

Deep Ecology- Conceptualisation and Interconnection with Literature

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Abstract

Literature and the arts have been interested in depicting physical environments and relationships between humans and their environment since prehistory. However, since the early 1990s, literature has had a long-standing interest in these issues, which has given rise to the initiative known as Ecocriticism, an eclectic movement whose interests and alliances extend across a variety of art forms and media but whose contributions to date have been most visible within its home discipline of literature. Ecocriticism investigates the relationship between literature and nature. It investigates the connection between literature and the environment. Deep Ecology, one of the sub approaches of Ecocriticism has provided a space for imagining alternative futures and ways of being in the world. It has offered visions of sustainable and just societies that prioritize the well-being of humans and the natural world over economic growth and profit. Literature has played a crucial role in raising awareness of the impact of environmental degradation on human life and the natural world, exposing environmental injustices, and imagining alternative futures. By engaging with the ecological crisis, literature has contributed to the global conversation on environmental issues and the urgent need for collective action to address them. In this paper, I will explore the concept of Deep Ecology, its conceptualisation and interconnection with literature. The paper has been divided into three sections: The Deep Ecology Movement has been explained in Section I; data from literature has been examined and related to the movement's core principles in II; and finally, a critical assessment of the movement has been undertaken in Section III.

Keywords: Ecology, literature, crisis, Movement, etc

Introduction

Ecocriticism pinpoints the link between civilization and nature, as well as the internal structure of society, as the core causes of the ecological crisis. The ecological crisis has become one of the most pressing issues of our time. Literature, in particular, has played an important role in bringing attention to the ecological crisis and its impact on human life and the natural world. Ecological degradation has long-lasting, generational effects. The major environmental imperatives should be the preservation of air, water, soil health, and diversity. The modern world has an impact on people's daily life. The standard of human life is determined by the quality of the natural environment. Integrated environmental practices are essential to a person's ability to maintain their culture.

Literature has a long tradition of engaging with nature and the environment. From William Wordsworth's celebration of the beauty of the natural world in his poetry to Thomas Hardy's depiction of the devastating impact of industrialization on rural communities in his novels, it has been an important forum for exploring the relationship between humans and the natural world. However, with the growing awareness of the ecological crisis, the role of literature has expanded to include a more urgent and critical engagement with environmental issues.

Our globe is currently dealing with a number of environmental issues, such as air pollution, water pollution, sound pollution, global warming, smog, ozone depletion, and more, which could seriously harm the ecosystem. The fundamental cause of this is the destructive tendency of humanity. In addition to destroying our atmosphere, these environmental pollutants also make people sick. Pollution is rising along with the population which means more people will cut down trees and plants and destroy fields to make room for their homes, which could lead to soil erosion and less rain. Because there are so many companies, industries, and automobiles generating foul smoke that contaminates our air, rapid economic expansion may result in an increase in pollution. These firms manufacture materials like plastic that harm our environment.

Deep Ecology is a philosophical and environmental movement that emerged in the late 20th century. It focuses on the interdependence and interconnectedness of all life forms, advocating for a shift in human values and attitudes towards nature. It has become an important concept in literature, as many writers have explored and reflected on this ideology in their works. It emphasizes on the intrinsic value of all living beings, regardless of their usefulness to humans. The movement calls for a transformation in human thinking and behavior towards nature, advocating for a holistic approach to environmental issues. This approach sees humans as part of the natural world, not separate from it, and emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life forms. It emphasizes on the importance of preserving ecosystems and the biodiversity of the planet, recognizing that human activities have a significant impact on the natural world.

In the middle of the 1980s, Naess and the American philosopher Sessions created eight fundamental principles for deep ecology that are still valid today:

1. Inherent value: The well-being of human and nonhuman life on earth has intrinsic values, separate from human uses or purposes
2. Diversity: Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also intrinsic values
3. Vital Needs: Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs
4. Population: 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
5. Human Interference: The present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening
6. Policy Change: 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
7. Quality of Life: The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living
8. Obligation of Action: Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation.

Although the deep ecology concept is not inherently radical, it elevates nature above humans and places it in the center of things. It highlights the inherent worth of nature. Humans must understand its inherent value if we are to adequately and truly safeguard and manage our natural environment directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes. Deep ecology illustrates the idea that all other living things in the world should have the same rights to exist as humans have. The current destructive state of nature can be changed if human attitudes toward the environment shift.

Environmental justice, as a component of social justice, is defined by the US Environmental Protection Agency as, “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies”. A deep ecological approach to sustainability can also be justified by the same idea of the oneness of existence that can serve as the foundation for an ethos of liberation. This is because the Advaita Vedanta worldview is not limited to the arena of human life.

The doctrines of non-dualism say that everything is one. The self-empathy, which is the sense of unity, is the foundation of an ethos that upholds the intrinsic dignity, and even divinity, of all living things. So, it provides a conceptual foundation for work done for the health and well-being of the earth itself and all living things that inhabit it as well as for environmental justice.

Jeffery D. Long in his article, Advaita Vedānta and Its Implications for Deep Ecology says, “Similarly, of the Mahāvākyas, or “great statements” of the Advaita, or non-dualist system of Hindu thought is *sarva m̐khalvida brahma*, or “All of this is, indeed, Brahman” (Chāndogya Upaniad 3.14.1). This statement is often interpreted in a “world-denying” sense,

to mean that all of this world which we mistakenly take to be made up of distinct entities co-existing in a realm of time, space, and causation, is not in fact real at all, but rather, all that is real is Brahman, the infinite ground of all being whose true nature is unlimited sat-chit-ānanda, or being, consciousness, and bliss”.

According to Judi Bari, an environmentalist, “Nature does not exist to serve humans. Rather, humans are a part of nature, one species among many. All species have the right to exist for their own sake, regardless of their usefulness to humans.” (Church of deep ecology, n.d., What is deep ecology, para.2).

One of the ways in which English literature has addressed the ecological crisis is by exposing the consequences of environmental degradation on human life. For example, Barbara Kingsolver's novel, *Flight Behavior*, explores the impact of climate change on the migration patterns of monarch butterflies and how this affects the lives of the people in a small town in Tennessee. The novel highlights the interconnectedness of human and non-human life and the need for collective action to address environmental issues.

In his book *Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, the eminent environmental historian Donald Worster makes the argument that our moral framework, rather than ecological function, is to blame for the current global problem. The introduction of ecocriticism is both necessary and opportune.

For example, Margaret Atwood's novel, *MaddAddam*, imagines a post-apocalyptic world in which a group of survivors work to rebuild a sustainable and equitable society. The novel offers a vision of hope and possibility in the face of environmental collapse. In conclusion, the ecological crisis has become an important theme in English literature.

Many writers have incorporated the principles of Deep Ecology into their works. One notable example is the poet and novelist Gary Snyder, who is regarded as a prominent figure in the Deep Ecology movement. Snyder's work emphasizes the relationship between humans and the natural world, and the need for a fundamental change in human values and attitudes towards nature. Snyder's poetry often focuses on the beauty and majesty of the natural world, and he encourages readers to recognize and appreciate the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Another writer who has explored the concept of Deep Ecology in his works is the American author, Edward Abbey. Abbey's novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* is a satirical take on environmental activism, as the main characters take extreme measures to prevent the destruction of the natural environment. He opines, "But love of the wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth which bore us and sustains us, the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need—if only we had the eyes to see." He sees nature as an interconnected system that should be protected at all costs and encourages readers to consider the importance of preserving the natural environment, and the consequences of human activities on the planet.

The British author, J.R.R. Tolkien, also explores the concept of Deep Ecology in his works, particularly in *The Lord of the Rings*. The novel reflects the Deep Ecology philosophy by depicting the interconnectedness of all living beings, and the importance of maintaining a

balance between them. The novel's central conflict is between the forces of good and evil, which seek to control and dominate the natural world. Tolkien's work highlights the importance of respecting and preserving the natural environment, and the consequences of human actions on the planet.

Another significant work that explores the concept of Deep Ecology is the non-fiction book, *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. The book highlights the impact of pesticides and other chemicals on the environment and the potential dangers to human health. Carson's work argues for a holistic approach to environmental issues, recognizing that human actions can have far-reaching consequences on the natural world. The book encourages readers to consider the long-term effects of human activities on the environment, and to take action to preserve the natural world.

Ecological consciousness is the understanding and awareness of the interconnectedness of all living things and the natural environment. It is a critical aspect of sustainable behavior and environmental protection. "In shallow ecological movement, the main concern is to oppose the destruction of wildlife even though they will not nourish trees and plants... Deep ecological movement gives much concern to all living beings. They think that all living beings including human and non-human beings are needed in an ecosystem." Compared to deep ecological movement, shallow ecological movement is more potent. The primary goals of the shallow ecological movement are to eliminate pollution, create an environment free of pollution, and ensure that people are healthy without causing any negative side effects. According to deep ecology, the environment should be protected from human interference and preserved. According to the deep ecology movement, humans should not interfere with nature's ability to thrive unless it is absolutely necessary for their survival. Thus, the deep ecology movement believes that since human intervention with nature worsens its state, human policies need to be changed.

Humans have been dealing with environmental and ecological issues as a result of the overuse of the earth's natural resources. In this ecologically degraded world, the survival of man himself is now in jeopardy. It has become crucial for everyone to contribute in their own way in order to rescue our planet earth. Thus, eco-criticism is one of the strategies used by humanists to defend the future of the earth.

J. Baird Callicott, an American philosopher has written extensively about environmental ethics and the intersection of ecology and religion. He has been influenced by the ideas of Indian environmental thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi and Arne Naess. He defines Deep Ecology as, "Deep Ecology challenges the dominant paradigm of modernity, which sees nature as a resource to be exploited for human benefit. It calls for a re-evaluation of our relationship with the earth, and a new understanding of what it means to be human".

In conclusion, Deep Ecology is an important concept in English literature, as many writers have explored and reflected on this ideology in their works.

The Vedanta does not reject reality. According to Swami Vivekanand, "...really means deification of the world—giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us—and to know what it really is. Deify it; it is God alone. We read at the

commencement of one of the oldest of the Upani-shads [theĪśa Upaniṣad], “Whatever exists in this universe is to be covered with the Lord”. He had a good knowledge of the profound ecological consequences of this understanding of Vedanta. He is of the view, The life of an animal is immortal, just like the life of a man. Only the degree, not the sort, of the difference differs. The only difference between the amoeba and Myself is one of degree, and from the perspective of the highest life, all of these differences disappear. A individual might notice significant differences between grass and a small tree, yet from a very high vantage point, the largest tree and the grass will look to be extremely similar. The lowest animal and the highest man are therefore equivalent from the perspective of the ultimate ideal. Animals and the highest creatures must be identical if you believe in God.

Deep Ecology as a movement emphasizes the intrinsic value of all living beings, the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life forms, and the need for a fundamental shift in human values and attitudes towards nature. The works of Gary Snyder, Edward Abbey, J.R.R. Tolkien, Rachel Carson, Margaret Atwood ad Swami Vivekanand are just some examples of how Deep Ecology is represented in literature. These works encourage readers to consider the importance of preserving the natural environment and the consequences of human actions on the planet. As the global environmental crisis continues to worsen, the concept of Deep Ecology remains as relevant and necessary as ever. It is pioneering the ecocritical movement.

Joanna Macy, an environmentalist defines it as, “Deep Ecology is not just a set of ideas but a way of life, a way of being in the world. It involves a deep commitment to the earth and all its inhabitants, and a willingness to live simply and in harmony with nature”. The works given above continue to explore and reflect on the philosophy of Deep Ecology, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of respecting and preserving the natural world.

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