

A Study of Deep Ecological Crisis in D. H. Lawrence's Poem " Love on the Farm"

"If you lose relationship with nature, you lose relationship with humanity."
Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986)

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Abstract

This research article is based on the concept of harmonious interdependence between nature, living beings, and non-living beings for the sustained ecological balance. It makes an analysis of a poem by D.H. Lawrence, entitled "Love on the Farm" from deep ecological critical perspective. As a term, deep ecology explores how human beings, creatures, plants and trees are connected in the organic chain. Coined by Norwegian philosopher, named Aryan Naess, deep ecology became an assertive response to the menace of environmental crises taken place in different parts of the world. Considering its far-reaching consequences, universities and academic institutions began to study it seriously. As a result, initiatives were taken to broaden its study premise. Courses were devised and literary works were begun to be interpreted from ecological perspective and research outcomes produced significant insights and conclusions in order to explore this subject matter more comprehensively. On this backdrop, this article fundamentally sets three dominant premises for this research study: a) Human beings are sole causes for environmental loss, and, b) Ecological chain is prerequisite for the survival of the whole planet. On considering these premises, this present research article explores deep ecological elements in the poem " Love on the Farm" and how they are disturbed by domineering and more anthropocentric attitude of human beings. In proving the claim, this article takes first wave of eco criticism as a theoretical tool propounded by eco-critics like Jonathan Bate, Cheryll Gotfelty, and Lyn White, Jr. Then, it analyzes the poem, justifying how conflict with nature and ecology causes disturbance in entire environment. Finally, it concludes: ecological balance is the long-term solution to the survival of living and non-living beings as well as the longevity of whole planet.

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Introduction

Ecological crisis is a global phenomenon in modern world due to ever rising human quest for development and industrialization. As a result, environmental degradation and ecological imbalance become almost daily activities and are accelerating and impacting the whole world. Alarming reports and research findings hint about severe consequences in future if not this scenario is checked. It is therefore taken as critical issue faced by human society. Moreover, ecological crisis is not only reflected in physical world or biosphere but its seriousness is also expressed in art, painting, and literary work, like poetry. We can see the following poetic lines to see this apocalyptic sense regarding ecology.

I like to think
(It has to be!)
of cybernetic ecology
where we are free of labors
and joined back to nature,
returned to our mammal
brothers and sisters,
and all watched over
by machines off loving grace. (16- 25, as cited in Gardner, p. 182.)

These lines are extracted from the poem titled, “All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace” by Richard Brautigan. A bit satirical and humorous, these lines propound poet’s fictional conceptualization of cybernetic ecology. This ironically indicates how the concept of deep ecology—relationship between nature, earth, and creature— seems be merely a dream! The poet gives us a bleak sense that we are having looming environmental crises in the recent times. The concept of fine ecology, then, can only be possible in computer picture, but not in practical circumstance of life. Furthermore, this poetic expression hints us that ecological concept is distant hope for humanity.

Considering long term consequences, environmental thinkers, activists and academicians try to expound deep ecological connection in life, especially for the survival of this beautiful planet: human beings, plants, animals, and creatures as well. This fact leads humanity to seriously consider environment and ecological

concern which is of critical importance. Thus, ecological consciousness is becoming a global issue for the humanity. Ecological crisis is accelerating in the time because we are making headlong damage to nature and environment. Nissani (2013) manifests graver conditions of environmental decline. He has made a thoughtful point here, “We are surrounded by signs of global environmental decline. Worldwide, some species of frogs, salamanders, and penguins are declining. We have apparently learnt nothing from the extinctions of dodo and the great auk, of the passenger pigeon and moa”(p.30). Nissani projects a frightening situation that the planet is posed with environmental decline, boding some unprecedented consequences to be faced in the future as well.

Furthermore, it is obvious that ecological chain is disrupted and human beings are posed with several problems in human history. This balance is a must for long term survival of the planet. This is also considered as a broader ecological chain. To be precise, ecological balance consists of living beings interacting with the non-living beings in their peripheral environment, such as soil, landscapes, atmosphere, water, heat and sunlight help in the survival of living agents of the universe. There is a unique chain at work which is interconnected. For example, trees produce oxygen that living agents inhale and carbon dioxide is absorbed by trees and plants to maintain supply of the air. Admittedly, recent studies indicate that oceans produce healthy air to breathe for living creatures. It is said that about 500 or more plant species rely on bats to pollinate their flowers. These are just some representative examples. If we try to see the intrinsic bond with creatures and nature, there may be tremendous sources of information for us. Ironically put, this chain is broken down in the modern times due to our unhealthy practices, for we are dominating nature recklessly.

Human beings’ recklessness towards nature or ecology is not a new phenomenon, though. We see a number of cases in which conflicting and contradictory relationship with nature and ecology have been manifested from the past to the present. Pakenham (2005) makes a point that Mayan Civilization which flourished in the sixth century, witnessed a great setback when human beings adopted unhealthy agricultural practices. People exploited all natural resources and made the land less fertile and civilization came to collapse.

Similarly, several organizations in the modern times working in the field of degrading environment provide us rather harrowing data regarding environmental loss and its impact on human life. Hauschild, Poltavtchenko, & Stroller (2012) quoting Oxfam have stated:

Oxfam predicts that future climate change will further undermine basic human rights. We are likely to see floods and rising sea levels cause displacement or death among population living in coastal areas. Moreover, lack of water supplies will reduce sanitation efforts, resulting in the spread of illness. (p.3)

On the backdrop of all these frightful data, the mid seventies was the most sensitive time for academicians, activists, and institutions to think over the issue of ecology and environmental awareness. In the subsequent years, efforts were brought to make elaborate discussions; academic and scholarly activities in this area were explored. As a result, the concept of deep ecological thought dawned and it was begun to be discussed substantially.

Methodology

This research article relies on the proposition of deep ecological thinking and ideas carried in the recent times, especially adhering to the first wave of eco-criticism as a critical tool. Besides, it will have an analysis of deep ecological reading of D. H Lawrence's poem "Love on the Farm" elucidating contrast between the nature or ecology and human force.

Nature and Living Beings

The relationship between nature and living beings is intrinsic. Religions and sacred books, both from oriental and occidental discourse, account existence of nature as predominant. In Hindu religious books, the earth is mentioned as life-giving entity, *basundara* and specific creation. Similarly, the Christian religion takes nature as fulfillment of divine purpose of God.

Not only in religious books, nature and human beings have fared harmonious relationship since the time of Stone Age to the process of Agricultural Development. Human beings maintained good relationship with nature in course of prospering human civilization. This intrinsic relationship can be seen in history and literary writings as well. For example, the Elizabethan time enjoyed affinity with the nature in pastoral form. We can read poetic writings like Edmund Spenser's "The Shepherd's Calendar" woven in pastoral beauty. This interrelationship took steady until the era of Romantic writings when great romantic poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote poetry extolling the beauty and serenity of nature. William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and "Lucy Gray" are beautiful examples of this.

However, the industrial Revolution of 1760 brought somewhat changing context of nature and human relationship. That is, nature and human relationship was of conflicting kind. Human being's quest for development and industrialization brought further set back in this relationship. It was believed that domination over nature was the growth of human civilization. This thinking prevailed, bringing catastrophic impacts in the ecological structure. And the twenty-first century was the time when the world witnessed unprecedented situations in different parts of the world never before in the history. These threatening conditions ushered grounds for revisiting nature and ecology.

Deep Ecological Consciousness and Concept of Environmentalism

The publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962 by Rachel Carson marked environmental and ecological consciousness and discussions came to surface. Carson tried to fictionalize environmental facts in beautiful plot for which she was acclaimed. She was against the use of pesticides that devastated wild flowers and plants, causing a great loss in the greenery. It unquestionably, however, raised question that the world is posed with predicament or apocalyptic facts about environmental loss. This epoch-making work was well received. Carson was obviously the precursor of the environmentally sensitive conservationist. This sensitivity further expanded as deep ecology.

Deep ecology was coined by Norwegian philosopher, Arjan Naess, who rejected anthropocentrism, thereby calling for environmental justice. He further elaborated this as a broader concept of environmental rejuvenation in which several other environmentalists, especially deep ecological campaigners took part in the subsequent years (cited in Benshrim 2016). In course of time, deep ecology began to take attention when human beings were alarmed with environmental threat due to growth of haphazard industrialization, materialization of human life, and society. Faced with consequences of drought, flood, and deforestation, global community was being threatened by ever rising catastrophes in African, Sub-Saharan, and Latin American worlds.

This concept, evidently, got further elaboration by George Session, who developed eight founding principles of deep ecology. Then ecological movement was wagged in different parts of the world and it was associated with several social and environmental moments in course of time like eco-feminism, social ecologists, and so on. (Hiltner, 2018). That said, deep ecology was not merely a response

to declining nature and environmental degradation, but also a quest for reviving the intrinsic relationship between nature, living and non-living entities of the planet. Ecological concerns were pouring in course of time. A phenomenally important work came out by James Lovelock (2006) entitled *The Revenge of Gaea* in which he made a daring effort in justifying the loss of climate change and its devastating impact on the planet. He conceptualized that the whole eco system as “super organism” and safeguarding it, according to him, needed an ethical framework and consideration to curb the ever-increasing menace of climate change.

That is to say, study of ecology is not merely prevalent in scientific study alone, but it is also linked with art or literature because nature is present with us in our thinking, ideological and literary understanding of life. In the recent times, environmental study abounds in the university courses. As a result, the concept of nature, ecology, and environmental studies become undercurrent issue for humanity in academic and literary pursuits. Besides, there are different categories of ecological understating which advocate ecological consciousness in varying degree. For example, the concept of romantic ecology gives importance to greenery and pastoral form of nature. Jonathan Bate (2018, p. 79) in this regard has observed, “Romantic ecology reverences the green earth because it recognizes that neither physically nor psychologically can we live without green things; it proclaims that there is one life within us and abroad, that the earth is single vast ecosystem which we destabilize for our peril”. Many of these dominant trends and concepts were influential in shaping the concept of deep ecology which burgeoned interests of the academicians, intellectuals, and theoreticians over the years. Obviously, deep ecology was gaining height.

Over the years, academicians, activists, politician, religious leaders, and general public showed interest in it as the world faced deepening crisis of environmental loss and ecological imbalance. As the frightening events regarding environmental and ecological imbalance were reported, human beings were alarmed by the threatening fear of survival of living species in the world. Ecology “as a natural web of life”(Shepard, 2018, p. 62) was one of the fundamental concepts that took vogue in the environmental studies. Human beings were, thus, taken as the part of this organic form and he should not play dominating role rather reconciliatory one.

On this backdrop, concept of ecological studies began as an academic pursuit in different parts of the world in the mid eighties. Over the years, the field of environmental literary studies, as a new discipline, emerged with growing interest. Several research articles and journals were published to highlight the importance of the environmental

knowledge. In a course of time, universities prepared courses based on environmental literary studies. Moreover, a dominant critical study known as eco-criticism took its vogue and environmental literature was one of the much-sought course offers in several universities (Glotfelty, 2018). In the same vein, environmental literature and studies were becoming rather pragmatic course offers in different universities. Nepalese English courses for master third semester offered a course in environmental literature.

Eco critical concepts in literary writings hint us living beings' relationship with nature. Such readings and scholarly activities provided grounds of ecological perspective as a new theoretical tool more relevant in the modern world.

Theoretical Justification

Since the dawn of human civilization, relationship between nature and human beings, as well as other living creatures has been established as an order of ecological development. This has impacted on an outlook of social, cultural, ethical, and economic order. However, this relationship has been disturbed in the quest of modernization, especially industrialization. There are some beliefs and misconceptions prevalent in this consideration. It seems that there is a deep-rooted misconception to understand nature and ecological realm. Even religious and spiritual understandings are lopsided in this regard. White (2018) has aptly viewed:

The Christian dogma of creation, which is found in the first clause of all the Creeds, has another meaning of our comprehension of today's ecologic crisis. By revelation, God had given man the Bible, the Book of Scripture. But since God had made nature, nature also must reveal the divine mentality. The religious study of nature for the better understanding of God was known as natural theology. In the early Church, and always in the Greek East, nature was conceived primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men: the ant is a sermon to sluggards, rising flames are the symbol of the soul's aspiration. (p.44)

Here, White makes a point that nature has been taken as secondary importance even in the Christian belief. It is supposed to take place through revelation. This specifically hints us that nature and ecology are part of divine mystery without their independent role. White makes a critical point as to how religious and traditional mindset has worked to take nature as something of less importance. She is adamant to say that ecological crisis is therefore based on such religious dogma inherited from Christianity.

Merchant(2018) is of the opinion that the concept of Mother Nature has changed over the year .The Mother Nature as procreative entity was greatly affected by the industrial pace and development where development was merely sought through exploitation of nature. That led to ruthless and reckless handling of nature and environment by human beings a domination prevailed for a long time. The distance between man and ecology widened. For example, the renaissance beauty, pastoral elements as well as pantheistic mode of romanticism declined. The harmony and balance with nature was disturbed by the industrial pace where man was in the center and nature and ecology at the far aside. This pace progressed and brought the menace of ecological crisis in the modern world.

Eco-critical reading of texts and interpretations highlight issues of environment and ecology. Besides, it has opened up an area of academic pursuit to explore how natural world and nature are expressed in literary texts. In most of literary texts, human forces and nature persist and human beings, especially in terms of their reactions, show certain attitudes to nature. The romantic and pastoral writers did show rather close relationship with the nature. However, modernity and the pace of industrialization broke this affinity.

Eco critical reading therefore tries to see nature in renewed sense. From pragmatic perspective, this is growing to be more relevant, for environmental study is becoming a global concern. Literary texts like a poem may give us some insights in making the ecological study more undercurrent for intellectual and academic discussions.

Analysis of the Poem from Deep Ecological Perspective

Nature and its descriptions dominantly exist in most of the poetic writings of David Herbert Lawrence, and this present poem "Love on the Farm" is not an exception to this. Nature abounds in the poem from the beginning to the end. The poem sets a romanticized mood of nature abreast with living beings in the background. We get nature being described in adjectives like beautiful, bountiful, and harmonious. These descriptions create harmonious and calming effect of nature in the farm. Proximity with nature and its abundance seems to impact life of human beings, animals, trees and plants. Furthermore, ecological congruence with both living and non-living beings intensify through the poetic development. Beauteous and romantic mood pervade in the immaculate evening and profuse prosperity is observed in the poem: reddening light, the trees filled with dew like honey, the moths fluttering across to soak honey in flowers. This can be further manifested in the following lines:

What , large dark hands are those at the window
Grasping in the golden light
Which weaves its way through evening wind
At my heart's delight?
Ah only the leaves ! But in the west
I see a redness suddenly come
Into the evening's anxious breast----
'Tis wound of love goes home !

The woodbine creeps abroad
Calling low to her lover:
The sun-lit flit who all the day
Has poised above her lips in play
Stolen kisses, shallow and gay
Of pollen now has gone away----
She woos the moth with her sweet, low word:
When above her his moth-wings hover
Then her bright breast she will uncover
And Yield her honey- drop to her lover. (1-18)

The words are attenuated with reflective and subjective expressions of the speaker who is watchful of all the activities . We see three forces at work: the nature, creatures, and plants in harmony, and nature bringing congenial mood as plants, trees and animals feel the presence of the nature. The narrator observes this and feels at ease being led to the soothing joy nature charges. This can be interpreted as ecological harmony because nature in the farm prevails in the organic form: where creatures and plants enjoy the joyful moments without any disparity. That is, there is equivalence and harmony in the organic relationship. Existence of nature is taken as life giving or life enhancing agent. This is the basis of ecological balance.

However, the intruding force appears in the poem that brings development of the poem towards conflicting mode. He is the man, the husband of the speaker. The intruding force appears as domineering man who dominates innocent animals and even his wife. There appears an explicit antagonistic relationship between the soothing nature and domineering nature of man. In ecological sense, this can be manifested as violent force of man to disturb spontaneous existence of nature so as to create ecological imbalance. This takes us towards conflicting stage between nature and human force.

From the fourth stanza, domineering actions of the man further abound. He is shown as cruel, indifferent, and a bit sadistic. These descriptions take us to perceive domination over submissive nature propagated by aggressive human actions. He is indifferent, insensitive, and domineering. The poet lets us see the person's activities that push the poem to the climatic effect:

Into the yellow evening glow
Saunters a man from the farm below
Leans, and looks in at the low built shed
Where shallow has hung her marriage bed (19-22)

As soon as a man enters in the scene, beauty and serenity of nature diminishes and human forces take up. That is, there is an intrusion over universal natural unity, thereby giving room for an establishment human entity as dominating element. Towards the ending lines of the poem, we see the husband proud, dominant, and somewhat victorious in his actions :

I hear his hand on the latch, rise from my chair
Watching the door open; he flashes bare
His strong teeth in smile, and flashes his eyes
In a smile like triumph upon me; then careless wise
He flings the rabbit soft on the table board
And comes towards me: ah! the uplifted sword (49-55)

The above lines foreground to limit the existence of nature. He kills a rabbit and paces towards the house as victorious man. The complicity and interdependence with nature and natural forces erode. We see things from the person's point of view where the nature and ecology disappear. That is, the holistic life on the farm, gets disrupted. The breakdown of balance gives a room for sinister human subjugation on the verge of that domineering other forces. The lines hint: when man conquers nature, he can conquer other forces. To put rhetorically, dominating nature is the vigor of human civilization because our progress has started when we learnt to dominate nature. In other words, our civilization has prospered at the expense of natural loss or ecological imbalance. This can be reflected in the poem metaphorically : that the husband dominates his wife and her wishes of freedom or affinity with nature. The narrator, his wife, is romanticized with soothing nature before the man, her husband, appears in the scene. Like the nature, the wife is submissive; he takes her as passive agent as if he can fulfill his wishes without her reactions or protest. He wants to satisfy his

passionate urge by force. Exactly the same human beings do to get undue advantage to the nature in the name of development . Therefore, the submissive temperament of nature is analogical to wife's feelings and her helpless conditions. This can also be correlated with the nature's calm, innocent, and harmless status of the nature.

Insensitivity towards nature comes when a person thinks himself as the maker of destiny, without considering other forces of life: the ecological elements of the universe. The husband, here, is unruly, and indifferent to the surrounding because he is drawn by his lust, power, and vigor just for his selfish desires. It can be beautifully compared with insensitive industrialization and encroachment over nature by selfish man.

Conclusion

Deep ecological concern brought a revolutionary outlook in the perspective of environment and nature preservation, thereby providing conducive grounds for ecological awareness. It led to campaign and movements, including academic and research activities to make this subject matter more pragmatic and all encompassing, highlighting importance of ecological balance for longevity of this planet. This research article, through the analysis of the poem, may give a small leap towards this step. Furthermore, it tries to make a point that ecological balance is critical issue and human beings should strive for it for the longevity of the planet, implying that human beings should curb his domineering activities over the nature. At the same time, ecological study in poetic literature can also be a useful pursuit to seek another dimension of eco critical reading .

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