

Eco Marxism – An Ecological Critique of Capitalism

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Abstract: Nowadays human beings are worried about the future of earth which will be unable to satisfy the basic needs of coming generations. This problem was handed over to the capitalist movement that created all the ecological problems that we ever had faced. So it is better to reevaluate our policies in case of environmental protection. From the beginning of Marxian ideology it carries a thought about ecology. And it is an exact combination of bio and human centric visions. It provides an idea about the mutually complimented relation of man and nature. Eco Marxism should not be evaluated only as a part of environmentalism. This ideology is a part of production system and social relations. In terms of politics it is an accurate critique of capitalism. Eco Marxian perspective is all inclusive like socio-economic and cultural sides. Simply it's a package of ecological balance. And this level of thoughts can only cure all the environmental crisis based on a concept of equality. Modern term sustainable development is a part of eco Marxism. By rebuilding all the concepts of Eco Marxism from history according to the society will simply help us to develop a new ecological vision for the betterment of society.

Introduction

After industrial revolution the planet Earth is facing a big struggle on its survival. But the time during industrial revolution Marx and Engels addressed the environmental problems which may occur at the very near future of industrial revolution. Nowadays this necessity is forcing a world wide application of environmental protection in an effective way. But capitalists exploiting even this survival for their betterment and advertising an idea of sustainable development which is extracted from the ideology of Marxism. Eco Marxism is only able to solve this necessity of ecological care in development. But we have to understand how it explains the relation between man and nature. Through understanding the perspectives of Eco Marxism it could be differentiated from a pure environmentalism. This ideology reveals the reality of development and balanced nature-man relation. By considering the importance of Eco Marxism in the present situation we should analyze the different streams of thoughts it carries regarding environmental protection. Also interpret this concept as an ecological critique of capitalism to prove that it is not an outdated theory and is still alive.

Historical way to Eco Marxism

From the beginning of 18th century environment was abundantly abused as a part of industrial revolution and capitalist movement. During the period of industrial revolution modernization was deep rooted all over the world. This ideology was only a human centered thought. And the people who are involved in modernization believed that natural resources are deserved only for human beings. They started to exploit the nature through industrial revolution. Capitalist movement created a wide range of production. But still it doesn't resolved the problems of the society and poor people. So it resulted in the formation of Marxist ideology which was based on equality and centered in humanity. Marxian ideology provided a new vision of Equality not only in case of human beings but also in case of environment. But this type of progressed thoughts was limited in the areas of politics only.

Reasons for the arrival of environmental ideology in the Marxist space

- Eco Marxism is a form of criticism against the concept of capitalist exploitation view on nature.
- Majority of the scientific developments was carried out for the abusing of natural resources. After all it created a mindset of human centric vision throughout the world {Weocratic approach}
- Marx and Engels deeply analyzed the various environmental problems which may appear in the distant future of industrial revolution here we have to notice the inner ability to predict the side effects of a movement which was only focused in its profit.

- Nowadays all the capitalists are searching market for their products all over the world .these type of overproduction led to a complex economic as well as ecological crisis. This warning signal will bring a thought regarding the protection of nature.
- Accumulation of money, commodity and resources in the minority capitalists through a wide exploitation of natural resources which is here for all the members of this planet.so an idea of equality is valid and it is only perfect for a Marxian stream only .
- The above mentioned situations become the reasons for the re –emerging of Eco socialism /Green politics. Marxian ideology is placed in the background of materialist thought. At a time it is humanistic and bio centric.

Eco Marxism –Great way that never had been followed

According to Foster Ecology as we know it today represents the triumph of a materialist systems theory. Socialist thought is re-emerging at the forefront of the movement for global ecological and social change. In the face of the planetary emergency, theorists have unearthed a powerful ecological critique of capitalism at the foundations of Marx’s materialist conception of history.[2]

According to Konak Within environmental sociology, one of the central debates is between an ecological modernization perspective and an eco-Marxist perspective. Both theoretical perspectives have dealt with the environmental implications of globalization[10].

Social ecology and Eco Marxism suggests that social problems are the basic reasons for natural exploitation. It is a very important fact that reveals the politics of developed countries which imports the idea of conservation to undeveloped countries .So generally we can conclude that infinite “growth” brought about by Capitalist expansion is threatening the natural foundations of human life on the planet. How should we react to this danger? Socialism and ecology [5].Foster says that After knowing the term Eco Marxism may be we feel that ,the first term eco means the relation between man and environment .The second one having the matter of class relation. But we have to understand that these are complex words but stays mutually benefited. Eco Marxist stream is extracted from the history of Marxian ideology. This is a mutual contribution of Marx and Engels. Nowadays it is only considered as a part of ecology. But eco Marxian stream have an identity beyond this. It include capitalist criticism and green politics .Green politics mean a political reaction against environmental issues.It plays a major role in production all over the world .it determines the social class and social-cultural-financial and political situations of a nation. Globalization indicates the boundless exploitation of market through that they are abusing natural resources also. Eco Marxism related to the production cycle of a system which is normally controlled by the natural resources.Contrary to the depiction of Karl Marx by some environmentalists, social ecologists and fellow socialists as a productivist who favored the domination of nature, eco-socialists have revisited Marx's writings and believe that he was a main originator of the ecological world-view .so we cannot say that Eco Marxism is anew thought. It was arrived earlier from the analysis of Karl Marx. Even from the limitation of a productivist Marx structured a production system which contains a justice to the nature in its spirit. John Bellamy Foster is a main author of eco Marxism. He is absolutely pointing out the clear observation of Marx-like metabolic rift between man and nature. Marx developed a theory of ecological crisis, now known as the theory of metabolic rift. From the book “Ecology is politics “of Andre Gorse it is clear that Engels presented more detailed view on environmental vision of communism.It is very important that the first communist nation Soviet Russia started innovative movements of social development along with environmental protection. But when this nation involved in competition with the capitalist countries it lost the bio centric vision which was kept for the betterment of the society. Douglas Werner deeply studied the ecological movements in Soviet Russia .Among the Stalinist misfeasance Eco Marxism was embalmed as a harmful ideology. It prevented the great possibility of tie up between green and red.

Murray Bookchin is the founder of Eco Marxist movement. He was an anti-capitalist, American anarchist and libertarian socialist author. He says that domination over nature is a usual extension of social domination. For example human dominates over humans first. Then it will be extended towards nature.The very famous

authors of eco Marxism are Foster , Paul Burckket, Michael Löwy, David Harvey, Joel Kovel, James O'Connor and Mike Davis etcetera[10]. Eco Marxism was developed as a movement against capitalism under the above mentioned thinkers. From all the historic observations regarding Eco Marxism proves that it is not a radical environmental approach. This fact shows that Eco Marxism differ from all the other branches of Ecology. So it gives priority to tribal groups and other backward people who depends nature only. May be some of the concepts in Environmentalism is becoming hyperbolic and cannot make it applicable. Gandhi believed that behind every development we should consider the poor people who stand under the very lowest part of the society. In such a frame Eco Marxism is not becoming blind in its plea and being humanistic also. This type of vision should lead the society for exact development. Being humanistic is not possible in capitalism. If it became possible for such a movement then it will never termed as capitalism. Nowadays developed capitalist countries becoming more bothered about environmentalism. They are arguing for a pure natural protection only. Such countries tortured the environment maximum and became developed. But now they restrict undeveloped countries for effective natural resource utilization. For this injustice they have an explanation of environmental protection. From this we can understand that it's a part of politics to prevent the growth of developing countries. And it affects mainly the lowest part of the society where the capitalists won't be benefited anymore. That's what Andre Gorse named his book that 'Ecology is politics'. The environmental vision in the Marxian stream demanding less production ,less conception and more human development .In the current situation it is called Sustainable development. This term is a marketing technique for capitalists now. Actually this vision is a part of Marxist ideology.

There are two perspectives that dissolve in sustainable development. First one is the concept of desire and the second is concept of the survival. In developed countries environmental protection emerged from the concept of desire. They are limiting luxuries but not the basic needs. In case of developing countries they have to utilize the natural resources to satisfy the basic needs of their society. For example Attapady, a tribal area in Kerala starving among abundant natural resources. Tribes know how to interact with nature in its usual way. But they are being forced to accept and apply fake imported environmental protection techniques. There is no logic in such a development theory. Because it is a truly political movement of capitalism. Before applying the imported ideologies we should re-build it according to the social setup of a society where we have to develop. So all these facts are not against environmental protection. And here we have to accept that development will not be complete without considering the human beings. Pure environmentalism avoids humanity and replacing it with bio – centricism. It will not be possible because all the thinkers and activists of environmentalism are humans. They don't forget their people also. Real environmental protection is only possible when it suggests by a movement which is based on the principle of humanity. Capitalism only aim the possibility to increase the profit not to improve humanity and environmental care. So the sustainable development suggested by Capitalists may create some benefits. But it will not stay longer. This is a basic problem of the movement which only looks immediate outcomes only.

It is sure that Sustainable development and bio-human centric combination will only occur through Eco Marxism. This green political approach will help in the development of lowest field of the society. Through human protection we can also protect the nature .From the thinker Karl Marx to the current Eco socialists, it is clear that social situation and environmental protection is mutually complimenting each other. Great activist Kalel pokkudan pointed out that “If we do not love the nature we cannot love human beings also”. Without humanity environmental protection is not possible. Without taking care the nature human developments will not last long .These two facts are exact realizations which lead the developments in a right path. Simply it is called Eco –Marxism

Conclusion

“A Great Transition, in which values of “consumerism, individualism, and domination of nature” are replaced with “a new triad: quality of life, human solidarity, and ecological sensibility.” {Foster}[2]. This slogans maps a transition stage from capitalist exploitation to eco socialist sustainable development. It was deep rooted in the history of Marxism. The value of eco Marxism is it maintains a balance between man and nature. In this stream Humanism and environmental protection are like two sides of a coin. Sustainable development structured by

developed Capitalist countries is not at all applicable for the betterment of the society. This concept drives developing countries. So it should be replaced by Eco Marxism. Not only as an idea of environmental protection but also an ecological critique of capitalism.

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