

Deep Ecology and Poetic Vision: Interpreting Nature in the Works of A.K. Ramanujan

Preksha Naik^{1*}, Dr. Zeba Siddiqui²

1 Asst. Professor Department of English, Madhav Mahavidyalaya, Gwalior(MP), India

naik.preksha06@gmail.com

2 Professor, Dept. of Humanities and Culture, Vikrant University, Gwalior(MP), India

Abstract: Deep ecology emphasizes the interconnectedness and intrinsic value of all living beings and the Earth's ecosystem. These two perspectives provide valuable lenses through which to analyze Ramanujan's poetic works. Deep ecology recognizes the inherent worth of non-living entities and promotes ecological harmony and sustainability. It advocates for moving away from a mindset of dominance over nature and towards one of respect and humility. Interconnectedness of all living beings, the intrinsic value of non-human life, and the need for ecological awareness and responsible stewardship is discussed in this paper. Further this study explores that deep ecology is a movement focused on environmental awareness. Unlike human-centered approaches, deep ecology is ecocentric, meaning it prioritizes nature over human interests. It views pollution not only as a crime against humanity but as a crime against all life. The destructive actions of humans have caused severe harm to the environment, leading to issues like ozone depletion, water pollution, and global warming. This is why deep ecology is important. It emphasizes that environmental ethics are essential for addressing the growing environmental crises caused by human activities. This paper argues that Ramanujan's poetic voice contributes meaningfully to ecocritical discourse by encouraging ecological awareness and environmental responsibility. His poetry is like a medium through which ecological values can be both expressed and internalized within a broader movement toward environmental ethics in literature. Ultimately, this study affirms that Ramanujan's poetry embodies the spirit of deep ecology, offering a poetic model for rethinking humanity's place within the natural world and inspiring a more sustainable and compassionate environmental ethos. . By analyzing poems such as 'The Striders', 'Looking for a Cousin on a Swing' this study highlights on a sense of respect and harmony with nature which is central tenet of deep ecology.

Keywords: ecocriticism, deep ecology, interconnectedness, ecological consciousness, environmental ethics

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the intersection of deep ecology and A.K. Ramanujan's poetry, examining how his works reflect and engage with ecological themes. Deep ecology, a philosophical perspective that emphasizes the intrinsic value and interconnectedness of all living beings and ecosystems, provides a unique framework for analyzing Ramanujan's poetic contributions. In contrast to anthropocentric approaches, deep ecology adopts an ecocentric worldview, prioritizing the well-being of nature over human interests and advocating for a shift

from dominance to respect and humility in our relationship with the environment. The paper explores how Ramanujan's poetry embodies key principles of deep ecology, including the recognition of the inherent worth of non-human entities, the promotion of ecological harmony and sustainability, and the call for increased environmental awareness and responsible stewardship. 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 oneness can be attained by progressing from a self-centered perspective to an eco-friendly 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) (Gaiys p.3)

Through an examination of poems such as 'The Striders', 'Looking for a Cousin on a Swing', and 'No Man is an Island', the study reveals a profound sense of respect and harmony with nature that aligns closely with deep ecological thought. In the context of escalating environmental crises caused by human activities, including ozone depletion, water pollution, and global warming, this research underscores the significance of deep ecology in addressing these challenges.

Deep ecology highlights the intrinsic value of every living being and the importance of mutual respect and coexistence. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago's evolving bond with the marlin—from foe to friend, brother, and ultimately a reflection of himself—embodies this philosophy. Supporting elements like the warbler and the sea bring powerful realizations to Santiago. As he navigates the vastness of life (the sea) in solitude, he comes to recognize that nature and its creatures guide and sustain him. Rather than human companionship, it is the natural world that leads him toward renewal and helps him rise above his shame. (Arya MP p. 4) This paper posits that environmental ethics, as championed by deep ecology, are essential for mitigating the destructive impact of human actions on the planet's ecosystems. Through a comprehensive analysis of Ramanujan's works, this study aims to demonstrate how poetry can serve as an effective medium for expressing and promoting deep ecological principles. By

exploring the themes of interconnectedness, intrinsic value of non-human life, and ecological responsibility in Ramanujan's verses, the research contributes to our understanding of the role of literature in fostering environmental consciousness and ethical considerations.

Deep ecology, a philosophy introduced by Norwegian thinker Arne Naess, emphasizes the inherent equality of all living beings. According to this perspective, humans do not possess any greater intrinsic worth than other organisms; instead, all species are regarded as equally significant members of the ecological community. Naess argues that every form of life holds an unmeasurable, universal right to exist, and no single species has a superior claim to survival or flourishing. This core belief highlights deep ecology's holistic and egalitarian approach, recognizing the deep interdependence of all life within the broader web of nature. **(Remeena K. M. p. 1)**

Deep ecology is a modern and debated environmental philosophy that suggests humans need to rethink their relationship with nature. It is based on eight main ideas, guiding how people should view and treat the environment. My project is a research paper that explains what deep ecology is, how society has responded to it, both positively and negatively, and the role humans are expected to play in nature according to this philosophy. As environmental concerns grow, deep ecology becomes more important, especially since human impact on the environment is increasing every day. Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1972 coined a term Deep Ecology which encompasses a radical approach to addressing the ecological crisis. It emphasizes fundamental changes in human-environment relationships and promotes an ecocentric lifestyle (Glasser, 2001; Smith & Gough, 2015). The deep ecology movement advocates for social, political, ethical, and often spiritual transformations as the only viable solution to environmental challenges (Glasser). Interestingly, deep ecology has been critiqued from a feminist perspective, highlighting logical inconsistencies and methodological shortcomings in the seminal works of Naess and Devall (Salleh). Additionally, some researchers have repositioned deep ecology as a posthumanist/relational ideology, offering novel perspectives based on kinship with the earth (Smith).

Deep ecology, a radical form of environmental philosophy, was formally introduced by Arne Naess and George Sessions in April 1980, through eight core principles. However, it represents a culmination of decades of environmental thought, drawing from a wide range of religious traditions and philosophical ideas. The "deep ecology movement is a direct outgrowth of the

ecological concerns of the 1960's (Zimmerman, 161),” and has really attributed its influence to many people over time. According to Naess and Sessions, deep ecology's religious roots span from many differing religions, but its philosophical roots can be “found in the ecocentrism and social criticism of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, D.H. Lawrence, Robinson Jeffers, and Aldous Huxley (Sessions, ix).” (Ambrosius p.2)

METHODOLOGY

In this research paper, I will use a qualitative approach to study the poetry of A.K. Ramanujan through the lens of deep ecology. My methodology will include the following steps:

1. Literature Review

First, I will read and review key writings on deep ecology to understand its main ideas and philosophy. I will also look at existing criticism and analysis of Ramanujan's poetry, especially those that discuss nature and ecological themes.

2. Choosing Poems

I will select a group of Ramanujan's poems for detailed study. These will include poems such as *The Striders*, *Looking for a Cousin on a Swing*, and *No Man is an Island*, along with others that seem to reflect deep ecological ideas.

3. Close Reading and Analysis

I will carefully read each selected poem, focusing on the images, themes, and language used. I will look for elements that highlight:

- The connection between all living beings
- The value of non-human life
- Awareness of nature and ecological responsibility
- A shift from human-centered (anthropocentric) to nature-centered (ecocentric) thinking

4. Comparing with Deep Ecology

I will compare the ecological messages in Ramanujan's poems with the main ideas of deep ecology. I will also consider how his background and life experiences might have shaped his view of nature.

5. Understanding the Context

I will examine the historical and cultural background in which Ramanujan wrote his poetry. This will help me understand how his work fits into the environmental conversations of his time and how it relates to today's ecological concerns.

6. Using Theoretical Frameworks

I will apply the ideas of deep ecology to interpret Ramanujan's poems. I will also use other ecocritical theories to support my analysis.

7. Bringing It All Together

I will combine insights from the detailed readings, comparisons, and context study to understand how deep ecological themes appear in Ramanujan's poetry and what they mean.

8. Reflecting on the Study

Finally, I will reflect on what my findings say about the power of poetry to raise environmental awareness. I will also discuss the limits of this study and suggest areas for future research.

Through this approach, I hope to explore how Ramanujan's poetry expresses deep ecological ideas and to show how literature can contribute to our understanding of nature and environmental ethics.

DISCUSSION

Deep ecology is a new way of thinking about the environment that tries to solve today's environmental problems. Although it's a recent idea, it brings together beliefs from different environmental groups and religions. It encourages people to care for nature, much like our ancestors once did. By appealing to our sense of moral duty, deep ecology could lead to big changes in how we live—maybe even a major shift like the one Reich talked about. (Wendy Ambrosius p. 1)

Deep ecology highlights the intrinsic worth of all living beings and ecosystems, emphasizing their profound interconnectedness. It is a philosophic and environmental movement that mainly focus on interconnectedness and promotes the protection and preservation of nature for its own sake rather than merely for human benefit. Deep ecology recognizes the inherent worth of non-human entities and promotes ecological harmony and sustainability. Deep Ecology challenges the idea that humans are above nature, arguing that harming the environment harms ourselves. Promoted by thinkers like Arne Naess, Bill Devall, and George Sessions, it calls for deep ecological awareness and unity with all life. It aims to reshape human-nature relationships through ethical reflection and action. **(Pachkawade p.4)**

Nature and Balance in ‘The Striders’

Ramanujan has explored the elements of deep ecology in his poem “The Striders”:

And search
for certain thin- stemmed,
bubble-eyed water-bugs.
See then perch
on dry capillary legs
weightless
on the ripple skin
of a stream. *(CP 3)*

There are indeed elements that align with the principles of deep ecology. The first element of deep ecology in these lines is the main focus on interconnectedness of species and ecosystems. The mention of certain thin-stemmed, bubble-eyed water bugs represents the specific creatures that exist in a larger ecological context. Their existence reflects them as a part of a broader web of life. Deep ecology encourages understanding of complex relationship between organisms and ecosystems and emphasizes the importance of each element in web of life.

The poet has described further about the bugs, those perch on dry capillary legs and they are weightless and ripple skin of a stream. This suggests a sense of harmony and balance with the

natural environment. Deep ecology promotes the idea of humans recognizing and respecting the essential value of non-human entities. The description of bugs about their navigation on the surface of the stream without disrupt symbolizes their understanding of their place within the ecosystem where they live and their ability to coexist with other elements, entities without causing harm.

The subsequent mention on water-bugs, distinct physical traits like their stems and bubble-eyes suggests an appreciation for the diversity of life forms. Deep ecology recognizes the importance of biodiversity and emphasizes for protection and preservation of different species and their habitat. By drawing attention towards these often overlooked and seemingly insignificant creatures these lines of the poem encourages a broader understanding of the value of biodiversity. It also suggests that every living creature has a vital role to play and contribute to the overall health and the smooth functioning of the ecosystem.

The poet has described the eyes of the bugs as ‘bubble-eyed’. The nature evokes a sense of awe and wonder towards the complexities of the natural world. Deep ecology promotes a sense of ecological consciousness and a deep emotional connection to nature. These bugs are described with a unique characteristics, these lines of the poem encourages the readers to perceive and appreciate the aesthetic beauty and complexity present in every the smallest of organisms. Deep ecology recognizes the inherent worth of non-human entities and promotes ecological harmony and sustainability.

Kofi Akamani in his article “Integrating Deep Ecology and Adaptive Governance for Sustainable Development: Implications for Protected Areas Management” he advocates integrating deep ecology and adaptive governance by emphasizing their shared values and approaches, contrasting them with conventional sustainable development, which reflects shallow ecology through its human-nature divide, anthropocentrism, reductionist science, and top-down institutions. Although deep ecology can also be described using the eight principles of the deep ecology platform [38], the focus on the distinction between deep ecology and shallow ecology in this section captures the central issues in the eight principles, while allowing for ease of comparison with the adaptive governance literature. (Akamani)

Challenging Anthropocentrism

Deep ecology promotes a sense of responsibility in human attitudes towards nature advocating for a more holistic and sustainable relationship with the natural world. It encourages human consciousness towards ecological awareness and respect for the Earth's ecosystem.

No, not only prophets
walk on water. This bug sits
on a landslide of lights
and drowns eye-deep
into its tiny strip of sky. (CP 3)

The poet has portrayed the bug sitting on a landslide of lights highlights the impact of human civilization on the natural world. Here the light symbolizes technological advancement of human beings and urbanization that often result in the destruction and alteration of natural habitats. This image raises awareness of the human-dominated environment and its effects, its impact on other species.

Firstly, the line 'No, not only prophets' suggests that the perspective is beyond human-centered or anthropocentric viewpoints. It implies a broader perspective of understanding and appreciation of natural world that encompasses more than just human experiences and beliefs.

Secondly, the next line 'walk on water' can be seen as a metaphorical representation of human's domination over nature. It symbolizes the perception of superiority and the desire for control over the environment. In juxtaposition, deep ecology promoted humility and recognition of the limitations of human beings their power, their knowledge in the complex and interconnected web of life.

In next line bug's immersion presents a contrast between the broadness or vastness of the natural world and the very limited perspective of the bug. This contrast shows the importance of recognitions and the interdependence and interconnectedness of all the life forms. Here deep ecology emphasizes to value every smallest organism no matter seemingly insignificant.

Furthermore, the bugs fixation or stagnation on the sky suggests a longing for freedom and natural harmony. Deep ecology recommend for a connectivity with the natural world and

restoration of harmony and balanced ecosystems. The bug's gaze on the sky reflects a longing for more ecologically sustainable future, where human actions align with the needs and well-being of the Earth.

Through its evocative imagery and symbolism, the poem represents a deep ecological perspective and to reevaluate their relationship with the earth and its ecosystem.

The growing conflict between humans and nature is reflected in popular culture, especially films. Themes like climate change and sustainability are now widespread. Deep Ecology, introduced by Arne Naess, promotes ecological awareness, viewing humans as part of nature—not above it—to combat environmental harm caused by human-centered thinking. (**Megha S. p. 1**)

Innocence and Ecology

Ramanujan's another poem titled 'Looking for a Cousin on a Swing' also have elements of deep ecology. Deep ecology mainly focus on interconnectedness and essential value to all living beings and the natural world. It also recognize the importance of respect, harmony and coexistence between humans and the natural environment.

When she was four or five
she set on a village swing
and her cousin, six or seven,
sat himself against her;
with ever lunge of the swing
she felt him
in the lunging pits
of her feeling;
and afterwards
we climbed a tree, she said,
not very tall, but full of leaves

like those of a fig tree,
and we were very innocent
about it. (CP 19)

The setting of the swing in a village depicts a sense of simplicity and closeness to nature. In villages life is often very close with the natural world as compared to urban environments. This connection reveals the deep ecological beliefs that human should appreciate their interdependence with Earth's ecosystems. The act of sitting on the swing can be reflected as a metaphor for human closeness with the environment. Swing is a symbol of playful interaction with the physical world, it also symbolize the innocent, playful, and joyful connection between the cousin and the nature. Deep ecology emphasizes the importance of feeling sense of great respect for the natural world and similarly childlike innocence portrayed in these lines.

Dr. N.E. Sugandhi in her paper titled "Ecological Consciousness in Kamla Markandays's 'Nectar in a Sieve'" concludes that Ecological Criticism and its contribution are the main aspect for research and literary study these days. Indian writers such as Raja Rao, Kamla Markandaya, R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, A.K. Ramanujan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Jayant Mahapatra, have used Nature as landscape and as beautiful atmosphere in their writings. She further writes that Kamla Markandaya deems Nature as a wild animal and thinks that Nature is a destroyer and a preserver both. She has used Nature imagery beautifully in her novels. 'Nectar in a Sieve' shows how man is tossed between the ebb and flow of Nature. Like other Indian farmers Nathan and Rukmani in 'Nectar in a Sieve' had braved all the hardships and sorrows as their dependency on capricious monsoon for a satisfactory harvest. In the novel "Nectar in a Sieve," Kamala Markandeya explores the deep bond between Nathan and Rukmani and their connection to the land they inhabit. Both Nathan and Rukmani dedicate their lives to their land, treating it as their own child. They view the land not just as a means of survival but as an integral part of their existence. They cannot imagine being separated from it, so strong is their attachment. Their relationship with the land goes beyond the physical; it holds a spiritual significance for them. The land becomes a source of nourishment and sustenance, both literally and metaphorically, symbolizing their intertwined lives and their profound connection with nature.

Further the reference to climbing a tree adds another layer of deep ecological significance. Trees are always regarded as symbols of interactions and vitality in deep ecology. 'Full of

leaves like those of a fig tree' here the description of the tree signifies abundance and diversity in nature.

Deep ecology views Earth as shared by all life, not owned by humans. Arne Naess, like Leopold, believes humans belong to the land. Natural entities aren't possessions of individuals or states. Vital needs, meaning basic essentials for all life, include both human and nonhuman needs within the broader ecosystem. (**Chris Abakare p. 4**)

Urban Loss and Ecological Disconnection

Deep ecology implies the importance of biodiversity and the very essential value of all entities. It highlights the deep interconnection and interdependence of all life forms within ecosystems.

Now she looks for the swing
in cities with fifteen suburbs
and tries to be innocent
about it
not only on the crotch of a tree
that looked as if it would burst
under every leaf
into a brood of scarlet figs
if someone suddenly sneezed. (*CP 19*)

The elements of deep ecology embedded in these lines also from the same poem 'Looking for a Cousin on a Swing'. Searching for a swing in cities with fifteen suburbs can be seen as a critique of urbanization and the encroachment of human development on natural spaces. It suggests a connection between the nature and the childhood innocence that is very hard and difficult to find in urban environments. This highlights the element of disconnection between human beings and the natural world, an important key concern in deep ecology.

It is inaccurate to claim that deep ecology views people separately or assigns them a different value. In fact, the key distinction between deep and shallow ecology lies in their differing

perspectives on the role of human beings. Contrary to the view that considers humans as superior to nature and accepts nature as a servant to meet all kinds of needs of humans in the nature-human distinction, in deep ecology, human and nature are handled as "one", as "whole", without making a distinction between humans and nature (**Pepper, 1999: 17**). In the web of life on earth, human beings are only one of the threads, just like plants (**Capra, 1995: 20**). (ÇETİN p. 6)

Vandana Shiva, a prominent Indian ecofeminist thinker and activist suggests that women and nature share a deep connection and have experienced similar kind of exploitation, degradation, and domination rooted in a male-centric worldview. She argues that the degradation of both women and nature stems from the emergence of a global order centered on development, modernization, scientific and technological progress, and new reproductive technologies.

Further the mention of the image of a tree that burst with scarlet figs, symbolizes the abundance and vitality of nature. The mention of the tree's crotch adding a sensual element, that suggests a deep respect for the fertility and life-giving qualities of the natural world. The potential, the capacity of the tree to burst into a brood of scarlet figs highlights the power and the regenerative capacity of nature that always reminds us of the complex cycles of life and the interdependence of species.

Finally, the last line 'If someone suddenly sneezed' highlights the unpredictability and vulnerability. It implies that even a small disturbance or human action can disturb the delicate balance of nature. In deep ecology this represents with the recognition that human actions like pollution and destruction of habitat of other species can have far-reaching consequences for ecosystems and their inhabitants. It also recognizes the intrinsic value of all living entities and seeks to live in harmony with the Earth.

CONCLUSION

This study has illuminated the profound resonance between A.K. Ramanujan's poetry and deep ecological principles. Through close textual analysis and contextual interpretation, we have uncovered significant themes of interconnectedness, intrinsic value of non-human life, and a shift from anthropocentric to ecocentric perspectives in Ramanujan's works. The poet's cultural background and experiences have evidently shaped his ecological awareness, resulting in a unique blend of Indian and Western environmental sensibilities. This research contributes to the growing field of ecocriticism by demonstrating how poetry can serve as a powerful medium

for promoting environmental consciousness. While the study has its limitations, it opens avenues for further exploration of the intersection between literature and ecological ethics. Ultimately, Ramanujan's poetry emerges as a compelling example of how creative expression can foster a deeper understanding of our relationship with the natural world.

Every individual and society must protect the environment through ecological awareness. Since the environment affects us all, we have a moral duty to act. Issues like global warming impact everyone. By treating the environment as our own, we can take meaningful steps to prevent its degradation and ensure its preservation. (***Deep ecology: Principles and movements: Free essay example p. 3***)

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