of progress and the resultant economic policies. Deep ecology on the other hand emphasizes alternative modes of thinking, such as spiritual enlightenment or artistic expression that emphasizes life-enhancing qualitative values. For Naess ideological change is required which is "mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of intrinsic value) rather than adhering to a high standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great." Deep ecology is not primarily a social philosophy. It usually assumes that there is an individual human being doing the thinking for himself or herself, trying to determine an honest and


http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=48940, x
personal way of assessing how to conceive of a way in which nature can matter to each of us, one at a time. Social action comes later, when individuals, with their own ecological philosophies get together to change things.\textsuperscript{112} The platform calls for, "the respect and intrinsic valuation of all forms of life", an attitude of "non-interference with natural processes and systems", a deemphasis on the primary significance of human life and institutions, the restructuring of human society to be "in harmony with natural processes", and a reexamination of the human life, replacing the "ceaseless pursuit of material abundance" with a heightened quality of life experience. This family of related ideas and general policy prescriptions constitutes the fundamental substantive ideas of the philosophy of deep ecology.\textsuperscript{113} Deep ecology emphasizes the need to view the world in the right way. Naess argues that environmental disagreements are largely the result of different perceptions of reality.

4.1.1 Identification, Difference, Neither, or Both?

As seen above, the platform of deep ecology seems to attribute intrinsic value to the environment independent of their instrumental value for human purposes. The words "intrinsic value" often sparks debates since it may be argued that intrinsic value is based on instrumental value. One may argue that the environment is a mutual interdependent system where every part (including humans) only plays an instrumental role in the functioning of the whole system (ecology). In other words, the environment is only


capable of being attributed instrumental value. Thus to give nature intrinsic value independent from instrumental value might be difficult. However I think that if one can look a little beyond the terminology to examine the real meaning and motivation behind giving the environment intrinsic value, one might find something along the lines of respect and knowledge. We must extend respect to the non-human world, understand our function within the ecology, and create limits for our species. However there are several other debates within ecology that have attracted more criticism of its philosophy.

Naess appeals to concepts of unity, identification and self realization to provide a foundation for activist concern for nature. The basic argument is that if human beings can identify with nature, then we will care for it. Val Plumwood, a well-known ecofeminist intellectual and activist, provides criticism against this argument. She argues that if we work mainly with concepts of identification it can be very difficult to get the right balance between continuity and difference. Trying to base methodologies on concepts of unity opens up some very problematic territory; problems such as a continued human-centered identification, and the inability to see important differences persist, which I will elaborate on later. Plumwood discusses these problems within deep ecology.

Plumwood explores the diverse answers available to the question of how to ground solidarity with and respect for the value of nature in the debate between Naess and fellow Norwegian mountaineer Peter Reed. Naess and Reed differed profoundly over the question of whether the abstract foundation for the desired new relationship will be found in human unity with embeddedness within the natural order, or in the existential gulf, our discontinuity and difference from nature. Naess’ proposed foundations formulated were basically in terms of identity and unity. Reed believed that respect
should be based not on sameness but on difference. It is, he argued, "our very separateness from the Earth, the gulf between the human and the natural, that makes us want to do right by the earth". Naess elects for identification with nature and the realization of the self based on the totality of these identifications as the foundation for respect for and defense of nature. "Identification is the process by which the supposed interests of another being are spontaneously reacted to as our own interests". The position draws on sameness and identity as the basis of the respect relationship. This creates a useful alliance with those forms of Buddhist thought which cast the sense of personal separateness as the ultimate illusion, contributing to the success of deep ecology within certain circles.

For Reed respect could only be based on the very existential gulf that Naess sought to remove. Reed argued, "our very separateness from Earth, the gulf between the human and the natural, that makes us want to do right by the earth". One approach sees humans as a part of nature, the other sees nature as a part of humans. According to Plumwood, Reed tends to view nature as the pure landscape of human absence. When nature is terribly dominant, says Reed, we have a sense of fear and of wonder which is missing in contexts too familiar and humanized. Nature is both related to us and Other, but it is difference alone which is the basis of the intuition of value, says Reed.

118 Plumwood, Val. Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason. (Routledge; London, 2002), 199
According to Plumwood even though Reed develops his account of difference in ways that turn out to be problematic, Naess’s account is based entirely on unity and identification with the self provides a problematic basis for respect for the non-human world, and particularly issues like wilderness. However the pure self/pure other choice presented by Naess and Reed and the underlying metaphysical choice of same/different is a false dichotomy: both continuity with and difference from self can be sources of value and consideration, and both usually play a role. Plumwood criticizes both Naess's and Reed’s frameworks of valuing either sameness or as difference, as ultimately anthropocentric. To base value exclusively on either sameness with or difference from the human implicitly construes the human as the center and pivot of value either as the positive or the negative source of value and recognition.119 Plumwood argues that some of the problems in Naess’s and Reeds’s mutual critiques can be resolved in a larger critical framework, employing resources from feminist theory and postcolonial theory. To deal with the problems of identity that the present form of human colonization of nature generates, an adequate environmental ethic needs to provide an affirmation of both continuity and difference between humans and nature, as appropriate to context.120 Deep ecologists can learn much from feminist theory and anti-colonial theory about how to undertake the theoretical task of rejecting hyper-separation and elaborating a concept and ground for solidarity with nature distinct from unity, one that at the same time allows us to affirm continuity and to respect nature’s difference. One important critical basis can be an understanding that certain human societies position humans as oppressors of

120 Plumwood, Val. Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason. (Routledge; London, 2002), 201
nonhuman nature, treating humans as a privileged group that defines the nonhuman terms of roles that closely parallels our own roles as recipients of oppression within human dominance orders. So what can we learn from cultures that have traditionally adopted deep ecology within the community and then have had to undergo changes due to colonization?

4.2 The Traditional Roots of Deep Ecology and Ecofeminist Movements in India

The premise of deep ecology that calls for identification with nature finds its roots in Hinduism as well as Buddhism and Taoism. One of the systems of Hindu religious thought, the Advaita Vedanta has been a significant influence. The Bhagavad Gita has been another source of influence in the development of deep ecology. The Bhagavad Gita talks about disciplined meditation as the means to self realization. The following passages from the Bhagavad Gita combine self-realization, non-duality, and restraint, and reveal an affinity with deep ecology;

\begin{verbatim}
But when a man is released
From dualities, he can act
Purely, without attachment,
And can serve me with all his heart

Wise men regard all beings
As equal: a learned priest,
A cow, an elephant, a rat
Or a filthy, rat eating outcaste.
\end{verbatim}

It describes the disciplined person who realizes the self, merges with Brahman which is absolute reality where the individual self ceases to be and sees Brahman in all beings by

\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}
means of a discipline of sameness, indifference, or treating everyone alike, which is a certain type of self control.\textsuperscript{123} Self-realization in the Hindu context usually means reaching a state of enlightenment which is characterized by a giving up of the ego, and a sense of oneness or identification with the nature. The basic statement of Hindu monism is that the self is identical with Brahman, the substratum of the world and ultimate reality. It differs from Naess‘s and Reed‘s sense of self on a metaphysical level. All beings share the same self. For Hinduism there exists an actual oneness with all of earth on a metaphysical level, whereas for Naess, the self is the individual who needs to identify with nature through an examination of one‘s own similarity to nature and being a part of nature. For Reed the self and individuality necessarily causes a sense of being different from other humans and the non-human world. However for Naess self-realization is the ultimate value or the most basic norm in deep ecology. An important implication for environmentalism of the Hindu concept of self-realization according to Naess, is that one can identify with all beings because one‘s true identity is the same as theirs.\textsuperscript{124}

The philosophy of Hinduism has also been reflected in the way Indians used to live within their environment. India has a tradition of valuing trees, creating common spaces for community access of resources, and also at the same time preserving the forests for future generations. Banwari talks about how the concept of the word ‘forest’, at one level, means the entire world. It includes the whole creation. \textquoteleft \textquoteleft you are also part of that forest. It is not that you are outside the forest. You can reorder it, but you cannot


India has a tradition of valuing trees. This tradition was passed on into the Indian culture and led to a subtle ecological relationship between human communities and the forest community of trees, plants, and animals. The basis of this relationship was the recognition of the rights of the trees, forest-dwelling animals and plants to a life of their own, free from exploitation by humans. To remove the forest was simply not acceptable. Therefore the villages each reserved sections of the forest for their own specific needs. These forests were different from the wild forest or jungle because they were open for exploitation and harvesting according to strictly ecological practices. Such forests were the basis for the community’s prosperity. Each village is responsible for maintaining its forest. In the forest, the natural arrangement of trees and plants would not be disturbed, but people could go there to collect dry wood, leaves, forest produce, and a limited amount of green timber. As care for this woodland was the responsibility of the village communities, and as their livelihood depended on it, they naturally conserved it from generation to generation.

Until the nineteenth century India was covered with thick forest land. However a lot changed when the British government set up the Indian Forestry Department to exploit the forests. From the beginning of the nineteenth century Britain systematically felled large areas of virgin Indian forest mainly to meet the ever-expanding needs of the British ship-building industry. From 1853 the arrival of the railway in India required further vast amounts of timber for sleepers and for fuelling locomotives. When later coal replaced timber as a fuel, the coal mines themselves needed large quantities of timber for their underground galleries. Exploitation continued, and during Second World War 6,326

---

square miles of previously untouched Indian forests were felled for the war.\textsuperscript{127} To meet the Empire’s needs during the nineteenth century the forests were gradually nationalized. The present Indian law controlling public access to government forests dates back to the Forest Act introduced by the British in 1878.\textsuperscript{128} In essence these laws meant that much of India’s forests was taken out of the hands of local people. Because the basic connection between the villages and its forests has been broken, the tradition of caring for trees, of respecting and even worshipping them, has fallen into disuse. The villagers understand that trees must be protected so that soil will be fertile for agriculture, but because of the crushing economic pressures that are now placed upon them their common sense and their traditional reverence for trees have been overshadowed by their immediate need for short term economic survival.

However there are several small and big movements in India that are working at remedying the current environmental and social crisis situations. These movements have an underlying foundation of respect for nature and the place of human beings as a part of and within nature. One such example of a movement that stems from the very ecological beliefs is the ‘Chipko Movement’.

This following paragraph is Ranchor Prime’s description of the Chipko Movement in ‘Hinduism and Ecology’. Chipko Movement is the now world-famous tree-hugging movement that started among the Himalayan villages of Uttarakhand, India in 1973. Sunderlal Bahuguna is ‘a small, bright-eyed man’ whose ‘unassuming exterior conceals a strength and determination which have been a driving force behind the Chipko

The villages in the Himalayas were facing major threats due to the steady loss of their forests, but down by commercial logging companies from the plains. This had been going on for a long time. It had begun with the British exploitation of India’s resources. The people of the mountain valleys had always depended on the forests for their livelihood in one way or the other, but they had never simply take from them – they had preserved the forests for future generations, using only what they needed in a sustainable way. Now all that was changing. The government took over and the trees that were cut down were replaced with faster growing and more profitable, but environmentally unfriendly pine trees instead of the oak and deodar trees of the Himalayas. By the 1950s the environmental consequences were becoming apparent. The trees were essential protection for the land. They captured moisture of the heavy monsoon rains and released it gradually into the river system, ensuring a steady year round supply of water to the plains. They also held the fragile mountainsides in place. Without tree-cover, they became disaster areas. Flash floods and landslides became regular occurrences responsible for a growing death toll and damage through out the second part of the twentieth century. Diminishing forests also meant drying up of mountain springs, loss of topsoil, fuel, fodder and fertilizer. In 1973 things came to a head and a group of villagers who had formed a self-help action group decided it was time to stand up for their rights. They decided to hug trees in order to prevent axemen from cutting them. Sunderlal, passionately dedicated himself to campaigning for justice for the rural people and soon became a spokesman of this movement. Thus the Chipko movement was born. Chipko means ‘to hug’. Here is a confrontation between two


conflicting world-views. One sees nature simply as a commodity to be sold on the world market, and the other sees it as something sacred, “the basis of our life”. The Chipko movement eventually created enough pressure on the government to change its forestry policies.

While Chipko has been an inspiring and successful movement, there is something very wrong with the description of the movement above provided by Prime. The description written above has managed to ignore an extremely important aspect of the whole movement, which is the role of women. Prime projects the hero of the movement as a man called Sunderlal Bahugana. While his role may have been instrumental, the fact that the movement was fueled and run mostly by women has been completely ignored in the description while projecting Sunderlal as the main hero of this important movement. The only part where Prime mentions women is in the following sentences:

The forester asks;

*What does the forest bear?*
*Resin, timber and foreign exchange.*

To this the women reply in chorus:

*What does the forest bear?*
*Soil, water, and pure air.*
*Soil, water, and pure air*
*Are the basis of our life.*

On the other hand, Vandana Shiva, world-renowned environmental leader and ecofeminist, gives her description of the Chipko Movement. On 30 November 1986, Chamundeyi, a woman of Nahi-Kala village in Doon Valley was collecting fodder in the

---

forest when she heard trucks climbing up the mountain toward the limestone quarry in the area. But since September 1986 there had been a Chipko camp on the road to the quarry set up by the village communities of Thano region, to stop the mining operations which have created ecological havoc in the region; the trucks should not, therefore, have been there. The quarry workers had attacked the protesters, removed them from the blockade, and driven the trucks through. Chamundeyi threw down her sickle raced down the slope and stood in front of the climbing trucks, telling the drivers that they could go only over her dead body. After dragging her for a distance, they stopped and reversed. The myth that movements are created and sustained by charismatic leaders from outside is shattered by the non-violent struggle in Nahi-Kala in which ordinary women like Itwari Devi and Chamundeyi have provided local leadership through extraordinary strength. It is the invisible strength of women like then that is the source of the staying power of Chipko – a movement whose activities in its two decade of evolution have been extended from embracing trees to embracing mountains and living waters. Each new phase of Chipko is created by invisible women. In 1977, Bachni Devi of Advani created Chipko’s ecological slogan;\textsuperscript{134}

\begin{quote}
What does the forest bear?
Soil, water, and pure air.
Soil, water, and pure air
Are the basis of our life.
\end{quote}

The women of Chipko provide a working example of the fact that there does exist a better way of understanding our environment rather than just exploiting it for short term benefits. Deep Ecology urges us to rethink how we view, interact with, and act in the ecological world. It prompts us to examine our interdependence with each other and the ecological world.

\textsuperscript{134} Mies, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. \textit{Ecofeminism.} (London: Zed Books, 1993), 247
environment and understand the importance of everything within a web of relationships where each relationship is important. Each living being and non-living thing has its own function within ecology. I do not completely agree with Naess about identifying with nature and nor do I totally accept Reed’s theory of respecting nature because of our difference. I do agree with Plumwood who finds that both positions still provide an anthropocentric view. However, being human it is difficult to escape anthropocentrism completely. We can strive for an ecocentric outlook which will still however be from the human perspective. The way forward to my me is through understanding ecology; how do our actions affect the non-human world and how does the non-human world really function. Traditional knowledge of Indian forests possessed by villagers in this case provides excellent insight into how ecology works and how we can live harmoniously. Ecofeminism also offers a key method of moving out of our current dilemmas with material progress and globalism. It provides us with eco-movements like Chipko which not only examine our relationship with the non-human world, but also help women’s voices be heard, draw from traditional knowledge and combine it with scientific knowledge, and deconstruct the gap between theory and action. The conclusion of the thesis focuses on these eco-movements and how they help bring about some real change in our concept of progress, through a reexamination of our relationships.
Chapter 5

Bridging the Gap: Eco-Movements

Our environmental problems originate in the hubris of imagining ourselves as the central nervous system or the brain of nature. We're not the brain, we are a cancer on nature.

~Dave Foreman, Harper's, April 1990

5.1 The Bt Brinjal Success Story

While the Bt Brinjal issue was being debated in India, I was getting all my news in the US from my father in India. I was deeply concerned about this issue and my father felt it and began wondering what he could do in India about this situation. He decided to send out an email to consult with a group of his friends in high profile jobs in Indian industries who are a part of a group that aims at conducting ethical business. In the email apart from bringing up the Bt Brinjal issue, he also attached an article providing arguments against Bt Brinjal written by Vandana Shiva, an ecofeminist and activist. The first person to respond from the group was an ex-managing director of an agro-company that makes genetically modified seeds. His response was that the Bt Brinjal technology is under scientific review by the expert group of GEAC and legal review by the Supreme Court of India. The Minister of Environment, is currently having wide ranging consultations with all stake holders to make the appropriate decision in the best interest of
the country, its farmers and consumers. He then goes on to justify Bt Cotton by giving statistical data. Bt Cotton which was first cleared in 2002 for a tenth of a million acres as a test case has been adopted by farmers in over 20 million acres in 2009 because he says, 'farmers know what is best for them and are the best judges'. No adverse environmental impact has been seen by the GEAC/RCGM in the last seven years in India. Not only has the Indian Cotton production and productivity increased by 30%, there is a marked decrease in 200,000 farmer suicides since the period of 1997-2007. It is important at this point to note that his basis for making a judgment about Bt Cotton is purely economical. His statistics about farmers' suicides seems to be missing an account of the 1,500 farmers that committed mass suicide in April, 2009. Having given the above statistics he goes on to warn the group against believing Shiva and her non-profit organization. He recommends that the group 'should not get involved in the controversy raised by the NGO's with unknown vested interests?‘

I find it important to mention this email exchange at the end of the thesis because it makes it much easier to understand the above situation from the point of view of those who uphold economic progress. It is not a simple situation; it is in fact quite complex. I had to opportunity- at a time previous to this email exchange- to interact with the above individual and a friend of his on the same issues. He refused to acknowledge that activists like Shiva and Arundhati Roy had 'real' knowledge of the situation at hand. His friend supported him by giving his own personal experience of meeting farmers. The farmers are begging for the genetically modified seeds and new technology. It is their only hope for survival. I feel however that if one was to closely examine the situation it is a cycle of

---

economic globalization that not only causes the agricultural problems which the farmers cannot cope with, but also influences the farmers to demand more of the same technology that is ruining their lives. However after Monsanto’s attempt to introduce Bt Brinjal in India, things have dramatically changed, which might point to the fact that farmers do not want this new technology anymore.

There were tremendous protests throughout the country against Bt Brinjal led by activists, ecofeminists, women, farmers, political parties, scientists, ecologists and citizens. In a novel method of registering their resentment to attempts to allow commercial production of Bt Brinjal in the country, hundreds of women under the banner of Orissa Nari Samaj (ONS) took out a funeral procession of Bt Brinjal. They exhibited indigenous varieties of brinjal, which they claimed was produced with the use of organic manure.136 Over 1,200 individuals gathered at Ahmedabad Management Association for the third round of the seven consultations on Bt Brinjal on January 19, 2010. People also came from the other states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat to voice their concerns on the much debated genetically modified food crop. In the first session, out of 28 farmers who got to speak, 18 rejected Bt Brinjal. In the second session, where scientists expressed their views and feedback, an overwhelming 13 scientists out of 15 scientists who spoke took a stand against the entry of Bt Brinjal.137 In a major setback to the BioAgri industry, seven major states of India, which together account for more than 70 percent of brinjal cultivation in the country said an emphatic “No” to the

137 Dark Clouds Gather over Bt Brinjal, Biospectrum India, 5 February 2010, available from, http://biospectrumindia.ciol.com/content/CoverStory/11002051.asp
introduction of Bt Brinjal.\textsuperscript{138} Located far away in a corner of Mumbai is a self help group run by two strong headed women, namely Sandhya and Kalpana. They run \textquoteleft Samta,\textquoteright basically a canteen, where around about seven to eight women work to sustain their livelihood, all of them hailing from lower socio-economic background. \textquoteleft This is a very serious issue,\textquoteright said one of the women in her local language regarding Bt Brinjal. \textquoteleft People like you and me have to do something about it.\textquoteright Following this concern were written letters and signed petitions stating that they do not support GM food crops and want it to be banned in India, just like it has been banned in other countries\textsuperscript{139}. The last and final consultation on Bt Brinjal saw the most interesting development when the former Monsanto India Managing Director Mr. T.V. Jagdishan said no to Bt Brinjal. While pointing out that private companies only have profit in their mind when introducing new technologies he questioned the lack of seriousness with which the government regulatory authorities are treating something as dangerous as genetically modified crops.\textsuperscript{140} Finally after all these protests, the environment minister announced the decision to put a moratorium on the release of Bt Brinjal until such time independent scientific studies establish, to the satisfaction of both the public and professionals, the safety of the product from long-term view on impact on human health.\textsuperscript{141}

The Bt Brinjal victory if only for a short while signifies the possibility of change occurring from the bottom up. It was a victory driven by the civil society. The expressions \textquoteleft bottom-up\textquoteright or \textquoteleft top-down\textquoteright imply a certain discourse of power. It seems to

\textsuperscript{138} Dark Clouds Gather over Bt Brinjal, Biospectrum India, 5 February 2010, available from, http://biospectrumindia.ciol.com/content/CoverStory/11002051.asp
\textsuperscript{139} Samta Mahila Mandal says no to GE, Greenpeace, 6 October 2009, available from http://greenpeace.in/safefood-news-blog/samta-mahila-mandal-says-no-to-ge/
\textsuperscript{140} Former Monsanto M.D. says no to Bt Brinjal, Greenpeace, 10 February 2010, http://greenpeace.in/safefood-news-blog/former-monsanto-m-d-says-no-to-bt-brinjal/
signify the movement, concentration, and flow of power. The current concept of progress as I have laid it out, as being one driven by economical growth in a techno-capitalist set-up, functions with a concept of hierarchy as I have shown earlier. This hierarchy is basically deconstructed by deep ecology and eco-feminism into a horizontal interconnectedness rather than a vertical hierarchy. The functioning and role of power in a hierarchical structure that progress suggests is different from the role power will play in a distributed system of communities and local economies governed by ecology. Thus in a top-down or bottom-up scenario, the power is concentrated on the top which is basically certain powerful economies and corporations, which has a huge radius of intense influence. The bottom of the hierarchy, such as individuals, groups of farmers, women, and activists, have power which does not have the same radius and intensity, but can imitate a similar amount of power and influence through greater number and collective action. However the main concern of this thesis, as far as power is concerned, is a kind of redistribution of power that empowers women, farmers, local communities, eco-movements, and traditional knowledge. One of the examples of this kind of distribution can be seen in the deep ecology chapter where I explain the forests as being commons in India. Forests were respected and worshipped in the past, and had their own place in a world where humans were not the center of all things. Combining these traditional methods with ecology has helped empower women, for example in the eco-movement Chipko, who form the 'bottom' of the social setup and were influential in restoring the ecology of a rapidly deteriorating forest area in the Himalayan mountains. When power is distributed in a variety of pockets through the combination of the science of ecology as well as traditional knowledge, it manages to provide us with a different perspective on
what human progress should be. Large scale change in complex systems never comes from the top down; it always bubbles up from the bottom. That means that large-scale social, political, and economic change comes from the collective voice of citizens. According to Wessels this collective voice would only become possible if our society underwent a paradigm shift.\textsuperscript{142} Kant believed that change needed to come from the top to the bottom. While we do need change at policy making positions as well, changing our concept of progress requires change at all levels and not just top down.

Kant’s theory of progress based on reason and teleology may have suited the context in which it was created. It was probably required for the scientific advancement that surrounds us and makes life so much easier for us. But like all theories, Kant’s was not complete. The environment may not have been a pressing issue in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, but the ecological crisis is what defines the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. We cannot continue with a concept of progress that values relentless material growth without any regard to the environment and the less privileged. Globalization itself is not capable of being given a value judgment. It is a process that has been occurring since humans began trading. It has benefited the human race in more ways than one. However globalism can be criticized and changed. The cultural values that drive human interaction and action can definitely be changed from an attitude of ‘wanting’ to one of ‘sharing’. Defining the cultural values to live by and act upon can be discovered and realized through an understanding of our place in this world. We are not an isolated species, but rather a part of an interconnected ecological community where our actions have an impact on the community. Tom Wessels writes, ‘once we break free of the mental prison of separation and exclusion and

\textsuperscript{142}Wessels, Tom. The Myth of Progress: Towards a Sustainable Future. (Burlington; University of Vermont Press, 2006), 60,61
see how the world is interconnected, new alternatives emerge. Despair turns to hope. Violence turns to non-violence. Scarcity transforms into abundance and insecurity to security. Diversity becomes a solution to violence, not its cause. Our actions should thus be guided by a sense of inclusion of all members of the ecological community whether it is women, trees, soil, or animals. `Navdanya` is an example of an ecocentric movement that serves as a model where theory and action become one.

5.2 Looking Forward: Navdanya

`Navdanya` is a network of seed keepers and organic produces spread across 16 states in India. It has its 46 seed banks across the country and organic farm spread over an area of 20 acres in Uttranchal, north India. Navdanya started in 1987 as a program of the Research Foundation for science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE), a public interest research organization founded by Vandana Shiva. It has help set up 54 community seed banks across the country where farmers save and share seeds. It also is actively involved in the rejuvenation of indigenous knowledge and culture. It has created awareness on the hazards of genetic engineering, defended people's knowledge from biopiracy and food rights in the face of globalization.

Navdanya pioneered the movement of seed saving, which began in response to the crisis of agricultural biodiversity. The conservation of agricultural biodiversity is impossible without the participation of the communities who have evolved and protected the plants and animals that form the basis of sustainable agriculture. The Navdanya program works for promoting ecological agriculture based on biodiversity, for economic

---

143 Wessels, Tom. *The Myth of Progress: Towards a Sustainable Future*. (Burlington; University of Vermont Press, 2006), xviii
and food security. For last 2 decades Navdanya has worked with local communities and organizations serving more than 2,00,000 men and women farmers from the States of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. Navdanya's efforts have resulted in the conservation of more than 2000 rice varieties from all over the country including indigenous rice varieties that have been adapted over centuries to meet different ecological demands. They have also conserved 31 varieties of wheat and hundreds of millets, pseudocereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables and multipurpose plant species including medicinal plants. Over the past two decades Navdanya has initiated Community Seed Banks with many partners including Beej Bachao Andolan in Uttar Pradesh, Green Foundation, Navdarshanam and Centre for Tropical Ecosystems, all three in Karnataka, Rishi Valley in Andhra Pradesh, and many more. Navdanya has established 34 seed banks in 13 states across the country operating through a network of community seed banks in different ecozones of the country, and thus facilitating the rejuvenation of agricultural biodiversity, farmer's self-reliance in seed locally and nationally, and farmer's right.

Navdanya's mission is to promote peace and harmony, justice and sustainability. They strive to achieve these goals through the conservation, renewal and rejuvenation of the gifts of biodiversity humankind has received from nature and ancestors, and to defend these gifts as commons. The setting up of community seed banks is central to their mission of regenerating nature's and people's wealth. Keeping seeds, biodiversity and traditional knowledge in people's hands to generate livelihoods and provide basic needs is their core programme for removal of poverty. Navdanya's mission focuses on
improving the well being of small and marginalized rural producers through non violent biodiverse organic farming and fair trade. The overall mission of Navdanya is to meet people’s needs while protecting the earth, defending our ecological and intellectual heritage, and strengthen livelihood and food security.

This thesis on gave me the opportunity to explore the concept of progress and critique it. However I recognize several limitation of the content due to a lack of adequate research on certain issues. I find that my philosophical analysis of the concept of progress was limited by working only with Kant. The critique of Kant was also one sided since it did not give an understanding of the positive aspects of Kant’s theory of the state. Similarly the chapter on economic globalization tends to take a severe look at the negative aspects of globalization while leaving out the many advantages of globalization such as education, and improvement in women’s situation in certain urban circumstances. I was also unable to talk adequately about the economic inequality that also results from economic globalization that fuels decisions that poor countries make in favour of multinational corporations. The impact of the research on the agricultural issues was diminished by limiting the thesis to the agricultural situation in India. It will greatly help my thesis to gather more data from other countries and provide an assessment of the global impact of capitalistic progress. I hope to be able to focus more on the intricacies of ecology and ecofeminism to be able to understand the various debates within these philosophies. Gaining adequate understanding of ecology and how ecology works will be helpful in developing an outline of environmental ethics that can guide human actions and create a better concept of progress for our current times.
References


Dark Clouds Gather over Bt Brinjal, Biospectrum India, 5 February 2010, available from, http://biospectrumindia.ciol.com/content/CoverStory/11002051.asp


Dodds, E. R. The Ancient Concept of Progress: and other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief. London; Oxford University Press, 1973


Former Monsanto M.D. says no to Bt Brinjal, Greenpeace, 10 February 2010, http://greenpeace.in/safefood/news-blog/former-monsanto-m-d-says-no-to-bt-brinjal/


