

COMMODIFICATION OF NATURE*:

*Note by Chandrani Dutta, Asutosh College, Source: Internet (Research papers & Articles)

INTRODUCTION:

The commodification of nature refers to the process of incorporating biophysical entities &/or information about them into economic systems for the purpose of exchanging good or service for a profit. In other words, the process through which society & economy give exchange value to something that previously had only use value.

TYPES OF COMMODIFICATION:

Two types of commodification in this course are:

1. Natural resources become commodities e.g., trees become timber
2. Nature itself become commodity
 - i. Consuming a view
 - ii. Forests become game parks

CAPITALISM & COMMODIFICATION:

The structure of capitalism is such that, it seeks to commodify everything including human life (labor) & environment (land & natural resources). The commodification of nature and the environment, inherent in the capitalist system, is problematic in its own right. Within this economic system, land as well as labor are seen as a commodity – something that can be purchased and an essential part of industry. Labor is essentially human activity, a necessary part of life. Land synonymous with nature, is not produced by man & in fact, encompasses man as a part of itself. When human being sell the right to harm the natural environment, they are effectively selling something that is not theirs.

Yet many seek to solve the climate change crisis through market mechanisms & through the buying & selling of rights to pollute or to degrade the natural environment through things like carbon taxing & trading. Carbon trading is the trading of carbon permits, where states, corporations even individuals would be given a certain allocation of permissible carbon emissions if purchase the permit.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES:

John Bellamy Foster, Professor of Sociology, University of Oregon, America believes that, Commodification of nature might be more dangerous than the impending danger of climate change & ecologic disaster. He fears that, it might lead to a system that favors economy over ecology & promote a form of neocolonialism (practice of using capitalism, globalization, cultural imperialism) instead of colonialism.

CONCLUSION:

There is a contradiction in recognizing only rights of humans while all the rest of the Earth system is reduced to a business opportunity in the “green economy.”



Fig.1: No to Green Economy

In an interdependent system in which human beings are only one component of the whole, it is not possible to only recognize the rights of the human part without instigating an imbalance in the system. To guarantee human rights and to restore harmony with nature, it is necessary to effectively recognize and apply the rights of Nature.

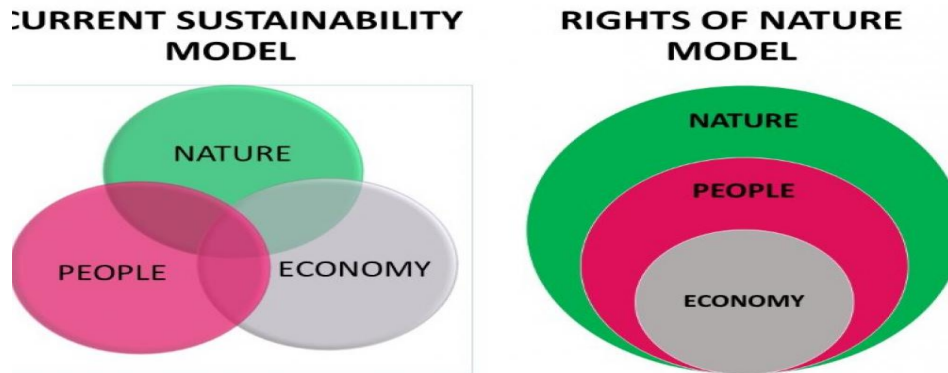


Fig. 2: Current Sustainability Model vs. Rights of Nature Model

Nature cannot be submitted to the wills of markets or a laboratory. The answer for the future lies not in scientific inventions that try to cheat nature but in our capacity to listen to nature. We need to overthrow capitalism and develop a system that is based on the Community of the Earth.