



# Deep Ecology And Its Role In 21<sup>st</sup> Century Society : A Study Of Gary Snyder As An Ecoconscious Poet, And A Deep Ecologist.

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## Abstract

The philosophy of deep ecology is based in completely rejecting the humanistic approach. According to deep ecologists, ecology and human exceptionalism are opposed to one another. Deep ecologists believe that self, should be understood deeply connected with nature. Nature should be treated as a living force and, therefore, nature has intrinsic value. Deep ecology is a movement initiated by Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss in 1972.

Gary Snyder is one of the most significant American environmentalist-poets in the second half of the twentieth century. He believes that nature is constituted of microscopic organisms, animals, plants and human societies. He calls for the protection of nature from the damages of civilization and urges humans to be in touch with their "wild" selves and return to a sense of union with nature. Snyder is a deep ecologist; his interests also associate him with ecopsychology. The paper deals with the ecological issues in the poetic works of Gary Snyder, and also his connection with deep ecology. It tries to explore the ecoconsciousness and its implications in selected poems from three of Snyder's major works of poetry, *Riprap* and *Cold Mountain Poems* (1959), *Turtle Island* (1974) and *Mountains and Rivers without End* (1996).

**Key Words:** Ecocriticism, , Deep ecology , Environmental issues, etc.

## Introduction

Environmental degradation is the main challenge before 21<sup>st</sup> century man. Several degradations are threat to the planet like loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction, depletion of energy, mineral sources, exhaustion of groundwater reservoirs, ozone layer depletion, pollution, population, epidemics, and above all dumping of e-waste in seas and oceans. Presently the four areas of global concern due to the environmental degradation are marine environment, ozone layer, smog and air pollution, and the vanishing rain forests. Climate change is an issue that is of global concern. The guiding principles, that have to be emphasized in dealing with the imbalances in man nature relationship are, active and reflective practices that will help in to moving against unrestrained materialism and technological advancements. The social, ecological movements thrive to bring

change in ecological thinking and concern for the environment. Most of the environmental problems are the result of indifferent activities of mankind towards nature. Nature too takes its action back, and humans have to face, natural disasters, famines, epidemics, earthquakes, loss of agricultural production etc. Ecocide threatens all human populations who are dependent on natural resources for maintaining ecosystems and ensuring their ability to support future generations. So we need to develop a deeper understanding, effective and responsible action based on holistic perspective from an individual level, which is the requirement of the present time, to deal with the current ecological crisis.

According to the Deep Ecologist George Sessions, “the scientific revolution overturned the age-old organic view of the world as a living organism and replaced it with a mechanistic clockwork image of the world as a machine (149)”. The utilitarian mentality of humanity, towards more consumption of natural resources and unlimited freedom to exploit the non human nature, accelerated the ecological crisis, and this present scenario impels the advocates of environmentalism to encourage holism, by maintaining the equality between human and non human nature. Modern man recklessly ignores the essential connection to the non human world. The main objective of Deep Ecology is to create a deep thinking among 21<sup>st</sup> century humans, so that they can understand the role nature plays in their life. A kind of mystical, spiritual awakening is needed to understand the essence of humanity and role of man as being commander of the planet.

The paper aims to prove that ‘Ecology’ be recognized as a sixth sense, so that we as humans are able to stop further devastation of nature. Deep ecologists have proved that Eco-consciousness can rebuild the connect which man has lost with nature. Gary Synder’ poetry is an example of this kind of Eco-sense or Ecoconsciousness.

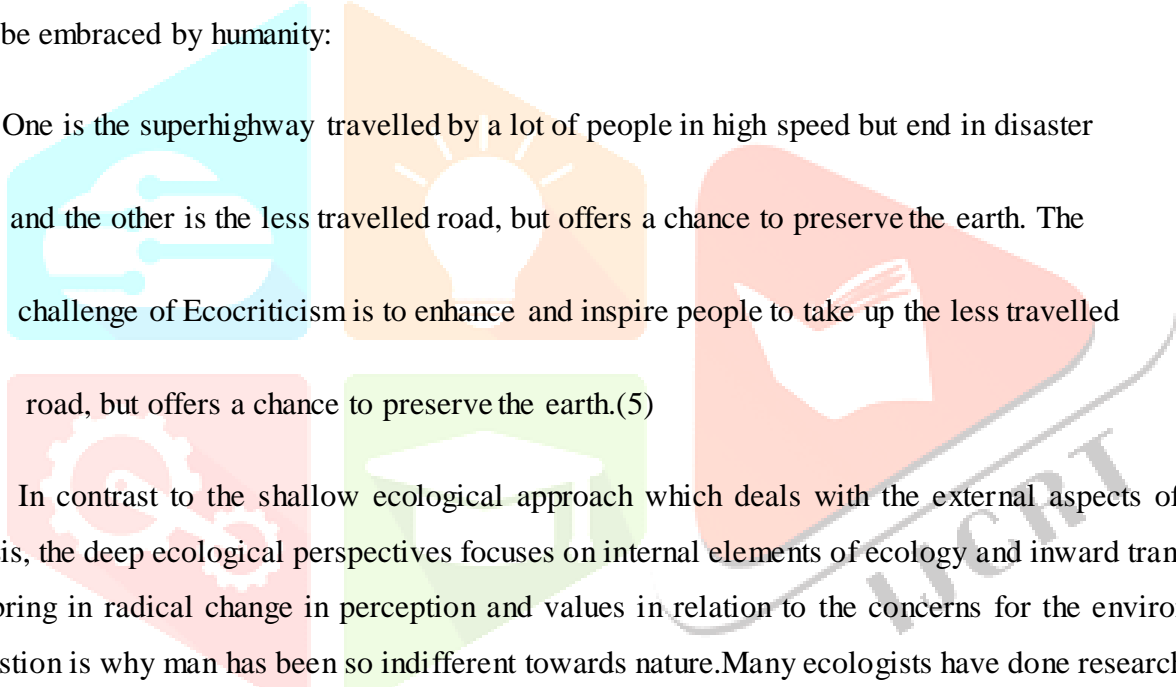
### **Discussion:**

During 17 and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the modern, industrial worldview, shaped by scientific progress and the industrial revolution, has permitted and driven human beings to pursue exploitative, destructive, and wasteful application of technology. This materialistic approach has alienated man from the natural world and his own fellow beings. Ego centrism refers to a condition in which one develops the sense that everything around, is for one’s own possession and selfish needs and becomes self obsessed.

An egocentric individual considers everything around that is connected to the self is for his/her well being and usefulness. The concerns become so narrow that the individual becomes unconcerned and indifferent to the greater realities of the outer world. The year 1776 is renowned for four incidents. This year Adam Smith, rightly known as the father of modern economics, published *The Wealth of Nations*, the American colonies declared their independence, James Watt improved the modern steam engine and Edward an Era Gibbon published *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. During 1700s England had extensive natural resources, such as water power and coal to fuel the new machines, iron ore to construct machines, tools, and buildings, rivers for inland transportation and harbours from which merchant ships set sail. England was a

politically stable society and it was the world's leading colonial power. Its colonies could serve as a source for raw materials, as well as, a marketplace for manufactured goods. Besides, England had an emerging economy to support industrialization. Businessmen invested a large amount for new inventions in the manufacturing. There was the growing interest in scientific investigation and invention in England. It has become absolutely necessary to question the very foundations of the modern, industrial and growth-oriented way of life, which has aggravated the crisis, and to shift to more viable alternatives that would deconstruct the accepted power-oriented categories of belief. The delusion of progress has resulted in the broken balance between man and nature.

Feeling of oneness with the non human nature is very much essential for the survival of all life forms. "This thirst for "oneness" is profoundly reflected in many of the recent ecological perceptions (Coupe 9)." This can only be achieved by progressing from an ego-centric perspective to an eco-centric one. In *Silent Spring*, a major text in the field of Ecocriticism the author Rachel Carson, points towards two paths that could be embraced by humanity:



One is the superhighway travelled by a lot of people in high speed but end in disaster and the other is the less travelled road, but offers a chance to preserve the earth. The challenge of Ecocriticism is to enhance and inspire people to take up the less travelled road, but offers a chance to preserve the earth.(5)

In contrast to the shallow ecological approach which deals with the external aspects of ecological crisis, the deep ecological perspectives focuses on internal elements of ecology and inward transformation, to bring in radical change in perception and values in relation to the concerns for the environment. The question is why man has been so indifferent towards nature. Many ecologists have done research and it was found that man has turned his heart away from nature. A famous Ecologist Oliver Inghy explains a way of looking at interactions of humans with the environment in his article on "Human Ecology: A Call for Conservation and Preservation". Oliver suggests that:

The root problem of the environmental crisis resides in man's heart rather than in strictly economic or industrial concerns. The ecological problems are the outward expression of the internal crisis faced by humanity. The ecological breakdown is linked with the indifferent and selfish attitude of humanity, both individual and collective. This disintegrates the order of ecosystem which is characterized by mutual interdependence. It has become the inevitable need of humanity to restore

the harmony of the entire universe by creative and collaborative effort.(56)

Human Ecology reminds that mankind is a relational creature. It is important to realize that it is the duty of man to keep healthy bond with fellow beings, as well as with other life forms and nature. Another researcher Lynn White gives us a historical perspective of man's dominance over nature. In his article "Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" he stresses that:

The advancement of science and technology accelerated and dominated by the west which has created the uncontrolled destruction of nature and its richness. He criticizes the anthropocentric view of western approaches, especially the outlook of domination of man over other creatures, reflected in the religion of Christianity. The fields of technology and science are controlled by the powers of the west. They fail to maintain a harmonious coexistence between man and environment. (5)

The western culture is lead by the idea that man is the centre of creation and all other life forms are under his control. He is master of the world, and as a master he can do whatever he desires. Misinterpreted the concept which is revealed in Bible, (man is crown of creation and commander of all other living and non-living forms). The commander in actual sense means care taker, and a care takes keeps himself hungry but feeds his family.

The idea that man is the centre of creation and all other life forms and elements of nature can be utilized and exploited for his greed and selfishness. Many Christian ethologist have presented their argument and have tried to make this statement more lucid and clear. One among them is St. Francis of Assisi. Francis who succeeded in bringing drastic change in the human centred view of Christian teachings. He is considered as a Christian, spiritual, revolutionary in the history of Christianity who bought radical change in the concept of man's relation towards nature. According to Francis all creatures are siblings of man and he called the moon, the sun, the stars, the sky, birds and animals as his brothers and sisters. This understanding as perceived by St. Francis, will make man realize that he is not the superior of creation , but a master, a commander who has to a build a bond of love and care with other fellows and things.

The solution to this problem is that we as humans have to spiritually active so that we can understand the interdependence of man and nature. This I believe can be achieved when we develop a sense of love and care for each other, rather believing in selfish desires and attitudes. Every religion teaches us to be compassionate and selfless. Christianity, Islam, Judaism , Hinduism and Buddhism etc. All religions teach us to be compassionate and selfless. In Bible, "the valleys are said to be watered for the sake of wild beasts (Psalm 104: 10f)," and the same Psalm expresses God's care for a great variety of wild creatures. Similarly.

“ the uninhabited wilderness is given rain to support the plants (Job 38:26f.)” Passages such as Psalm 148 and Psalm 104:24, which express admiration of God’s handiwork and the praise in which all his creatures join.Indeed Calvin combined his Anthropocentrism with a belief in stewardship over the whole earth. Thus he writes:

Man was created in this condition, that the earth was subject to him; but he enjoys it only when he understands that it has been leased to him by the Lord.....Now if I want to plunder the earth of what God has given it for the nourishment of men, ....I want to bring to nothing the goodness of God ....’[50] and his teaching was ‘Let every one regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses.’[51] .

Here the biblical belief in stewardship and responsible dominion is re-emphasized.

In Islam, the Muslim is assured that the whole earth is a mosque for him. The walled buildings to which he is summoned to prayer are simply a convenience. The fields, the forest and the desert are equally fitting as places of prayer and therefore demand the same respect that is accorded to a conventional mosque. To show respect for everything that God has created is a part of faith, for everything bears the imprint of His hand. The man or woman who stands, bows and prostrates in the midst of nature is a member of a universal congregation, joining in a universal prayer.

In Islam "All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God", says the Qur'an. Qur'an contains verses that obligate the followers to preserve and curb the damage of the ecosystem. It also encourages believers to foster nature and only exploit it as per the necessity. The Qur'an, in its verses regarding the environment, maintains its primary theme of upholding the character of the universe established by Allah. The holy text mentions many incentives provided by God to those who cultivate and nurture nature. Qur'an regards human as the caliphate (Khalifa) or guardian of the earth and all the variety of life created by Allah; it also obligates that guardianship is the primary responsibility of human towards God. Prophet Muhammad (saw), spent an eco-friendly and straightforward life, putting himself an example to the other followers and stressed on acting kindly with all the living creatures. He said, “Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded”. He further asserted on the cleanliness of environment saying, “Removing harmful things from the road is an act of charity (sadaqah).” Additionally, many chapter names in Qur'an, such as the Star, the Sun, the Moon, the Morning, the Dawn, the Sand Dunes, the Wind, the Smoke, the Ants, the Spider, the cattle, and the Fig, indicate the importance placed on the ecosystem by Islam.

The image of creation by divine dismemberment prefigures a signature notion of Hindu theology: that the universe itself is formed of the substance of the divine: the earth. Bhūdevī (“Goddess Earth”) is Viṣṇu’s spouse, and the lord himself descends as avatāra to rescue her when she is abducted by a demon. Before rising in each morning, devout Vaiṣṇavas ask Bhūdevī to forgive the abusive touch of their feet. Hindus contemplate divinity as the one in many and many in one. The concept of ‘God is one and is everywhere present’ is found in Vedas. For example, Rig Veda says: ‘He is the one God, producing heaven and earth, wields them together with His Veins and Wings’ – 10.81.3 (164). Hence, from the foregoing, the Hindu religion is pantheistic in nature or put differently that God resides in all things including living and non-living things. Explaining it elaborately, Dwivedi, writes further that: In Yajur Veda (32.10), he is described as “our friend, our father, our creator, who knows all positions, and all existing things.” Furthermore, in Gita 13.13, the Lord Krishna says: Sarvam avritya tishthatil (“he resides in everywhere”); thus, it is not surprising that Hindus are enjoined to respect all elements of creation as stated in Sriṃad Bhagavala Mahapurana (11.2.241). ‘Ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, trees and plants, rivers, and seas. They all are organs of God’s body, remembering this, a devotee respects all species” (162), microscopic organisms and other living things like the plants. This belief has its origin from the concept of reincarnation. Hindu teachings have it that the human soul can reincarnate in any form, like in the form of lesser and simple living organisms or in the complex form and by implication the need to treat all forms and categories of life with respect and reverence.

For Buddhists the ultimate pilgrimage is the spiritual journey through meditation to discover the Buddha-nature within oneself. This is a vision quest that reveals the oneness of the individual and nature, and thereby the emptiness of self through interconnectedness and interdependence. However, since ancient times, Buddhists have also undertaken pilgrimages to sacred sites associated with the Buddha and other Buddhist personages, as well as to temples, shrines, and other sacred places, many on mountains and/or in forests. In Tibet, Mount Kailas is sacred to Buddhists as well as to the Hindu, Jain, and the Tibetan Bon religions. At its foot Lake Manasarovar is also considered sacred and a component of pilgrimages. Because many of the sacred places associated with Buddhism require certain prescriptions and proscriptions, such as not killing any beings, the result, even if inadvertent, is that these sites often function in effect as sanctuaries of nature as well as religion.

Although the “higher power” in Buddhism might be considered Dhamma or Dharma (nature), Buddhism, with its philosophy and teachings, provides a definite way of perceiving the spirituality of these relationships, relating directly and indirectly to nature. Deep Ecology often refers to the “Ecological Self,” which is spiritually based on relationships and responsibilities for all living beings and nature rather than the ego. Both of these spiritual approaches to nature and tropical forests are based on “Oneness,” relationships, all living beings, and ecocentric orientations. The enormous variety of life forms in tropical forests create a powerful spiritual environment, endlessly different and suspenseful as the most mysterious of all natural worlds. This spiritual response obviously has significant impact on virtually all human beings, regardless of their religious, social, and cultural background. This response and impact of tropical forests were

experienced and noted by the Buddha. In the *Rukkha Sutta*, the Buddha admired those who sat at the foot of trees, who desired seclusion, and who had few needs. These teachings encouraged his disciples to lead a forest life and prevented them from destroying the forest. The Buddhist communities were primarily comprised of forest-dwellers, so these members had to be mindful for protection of the forest, which was basically their abode. Community members had to respect each tree with which they came into contact. The Buddha chose to live in the forest in order to imitate what he saw. He emphasized the value of living in the forest to his disciples and called on newly ordained monks to sit at the foot of a tree. Therefore, every religion teaches man to act like a shepherd and take care of everything that God has given him.

### Deep Ecology:

Deep ecology advocates that the only true way to forge ahead toward an ecological political society is to reject Anthropocentrism outright, and instead accept an ecocentric outlook that recognizes the interconnectedness and intrinsic value of other life forms in addition to human beings. Arne Naes states that:

The environmental and social effects of out of control Anthropocentrism, according to deep ecology, involve a number of general results including large scale human interference in ecosystems resulting in widespread destruction of habitats, increasing alienation between humans and nature, an increasingly mechanized worldview in humanity that places humans and nature in conflict, and other more concrete environmental problems such as pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss.(160)

According to the Deep ecologists' identification is a sense of belongingness that one feels with nature. The concept 'identification' with all life forms deals with the path of self realization. It is a holistic approach of experiencing ourselves as part of the Nature in which the individual feels a sense of belonging, of connectedness, to the cosmos as a whole. The relationship is not that of a detached observer and phenomena, but one of feeling with and becoming part of all. Without question, the two concepts most often associated with the views of deep ecology supporters are 'Self-realization' and 'identification.' Even Naess advocates that human beings have to develop a sixth sense so that they can feel connected with nature. David Rothenberg argues that:

Anthropocentrism leads to alienation between humans and nature. In turn, this alienation from nature leads to a mechanized world in which humans are forced to confront economic and ecological problems by choosing between themselves and nature, relying on a dualistic assumption that humans and nature are fundamentally at odds (p. 160)

The concepts of inter-connectedness and inter-relatedness tend to uncover the shades of other factors which are responsible for this self realization.. Self-realization through recognition of this interrelated web of ecological relations is one central aspect of deep ecological thought. Through this individualized process, deep ecology argues that a profound ecological consciousness will develop in the human psyche. Moreover, this ecological consciousness will provide an impetus in the individual to care for and protect the environment. Individuals who develop this type of relationship with the natural world, according to deep ecology, will cease to conceive of themselves and their fate as separate from the fate and the flourishing of the natural world . These ideas about the importance of developing an ecological consciousness first emerged in early works by Arne Naess. The concept of “Ecosophy ” has become an important example of what deep ecology means when it discusses the development of an ecological consciousness. Naess developed this concept of “Ecosophy ” and discusses it at length in many of his works. Naess calls his personal process of self-realization and development of an ecological consciousness .Deep ecology is also called spiritual ecology., and important principle of deep ecology is that the human species is a part of the Earth and not distinct from it.A thorough analysis of the philosophy of deep ecology follows from a platform of eight points by Arne Naess and American philosopher George Sessions. It states:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves which is called intrinsic value or inherent value. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
2. 3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population, which is also a basic requirement for the growth of non-human life.
5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.



6. 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. 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. 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 try to implement the necessary changes (McLaughlin 86-89).

‘Inherent value’ or ‘intrinsic value’ means that the value of a natural object is not dependent on the value it has to some human. Life or living beings have deep meanings in deep ecology as it comprises ecosystems, rivers, mountains, or in other words, the Earth as a whole.

Gary Sherman Snyder is an American poet as well as an essayist, lecturer, and environmental activist. He is a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and his work, in his various roles, reflects an immersion in both Buddhist spirituality and nature. Snyder has translated ancient Chinese and modern Japanese literature into English. Snyder is of German, Scots-Irish, and English ancestry. Snyder became intimately attached to the physical world around him. In 1974, *Turtle Island*, his most celebrated volume, was published by New Directions which fetched him the 1975 Pulitzer. Snyder defines this collection as “the first literary surfacing of the bio-regional concept”. A close appraisal of Snyder’s poetry will reveal that three resources dominate his verses, which lead him to a deep ecological path. The first consists of the cultures of primitive peoples, particularly the Native American tribes. Primal people like the Ainu of Japan, the Hawaiians, the Alaskan Eskimos and the Australian aborigines have also influenced him. The intimate relationships of these people to their land teach the urbanites about regaining a balanced and sustained relation between man and nature. Secondly, he appreciated the Asian cultures of China, Japan, India and Nepal, mainly the Buddhist practices and life styles. Zen Buddhism’s eclectic, syncretic and interdisciplinary tendencies and its Sangha notion gave him ample material. The third area consists of ecology, and from childhood itself he intuited a harmonious relationship with nature and sensed that American culture was violating that harmony.

Snyder’s first collection, *Riprap*, is evidence of the writing and thinking that Snyder had been doing through the mid-1950’s. *Riprap* took shape while Snyder was working on a backcountry trail crew in 1955, and its title is at first a description of “stone laid on steep, slick rock to make a trail for horses in the mountains,” then a symbol of the inter linkage of objects in a region and a figure for the placement of words in a poetic structure. It serves to connect language and action, reflective thought and the work that generates it. The poems in the collection are dedicated to the men Snyder worked with, the “community” of cohesion and effort he joined, men who knew the requirements of the land and who transmitted their skills through demonstration. *Riprap* includes elements of the oral tradition Snyder intersected, and the title “celebrates the

work of the hands” while some of the poems “run the risk of invisibility” since they tried “for surface simplicity set with unsettling depths.” Poems such as “Above Pate Valley” and “Piute Creek” begin with direct description of landscape and move toward an almost cosmic perspective concerning the passage of time across the land over geological epochs. The specific and the eternal coalesce:

Hill beyond hill, folded and twisted  
 Tough trees crammed  
 In thin stone fractures  
 A huge moon on it all, is too much.  
 The mind wanders. A million  
 Summers, night air still and the rocks  
 Warm. Sky over endless mountains.  
 All the junk that goes with being human  
 Drops away, hard rock wavers.(1-8)



Snyder read the original version of “The Woman Who Married a Bear” in an anthropology text in Reed College and was fascinated by the interaction of the human and animal cultures. He devotes a chapter to the story in *The Practice of the Wild*, lamenting that “the bears are being killed, the humans are everywhere, and the green world is being unraveled and shredded and burned by the spreading of a gray world that seems to have no end.” His poem is placed at the convergence of several cultures and is structured by the different speaking “voices”—not specifically identified but clear from tone and context. First, in a quote from the anthropological text, the bear speaks: “As for me I am a child of the god of the mountains.” Then, a field scientist, observing the data:

You can see  
 Huckleberries in bearshit if you  
 Look, this time of year  
 If I sneak up on the bear  
 It will grunt and run.(3-5)

This relatively matter-of-fact, outside position is replaced by a tale of the girl who married a bear: “In a house under the mountain/ She gave birth to slick dark children/ With sharp teeth, and lived in the hollow/ Mountain many years.” A shift has been made to the Native American culture, and what follows is the burden of the legend, as the girl’s tribe goes to reclaim her. The next voice is the hunter addressing the bear:

honey-eater  
 forest apple  
 light-foot  
 Old man in the fur coat,  
 Bear! come out!  
 Die of your own choice!(2-6)

Now the poet enters, turning the tale (text) into poetry (myth): “Twelve species north of Mexico/ Sucking their paws in the long winter/ Tearing the high-strung caches down/ Whining, crying, jacking off.” Then the tale continues, as the girl’s brothers “cornered him in the rocks,” and finally the “voice” of the bear-spirit speaks, as through a shaman perhaps, in the “Song of the Snared Bear”:

Give me my belt.  
 “I am near death.  
 “I came from the mountain caves  
 “At the headwaters,  
 “The small streams there  
 “Are all dried up.

Snyder reduces the dramatic tension by the interposition of the disarmingly personal. As if inspired by the story, he begins to imagine himself a part of the Paleolithic hunter culture: “I think I’ll go hunt bears.” However, he is too solidly grounded in reality to go beyond a reading of the text: “Why s— Snyder,/ You couldn’t hit a bear in the ass/ with a handful of rice.” Although, of course, in the poem, he has hit the target squarely by assimilating the different voices (as different strands of culture) into his own modern version of the myth.

*The Cold Mountain Poems*, published together with *Riprap* as *Riprap and the Cold Mountain Poems*, are “translations” (in the Poundian sense) from Han-shan, a hermit and poet of the Tang dynasty, and they represent Snyder’s identification with a kind of nature prophet at home in the wild as well as his inclination to isolate himself from those aspects of American (or Western) society he found abhorrent until he could fashion a program to combat the social ills he identified. As in most effective translations, there is a correspondence in sensibility between the two artists, and Snyder’s comfort with the backcountry, as well as his growing sense of a cross-cultural and trans epochal perspective, may be seen in lines like

Thin grass does for a mattress,  
 The blue sky makes a good quilt.  
 Happy with a stone under head  
 Let heaven and earth go about their changes.

Calling Han-shan a “mountain madman” or “ragged hermit,” Snyder expresses through the translations his admiration for a kind of independence, self-possession, and mindful alertness that he saw as a necessity for psychic survival in the Cold War era, a husbanding of strength to prepare for a return to the social struggle. “Mind solid and sharp,” he says, he is gaining the vision to “honor this priceless natural treasure”—the world around him (“the whole clear cloudless sky”)—and the insight (“sunk deep in the flesh”) to understand the complementary wonder within.

Toward the poem’s conclusion, “The Mountain Spirit” reframes the conception of mountains and rivers that launched the journey. Its declaration, “Streams and mountains never stay the same,” is like a motto for the poet’s way of being, while its statement “All art is song/ is sacred to the real” reemphasizes his fundamental credo. His quote “nothingness is shapeliness” is at the core of Zen practice, also echoing Ginsberg’s claim, “Mind is shapely/ Art is Shapely.” The final poem, “Finding the Space in the Heart,” explores the infinity of space, which Snyder sees as a symbol of freedom, ending the poem in an ethos of gratitude epitomized by the “quiet heart and distant eye,” which he acknowledges as the supreme gift of “the mountain spirit.” Even with all of the evocative, vividly descriptive passages illuminating the natural world, Snyder’s poetry remains firmly grounded on the human values he sees as the fundamentals of existence. As he has said, “In a visionary way, what we would want poetry to do is guide lovers toward ecstasy, give witness to the dignity of old people, intensify human bonds, elevate the community and improve the public spirit.”

In *Riprap*, Snyder's first published book, several poems epitomize his sense of the wilderness and call up the mysterious, timeless quality of the raw landscape with its hard-edged dimensions and nonhuman life too great for the mind to focus on and encompass. "Piute Creek" and "Above Pate Valley" contain the same view of the land, but in the latter Snyder includes the continuity of human life as only fragments and trails upon nature's surface:

One granite ridge

A tree would be enough

Or even a rock, a small creek,

A bark shred in a pool.

Hill beyond hill, folded and twisted

Tough trees crammed

In thin stone fractures

A huge moon on it all, is too much.

The mind wanders.(1-10)

The poem “Water” from *Riprap* depicts the time Snyder spent in Yosemite as a trail crew worker

laying riprap:

Pressure of sun on the rockslide

Whirled me in a dizzy hop-and-step descent,

Pool of pebbles buzzed in a Juniper shadow,

Tiny tongue of a this-year rattlesnake flicked,

I leaped, laughing for little boulder-color coil----

Pounded by heat raced down the slabs to the creek

Deep tumbling under arching walls and stuck

Whole head and shoulders in the water:

Stretched full on cobble---ears roaring

Eyes open aching from the cold and faced a trout.(1-11)

If the poem is read carefully, we can discover that Snyder places equal value between himself and other ecosystems. He does not present himself as a dominant figure but as a small part in the universe. This is shown in the last line in the poem when he is face to face with a fish. The whole poem seems to be a description of a real event but religious and ecological implications are conveyed through it. The theme Snyder emphasizes is that everything has its position in the universe and no one component is superior over others in the world. Thus like Deep Ecologists Snyder believes that Nature is a living force and man is part of that force. Deep Ecology often refers to the “Ecological Self,” which is spiritually based on relationships and responsibilities for all living beings and nature rather than the ego. Both of these spiritual approaches to nature and tropical forests are based on “Oneness,” relationships, all living beings, and ecocentric orientation.

In another poem from *Riprap*, “Milton by Firelight,” Snyder warns against the decline of the natural environment:

In ten thousand years the Sierras

Will be dry and dead, home of the scorpion

Ice-scratched slabs and bent trees.

No paradise, no fall

Only the weathering land. ( 2-6))

The poet is concerned about the damage caused to the environment by scientific “progress” which had given man superiority over the nonhuman elements of nature. In this poem, Snyder especially displays his cosmic consciousness which he always expresses in his writing.

As a solution to homogeneity and alienation, bioregionalism proposed deep awareness of one’s body and place, through engagement with the local cultural and biotic specificities endemic to one’s place of living. This engagement was largely envisioned as a form of stewardship, of taking care of one’s place, born from a deep connection to the region. As Gary Snyder writes in “Four Changes” (1974a),

Stewardship means, for most of us, find your place on the planet, dig in, and

take responsibility from there—the tiresome but tangible work of school boards,

county supervisors, local foresters, local politics, even while holding in mind the

largest scale of potential change. [...] New schools, new classes, walking in the

woods and cleaning up the streets. Find psychological techniques for creating an

awareness of “self” that includes social and natural environment. (100)

The primary focus of *Turtle Island* is re-in-habitation. Also, Buddhism with other Eastern religions remain an integral aspect of Snyder's understanding. Snyder gives an explanation for the title "Turtle Island" in the 'Introductory note' of the book as:

The old / new name for the continent based on many creation myths of the people who have been living here for millennia, and reapplied by some of them to "North America" in recent years. Also, an idea found 50 world-wide, of the earth, or cosmos even, sustained by a great turtle or serpent-of-eternity. (1)

*Turtle Island* was written during the era when environmental awareness reached its peak by observances and legislation's like the first Earth Day, Clean Air Act and Endangered Species Act, which were all kicked off during the 70s. The readers of America welcomed this book because it proved relevant, addressing the problems and crisis they faced every day. A deep ecological study of *Turtle Island* proves how Snyder can raise environmental awareness and propose solutions for a radical life style without being prejudicial to his poetic vision and craft. The poem "The Dead by the Side of the Road" is the story of five different animals: a Red-tailed Hawk, a Skunk, a Fawn, a Ringtail, and a Doe. Each animal lies dead on the side of the road and all are, either intentionally or unintentionally, killed at the hands of humans. Some are road killed, others shot.

I never saw a Ringtail til I found one in the road:  
case-skinned it with the toenails  
footpads, nose, and whiskers on;  
it soaks in salt and water  
sulphuric acid pickle;.(14-18)

The road implies the far-reaching penetration and infiltration that man has achieved on nature, as roads, especially the interstates which are the setting of this poem, can go deep into wilderness. Nature has no escape from the harmful brunt inflicted by man, as symbolized by the animals, killed by people who are blazing their way through nature and destroying everything that come in their way. The animals fester with flies, stink, and gradually wither away on the isolated shoulder of the road. The power humans use to eradicate nature and other objects of nature shows man's callousness and avarice. Being crown of creation, man has turned himself into a beast.

"The Bath" disseminates the idea of harmonious family life. For him family is the best arena for practising ecological ideas, and a vision of a new and ecologically balanced culture must include a functional family. It portrays a vision of a family free of sexual and physical shame, in touch with their own bodies, as Snyder, his wife Masa, and their two sons Kai and Gen wash each other in the family's homestead sauna. At first, the speaker washes his eldest son, Kai and realizes the identity of their bodies as father and son:

This is our body. Drawn up cross legged by the flames

drinking icy water

hugging babies, kissing bellies,

Laughing on the Great Earth

Come out from the bath.(90-94)

The poem gives the idea of harmony and peace. The family is contended and spread peace accordingly. What causes man to behave like a beast is his soul behaving eerily.

“Front Lines” brims with powerful imagery that expresses Snyder’s protest against exploitation of nature. He expresses his outrage at deforestation, which is one of mankind’s worst ecological transgressions. It stands as a grave threat to nature, especially forests. He not only gives a negative portrayal of logging procedures, but also urges his readers to take actions against this vice. The online account of National Geographic Society gives an alarming account of deforestation as responsible for clearing Earth’s forests on a massive scale, resulting in massive spoilage of land:

Bulldozer grinding and slobbering

Sideslipping and belching on top of

The skinned-up bodies of still-live bushes

In the pay of a man

From town.

Behind is a forest that goes to the Arctic

And a desert that still belongs to the

Piute

And here we must draw

Our line.

As the crickets’ soft autumn hum

is to us

so are we to the trees

as are they

to the rocks and the hills.(18-31)

Snyder exposes human expansion as a "cancer[ous]" expansion into nature. He even goes to a further extent to compare the expansion to rape. The reality company in the poem tells the forest to "spread your legs" making the comparison to rape severely evident. Snyder's theme of environmental sustainability is carried into "Front Lines" by showing how many people do not see the negative effects of destroying forests for expansion. He personifies the forest as a human and portraying the expansion as rape so that humans can connect more with that comparison rather than just a forest being torn down for some condos. Snyder ends



his poem with a challenge for the audience: where should the line be drawn for how much nature can be destroyed. This leaves the reader thinking more about the repercussions of their actions on nature and creates a very effective message.

In the early 70s when Snyder wrote the poem “LMFBR”, there was fervent discussion of nuclear plants. The Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor, which is the full form of the acronym, was a notable innovation in nuclear technology geared up to take the place of old reactors. The perilous reality about this reactor was the production of extra fissionable material than what was consumed by the generator. Though this appeared as a benefit at the first glance, it would lead to hefty wreckage in case of a nuclear accident. This poem is outdated now as the nuclear Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor, which Snyder forewarns, has never become a reality in any power plant, due to the uneconomical expenditure and complicated management. Energy from such reactors is emitted from Uranium and thorium, which are highly expensive. Snyder is updated enough to use an abbreviation for the reactor which shows his awareness of the technical jargon used in nuclear energy production. This acronym must have been unfamiliar to most of the readers during Snyder’s time. Thus, by using this title he attempts to stir up the readers’ attention regarding the nuclear developments around them, and to warn them about the strangeness and unspeakable dangers such reactors come with. Snyder succeeds in showing his strongest protest against every kind of nuclear power and development which takes a heavy toll on the life around. The second half of this poem is highly relevant, as it deals with an ever-present environmental problem of garbage management. The first line of the poem is “Death himself/ (Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor)/ stands grinning, beckoning” (1-3), which gives an instant appeal to the poem and clearly portrays Snyder’s dismal opinion on nuclear plants. The reactor, which becomes a personification of death, is seen “grinning” (3) at mankind revealing its “Plutonium tooth-glow” (4). The reactor stands with a “scythe” (6) beckoning, with the intention to deceive mankind, and to wreak harm to the whole living :

Death himself

(Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor)

stands grinning, beckoning.

Plutonium tooth glow.

Eyebrows buzzing.

Strip-mining scythe.

Kali dances on the dead stiff cock.

Aluminum beer cans, plastic spoons

plywood veneer, PVC pipe,

vinyl seat covers, don't exactly burn,

don't quite rot, flood over us,

robes and garbs of the Kali-yuga end of days.(1-12).

The seventh line “Kali dances on the dead stiff cock” (7) hints at the Hindu goddess of death and doom, Kali. Her dance on the body of the cock signifies that progress of nuclear energy through reactors will only prove grave and fatal, wiping off the whole mankind, and with it the entire planet. The cock stands as a messenger of the underworld, screeching out warnings of danger. It indicates that we need a wake up call to pay attention to some of the circumstances in our life. But as the cock is dead, it means we are too late to mend our actions, and these nuclear plants have fledged to become a menace to all life and mankind. Bioregionalism conceptualizes of place as a dialectic relation between the biotic and the cultural. As bioregionalists argue, the knowledge of a bioregion and the practice of incorporating its particular characteristics in our daily lives creates a sense of place, which in turn, is seen as a motive for engaging with environmentally-oriented types of action, and ways of living. As Snyder writes:

With this kind of consciousness people turn up at hearings and in front of trucks and bulldozers to defend the land or trees. Showing solidarity with a region! What an odd idea at first. Bioregionalism is the entry of place into the dialectic of history. Also we might say that there are “classes” that so far have been overlooked—the animals, rivers, rocks, and grasses—now entering history. ( 194)

### Conclusion:

In all his poems Snyder becomes a voice of resistance. He not only writes about the major environmental issues, rather places a solution before 21<sup>st</sup> century man. The solution is his ideology and his theorem. He believes that man has to change his anthropocentric attitude and start believing in oneness of the world. Man being crown of creation, has to take care of this one family. Peace, love and interconnectedness is the ultimate solution to our environmental issues. Snyder places equal value between himself and other ecosystems. He does not present himself as a dominant figure but as a small part in the universe. The theme of Snyder's poems emphasize that everything has its position in the universe and no one component is superior over others in the world.

He as an ecologist advocates the philosophy of Deep Ecology. He rejects the picturesque, beautiful in nature, rather believes in sublimity and awe, which nature possess as its special feature. When there is Ecocide ,nature too gets annoyed and consciously attacks man back. Earthquakes, floods, droughts, famines and other natural calamities are warning signs which earth is trying to convey. Recently covid-19 has put humanity on alarm, as millions of people lost their lives. Man died gasping for oxygen and nature always like a machine makes oxygen available for him. Maybe 21<sup>st</sup> century man is able to understand it

and may be environmentalists like Snyder try to open our eyes so that we can put nature as a priority and save this planet from further devastation.

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