



Notes towards a definition of Deep Ecology: An Ecocritical Study

Amili Basak

PG Visiting Faculty, Department of English, Women's College, Agartala, Tripura.

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to epistemologically define the notion of Deep Ecology covering idiosyncratic determiners like all-embracing intrinsic valuation of every natural component: biotic or abiotic, ecological spiritualization, absolute respectability, imagining Man as an extension of Nature, paradigm shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, holistic approach, pantheistic transcendence, environmental ethics etc facilitating a neat understanding of its relevance. Closely related terms like shallow and deep ecology are discussed and distinguished employing their concerns as the differentiator. Specific contributions of Arne Naess and George Sessions are mentioned with references to the 'Apron Diagram' and the 'Eight-point Platform'. A cataloguing of ecocritical markers in a literary text is laid so as to circumscribe its periphery. The inception and the subsequent growth of this discipline in the hands of different ecocritics across nations is charted out in order to track its undulations until manifestation.

Introduction

Stimulated by Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring'(1962) and the philosophies of Spinoza and Gandhi, Arne Naess the Norwegian environmentalist in his 1973 article 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary' employed the term 'deep ecology' in relation to its dichotomy 'shallow ecology'. While the former denotes an all-encompassing, abyssal and serious discernment of the location of man as a component within Nature without any superiority quotient, the latter undermines and



reduces the ‘environment question’ to a man-centric amelioration of ecological fallouts like overexploitation, pollution or resource depletion.

Deep Ecology delineates an eco-conscious critical paradigm that fosters a holistic comprehension of the Man-Nature synergy lending equal weightage to both the entities and advocating a bio-centric view of their reciprocity and interconnectedness. This radical counter narrative fundamentally accords an in-built inherent value to every natural creation closely resonating G.M.Hopkins’ idea of the individualistic ‘inscape’ thereby facilitating an epistemological turn from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism.

We don’t say that every living being has the same value as a human, but that it has an intrinsic value which is not quantifiable. It is not equal or unequal. It has a right to live and blossom. I may kill a mosquito if it is on the face of my baby but I will never say I have a higher right to life than a mosquito(Naess)

Affirming to its nomenclature, ‘Deep Ecology’ signifies the ‘Dark Green’ colorscape of the ecocritical corpus that seeks to dive into the depths of original linkages between the human and the non-human biota by syncing in their ontological chords. The human monopoly over Nature, assuming it to be the power centre is therefore curbed and a neutralising effect is circulated across biomes aiding equality amongst creations. This notion of correspondence between the seemingly dialectical pair – Man and Nature addresses deep seated philosophical and axiological concerns triggering the evocation of environmental epiphanies pertaining to sacralization of Nature that touch upon the spiritual roots of mankind as reflected in the following quote:

The ecological field worker acquires a deep-seated respect, even veneration, for ways and forms of life. He reaches an understanding from within, a kind of understanding that others reserve for fellow men and for a narrow section of ways and forms of life. To the ecological field worker, the equal right to live and blossom is an intuitively clear and obvious value axiom(Naess)

This deconstructive take organically situates man within the ‘logos’ of Nature without privileging either, as if to acknowledge both the presences irrespective of their usefulness. Man-made havoc and exploitation in the name of technological advancements is sought to be prevented by radically revisioning the Man within Nature possibility rather than the Man Vs Nature polarity in ecosophical terms.

When we speak of Nature it is wrong to forget that we are ourselves a part of Nature. We ought to view ourselves with the same curiosity and openness with which we study a tree, the sky or a thought, because we too are linked to the entire universe(Naess)



To a subscriber of the Deep Ecological worldview reiterating Naessian environment philosophy, a biocentric climate of all-inclusivity and a judicious level of respectability towards all life forms is suggested.

Method and Methodology

This research relies on textual method, archival method and ICT enhanced tools like visuals, figures, interviews and videos as means of data collection. For further information, several YouTube channels have been consulted and subscribed and a detailed study of several interviews related to the movement have been undertaken. For data analysis in the purview of Ecocriticism or Green Studies, Deep Ecology is employed as the methodological paradigm.

Discussion

In 1984 Arne Naess and George Sessions in the manner of a trailblazer have typographically concretised their vision on ecological preservation through a structuralist formulation of the ‘Apron Diagram’ distributed across four levels, namely:

Level 1- Variegated ecosophies and worldviews that qualitatively merge in.

Level 2- The Eight-Point Platform forming the basic foundation of this ideology.

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
5. 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. Policies must therefore be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.



7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent worth) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes (Naess and Sessions)

Level 3- Hermeneutics of Policy Formulations that generate belief-systems.

Level 4- Implementation of schemes causing actual action.

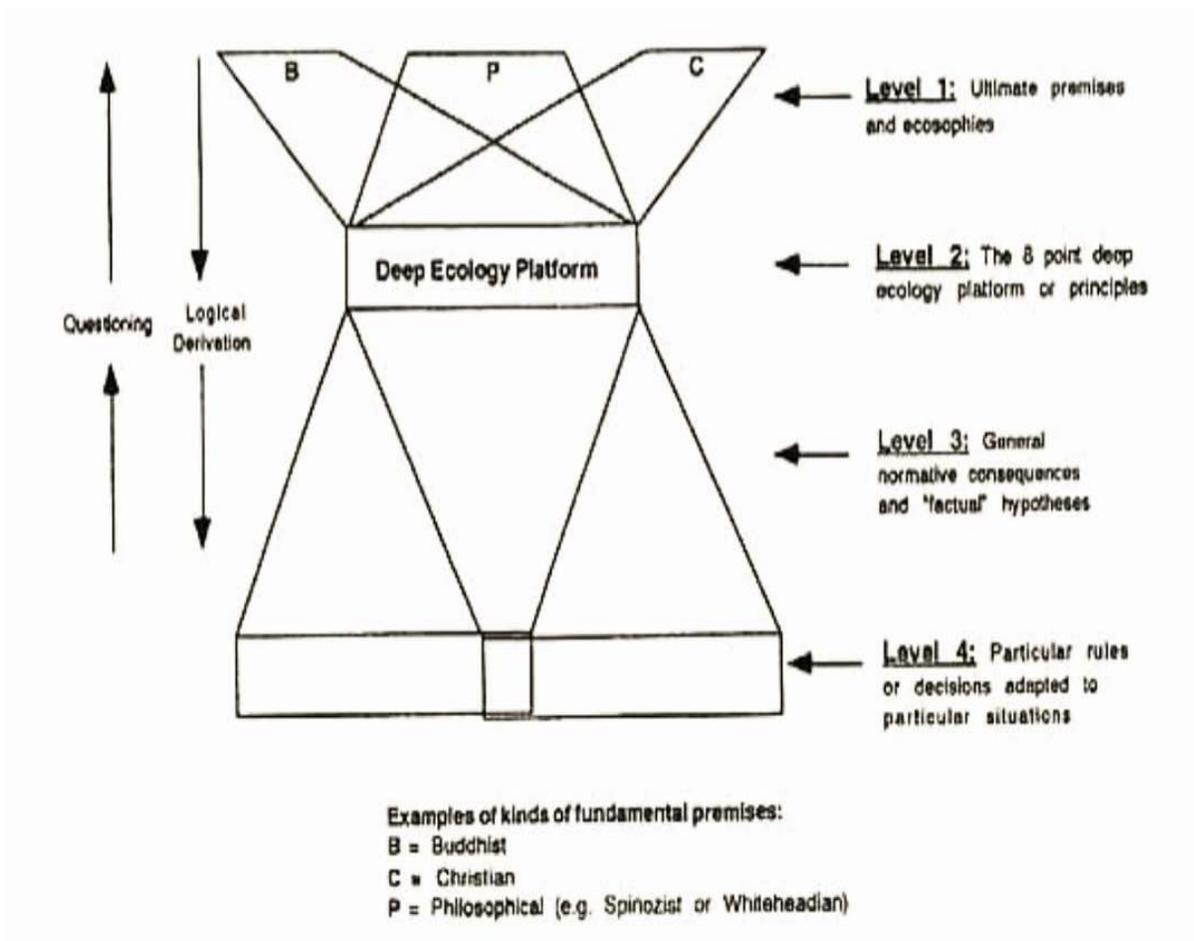


Figure 1: Arne Naess' 'Apron Diagram'

The 1960s primarily demarcate the 'Age of Ecology' paving the way for a trail of ecophilosophers like Rachel Carson, Arne Naess, George Sessions, Bill Devall, Aldo Leopold, Warwick Fox, John Passmore and Richard Routley who gained inspiration from precursors like St Francis, Spinoza,



American Transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman, John Muir, George Perkins Marsh, J.S. Mill, George Santayana etc.

Nationality	Ecocritics	Contributions
American	Rachel Carson	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authored 'Silent Spring'(1962) 2. Aversive to the use of Pesticides 3. Rebuked the 'Control of Nature' epithet in relation to anthropocentrism
American	Stewart Udall	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wrote 'The Quiet Crisis'(1963)
American	Lynn White Jr.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Glorified St Francis' 'ecological egalitarianism' 2. Heretically questioned Christian grand narratives in his 1967 article where Man's superiority over Nature was challenged. 3. To him Science and Technology are discourses emerging out of Occidental perceptions of man being the dominant entity and controller. 4. Advocated a "theology of ecology"
American	Clarence Glacken	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supported White's supposition of scientific advancements being functional within a Christian grid.
American	Paul Shepard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Western anthropocentrism is targeted in his essay 'Ecology and Man'
American	David Ehrenfeld	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wrote 'The Arrogance of Humanism' 2. Opined that exclusive emphasis on reason has distanced man from instinct and intuition
Canadian	John Livingstone	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Philosophical insights into anthropocentrism
Canadian	Neil Everndon	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phenomenological approach to ecosophy and critiqued anthropocentric "resourcism"
Australian	John Passmore and Richard Routley	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Routley investigated into the three perceptions of man: the despotic, the stewardship, and man-perfecting nature devised by Passmore



‘Ecocriticism’ the coinage of which is attributed to William Reuckert and propagated by texts like ‘The Ecocriticism Reader’ by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm and Lawrence Buell’s ‘The Environmental Imagination’ in the 1990s studied the interlinkages between literature and Nature. With the ASLE(Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) as its organizing agency and the ISLE(Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) , , its journal, Ecocriticism inspects literary texts where injustice across social stratas equate environmental deterioration, women’s subordination coincides with man’s supremacy over Nature, animistic religions are celebrated in theosophical terms and a character’s ethnicity, race, class, gender, thought processes affect Nature’s dynamics.

Conclusion

In this research we decipher an expanded comprehension of deep ecology as a green movement revolutionizing one’s perception over the Man-Nature symbiosis opening up new frontiers for eco-friendly ventures where limiting anthropogenic disturbances and channelizing overexploitation of resources is not enough. It bears the clarion call for a transcendental understanding of man’s positioning in Nature so as to enhance the intensity of healthy interaction between the two as mutually inclusive entities.

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