

SYM 101

Sociological Concepts

Unit : 03

Topic : Social Ecology Part-I



Content



Concept of Ecology, Human Ecology, Social Ecology and Cultural Ecology



Characteristics of Ecology



Radhakamal Mukherjee Views on Social Ecology & Scope of Ecology

Introduction

- Ecology is a branch of biology. It is the study or relations between organisms and their environment. It emphasizes the idea that every living organism is constantly trying to adjust itself to its environment. The term environment includes climate, topography and other organisms as well. Thus, an organism tries to adjust itself not only to the climate but also to the other organisms. **The study of the relations between organisms and their environment is the subject matter of ecology.**

Meaning and Definition of Ecology

- The term “**ecology**” was coined by the 19th century German biologist **Ernst Haeckel**. He used the term to refer to the study of the influence of the environment upon animals. As a branch of biology ecology studies the relation between organism or group of organisms and their environment.

- Ecology is the study of living organisms including plants, animals, humans and their interaction with each other and their environment. Zoologist and biologist started using the term ecology in their researches. Sociologist have borrowed this ecological approach of these natural scientists and applied the same way in the studies of communities; this is called human ecology. Human ecology is man's collective interaction with his environment. The ecological point of view is that every living organism, human and non-human is incessantly making adjustment to the environmental condition.

Definitions of Ecology

- **A.H. Hawley**- The life of an organism is inescapably bound up with the conditions of environment, which comprise not only topography, climate, drainage etc. but their organisms and their activities as well. Ecology is the scientific study of the relationship of living organisms with each other and with their environment.
- **Ogburn** and **Nimkoff** say that ecology is the study of groups in relation to their environment. As sociologist we are interested in inter relationship between human beings and their environment.

Characteristics of Ecology

- ❖ Ecology is the scientific study of relationship between organism and their environment.
- ❖ Ecology is a science that studies relations in totality.
- ❖ It is a science of ecosystem (complex interconnected system where living organisms/biotic factors interact with their physical environment)/abiotic factors.
- ❖ It is a study of internal relations among human beings with environment.
- ❖ It is a branch (special) of biology.

Human Ecology

- **Human Ecology** is defined as **study of spatial** (arrangement of people, their activities and their physical structures like cities) and **temporal organization** (arrangement of human activities, events and processes over time) and relations of human beings with respect to selective, distributive and accommodative forces of environment.
- It's the study of how **humans interact with their environment**, both physical and social, leading to formation of human communities and social structures.

Human Ecology: Robert E. Park

Social Ecology: Murray Bookchin

- Approach to society that embraces **ecological, reconstructive and communitarian view** on society.

Cultural Ecology: Julian Steward

- How human society and culture adapt to their environment and how these adaptations shape both society and culture.
- Examines fundamental ways people use their surroundings and how this interaction influence their way of life.

Social Ecology

- It looks to reconstruct and transform current outlook on both social issues and environmental factors while promoting direct democracy.
- Democracy is not possible without harmony in environment.
- It looks to do away with scarcity and hierarchy in the economy in favour of world in which human communities work together in harmony with nature to accept and promote diversity, creativity and freedom.

Social Ecology

- Rather than being looked on as a hierarchy, life and environment should instead be looked on as a complex system in which all life forms are interrelated and of equal importance to a healthy and sustainable environment.
- Hierarchy is viewed as root cause of environmental problems.

- The term '**Social Ecology**' is referring to the study of human inter relationships with physical environment. Human beings are constantly adjusting to their environments. Human ecology is the study of how people and institutions are located in space and how do they adjust themselves to their environment. An ecologist is interested in the social and cultural phenomena associated with various localities. He focuses his attention upon the social effects of locality. Social ecology includes the study of community and population.

Radhakamal Mukherjee on Social Ecology

- Social Ecology, as a discipline, requires the cooperation of a member of science including social science.
- The geological, geographical and biological factors work together to produce an ecological zone. Ecological conditions also conditioned by social, economic and political factors. Indeed, human or social ecology is the study of all aspects of reciprocal relations between man and his environment.

Radhakamal Mukherjee on Social Ecology

- Mukherjee explains the scope of human ecology in his work **Regional Sociology(1926)** as “synoptic study of the balance of plant, animal and human communities, which are systems of correlated working parts in the organization of the region.”
- His ideas about social ecology advocated **regional development**.
- He stood for balance between economic growth and ecological fitness.
- He strongly advocated for conservation of forests and protection of ecological balance.

Radhakamal Mukherjee on Social Ecology

- **Mindless urbanization was lamented by him.** From ecological point of view, he upheld the idea and process of urbanization. Urban development at the expense of countryside should be kept in check. Agriculture should be diversified, and industries should be decentralized.
- Mukherjee notices with concern that **overgrazing, improvident destruction of trees and scrubs, faulty method of cultivation brings about serious imbalance** in the biophysical constitution of the entire region. It impairs nature's cycle.

Radhakamal Mukherjee on Social Ecology

- Social ecology is a better alternative to the havoc caused by rapid industrialization.
- India, with its long history, was a storehouse of values. Therefore, **in building new India**, the planning must not be confined to immediate and concrete problems but must be directed towards **value-based development**.
- Values are socially approved desires and goals that are internalized through the process of conditioning, learning or socialization.

Scope of Ecology

- Initially, ecology was considered to be a branch of biology that deals with the relation of organisms and group of organisms to their environment. Later on, it was realized that ecology is not only concerned with the organisms, plants and animals but with the energy flows and material cycles on the lands, in the ocean, in the air and in fresh water. So, keeping this modern emphasis, ecology is defined as the study of structure and function of nature considering that mankind is the part of the nature.
- The study of ecology begins with the understanding of the interaction of various biological units with their environment for the production of a series of living system i.e. ecosystem. After getting a clear picture of overall structure and function of an ecosystem, the emphasis is laid on various important aspects such as food chains, primary productivity and food for man.

Scope of Ecology

- ❑ Human environment – whole environment and its component.
- ❑ Climate and natural resources.
- ❑ Study of ecosystem.
- ❑ Relation between population and whole environment.
- ❑ Human influence on environment.
- ❑ Effect of maximum use of biological resources on environment.

- Impact of agriculture and farming on environment.
- Effect of urbanization, industrialization and modern activities on environment.
- All type of pollution.
- Study of land degradation and hazardous waste chemicals.
- Environment and human health.
- Study of social impact of development project.

- Study of economic effects of improved environment.
- Study of environmental management.
- Study of environment and development.
- Environmental conservation.
- Study of acts/laws related to environment.
- Study of Social consciousness

- An understanding of how biodiversity affects ecological function is an important focus area in ecological studies. Ecologists seek to explain:
 - ❖ Life process, interaction and adaptation.
 - ❖ The movement of materials and energy through living communities.
 - ❖ The successional development of ecosystem.
 - ❖ The abundance and distribution of organisms and biodiversity in the content of the environment.

Thankyou

