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## Agroecology of Punjab: A philosophical perspective

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### Abstract

Agroecology is not only the study of soil, water and cropping patterns but it miles ahead to a deep philosophy, "Human Nature Relationship". Environmental ethics, deep political ecology, and ecofeminism bring the technical challenges of groundwater depletion, soil degradation and monoculture dependency in Punjab together with their moral and epistemic justice. The paper presents agroecology as far more than a set of sustainable farming practices, but instead as a view of the world from within indigenous thought and learning that is tied to care of community, agricultural land and sound ecological manners.

**Keywords:** Agroecology, environmental ethics, epistemic justice, sustainable farming, sound ecological manners

### Introductions

#### Philosophical Lens on Punjab's Agroecology

While the success of Punjab in securing food for millions through its Green Revolution is widely celebrated as a testament to human resourcefulness, philosophically it remains a paradox, as it solved an immediate crisis but created long-term crises of ecological imbalance and moral negligence (Leopold 1949) <sup>[1]</sup>. These questions that is being raised by the environmental determinists -- do current agricultural systems treat Nature-in-agriculture as a set of inputs? Leopold in his essay *Land Ethic*, proposes a significant analysis that is based on the idea of treating land as a community instead of a commodity.

Though, this has been violated in favour of short-term profits (Singh and Sidhu, 2004) <sup>[7]</sup> as is the case in Punjab where ground water resources are being depleted excessively year by year and soils have lost their fertility.

Considering the perspective deep ecology (Naess, 1973) <sup>[2]</sup>, fields of Punjab cannot be regarded a space in which humans act as subject on an inert environment, but complex living system where all living beings have an equal right to flourish. Other species including plants, animals, fungi and bacteria are no longer communicating with each other as their voices have been suppressed and their habitats have been destroyed. Moreover, agro-biodiversity has been degraded due to the dominance of rice-wheat monoculture. Wisdom of ecological lies in restoration of field margins, reinstatement of crop diversity and preservation of non-crop life (Pretty, 2008) <sup>[8]</sup>.

The debate in "political ecology" reveals that the agricultural problems of Punjab are not merely matters of inappropriate practice rather they are constructed by structures of power (Sen, 1999) <sup>[3]</sup>. These state procurement policies are not good for the long-term sustainability of agriculture, shaped by the centuries of colonial irrigation pattern and centralised decision making, which leaves farmers locked into these unsustainable cycles. That is quite a philosophical change that requires decentralised and participatory governance where the most impacted people are directly engage themselves in finding solutions to ecological degradation.

Ecofeminism, as suggested by writers such as Vandana Shiva, exposes that the degradation of agricultural land in Punjab is the result of side-lining of women from land-ownership and decision-making. Their traditional roles from saving and preserving seeds to kitchen gardening are not valued and women can provide significant inputs to a more sustainable pathway in Punjab. Thus, it must involve the integration of women's perspectives both as a matter of ecology and ethics.

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### Land, Water, and Ethical Commons

Land ownership in many indigenous and agrarian cultures is established on the basis of communal land rights which treat land as a shared commons held in trust for future generations (Leopold, 1949) <sup>[1]</sup>. Green Revolution redefined land as a commercial input to get maximum yield and profit. Ethically, cultivators must put themselves into collective responsibilities along with collective rights that towards replenishing soil, rehabilitating biodiversity and ecological harmony.

For Singh and Sidhu (2004) <sup>[7]</sup>, while considering water resources in Punjab, they claim that the issue is not just a technical concern but a moral crisis. Development that does not compromise the freedoms of future generations is required, and the capability approach suggested by Sen (1999) <sup>[3]</sup> provides a step in this direction. Excessive extraction of groundwater would jeopardize tomorrow's existential endowment, hence, violating the ethical principle of sustainability. But changing the mindset about water resources also requires that we think of it not as a commodity but as a life-supporting commons.

Agroecology also represents epistemic justice, acknowledging the value of farmers as experience at par with scientific research (Pretty, 2008) <sup>[8]</sup>. This means seeing traditional cropping calendars, local seed varieties and communal irrigation practices not as relics but as active knowledge systems crucial for coping with and adapting to challenges (Sen 1999; Shiva 2016; and Shiva 1991) <sup>[3, 5, 4]</sup>.

### Beyond Technological Fixes

One reason this might be the case is that Punjab agriculture has been an offshoot of a technological instrumental mindset which suggests that technology can fix everything (Sen, 1999) <sup>[3]</sup>. New farm technologies like the Happy Seeder and Direct Seeded Rice alleviate environmental degradation, but take us no closer to asking the important question: how do we live within nature's limits? In the absence of an essential value shift, that is, from domination to reciprocity, technology is a patch, not a transformation.

### Agroecology as Ecological Wisdom

Agroecology, in its deepest sense, is a form of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom that recognises nature's complexity and calls for humility, moderation, and stewardship (Leopold, 1949; Naess, 1973) <sup>[1, 2]</sup>. This native knowledge would translate self-sustaining agroecosystem that would lead to diversified cropping systems, enhancing soil organic matter through high quality compost, suppressing weeds by cover crops, protecting pollinators, and intercropping system that would ultimately direct to amend and pave for massive system change so as to create new brand "Punjab state high on rural wellness".

### Conclusions

In the context of agriculture, a philosophy-style reading of Punjab's agroecology changes what once was a burning question from "How can we produce more? To "How we can live with the land". It demands a spiritual turnaround, in which agriculture is perceived as a relationship of reciprocity and care instead of just an extractor. It places ecological knowledge alongside radical social change, environmental justice, and cultural renewal in ways that center health of the land with health of the people, hence, all of which are happening simultaneously.

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