



## THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON NATURE

Jennifer.L<sup>1</sup>, Pansy Evangeline Victor<sup>2</sup>, Dr.K.Lavanya<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D Research Scholar, Dept of English, St. Joseph's College of Arts and Science for Women, Hosur (India).

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D Research Scholar, Dept of English, St. Joseph's College of Arts and Science for Women, Hosur (India).

<sup>3</sup> Asst.Prof and Head, Dept of English, St. Joseph's College of Arts and Science for Women, Hosur (India).

### ABSTRACT

*The culture of the society is always connected to the ecological traits, where human beings are always dependent on nature. The values of the community are associated with their culture, religion and experiences inherited from their ancestors. The paper tries to analyse the deep ecological principles related to the cultural influences of the society. It analyses how human beings are benefitted from the selfless nature but the consciousness to preserve it is completely lost due to many factors like materialistic greed, advancement of technology and carelessness. The proper interpretation of the cultural ethos will definitely preserve the ecology and renew the bond between human beings and nature.*

**Keywords:** culture, deep ecology, environment, nature, society

### 1. Introduction

Understanding ecology is a part of culture as one could find a lot of difference between the village life and city life today. The rural setup is closely associated with nature and its benefits. The city life is more a machine age with less eco space consisting of parks. It is often marred by pollution and chemicals in spite of comfort. The cultural anthropological studies cover the perspectives of human beings related to their environment through the spheres of domesticity, religion, economy, marital laws, kinship, politics and language. The beliefs, habits and morals of the people originate from their cultural consciousness. The culture, the beneficial outcome of a society is connected to the ecological traits of the flora and the fauna.

### 2. Deep Ecology

The term 'Deep Ecology' was created verbally by Arne Naes in his article "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements" in 1973. The word 'deep ecology' connects to the deeper understanding of the human and non-human world. The coinage of this term is an effort to describe the deeper and spiritual formulation towards nature. Deep ecology goes beyond the scientific term 'Ecology', which is a study of the maintenance of the ecosystem and it is more dependent on a culture of the environment. The proposed study is to focus on the impact of culture on nature in the vast expansion of the universe and to gain adequate knowledge about the functioning of nature and culture in the environment.



It cultivates the ecological consciousness of questioning the values and moral philosophy of nature which is incorporated with the culture. For many years there is a question of dominance in all aspects. To illustrate, the dominance of masculine over the feminine, rich over the poor, the upper class over the lower class and human dominance over nature is a major issue prevailing in the society till today. The identity and growth of a person depends on the cultural space linked to the civilisation. Deep ecology is the knowledge of our space in the mother earth. Its motivation is to identify ourselves as part of the organic cycle. It is an "active deep questioning and meditative process and way of life" [1], with regard to nature.

### 2.1 The purpose of Deep Ecology

Deep ecology is an emerging study introduced to create a harmonious balance between human individuals, communities and all of nature. This study provides the potential to satisfy the deep thoughts and thirst for nature. It helps us to implant two major intuitions (i.e) faith and trust in us and all the commodities of nature. Deep ecology gives us

...courage to take direct action; joyous confidence to dance with the sensuous harmonies discovered through spontaneous, playful intercourse with the rhythms of our bodies, the rhythms of flowing water, changes in weather and seasons, and the overall processes of life on earth [2].

The study of deep ecology is a self-effacing attempt to explain the mechanism of the environment. The cultural anthropology brings out the differences in the contemporary culture through social relations. The system of the environment combines the holistic human behaviour towards the ecological concepts. The core of deep ecology is to discover the facts and findings of the handicapped nature prevailing today. It is a try to make the human world rethink and meditate on the lost green world. The world is meeting natural disasters often.

### 3. Culture

Culture is a complex and dynamic phenomenon which is patterned with integration and interdependency. Human beings find solace in selfless nature but throughout the time, natural resources are depleted. Basic needs such as water, oxygen and healthy food are in demand today. Nature has failed to provide the basic needs because of the continuous destruction caused by the human. It has become a difficult task for nature to save human and let the humans survive. The upcoming issues such as global warming, tsunami, unexpected cyclones have hit the sub-consciousness of the people. The so far negligent thoughts and the mistake of considering nature as another have shaken the humanity. It is a warning for the people to think deep, raise questions and to activate mobility to sustain nature for a better tomorrow.

The rise of civilization is the product of ecological adaptations and ongoing process of culture. The theory of deep ecology cannot be complete without explaining its basic principles. Arne Naes has enriched the theory of deep ecology with eight principles. These principles act as a platform to understand, to create awareness, to stimulate interest and to appreciate the greatness of nature. He has set these principles to seek the



attention of the people of all races, culture, tradition and religion. This theory with principles invites readers and supporters of nature to include and to relate these given principles to the present happenings of the universe.

#### 4. First Principle

The first principle states, "The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human purposes" [3]. According to the first principle, human and non-human lives have their own values. The culture of a rural family is closely connected with the non human lives in the form of agriculture, flower gardens and water resources. The living components in the non-human world are to be accepted and respected by the human world. When 'acceptance' and 'respect' becomes the core of the human world, the non-human world would flourish and remain evergreen. Both have their own purpose to accomplish and to endure. When their role remains 'incomplete', there is a disturbance in the whole of the universe.

Human and non-human hold different positions in the environment. This principle is a mode of approach to the natural resources. It finds out the reason behind the separation of human and nature. It discovers the origin of the environmental problems. The first principle attempts to change the attitude of the humans and to realise that they are members in the family of the ecosystem and also should stay akin to the natural entities such as mountains, rivers, organisms and every kind of species living in the ecosphere. Every living species from tiny creatures to the huge ones have their own rights to live. The whole of the ecosystem carries intrinsic value. 'Intrinsic value' is to give reverence to the birds, animals, rivers, trees etc. If they are not given its value in the bed of earth, anytime destruction would erupt like a volcano and demolish the living world. Every entity of nature has the power to destroy its surrounding.

For instance, the upbringing of zoos is leading to the extinction of animals and birds. The wild animals are bordered with fences to live in. The powerful wild animals are made powerless. The flying birds of the air are in closed cages. Animals and birds are not given its value. The right place of the birds and animals are empty as they are shifted to the wrong places where they do not belong to. The scenario of the zoo is pathetic with the lack of fresh air, clean water, and of adequate food. Witnessing the birds and cattle packed together while transportation for meat purposes is usually very cruel but unbothered by mundane human life.

In May 2018, a tamed elephant at Shrirangam, Trichy killed its own tamer. No one could trace the reason for this. It was quite shocking, as this elephant would bless the people who visited the temple for years. It would have longed to keep away from its monotonous stay and to plunge into its world of paradise. The elephant rushed from place to place and left a few people injured. Finally, it stamped and killed its tamer. Here, the huge animal, the elephant is meant to live in the wilderness enjoying the freedom of moving in herds. The stolen freedom leads to the death of its tamer. This instance stresses the law of the first principle by Arne Naes.



## **5. Second Principle**

The second principle discusses the diverse and complex culture of the people. It says, "Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realisation of these values and are also values in themselves" [4]. The complex life of humans is set right due to the contribution of nature. Every species has its value. Giving them their right to live makes the human life content and comfortable. Today, crops, trees, fruits, vegetables etc breathe life into the human. It is amazing to observe them taking turns in its season to supply the seasonal nutrients to the body. For example, people wait for the summer season to enjoy the blessing of mangoes. Nature never breaks its promise of providing the needed at the right time. Contributions of nature according to the change of seasons are a gift to the living world. The other part of nature such as woods, land, trees, water and animals etc adds richness to the tradition and culture of the human world. When nature is not given its importance, life would turn out to be complex.

To illustrate, there was a man who lived amongst his rich acres of land. His family enjoyed consuming food from their own farm. They were hale and healthy working together in their land. They were bound together with love, care, peace and happiness. It kept them away from physical and mental illness. Later, their desire for money devastated the land and the togetherness of the family. They destroyed their flourishing lands and replaced it with buildings. The income gained through rents made them luxurious. They opted for fabricated materials such as air conditioner, television, trendy phones etc. They lost their fresh circulation of air and replaced with air-conditioner, lost their never-ending time of togetherness spent on lands and replaced their leisure time with television and phones. Consumption of unhealthy food leads to untold diseases. Nature shows its action when a man does his action by taking nature for granted. Complex life would be straightened when human enjoys the richness of nature.

Culture has transformed through ages with the technical advancements and giant scientific leaps. The materialistic greed of people has destroyed the bond of fraternity and neighbourhood as life is looked like a race competing each other. Human beings never stand and stare nature since they have lost the values of patience and tolerance. A culture bound with the ecological concerns respects and nurtures its members with a deep sense of responsibility towards nature. The time span of natural process of fruit bearing is almost reduced, yielding many in shorter duration. Humans have adapted themselves to be in haste without realising the broken bondage of nature.

## **6. Third principle**

According to the third principle, nature is a 'vital need' for the human world. "Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs." [5]. Humans have no right to demand more. Supplying adequate needs would vanish if the expectations of humans cross the boundary nature's providence. There is scarce rainfall due to the lessening of the green world. The ozone layer is disturbed due to the emission of pollution air. Globally, the vital need of the human world has crossed limits. As every country's aim is to increase the economy, the intervention of the human world is increasing from time to time. This materialistic



lifestyle is never ending, as there is a rapid rise in the population. The more increase in population would cause the extinction of nature. In spite of taking precautions, the population is out of control and is leading to the outburst of natural disasters. Deeply rooted transitions would preserve the bounty of nature to some extent, else, the plenitude of the non-human world would fade away.

## 7. Fourth Principle

The fourth principle stresses the growing population of the human world. "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease" [6]. The flourishing of non-human life demands the decrease in the human population. The expansion of non-human life depends on the growth rate of the population today.

Thomas Malthus, a predominant originator, in his *Essay on the Principles of Population* (1798) discusses the doctrines of the population. Malthus points out that "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man" [7]. The population should be checked and kept under control, if not so, nature will fail to meet the needs of the people.

Every decade, there is a rapid growth in population. The increase in population would lead to complexity and misery. Conflicts and competitions would arise to acquire resources. As the population of the population is innumerable, the government is taking measures to widen the roads and to increase the mode of transport on roads, airways, railways and waterways. *The Population Bomb* by Paul Enrich spreads environmentalism. He justifies that overpopulation would lead to 'environmental collapse'. The growth of birth rate would increase the death rate. Man is arrowed by nature from all sides. Overpopulation leads to deadly diseases. "Uncontrollable multiplication of cells" [8] multiplies air and water-borne diseases.

Kirkpatrick Sale, a bioregionalist in his work *Dwellers in the land: The Bioregional Vision* presents his view with an example of a 'single dietary mainstay', the 'potatoes' which is a part of everyday food in Ireland. As the population grew from 2 million to 8 million, there were insufficient potatoes to provide. Another competitor entered the country to sell potatoes. Those potatoes were sticky with the parasitic fungus. As a result, the potatoes led to deadly diseases. Moreover, more than a million Irish people starved to death because of no nutritious meal during the famine in 1845. The increase in population forced the people to buy unhealthy potatoes. The growth of population increased the death rate in the country. Overpopulation hinders the natural process of the biosphere. The impact is tremendous because of the production of waste, chemicals and water. The ecologists alert us that we are at a crucial period having no solution to the population.

## 8. Fifth Principle

The fifth principle portrays that the intervention of human with the non-human world is going beyond limits. "Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening" [9]. This intrusion hinders the natural setting of the world. The interference of humans has detached the animals,



plants and creatures from the environment. Lands are occupied to build houses, industries and much more pertaining to their needs.

The culture of any society is based on the principles they follow for sustainability. The problem with the contemporary period is with psychological changes in the mindset of the human beings. They act selfish never minding the depletion of natural resources. The rural people feel difficult to survive in the concrete towns detached of ecological principles. The younger generation do not understand the glory of nature where the nature adored by their ancestors is not respected by them. Every deed of nature from the beginning of the world is selfless but the cultural behaviour of the people has lost their humane values.

Before decades, nature was the only source that would cure diseases. Today, the world is after chemical medicines which itself is a killer. Ponds and lakes do not have water but buildings. At present, the "world wilderness"[10] is contaminated with human domination. Mc Kibben in the *The End of Nature* presents the view of the whole planet being contaminated. The interference of human has changed the situations and atmosphere. We are the cause of the changes happening in the weather too.

The rising Tsunami, volcanoes, cyclones and never seen disasters hit the world often. The scorching heat of the sun has led to problems in the ecosphere. There is no doubt that, the upcoming generations will never feel or see the nature's schedule of summer, autumn, spring and winter. Instead, the futuristic world will see the winter days which will be hot and not cold, rainy days will be dry days and so on. It is pathetic to read the lines of Mc Kibbon that "We make every spot on earth, man-made and artificial, we have deprived nature of its independence, and that is fatal to the meaning. Nature's independence is its meaning, without it, there is nothing but us" [11].

## 9. Sixth Principle

"Policies must, therefore, be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present" [12]. The sixth principle voices that the world has to make changes in the policies formed by the government. There are a number of policies recommended by the government for the upliftment of the society. Among those, there are only a few pertaining to nature. The policies today have the only notion to upgrade the standard of living. One of the Indian policies is 'small cities mission'. This policy means to modify the urban cities and to make them 'citizen friendly' and not 'eco-friendly'. To implicate this scheme, Rs 980 billion from the government of India has been allotted to rejuvenate the cities. 'Why aren't major policies eco-friendly?' Many schemes are looking forward only to destroy nature and to make the citizens lead a sophisticated life.

The people should mend, alter, adjust, rework and transform their attitude towards nature. The culture today expects advancement in technologies. Introducing technologies subsides in nature. Man's 'greed' is beyond bounds. Crave for electronic goods such as laptops, personal computers, mobile phones and much more



handicaps nature. The overwhelming desire for automobiles is a killer of every single cell in the human body and killer of every component of nature too.

## **10. Seventh Principle**

“The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life equality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great” [13]. The previous principle demands changes to be made in policies. According to the seventh principle, when political, sociological and ideological changes take place, it enhances the ‘quality of life’ rather than ‘quantity for life’. A higher standard of living reduces the ‘quality’ but increases in ‘quantity’.

### **10.1 Impact of Culture**

When the culture of a community teaches the generation about the quality of livelihood, the world will definitely be a better place to live in. Nature possesses lot of qualities like patience, fertility, generosity, utility to the core which could be interrelated with the cultural infrastructure of the society. The rural lifestyle bonded with the animals, birds, local water system, touch of the earth through farming teaches them a simple life of responsibility, hard work and contentment. Those people who have gone for jobs to cities would like to return to their native villages in their old age as they feel a kind of connectivity to their mother earth.

William Carther in her story "Oh Pirates" sketches the life of the first farmer of the Nebraska Prairies. She portrays the quality life of the farmers. While the world is striving towards the techno world, the farmers are forever standing still with their lands. They are living a content life with ‘quality’ producing adequate in ‘quantity’. In the story, she explains how the country life embraces human than the urban life. She describes the chirping of birds and sounds of insects during the day and night. The trees are thick and give shade. She seeks comfort beneath the trees to escape from the hot sun. Urban life provides much in quantity without quality. Living a quality life makes an individual happy, peaceful and content. The people today are in search of organic vegetables, spices, pulses and poultry. Unhealthy, preserved and processed food has given birth to deadly diseases. To live a healthy life, people are in search of quality products and productions of which the world lacks today.

## **11. Eighth Principle**

"Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes" [14]. These principles are open to the world today. It is in the hands of every individual to follow. The human world should have the willingness to revolutionise in order to attain a better world with a healthy scenario and peaceful surrounding. None and nothing can be a barrier to the individuals who wish to dive to create changes.



## 12. Conclusion

To conclude, the deep ecological doctrines ingrained in culture, all put together looks forward to attain and accomplish three targets:

- a) To regenerate the lost green land in midst of technological advancements.
- b) To reframe the mind map of the human mind with eco cultural awareness.
- c) To ensure a better world by going green adhering the principles of the culture of ancestors.

To regenerate the lost world is to regenerate the connection between the human and the natural bodies such as plants, trees, animals, birds, insects, reptiles, mountains etc. Humans have lost touch with nature. It attains to change the mindset of the people to forget being cruel to nature and to treat nature as their master. To regenerate, the people should feel the pain of demolishing nature and should have the mind power to reason whether it leads to the worst or good. To renew, the human world should remove the separator line between them and nature. Let us join hands to renew the lost green world and experience the transformation in the universe.

The second is to reframe the mindset of the people. To enjoy and satisfy life by chopping, polluting, destroying and disturbing the environment is the mindset of the society today. The mindset of the people is to enjoy and their mind map to build and acquire lands insists them to destroy nature. Human has the mindset to master over nature for every need. They are dominant over every network of nature. Nature is used to satisfy every need in a bombastic way. They overrule and consider nature as another world. Nature is considered subordinate at all angles. Humans live in a "planet of which we are a part but which we do not possess." [15].

Nature is not given its reverence and it is withering its beauty. The undermining law is practised to destroy nature and lay roads and erect buildings etc. The word 'illegal' pertains to only humans, but why not to nature also? Illegal practices like cutting of trees, occupying lands, polluting at a large scale and destroying nature to become wealthy are the deep-rooted illegal practices going on for years. The deep ecology movement attempts to reframe by generating knowledge to avoid the ever-increasing exploitation of earth's resources. This major initiative puts an end to such standing laws of human regulations and to protect nature.

Deep ecologists are taking measures to ensure better nature by going green. 'Going Green' is "concentrating on images of natural beauty and emphasizing the harmony of humanity and nature that 'once' existed..." [16]. The actions of human have silenced the rebirth of green new life. To ensure a better world in this present 'stricken world', the social, political and philosophical movement of environmentalism should emerge to create a revolution against the environmental crisis. The intuition of the people should be to avoid the clash between them and nature. Instead, they should attempt to manage the ecosystems.

'Better Nature' can come back to life when the society stops destroying nature to accumulate wealth. Nature provides to meet the needs, which also helps in the perpetual growth of nature. The 'Yesterdays'



natural world will become a 'green world' when one quiets his/her mind and listen to the spiritual wave of nature. The bewildering senses should calm down and bring back their contact with the earth. Oelschlaeger, an environmentalist expresses about nature that "We are her children, she is our mother, we are it, the flowing land..."[17]. Self-organisation of human towards nature is to be followed. Nature is to be handled gently and given freedom.

Nature will make us happy when our cravings for the non-human world lessen. Human has to accept every part of nature as their equals living on the ground. We should obey and humble ourselves to the laws of nature. Human has no rights to bring change in the evergreen world. The poem *Recovering our Roots* (translated) written by Tao Te Ching was translated by Tom Early. This poem describes the scope of deep ecology.

Deep ecology enables us to touch the 'desert places' of our inner self. It sets our tangled minds, calm and clear. Calm and clear mind leads to sharp thoughts and active motions. It conveys all the components of the world to rise, flourish, and return to nature. It is a call for each creature to return home and to recover its roots. 'Recovering the Roots' means recovering the joyous and harmonious relationship with each creature in the universe, be it big or small. The study helps the world to accept the 'common fate' that each creation is the 'kinship of all creation'. The poet calls this 'eternal truth'. The poem continues proclaiming that, when one understands the fact of eternal truth, each individual attains "extraordinary clarity and Eternity's radiant light."[18]. Today, the world is blind to their eternal truth and the leaders of later generations are sowing seeds of careless and hasty deeds and are bearing evil and rotten fruits. When the rulers plant these common thoughts, new ideas and norms would embrace the world, guide the world in a celestial path and to reach the everlasting way.

Apart from the several commandments scribed in the scriptures of the universe, Vincent Rossai, leader of the eleventh commandment Fellowship has formed another commandment saying "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Thou shall not despoil the earth, nor destroy the life thereon"[19]. This commandment is conveyed through the several works of literature. It should be made the foundation of one's personal ethics of the environment for the creation is not meant to destroy.

Mending the environment must begin in our personal lives. We must investigate our preferences and deeds. Our deeds and actions must stimulate eco-cultural consciousness in and around us. Deep ecology maintains a planned system to connect our utmost values to our environment, culture and community. The methodologies and principles of deep ecology connected with the cultural ethos has taken measures to enable us to build a meaningful experience with the wealth of nature which leads to sound health of body and minds, and to live in accordance with the ecological system.



## References

- [1] Arne Naess, 'The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects' *Philosophical Inquiry*: 1973, 10-31. Print.
- [2] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.7.
- [3] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.71.
- [4] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.71.
- [5] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.70.
- [6] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.70.
- [7] Malthus, T.R. *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Harmondsworth: London, 1798). p.71.
- [8] Greg Garrard. *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2012).p.105.
- [9] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.70.
- [10] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.67.
- [11] McKibben, B. *The End of Nature* (London: Penguin, 1990). p.54.
- [12] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.70.
- [13] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.70.
- [14] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.70.
- [15] Greg Garrard. *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2012).p.181.
- [16] Greg Garrard. *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2012).p.1.
- [17] Oelschlaegar, M. *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (London: Yale University Press, 1991).p.274.
- [18] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.15.
- [19] Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (USA: Gibbs Smith, 1985). p.34.