

Deep Ecology

A. Choose the right answer:

1. Why are we unable to solve the problems which harm the biosphere and human life?

(c) because a change in the perception of reality is required to solve them and that has not happened.

2. Which of the following is not true about deep ecology?

(b) deep ecology puts man at the center of its world view

B. Answer these questions in one or two sentences:

1. What does Fritjof Capra mean by ‘the crisis of perception’?

A: By the expression ‘the crisis of perception’ Fritjof Capra means our collective inability to understand the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans, animals, nature and the problems we face. Such a fragmented and skewed perspective prevents us from holistically see the world and its complex interrelations.

2. Why is it not possible to study the current global problems in isolation?

A: It is their interconnectedness and interdependence that make a study of global problems in isolation impossible. For example, world population can be stabilized only if and when poverty is reduced worldwide.

3. What is a sustainable society according to Lester Brown?

A: According to Lester Brown, a sustainable society is one that satisfies its needs without diminishing the prospects of future generations.

4. What is it that the leaders fail to see?

A: Our leaders fail to see the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans, animals, nature and the problems we face. They also refuse to recognize how their myopic and unimaginative solutions affect future generations.

5. What breakthrough in physics led physicists to a new world view?

A: The Copernican revolution in astronomy led physicists to a new world view.

6. How does Fritjof Capra define a social paradigm?

A: According to Fritjof Capra, a social paradigm is the entire constellation of human perceptions, thinking, cognition, values and actions prevailing in a given society.

7. What is a holistic world view?

A: Holistic world view is the attempt to see the world as an interconnected whole, rather than a dissociated collection of parts.

8. How does shallow ecology view humans?

A: Shallow ecology is anthropocentric. It views humans as above and outside of nature, as the source of all value and ascribes only instrumental use to nature.

9. Comment on the anti-ecological nature of social and economic structures.

A: Our social and economic structures are anti-ecological because they are exploitative, dominative, utilitarian and imperialistic.

C. Answer these questions in about 100 words each:

1. What are the major features of the world view that has dominated our thought for centuries?

A: Anthropocentrism, utilitarianism, insensitivity and selfishness are the major features of the world view that has dominated our thought for centuries. It views humans as above and outside of nature, as the source of all value and ascribes only instrumental use to nature. Our collective inability to understand the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans, animals, nature and the problems we face is the outcome of this thought. For example, world population can be stabilized only if and when poverty is reduced worldwide. Such a fragmented and skewed perspective prevents us from holistically see the world and its complex interrelations. Our leaders fail to see the interrelations in the world and refuse to recognize how their myopic and unimaginative solutions affect future generations.

2. What is the difference between a holistic world view and an ecological one?

A: A holistic world view sees objects as functional wholes and tries to understand their constituent parts. An ecological view includes this approach but goes further. It situates an object in its natural and social environment. Questions such as where did its raw materials come from, how was it manufactured, how shall it affect the users and impact on the larger community, etc., are a part of an ecological world view.

3. Why is deep ecological awareness spiritual?

A: Ecological awareness is ultimately spiritual because it is a mystic realization of our connectedness to the whole universe. A strong sense of belonging, a sublime consciousness and holistic awareness of the world are the ingredients of this awareness. It is a realization that just like an individual is influenced and shaped by environment, his actions can decide the fate of the environment.

4. Write a short note on eco-feminism.

A: Eco-feminism is a special school of social ecology. It addresses the basic dynamics of social domination within the context of patriarchy. However, its cultural analysis of the many facets of patriarchy and the links between feminism and ecology goes far beyond the framework of social ecology. Ecofeminists see the domination of women by men as the prototype of all domination and exploitation we witness in the world. They argue that the exploitation of nature has gone hand in hand with that of women. Accordingly, they see female experiential knowledge as a major source for an ecological vision of reality.

5. Give an account of the implications of the shift from self assertion to integration.

A: The shift from self assertion to integration implies new sensibility, perspective, ethics, perceptions and values. In other words, the shift calls for a new social paradigm, an entire constellation of human thinking, cognition, values and actions prevailing in a given society. This happens because in self assertion humans beings are considered above and different from nature; but in the integration mode the world is seen as an interconnected whole, rather than a dissociated collection of parts.

6. What is the meaning, in social organization, of the shift from hierarchical to networks?

A: The shift from hierarchical to networks brings about many changes in our outlook and sensibility. In place of social organizations that advocate and perpetuate discrimination and exploitation, there will a realization that the world is a big network in which everything is connected with each other. Institutions such as patriarchy, racism, capitalism and imperialism will have no place in the new paradigm of networks.

7. Write a short note on ecological ethics.

Ethics are the central defining characteristic of deep ecology. Unlike in the old anthropocentric paradigm, deep ecology is based on ecocentric values. It is a world view that acknowledges the inherent value of non-human life. All living beings are members of ecological communities bound together in a network of interdependency. When we assimilate this deep ecological perception, a radically new system of ethics will emerge. Such a deep ecological ethics is urgently required today, especially in science. Most of what scientists do is not life-furthering and life-preserving but life-threatening.

8. What is the link between ecology and psychology?

A: The connection between an ecological perception of the world and the corresponding behavior is psychological in nature. Logic does not lead us from the fact that we are an integral part of the web of life to the norms of how we should live. But if we have a psychological realization that we are a part of the world, our perspective will become holistic and ecological. Many authors have recently explored the link between ecology and psychology.

D. Answer these questions in about 300 words:

1. Describe the changes that are occurring in our outlook on the world

A: Anthropocentrism, utilitarianism, insensitivity and selfishness are the major features of the world view that has dominated our thought for centuries. Our collective inability to understand the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans, animals, nature and the problems we face is the outcome of this thought. Such a fragmented and skewed perspective prevents us from holistically see the world and its complex interrelations. Our leaders fail to see the interrelations in the world and refuse to recognize how their solutions affect future generations.

A holistic world view, on the contrary, sees objects as functional wholes and tries to understand their constituent parts. But an ecological view, in addition, situates an object in its natural and social environment. Ecological awareness is ultimately spiritual because it is a mystic realization of our connectedness to the whole universe. A strong sense of belonging, a sublime consciousness and holistic awareness of the world are the ingredients of this awareness. It is a realization that just like an individual is influenced and shaped by environment, his actions can decide the fate of the environment.

Eco-feminism addresses the basic dynamics of social domination within the context of patriarchy. Ecofeminists see the domination of women by men as the prototype of all domination and exploitation we witness in the world. They argue that the exploitation of nature has gone hand in hand with that of women. Accordingly, they see female experiential knowledge as a major source for an ecological vision of reality.

The shift from self assertion to integration implies new sensibility, perspective, ethics, perceptions and values. In other words, the shift calls for a new social paradigm. This happens because in self assertion humans beings are considered above and different from nature; but in the integration mode the world is seen as an interconnected whole. In the shift from hierarchical to networks there will a realization that the world is a big network in which everything is connected with each other. Institutions such as patriarchy, racism, capitalism and imperialism will have no place in the new paradigm of networks.

Deep ecology is based on ecocentric values. It regards all living beings as members of ecological communities bound together in a network of interdependency. When we assimilate this deep ecological perception, a radically new system of ethics will emerge. Such a deep ecological ethics is urgently required today, especially in science. Most of what scientists do is not life-furthering and life-preserving but life-threatening.

The connection between an ecological perception of the world and the corresponding behavior is psychological in nature. If we have a psychological realization that we are a part of the world, our perspective will become holistic and ecological. Many authors have recently explored the link between ecology and psychology.

