Analysis of Paudyal's "The Parrot in the Cage" and Sama's "Don't Cut down the Trees, Brother Woodcutter" from Ecological Perspectives Raj Kumar Gurung

Abstract

This paper analyzes the ecological reading of Paudyal's "The Parrot in the Cage" and Sama's "Don't Cut down the Trees, Brother Woodcutter." There are several factors of modernization responsible for the destruction of natural phenomena. The deterioration of flora and fauna has not been controlled though several government monitoring agencies have been actively working. There are limited research works on Nepali writers' works regarding environmental issues. This study explores these two authors' works to show how the deforestation and destruction of the wild lives take place. The findings of the study show that people are cutting down trees; hunters are hunting birds and animals; and the government is cutting down trees for constructing roads, airports, and city planning. Because of these causes, the ozone layer has been depleted; global warming has increased and people are suffering from skin cataracts; eye cataracts, and respiratory problems. The over-superiority complex of man has helped destroy the flora and fauna. Whatever change takes place in nature is irreversible. The study adopts the deep ecology theory that was propounded by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. This essay explains the causes and effects of deforestation. The study also analyses the related consequences of deforestation. This is explanatory research rather than exploratory. The main purpose of this paper is to minimize ecological degradation and environmental problems. The study also attempts to find necessary solutions like afforestation, reforestation, and alternative energy.

Keywords

Ecological reading, deterioration, deforestation, hunting, conservation, ecology

Introduction

"The Parrot in the Cage" and "Don't Cut down the Trees, Brother Woodcutter" are poems composed by Nepali poets, Lekhnath Paudyal and Bal Krishna Sama. In both poems, the poets have shown that the humans have destroyed the flora and fauna. The study employs the deep ecology theory which deals with serious environmental problems and non-violent campaigns for social justice. The former deals with the flora and the latter does the fauna. Although Paudyal's poem is about the over-exploitation of the Rana Dynasty, it can be analyzed from an environmental perspective. The parrot indicates the confined people according to the main objectives of the author, but it also indicates the over-exploitation of nature by man. Humans confine wild birds like parrots as pet animals for their happiness. Parrot trafficking or other bird trafficking as such human activities reduce the number of birds in the forests. Similarly, Sama's poem deals with the deforestation problems as it is because of a woodcutter. This single woodcutter is nothing but massive trees cutting by using modern sawing machines and

transporting the wood in trucks and Lorries for business is the most dangerous activity. Paudyal states, "My parents and relations that there are / Do in a forest corner dwell afar" (lines 5-6). This is a caged parrot's saying that his parents and relations are in the forest far away happily in their ways but he has been caged. After all, the forest is the main habitat for the birds like a parrot who enjoys eating wild fruits. "A poor and little forest wanderer I / Fed on wild fruits, delighted who did fly" (13-14). How delighted he was when he flew wherever he liked feeding on the wild fruits.

This paper focuses on these research questions. What are the main factors of ecological degradation and environmental problems? What are the causes and effects of deforestation and what might be the possible solutions? The new constructions as such roads, railroads, airports, football grounds, cricket grounds, and individual buildings for commercial and other uses fuel the ecological degradation. Because of these causes, eye cataracts and skin cataracts as well as the CFC problems are the effects that suffer the whole Earth planet. Then, the study concerns the objectives. The main objectives of the study are to explore the factors of ecological degradation and environmental problems. The second objective is to examine the causes and effects of deforestation and attempt to find some solutions.

Methodology

This research is explanatory research which explains the causes and effects of ecological degradation and environmental problems. The study employs the deep ecology theory propounded by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. "From 1965, Naess's work focused increasingly on serious environmental problems and non-violent campaigns for social justice. He co-founded the deep ecology movement, building on the 'ecosophy' he developed in more than thirty books, four hundred academic articles, and countless lectures delivered in countries throughout the world" (5).

Discussion and Results

Several factors cause the deforestation and destruction of wildlife and creatures. There is a Buddhist legend in which Buddha was supposed to have been born as a parrot and he found that there was a fire in the forest because of lightning., "Lightning flashed, thunder crashed, and a dead tree, struck by lightning, burst into flames. Sparks leaped on the wind and soon the forest was ablaze" (Buddhist Legend 10). When the forest was ablaze, the wild animals were entrapped there but the little parrot dipped himself in the water and flew back so that he could extinguish the fire, and at last, he did it after a long try. Now, Sama pleads with the woodcutter not to cut down the trees though it is occupation. The woodcutter is the representative character of forest destroyers. Other hidden mass people have eroded the forest land. The government's planning and projects are another cause of deforestation:

Don't cut down the trees, brother woodcutter, they are our dead mothers.

And so they cannot even plead with us
But always they protect us from the sun

and rain. (Lines 1-6)

This poem, "Don't Cut Down the Trees, Brother Woodcutter" is about how nature protects humans not only from sun and rain but also from hunger. Forests or plants are the sources of food as well as oxygen and human protection. According to Puadyal, the woodcutter does not have to cut down trees for his occupation. The poet attempts to convince him not to do so for the sake of environmental and ecological benefits.

This is how the people destroy the forest. "The trail passed through a strange forest of skeletal-looking *sal* trees, with scarcely a leaf left them" (Lila and Barry 40). The four American geographers had a trip to the hinterland of Karnali, Nepal. They saw many people who were cutting grass and wood at the same time. They learned that this deforested sooner than before. The *sal trees* need about a hundred years to mature but they have been skeletal-looking. This is symbolic that nature has been exploited by man. When these geographers reach the Tarai belt, they see the real picture of how the forest has been destroyed. They narrate, "In a grove of mango trees we sat beside a campfire and listened to the night sounds of the plains—the high-pitched squeak of fruit bats, the mournful yapping of jackals, the muted bells of mule caravans. A bullock cart creaked past on the moonlit trail" (40). This is a real scenario of how the exploitation of nature has taken place. There is a queue of bullock carts loaded with the logs. All of the carts are heading toward India for the black market. They had seen some women cutting the grass for their goats and some people cutting the trees on the way. It was just a trailering of the film. The real film they saw was the bullock carts that were fully loaded with logs and many wild animals yapping because their habitats were destroyed by man. William Stafford states:

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting, alive, still, never to be born.

rolled it down to the canyon for the safety of other humans in his car.

Beside that mountain road, I hesitated. (9-12)

The poet narrates the incident he encountered while driving through the dark on the Wilson River road. He saw a dead doe lying at the edge, and he stopped his car to see if he could help. He found that it was a female deer, pregnant, stiffened. The deer was just killed either by the poacher or a vehicle. The fawn was alive but never to be born. This sensitized the poet but he

Moti Nissani adds, "Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and the critical resources" (29). The human world and the natural world are on the verge of a collision course. In the name of urbanization and industrialization, several trees have been cut down and several wild animals have been killed and driven away as their habitats have been disturbed. Whatever damage in nature takes place that is irreversible. They cannot be undone at any cost. One of the major factors of deforestation is the population growth. "Owing to rapid population growth, poverty, and other factors, many third world people are forced to move into, harvest, clear, burn, or cultivate tropical forests. . . . as the population grows, more and more people are forced to convert forest into farmlands" (34). Nissani points out that the major causes of deforestation are

poverty and rapid population growth. Many third-world people are compelled to destroy the forests to convert them into farmlands for their survival. Not only do they destroy the forests, but they also hunt wild animals. They destroy the flora and fauna simultaneously.

Because of deforestation, there have been several indirect effects like global warming, ozone layer depletion, and many more. Nissani adds, "The facts speak for themselves. The chances of contracting cancer, emphysema, or asthma are far higher now than they were a century ago. Human sperm counts in many localities are worrisomely low" (30). Many people are suffering from cancer, emphysema, or asthma. Deforestation is the major cause of it. Who counts this? Another dangerous effect is that the human sperm is worrisomely low in many localities. The number of childless couples is increasing in the world. This trend is going upward.

There are several other factors of the environmental impacts by which this planet Earth is becoming difficult to live on. "Forest degradation continues due to various factors such as the extension of cultivation, grazing, extraction of forest products, hydroelectric projects and commercial plantations" (Abhilash et al. 22). In the name of urbanization, modernization, and industrialization, people destroy the forests continuously. For the cultivation and grazing land, people cut down the trees. Firewood, grass, and wood for furniture, herbs are the forest products. Hydroelectric projects and commercial plantations

Like Paudyal's view, Paul Lawrence Dunbar presents the racial issue as one particular group confines the other minority group. This is a kind of domination but my point of view is the analysis of ecological degradation while confining the birds in the cage. The parrot bird of Puadyal and Dunbar's bird is not different. This is how Dunbar presents:

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!

When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;

When the wind stirs softly through the springing grass,

And the river flows like a stream of glass; (1-4)

People keep pet animals for their entertainment by exploiting animal rights. Some habituated wild animals like tigers they become close to humans but they do not enjoy life as happily as they used to. Who cares about the feelings of the caged birds? It is man who narrows the bird's horizon. The birds enjoy the natural beauty of the upland slopes, springing grass, and the rivers like a stream of glass.

Likewise, William Cowper cites this stanza. This stanza has been extracted from the poem, "The Poplar Field." The poet seems to have come back to his countryside after twelve years and he finds that the poplar trees are all cut down by the Ouse River:

My fugitive years are all hasting away,

And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,

With a turf on my breast and a stone at my head,

Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead. (13-16)

The poplar trees were all cut down before the poet came back to his public career for a life in rural retirement but he found his famous place the poplar field all deserted. The trees have been changed into furniture and blackbirds are no more there. They fled to another forest where they

were safe. This reduces the human life span when the sources of oxygen are being destroyed. There will be no logs to cremate the dead body if this trend of deforestation continues.

Now the discussion is about the effects of deforestation. Isaac Asimov writes that "electricity is scarce, and few people can afford to keep lights burning after supper" (102) in his essay, "Nightmare Life Without Fuel." In some countries, there is hydroelectricity like Nepal. There was a load-shedding problem as there was no sufficient water in the Kulekhani dam. The forest is the source of water but cutting down the trees reduces the water source. Then electricity scarcity was common and only some rich people could afford alternative sources like solar power and inverters or generators to keep lights burning after supper. The public suffered the load shedding of 18 hours a day in Nepal. It was alarming but there was no way out.

Likewise, Asimov shows another problem of fuel shortage. Fuel means not only petroleum goods, foods, and firewood are also the fuels. Plants are the major sources of all kinds of fuels. Reducing the number of trees means reducing the number of plants as well in a sense. When the number of plants goes down, a food shortage takes place. The food shortage problem is the starvation problem. So, "the first and most helpless victims of starvation are babies after their mothers have gone dry" (Asimov 103) when they do not get nutritious foods. Then breastfeeding babies become the most helpless victims. In the lack of nutritious foods, "nearly 2 billion people in the world who are alive but who are permanently brain-damaged by undernutrition, and the number is growing year by year" (104). It was the data of a long time back. This must be alarming now.

Moreover, W. S. Merwin's "Unchopping a Tree" is a relevant essay. The author has shown the related effects minutely while chopping just a single tree. It is a man who thinks that he is the master of this planet Earth and he rules and exploits nature as he wishes. Merwin states, "Even in the best of circumstances it is a labor that will make wish often that you had won the favor of the universe of ants, the empire of mice, or at least a local tribe of squirrels, and could enlist their labors and their talents" (109-10). He calculates the damages caused while felling a tree. While cutting down a single tree, not only this tree is destroyed, but also other small plants are destroyed and healthy branches of neighboring trees are split. Simultaneously, the universe of ants, the empire of mice, a local tribe of squirrels, cobwebs, and many more are destroyed.

Man has destructive skills but he does not have the talents of unchopping a tree and rebuilding the damaged universe of ants, the empire of mice, a local tribe of squirrels, cobwebs of spiders, and nests of birds. Unchopping means reviving the trees. Can a man unchop a tree? One can unfold or undo but he cannot unchop. Unchop here means reviving. The chopped tree to be unchopped means reviving it. The cut-down tree cannot be revived. He makes it clear, "We do not have the spider's weaving equipment, nor any substitute for the leaf's living bond with its point of attachment and nourishment" (110). Once the spider's web is destroyed while felling a tree, it cannot be put back or repaired by man. The author concludes his ideas with these remarks. "But there is nothing more you can do. Others are waiting. Everything is going to have to be put back" (Merwin 112). In the age of science and technology, everything is possible. This might be the thought of man. He may think that a cut-down tree that has been made into several pieces can be put back into its original form. But it is impossible. So, man can destroy but he cannot revive and rebuild anything.

Millions of trees have been cut down. How can a man put back them? Whatever the change takes place that is irreversible.

There are innumerable effects of deforestation and ecological destruction caused by man. Several authors have been making the world aware of the danger man is causing. But they turn their deaf ear to these threats. With the use of computer chips, refrigerators, and many other electric devices as such, CFC has increased. So, "[m]ost of the world's nations agreed to entirely phase out CFCs—by the year 2020 in rich countries and by the year 2030 in poor ones" (Chaudhary 170). It causes different unexpected effects on man and other flora and fauna. Therefore, the rich countries seem to have been aware of it but the poor countries are not well aware of such mishaps. Because of human unnatural activities, there is threat after threat. The author predicts, "In the next fifty years, 240 million human beings might contract skin cancer as a result of ozone depletion, of which 4 million might die" (171). The entire natural environment and ecology are in danger all because of human activities. Because of global warming, ozone layer depletion takes place. Because of it, different fatal diseases like cancer, memory loss, reduction of human sperm that is worrisomely low in many localities, and not good immunity as such take place.

There are other factors in the destruction of natural vegetation and other creatures. All plants and creatures are crucial parts of nature including humans. Every part has an equal contribution to the whole. But the problem is that man is all in all, he is the master or owner of the rest. Shahi et al. suggest, "In most cases, forest regeneration is influenced by several biotic and abiotic factors they include natural and human activities such as forest fire, disease outbreak, drought, deforestation and forest degradation, grazing, developmental activities, climate change, etc." (17). Human activities mean urbanization, industrialization, and modernization. Because of this, forest fires, disease outbreaks, drought, deforestation, and forest degradation take place. In addition, cattle grazing, road construction, airports, football grounds, and converting the forests into farmlands destroy the forest and other wildlife. This is because "nature has been understood as an entity for man to use and explore at his will" (Air 28). The author makes it clear that man does not have to perform his activities at his will. He is not a master or owner of the trees and creatures of this universe, he is a part of it. Nature is not his entity. The "[d]eep ecology supporters appreciate the inherent value of all beings and of diversity" (Drengson 10).

Every part of nature has contributed to the whole. He is the only man who has been destroying nature. All the birds, insects, and plants are always contributing to the whole. It is true that "[b]iodiversity is our living commons – the basis of life. We are part of nature, not her masters and owners. . . . We need to recognize the rights of Mother Earth and therefore the intrinsic value of all her species and living processes" (Mies and Shiva xx). Modern man has become too selfish for his benefit. He is ready to do anything if there is a benefit for him.

Today, people seem to have been aware of nature conservation. One of them is the community forestry concept which has increased the number of trees in many places in Nepal remarkably. Although this is not the ultimate solution, partially it has helped in the conservation of flora and fauna. One of the main important points is that the reason for conservation is not only for conservation's sake but also for financial benefits. The community forest concept has the double benefits of environmental conservation and income source for working-class people. If deforestation

takes place, the first and most helpless victims are those indigenous people who depend on the forest/nature. Kafle and Upadhyaya state:

Non-farm source of income (mostly income from in-country and foreign services) is the major source of the sampled household which comprise 65.57% of the total household income. Agriculture is the second largest income source (16.9%) and livestock supports 10.9%. Community forest contributes only 4.22% of the household income. Poor-class households is receiving 12.3%, middle class 4.06% and the rich-class households are receiving 2.78% of their total household income from the Community forest. (17)

Different people have different jobs for their income sources in Nepal. Many of the youths have gone abroad for studies but they are there to earn something. Most youths have been working abroad as full-time job holders. Few people are job holders in the country. There are limited people in business and agriculture. Although agriculture is supposed to be the backbone of the economy, all the people are not engaged in it and they have government jobs, businesses, small-scale industries, and so on for their occupation. Non-farm source of income is 65.57% which is the first source of income of the household. Second is agriculture which comprises 16.9%. Third, the livestock comprises of 10.9%. Fourth is the community forest which comprises only 4.22%. Anyway, poor-class households receive 12.3%, middle class 4.06% and rich-class households receive 2.78% of the total household income from the community forest. Therefore, the Community forest concept has contributed to some extent but it has to be made broader than it is going on now across the nation.

To sum up, the discussion, the causes and effects of deforestation and the deterioration of flora and fauna are human activities. A hundred percent of human activities are out of eco-friendly. The number of plants and wild species is decreasing drastically. Some eleven hundred million hectares of tropical rainforest land has been eroded just in thirty years, that is, as big as India. The production of oxygen is decreasing whereas human number is increasing. Anyway, what we want and what we need of natural beauty with a sufficient number of plants and other non-human beings to maintain the balance of ecology. And if the forests attract the poets to think something as Robert Frost was stopped by the wood on a snowy evening even if he had to go miles away before he slept. He did not account for how long way there he had to walk along, he damned it all because natural beauty has the power of attraction. This cannot be avoided. Therefore, Frost recites:

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep.

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep. (13-16)

One late evening, the poet was going perhaps to visit his beloved. He had to go a long way but because of the beauty of the snowy wood, he stopped there to look at it. He had promised his love to visit her. He forgot all this thing. Natural beauty has the power to hypnotize anyone, but here the poets as such people are moody and crotchety. The ecological balance means the maintenance of natural beauty. The natural beauty attracts not only the birds and animals but also the highly intellectual figures like Frost, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Byron who flow a vast river of literature to wash contaminated minds of man in the present-day world.

Conclusion and Implications

This study was carried out to examine the causes and effects of deforestation and its solutions. The research also examined the factors of deforestation and ecological degradation. This paper employed the deep ecology theory that was propounded by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. This theory deals with the integral relations between humans and wildlives and plants. This type of research is called explanatory research. While examining, the study found that overpopulation and human activities are the major factors and causes of deforestation and degradation of the natural environment. The main factors of deforestation are developmental activities that are destroying the forests. They are new constructions like road constructions, city planning, airports, football grounds, cricket grounds, establishments of factories and industries, and converting the forest into farmlands. Similarly, grazing cattle, forest fires, and natural calamities like disease outbreaks, drought, and climate change caused the deterioration of the natural environment and ecosphere. All these factors cause ozone layer depletion, and global warming, as the snow melting process has been several times faster than the snowfall on the snow peaks.

The effects are skin cancer, eye cataracts, human sperm being worrisomely low in many localities, respiratory problems, the disappearance of several species of wild lives and plants, and many more. And because of global warming, there has been a fluctuation in temperature. The effects are innumerable as all of them have not been well accounted for. Now, the basis of this study is the solution. This research analyzed two poems composed by Paudel and Sama and concluded that human awareness is the main solution. Modern man has to change some of their lifestyles like using metal and plastic furniture instead of wooden ones. Those who are hunting wild animals should be converted into vegetarians. The new construction should be done as the Japanese project did while constructing the Sindhuli Road. This road construction is eco-friendly. Many world highways have been constructed making the pillars and destroying less trees or destruction is negligible.

The community forest concept is one but this is not sufficient. The roadsides and river banks as well as open fields and barren lands are to be filled up with replantation. Afforestation and reforestation are the two major solutions. Taming wild animals or birds as we keep parrots or other birds should be discouraged or stopped. Some people keep parrots as their pets, and some keep peacocks at home and other beautiful birds. There are still about fifty percent of people who have been using firewood in Nepal. Overpopulation and human activities are the main factors and causes of the destruction of flora and fauna. Applying alternative resources like metal and plastic for the new construction of big buildings instead of wooden furniture; making strong rules against those who keep wild animals and birds at home and taking immediate action; big fines for the hunters and poachers and public awareness help ameliorate the sustainable greenery in the country. Government monitoring agencies should be effective and action-oriented.

The government has to make the provision of giving some subsidies to needy people. Nepal government gives this incentive to the poor people that those who consume less electricity like 30 and 50 units per month are not charged. Likewise, for some people in the remote villages of western Nepal, the government has given them solar stoves free of cost. This research work might be the first to analyze Paudyal and Dunbar's poems from an ecological perspective. I have analyzed this work of art only from an ecological degradation point of view though there are other scientific explanations for how birds contribute to the whole. Future researchers who are from technical fields can do the research from several other perspectives, and that can be more fruitful to the masses even if this piece

of investigation has great importance. Though this help seems to be helpful to some extent, it does not seem to be practical. According to income level, poor people should be charged fewer electricity bills. Government monitoring should be up-to-date for such works. As Nepal government has given a heavy discount on electricity for farming use. But the farmers are consuming the electricity for their home use as well. They should be well monitored. If they have been given the facilities by the government, they should not misuse them.

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