

# **Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist**

## **Reading of Gary Snyder's Poetry**

Thesis Submitted to University of Calicut  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature

By

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### **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” is a bonafide record of studies and research carried out by Nitha Rajagopal under my guidance and supervision in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Philosophy in English. The research work has not been previously formed as the basis of an award for any degree, diploma, fellowship, or other similar titles. Its critical evaluation represents the independent work on the part of the candidate.

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### **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that thesis entitled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” is an authentic record of my studies and research carried out under the guidance of Dr. Fr. Babu K.T, Research Supervisor, Research and Postgraduate Department of English, St. Aloysius College, Thrissur, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English. I hereby certify that no part of this work has been submitted or published for the award of any degree, diploma, title, or recognition. The contents of the thesis has undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index was found within permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

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24.04.2025

This is to certify that the suggestions made by the adjudicators have been incorporated in the thesis entitled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” submitted by Nitha Rajagopal. I also certify that the contents in the thesis and the soft copy are one and the same.

Thrissur  
24/04/2025

Dr. Fr. Babu KT  
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**Nitha Rajagopal**

## ABBREVIATIONS

TPM : *The Present Moment*

RW : *Regarding Wave*

TI : *Turtle Island*

AH : *Axe Handles*

RR : *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*

DP : *Danger on Peaks*

MRWE: *Mountains and Rivers Without End*

OW : *The Old Ways*

PW : *The Practice of the Wild*

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## **Abstract**

### **Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder's Poetry**

The thesis, entitled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” tries to portray Gary Snyder as an ardent follower of Buddhism and Deep Ecology. Through an investigation of his collections of poetry in the light of concepts like Buddhism, Deep Ecology and spirituality, this thesis tries to foreground Snyder’s deep commitment towards nature and the whole universe. The works written by Gary Snyder justifies his unwavering dedication and compassion towards all forms of life and non-living things in this universe. The thesis elaborates on how Gary Snyder has used his poetry as an effective way to impart his ideologies of Buddhism, deep ecological concerns and Hindu beliefs for saving the earth from further degradation. In his poetry, Snyder tries to dissolve the barriers between the civilised and the wild and exhorts us to understand human life as a part of the whole universe. Snyder feels that without wildness in the mind, a poet cannot excel in his profession as a poet.

Chapter One, Introduction includes introduction to the author, research objectives, literature review and methodology and are explained in detail. The second chapter entitled “Bioregionalism in Gary Snyder: An Exploration of Ecological Identity and Interconnectedness” is a detailed study of Gary Snyder’s Bioregionalism. This chapter focuses on Gary Snyder’s perspectives on the intersection of Ecology, Buddhism and Politics in his Bioregionalism and how all these three elements are interrelated and define each other. The third chapter titled “Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhist Paradigms: A Quest for Contentment and Compassion” delves into the analysis of the works of Gary Snyder filled with contentment and compassion through the lens of Deep Ecology and Buddhism. The fourth chapter “Religious Influences and Whispers of the Earth in Gary Snyder’s Poetry: A Path Toward Environmental Healing” establishes how the principles of Hindu philosophies and Buddhism aid in tackling the problems of the environment as represented in the poetry of Gary Snyder. This chapter deals with the analysis of some spiritual texts related to Hinduism and Buddhism that help in understanding the elements of spirituality in the poetry of Gary Snyder and how it provides solutions for the present environmental problems. The

fifth chapter concludes the thesis with possible solutions that Gary Snyder speaks through his poems. The sixth chapter discuss further scope of research in the works of Gary Snyder.

To nurture mindfulness and to possess the bodhisattva ideal, the development of a religious mind is required and that marks the development of self-knowledge. As a revolutionary act, new rituals are to be introduced for the celebration of the transformation moments that the universe had undergone during the previous years. It is believed that the celebration of the occasions in the form of rituals would make our sense of sacred more renewed. There is a strong network of trust that exists between people living in a community, they strive together, understand their situation together and work together to create a world where they can live without fear and injustice. By involving ourselves in base level community activities, a sense of mutual commitment, enhancement of personal integrity and belief in what is possible will emerge. The next change that is welcomed is the nurturing of personal practice. Through the practice of meditation, one can acquire a mind that is free from negative thoughts filled with wisdom obtained through inner transformation. The element of compassion is an offshoot of this mindful meditation. It is different from the concept of pity where the individual becomes capable of removing hatred towards the living and non-living entities and fills the mind with love and empathy.

The research study titled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” endeavours to address the gap in existing studies on Gary Snyder. This study portrays the elements of Eco-Buddhism in the poetry of Gary Snyder. It also tries to include Eastern religious philosophies for analysing the poems which is a novel attempt. The existing works on Gary Snyder falls short of understanding his poems through this lens. There are limited studies that link Gary Snyder’s works with Eco-Buddhism. This research study addresses this research gap by providing an extensive analysis of the Gary Snyder’s Poetry through the lens of Deep Ecology, Eco-Buddhist precepts.

സംത്യപ്തിയുടെയും അനുകമ്പയുടെയും റൈംസ്: ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ  
കവിതയുടെ ഒരു ഇക്കോ-ബുദ്ധിസ്റ്റ് വായന

"സന്തോഷത്തിന്റെയും അനുകമ്പയുടെയും റൈംസ്: ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ  
കവിതയുടെ പരിസ്ഥിതി-ബുദ്ധിസ്റ്റ് വായന" എന്ന തലക്കെട്ടിലുള്ള തീസിസ് ഗാരി  
സ്നൈഡറിനെ ബുദ്ധമതത്തിന്റെയും ആഴത്തിലുള്ള  
പരിസ്ഥിതിശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെയും തീവ്ര അനുയായിയായി ചിത്രീകരിക്കാൻ  
ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു. ബുദ്ധമതം, ആഴത്തിലുള്ള പരിസ്ഥിതിശാസ്ത്രം, ആത്മീയത  
തുടങ്ങിയ ആശയങ്ങളുടെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ  
കവിതാസമാഹാരങ്ങളുടെ അന്വേഷണത്തിലൂടെ, പ്രകൃതിയോടും  
പ്രപഞ്ചത്തോടും ഉള്ള സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ ആഴത്തിലുള്ള പ്രതിബദ്ധതയെ  
വിവരിക്കാനാണ് ഈ തീസിസ് ശ്രമിക്കുന്നത്. ഗാരി സ്നൈഡർ എഴുതിയ  
കൃതികൾ ഈ പ്രപഞ്ചത്തിലെ എല്ലാ ജീവജാലങ്ങളോടും ജീവനില്ലാത്ത  
വസ്തുക്കളോടും ഉള്ള അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ അചഞ്ചലമായ സമർപ്പണത്തെയും  
അനുകമ്പയെയും ന്യായീകരിക്കുന്നു. ഭൂമിയെ കൂടുതൽ തകർച്ചയിൽ നിന്ന്  
രക്ഷിക്കുന്നതിനായി ഗാരി സ്നൈഡർ തന്റെ ബുദ്ധമത ആശയങ്ങളും  
ആഴത്തിലുള്ള പാരിസ്ഥിതിക ആശങ്കകളും ഹൈന്ദവ വിശ്വാസങ്ങളും  
പകർന്നുനൽകുന്നതിനുള്ള ഫലപ്രദമായ മാർഗമായി തന്റെ കവിതയെ  
എങ്ങനെ ഉപയോഗിച്ചുവെന്ന് പ്രബന്ധം വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നു. തന്റെ കവിതയിൽ,  
നാഗരികതയ്ക്കും വന്യതയ്ക്കും ഇടയിലുള്ള വേലിക്കെട്ടുകൾ ഇല്ലാതാക്കാൻ  
സ്നൈഡർ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു, കൂടാതെ മനുഷ്യജീവിതം മുഴുവൻ പ്രപഞ്ചത്തിന്റെ  
ഭാഗമായി മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ നമ്മെ ഉദ്ബോധിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. മനസ്സിൽ  
വന്യതയില്ലാതെ ഒരു കവിക്ക് കവിയെന്ന നിലയിൽ തന്റെ തൊഴിലിൽ മികവ്  
പുലർത്താൻ കഴിയില്ലെന്ന് സ്നൈഡർ കരുതുന്നു.

അധ്യായം ഒന്ന്, ആമുഖത്തിൽ രചയിതാവിനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ആമുഖം,  
ഗവേഷണ ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾ, സാഹിത്യ അവലോകനം, രീതിശാസ്ത്രം എന്നിവ  
ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നു. അവ വിശദമായി വിവരിക്കുന്നു. "ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിലെ  
ബയോറിജിയണലിസം: പാരിസ്ഥിതിക ഐഡന്റിറ്റിയുടെയും പരസ്പര  
ബന്ധത്തിന്റെയും പര്യവേക്ഷണം" എന്ന തലക്കെട്ടിലുള്ള രണ്ടാമത്തെ അധ്യായം  
ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ ബയോറിജിയണലിസത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിശദമായ

പഠനമാണ്. ഈ അധ്യായം ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ ബയോറിജിയണലിസത്തിൽ പരിസ്ഥിതി, ബുദ്ധമതം, രാഷ്ട്രീയം എന്നിവയുടെ വിഭജനത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളെക്കുറിച്ചും ഈ മൂന്ന് ഘടകങ്ങളും എങ്ങനെ പരസ്പരം ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നുവെന്നും എങ്ങനെ പരസ്പരം നിർവചിക്കുന്നുവെന്നും കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്നു. "ഡീപ് ഇക്കോളജി ആൻഡ് ഇക്കോ-ബുദ്ധിസ്റ്റ് മാതൃകകൾ "എന്ന തലക്കെട്ടിലുള്ള മൂന്നാമത്തെ അധ്യായം ആഴത്തിലുള്ള പരിസ്ഥിതിയുടെയും ബുദ്ധമതത്തിന്റെയും ലെൻസിലൂടെ സംതുപ്തിയും അനുകമ്പയും നിറഞ്ഞ ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ കൃതികളുടെ വിശകലനത്തിലേക്ക് കടന്നുചെല്ലുന്നു. "ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ കവിതയിൽ ഭൂമിയുടെ മതപരമായ സ്വാധീനങ്ങളും മന്ത്രിക്കലുകളും: പരിസ്ഥിതി സൗഖ്യമാക്കലിലേക്കുള്ള ഒരു പാത" എന്ന തലക്കെട്ടിലുള്ള നാലാമത്തെ അധ്യായം, ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ കവിതയിൽ പ്രതിനിധീകരിക്കുന്ന പരിസ്ഥിതി പ്രശ്നങ്ങളെ നേരിടാൻ ഹിന്ദു തത്വശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെയും ബുദ്ധമതത്തിന്റെയും തത്വങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെ സഹായിക്കുന്നുവെന്ന് സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നു. ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ കവിതയിലെ ആത്മീയതയുടെ ഘടകങ്ങളെ മനസ്സിലാക്കാനും അത് നിലവിലെ പാരിസ്ഥിതിക പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്ക് എങ്ങനെ പരിഹാരം നൽകുന്നുവെന്നും മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ സഹായിക്കുന്ന ഹിന്ദുമതവും ബുദ്ധമതവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട ചില ആത്മീയ ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളുടെ വിശകലനം ഈ അധ്യായത്തിൽ പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്നു. അഞ്ചാം അധ്യായം തന്റെ കവിതകളിലൂടെ ഗാരി സ്നൈഡർ സംസാരിക്കുന്ന സാധ്യമായ പരിഹാരങ്ങളോടെ തീസിസ് അവസാനിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ആറാമത്തെ അധ്യായം ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ കൃതികളിലെ ഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ കൂടുതൽ വ്യാപ്തി ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്നു.

ബോധവൽക്കരണം പരിപോഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും ബോധിസത്വ ആദർശം സ്വന്തമാക്കുന്നതിനും, ആത്മജ്ഞാനത്തിന്റെ വികാസത്തെ അടയാളപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഒരു മത മനസ്സിന്റെ വികാസം ആവശ്യമാണ്.. ഒരു വിപ്ലവകരമായ പ്രവൃത്തി എന്ന നിലയിൽ, മുൻ വർഷങ്ങളിൽ പ്രപഞ്ചം അനുഭവിച്ച പരിവർത്തന നിമിഷങ്ങളുടെ ആഘോഷത്തിനായി പുതിയ ആചാരങ്ങൾ അവതരിപ്പിക്കും. ചടങ്ങുകളുടെ രൂപത്തിലുള്ള ആഘോഷങ്ങൾ നമ്മുടെ പവിത്രബോധം കൂടുതൽ നവീകരിക്കുമെന്ന് വിശ്വസിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ഒരു കമ്മ്യൂണിറ്റിയിൽ ജീവിക്കുന്ന ആളുകൾക്കിടയിൽ വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ശക്തമായ ഒരു ശൃംഖലയുണ്ട്, അവർ ഒരുമിച്ച് പരിശ്രമിക്കുന്നു, ഒരുമിച്ച് അവരുടെ സാഹചര്യം മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു,

അവർക്ക് ഭയവും അനീതിയും കൂടാതെ ജീവിക്കാൻ കഴിയുന്ന ഒരു ലോകം സൃഷ്ടിക്കാൻ ഒരുമിച്ച് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. ബേസ് ലെവൽ കമ്മ്യൂണിറ്റി പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ നമ്മളെത്തന്നെ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിലൂടെ, പരസ്പര പ്രതിബദ്ധത, വ്യക്തിഗത സമഗ്രത വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കൽ, സാധ്യമായ കാര്യങ്ങളിൽ വിശ്വാസം എന്നിവ ഉയർന്നുവരും. സ്വാഗതാർഹമായ അടുത്ത മാറ്റം വ്യക്തിപരമായ പരിശീലനത്തിന്റെ പരിപോഷണമാണ്. ധ്യാന പരിശീലനത്തിലൂടെ, ആന്തരിക പരിവർത്തനത്തിലൂടെ ലഭിച്ച ജ്ഞാനം നിറഞ്ഞ നിഷേധാത്മക ചിന്തകളിൽ നിന്ന് മുക്തമായ ഒരു മനസ്സ് നേടാൻ കഴിയും. അനുകമ്പയുടെ ഘടകം ഈ മനഃപൂർവ്വമായ ധ്യാനത്തിന്റെ ഒരു ശാഖയാണ്. ജീവനുള്ളതും അല്ലാത്തതുമായ അസ്തിത്വങ്ങളോടുള്ള വിദ്വേഷം നീക്കാൻ വ്യക്തി പ്രാപ്തനാകുകയും മനസ്സിൽ സ്നേഹവും സഹാനുഭൂതിയും നിറയ്ക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന സഹതാപ സങ്കല്പത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ഇത് വ്യത്യസ്തമാണ്.

ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിനെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിലവിലുള്ള പഠനങ്ങളിലെ വിടവ് പരിഹരിക്കാൻ "റൈംസ് ഓഫ് കോൺടെന്റ് മെന്റ് ആൻഡ് കമ്പോഷൻ: ആൻ ഇക്കോ-ബുദ്ധിസ്റ്റ് റീഡിംഗ് ഓഫ് ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറുടെ കവിത" എന്ന ഗവേഷണ പഠനം ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു. ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ കവിതയിലെ ഇക്കോ ബുദ്ധമതത്തിന്റെ ഘടകങ്ങളെ ഈ പഠനം ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നു. കവിതകളെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നതിനായി പൗരസ്ത്യ മത തത്ത്വചിന്തകൾ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്താനും ഇത് ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു.

ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിലവിലുള്ള കൃതികൾ അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ കവിതകളെ ഈ ലെൻസിലൂടെ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നതിൽ പരിമിതമാണ്. ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറിന്റെ കൃതികളെ ഇക്കോ-ബുദ്ധമതവുമായി ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്ന പരിമിതമായ പഠനങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ഗാരി സ്നൈഡറുടെ കവിതയുടെ ആഴത്തിലുള്ള പരിസ്ഥിതി, ഇക്കോ-ബുദ്ധമത പ്രമാണങ്ങളുടെ ലെൻസിലൂടെ വിപുലമായ വിശകലനം നൽകിക്കൊണ്ട് ഈ ഗവേഷണ പഠനം ഈ ഗവേഷണ വിടവ് പരിഹരിക്കുന്നു.

## Chapter I

### Introduction

The thesis “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” focuses on Gary Snyder’s works and is an attempt to read Snyder’s poems through the lens of Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology.

Gary Snyder, America’s renowned poet, essayist, lecturer and environmental activist, is hailed as the Poet Laureate of Deep Ecology. Snyder, a prominent member of the Beat Generation during the 1950’s tried to include social, and divine elements in his works. Snyder tried to connect the real and his impressions on nature using the knowledge that he gained through the practice of Zen Buddhism and environmentalism (Poetry Foundation).

In Charles Altieri’s *Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry during the 1960’s*, Snyder has been ranked among the best poets of his generation when judged in aesthetic terms, in matters of precision, intelligence, imaginative play, and moments of deep resonance. Moreover, Snyder has used abstract entities in his poems to make it pertinent and acceptable. Snyder gave prominence to metaphysics and glorified the natural world in his works. Snyder’s style is different from the Beat writers of his generation. Snyder is often considered as the poet of San Francisco Renaissance along with the renowned poets like Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan and so on. Snyder was inspired by Japanese Haiku and Chinese verse that helped him to develop a unique style in poetry. Snyder’s poetry exhibits terseness, simplicity and issues related to environment that has created a new dimension in the field of American poetry (Poetry Foundation).

Snyder, born in 1930 at San Francisco, was brought up on small farms and lived in close connection with nature during his childhood. Snyder was upset by the

destruction of the Pacific North Western Forests during that time. Snyder had deep reverence towards the cultures of the East that gave due respect to nature. Snyder tried to understand Indian culture and traditions through Indian folklores and other religious texts. Snyder had a deep interest in the wild regions and he involved himself in professions like mountain climber, trail crew member, logger and other techniques used by people living in close connection with nature. Snyder's deep inkling towards Chinese paintings and Eastern culture are reflected in his works. Snyder had his schooling in Seattle and Portland public schools. After that, he pursued his studies at Reed College, Indiana University and the University of California, Berkeley. Snyder nurtured his interest in Zen Buddhism and began to practice it during the 1950's. Snyder also became a part of the counter-culture revolution in literature along with writers like Philip Whalen, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac (Poetry Foundation).

Gary Snyder is one of the unique voices of America, and he raised his voice in defence of nature and against the Industrial Revolution. Born in California to working-class parents in 1930, he spent his childhood in Washington, Oregon, California and took multiple degrees in Anthropology and Literature at Reed College in 1951 and studied Linguistics and Oriental Languages in graduate school before spending several years in Japan as a student of Zen Buddhism. Snyder recaps in *The Real Work: Interviews and Talks*, the emotion he had towards nature in his childhood days as "an immediate, intuitive, deep sympathy with the natural world which was not taught to me by anyone. In that sense, nature is my guru" (Snyder, *The Real Work* 92). Snyder shared views similar to those of Aldo Leopold, Joseph Wood Krutch, and many others in the group of nature writers. In *The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964–1979*, Snyder describes human life and the requisites necessary for a harmonious life in connection with nature:

I have had a very moving, profound perception a few times that everything was alive...and that on one level, there is no hierarchy of qualities in the life of a stone or a weed is as completely beautiful and authentic, wise and valuable as the life of, say, an Einstein (Snyder, *The Real Work* 17).

Snyder sounds very much like Krutch, and he concluded that “we are part of everything” (Snyder, *The Real Work* 79). The first two poetry collections, *Riprap* (1959) and *Myths & Texts* (1960), are miniature narratives capturing Snyder’s travels and life in association with the natural world. These two collections represent the quest for freedom from the urbanity of America. Snyder after returning back to America, resides in a hundred-acre ranch near the Yuba River in Sierra Nevada. Snyder’s interest in Buddhism has become an essential part in his poetry. Snyder recommends meditation as a plausible path for attaining enlightenment by disowning the material pleasures and embracing the eternal (Poetry Foundation). Along with Buddhism, Snyder incorporated anthropology and so-called primitive cultures in his works and attempted to reverse myths and rituals as essential demonstrations of man-in-nature and nature-in-man.

Snyder considers a poet as a medicine man or a healer who is the messenger of the Earth. Such a poet sings songs of the Earth and tries to connect human with the Earth. Snyder acts like a shaman by including oral traditions in his poetic style to disseminate his views. Snyder’s poetry aims at developing an ecological mind in his readers. The poetic collection, *Turtle Island* brims with the ideas of improving ecological consciousness and it won the much-coveted Pulitzer Prize in 1974. The collection consists of five dozen poems with clarity and precision. The poems in this collection aims at the rediscovery of the land and the ways through which one can

become a native of that place. The poems also try to foreground the different types of energy pathways that sustain life.

Snyder's expertise can be seen in his prose writings as well. Most of his prose discourses depict his commitment towards society and his attachment towards the influences that had attuned his writing career. The essays included in *The Practice of the Wild* (1990), illustrate Gary Snyder's connection with Buddhism, human life, and wildness of nature. These essays, delineate the ideology of Snyder regarding wildness and the connection between nature, human and the non-human world. This work is accepted as an authentic work for understanding the nuances of nature, place, human and wilderness. The prose collections like *Earth House Hold* (1969), *A Place in Space* (1995), and *Back on the Fire: Essays* (2007) clearly portray the fluid and original thought of Gary Snyder.

Timothy Gray in his work, *Gary Snyder and the Pacific Rim: Creating Countercultural Community*, describes a new word, 'ecospatial orientation', that denotes the process through which human beings understand place, understand how place operates in the literary texts and how they read it. Just as ecospatiality helps us to bridge the conceptual gap between space and nature, this ecospatial orientation addresses the gap between the physical and the discursive, between nature and culture (Gray, *Gary Snyder and the Pacific Rim* 4). Snyder's works permeates with ecospatial orientation and is imbued with reverence for nature, culture and place. Snyder's connection with nature and its unique presentation through his works reflects his earnest attempt in developing a new environmental ethic that can be followed for the preservation of nature and its resources. Snyder's addiction with Buddhism framed his thoughts and writing style to a large extent.

In *A Controversy of Poets*, Snyder offered his assessment of his art. As a poet, he wrote,

I hold the most archaic values on earth. They go back to the late Paleolithic: the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power-vision in solitude, the terrifying initiation and rebirth, the love and ecstasy of the dance, the common work of the tribe. I try to hold both history and wilderness in mind, that my poems may approach the true measure of things and stand against the imbalance and ignorance of our times (Snyder, *A Controversy of Poets* 421).

Snyder reconsiders self and nature in the following lines and describes how poetry enters his mind when he is in closeness with nature:

How Poetry Comes to Me

It comes blundering over the

Boulders at night, it stays

Frightened outside the

Range of my campfire

I go to meet it at the

Edge of the light (Snyder, *Gary Snyder Reader* 57).

Here, Snyder feels that poetry comes into his mind with the acquaintance of the animal world. Poetry comes from the meeting of the animal world at the edge of the light. This light brings the animal closer and keeps it away. It is also the region where the distinction between animal and human gets diminished, and the poetry comes into his mind. The speaker clears his mind from all kinds of dualities, and he writes about a variety of creatures and becomes one with nature.

Snyder's poetry picturises fictitious and legendary allegories from various texts and spiritual or sacred experiences from his life too. The uniqueness of his

poetry lies in the use of free verse infused with the influences he had from stalwarts like Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound and also from Japanese haiku. Prominent in his first two books of poems, *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems* (1959) and *Myths and Texts* (1960), are images and experiences drawn from his work as a logger and ranger in the U.S. Pacific Northwest. In *The Back Country* (1967) and *Regarding Wave* (1969), the fusion of religion into everyday life reflects Snyder's increasing interest in Eastern philosophies. The Pulitzer winning collection, *Turtle Island* (1974), *Axe Handles* (1983), *Earth House Hold* (1969) and *The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964–1979* (1980) are some of his later collections.

Snyder's prose collection, *The Old Ways* (1977) illustrates the different facets associated with tribal life; *He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village* outlines the Haida Indian myth; and *Passage Through India* (1984) renders his experiences of Asian Pilgrimage. Snyder published *Left Out in the Rain* (1986), *No Nature* (1992) and *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (1996), that secured Bollingen Prize in 1997.

Snyder published *Danger on Peaks* in 2004, the collection of poems that brought nature to the limelight and triggered the inner consciousness of the reader to respect nature. The poetic collection, *This Present Moment*, was published in 2005. Gary Snyder's non-fiction works include *The Great Clod: Notes and Memoirs on Nature and History in East Asia* (2016), *Distant Neighbours: The Selected Letters of Wendell Berry and Gary Snyder* (2014). Snyder received the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize in 2008.

Deep Ecology is recent branch of ecological philosophy or Ecosophy that considers humankind as an integral part of the environment. The expression 'Deep Ecology' introduced by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and was given a theoretical foundation in 1973. Deep Ecology gives importance to non-human species,

different cycles of nature and ecosystem as a whole. The core principle of Deep Ecology, as cited by Arne Naess in his article “The Shallow and the Deep”, is his idea of ‘Biospherical Egalitarianism’, that gives importance to humanity and the environment where everything has “the equal right to live and blossom” (Naess 4). Deep Ecology inculcates the element of ecological wisdom through deep experience, interrogation and dedication. By practicing these three requisites, a new interconnected system can be established for bracing each other. Deep Ecology is the philosophy that has evolved, but is consistent in its ideas of being, thought processes and actions that lead to a harmonious existence filled with wisdom (Naess 4). Arne Naess’s seminal philosophy of egalitarianism states that a person is a part of nature and is only a relational junction within the total field. The process of identification expands this junction and becomes capable of understanding the ‘self’ (atman) as the ‘Self’ (Brahman) (Morton, *Ecology* 103).

The main doctrine of Deep Ecology is that the human beings are an integral part of the earth. The human beings need to develop a kind of self-realisation that is required for nurturing an eco-centric mind. Deep Ecology acknowledges the innate quality of all living beings and considers human beings as one among all beings. Eventually, deep ecological awareness can be considered akin to spiritual consciousness that promotes the aspect of belonging and interconnectedness. According to Arne Naess, “The essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions” (Capra, *The Web of Life* 7). Deep Ecology offers a philosophical basis for environmental activism by guiding the activities of human beings that lead to self-destruction and, in turn, the environment around them. Deep Ecology and environment maintain that the actions of the modern generation threaten the global ecological well-being. According to Dreese, “Deep Ecology challenges the hierarchy

that has polarised humans and nature and advocates a bio-centric perspective, which acknowledges the mutually reciprocal relationship required for sustainable ecosystem” (Dreese, *Ecocriticism* 5). Deep Ecology proposes drastic changes in our habits of consumption, not only to avert catastrophe but as moral and spiritual awakening (Waugh, *Literary Theory and Criticism* 536).

Eco-Buddhism is an American initiative to discuss and practice authentically the Buddhist responses to the present environmental problems. One of the essential tenets of Buddhism is to live in harmony with nature. We can see this intimacy between humans and natural world by envisioning the life of the Buddha. All pertinent events in his life are associated with rural backgrounds and trees. From his birth onwards, his meditative state, his enlightenment, and his death had taken place under different trees. The Buddha explained the Noble Eight-Fold Path to his disciples categorised under right understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. First two promote wisdom, that is the capacity to visualise the basic nature of entities directly. The third, fourth and fifth are ethical, and the other three aim at concentration. So, in seeking to apply the Buddha Dharma to the areas of environment, we have to look for the underlying principles that are appropriate to the very different world (Nyanatiloka, *The Word of the Buddha* 32).

In the introductory part of Allen Hunt Badiner’s book, *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, Badiner talks about Buddhism as “the religion before religion,” which means that anyone of any faith can practice it. The dharma, the teaching of Buddhism, is about a way to end suffering by facing the existing circumstances with equanimity and to resolve to do our best (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xiii). Badiner is of the opinion that Dharma is a powerful companion for us on our journey from egocentricity to ecocentricity and a true greening of

ourselves (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xiv). Badiner also explains the Buddhist concept of mindful living that helps human beings to maintain their relationship with nature. This awareness opens our perception to the interdependence and fragility of all life and our indebtedness to countless beings, living and dead, past and present, near and far (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xv). Badiner opines that if there is any kind of authentic identity in Buddhism, it is ecology itself, which is a massive, interdependent, self-causing dynamic energy against a backdrop of ceaseless change (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xv).

Allan Hunt Badiner mentions the Gaia hypothesis of scientist James Lovelock, who, while observing the air, was able to apprehend the dependent co-origination in the self-controlling changing atmosphere of Earth. As per the hypothesis of Lovelock, “the Earth is a homeostatic living organism that coordinates its vital systems to compensate for threatening environmental changes” (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvi). According to the novelist, William Golding, Lovelock named the hypothesis as Gaia Hypothesis, after Gaia, the Greek goddess of Earth. The essence of the Gaia Principle is unity, and the differences and variety in nature are to be nurtured and preserved for survival (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvi). Lovelock has pointed out that a perfect understanding of the Gaia will become ‘a scientifically verifiable religion’ (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvii). This religion or faith is a composite of Buddhism, Deep Ecology and Feminism and could be called as ‘Dharma Gaia’ (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvii). The word Dharma originated from the Sanskrit word ‘dhr’ (that which is established firmly and real) and so the term ‘Dharma Gaia’ means ‘the teaching of the living earth’ (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvii). Buddha believed in the ethical development of an individual, which is one of the prerequisites for mastering the mind. ‘Dharma Gaia’, or earth consciousness, brings ecologists and Buddhists under a common

platform to search for the spiritual roots of the ecological crisis. In general, it intends to exhibit the necessity to reinstate human abilities of discernment and to acknowledge the fact that human beings are intricately tied to everything else in the universe.

Allan Hunt Badiner, in his book *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, prescribes the conversion of egocentricity into eco-centricity and reaffirms the Buddhist concept of ‘Prathithya Samutpada’ or the “dependent co-origination or condition coproduction or the great wheel of causation is the heart of Buddhist understanding. It suggests that all objects and beings exist interdependently, and not independently” (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvi). This is the emptiness of ‘Sunyata’. which means nothing has a separate existence (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvi). In a Buddhist perception, everything is alive and influences everything else (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvi). ‘Prathithya Samutpada’ is known as the law of cause-effect relationship. No entity is independent in absolute terms. Everything depends for its existence on other things. ‘Prathithya Samutpada’ is known as the Law of Dependent Origination. If we ignore the signals of the body, we remain unaware; unconscious reaction begins toward the sensation, a momentary liking or disliking, which develops into craving or aversion (Krishna, *The Buddha* 143).

This idea is typified in the simile of Indra’s Net on the roof of the palace of God Indra, which comprises of a net of interlaced jewels. When light falls on these jewels, each gem reflects the whole cosmos and every other jewel in the net. In this mesmerising vision, we can imagine the interdependence of all processes (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xvi). From this understanding of the cosmos, it is quite clear that by harming nature, we mistreat ourselves. Any kind of brutality thrust on nature completely degrades human beings altogether.

The Buddhist ideal emphasises a harmonious relationship between humans and nature and the basic principle of non-violence. Ahimsa or harmlessness does not mean that we should restrain from the use of the resources offered by earth with the fear of inflicting harm on nature. We must use nature judiciously, and it becomes a part of our spiritual life and has a positive effect on our minds. By mindfulness, Buddha means that one should be aware of their thoughts and should know how to sway them and make them clear, positive and focused. Nature cannot be understood merely as a commodity, a resource; it can only be understood in terms of romance. Emerson believes in the sanctity, spell and enchantments of nature. Emerson is of the opinion that richer aesthetic experiences are possible in forest and fields. There is always a scope for enjoyment, more to see, smell, touch, taste, more sense of place, space, time and proportion (Palmer, *Fifty Great Thinkers on Environment* 95).

The inner transformation of the mind is an inevitable part of environmental practices, and the two traditions in Mahayana Buddhism, Zen and Tantric Buddhism, are apposite to ecological crisis. Mahayana is the excellent vehicle that carries us across the ocean of suffering to salvation. It accentuates love, kindness and compassion, thus underscores the common man's capacity for enlightenment. In Badiner's view, Buddhism offers a well-defined structure of ethics and guidelines for ecological living. The first tool for improving ecological consciousness is meditation, through which the practitioner becomes aware of the environment, which leads to the expansion of one's own identity, including all circumstances and conditions of life. Through this awareness, any person can find ways to keep away from irreversible change and self-destruction (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xviii).

There are remarkable parallels between Ecology and Zen Buddhism. Both philosophies try to foreground interdependence of all things in this universe. The

ecologists and Zen Buddhists challenge the antagonistic attitudes of men towards nature and view natural systems as multi-dependent and interacting entities.

The thesis titled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” aims to do an analysis of the poetic collections of Gary Snyder: *Myths and Texts* (1960), *Rip Rap and Cold Mountain Poems* (1959), *Turtle Island* (1974), *Axe Handles* (1983) and *Mountains and Rivers without End* (1996) to list a few on the thematic backgrounds of Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism. Snyder’s career is based on his writings about nature. It is entirely different from the conventional and dominant cultural discourses, and his commitment towards society and the presentation of nature in accordance with his perception has been instrumental in shaping a new modern environmental thought.

In Snyder’s 1974 Pulitzer winning volume, *Turtle Island*, most of the poems deal with the themes of Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism. The collection contains almost five dozen poems with occasional prose pieces. The language used is very clear, lyrical, and sometimes mystical, and a few with political implications. The name Turtle Island is an old new name for the continent created based on various myths popularised by the ethnic people who lived there for a millennium. All poems share a common vision of the rediscovery of this land and the paths through which we can become natives of the land for the first time. The collection of poems demonstrates place and the metabolic pathways that assist life. The whole collection gives us the importance of maintaining interconnectedness in the world and a revelation that we are a part of this universe.

*Mountains and Rivers Without End* (1996), titled after a Chinese sideways scroll painting got published in 1996, is an epic celebration of nature and humanity. Snyder’s effort was to exhibit the social function of ancient epics, encompassing East Asian landscape paintings and his own experiences. The influence of Zen Buddhism,

Asian art and drama, and the history of Gaia reverberates throughout the collection. Snyder's dream vision of cities, wilderness in city landscapes and his positive approach towards city life are clearly visible in the poems. His interest in Native American performances and his indifference towards the Beats who were against the Industrial Revolution is also depicted. The language used is simple and striking, and it touches upon geology, prehistory and mythology.

Snyder's aesthetic and spiritual growth was aided by his experiences as a fire lookout on the Crater Mountains in 1952, and his involvement as a trail crew member in Yosemite National Park in 1955. The experiences that he gained through his life in close connection with nature inspired him to write the poetic collection, *Riprap and the Cold Mountain Poems* (1959). It reveals Snyder's thought and writing processes during the 1950s. This collection originated while he was a trail crew member in 1955. The whole work is dedicated to the workers with whom he got acquainted while working in Yosemite Park. They were well-versed in the requirements of land and exhibited their skills by demonstration. Rip-rap includes the tradition of oral dissemination and celebrates the work of a community.

Gary Snyder reveals the importance of ancient roots and community life in *Axe Handles* (1983). Descriptions of the importance of community living and the transfer of ancient cultural and moral teachings in families are found in this collection. The collection, *Axe Handles*, comprises of the 71 poems included in three sections of the work- "Loops", "Little Songs for Gaia" and "Nets", with perfect clarity. An admixture of community development, anthropology, language and scientific elements can be deciphered from Snyder's collection *Axe Handles*. The collection, *Axe Handles*, reflects the actual life that Snyder led in his local community and is dedicated to San Juan

Ridge, his living place in Northern California, which he often referred to as the watershed in Sierra Nevada.

Snyder, along with his dedication towards ecology, he was fascinated by mythology. *Myths and Texts* (1960) is an earlier collection of poetry, where he says that myth is something that places people in a cultural and physical context and gives them a sense of presence in place and time. According to Snyder it is the duty of a mytho-poet to constantly reenergise the stories that talk about our origin of our history. It also gives us an idea about ourselves and our past. In this sense it becomes a social endeavour and a creation of a novel social mythology. This collection is in the form of three sections based on our culture and weaknesses. Snyder talks about two different types of human knowledge, symbols (myths) and sense impressions (texts). In *Myths and Texts*, he tries to project the destruction of American nature with reference to the greed of the public. In the section, “Logging”, he speaks about his own experiences as logger. The section “Hunting”, is based on the ascetic life of Indian tribes and his deep respect for such a life is clear through his descriptions of myths and tradition of the hunters. The third section, “Burning” speaks about the Buddhist principle of self-awareness. His interest in Buddhism, Hindu myths and Indian traditions coupled with his own life experiences form the major crux of the collection.

### **Research Questions**

The thesis tries to answer the major research questions listed below.

What are the striking similarities between Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism in Gary Snyder's poetry? How are these philosophies embodied in Snyder's poetry, and how do these philosophies help in the protection of the natural world from the harmful effects of anthropocentrism?

How the sense of contentment and compassion is represented in Gary Snyder's poetry by embracing Eco-Buddhist perspective?

How does Gary Snyder find the connection between Buddhism and nature in his poetry?

How is the Buddhist concept of Dharma Gaia incorporated in Snyder's poetry, and how it helps to examine the spiritual roots of ecological crisis? How are Buddhist concepts of non-dualism, no-self, interdependence, dharma, and mindfulness encapsulated in Snyder's poetry and how do these help in altering the negative attitudes of humans towards nature and also how does it lead to the inner transformation of the mind?

How does Gary Snyder use both the philosophies of Deep Ecology and Zen Buddhism in his poetry?

What is the relevance of the principles of Hindu philosophies and Buddhism in tackling the problems of the environment, and how is it presented through the poems of Gary Snyder?

What are the solutions proposed by Gary Snyder and his practice of Eco-anarchism as a pathway for sustaining harmony with nature?

### **Objectives**

The thesis aims to analyse the Eco-Buddhist deconstruction of self and nature in the poetry of Gary Snyder. A complete deconstruction of the self is required for acquiring a mind that is free from all kinds of barriers. Only such a mind can understand the varieties and requirements of all systems existing in this universe. The very understanding of nature as something that includes living and non-living things is entirely dismantled by Snyder's likening of nature to all systems functioning in the universe. This thought is itself revolutionary, and he was able to bring out a religion that reveres and appreciate nature in a novel manner.

The study aims to underline the anthropological and religious influences in Gary Snyder's poetry. Snyder had studied Anthropology at Reed College and also studied and practiced Zen Buddhism in Japan for a few years and he had made use of these influences in his writings. These studies have helped him to voice against the present anthropocentric culture that had led to the destruction of nature to the maximum. Snyder, through his interest in anthropology, has tried to create an environment where equal respect is granted to all living and non-living entities in the universe. Snyder tried to introduce an all-inclusive culture through his writings. His interactions with the people of his native land had also framed his notions about man. Snyder was a person who had an intricate connection with his native land and he stressed the need for rootedness and sense of place.

The study explores the politics and practice of environmental advocacy in American literature and culture through the works of Gary Snyder. It also examines Gary Snyder's personal approach to delineating the relationship between nature and the sacred. A probe is also done to find out how ecology is connected to spirituality. The thesis probes into the Beat Movement during the 1950's and the popularisation of Zen Buddhism in the US. The study aims to understand the religious influences on Gary Snyder and to consider Eco-theology as a means to solve the present environmental crisis with reference to the works of Gary Snyder.

### **Research Methodology**

This thesis entitled "Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder's Poetry" is multidisciplinary in nature. The theoretical precepts used in this study are Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism. Both theoretical precepts have common environmental ethics that can be practiced to preserve the harmony of nature. The thesis uses the concepts of Eco-Buddhism and

Deep Ecology as methodological tools to understand how nature and human beings are connected in Gary Snyder's poetry. Eco-Buddhism attempts to provide a Buddhist response to the present environmental crisis. Living in harmony with nature is a crucial Buddhist practice. In general, it suggests the requirement of restoring the ability of human beings to understand nature and to instil the concept of interconnectedness for creating a better world.

Padmasiri De Silva, in his essay, "Buddhist Environmental Ethics", states that the need for an environmental ethic that is required to change the worldview of the individual is a Buddhist critique of the Self (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* 14). The two plausible perspectives towards nature found in Buddhism are mastering and harnessing natural resources for human utility obtained by humanising the habitat and a contemplative attitude in which we look at nature as our own vision of peace and tranquillity (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* 15). By combining these two attitudes, a feasible Buddhist stance can be formed that is in contrast with the aggressive and violent attitudes towards the environment. By practising Buddhism, one develops a sense of respect and gratitude towards nature. A Buddhist is capable of viewing the world with equanimity and is aware of the transience of all systems existing in the universe. Buddhism calls for a modest concept of living, simplicity, frugality and an emphasis on what is essential-in short, a basic ethic of restraint (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* 15).

In the book *An Introduction to Environmental Psychology*, Proshansky Ittleon refers to a new environmental psychology where the human psychological aspects and their physical environment are examined to find out a broader meaning in the relationship between humans and nature. Proshansky says that,

In this sense, not only the environment but also an ethos is preserved. For the extent to which we achieve an identity in the environment is not simply in the

prudent use we make of it, but in the human values we express through our willingness to shape it to an ethical end. Environmental man is not only critical in relation to the ecosystem but to his own sense of self (Ittleson, *An Introduction to Environmental Psychology* 9).

A similar idea is also referred to in the book *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of all Beings*, the co-author, John Seed states that the philosophy of nature called Deep Ecology questions the fundamental premises and beliefs of contemporary civilisation. It is a revolutionary idea that projects the importance of social existence and changes in the thought processes of the individual living in a community. Deep Ecology maintains the requirement of a complete change in the consciousness for maintaining the life-supporting systems in this universe (Seed, et al. 9). Arne Naess has called this perspective the ‘ecological self’ that has the qualities of aliveness, energy, interconnectedness, changeability, beingness, sentience and ultimately mystery about it (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* 25).

Stephen Batchelor, in his article “The Sands of the Ganges” views ecological problems as spiritual problems and suggests Buddhist principles of no-self and interdependence as the possible solutions for creating an aware mind. Batchelor prefers an inner transformation of mind for creating a better environment and validates that the two traditions in Mahayana Buddhism, Zen and Tantric Buddhism can help us to overcome the present environmental crisis. Mahayana is the ‘great vehicle’ that carries us across the ocean of suffering to salvation (Batchelor 31). It stresses on love, kindness and compassion and places greater emphasis on the laity’s capacity for enlightenment. There are remarkable parallels between ecology and Zen Buddhism. Gary Snyder, as an advocate of these two principles, emphasises the correlation and coalition of all things and accentuate the artificiality of binaries

existing in this universe. Zen Buddhism has moved beyond cause-effect analysis to view natural systems as multidependent and interacting complexes (Batchelor 31).

Through his works, Gary Snyder beautifully unveils the connection between soul, soil and society.

Gary Snyder tries to combine Buddhism, ecology and radical politics to develop an interdependent society where all these three elements define each other and work in a rhythmic structure that leads to the new concept of Eco-Social Buddhism. Snyder has deep respect for nature, and he feels that it is the duty of the inhabitants of the land to preserve the harmony between nature and humans. In *Axe Handles*, Snyder highlights the prominence of community life in society. This concept is akin to the Sangha in Buddhism, where the people practice their paths together. In Buddhism, the community includes native people, all varieties of plants and animals, environmental aspects, and the presence of dead ancestors and spirits. The Earth is considered a living being, and the realisation that even plants have their own rights is a part of Buddhist belief. The community can include rocks and springs that have given birth to civilising ancestors (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* 25). This is known as the net of interrelatedness in which each element is celebrated. The transmission of knowledge, culture, tradition and beliefs takes place between the ancestors and the contemporary generation in *Axe Handles*.

In the collection of poetry, *Turtle Island*, the idea of a sense of place reverberates throughout. Doug Codiga in his essay, “Zen Practice and Sense of Place” speaks about the sense of place as “the feeling you have for where you live, is ultimately a recognition of selflessness in the local ecology. Sense of place may range from highly subjective feeling to a deep look into our fundamental identity with reality, and it is our relationship with the local ecology that desperately needs rehabilitation” (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* 106). Snyder shares a similar vision where he exhorts the rediscovery of

the imaginary land Turtle Island and hopes that we can become the natives of the land without the feeling of a foreigner.

In the book *Practice of the Wild*, Gary Snyder delineates the wilderness as a space where the wild energy is completely exhibited and the diverse species, living or non-living, flourish as per their order. So, a wild system is an assembly of all beings, and human beings are just a part of that whole (Snyder, *PW* 12). According to Thoreau, we need the tonic of wildness to lead a satisfactory life. It is human nature to go in search for the hidden, curious and unspoiled things and knowledge. We can never have enough of nature and we cannot find the depth of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of nature's inexhaustible vigour, vast and titanic features (Thoreau, *Walden* 211).

Richard Schneider, in his work, *Thoreau's Sense of Place: Essays in American Environmental Writing*, discusses the concepts of wild and wilderness. According to Schneider, life consists of wildness and it is housed in wilderness. It is hard to dissociate the two concepts and to accept one without the other (Schneider, *Thoreau's Sense of Place* 15). As Emerson wrote to Muir in 1872, the solitude of the 'wilderness' is a sublime mistress, but an intolerable wife (Schneider, *Thoreau's Sense of Place* 25). Schneider speaks about the spaces of wilderness set aside sacred spaces - sanctuaries, temples and cathedrals- to serve both as private spaces for the ecstatic development of the self and as shared public stages for the performance of the drama of American self-making, preserving the original paradise from which America can measure its declension and to which it can always look for its ideals (Schneider, *Thoreau's Sense of Place* 24). But Schneider states that nature is not elsewhere, but everywhere, and all the land is holy, not just a few best places (Schneider, *Thoreau's Sense of Place* 24).

Snyder is always preoccupied with the concepts of nature, the wild, and wilderness. Snyder says that freedom is inherently connected with wildness, and human beings need to embrace it at any cost. Snyder always believes in a new method of reconciliation for solving the present environmental crisis. It is to bridge the gap between human culture and the wilderness culture. In Snyder's ideal, nature is vast and human beings should not limit the faculties of nature. Without preconceived notions, nature needs to be left free and human beings should stop fighting with nature and need to live within it by accepting each other. In *Nobody Home: Writing, Buddhism and Living in Places*, Snyder describes wilderness as "the name of the process of impermanence and constant flow of change of phenomena, as constantly going on without human intervention that. It is a simple insight really" (Snyder, *Nobody Home* 54). This concept of wilderness is a recurring theme in many of his poems. In the poetic collection *Myths and Texts*, this concept of Eco-Social Buddhism is perfectly presented. The collection is divided into three sections: "Logging", "Hunting" and "Burning". All poems in this collection assert that all social issues and environments are interrelated, and primacy is given to both individuals and the whole. This science of reciprocity of things is known as relational holism, where the individual and the whole are considered the same, and any attempt to make one primary will destroy the harmony. All entities in a system are valuable, and there is no centre or authority for them (Payne, *How Much is Enough* 96).

Bioregion is based on the principle of rootedness, which means that there is an intrinsic connection between the land and human beings. The term 'Bioregion' was coined by Allen Van Newkirk and popularised by Peter Berg. The life forms and the topography of that place without human intervention define a bioregion. Such a region will have unique characteristic features, like climatic seasons, land structures, water

resources, soil and plants, animals, and people who are the inevitable part in a community. A bioregion in a nutshell, is a self-sufficient and decentralised entity. Bioregionalism is a movement that advocates the uniqueness of bioregions with the aim of restoring the lost connection between land and humans. This movement also aims to present the antagonistic attitude of the modern world towards nature and culture and how these notions can be rectified to nurture a harmonious relationship with nature. In the discourse of Bioregionalism, several key terms like dwelling, sustainability and reinhabitation can be found (Lynch, et al. *The Bioregional Imagination* 3-7). Gary Snyder is an advocate of bioregion and believes in rootedness and in the interconnection between all forms of life and natural entities. This concept is clearly depicted in many of his poems in different collections. Snyder in *Nobody Home: Writing, Buddhism and Living in Places*, expounds on Bioregionalism as, it is simply the hope that people will pay attention to where they are and also to remind them that nature happens locally. If anyone wants to study nature, they only have to go outside the door. It is something specific and close to the person (Snyder, *Nobody Home* 54).

Gary Snyder has used Eco-Buddhist Anarchism in his concept of bioregion. By Eco-Buddhist Anarchism, Gary Snyder gives importance to self-government, which is devoid of hierarchy for protecting nature and natural habitats. Through this technique, Snyder aims to break down the existing negative views of nature in the society and to create a situation where nature will be accepted as a divine being and no human will dare to harm nature.

Murray Bookchin initiated the concept of Social Ecology and it is a libertarian concept that provides a proper structure for direct democracy, human societies, and a great sense of attachment with earth (Payne, *How Much is Enough* 87). Especially in *Turtle Island*, Snyder tries to bring about a connection with one's own land, and he

exhorts the people to inhabit the place and become one with the land and its resources. Snyder is of the view that all things in the universe need to be given the right to vote and the right to exist with egalitarian rights (Snyder, *TI* 76).

Gary Snyder is indebted to the spiritual tenets of Eastern culture and Zen Buddhism. Most of his poems are spiritually oriented, and an effort has been made to incorporate some Buddhist texts and Hindu philosophical texts to evaluate the poet's spiritual connections and ideologies. Some of the Buddhist works considered are Allen Hunt Badiner's work *Dharma Gaia: Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, *One Hand Clapping: A Collection of Zen Stories*, *Silence: The Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise*, and *The Art of Living* by Thich Nhat Hanh, Martine Batchelor's edited work, *Buddhism and Ecology*. The Hindu philosophical texts taken for doing the evaluation are *Ramana Maharshi: Sage of the People* by Anupa Lal, *Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth* by Ranchor Prime, and *The Religious Mind*, by J. Krisnamurthi.

### **Literary Review and Research Gaps**

Snyder's poetry and prose have been featured in various texts and anthologies. Snyder has written afterwards and prefaces for various books and collections connected with Buddhism and poetry. Many of his poems have been translated into various languages and his writing style has often invited fierce criticisms from critics and scholars.

"Gary Snyder and the Nature of Nature" is an interpretation of Snyder's poetry of nature and wildness. The study tries to foreground the exact definition of the natural and the wild. The author, Robin Chen-Hsing Tsai tries to unearth Gary Snyder's ideas of representation and how these ideas are represented through his poetry.

The article “Gary Snyder, His Deep Ecology and Zen Emptiness” by Dr. Sarangadhar Baral, Nikita Suman, Malsawma and Sourav Upadhyaya elaborates on Gary Snyder’s life and his poetry. This article discusses Snyder’s practice of Zen Buddhism and deep ecological concerns employed in his poetry. This article expounds on Snyder’s practice of Zen Buddhism in Japan for ten years (1956-1967), that gave him sufficient insight into the connection between life and the earth as a whole. The study elucidates on a specific way of Zen Buddhism, that is the path of emptiness, which is the absolute Zen concept of being. The study highlights the performative nature of Snyder who believes that nature is not a book, but a performance.

The article “The Ethics of Translation: Gary Snyder and Chinese Literature” by Robin Chang-Hsing Tsai tries to foreground the influence of ancient Chinese tradition and poetic tradition on Gary Snyder in moulding his poetic career. The author discusses Snyder’s ideal of ‘post-humanism’, that includes everything in this universe. The article also illustrates the importance of Snyder’s environmental advocacy by incorporating Eastern eco-centric views to provide solutions for the problems of Western ego-centric world. The article portrays a discussion of classical Chinese poetic works influenced by Buddhism and other connected philosophies. In this article, prominence is given to the translated Chinese texts by Snyder and how it helped him to enrol himself as an environmental advocate.

*Gary Snyder’s Green Dharma* by Thomas Harmsworth throws light on the environmental studies that criticises the Western civilisation responsible for the present environmental degradation. Harmsworth tries to present the Eastern religious traditions and cultures as an antidote for the existing anthropocentric world. The work studies religious undertones in Snyder’s poetry that he had harnessed through the

practice of Buddhism. The author remarks that Snyder created a new kind of environmental ethic for bridging the gap between the cultures of East and West. The first part of the book discusses about the connection between Snyder and the Beat Generation poets like Kenneth Rexroth, Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, Philip Whalen and Jack Kerouac and their intimacy with Buddhism and nature. The second part of the book examines the poetic translations done by Snyder of the Tang Dynasty poet Han Shan. The study finds that the concepts of wilderness and Buddhism are embedded in the translated works and other poems written by Snyder. The writers like D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts were influenced by Snyder's Buddhism which aimed at creating a place where people are connected locally with their land. The next section of the book tries to outline Snyder's understanding of Hua-yen Buddhism and Western scientific ecology during the 1970s and 1980s. There is also a section in the book that discusses a prose work entitled, *The Hokkaido Book*, based on environmental ethics of the East. The study also examines the poems of *Mountains and Rivers Without End* which had the influence of Chinese landscape painting and Japanese Nō drama,

“The Representation of the Orient in the Poetry of Gary Snyder” by Enas Abdel Aziz discusses the Eastern influences in Snyder's poetry. It examines how Gary Snyder as an orientalist, represents China and Japan to occidental culture. The first part “Orientalism: History and Theory in Practice” discusses the concept of Orientalism. The article expounds on how Edward Said's Orientalism can be applied to Gary Snyder's poetry. The second section, “Translating Oriental Poetry” is an exploration of translated Japanese and Chinese works of Snyder. The third Part “The Occidental Appreciation of Oriental Art” contains the analysis of Gary Snyder's

*Mountains and Rivers Without End*. In the fourth part, “The Adoption of Oriental Religion”, the influence of Zen Buddhism in the poetry of Gary Snyder is explored.

*The Transatlantic Eco-Romanticism of Gary Snyder* by Piage Tovey tracks down the connections between Gary Snyder and the renowned poets of the Romantic Age, Wordsworth, Blake, Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau. This study elucidates the problems of urbanisation and Gary Snyder’s connection with his antecedents.

“Towards Biocentrism: An Evaluation of Deep Ecological Consciousness in Selected Poems of Gary Snyder and Ted Hughes” Ph.D. thesis by Remi Cherian George is a comparative study trying to throw light on the works of Gary Snyder and Ted Hughes. Chapter two of the thesis entitled “An Evaluation of Deep Ecological Consciousness in Gary Snyder’s *Turtle Island*”. Chapter three of the thesis entitled “A Deep Ecological Decoding of Ted Hughes’s River”. Chapter four of the thesis entitled “Bio-centrism in Gary Snyder and Ted Hughes” helps the readers to comprehend bio-centrism in Snyder and Hughes. The thesis thus presents a comparative study of both American and British literature.

The thesis titled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” is divided into six chapters with an introduction, three main chapters, conclusion and recommendations. Chapter one is the introductory chapter, introduces Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology, provides details about the author, and details of his works. In this chapter, a general introduction to Gary Snyder and his associations with various movements and philosophies are included, along with the awards he had received. This chapter gives a brief description of the poetic collections of Gary Snyder. This chapter gives a precise description of the research problem, objectives of the study, research methodology, literary review, research gaps and a brief note on chapter divisions.

The second chapter entitled, “Bioregionalism in Gary Snyder: An Exploration of Ecological Identity and Interconnectedness” attempts to analyse how Gary Snyder uses Buddhism, ecology and radical politics in his works. All these three elements are interrelated and define each other. Snyder’s Eco-Social Buddhism, political orientation, political critique, social ideals, and various forms of activism are explored. A probe is done into the specific ecological views of Gary Snyder and how his environmentalism gets along with his political orientation. This chapter also tries to bring out the significance of Buddhism in Gary Snyder’s eco-social perspective and exploration of ecological identity and interconnectedness through his poems. A close analysis of his works shows that Snyder has used anarchism throughout; his association with Buddhism and environmentalism has shaped that. All these three elements in the perception of Gary Snyder finds expression in his Bioregionalism. We can also find traces of non-dualism in his approach towards environmental and social issues which is an extension of Mahayana Buddhism.

Chapter three entitled “Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhist Paradigms: A Quest for Contentment and Compassion”, tries to find the parallel connection between Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism and a detailed analysis of Snyder’s poetry is done in the light of these principles. The chapter underlines the quest for contentment and compassion in the poetry of Gary Snyder. Snyder’s elaborate attempts to recast the conventional ideas of nature and his disagreement against the adversary ideas and actions of the public towards their environment is underlined in this chapter. Snyder had made an effort to alter people’s views of nature and their actions. His works showcased novel ways of interacting with nature that could preserve the natural world. For that, he has used the assistance of these two crucial disciplines like Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism.

Chapter four entitled “Religious Influences and Whispers of the Earth in Gary Snyder’s Poetry: A Path Toward Environmental Healing” tries to analyse the views of Gary Snyder with some Hindu religious texts and Buddhist texts to get an idea of various tenets or principles or concepts that can aid in the transformation of our mind to make positive changes in the universe. The world is wallowing under the clutches of industrialisation and commercialisation, and the whole ecosystem is in jeopardy. By mixing the ideas presented in the religious texts and Snyder’s Buddhism, this study tries to gather some possible solutions for the present-day environmental crisis.

Chapter five is the conclusion of the thesis and it presents a comprehensive summary of all findings in the thesis. Gary Snyder’s Eco-Social Buddhism and environmental ideologies in his poetry are elucidated in detail. The deep ecological and Eco-Buddhist analysis of the poetry of Gary Snyder is done in detail. The elements of compassion and the Hindu religious influences in the Eco-Buddhist poetry of Gary Snyder are also explored.

Chapter six outlines the recommendations for further studies related to this area. The thesis “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Analysis of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” is indeed a novel field to explore. This thesis is unique in its organisation and has tried to bring out a religious pathway for solving the present-day eco-crisis. To speak about the further scope of research, the researchers can go for Cultural and Anthropological Studies of Gary Snyder’s Poetry, Eco-feminism in Gary Snyder’s Poetry, Gender Studies and Post-Humanism in Gary Snyder’s Poetry. There is also further scope for extensive research on Snyder’s prose collections.

## **Relevance the Study**

The thesis entitled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” is a unique contribution to the literary field in many aspects. Most of the articles related to Gary Snyder are done by Western researchers and the thematic precepts are more connected with western thought and their locale. This thesis is grounded more on the Indian spiritual texts, and it is a fresh research work with some innovative ideas. The thesis is unique because it expounds on Eco-Buddhism employed in Snyder’s poetry and the analysis is done by connecting Deep Ecology with Buddhism which is not found in other works on Gary Snyder. In articles on Gary Snyder, different ecocritical analysis methods can be seen, but an Eco-Buddhist analysis on the rhymes of contentment and compassion of Gary Snyder is missing from the current academic studies on Snyder. This study has incorporated concepts from Buddhist and Hindu religious texts for analysing the poems of Gary Snyder. This work is very relevant in contemporary academic studies as it stresses the need for a mutualistic connection of human and the natural world. Modern society has lost its ties with nature and is mutilating nature for material purposes. There is a dire necessity to inculcate respect for nature and to use its resources judiciously. This thesis tries to remedy a glaring research gap in this area of study. In the present commercialised world, there is an urgency to save the natural world. For this we have to internalise the views and values upheld by writers like Gary Snyder. Lawrence Buell gave ecocriticism an explicit method to understand the extent to which a work is environmentally oriented. Firstly, the non-living entities are present in order to suggest that human history is an integral part of the natural history. Secondly, the ultimate interest is not of the human beings alone. Thirdly, the obligation and responsibility of human beings to the environment is included in the

work or text. Lastly, some sense of the environment as a process is at least implicit in the text (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 7-8).

Through the poetry of Gary Snyder, we are introduced to new ways of approaching nature and its preservation through novel methods. The present ecological problems and anxieties are due to anthropocentric attitudes and actions done as apart of establishing themselves as superior to nature. Human beings dominate nature and believe that they are above nature and try to control all the functions of nature without respect. According to Scott Slovic, nature writing is a 'literature of hope' in its assumption that the elevation of the consciousness may lead to wholesome political change, but this literature is also concerned, and primarily so, with interior landscapes, with the mind itself (Slovic, *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing* 18). The concepts of Deep Ecology and Buddhism insist on the basic tenet of interdependence and co-dependency. All these are reflected in Gary Snyder's poetry. Snyder has excelled in incorporating the philosophies of Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism in his poetry. Snyder found that it is an effective way to educate the public and raise awareness regarding their encroaches on nature. Gary Snyder's poetry is an expression of contentment and compassion and it is analysed through the lens of Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology.

## **Chapter II**

### **Bioregionalism in Gary Snyder: An Exploration of Ecological Identity and Interconnectedness**

Buddhism and environmentalism are closely connected in terms of principles and activities. These two streams of activism can become viable and useful in reducing the chaotic nature of the present world. They have similar traits in their attitude towards renewal, protection and activities that safeguard the harmony of the universe. Snyder has used both these aspects to frame his activism, and he has become successful in creating radical thoughts and actions.

Gary Snyder wrote early in the 1950s, and from that point onwards, Buddhist environmentalism began in the United States. Gary Snyder has been hailed as the most influential Western Eco-Buddhist writer and activist in the contemporary period. Snyder's environmentalism is different from that of other practitioners. His approach is a composite of broader social critique and a very radical political vision. So, it is more relevant to discuss his eco-social views apart from his environmentalism. Gary Snyder's attitude is similar to that of Asian Buddhist leaders like Sulak Sivaraksa and A.T Ariyaratne. The structure of environmentalism followed by these practitioners was a combination of social, environmental issues, political critique and vision of ideals.

This chapter focuses on Gary Snyder's perspectives on the intersection of ecology, Buddhism and politics and how all these three elements are interrelated and define each other in his poetry. This chapter also delves into Gary Snyder's Eco-Social Buddhism, examining his political orientation, political critique, social ideals, and various forms of activism as represented through his poems. Along with this it

explores Gary Snyder's specific ecological views and examines how his environmentalism aligns with his political orientation.

Gary Snyder makes radical extensions of Leopold's anti-hierarchical and bio-centric perspective, identifying his own position as post-humanist. In his most recent collection of essays, *The Practice of the Wild*, he defines the term as the following:

The "post" in the term posthumanism is on account of the word 'human'. The dialogue to open next would be among all beings, towards a rhetoric of ecological relationships. This is not to put down the human: the "proper study of mankind" is what it means to be human. It is not enough to be shown in school that we are kin to the rest: we have to feel it all the way through. Then we can also be uniquely "human" with no sense of special privilege (Snyder, *PW* 68).

This post-humanist, ecological vision, including such vast and complex subjects, is rooted in Snyder's attention to all living and non-living things in a place. The place, according to Snyder, is a region where environment, society as a whole, and inner realisations occur in a stabilised state. Ecological relationships are found not only in nature, but also among people in communities. Through this rhetoric of ecological relationships, Snyder figures an ecological ideal where nature, community and essential being are hooked together. In one of his best poetic collections, *Turtle Island*, he says that the name "Turtle Island" is the Indian name for North America linked to "creation myths of people living here for a millennium"; and such a name helps us to envision our position promptly in this universe comprising of all forms of life and lifeless entities and communities (Snyder, *TI* i).

Gary Snyder placed the poem "Anasazi" as the first poem in the *Turtle Island* collection with a solid intention. In the poem, Snyder glorifies the descendants of the

ancient desert archaic people of Native America, who were thought to be the predecessors of modern Pueblo Indians. The poem starts by addressing the natives as Anasazi:

Anasazi,  
Anaszi,  
tucked up in clefts in the cliffs  
growing strict fields of corn and beans  
sinking deeper and deeper in Earth  
up to your hips in Gods (Snyder, *TI* 3).

These descendants were well-versed in arboriculture, earthenware manufacturing, basketry, and architectonics and they built their houses on cliffs in peculiar ways without harming nature. They were excellent hunters, gatherers and also cultivated maize and pumpkins. Snyder glorifies the conformity between ancestors and their consensus with nature. All religious and spiritual beliefs were passed on from one generation to another through oral medium. They have a strong belief in the creator and also adhere to the notion that every living thing is a part of the creator. Here, the deep ecological concern of Gary Snyder is brought to light, as he establishes the inherent connection between human beings and the environment in this poem.

Again, in the poem “Without”, Snyder speaks about the power that resides within nature and asserts that it is silent and eternal. The silence of nature has the power to heal the wounds of men. It helps people to choose the right path for enlightening their minds. The human beings can borrow this faculty of nature through mindful meditation:

the silence  
of nature

within.

the power within.

the power without.

the path is whatever passes -no

end in itself (Snyder, *TI* 6).

With the attainment of silence within and outside, a person will get the power to distinguish between right and wrong. This also provides the eternal knowledge of oneness in nature and, in turn, will enable us to find happiness everywhere.

Mindfulness is general recollectedness, not being scatter-brained, whereas awareness means keeping oneself under constant observation, not letting actions, thoughts and feelings rise and fall unnoticed (Heendeniya, *Buddha and his Teachings* 69).

The diverse nature of the environment is glorified in another poem, “Manzantia”, and Snyder suggests natural variety as a prerequisite for developing a healthy lifestyle. Snyder introduced the medicine songs of Coyotes, which are capable of converting young girls and boys into responsible individuals. The other images used in the poem are that of the moon, sun, dogs, woodpecker and hunter. Towards the end of the poem, Snyder says,

Manzantia the tips in fruit,

Clusters of hard green berries

The longer you look

The bigger they seem,

“little apples” (Snyder, *TI* 27).

This poem celebrates the immediate environment, and it can be assessed as a song of flora. The poem also foregrounds the importance of nature in human culture. In a very

reflective poem entitled “On Top”, Snyder instructs us to develop a mind like that of a compost. All the new stuff that is ingrained will find its place on the top layers:

All this new stuff goes on top  
Turn it over turn it over  
Wait and water down.  
From the dark bottom  
Turn it inside out  
Let us spread through, sift down,  
Even.  
Watch it sprout.  
A mind is like a compost (Snyder, *AH* 11).

The ecological concept of interconnectedness is the main crux of the poem, and Snyder advises the readers to develop an open mind and accept everything with dignity and grandeur. In “Jack Rabbit”, Snyder laments over the loss of connection with nature. There is a lack of understanding of the various forms of life. The present generation is not able to identify themselves with the tiny forms of life:

Jackrabbit,  
black-tailed Hare  
by the side of the road,  
hop, stop.  
Great ears shining,  
you know me  
a little. A lot more than I  
know you (Snyder, *MRWE* 31).

Snyder says the jackrabbit knows us better than our knowledge about this little creature. This is really a frightening reality and warns humanity about the difficulties that they are going to face in the near future. The poem, “How to Know Birds” tries to give a kind of revelation to the readers that they know everything about nature, but intentionally or unintentionally they are ignoring the fact. Here, Snyder describes the way to understand different kinds of birds. For that, we have to be aware of the place, time, their movements, the meadows, the forest, whether they are moving in groups or alone and so on. We have to understand the size, speed, flights, eating habits, and the meaning of their calls and songs. After getting acquainted with the characteristics of the bird, we will realise that we already know this bird (Snyder, *TPM* 40). Through this poem, Snyder tries to foreground the inherent connection between human beings and nature.

In the poem “Elwha River”, Snyder cites an incident that took place in a classroom. A teacher asked her students to write an essay, and a female student who was pregnant wrote about the Elwha River, where she used to wait for her lover. The next day, grades were awarded to the students based on their work and the girl was awarded Zero Grade. She enquired about this to her teacher, but the reply that she got from her was quite ridiculous:

The teacher came to me and said “I just don't like you”.

— “Why?”

— “Because I used to be a man”.

The Elwha River, I explained, is a real river, and different from the river I described. Where I had just walked was real, but I wrote a dream river—actually the Elwha doesn't fork at that point.

As I write this now, I must remind myself that there is

another Elwha, the actual Olympic peninsula river, which is not the river I took pains to recollect as real in the dream.

There are no redwoods north of southern

Curry County, Oregon (Snyder, *MRWE* 32).

The poet comes to a painful realisation that there are no redwoods in the country of Oregon. Again, this points out the extinction of certain species from the surface of the earth due to the harmful deeds already done by humanity. Through these poems, Snyder tries to bring out how human beings lose connection with nature and harm it consciously or unconsciously. The few poems analysed above underline the need for recapturing the lost ties with nature. Through these poems, Snyder tries to align the causes and activities of human beings that harm nature. Snyder advocates the need for preserving nature and natural systems to lead a healthy and peaceful life.

Gary Snyder grew up in a family that was radical on both sides. Snyder became a practitioner of Buddhist Anarchism during the 1950's which was an offshoot of the Beat Movement. Snyder did have a unique political orientation and it is reflected in one of his earlier essays, entitled "Buddhist Anarchism" which was published in 1961, while he was studying Zen Buddhism in Japan. In this essay, he has described these two traditions that originated in two different parts of the world. Snyder says that the mercy of the West was social revolution, and the mercy of the East was an individual insight into basic self. Even though anarchism is not connected with Buddhism conventionally, in order to understand the Buddhist environmentalism of Gary Snyder, we have to touch up on the tradition of anarchism. We can find such traits in the American nature writers who were influenced by the religion of East Asia.

The first political philosopher who developed the concept of anarchism was William Godwin in his work *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice*

(1793), in which he argued that citizens are rational individuals and are sovereign to themselves. The government is a destructive force that restrains the autonomy of people. Human beings, on the other hand, are able to identify justice and act rationally. Eventually, proper education can nourish an individual's attitude towards selfless justice and create a society that is bereft of centralised authority. The word 'anarchism' was introduced by the French social theorist Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). He also followed the path of Godwin and gave primacy to reason and the individual. He considered the state as a moral guardian that was destined to protect the wealth and power of the higher classes. Such an order should be eradicated and replaced by a voluntary and egalitarian system of cooperation called mutualism. In order to reform society, the workers should transform themselves and fight against the current hegemony, and the ideal society is to be reached through a peaceful economic revolution. Proudhon thus imparted a social dimension to individualism (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 88). The Russian theorist Mikhail Bakunin has developed the theory called collectivism, which gives importance to social groups. According to his theory, we are all social beings with equal rights and people with an instinct for solidarity and freedom. According to him, this type of anarchism reflects the innate nature of the universe, and the main aim of an individual should be to create a society where political, economic, and social equity exists. Bakunin emphasised federalism, and his views were influential among the labour unions during the World War (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 89). The concepts of anarchism, mutualism and collectivism are based on the basic principle of creating an egalitarian society where freedom and individuality are preserved.

Gary Snyder states in *The Practice of the Wild*, "Anarchy is a state itself which is inherently greedy, destabilising, entropic, disorderly, and illegitimate"

(Snyder, *PW* 41). Departing from the ways of Western anarchists, Snyder made use of civil disobedience, outspoken criticisms, protests through writing and speeches, pacifism, voluntary poverty and gentle violence. Snyder also stood for the cause of individuals who were polygynous, polyandrous or homosexual, which were not allowed in Western tradition. Snyder's Buddhist Anarchism is related to nature and human beings. Snyder felt the necessity to free nature from the different kinds of encroachments done by human beings and to restore the lost connection between them. Snyder feels that any kind of authoritarianism can destroy the peace and harmony of the universe. Gary Snyder made use of this method to educate the public about the need to preserve the natural world for the well-being of the world. Human beings believe that they are superior to nature which makes it a human-centred platform where the rights of nature are subdued. Through his poems, Snyder has tried to educate people about their actions that are radical and justifiable. Snyder promotes community living and mutual co-dependence for the proper functioning of society. Snyder's Eco-Buddhism encompasses the whole systems of the universe and posits that everything is connected to everything else.

In one of the poems, "Amitabha's Vow", Snyder makes use of three different traditions: the Bodhisattva ideal, the social marginalisation, and the elements of Beat poetry. Bodhisattva ideal is the concept of enlightenment. This enlightenment occurs only through the constant practice of mindfulness. With the attainment of this ideal, we can eradicate the social marginalisation based on various social stigmas and beliefs:

If after obtaining Buddhahood, anyone in my land  
gets tossed in jail on a vagrancy rap, may I  
not attain the highest perfect enlightenment.

wet rocks buzzing  
 rain and thunder southwest  
 hair, beard, tingle  
 wind whips bare leg  
 we should go back  
 we don't (Snyder, *Myths and Texts* 40-41).

Here, Snyder is concerned about his fellowmen who have miserably failed to find their own land. Snyder says that he does not want to become enlightened in a situation where his fellowmen live like wanderers without identity. Snyder believes that he cannot enjoy the state of enlightenment while his countrymen were suffering. He again comes to the point that they have to go back to the primitive or crude life that was led by the poets and people who belonged to the Beat Generation. These instances from *Myths and Texts* illustrate the path of Gary Snyder, who combined Buddhism, environmentalism, and radical politics in his writings.

By practising Buddhism and adhering to the tenets of Avatamsaka Sutra, Snyder developed an ecological framework that he desired to create in order to participate entirely in the natural world. The poem "Piute Creek", Snyder expresses the connection between Zen and nature:

In thin stone fractures  
 A huge moon on it all, is too much  
 Gone in the dry air  
 ...A clear, attentive mind  
 Has no meaning but that  
 Which sees is truly seen.  
 No one loves rock, yet we are here.

Night chills. A flick  
 In the moonlight  
 Slips into Juniper shadow:  
 Back there unseen  
 Cold proud eyes  
 Of Cougar or Coyote  
 Watch me rise and go (Snyder, *RR* 13).

Snyder speaks about the need to develop a clear, attentive mind that will help to perceive nature positively. The thrust here is given to the Zen Buddhist practice, by which one can find the truth in everything else in this world. Here, while focusing on the natural entities, the poet envisions an interconnection between the primitive and civilised nature of the mind. That will help the modern generation to revisit nature at least for a short period, and can experience the original mind, which is a part of the Buddhist experience. Snyder after realising this experience, returns back to the US, but doubts about the implication of this insight in a commercialised and unenlightened American society. Snyder envisions the need for positive interactions with nature to remove emptiness from life. Snyder, thus changes his role from a preacher to a Shaman, who is able to understand the plight of humanity and emerges as a healer of humanity.

In yet another poem, “Water”, we can trace the life Snyder spent in Yosemite Park as a trail crew member who assisted in 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 (Snyder, *RR* 16).

The main gist of this poem is that the poet gives equal value to the other ecosystems and himself. We are introduced to a real event that took place in his life, and it has lots of religious and ecological implications. The main idea that is projected through these lines is that no one is superior to others in this world. The concept of I gets diminished, and an all-encompassed lifestyle is suggested at the end. In the Buddhist line, the rejection of the concept “I” leads one to a state of ecstasy and can enjoy one’s life by becoming one with the universe. Snyder’s concept of relational holism can be traced in this poem. When we move on to the ecological stance, an echo of Bioregionalism creeps in that suggests a more intrinsic land-human relationship, self-sufficiency and decentralisation.

In an introductory note to *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds, New and Selected Prose*, Gary Snyder says about the ancient Buddhist precept as “Cause the least possible harm” and the implicit ecological call to “Let nature flourish” (Snyder, *Place in Space* vii). Snyder exhorts human beings to respect each other and give reverence to the rest of the creation. The essays in this collection are poetic, embedded with moral values and deal with the Buddhist principles to be practised in daily life. Snyder says about creation of a work as “art, beauty, and craft have always drawn on the self-organising “wild” side of language and mind. Human ideas of place and space, the contemporary focus on watersheds, become both models

and metaphors” (Snyder, *Place in Space* vii). Snyder hopes for the establishment of a world where all realms interact with each other and understand each other and themselves (Snyder, *Place in Space* vii).

One of the most important incarnations of anarchism is Social Ecology. The basic point behind Social Ecology is that the issues of society and the environment are interlaced. Social Ecology maintains that all the problems related to the environment and society are connected with the centralised authoritarian government and hierarchical society. Apart from this, the individuals are deprived of their freedom and responsibility, and they are separated from nature and their fellow beings. The only solution for all environmental and social problems can be found in a decentralised economy, democracy of the people belonging to the grassroot level and small-scale egalitarian societies in which the natural communitarian forces can blossom. Social Ecology, mainly associated with the US anarchist writer, Murray Bookchin, emphasises the link between environmental degradation and the exploitation of human beings, arguing that better treatment of the environment can only come with the abolition of oppressive hierarchies in human society (Waugh, *Literary Theory and Criticism* 536). Gary Snyder is often associated with Deep Ecology, and his Eco-Social Buddhism agrees with the tenets of Social Ecology.

Murray Bookchin initiated Social Ecology. His libertarian concept gives a proper structure for direct democracy, human-scaled societies, and a great sense of attachment to the Earth. Bookchin is antagonistic to spiritual perspectives based on Asian or American cultures. Recently, a modern and broader type of Social Ecology can be seen in John Clark, who appreciates the anarchist values that can be found in spiritual tenets of Buddhism and other religions. John Clarke has an open mind towards the tenets of Deep Ecology (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 91). This type of

Social Ecology is applicable in Gary Snyder's Eco Buddhism. Another tradition that is related to anarchism is the communalist tradition. These communities separated themselves from the existing prominent culture to follow and develop a communitarian society. Kenneth Rexroth, an American Buddhist poet who influenced Gary Snyder, mentions about this communalist tradition in his book *Communalism*. A radical Christian group known as the Diggers who settled on the unused land of Saint Georges Hill was led by Gerrard Winstanley during the religious and political uprisings of Seventeenth-century England. The diggers formed an egalitarian, anarchist and communist society based on the belief that nature was an incarnation of God and a resource meant to be shared by all. This was the first anarchist community formed, and when the landowners felt threatened, they started harassing the community, and it finally got dispersed (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 92).

In the poem, "Revolution in the Revolution in the Revolution", Snyder states that the country surrounds the city and the country is surrounded by the back country. The most lauded revolutionary consciousness is found in the exploited classes like flora, fauna, water and air. It is a difficult task for us, to pass through the stage of dictatorship of the unconscious and reach the shore of true Communionism (Snyder, *RW* 44). Furthermore, Snyder states, when the capitalists and imperialists are the exploiters, masses are the workers and the party is the communist. When the civilisation is the exploiter, masses is the nature and the party is the poets. Snyder goes on to say that, when the rational intellect is the exploiter, the masses is the unconscious and the party is the yogins and the power comes out the syllables of mantras (Snyder, *RW* 44).

Another alternative community based on this principle was established nearly two centuries later by American Josiah Warren (1798-1874). In 1834, he formed an experimental community, a village of equity, in Ohio and two other different colonies, Utopia and Modern Times. At first, Warren's political approach was based on enlightenment ideas of reason, justice, and sovereignty of the individual. The societies were not communistic but followed mutualistic individualism, and these intentional communities did not last long. Later, serious experiments were made to direct anarchism in order to create a society that is self-sufficient and that does not take the assistance of the prominent society. This aim was revived in the 20th century through reviving the lost connection with land, and this concept plays an important part in the bioregional movement. The anarchists analyse ontology, human nature and history (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 92). Gary Snyder accepts this form of community living because it adheres to egalitarian principles, fosters a healthy communal life, embraces radical views, and attributes sacredness to nature. All members share the resources in that community without any kind of segregation. In Snyder's view, this is a perfect community that pays due respect to nature, and they can help in restoring harmony in nature.

One of the renowned geographers, James Houston, describes space and place as follows: space has only a mathematical meaning, while place encompasses a human context. A place is a space with numerous historical associations, where vows are made and fulfilled, filled with various kinds of encounters or interactions, obligations and commitments are fulfilled, and where the limits are recognised. Snyder describes place in his work *Turtle Island* as, "place implies belonging. It establishes identity, defines vocation, and envisions history. The place is filled with memories of a life that provide roots and give direction" (Snyder, *TI* 107). Snyder gets

in line with these ideas that we should have a more encompassing humanism that would “include the non-human”-plant life, animals, even mountain ranges, as well as human beings (Snyder, *TI* 107-108).

Snyder warns the Americans about their misdeeds and the ruins that they have inflicted upon their land. He continues by stating that there can be no escape from the reality that they have ravaged their landscape:

There is no place to flee in the U.S. There is no “country” that you can go and lay back in. There is no quiet place in the woods... The surveyors are there with their orange plastic tape, the bulldozers are down the road warming up their engines, the real estate developers have got it all on the wall with pins in it, the county supervisors are in back room drinking coffee with the real estate subdividers... and the forest service is just about to let out a big logging contract to some company (Snyder, *The Real Work* 118).

Snyder uses the language of poetry to educate the public about the aftermaths of environmental degradation. This aspect is clearly communicated in “Spell Against Demons” which says:

The release of Demonic energies in the name of people  
must cease  
Messing with blood sacrifice in the name of nature  
must cease  
the stifling self-indulgence in anger in the name of freedom  
must cease  
this is death to clarity  
death to compassion  
The Demonic must be devoured!

Self-serving must be cut down

Anger must be plowed back

fearlessness, humour, detachment, is power

Knowledge is the secret of Transformation! (Snyder, *TI* 16).

Snyder is voicing against the destructive forces in society in the name of man, sacrifice in the name of nature and anger in the name of freedom. In his view, if we water all these demonic energies, we are living just like dead people. These demonic energies need to be conquered, and we have to develop a kind of self-awareness that helps us foster fearlessness, humour, and detachment from worldly pleasures. Any kind of transformation should happen from within our mind.

“Above Pate Valley” is an account of the impact of human beings on nature and the need for awareness and judicious utilisation of natural resources. It is a powerful poem that glorifies the majesty of nature. The Pate Valley is a remote area filled with wilderness and without human encroachment. Gary Snyder feels that this place is suitable for retreat from a world of chaos. Snyder tries to foreground the element of interconnectedness that exists in the valley, and it has its own specific cycles that are connected with nature. Snyder, through this poem, tries to bring out the negative impacts of human influence on nature and the need to develop proper awareness of the different facets of nature. Snyder urges the reader to consider the consequences of their actions and to develop respect for the divine entity, thereby preserving the uniqueness of nature (Snyder, *RR* 15).

In the poem, “Enjoy the Day”, Snyder tries to present nature without trees. The scene from a camp site is presented, where Snyder goes up the mountains to experience the old warmth that he got from nature. But Snyder is dissatisfied by the changes he witnessed and also questions the ancestors about what is happening in nature. Snyder

gets the answer from them as, “New friends and dear sweet old tree ghosts/ here we are again. Enjoy the day” (Snyder, *DP* 33). Finally, in this poem, Snyder tries to project the sad plight of the present generation who cannot enjoy nature with live trees.

In the poem, “O Waters”, we can see that Snyder is paying obeisance to water and is considering it as a divine spirit:

O waters  
Wash us, me,  
under the wrinkled granite  
straight-up slab,  
and sitting by the camp in the pine shade  
Nanao sleeping,  
Mountains humming and crumbling  
Snowfields melting  
Soil  
building on tiny ledges  
for wild onions and the flowers  
Blue  
Polemonium  
Great earth Sangha (Snyder, *TI* 73).

Snyder requests water to wash the whole humanity and himself residing under the wrinkled granite slab. Here, the desire to become one with nature is expressed, one among the great Sangha.

Gary Snyder, in the essay “Re-Inhabitation”, refers to the small number of individuals who emerge from industrial societies and begin to reconnect with the land and their place. This comes for some with the rational and scientific realisation of

interconnectedness, as well as planetary limits. But the actual demands of a life committed to a place are so physically and intellectually intense that it is a moral and spiritual choice as well (Snyder, *OW* 65).

To reinhabit a place means the people living in a place should have an ecological perspective that brings interconnectedness, understanding the limitations, and moving beyond an intellectual perspective to an ethical, spiritual vision. Snyder's ideas echo in *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (1985) by Kirkpatrick Sale: "To become dwellers in the land...the crucial and perhaps only and all-encompassing task is to understand place" (Sale 42). Snyder, while discussing Bioregionalism in "The Place, Region, and Commons" says, "Our relation to the natural world takes place in a place, and it must be grounded in information and experience" (Snyder, *PW* 39).

Gary Snyder reinstates the ideal that Buddhism is both ecological and anarchist. For him, the real world should be a civilisation of wildness in which human beings interact with nature in a harmonious manner. He also upheld the concept of interrelatedness and the values of libertarian, egalitarian and communitarian society. Emphasis on the local ecosystem has become a part of Snyder's ideology. Bioregionalism as a movement gives importance to the uniqueness of local areas. It is related to the natural divisions created by soil climate topography, river drainage and so on. Bioregions may be distinguished as watershed or biogeographically distinct territories. According to Snyder, in order to understand and live harmoniously in nature, we need to become intimate with the particularities of each place (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 103). Bioregionalism has three elementary principles. Firstly, biogeography which is the study of the interaction of life with physical geography. Secondly, the reformist programs that are currently being pursued suggest small-scale

sustainable forestry and green cities. The third is a radical view of a new society that is characterised by the decentralisation of politics, economics, and culture, as well as close harmony with the place. The aim of Bioregionalism, according to Snyder, is to help our human, cultural, political and social structures to harmonise with natural systems. The power of Bioregionalism comes from its capacity to hold various types of non-dualisms. For instance, it combines the “two cultures” of science and humanities. The reformist activities are immediately provided by Bioregionalism while also pointing to a more radical Utopian ideal. It calls for both highly practical physical activities and also a “bioregional consciousness”- a highly refined sense of place and a deep feeling of identity with the land one inhabits. It has both individual and social dimensions: each person can pursue bioregional values, or a community can work to create bioregional programs, and it involves both living in harmony with the land and utilising it (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 103).

As Charles Strain has said, the practice of reinhabitation presumes that humans have a place and they must find a place in the wild. According to Strain, “having a place means using its resources wisely; it entails transgressing the lines of division separating preservation and natural resource management” (Strain, *American Buddhism* 153). Gary Snyder considered Bioregionalism to be closely related to Buddhism. The relational holism of Huayan metaphysics leads one to a profound sense of interrelatedness with the local natural world in which one lives. The local bioregion or the watershed then takes on his extended sense of biogeographic mandala (Snyder, *Gary Snyder Reader* 371). An ecosystem is a kind of mandala in which there are multiple relations that are all powerful and instructive. According to Snyder, the watershed is the only place where human and non-human entities get a chance to interact with each other. That is the beginning of Dharma citizenship or a larger

community citizenship. In other words, the Sangha, a local Dharma community, has this ecological notion of mandala as well as his extension of Sangha to include all beings. Gary Snyder believes that Bioregionalism has a link with both classical anarchist thought and contemporary Social Ecology. In an interview, Snyder speaks of Bioregionalism as, “So this is an anarchist exercise, as foretold by Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid* and as described, in contemporary terms, by Murray Bookchin in *The Ecology of Freedom*, in which we try to realize the true meaning of being local, and having a culture, without letting it pull us back into centralised, hierarchical forms” (Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* 16).

Snyder combines the anarchist organisational principles with Bioregionalism. Gary Snyder’s Bioregionalism includes city and country landscapes. Snyder says that “the city is just as natural as the country, let us not forget it” (Snyder, *The Real Work* 91). The important factor is that whatever be the location, we should have a deep sense of community in harmony with the land. During the early days, Snyder had a deep connection with the mountain ranges, and this helped him lead a lifestyle that was suitable for an alternative community. Gary Snyder’s alternative community is different from that of other bioregionalists in that he did not create a separate community for himself, but it was rather non-dualistic. According to this type of Bioregionalism, an alternative community is developed while remaining engaged in the mainstream society. Thus, Snyder’s Bioregionalism challenges the pretensions of the state, and he believes it is the only way to shape society (Snyder, *The Real Work* 91).

Gary Snyder often uses the image of Indra’s net to represent metaphysical reality. The concept of the Indra’s net was developed by Huayan school of Buddhism. This concept views the universe as an interconnected system that is

considered a network of jewels. Each jewel represents the image of the entire net. We can find a single field of stars mutually interacting with each other. As Snyder notes, ‘Avatamsaka’ Buddhist Philosophy sees the world as a world of interrelated networks, and every other thing is living with mutual interdependence (Snyder, *The Real Work* 130). This view of Snyder reaffirms the importance of individuals and the whole. An individual is distinct from others not in being independent of them but in being constituted by a unique set of inter-relationships with others and a unique position in the field. This perspective is called relational holism. According to this, importance is given to the relationships among particulars and also the primacy of the whole, which is a single field of all interrelationships (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 96).

The visualisation of the image of Indra’s net provides an abstract image of the metaphysical interpenetration of all things in this universe. Snyder makes the image more concrete by connecting it with ecology as “the reciprocity of things” (Snyder, *The Real Work* 130). According to Snyder, Indra’s Net is embodied in the physical, ecological interrelationships of the natural world. “If you want to know Indra's net as manifested in the phenomenal world, study ecology; if you want to understand the subtle nature and full significance of the ecological relationship, see it as Indra’s net. If you understand one blade of rice, you can understand the laws of interdependence ...and you know the Buddha” (Snyder, *The Real Work* 35). He presents this combination of Indra’s net and ecology in another extended image of the ‘Avatamsaka’ or the Flower Wreath, a jewelled net interpenetration of ecological systems-emptiness -consciousness tells us no self -realisation without the Whole Self and the whole self is the whole thing (Murphy, *Place of Wayfaring* 3). Snyder’s relational holism is directly related to this anarchism. Firstly, it provides an alternative to the debates in anarchism concerning the individual and the society. Snyder’s

relational holism is dialectical in that both the individual and the whole are upheld, and any attempt to make one primary or fundamental is rejected. Secondly, it is relevant to social value. The statement that everything is valuable, that is, the measure of the system, is really true socially and ecologically. Any individual, social class, gender, ethnic group or nationality is as valuable as any other. And the third relational holism offers an alternative image of a political ideal (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 96). There is no centralisation, and the world is full of complexities, and there is no visible source of authority (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 96).

Like many of the anarchists, Snyder also believes that the true order comes from the people interacting with themselves without an external force. Snyder develops this idea in the book of essays *The Etiquette of Freedom* (2010). In this book, he mentions the term wild. Usually, it has a negative connotation, but Snyder imparts a positive aura to the wild. Wild plants and animals are those flourishing in accord with innate qualities, each with its own endowment. The same holds true for wild- anarchist -societies whose order has grown from within (Snyder, *PW* 9).

Snyder notes that his positive set of definitions comes very close to how the Chinese define the term Dao, the way of Great Nature, as self-organising, self-informing, independent, complete, orderly, freely manifesting, and self-authenticating. The related term wilderness is a place where “a diversity of living and non-living beings are flourishing according to their own sorts of order” (Snyder, *PW* 10). Snyder speaks about the importance of our ancestral roots that will help us to lead a healthy and peaceful life. This idea permeates through the poem, “Roots”, where Snyder asks us to dig and find out our native roots for replenishing harmony in universe:

Draw over and dig

The loose ash soil  
 Hoe handles are short  
 The sun's course long  
 Fingers deep in the earth search  
 Roots, pull them out; feel through;  
 Roots are strong (Snyder, *RW* 31).

Snyder says that roots are lying deep in ash soil. The ash soil symbolises the dead remains of the past and the process of finding one's own roots is extremely difficult. Through constant search, we can pull out the roots and feel the strength of our ancestry. They have developed this strength through constant practice of a disciplined life and reverence to nature. Here, Snyder advises us to follow the path of the past culture and tradition for creating a better world.

In the poem "Haida Gwai North Coast, Naikoon Beach, Hiellen River Raven Croaks", we can see the image of Mother Earth who is capable of loving and punishing us. The poem is an explication of the power of Mother Earth, who acts both as a protector and destroyer:

Mother  
 Earth  
 loves to love.  
 Love hard, playing, fighting,  
 rough and rowdy love-rassling  
 she can take it, she gives it,  
 kissing, pounding, laughing—  
 up from old growth mossy bottoms  
 twa corbies rork and flutter

the old food

the new food

tangled in fall flood streams (Snyder, *MRWE* 106).

Here, Snyder tries to project the love and care that Mother Earth provides to her children and also echoes a warning when he says, “she can take it, she gives it”.

Snyder also points out the connection between the past and present and says that it is intertwined and will remain forever.

A similar approach can be found in the poem “The Bear Mother”, where the invisible power of nature is glorified, and no one can assess the intricate ways of nature. Snyder speaks of the mysterious ways of nature and nature herself, asking whether humanity knows her ways:

She veils herself

to speak of eating salmon

Teases me with

“What do you know of my ways”

And kisses me through the mountain.

Through and under its layers, its

gullies, its folds;

Her mouth full of blueberries,

We share (Snyder, *MRWE* 115).

Here, Mother Earth is teasing its offspring by stating that they do not know of her ways. Everything that she has is shared for the welfare of the whole world. Snyder, through this poem, tries to bring out the omnipotent quality of nature and the theme of interconnectedness. The ways of nature are obscure and sacred. The bear’s mother is

nature itself, and she goes on to say that both nature and humanity share the same blueberries or the same food chain that sustains the ecosystem.

Similarly, in Snyder's ideal of a civilisation of the wild, people act with a similarly emergent, anarchic order, responsive not only to other people but also to the natural world as a whole. Snyder suggests this possibility metaphorical in the poem "Straight- Creek- Great Burn", where a flock of birds in flight displays self-organising quality:

A whoosh of birds  
 Swoops up and round  
 Tilts back  
 Almost always flying apart  
 And yet hangs on!  
 together (Snyder, *TI* 52-53).

Towards the end of the poem, we can see the development of a vital political theme that deals with the self-organising quality or the power of nature along with the resilience power of nature. Nature is embedded with complex levels of interactions that cannot be described fully. Here, the birds are highly organised and complex in their behaviour patterns. Their leadership is based on their mind and not authority. Snyder makes use of two traditional Buddhist images to combine the politics of Buddhism and ecology. The sense of interpenetration of all things, together with the concept of Buddhist Sangha unites the entire natural world. Snyder tries to remind us that the Eco-Buddhist sense of a community includes both human society and the larger biological community, which he calls "the Great Earth Sangha" (Snyder, *TI* 73).

Another aspect that plays an important role in anarchist theory and Snyder's Eco- Social Buddhism is human nature. The view of an authoritarian society is that human beings are selfish, so there is a need for a centralised state to control our disorderly nature. Snyder, however, believes that people are aggressive not by their nature but as a result of living in an authoritarian society (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 97). He takes the aid of Buddhism to present his idea about human nature. According to Buddhism, all the creatures in the universe are in a state of complete wisdom, love, compassion and mutual interdependence. Buddhism says it is natural that people fall prey to craving, aversion, and delusion. But if people are living in a free and communitarian society, all these aspects will potentially diminish. And here lies the importance of Buddhist Anarchism. According to Snyder, we have to develop a much broader perspective on the historical human experience (Snyder, *The Real Work* 113). He tried to include a continuous tradition rather than pointing out a few isolated examples. From this, it is quite clear that certain social and religious forces have worked throughout to create ecologically and culturally enlightened states (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 98).

Snyder believes that this new culture, or the Great Subculture, is characterised by communalism, which connects Buddhism and anarchist ideologies. According to Snyder's analysis, this new culture includes the past, present and future. This culture was practised by mystics and visionaries, who tried to revive the past by connecting the gaps between the present, past, and future (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 98).

Snyder's view of metaphysics, ecology and history is directed to a very extensive critique of the political, social and economic conditions of our times (Payne, *How Much is Enough?* 98). He had tried to give a holistic approach to the environmental problems faced by the world. Destructions are taking place endlessly in

the East and the West, and it is not a matter of the suffering of human beings alone but the whole ecosystem. In the poem “Front Lines”, he uses very familiar metaphors like cancer, rape, fascism, and the demonic power of the machineries:

The edge of cancer  
Swells against the hill-we feel  
A foul breeze...  
Realty Company brings in  
Land seekers, lookers, they say  
To the land  
Spread your legs...  
Every pulse of the rot at the heart  
In the sick fat veins of Amerika  
Pushes the edge up closer...  
A 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 (Snyder, *TI* 18).

Here, Snyder is trying to depict the devastating condition of American society, where people ill-treat and manipulate the facilities of nature, thus ripping off its originality and causing destruction. He goes on by stating that nature is raped brutally and it is incapacitated. Man has become indifferent and is posing his authority over the bounties of nature, and the whole world is wallowing under the clutches of anthropocentric reign. The overpowering nature of various kinds of industrial machinery on land is also pointed out in the last section.

In the “Smokey the Bear Sutra”, the poet compares our rapacious society in the Buddhist image of a hungry ghost. We live in a world of loveless knowledge that seeks with blind hunger and mindless rage eat food that will not fill it (Snyder, *Gary Snyder Reader* 241). Along with environmental destruction, human beings are alienated from the natural world and their souls. This alienation from the outer wilderness and the inner wilderness will eventually lead to self-destruction. According to Snyder, even if we provide social and economic equality to all people, there is still a dire need for ecological justice, “which means providing plenty of land and water for the lives of non-human beings” (Snyder, *Place in Space* 60).

According to Snyder, the unequal distribution of wealth in the world leads to social turmoil and the destruction of nature (Snyder, *Place in Space* 60). The problems of racism and sexism have emerged from the confusion that we had in our relationship with nature. We are ignorant about nature, and our hostility towards nature leads to the objectification and exploitation of fellow human beings. Snyder’s Buddhism encompasses the central Buddhist teaching of mutual co-arising, where environmental, social and psychological aspects work together. Sometimes, Snyder focuses his condemnation on industrial capitalist societies and corporate economies as the whole planet is groaning under its great disregard for the concept of ahimsa. The “state”, he wrote in his essay, “Buddhist Anarchism”, “as the greed made legal, with a monopoly on violence” (Snyder, *Gary Snyder Reader* 43). The problem is with the people who consider nature as an object and commodify the natural world according to their needs. Snyder gives a Buddhist turn by connecting the civilisation and the state with the ego. Snyder claims that, “class-structured civilised society is a kind of mass-ego. To transcend the ego is to go beyond society as well” (Snyder, *Earth House Hold* 122). He says that it is not nature that threatens us but the state’s presumption

that it has created the order. In this way, Snyder tries to portray radically different ideals.

The two important questions that arise are: what kind of response is required to address ongoing environmental destruction and social injustice, and how can an Eco-Buddhist ideal be achieved? Gary Snyder, an ardent follower of mindfulness, believed that by changing our antagonist attitudes towards nature, we can live in ecstasy. As an adequate requirement, we have to identify our place, our identity and what we have to perceive in this world. A thorough personal involvement in nature can bring about changes in the world. There are several ways in which we can live in this world. Some people will decide to stay away from nature to acquire a purified mind. It can be done by accepting the life of a recluse in the monastery. However, Snyder's viewpoint is different in that he accepts the Bodhisattva ideal, choosing to live a life just like the people around him.

Snyder is against the violent approaches and methods of reformation, and he follows the tenets of Buddhism that favour non-violence and ahimsa. Although Snyder believed in pacifism, he had shown some difficulty in completely supporting non-violence. In the essay "Buddhist Anarchism", he says that the Buddhist practice leads to a deep concern with the need of radical social change and personal commitment to some form of 'essentially' non-violent revolutionary action (Snyder, *Journal for the Protection of all Beings* 11). But further in the essay, he seconds some types of resistances: "Fighting back with civil obedience, pacifism, poetry, poverty and violence, if it comes to the matter of clobbering some rampaging redneck or showing a scab off the pier" (Snyder, *Journal for the Protection of all Beings* 12). Later on in his essays, he tried to present various non-violent means of attaining harmony with nature.

However, Snyder is more inclined to speak the real work that tries to embody the ideal than resisting evil. It is no surprise that Snyder emphasised the need for a change of consciousness in working towards the ideal. It cannot be obtained with the help of arms, but one has to capture the important images, myths and archetypes to lead a better life. We can find Snyder's attempt to seize these components of a new consciousness in his poetry.

The whole collection of *Axe Handles* projects the theme of community and cultural exchange between succeeding generations. We can see the transfer of knowledge from Snyder to his family members, friends and readers in the titular poem itself. The whole book revolves around the concepts of renewal and restoration, rebirth and reconsideration. Snyder tries to inculcate a new set of values that aids in communal harmony, cooperation, and preservation of natural habitats, as well as a very pious life that shows deep respect and concern for one's own land. This revolutionary thought is clearly visible in the poem, "Removing the Plate of the Pump on the Hydraulic System of the Backhoe":

Through mind fouled nuts,

Black grime

It opens a gleam of spotless steel

Machined fit perfect.

Swirl of intake and output

Relentless clarity at the heart of work (Snyder, *AH* 93).

The quest for relentless clarity in Snyder's life and work is itself a symbol of his perseverance, and the pressure that he endures is subtly expressed through his kindred nature and utmost sense of humour. Snyder specifies the importance of mindfulness and also the need to preserve playfulness in life. With this dictum in mind, he framed

out simple solutions through his works and glorified the wild and free nature of human beings.

In *Myths and Texts*, the fourteenth poem of the section “Logging”, we can see a painful reflection of the destruction of the natural world. The poem begins as follows:

But you shall destroy the altars,  
break their images, and cut down their groves.  
The groves are down  
Cut down  
Groves of Ahab, of Cybele  
Pine trees, knobbed twigs  
Thick cone and seeds  
Cybele's tree this, sacred in groves  
Pine of Seami, cedar of Haida  
Cut down by the prophets of Israel  
The fairies of Athens  
The thugs of Rome  
Both ancient and modern...  
Trees down  
creeks choked, trout killed, roads (Snyder, *Myths & Texts* 3).

Snyder’s intention is clear through these lines, where he criticises the industrial developments that destroyed the beauty and harmony of nature by cutting down trees on a large scale. The trees are cut down on large scales, and it indirectly leads to the choking of creeks, death of fish and destruction of roads. Gary Snyder points out the

perpetual connection between the destruction of the environment and the Western religious traditions from the Bible and the indelible effects of capitalism.

Instances of social injustice can be found in *Myths and Texts*. In the seventh poem, he mentions a very tragic historical event in which the police killed the activists of the International Workers of the World, and he lists the names of the people who were assassinated in that encounter. The poem ends with the following lines:

Thousands of boys, shot and beat up  
 For wanting a good bed, good pay,  
 decent food, in the woods-"  
 No one knew what it meant:

“Soldiers of Discontent” (Snyder, *Myths and Texts* 4).

Here, Snyder criticises the injustice that was met by the working-class people who fought for their rights. They were killed for protesting for their daily bread. The world cannot exist without extending equal respect and rights to all beings. Thousands of boys were beaten and shot just because they asked for more wages.

Gary Snyder shared a common goal with Marx in the fact that they both wanted to end an oppressive social order, but at the same time, he rejected the approach of Marx that is reflected in the following lines:

A big picture of K.Marx with an axe,  
 Where I cut off one it were true  
 O Karl would it were true  
 I'd put my saw to work for you

Moreover, the wicked social tree would fall right down (Snyder, *Myths and Texts* 7).

Snyder always stood by the side of working-class people and had the same stand as Karl Marx in this aspect. Snyder is of the opinion that society is separating individuals on the basis of caste, creed and economic status. This demarcation will destroy harmony in nature. All living beings and non-living beings are a part of the larger whole, and he stresses the importance of interconnectedness. This concept of interconnectedness is a common premise in Deep Ecology and Buddhism. Jonathan Bate in the *Romantic Ecology*, says that “Everything is linked to everything else, and, most importantly, the human mind must be linked to the natural environment” (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 66).

Snyder’s sharp criticism against various countries regarding their delinquency in protecting their natural habitats is verbalised through the poem “Mother Earth: Her Whales”. This poem was written after attending a UN conference on environmental issues in 1972, and the way Snyder gives importance to all forms of entities is depicted through these lines:

North America, Turtle Island, taken by invaders  
who wage war around the world.

Many ants, may abalone, otters, wolves and elk

Rise! and pull away their giving  
from robot nations.

Solidarity. The People.

Standing Tree People!

Flying Bird People!

Swimming Sea People!

Four-legged, two-legged, people! (Snyder, *TI* 48).

Snyder pays solidarity to all living and non-living things in this universe and exclaims how the arrogant, greedy, power oriented political entities can speak for soil and leaf. Snyder accuses the world's political elite for "flapping like vultures near a dying doe"- our planet. Brazil is condemned for exploiting the jungle, Japan for hunting whales, and China for its massive acts of deforestation. Snyder's anger is directed against the nonpareil group, which is ignorant about ecological matters and egoistically pursues its own interests unbothered by the consequences of its actions. In general, undue importance given to reason has nurtured disdain towards the ancient roots of wisdom.

The poem, "Doctor Coyote When he had a Problem", Snyder brings out the indifferent attitude of humans towards nature:

Doctor Coyote when he had a problem  
 took a dump. On the grass, asked his turds where they lay  
 what to do? They gave him good advice.  
 He'd say "That's just what I thought too"  
 And do it. And go his way (Snyder, *DP* 71).

When a person was afflicted by a problem, he dumped it in the grass and asked the filth to guide him. The filth cannot advice good things to the receiver and the receiver is satisfied with the advice and goes away. Snyder warns about the after effects of such indignant behaviours of human beings towards truth.

In the poem, "March 2001", Snyder pays solidarity to the people who were attacked by Taliban forces. Snyder says the victims did not flinch in front of the mortar fire and addresses them as the Buddhas of Bamiyan who took refuge in the dust or nature. Snyder exhorts the public to keep the mind clear and calm in the present situation and honour the dust (Snyder, *DP* 118). In "September 2001", again

Snyder pays homage to the men and women who lost their lives at the World Trade Center and he combines those people to the category of Buddhas of Bamiyan, who took refuge in the dust (Snyder, *DP* 118). In “April 2001”, Snyder says that Dharma is not permanent, but that is not the reason to let compassion and focus slide or to be indifferent to suffering people who are impermanent (Snyder, *DP* 118).

In “Envoy”, Snyder speaks about a turning verse for billions of people. This verse can purify the world and can bring back virtue and power back to the universe. By chanting this verse, we can restore peace in the midst of chaos. Snyder tries to glorify the righteous people who lost their lives in wars, in the fields, on the seas while practicing their Dharma. Snyder believes that their spirits are hovering above us and invisibly they are guiding us in times of need. This poem is a clarion call for the present generation to heed to those sacred voices of those righteous beings and understand the great wisdom hidden in their words. Towards the end, Snyder names these sacred voices as ‘Mahaprajnaparamitam’, the great virtue of wisdom (Snyder, *DP* 125).

“Charms” is another instance where Snyder professes that natural variety is an important factor in creating a harmonious life. Snyder proclaims that unity can be maintained only through the preservation of the diversity of natural world:

“The Deva Realm” or better, the Delight  
at the heart of creation.

Brought out for each mammal species  
specifically-in some dreamlike perfection  
of name-and-form (Snyder, *TI* 28).

Snyder speaks of the different varieties of species existing in this world and how each variety is inevitably connected with the other species. He exclaims about this divine

sphere that has been instrumental in providing the universe a kind of delight after each creation with dream- like perfection. This power of nature enchants the whole world and makes it charming.

“Tomorrow’s Song” is the most radical poem that reflects Snyder’s most radical and challenging conviction that animals and plants should be represented in the government:

The USA slowly lost its mandate  
In the middle and later twentieth century  
It never gave the mountains and rivers,  
Trees and animals, a vote.  
All the people turned away from it  
Myths die; even continents are impermanent  
Turtle Island returned.  
We look to the future with pleasure  
We need no fossil fuel  
Get power within  
Grow strong on less (Snyder, *TI* 77).

If America wants to maintain its status and power, permission should be given to mountains and rivers to cast its vote. This in fact, shows a remarkable development in Snyder’s vision of the non-human world.

In “For All”, another poem from the volume *Axe Handles* (1983), has a similar ecological suggestion of equality among all living beings and non-living beings.

Snyder recommends untainted loyalty to the land and environment instead of a flag or government:

I pledge allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the soil of Turtle Island and to the beings who thereon  
dwell in diversity under the sun

With joyful interpenetration for all (Snyder, *AH* 113).

Snyder's introduction of a new pledge is indeed a revolutionary concept, as he altered the focus from national identity to natural identity. We should remain loyal to soil, beings and the ecosystem as a whole. He exhorts a life that is interdependent and clearly mentions that human beings are never given superiority over other forms of life. This view once again ascertains that human beings are an essential component of the world but not at all superior. The poem highlights the core idea of Snyder's ecological consciousness.

"As for Poets", the last poem in the collection, exhibits the element of creativity and the role of an artist in poetry making. Poetry exists in different forms, and different aspects can influence it. Poetry is neither black nor white, and it is subjective in nature. The poem introduces six different types of poets-poets of Earth, air, fire, water, space and mind and each is inspired by different ideas. The idea of a holistic worldview of combining spirit and matter is presented in this remarkable poem (Snyder, *TI* 87).

The poem, "Give Up" is a warning to the readers regarding their estrangement from nature:

Walking back from the Dharma-Talk

summer dry madrone

leaves rattle down

"Give up! Give up!

Oh sure!" they say (Snyder, *DP* 38).

Snyder cautions the readers to think about their righteous deeds and talks. If they waver from their Dharma, their lives will end up like dry leaves. The dry leaves

here are personalised and are given the ability to talk with their human counterpart. They warn human beings to give up their habit of receding from truth. In the poem, “Gray Squirrels”, Snyder exhorts human beings to follow the path of squirrels through the quivering oak leaves and pine needles to find the essence of interconnectedness and to nurture harmony in nature (Snyder, *DP* 90).

In “Prayer for the Great Family”, Snyder renders his gratitude to Mother Earth, plants, air, wild beings, water, the sun and the great sky. The Earth is the place where we sail throughout night and day, and we pay respect to the soil, which is rare, rich, and sweet. The flora looks out daily for sunlight, and they withstand the wind and the rain with the help of its firm roots and the description of the plants swaying in the wind as flowing spiral grain. The air is compared to the breath of our song or life. The wild beings are considered as siblings and teachers who teach us secrets, freedom and ways, who nurture us with their milk and picturise them as self-complete, brave and aware of us. Snyder pays gratitude to water of all forms for streaming through our bodies, and gratitude to sun for illuminating and warming us. At last, gratitude to the great sky who holds trillions of stars, and that is above all powers and thoughts, but always with us (Snyder, *TI* 24).

In the poem “Front Lines”, he speaks for the land inhabited by Native Americans and the creatures affected by scientific developments:

A 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 (Snyder, *No Nature* 118).

According to Patrick D. Murphy, one of his commentators, the poem “Front Lines” is a call for action. The bulldozer is not considered as a rival; the anger Snyder has is for the man from the urban area, who is channelling the destruction without having any attachment to nature. Snyder, here, exhorts humanity to take a stand that can protect nature from further encroachments. He locates the forest near his home, and that is important. Snyder’s approach to environmental activities is to think globally and act locally. So, the poem reflects both a political stand and a local defence of nature in which he and his fellow men are engaged (Murphy, *A Place for Wayfaring* 108).

Through “Earth Verse”, Snyder tries to give a very poignant message of how to lead a human life with dignity. The poem is in the form of an advice to humanity to preserve nature for the future generations:

Wide enough to keep you looking

Open enough to keep you moving

Dry enough to keep you honest

Prickly enough to make you tough

Green enough to go on living

Old enough to give you dreams (Snyder, *MRWE* 150).

Snyder takes responsibility as a mediator between nature and human beings in this poem. He gives ideas for a life of higher quality on Earth by following broadmindedness, openness, honesty, toughness, attachment to nature and maturity.

In the poem “Inupiaq Values”, Snyder sums up his idea of a complete and satisfied life by following certain principles in life. This poem is written in the form of

a tree-line and was hung on the walls of a classroom in a tiny school in Kobuk  
Alaska:

HUMOUR

SHARING

HUMILITY

HARD WORK

SPIRITUALITY

COOPERATION

FAMILY ROLES

AVOID CONFLICT

HUNTER SUCCESS

DOMESTIC SKILLS

LOVE FOR CHILDREN

RESPECT FOR NATURE

RESPECT FOR OTHERS

RESPECT FOR ELDERS

RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRIBE

KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE

KNOWLEDGE OF FAMILY TREE (Snyder, *TPM* 72).

Through this poem, Snyder tries to present the seventeen rules for enriching our lives in this world. The way Snyder has written this poem is commendable. The tree-line aspect introduced in this poem underlines his innate love and companionship with nature. Snyder acts as a mediator between nature and humans to retie their lost connection. This poem also gives a visual impact of a tree that represents nature.

Snyder, in the poem, "For the Children" gives an optimistic idea about future generations and life. Snyder tries to connect the present world that is chaotic with the ideal world in future:

The rising hills, the slopes,  
of statistics  
lie before us.  
the steep climb  
of everything, going up,  
up as we all  
go down (Snyder *TI* 86).

In this stanza, Snyder laments the problematic plight of the world. The stanza ends by stating that we are all going down instead of staying and moving along with nature. In the second stanza, Snyder says,

In the next century  
or the one beyond that,  
they say,  
are valleys, pastures,  
we can meet there in peace  
if we make it.  
To climb these crests  
one word to you, to  
you and your children:  
stay together  
learn the flowers  
go light (Snyder *TI* 86).

Here, Snyder suggests an idealistic path that echoes his concept of Bioregionalism, which connects community, bioregional identification, and a lifestyle connected with ecology. The phrase “if we make it”, captivates the uncertainty of the present situation and the difficulty of achieving the ideal practice of living in harmony with nature. However, Snyder is optimistic towards the end of the poem, where he states that there is a possibility of true and harmonious life within nature. It is possible only through rightful practice, such as staying together and learning the flowers. For Snyder, to know the land, we must experience it. One must understand land physically, through commitment, time, hard work and by treading on it. For him, as for Annie Dillard, walking is a form of spiritual practice, of meditation. It is “the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primarily to humankind. Walking is the exact balance of spirit and humility” (Snyder, *PW* 18).

In the poem, “What you should know to be a Poet”, Snyder forges into the duties of a poet. Snyder is of the opinion that a poet is supposed to consider the animals, trees, flowers, weeds as people living around. The poet needs to be aware of the names of different stars, the movement of the planets and the moon. According to Snyder, a poet has to keep an elegant and watchful mind and well-versed in any one kind of traditional magic-divination, astrology, the book of changes or the tarot. A poet has to dream of illusory demons and shining gods to get creative inspiration. Moreover, a poet has to develop a mind that is ready to love all forms of life and lifeless things that exist in the universe. A poet can engage in the trivial activities like children’s games, reading comics, watch television and advertising. However, a poet needs to work hard for hours without rest till the moment of exhaustion. While taking rest after the day’s work, the poet can enter into the wild freedom of the dance that provides ecstasy. In addition to this, a poet can enjoy silence and can enter into the

state of illumination by resting in a solitary place. At this point of illumination, the poet thinks of the real danger, gambles and edge of death that awaits the human species (Snyder, *RW* 44).

Thus, this analysis makes it clear that Gary Snyder's ideas of Ecology, Buddhism, and Politics are interconnected, and these components define each other and make a whole. It also engages Gary Snyder's Eco-Social Buddhism, examining his political orientation, political critique, social ideals, and various forms of activism. A close analysis of his works reveals that Snyder has embraced anarchism, shaped by his deep connection with Buddhism and environmentalism. All three concepts of Buddhism, environmentalism, and anarchism converge in Gary Snyder's Bioregionalism.

### Chapter III

#### Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhist Paradigms: A Quest for Contentment and Compassion

Timothy Morton, in his book, *The Ecological Thought*, speaks about the art of ecological reading, which is the essential requirement of the present world to expiate the negative notions about nature from the reader's mind. To have a genuine ecological reading, we have to discard all conventional rigid thoughts regarding environment and we have to choose an ecological ideal that is radical and open. Morton speaks of ecological art, and the ecological-ness of all art in this book and points that it is not merely something based on flora, fauna and non-living environment. Any kind of art is ecological because it is created from materials that exist in the world. Thus, Morton concludes that ecology permeates through all forms whether it is living or non-living. Additionally, ecological thought is connected with all aspects of life, culture, and society (Morton, *The Ecological Thought* 11). For the ecocritic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironised as a concept by enclosure within knowing inverted commas, but actually present as an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally if we mistreat it (Barry, *Beginning Theory* 252). Here lies the importance of the precepts like Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism that give more importance to oneness and interrelatedness. Through understanding and practicing the tenets of both the principles, humans become capable of creating oneness with the living and non-living entities of this universe. This in turn provides a sense of contentment in life that radiates happiness around them. This chapter tries to analyse the sense of contentment and compassion in the poetry of Gary Snyder through the lens of Eco-Buddhism and Deep ecology.

Snyder's works critique the political, social, and economic conditions of the present day. Environmental destruction has happened in the East as well as the West, which has led to the destruction of the watersheds and ecosystems. In the "Smokey Bear Sutra", Snyder compares the greedy society to a hungry ghost by stating that we live in a "world of loveless knowledge that seeks with blind hunger: and mindless rage eating food that will not fill it" (Snyder, *Gary Snyder Reader* 241). Along with the environmental destruction, alienation from nature is taking place and that in turn, leads to the loss of heart and soul. Snyder is worried about this state and says, "To lose our life in nature is to lose freshness, diversity, surprise, the Other-with all its tiny lessons and its huge spaces" (Snyder, *Place in Space* 59). He says the alienation is much more dangerous in Western culture,

a culture that alienates itself from the very ground of its being-from wilderness outside... and from...the wilderness within-is doomed to a very destructive behaviour, ultimately perhaps self-destructive behaviour (Snyder, *TI* 106).

Apart from this kind of alienation, Snyder speaks of the social injustices meted out by the working-class people. The environmentalists are concerned about the preservation of nature and focus more on social problems. "Even if economic and social justice were achieved for all people, there would still be a drastic need for ecological justice, which means providing plenty of land and water for the lives of non-human beings" (Snyder, *Place in Space* 60). Gary Snyder has a non-dualistic approach to these prevalent issues in society. As per the tenets of Social Ecology, there is an interconnection between environmental and social dimensions.

Sometimes, Snyder is more concerned about the degradation of nature due to social inequities. "The unequal distribution of wealth in the world causes endless

social turmoil and intensifies the destruction of nature” (Snyder, *Place in Space* 60). At other times, he points out the negative effects of our attitudes on nature and society. “I suspect that many of the problems within the human community-racism and sexism, to name two-reflect back from confusion about our relations to nature. Ignorance and hostility toward wild nature set us up for objectifying and exploiting fellow humans” (Snyder, *Place in Space* 211). From all these justifications, we have to assume that Gary Snyder’s understanding of environmental and social problems differs from the traditional Buddhist perspective that stresses psychological causes and cures. In a different sense, Snyder envisages the main Buddhist principle of mutual co-arising, which clarifies the notion that environmental and social issues are inseparable and that both social and psychological elements function together. Snyder often criticises industrial capitalist societies and states that the whole planet is groaning under the massive disregard of the highly organised societies and corporate economies of the world (Snyder, *Place in Space* 73). Secondly, he accuses the national state of “that relatively recent institution, the national state.” “The state is greed made legal, with the monopoly on violence” (Snyder, *Gary Snyder Reader* 43). Snyder recognises this issue is indigenous to all civilisations, and the antagonists’ social and political attitudes lead to the misuse of nature and harm to each other. The natural world is mercilessly commodified and objectified by the major civilisations. They regard nature as a mere inanimate resource and a target of opportunity” (Snyder, *Place in Space* 61). This has been supported by the fact that “our philosophies, world religions, and histories are biased toward uniformity, universality and centralisation-in a word, the ideology of monotheism” (Snyder, *PW* 41).

Snyder comes to the point that civilisation is the greatest enemy, and he associates civilisation and state with ego and claims that “class-structured civilised

society is a kind of mass ego. To transcend the ego is to go beyond society as well” (Snyder, *Earth House Hold* 122). Snyder believes that humankind is a temporary form with spirit and energy, just like other living forms and not superior to any other form in the universe. In order to maintain their life, they have to depend upon the diverse forms of life, and their extinction can lead to the destruction of human life. The extinction of any species weakens the stability of nature and will lead to deadly consequences on the environment. Bill Devall said about deep ecology as the process of learning a new language that is free from an obsession with human pre-eminence and learning the language of birds, their pain and passion (Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader* 25). Snyder has an open mind to this opinion and he has used the language of the wild, animals and the mountains to express his emotions and to convey his messages to the public.

Snyder’s interest in and acceptance of Buddhism was a turning point in his poetic career. Buddha’s religion is a discovery in the sense that it is the result of inquiry and investigation into the conditions of human life on earth and understanding of the working of human instincts with which man is born, the moulding of his instincts and his dispositions which man has formed as a result of history and tradition and which are working to his detriment. Buddha considers himself as a ‘marga data’ or way finder and not ‘moksha data’ or a giver of salvation (Ambedkar, *What the Buddha Taught* 6).

However, along with Buddhism, Snyder exemplifies his knowledge in anthropology and primitive culture in his works. Snyder reverses myth and ritual as an indispensable portrayal of man-in-nature and nature-in-man. Snyder considers the work of a poet as a shaman who acts as a medium for songs and chants springing from the earth. It is not surprising that Snyder recommends performance poetry as the

perfect medium of interaction and pursues the traditions of oral literature- chants, incantations, and songs-to disseminate his experiences. Most of Snyder's poems aim to infuse an ecological consciousness in his audience and readers. This theme pervades Snyder's 1974 Pulitzer-winning volume, *Turtle Island*. The concept of re-inhabitation of land in Gary Snyder's *Turtle Island* and the way he tries to hold history and wilderness in mind in order to understand the true measure of things is commendable. The poems included in the collection are brimming with deep ecological concerns that help the readers understand the shortcomings of our times.

*Turtle Island* contains nearly five dozen poems that are lucid, lyrical, and almost mystical, while a few are frankly political. Describing the title of his collection of poetry and occasional prose pieces, Gary Snyder writes in his introductory note that *Turtle Island* is "the old /new name for the continent, based on many creation myths of people who have been here for millennia, and reapplied by some of them to North America in the recent years". The collection is divided into three parts that address the conventional division of the living world into plants, animals and human beings. The first part is titled "Manzanita" named after a North American shrub and the second part "Magpie's Song" entitled after a bird that belongs to the crow family, and the third part "For the Children".

Some of the most gratifying poems describe the dialectic between the old and the new America and his own position within it. A few of Snyder's poems describe the dialectic between the old and the new America and his position as a poet in it. In "I Went into Maverick Bar" Snyder describes the bar in which he drinks double shots of bourbon, backed with beer, in some sense in disguise, his long hair tucked under his cap, and his earring left in the car. He watches a couple dance, holding each other the way high school couples did in the 1950s. He talks to himself:

That short haired joy and roughness –  
America – and your stupidity.  
I could almost love you again.  
...I came back to myself,  
To the real work, to  
“What is to be done” (Snyder, *TI* 9).

Through these lines, we can see the transformation that has taken place in Gary Snyder’s mind. Snyder began to acknowledge the vanity and pomp that had consumed the sense of Americans. He regains his senses at the end of the poem and states, ‘I came back to myself’, that is reality, and he is ready to take responsibility for saving America from the phase of degeneration. Snyder knows the reason, and he wants to act accordingly. The aim of his life is clear from this poem. The same theme reverberates in “Dusty Braces”. Snyder himself is rooted in rootlessness, and he laments about this in this poem:

O you ancestors  
lumber schooners  
big mustache  
long- handled underwear  
sticks out under the cuffs  
... you bastards  
my fathers  
and grandfathers, stiff-necked  
punchers, miners, dirt farmers, railroad men (Snyder, *TI* 75).

Snyder’s ancestors were rootless wanderers who were in search of lands to conquer for their kings and countries. On the other hand, Snyder’s quest is entirely different

from that of his ancestors, which is more spiritual. His ancestors were followers of Protestantism and capitalism, which Snyder disowned. Snyder created a path that helped him to reconnect with human beings and the natural world.

And pieces of imaginative history like “The Call of the Wild” which intimates how human society fears the call of the wild. Humanity fears nature or just does not care about nature, and this leads to the destruction of forest, the trapping of coyotes and so on. Snyder articulates that we destroy nature because we are scared of her:

The heavy old man in his bed at night  
 Hears the Coyote singing in the back meadow,  
 All the years he ranched and mined and logged.  
 ...he will call the Government trapper  
 Who uses iron leg-traps on Coyotes,  
 Tomorrow  
 My sons will lose this  
 Music, they have just stated to love (Snyder, *TI* 21).

Here, we can see the fear that emerges in the mind of Snyder when he says that the heavy old man was in command of the land. When he hears the song of Coyotes in his eighteenth year, he is afraid of losing his control over the land. He does not want the Coyotes to adorn the supreme position on earth. So, he is asking the government trappers to curb their freedom on land. Snyder feels disgusted in the last lines when he says that his children will lose the chance of enjoying the music of the Coyotes that they have started to like.

Snyder, in the poem, “The Earth’s Wild Spaces” describes nature as a human being and describes each body part with great reverence. Snyder attributes the eyes, mouth and hands of nature to the public highways. The nature’s eye is compared to

the bank clerk's window, where foreign exchange takes place. Snyder says he loves all body parts of nature and is well aware the path towards wilderness. Snyder does not say that wilderness is the best place to reside for ever. It is a scary region and we are almost alone there, but can enjoy utmost calmness (Snyder, *TPM* 14).

In the poem, "Askesis, Praxis, Theoria of the Wild", Snyder speaks of how to understand the shining way of the wild. The process is a tedious one and painful too. While practicing the rules, we may come across failures, stupid mistakes, delusions, bitterness and loneliness. But Snyder says that, through self-discipline we can hang out in nature, understand the workings of nature and enjoy the present moment. Consequently, nature will unveil the shining way of the wild before the practitioner (Snyder, *TPM* 77).

In "The Great Mother", nature is personalised, and she sits in a chair and inspects the passersby to understand their hidden viciousness:

Not all those who pass

Infront of the Great Mother's chair

Get past with only a stare.

Some she looks at their hands

To see what sort of savages they were (Snyder, *TI* 20).

Snyder feels that nature is very vigilant, and she checks the activities of human beings, as she has already categorised people who are indifferent to nature as savages. Regaining lost ties with nature is the primary concern of Deep Ecology. To live in harmony with nature, one should give due reverence to the place one inhabits.

Snyder articulates the splendid song of nature in the poem "By Frazier Creek Falls", where the poet looks out and down from the edge of the falls where he sees half-forested dry hills and a clear sky and observes the effect of the wind on the pines

rustling trembling limbs and twigs. The poet stands thrilled, listening to the swish and he relates joyfully:

This living flowing land  
is all there is, forever  
we are it  
it sings through us-  
we could live on this Earth  
without clothes or tools! (Snyder, *TI* 41).

In this poem, he points to the interconnection between nature and man. The planet Earth is eternal in his view, and we return to its larger realm after our death. While living on this surface of earth the energy of the land flows through us without inhibitions, and it is just like rhythmic music. He says we can live on earth solely with the presence of this energy, and there is no requirement for clothes, tools or material facilities.

In the poem, "It Pleases", Snyder praises the beauty and indomitable power of nature and watches all the workings of the world in an invisible manner:

Far above the dome  
Of the capitol-  
It's true!  
A large bird soars  
Against the white cloud,  
...the dark-suited policeman  
Watches the tourist cars-  
And the center,  
The center of power is nothing!

Nothing here.

Old white stone domes,

Strangely quiet people,

Earth-sky-bird patterns

Idly interlacing

The world does what it pleases (Snyder, *TI* 44).

Snyder tries to present the uniqueness of all forms of life on the surface of the earth.

The birds fly and do the activities meant for them. A policeman is introduced as a representative of the whole human community. Each living and non-living entity does its share of duty without fear and inhibition. He concludes that there is no autonomy in this free world. Snyder envisions such a world where earth is filled with harmless individuals and varieties of other species interlaced with each other in harmony. He longs for a utopian world where the world can do what it pleases.

The poem “Magpie’s Song” illustrates the need to reconceive our notions regarding nature. Snyder’s point here is that man has become divided in his sensibility. This fragmentation in man is the result of too much dependence on reason and his disconnection with nature:

Here in the mind, brother

Turquoise blue.

I wouldn’t fool you,

Smell the breeze

It came through all the trees

No need to fear

What’s ahead

Snow up on the hills West

Will be there every year

Be at rest.

A feather on the ground-

The wind sounds

Here in the Mind, Brother, Turquoise Blue (Snyder, *TI* 69).

According to Snyder, man should discard his superficial rational self and get dissolved in the wilderness of nature. What Snyder means is that all forms of nature, like breeze, snow, and hills, are at the service of man in healing him.

*Turtle Island* ends with some occasional prose pieces, and the most pertinent of the essays is the “Four Changes” in which he addresses four of the most prominent shortcomings and proposes ways to solve them. Population, pollution, consumption, and transformation are the four problems in America, and he proposes social and political action to rectify these issues.

The rhetoric of ecological relationships is the key to Snyder’s voice raised in defence of nature, society, and art. He is the most articulate champion for the positive vision of re-inhabiting. To re-inhabit a place, one must have an ecological perspective that affirms interconnectedness and acknowledges limits, a perspective that extends beyond the intellectual to an ethical and spiritual vision. Snyder has faith that cultures will eventually emerge from people who share commitments to places and who honour their roots. According to Snyder, to become dwellers of a land, the crucial and all-encompassing task is to understand the place. Snyder writes in a discussion of Bioregionalism in “The Place, the Region, and the Commons”: “Our relation to the natural world takes place in a place, and it must be grounded in information and experience” (Snyder, *PW* 39).

An admixture of community development, anthropology, language and scientific elements can be deciphered from Snyder's collection *Axe Handles*. The collection *Axe Handles*, is a reflection of the actual life that Snyder led in his local community and is dedicated to San Juan Ridge, his living place in Northern California, which he often referred to as the watershed in Sierra Nevada. The title *Axe Handles* can be understood in two ways: as a language that is capable of changing our attitudes and as a tool that can assist human beings in their activities.

The first part of the anthology, titled "Loops", the major thematic concern is that of recycling and composting of experiences and knowledge. In the titular poem, "Axe Handles", Snyder sets up a loop while framing a hatchet handle for Kai, his son, from a splintered axe handle:

And I say this to Kai  
 Look: We will shape the handle  
 By checking the handle  
 Of the axe we cut with—  
 And he sees. And I hear it again" (Snyder, *AH 5*).

Snyder passes down the knowledge to his son and also remembers his Chinese teacher who taught him of the connection between the past and present:

By cutting wood with axe  
 The model is indeed near at hand" (Snyder, *AH 6*).  
 I am an axe  
 And my son a handle, soon  
 To be shaping again, model  
 And tool, craft of culture,  
 How we go on (Snyder, *AH 6*).

A new handle is being framed out of an old axe handle. The poem comes to an end with the message that there exists an energy loop between the past and the present, and, in a similar way, between father and son, and it builds a very useful tool for the transmission of culture. A father gives instructions to his son and shapes his attitude. He serves as a role model and takes an unusual responsibility in educating his son, and in a way, he participates in the essential function of cultural transmission in his family. This poem is a perfect example of the relationship between the past and the present, which in turn suggests the interconnection between succeeding generations and that itself is a significant principle in Deep Ecology.

“River in the Valley” depicts the journey of father and son across the Sacramento River at Colusa they were wondering about the concrete overheads that is hovering above the river and the swallows nesting underneath these concrete blocks and the Great Central Valley is in a drained state, and it has been converted into thousand-acre orchards. The poet and his son hear a boy asking a question regarding the origin of rivers:

Where do the rivers start?

In threads in hills, and gather down to here—

But the river

Is all of it everywhere,

All flowing at once, all one place (Snyder, *AH* 8).

The answer that Snyder gives is that water is the same everywhere, and it reaches the same place where it started flowing. This poem projects the universal truth that every system in this universe is cyclical and everything is the same. The poet also fears the encroachment of natural habitats by human beings and is saddened by the diminishing landscape in Seirra.

In the poem “Among”, Snyder speaks of the life cycle of Douglas fir trees in the midst of pine woods. The seedlings of fir trees scattered around the pine trees die in drought, and the miraculous rain brings a few seedlings back to life to ascertain that “a Douglas fir will be among these pines” (Snyder, *AH* 10). The theme of interconnectedness and the law of nature pervades throughout the poem.

“Changing Diapers” is a reflective poem that stresses the need for equality in the family. It is the duty of both father and mother to change the diapers of their babies. Here, we can see the experience of a father doing the same. Towards the end of the poem, the father addresses his baby by saying that there is no need to worry about the dampened diaper, “No trouble, friend, you and me and Geronimo are men” (Snyder, *AH* 18). So, here Snyder stresses the need for equality, and the symbol of the baby itself suggests rebirth or revival.

The poem “So Old” touches upon the old ways and new ways of living. The conflict between the ancient and modern is clearly expressed through the description of old roads as deep and full of twists and the new roads as roads that go straight to the mountains without any confusion (Snyder, *AH* 26).

The flashing light of a jet plane is personalised in the poem “Strategic Air Command”. The flashing light enquires about the number of satellites in the sky:

Does anyone know where they all are?

What are they doing, who watches them?

The cliffs and the stars

Belong to the same universe.

This little air in between

Belongs to the twentieth century and its wars (Snyder, *AH* 37).

Snyder answers these questions with an adept answer that everything belongs to this universe and that the supernatural power of nature is holding all the systems in the right place.

Generally, the poems in the “Loops” section of *Axe Handles* are a compilation of his daily experiences with relatives and friends and his connection with the mountains and creeks in his native watershed. A magical loop is created between the past and the present, normal and extraordinary experiences and thoughts. In a way, energy pathways are preserved for cultural and personal nourishment.

In “Little songs of Gaia”, we can see how the poet introduces his concern about the massive encroachment of land by human beings and a highly anthropocentric attitude towards nature. Snyder exclaims, “a five-thousand-year span/about all that a human can figure, / grasshopper man in his car driving through” (Snyder, *AH* 49). Here Snyder foresees a world where there will be no distinction between human and animal species. In such a world, one can move forward to the farthest rim and experience the world in its deepest essence. Here, we are notified of the utopian ideal that Snyder nurtures in his mind.

Snyder is aware of the fact that a community cannot be cultivated within a short period and also to establish an interconnection with nature. In the poem “True Night”, we can trace the discomfort felt by Snyder through these lines. “Sheath of sleep in the black of the bad/ From outside this dream womb/ Comes a clatter” (Snyder, *AH* 43). The clattering sound attracts him away from the cosy zone into the world of a wanderer. Snyder is certain that he is inextricably connected with the culture of his ancestors. Like all ecologists, Snyder understands the value of knowing one’s own land, and he says, “one cannot stay too awake / In this dark” (Snyder, *AH*

43). The awareness of one's own land makes a person complete and rooted in the same place.

In the second section of *Axe Handles*, "Little Songs of Gaia", Snyder introduces the Goddess of snow, whom he had worshipped in his native land while living with his family. The presence of the Great Goddess is found in all sections of the poetic collection. We can trace the presence of Goddess in "Little Songs of Gaia", in which Snyder has a dream vision in which he is presented as a god who melts the snow with his breath:

I dreamed I was God last night.  
Melting the winter snows  
With my warm breath, Bending low over  
Snowy mountains with the black sharp  
scattered fir and pine, breathing (Snyder, *AH* 56).

In this section, the introduction of the Three Corn Maidens in dream depends on mythical vegetative seasons and the process of succession and renewal in a system where everything is interdependent and valued. Snyder considers San Juan Ridge to be his eternal mother, and he believes that she is the sole source of energy that helps him lead a harmonious life with nature. The title of the book itself is related to the Goddess, as we can assume from the epitaph from Shih Ching that equates axe handles with axe and wife and an introspection is done to understand which is more important. Nature calls /bodies of water/turned into the sky. / "Find a need and filled by it" (Snyder, *AH* 52). These lines echo the universality of nature. Everything, whether it is living or non-living, coils back to the larger self, Mother Earth.

In the haiku poem "A Dent in a Bucket", Snyder tries to express the idea of interconnectedness between all things in this universe:

Hammering a dent out of a bucket  
a woodpecker  
answers from the woods (Snyder, *DP* 36).

Here, Snyder speaks of an unseen bird while working in the woods. Snyder and the bird are involved in different tasks at different locations and gives equal importance to both. Snyder, with an egalitarian mind tries to create a sense of solidarity and attachment with the bird. Snyder tries to present a small moment in life, by portraying a human and a bird both at work.

Here, Snyder tries to reinforce the belief in harmony between the creatures living in a particular area.

In the poem “The Flickers”, a shaman-poet’s voice brings the two guises of Indian Medicine Man and Buddhist teacher:

The Flickers  
Sharp clear call  
This!  
This!  
This!

In the cool pine breeze (Snyder, *AH* 57).

The flicker in the pine woods is a common bird to whom the shaman poet gives voice, and the call of the flicker is an invitation to a new world of salvation. Snyder feels that if we remain patient, the sacred things in the world will be unveiled before us. The role of a poet and artist in the contemporary world is similar to the role of shaman in primitive culture. Snyder speaks about the advantage of reinhabiting a place by understanding it fully. By doing so, one can overcome alienation, and a practice of community living provides extensive spiritual benefits. James I. Mc Clintock, in his

work, *Nature's Kindred Spirits*, states that when the experience of nature is combined with thoughts about nature; personal life is combined with professional life; daily activity is understood and given significance within a framework of ethical and spiritual insight, we can create a new world of harmony (Mc Clintock, *Nature's Kindred Spirits* 21).

The last part of *Axe Handles*, titled "Nets", deals with the networks of energy flow. The section is divided into three groups. The first group deals with the various energy network flows, such as the sights of different creatures in the Yellow Stone energy network. The next section concentrates on Snyder's connection with the California Arts Council, networks, and human/nature communities from San Juan Ridge to Alaska and Australia. The last group includes poems with the familiar themes used by Snyder, like environmental protest in "The Cayon Wren", about rafting down a doomed stretch of the Stanislaus River, to mythic and magical evocations of the Indian way of understanding interconnections in nature and life.

There are poems in *Axe Handles* that have a connection with the California Arts Council. Two of them are concerned with Governor Brown and politics. In "Talking Late with the Governor about the Budget", he talks about the meeting he had with the Governor in the capitol. It was a place filled with iron carts full of bills and rules and the Governor was immersed in the administrative issues even without having food. "Two A.M/We Walk to the street/ Tired of the effort/ Of thinking about "the People" (Snyder, *AH* 82). Snyder was more concerned about pines, deserts, and oceans than people.

In the next poem, "He Shot Arrows, But Not at Birds Perching", Snyder is saddened by the indifference shown by the Governor who came to visit the mountains. The Governor went for a nap without noticing the pain with which Snyder

had cleaned the yard to spend time with nature. Snyder was more concerned with tending young trees and chickens. The next day, they talked about farming of oil and what would happen to the cars on the road. This itself is a solid example for the sweeping materialism that had overpowered humanity:

In the poem “Arts Council”

Because there is no art

There are artists

Because there are no artists

We need money

Because there is no money

We give

Because there is no we

There is art (Snyder, *AH* 84).

In the poem “What I Have Learned”, Snyder is introspecting himself and is gauging his own knowledge in various matters. He realises that he has learned how to use different tools in the proper manner. While tackling hard pleasant tasks, he spends his time in silence, drinks wine and thinks in his own way to reach the solution. Snyder, an admirer of silence, opines that you get answers in silence, sometimes different answers at a time, but one will get the correct answer, and he/she will have to pass it on to the next generation. Gary Snyder in *The Great Clod: Notes and Memoirs on Nature and History in East Asia*, speaks of the importance of silence through the approach of Daoist writers to nature. In pursuing their study of nature into human nature and the dark interior of phenomena, the Daoist writers stress on softness, ignorance, the flow of silence. A kind of thermal physical energy flows into life and is termed as the spiritual energy. This spiritual energy acquired through

silence often grows in strength when we let go, give up, cast off mind and body to become one with the process (Snyder, *The Great Clod* 34). The person enters into a state of enlightenment and this inherent capacity to achieve enlightenment is called Buddha nature (Snyder, *The Great Clod* 41).

Snyder talks about the inquisitiveness of parents to send their children to school to mould them into a better and more capable individual. From his experience, while working in Alaska as a logger, Snyder understood the universal knowledge of these workers who were in close contact with nature without a university education. The manufacture of an axe handle for his son indicates how one generation teaches the other by transmitting stories and thereby nourishing their ideals in life.

In the poem “Glamor”, Snyder speaks about a man who had failed to master his ally’s mind and went in a ravenous search for power, became afflicted with greed and went home with trade goods. His family understood his craziness and did not attempt to change his attitude. It is undoubtedly the duty of the relatives to forbid him from his misdeeds. As a result, this man created wanton damage to his clan and is visible in the following lines:

Civilisation spreads: among people who are generous,  
 Who know nothing of “ownership,”  
 Like a disease. Like taking Poison.  
 A glamorous poison  
 “overkill” (Snyder, *AH* 94).

Snyder warns people about the devastating nature of power and greed. A person who gets afflicted by these elements will be contagious and capable of destroying the whole of the community.

In the poem, “Money goes Upstream”, Snyder hears people discussing reason, higher consciousness, the unconscious and so on. He also talks about people who do business within the law and who amass fantastic wealth and attain a powerful position even though it hurts them. They drink the essence of power, and they will not get caught because the law is under their control. But Snyder feels a different kind of sensation that is different from power:

I can smell the grass, feel the stones with bare feet  
though I sit here shod and clothed  
with all the people. That is my power”. And some odd  
force is in the world  
Not a power  
That seeks to own a source.  
It dazzles and it slips us  
by,  
It swims upstream (Snyder, *AH* 101).

Snyder realises that absolute power is contagious and a non-destructive power that is the perfect understanding of one’s land, which is required to live harmoniously with nature.

In the poem “Breasts”, Snyder mentions about motherhood and breastfeeding. The mother’s breast provides pure milk to her offspring. It acts as a filter that collects the deadly molecules or poisonous substances and turns her bosom into a petro-chemical complex. Snyder celebrates the breasts, in a way motherhood and says,

So, we celebrate breasts  
We all love to kiss them- they ‘re like philosophers!  
Who hold back the bitter in mind

To let the more tasty wisdom slip through

For the little ones. Who can't take poison so young (Snyder, *AH* 103-104).

The duty of grown-up children is to understand the real self and to burn this poison that had collected in their breasts while feeding them. The earth has become flat and tired, like old leather tough enough for a few more good days. And the glittering eyes, /Old mother, /Old father, Are gay (Snyder, *AH* 104). The only debt that a child can give back to his parents is to love the land and make it a liveable place for future generations.

In "For a Fifty-Year-Old Woman in Stockholm", Snyder goes on praising Mother Earth for giving birth to several children in the process of giving birth, the bones and muscles around the pelvis become weak, and he ends the poem with an exasperation "mother of us all, / four thousand years dead" (Snyder, *AH* 107). Snyder laments over the damage caused by man on nature for attaining his material pleasures.

In "Old Woman Nature", the old woman has a bag full of bones and the woods are covered with hair and cartilage. All these images of dead remnants indicate the torture afflicted on nature without mercy. The poem ends with a warning by bringing in an image of a sweet old woman collecting firewood in the calmness of night. "Do not be shocked/ She is heating you some soup" (Snyder, *AH* 109). These lines give us a premonition that nature would react in a fierce manner that human civilisation cannot endure.

Apart from the meaning of networks of energy flow, the net also means a tool that is used to collect things or trap materials. As a poet, Snyder harvests very rare materials from the recesses of language and myth. Snyder's themes in his works hover around the recycling of language in order to tap the vital energies that help human beings socially and spiritually. The recycling of the dead always fosters the health of

the next generation. In general, artistic activity teaches us the universality of all things that are endless. Therefore, a poem or artistic entity is a new kind of capsuled energy that carries thoughts of wisdom and intelligence through a network of images. It is one of the most vital energies capable of producing a cultural and spiritual impact on its consumers. We come to an understanding that energy flow, poetry and life are interconnected with each other, and a kind of fierce energy is moving through human and non-human entities (Snyder, *AH* 109). The same forceful energy connects the material and spiritual world, and this theme is central to the works of Gary Snyder and his ideals of ecological interconnection and co-dependence.

Snyder's aesthetic and spiritual growth was aided by his experiences as a fire lookout on the Crater Mountains in 1952 and his involvement as a trail crew member in Yosemite National Park in 1955 gave him the inspiration to write his first book *Riprap and the Cold Mountain Poems* (1959). *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems* reveal Snyder's thought and writing processes during the 1950s. This collection originated while he was a trail crew member in 1955. The title *Riprap* itself describes the arrangement of stones laid on steep rocks to make a path for the horses to move on, and it is also a symbol of the linkage of objects in a region with human beings. It also suggests a structure for the inclusion of words in a poetic form and also serves as a connection between language, thought, action and the work. The whole work is dedicated to the workers with whom he got acquainted while working in Yosemite Park. They were well-versed in the requirements of land and exhibited their skills by demonstration. *Riprap* includes the tradition of oral dissemination and celebrates the work of a community. The poems like "Above Pate Valley" and "Piute Creek", gives a direct description of landscape and enters a cosmic level of understanding of the transience of time across the land.

The opening poem in *Riprap*, “Mid- August at Sourdough Look Out” represents an ecological image that is based on Zen Buddhism and scientific knowledge. The poem underlines the importance of the land and the self through concrete images. In the first stanza itself, we are informed about the triviality of human existence and the grandeur of the “high still air”:

Down valley a smoke haze  
 Three days heat, after five days rain  
 Pitch glows on the fir cones  
 Across rocks and meadows  
 Swarms of new flies (Snyder, *RR* 9).

In this poem, Snyder tries to educate the readers about the simplicity of life and the peace and solitariness that nature can provide to its admirers. Snyder disowns the sweeping materialism of his civilisation that aims at taming the wild world for their benefit. The above two aspects, solitariness and serenity, are the fruits of mindful meditation, and Buddhists believe that such meditations can help one individual purify their mind in a long way. The Zen Buddhist monk, poet and peace activist, Thich Nhat Hanh urges to wake up from the dream that is destroying the planet. Our mindfulness can change our collective unconscious, giving us the power to decide the destiny of our planet (Llewellyn, *Spiritual Ecology* 32). The signs of global imbalance, the tsunamis, and the destruction of the coral reefs are not physical symptoms. Thich Nhat Hanh says that these are the bells of mindfulness, calling us to become attentive and listen to them. The Earth needs our attention and it needs us to help and heal its damaged body through our exploitation. The realisation of what is sacred can bring real awareness to mind and can find solutions for our present predicaments (Llewellyn, *Spiritual Ecology* 14). Mindfulness is at the heart of

awakening of enlightenment. We practice breathing to be able to live in the present moment so that we can recognise what is happening in us and around us. We have to recognise in order to transform it (Llewellyn, *Spiritual Ecology* 34). Again, in Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, Hanh defines mindfulness as the miracle by which we master and restore ourselves and builds up concentration and awareness of life (Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* 16). The concept of mindfulness is mindfulness of feeling in feeling and mindfulness of mind in mind (Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* 32).

Snyder warns against the decline of the natural environment in the poem "Milton by Firelight" in a very evocative manner. A stark description of the damage inflicted on nature by the advanced scientific developments is evident in this poem. Snyder begins this poem with an allusion to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Snyder tries to connect the comment made by Satan, "Oh hell, what do mine eyes / with grief behold?" with the present-day environmental problems and the bleak future that Sierra is going to face (Snyder, *RR* 13). Through the words of Satan, Snyder depicts the advancement of human civilisation and the resultant estrangement from nature. He introduces the world of a single jack miner who had deep connections with nature and connects it with his observations on *Paradise Lost*. Snyder imagines how Sierras will look in the near future and then sadly remarks that it will become a mere artefact through this poem:

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 (Snyder, *RR* 14).

Down valley a smoke haze  
Three days heat, after five days rain  
Pitch glows on the fir-cones  
Across rocks and the meadows  
Swarms of new flies (Snyder, *RR* 14).

Here, the poet tries to give a new version of hell and how Sierras would become dead and dry in future. There is an echo of fear and uncertainty in the poet's mind. Towards the end of the poem, he forgets about the past and says that the fire goes out, and he can no longer read but can only hear the voices of mares from a distance. A lover of poetry can trace the elements of realism and eco-mysticism presented by Snyder through the objective rendering of the details. The poet is desperate about the destruction caused to the environment through scientific development that gave man a sense of superiority over the non-human entities existing in nature. Snyder tries to exhibit his cosmic consciousness, which is an elementary part of his writing style. In a way, Snyder seems to be similar to other American nature writers like Henry David Thoreau, Wendell Berry, Annie Dillard and Edward Abbey. However, Snyder's idea of nature goes beyond the conventional romanticising of it. Snyder immersed himself in the experience of the inner and outer worlds. Eco-mysticism calls for an understanding of the sensual implications of the natural world and urges us to strengthen the old spiritual connection with nature. This spiritual awareness may educate people of their connection with the environmental world and their place in the ecosystem.

In "Thin Ice", Snyder portrays himself as a rootless individual who is in search of something and wanders as depicted in the following lines "Walking in February/A warm day after a long freeze/On an old logging road" (Snyder, *RR* 19). The road

presented here is that of his forefathers, and their culture and tradition have been tampered with by the present generation for profit. The presence of the logging industry separated the close connection between nature and man. Snyder walks along the Sumas Mountain, and he looks down and finds himself separated from the normal human world and visualising his position in both the human world and the natural world:

Below Sumas Mountain  
Cut a walking stick of alder,  
Looked down through clouds  
On wet fields of the Nooksack—  
And stepped on the ice  
Of a frozen pool across the road.  
It creaked  
The white air under  
Sprang away, long cracks  
Shot out in the black,  
My cleated mountain boots  
Slipped on the hard slick  
—like thin ice—the sudden  
Feel of an old phrase made real—  
Instant of frozen leaf,  
Icewater, and staff in hand.  
“Like walking on thin ice—”  
I yelled back to a friend,  
It broke and I dropped

Eight inches in (Snyder, *RR* 19).

Snyder feels a kind of ecstasy while traversing through the path of nature that is unfamiliar to him. He lives in the present moment by immersing himself in the beauty of nature. Snyder concludes that the connection with nature is a prerequisite for spiritual nourishment. The awareness of “an old phrase made real”, helps him to decipher the fact that language itself is a tool for reconnecting life with nature. At times, a wanderer like him can fall in his mission to educate the public about the need for unison with nature. However, Snyder is sure that he will be able to accomplish the lost connection. In a way, Snyder tries to rise above the path of American culture and to become a prophet of nature.

In “The Sappa Creek,” Snyder laments over the plight of the Earth in which we reside. While engaged in the process of improving facilities for a better life on earth, we knowingly or unknowingly destroy the wealth of nature and turn it into a dustbin full of rags:

Old rusty-belly thing will soon be gone  
 Scrap and busted while we're still on earth—  
 But here you cry for care,  
 We paint your steel shelves red  
 & store the big brass valves with green  
 Wheel handles. Dustpan and waste can  
 Nestle in the corner—

Contemplating what to throw away (Snyder, *RR* 19).

In the above lines, we can see earth seeking the care of her inmates. But the materialistic world is ignoring the request and makes earth suffocated with more industrial and scientific gadgets that make the situation worse.

The poem “Nooksack Valley” marks a turning point in Gary Snyder’s life. It is a meditative poem, where he goes on a trip to the north in order to say goodbye to the north country. The poet feels depressed while he watches the dark sky darkening. The region where he stays brings loneliness, heaviness, coldness and darkness in his mind. It is a place where his past is embedded, and he feels a kind of anguish while leaving that place for a new one. It was the backcountry that he loved, and that helped him to develop an awakened mind by abstaining himself away from the lures of civilisation (Snyder, *RR* 20).

From the Nooksack Valley, Snyder moved to Japan, which he called “a great stone garden in the sea” (Snyder, *RR* 24). Through the poem, “A Stone Garden”, Snyder states that it was in Japan where he found his love, family and home. He feels that he is having a dream of the past in the present. In Tokyo, like a bear, Snyder tracks the human future of intelligence and despair (Snyder, *RR* 24). The culture in this place was different from the urban jungle that was inhabited by “a horde of excess poets and unwed girls” (Snyder, *RR* 24). Snyder speaks of the thousand postures of humankind in the form of touch and gestures and feels that such a love can conquer time. Snyder also adds his rare insight into the beauty of the older woman who loves her children immensely. Through this image of older women, Snyder tries to bring out the permanence of nature. Snyder confesses of the failures that occurred in protecting the variety of nature and wants to develop an ideal garden of life on earth by transcending the noises of the modern world (Snyder, *RR* 26).

In the poem “Rip rap”, Snyder tries to educate the public whose minds have been converted to immovable rocks. He speaks of the different forms of life that form an integral part of their life:

Lay down these words

Before your mind like rocks.  
placed solid, by hands  
In choice of place, set  
Before the body of the mind  
in space and time:  
Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall  
riprap of things:  
Cobble of milky way,  
straying planets,  
These poems, people,  
lost ponies with  
Dragging saddles  
and rocky sure-foot trails (Snyder, *RR* 31).

The people are represented as lost ponies with dragging saddles, bearing the weight of their burden. He also reveals the cyclical nature of all systems, suggesting that anything that is done to harm nature will be reciprocated in the same manner. It is visible in the following lines:

The worlds like an endless  
four-dimensional  
Game of Go.  
ants and pebbles  
In the thin loam, each rock a word  
a creek-washed stone  
Granite: ingrained  
with torment of fire and weight

Crystal and sediment linked hot

all change, in thoughts,

As well as things (Snyder, *RR* 31).

Each word in a poem is likened to a rock piece that is pure and ingrained with the torment of fire and weight. By this analogy, Snyder tries to project the importance of poetry that is revolutionary in thought and capable of producing changes in society.

“The Cold Mountain Poems” published along with *Riprap* are translations of the poems by a sage and poet of Tang dynasty Han-Shan, and Snyder identifies himself as a prophet of nature in his homeland. Snyder believed in the wildness that existed in nature, and he kept away from the ways of American society and tried to create an alternate way to tackle the ills he identified in society. Snyder in the collection of essays, *Back on the Fire*, states,

Wild nature is that part of the physical world that is largely free of human agency. Wild nature is most endangered by human greed or carelessness. Wild is a valuable word. It refers to the process or condition of nature on its own without human intervention. It is a process, a condition, not a place. The wild is a place where wild process dominates (Snyder, *Back on Fire* 25).

In any case, wilderness, in the sense of being the most inaccessible part of a given territory, is seen as a shared space that is both dangerous and magical, a place to visit for spiritual and economic reasons (Snyder, *Back on Fire* 26). According to Snyder, the wild nature is the ultimate source of order (Snyder, *Back on Fire* 27). Snyder additionally states that wildness gives heart, courage, love, spirit, danger, compassion, skill, fierceness and sweetness all at once to language (Snyder, *Back on Fire* 63).

In the second poem of “The Cold Mountain Poems”, we can see the importance of nature in the life of an individual. When you get connected with nature,

you will be able to find the path of nature. A picture of solitariness and serenity pervades throughout the set of poems enlisted in this section:

In a tangle of cliffs, I chose a place—

Bird-paths, but no trails for men.

What's beyond the yard?

White clouds clinging to vague rocks.

Now I've lived here—how many years—

Again and again, spring and winter pass.

Go tell families with silverware and cars

“What's the use of all that noise and money?” (Snyder, *RR* 37).

The poet stresses the need for humanity to return to the bounties of nature to understand their real selves. The families living in urban areas are naive and do not know the essence of nature, and they go behind money and pleasure. The poet here exhorts people to come back to the lap of nature to lead a better life. In poem 5, the poet wanders in search of a place to settle in, and he finds the cold mountain to be the perfect place to reside. Here, the poet Han-Shan speaks of the voice of nature that can be heard only by a preacher who is in search of unity between the natural world and humanity:

I wanted a good place to settle:

Cold Mountain would be safe.

Light wind in a hidden pine—

Listen close—the sound gets better.

Under it a gray-haired man

Mumbles along reading Huang and Lao.

For ten years I haven't gone back home

I've even forgotten the way by which I came (Snyder, *RR* 38).

The poet stayed as a recluse for more than ten years in the cold mountains, and he became one with nature. He is reluctant to go back to his home and states that he had forgotten that place and way. In the following poem, he gives answers to people who enquire about this divine path and how he was able to achieve it:

Men ask the way to Cold Mountain

Cold Mountain: there's no through trail.

In summer, ice doesn't melt

The rising sun blurs in swirling fog.

How did I make it?

My heart's not the same as yours.

If your heart was like mine

You'd get it and be right here (Snyder, *RR* 39).

The poet ascertains the fact that humanity can attain this state of mind only if he is ready to change his attitude. If a person nurtures a heart that is similar to the poet, that individual can surely find this place with dignity. In poem 10, the poet becomes emotional, and he just remembers the past thirty years that he spent with nature in ecstasy:

I have lived at Cold Mountain

These thirty long years.

Yesterday I called on friends and family:

More than half had gone to the Yellow Springs.

Slowly consumed, like fire down a candle;

Forever flowing, like a passing river.

Now, morning, I face my lone shadow:

Suddenly my eyes are bleared with tears (Snyder, *RR* 40).

The poet does not regret the time he spent with nature by alienating himself from his family. The years go by just like the passage of a river, and he realises that he will become a lone individual after he leaves his cold mountain. The water in the spring is clear, and the silent message of the cold mountain enlightens the poet. He gets the ability to contemplate the void that exists in this world.

In poem 24, HanShan criticises the people who call him insane and wail over the fact that they are not able to understand his words of wisdom:

When men see Han-shan  
 They all say he's crazy  
 And not much to look at  
 Dressed in rags and hides.  
 They don't get what I say  
 & I don't talk their language.  
 All I can say to those I meet:

“Try and make it to Cold Mountain” (Snyder, *RR* 46).

The people around him are unable to understand his language, and he just urges them to go to the mountains to learn the meaning of earthly life. A further reading of the poem ecologically emphasises the trivial existence of human beings in this big universe. In order to experiment with these ideas of Han-Shan, Snyder had a short sojourn with primitive people belonging to a small Japanese island named Suwanosejima during the period 1954-1968, and Snyder felt a sense of contentment after leading a simple life that was close to nature. Snyder often condemned the sweeping materialism of Western civilisation, represented in “its unconscious desire

to render the wild world tame and to bend nature to its will” (Stueding, *Gary Snyder* 153).

Snyder began to work on a poem of process in 1956, somewhat similar to Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* (1970) and named it *Mountains and Rivers without End*. In the beginning stage, he was inspired by the East-Asian brush paintings, and with his own experiences, he viewed the world as chaotic, as if everything was in place. Snyder combined the Native American narrative styles and his knowledge of Zen Buddhism, Asian drama and art and the variety of landscapes that he saw while travelling through different continents. The central focus is on the landscape, and he devised a structure for the collection that states that walking on the landscape can be both a ritual and meditation. The mountains are symbols of toughness and self-discipline, and rivers are presented as kind and loving spirits that are more concerned about beings. In an afterword to this poetic collection, he says there is an intervention of these elemental forces in the making of the poem. Snyder identifies the essential things that nurtured him to become a nature poet: his practice of Zen meditation and action, his ardent concern towards bio-diversity, his understanding of his filial duties towards friends and family members, and his quest for knowing the history of previous inhabitants of the continent of North America. Above all, he could understand his role as an artist and the revelation that he is only an extension of this working world. The world itself is providing the raw materials for his artistic creations. He is very much concerned about the intellectual, mythical, and cultural aspects of his times and the understanding of interconnectedness.

The poems are not chronologically arranged, but according to place, and there is no final sense of completion. For Snyder, the poems are open-ended, and they should reflect a sense of usefulness and importance to the readers. The first four

sections deal with the beginning stages of his voyage, the landscapes to be unravelled- inner and outer, and the paths through which the features of the landscapes can be gathered into a personal vision.

The poem “Endless Streams and Mountains”, the desire of Snyder to get back into the lap of nature is elegantly expressed, and he believes that the path to be unravelled will appear before him without any difficulty. Snyder wrote this poem after seeing a Chinese scroll painting where a rider, a walker and several other men travelling through mountains, valleys, and woods:

Clearing the mind and sliding in  
to that created space,  
a web of waters streaming over rocks,  
air misty but not raining,  
seeing this land from a boat on a lake  
or a broad slow river,  
coasting by.

The path comes down along a lowland stream  
slips behind boulders and leafy hardwoods,  
reappears in a pine grove (Snyder, *MRWE* 5).

The only requisite is to find one’s place in nature, which is the ultimate source of enlightenment. Snyder says art is unpredictable. We cannot imagine the wealth of knowledge that can be transferred through a piece of art made unintentionally. A healthy, productive culture begins with the dejection of narrow personal identity and finding a connection and commitment to the place one lives in:

‘The Fashioner of Things  
has no original intentions

Mountains and rivers  
 are spirit, condensed.’  
 ‘. . . Who has come up with  
 these miraculous forests and springs?  
 Pale ink  
 on fine white silk’ (Snyder, *MRWE* 7).

Snyder goes on to say that the artist who fashioned this art might not have thought about the deep inclinations that he represented through his painting. However, we get a revelation that a condensed divine spirit is residing in the mountains and rivers. Furthermore, he speaks about the connection between water and mountains in the following lines. “. . .The water holds up the mountains, /The mountains go down in the water . . .” (Snyder, *MRWE* 7). These lines depict the interconnectedness between different systems in the universe. It again gives us an idea that without water, a mountain cannot exist and vice-versa. A mutually supporting environment is necessary for the healthy functioning of the ecosystem. The present generation has forgotten their eternal connection with nature and is so busy with their material life that they do not have time to witness the miracles of nature. It is high time to:

Step back and gaze again at the land:  
 it rises and subsides—  
 ravines and cliffs like waves of blowing leaves—  
 stamp the foot, walk with it, clap! turn,  
 the creeks come in, ah!  
 strained through boulders,  
 mountains walking on the water,  
 water ripples every hill (Snyder, *MRWE* 8).

Snyder exhorts humanity to gaze at the beauty and grandeur of nature and to walk along with it and enjoy life. The ecstasy provided by the mountains and endless streams are unfathomable. Towards the end of the poem, we can see that Snyder asks us to walk with nature and it is a cyclical process without end. In his view, walking itself is a great adventure and it is a process where exact balance of spirit and humility is maintained. “Walking on walking, / under foot earth turns. / Streams and mountains never stay the same” (Snyder, *MRWE* 9).

Snyder concludes by stating that the streams and mountains are never the same. We cannot stick to a particular system in the universe. It is like we cannot stay twice in the same water of a stream. So, change is an inevitable part in our life, even though it is painful and difficult. In the poem “Old Bones”, Snyder brings out our connection with ancestors. They are addressed as old bones capable of enlightening humanity with its old songs and tales:

Out there somewhere  
 a shrine for the old ones,  
 the dust of the old bones,  
 old songs and tales.

What we ate—who ate what—  
 how we all prevailed (Snyder, *MRWE* 10).

The past plays a very crucial role in the development of an individual. The poet has used an image of food to describe our past actions that we have already done. The after effect of our actions will undoubtedly be dangerous, and it is the ultimate responsibility of the person to choose what he needs. Here, Snyder points to the judicious selection of activities by a person that can save him from the wrath of nature. He also ascertains that it is the rule of nature.

In “Boat of a Million Years”, we are reminded of the earth as a boat that carries its inmates to a safer place without drowning:

The boat of a million years,  
 boat of morning,  
 sails between the sycamores of turquoise,  
 .... Teilhard said “seize the tiller of the planet” he was  
 joking,

We are led by dolphins toward morning (Snyder, *MRWE* 39).

The principle of Zen Buddhism is projected in the above lines that tempts us to seize the day or the present. We have to seize the planet to live happily without any discomfort. Snyder says that dolphins are leading us to a better future. Here, a dolphin is presented as a saviour of mankind that is groping in darkness. The natural elements visibly or invisibly assist the forces of nature in doing their part for maintaining harmony in this universe. Thich Nhat Hanh in *Zen Keys* says, truth of existence is revealed through a deepening awareness that comes from living a life of single mindedness which means being ‘awake’ in whatever one is doing. Mind is the laboratory for doing aware work in everyday life especially in one’s daily work. Awareness is very important (Hanh, *Zen Keys* 2). In Zen, more power is generated by the ability to practice in the midst of the world than by sitting alone and shunning from all activities. In short, one’s daily activities become one’s meditation room called “working for oneself” (Hanh, *Zen Keys* 3). Hence, in Zen, everything is in doing and not in contemplating (Hanh, *Zen Keys* 4). The ultimate aim of Zen is the vision of reality acquired through the power of concentration. This wisdom is enlightenment, the perception of the truth of being alive. This is what practitioners of Zen wish to attain (Hanh, *Zen Keys* 23). Zen wisdom is attained not through intellect.

It makes use of the entire being of the practitioner as an instrument of realisation (Hanh, *Zen Keys* 23). Seeing into one's own nature is the goal of Zen. It cannot be taught. It can be passed directly from master to student from mind to mind (Hanh, *Zen Keys* 29). The world of Zen is the world of pure experience without concepts (Hanh, *Zen Keys* 83).

The second part of *The Mountains and Rivers without End* is an extension of the journey to the bleakness and compulsive nature of urban complexes, as well as an exploration of different cultural aspects regarding nature and humanity and combining them into an utterly fluid description. In the poem "Journeys", the poet sees a dream in which he catches hold of a bird, and it turns into a woman and later on into a sweet apple. The dream further connotes the interconnectedness between different things in this world. The notion of oneness will lead us to the ultimate spiritual awareness:

The bird became a woman, and I was embracing  
 her. We walked down a dim-lighted stairway  
 holding hands, then walking more and more swiftly  
 through an enormous maze, all underground.  
 Occasionally we touched surface, and redescended.  
 As we walked, I held a map of our route in  
 mind—but it became increasingly complex—and  
 just when I was about to lose the picture,  
 the woman transferred a piece of fresh-tasting apple  
 from her mouth to mine. Then I woke (Snyder, *MRWE* 54).

The poet comes back to reality, and he finds the complexity of the world where such a utopian world is quite impossible. However, as a poet, Snyder tries to bring back the lost ties with nature. In the next section of the poem, we can see the poet coming up

with the idea of death. He feels that after the birth of an individual, he will have to undergo different trials, and in the end, he will reach the place where he started his journey. Here, he goes on to say that it is in the mountains:

Now we have come to  
 where we die.” I asked him—what’s that up there,  
 then—meaning the further mountains.  
 “That’s the world after death.” I thought it looked  
 just like the land we’d been traveling, and couldn’t  
 see why we should have to die.

Ko grabbed me and pulled me over the cliff—  
 both of us falling. I hit and I was dead. I saw  
 my body for a while, then it was gone.

Ko was there too. We were at the bottom of the gorge.

We started drifting up the canyon. “This is the way to the back country”

(Snyder, *MRWE* 57).

This stanza of the poem projects the impermanence of human life, and the dead are subjected to sediment at the bottom of the gorge. Then, the dead will find their way back to nature.

The third section of *Mountains and Rivers without End* is a reconciliation of various natural forces and forms. In the poem “The Canyon Wren”, the poet hears the song of Canyon Wren and describes it as a delicate song that has a connection with ancient culture and tradition, and it had entered the world to purify our ears poisoned by the unpleasant voices:

Above the roar  
 hear the song of a Canyon Wren.

A smooth stretch, drifting and resting.  
 Hear it again, delicate downward song  
 descending through ancient beds.  
 ... These songs that are here and gone,  
 here and gone,  
 to purify our ears (Snyder, *MRWE* 93).

The purgative effect of the music produced by natural entities is exalted in this poem. “Walking the New York Bedrock Alive in the Sea of Information” is hailed as Snyder’s most significant work, and it explores the existence of wilderness within the city landscape. The poem touches upon flora and fauna existing inside an urban area. Snyder is not indignant or does not have a prejudiced approach towards the urban environment. He clearly mentions the sheer magnitude of the great city, which still recalls the many-footed Manhattan of Whitman’s America, and Snyder tries to draw parallels between geological strata, canyons, and skyscrapers, which implies commonality in disparate forms. In the poem “Walking the New York Bedrock” wildness is dispersed throughout the city, and the lessons we learn from the wild become the etiquette of freedom. We can enjoy our humanity with its flashy brains and sexual buzz, its social cravings and stubborn tantrums, and take ourselves as one more and no less than another being in the Big Watershed. The wild requires that we learn the terrains and nod to all the plants and animals and birds, ford to the streams and cross the ridges. And tell a story when we get back home (Snyder, *PW* 24).

The fourth section contains recent poems that represent reflections of a mature poet and his capacity to endure values. The poem “Koda, Cross-legged” is a kind of prayer of appreciation for the achievements of the journey, an expression of serenity and alertness. A demonstration of the qualities “we two be here what comes”

celebrates the condition of mindful awareness (Snyder, *MRWE* 130). The phrases like “always new, same stuff life after life”, “living in this old clear way”, and “old touches” in the poem depict the connection between the past and the present and the interest of Gary Snyder to return back to the roots. Towards the conclusion, The Mountain Spirit restructures the understanding of mountains and rivers that launched the journey. “The Mountain Spirit/ Walking on walking, / under foot earth turns/ Streams and mountains never stay the same” (Snyder, *MRWE* 146).

The declaration of the poet, “streams and mountains never stay the same”, is like a motto for the poet’s way of living. The continuous process of change that takes place in the universe is highlighted in the poem. This concept has a close connection with Zen principle, which is to live in the present. Through the poem, Snyder tries to give a clue to the impermanence and the change in seasons:

When the axe-strokes stop  
 the silence grows deeper—”  
 Peaks like Buddhas at the heights  
 send waters streaming down  
 to the deep center of the turning world.  
 And the Mountain Spirit always wandering  
 hillsides fade like walls of cloud  
 pebbles smoothed off sloshing in the sea  
 old woman mountain hears  
 shifting sand  
 tell the wind  
 “nothingness is shapeliness”  
 Mountains will be Buddhas then (Snyder, *MRWE* 147).

Snyder goes on to compare the peaks to Buddhas. The quality of the elevation of peaks is compared to the height of enlightenment that Buddha had in his life, and it also stresses the importance of interconnectedness between various forms of life. The Buddhist concept of silence is also introduced, and deep silence helps one to understand the workings of nature in a proper manner, which will also lead to personal enlightenment. The Mountain Spirit whispers back: “All art and song/ is sacred to the real. / As such” (Snyder, *MRWE* 148).

Here, Snyder reemphasises his fundamental ideal that all art and song are sacred, and it has miraculous powers to bring about a change in nature. The Zen Buddhist concept of “nothingness is shapeliness” is also introduced in this poem. The final poem, “Finding the Space in the Heart”, projects the infinity of space, which Snyder considers as a symbol of freedom:

O, ah! The  
 awareness of emptiness  
 brings forth a heart of compassion!  
 “Stomp out greed”

“The best things in life are not things” (Snyder, *MRWE* 151-152).

Snyder ends the poem in gratitude to the mountains and rivers that provided him with a “quiet heart and distant eye”, which he acknowledges as the supreme gift of “the mountain spirit”. Snyder’s poetry is grounded on human values and the fundamentals of existence. Snyder extends his poetry as a guide to his readers, unveiling the path to attain ecstasy in life. Snyder also gives dignity to previous generations and celebrates the intense human bonding that is required for elevating the community and improving the public spirit.

In the poem, “Regarding Wave”, Snyder says about the voice of Dharma, the voice of the present, a shimmering bell that clangs through everything in this universe. The voice of this bell can be heard through the still hills, tress, leaves, flowing slopes, old woods, new seedlings, tall grasses, dark hollows, through light and wind. Snyder experiences this clang of the bell and feels that this voice adorns the status of a wife in his life. This comparison between the voice of Dharma and his wife indicates that Dharma is an inevitable part or an inseparable companion in Snyder’s life (Snyder, *RW* 41).

The poet does not feel the necessity to escape from the city to the nearby woods and rivers while ruminating about the city in a dream. In spite of all hindrances, one is able to attain illumination in the city and country life if he /she is ready to inhabit the place. There should be an attempt on the individual’s part to know the land profoundly and to follow it. Snyder’s notion of civilisation is varied from the ideals of Beat writers like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. They disown the urbane life and are against all forms of civilisations. By glorifying nature and wildlife, Snyder posits that one can enjoy the wild within the city and attain enlightenment without going to the mountains or forests. Snyder does not find any difference between residing in a country and in the city, as he was enlightened while living in both regions. Snyder celebrated the wild and was hailed as the poet of the wild in the second half of the 20th century. Snyder added a naive urban dimension to it by placing himself at a different place in the network. It does not mean that he is not interested in the totality of the network, but it is the place where he centres himself.

Snyder made extensive efforts to rewrite the traditional concept of nature and fought against the antagonist notions and activities of the public that significantly harmed the environment. Snyder’s writings, to an extent, tried to alter people’s views

on nature and their actions. His works showcased novel ways of interacting with nature that could preserve the natural world. Snyder's plausible solution for the existing global crisis is to instigate people to reconcile and bridge the gap between their civilisation and wild culture.

Snyder has helped the modern environment in its evolution through his wholehearted approach to this perspective of nature. Although Snyder's environmental activism is out of sheer passion, his works reverberate environmental activism in a more influential way. Snyder considered himself a mediator between civilisation and nature. Often hailed as the patron saint of ecology in America, his campaign for ecology and its preservation is an endless activity. Snyder wrote in an essay entitled "Writers and the War against Nature" in one of his collection of essays *Back on the Fire* (2007), "What is happening now to nature worldwide, to plant life and wildlife, in ocean, grassland, forest, savannah, and desert in all spaces and habitat can be likened to a war against nature" (Snyder, *Back on Fire* 62). Here, a detailed analysis of Gary Snyder's poetry is conducted on the basis of profound ecological and Buddhist precepts. To conclude, by practising the principles of these ecologically oriented concepts, we can protect nature and develop a sustainable environment that promotes the well-being of the whole world.

## Chapter IV

### **Religious Influences and Whispers of the Earth in Gary Snyder's Poetry: A Path Toward Environmental Healing**

With the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, critics, writers and environmentalists started to ponder over the degradation of nature due to industrial advancements. Now, it is high time that our Earth requires deep cultural therapy to save our land from this danger. A new viable future needs to be created for humanity as a whole and for the whole planet in general. The first step in this process is to understand what is happening in the present and a kind of adoration towards the future, which is possible only if we respond judiciously to the present situation. This objective can be fulfilled only by understanding oneself, and for this, one has to attain spiritual enlightenment. For this, the individual can take the aid of various theosophies that favours interdependence of every living and non-living thing in this universe.

In response to the increased global environmental crisis, scholars in this area have started considering religion as a source of the development of a new cultural and environmental ethic. There is a close connection between religion and ecology, and it is believed that they can solve the problems of nature and natural resources together. In a controversial article, "The Historical Roots of Ecological Crisis", Lynn White recommends Buddhism as an alternative to the present ecological crisis. According to him, Buddhism projects a more holistic approach and a simple life that has a close connection with the environment. The Western tradition has an indifferent attitude towards nature that includes despotism, dominion, anthropocentrism and subordination. The attitude of participation is found in Buddhism, which permits human beings to participate in the workings of different systems. This participation brings forth a divinity in our existence. Due to the all-inclusive nature of Buddhism,

the followers in Asia and the people in the West have accepted it due to its eco-friendly attitude (White, *Eco -Theology and History* 151). Allen Hunt Badiner in his work *Dharma Gaia: Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, mentions the essence of Buddhism as mindful living:

The fruit of Buddhism-mindful living cultivates a view of human beings, Nature, and their relationship that is fundamentally ecological. Awareness opens our perception to the interdependence and fragility of all life, and our indebtedness to countless beings, living and dead, past and present, near and far. If we have any real identity at all in Buddhism, it is the ecology itself—a massive interdependent, self-causing dynamic energy-event against a backdrop of ceaseless change (Badiner, *Dharma Gaia* xiv-xv).

This connection between Buddhism and ecology can help environmental activists find proper solutions for present-day environmental problems. This chapter deals with the analysis of some spiritual texts related to Hinduism and Buddhism that will aid us in understanding the elements of spirituality in the poetry of Gary Snyder and how it can provide solutions for the present environmental problems.

In the Buddha's *The Dhammapada*, the first Gatha teaches the importance of mind and thought. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of an ox that draws the carriage" (Buddha, *Dhammapada* 1). Thus, Buddhism teaches that the mind is the forerunner of all things, and the mind is supreme. If we act with a mind that is sullied with greed, hatred and delusion, suffering is inevitable. If we act with a pure mind that is filled with contentment, compassion, and wisdom, happiness will succeed. We have to come to a realisation that the pollution in the environment is a result of our

psychological pollution. If we want to cleanse the environment, we have to adopt a lifestyle that springs from a moral and spiritual dimension.

Buddhism offers humanity a middle way, a simple lifestyle that avoids both self-deprivation and self-indulgence. The satisfaction of basic human requirements, the reduction of wants to a minimum, frugality, and contentment are important characteristics. Every individual has to order their life on moral principles, exercise self-control in the enjoyment of senses, discharge their duties with utmost honesty in society, and behave with wisdom and self-awareness in all activities. It is only when each person adopts a simple, moderate lifestyle that humanity as a whole will stop polluting the environment. This seems to be the only way of overcoming the present eco-crisis and the problem of alienation. With such a lifestyle, humanity will adopt a non-exploitative, non-aggressive, caring attitude towards nature. We can live in harmony with nature, using its resources to satisfy our basic needs. Just as the bee manufactures honey out of nectar, we should be able to find happiness and fulfilment in life without harming the natural world in which we live. “And this is the beginning here for the wise Bikshu: watchfulness over the senses, contentedness, restraint under the law; keep noble friends whose life is pure, and who are not slothful” (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 375).

Thich Nhat Hanh, in the essay, “Look Deep and Smile”, feels that to live more simply and to change the systems of injustice, we have to entrust ourselves to the Earth. Through the following Gatha, he compiles this idea:

I entrust myself to Earth;

Earth entrusts herself to me.

I entrust myself to Buddha;

Buddha entrusts himself to me (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 107).

If we plant a seed, we entrust it to the Earth, the plant takes refuge in the soil. The growth of the plant depends on the Earth. The quality of the Earth depends on the plants entrusted to it. The plants can make the Earth a beautiful place, fresh and green, and withered or dry. Similarly, the stability of Earth depends on the stability of the human minds entrusted to it. So, this again underlines the importance of relying on each other in this universe. These Buddhist practices can help us to revive the lost connection between human and nature and also aids in developing a mind that give due reverence to dependant co-arising and deep ecology of all things.

The *Avatamsaka Sutra*, which was written in India and became the most influential book in China, sums up the idea of interdependence in the following verse:

All lands are my body

And so are the Buddhas living there;

Watch my pores,

And I will show you the Buddha's realm.

Just as the Nature of Earth is one

While beings each live separately,

And the Earth has no thought of oneness or difference

So is the truth of the Buddha (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 11).

This concept of interconnectedness is a major theme in most of Snyder's poems. A life that nurtures inner-being can reach the ultimate truth or enlightenment or Buddhahood. Snyder employed an all-encompassing attitude in his poems, which was done in order to make the world understand the importance of universality or oneness. In the poem "With This Flesh", Snyder starts the poem with an excerpt from *Avatamsaka Sutra*:

Why should we cherish all sentient beings?

Because sentient beings  
are the roots of the tree-of-awakening.

The Bodhisattvas and the Buddhas are the flowers and fruits.

Compassion is the water for the roots (Snyder, *MRWE* 77).

Here, in this poem, Snyder tries to give importance to all beings who have the ability to feel, sense and the capacity to experience different kinds of emotions. Such sentient beings are enlightened followers of Buddha and possess a heart filled with compassion.

In poem 21 of “Cold Mountain Poems” in *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*, Snyder explicitly expresses his contentment in living close to nature:

I’ve lived at Cold Mountain—how many autumns.

Alone, I hum a song—utterly without regret.

Hungry, I eat one grain of Immortal-medicine

Mind solid and sharp; leaning on a stone (Snyder, *RR* 44).

The immortal medicine provided by nature has healed his soul and has made his mind solid and sharp, capable of facing anything in life. In the beginning, the cold mountain was just a place of retreat for the poet. Later on, it provided him with fountains of light akin to the enlightenment of Buddha. This idea is expressed in the poem 23 of “Cold Mountain Poems” in *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*:

My home was at Cold Mountain from the start,

Rambling among the hills, far from trouble.

Gone, and a million things leave no trace

Loosed, and it flows through the galaxies

A fountain of light, into the very mind—

Not a thing, and yet it appears before me:

Now I know the pearl of the Buddha-nature

Know its use: a boundless perfect sphere (Snyder, *RR* 45).

The beams of enlightenment will make one aware of the cyclical nature of all systems in this universe and the dictum that everything is connected to everything else.

The Chinese Buddhists considered this doctrine of mutual interdependence as a composite of all phenomena in this world. Uisang, a monk from Korea defines it through these lines of verse:

Since Dharma-nature is round and interpenetrating, it is without any sign of duality,

All dharmas (phenomena) are unmoving and originally calm.

No name, no form; all (distinctions) are abolished.

It is known through the wisdom of enlightenment, not by any other level.

The true-nature is extremely profound, exceedingly subtle and sublime.

It does not attach to self-nature, but takes form following (casual) conditions.

In one is all, in many is one.

One is identical to all; many is identical to one.

In one particle of dust are contained the ten directions.

(North, South, East, West; North-East, South- East, South -West, North-West,

Zenith, Nadir (up and down)

And so is with all particles of dust (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 11).

This philosophy is central to Zen Buddhist studies and the famous Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh, encourages his disciples to crack the shell of self-centeredness and understand the interconnection of all living beings. When Thich Nhat Hanh says in the book *The Art of Living* that “Please Call Me by My True Names” he means:

So, if you call me Thich Nhat Hanh, I will say, “Yes, that is me.” And if you call me the young girl, I will say, “Yes, that is me.” If you call me the pirate, I will also say, “Yes, that is me.” These are all my true names. If you call me an impoverished child in a war zone with no future, I will say, “Yes, that is me.” And if you call me the arms merchant selling weapons to support that war, I will say, “Yes, that is me.” All of these people are us. We inter-are with everyone. When we can free ourselves from the idea of separateness, we have compassion, we have understanding, and we have the energy we need to help (Hanh, *The Art of Living* 17).

In Thich Nhat Hanh’s view, self is just a belief that is not real, and this illusion can be removed only through the realisation of the reality that all beings are interconnected. Gary Snyder, an ardent follower of Zen Buddhism practised it for many years and it helped him to frame his spiritual thought and environmental thought. In the poem, “For/From Lew”, Lew Welch comes back from the dead to inform Snyder about the need to educate children about all life cycles. This will eradicate the fear of our culture, and in a way, it is the duty of adults to educate their children. “Teach children about the cycles. / The life cycles, / And all other cycles” (Snyder, *AH* 7). Snyder exhorts the present generation to introduce the nuances of different cycles in the world to their children, so that they can escape from their basic fears of their culture. Through these teachings, they become aware of their existence and get an opportunity to know their land in the fullest sense. This idea is central to Snyder’s reinhabiting the land and interconnectedness.

In *Ramana Maharshi: Sage of the People* by Anupa Lal, gives an introduction to Ramana Maharshi, who was a true sage of people. He guided people through all the sorrows and joys of life with profound wisdom. He resided in an ashram in

Arunachala Hills, led a simple life, and became a source of enlightenment for anyone who came for help. He guided them to the path of self-realisation. Arunachala is one of the sacred places in India, and according to Puranic legends, Lord Shiva appeared as a blazing column of light to settle a dispute between Brahma and Vishnu over who was superior. They realised their folly and prayed to Lord Shiva to manifest himself in a form less dazzling so that ordinary people would be able to worship him. For the good of the world, Shiva manifested himself as Arunachala, the sacred hill. The Gods declared that whoever circumambulated the hill slowly and with reverence would be blessed by Lord Shiva and that his wishes would be fulfilled (Lal, *Ramana Maharshi* 20). It is very fortunate to quote two different poems of Gary Snyder, brimming with the ideology of Ramana Maharshi. This principle is explicitly connected to the poetic activism of Gary Snyder, where he explored the mythical elements from Indian spiritual texts and lore.

In “Bubbs Creek Haircut”, from *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, Snyder introduces Asian gods and goddesses like Lord Siva, the Mountain God, the King of Hell, Yaman, an ardent follower of Lord Shiva; Goddess Parvati and Goddess Saraswati are exemplified as enlightening powers of nature:

Daughter of mountains, stooped  
 moon breast Parvati  
 mountain thunder speaks  
 hair tingling static as the lightning lashes  
 is neither word of love nor wisdom;  
 though this be danger: hence thee fear.  
 Some flowing girl  
 whose slippery dance

entrances Shiva  
 —the valley spirit / Anahita,  
 Sarasvati,  
 dark and female gate of all the world  
 water that cuts back quartz flake sand  
 soft is the dance that melts the  
 mat-haired mountain sitter  
 to leap in fire  
 & make of sand a tree  
 of tree a board, of board (ideas!)  
 somebody's rocking chair.  
 A room of empty sun of peaks and ridges  
 beautiful spirits  
 rocking lotus throne  
 a universe of junk, all left alone (Snyder, *MRWE* 33).

Snyder had an inkling towards Eastern culture and tradition, especially Indian gods and goddesses who are intricately connected to nature. Lord Siva resides in Mount Himalaya along with his spouse, Goddess Parvathi. The power of Sivasakthi concept is brought out in this poem. Lord Siva is considered the destroyer and protector of humanity, and Goddess Parvathi is an incarnation of nature itself. There is also a mention of Goddess Saraswathi, who is the illuminator of the whole world. She is capable of spreading knowledge and thus removing the darkness that exists in this universe.

In "Praise of Sick Woman", Snyder presents a woman as a wounded creature, and while giving birth to children, she is enduring pain that anyone can imagine. Her

body undergoes several changes in the process, and she becomes tired with the passage of time when she is fulfilling her responsibilities towards her children.

Through the poem, Snyder tries to uphold the marginalised and degraded group that existed in society. A woman was bound to suffer due to their biological functions like menstruation and child bearing. Women were considered wounded individuals, and being a woman was a curse:

All women are wounded  
Who gather berries, dibble in mottled light,  
Turn white roots from humus, crack nuts on stone  
High upland with squinted eye  
or rest in cedar shade.  
Are wounded  
In yurt or frame or mothers  
...sea cries  
Sick women  
Dreaming of long-legged dancing in light  
No, our Mother Eve: slung on a shoulder  
Lugged off to hell.  
kali/shakti  
Where's hell then?  
In the moon.  
In the change of the moon:  
In a bark shack  
Crouched from sun, five days,  
Blood dripping through crusted thighs (Snyder, *RR* 12).

Here, Snyder uses the concept of the divine mother from Hinduism, which destroys sin, ignorance, and filth in order to recreate. In the above lines, we can see the strength of women, which, in turn, connotes the strength and vitality of nature or Mother Earth. She is being compared to Goddess Kali or Sakthi, who is the epitome of power, life, anger, and death. She is the consort of God Shiva and represents the destructive incarnation of the Great Goddess, Devi. The poet may be trying to talk about the 'kali yuga', the period of decline in morality and never-ending miseries. The reproductive ability of a woman is also depicted in the last stanza, where he speaks about the menstrual cycle that is controlled by the change of the moon and the difficulties faced by women in those days.

Anupa Lal in *Ramana Maharshi: Sage of the People*, discusses the concept of self or spirit. According to Advaita philosophy, spirit manifests all the changing forms of the universe without itself ceasing to be both formless and changeless. Each individual imagines himself or herself to be a real and separate being. All human miseries and uncertainties are a result of this ignorance. According to Ramana Maharshi, ego or a person's sense of individual self has to vanish, and he calls it as "disrealising unreality so that reality could appear" (Lal, *Ramana Maharshi* 46). When a person realises the sense of "I" or his self for the first time, some kind of infinite, divine and eternal spirit arises from him and it is known as the Kingdom of Heaven or nirvana or mukti /liberation. Thus, he finds himself (Lal, *Ramana Maharshi* 49). In the poem, "The Blue Sky", Snyder speaks of Ramana Maharshi's concept of self-inquiry, which is the practice of asking the question, "Who am I?" that will lead to the understanding of the self (Snyder, *MRWE* 43).

Ranchor Prime, in the preface of the book, *Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth* discusses the introduction of the word 'Hindu' into the English language.

Actually, this term came from the Persians, whose Muslim descendants ruled India for a thousand years. They derived it from the river 'Indus', which flowed through the north-western plains of the sub-continent and gave its name to the land and its people. The Hindus, with their reverence for the sacred rivers, mountains, forests and animals, have always been close to nature. We can see this ideal of Ranchor Prime in the collection *Turtle Island*, where all poems share a common vision: a rediscovery of this land and the ways by which we might become natives of the land for the first time. The poems speak of place and the energy-pathways that sustain life. Each living being is a swirl in the flow, a formal turbulence, a song in the ocean of life. Describing the title of his collection of poetry and occasional prose pieces, Gary Snyder writes in his introductory note that *Turtle Island* is "the old /new name for the continent, based on many creation myths of people who have been here for millennia, and reapplied by some of them to North America in the recent years" (Snyder, *TI* i).

Prime suggests that Hinduism can be given a legitimate name, it is 'Sanatan Dharma' - the eternal essence of life. This essence is not limited to human beings but an essential quality that unites all beings, the flora and the fauna, with the universe surrounding them. The Hindu scriptures have always advised that science, the knowledge of the matter, must be coupled with the knowledge of the spirit in order to benefit humanity (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* x). This idea has a close connection with Gary Snyder's Bodhisattva Ideal, in which the Bodhisattva is a person who has purity in his mind that he had gained through practising mindfulness. Such a mind is capable of doing the right actions in the right place without harming the world. He also believes in the universality of nature and gives due respect to all beings. The poem "The Blue Sky", is connected with Buddhist thoughts, and he glorifies Eastern tradition and hails Buddha as the master of healing and he says it would take a

thousand summer vacations for humanity to reach this pure utopian world, Lapis

Lazuli, the paradise of Medicine Man Buddha:

Eastward from here,

beyond Buddha-worlds ten times as

numerous as the sands of the Ganges

there is a world called

PURE AS LAPIS LAZULI

its Buddha is called Master of Healing,

AZURE RADIANCE TATHAGATA (Snyder, *MRWE* 40).

The three words that Buddha holds tight in his principles are healing, hail, and whole.

Snyder has introduced The Medicine Buddha Sutra in the poem “The Spell of the

Master of Healing”. In Buddhist scriptures, Bhaishajyaguru is the Medicine Buddha

who has the power to heal the whole universe.

Namo bhagavate bhaishajyagura-vaidurya-

prabharajaya tathagata arhate samyak

sambuddhaya tadyatha om bhaishajye

bhaishajye bhaishajya samudgate

sva-ha- (Snyder, *MRWE* 41).

Here, Snyder pays homage to Lord Buddha and considers him as the blessed master

of healing and as the king of Lapis Lazuli with a perfect awakened mind and radiance:

I honour the Lord, the Master of Healing,

shining like lapis lazuli, the king, the

Tathagata, the Saint, the perfectly enlightened

one, saying OM TO THE HEALING

TO THE HEALING TO THE HEALER

HAIL!

sva-ha- (Snyder, *MRWE* 41).

Snyder glorifies Buddha as the Great Medicine Master in the land of Blue Sky, where living and non-living things exist in harmony (Snyder, *MRWE* 45-46). Snyder is an ardent follower of the principles of Buddha, and he believes in the utterance of the all-inclusive prayer “OM”, that provides salvation and heals the wounded self. In this poem, the story of healing is introduced, and it is also found in Mahayana Buddhism and Native North America. The Sanskrit term ‘Bhaishajyaguru’ means the Medicine Buddha and in Japan, this term is used as Yakushi Nyorai. He is a divine figure who holds a tiny medicine bottle in the palm of one hand. Years ago, he had made a vow to work for the welfare and healing of all sentient beings. Another element that is given importance in this poem is the protective and healing power of the blue colour and of certain blue stones. The character ‘k’ung’, is often used to represent Buddhist term “sunyata” or “emptiness” and in Chinese, it also means the “sky” (Snyder, *MRWE* 162).

In the poem “The Hump-backed Flute Player”, the flute player is seen as carrying a pack on his back that is filled with emptiness. This concept of emptiness is related to Buddhism, and the realisation of the emptiness itself will lead to the emergence of compassion. To nurture compassion in our mind is a prerequisite for leading a happy life on the surface of Earth. The concept of co-dependence is also related to emptiness:

The hump-backed flute player

walks all over.

Sits on the boulders around the Great Basin

his hump is a pack.

.....he carried

“emptiness”

he carried

“mind only”

vijñaptima-tra

The hump-backed flute player

Kokop’ele

His hump is a pack (Snyder, *MRWE* 82).

In ancient rock art and in rock carvings or petroglyphs, an image of a walking flute-player with a hump on his back is found widely in the Southwest and Mexico. These images are several thousand years old. In one of the secret societies named Hopi, the image of the Flute-player is accepted as its emblem. Some of the figures etched on the rocks have an erected penis or some with feelers on their heads that look like insect antennae. It has been suggested that the hump is possibly a pack and that the figure may represent Aztec or Toltec wandering traders who came to the Southwest carrying their trade items. In Peru, we can see young men with a sort of sling-pack on their backs, carrying a load and playing the flute while walking. The poet reflects on Kokop’ele, a flute player, who might have been carrying seeds as a symbol of genetic diversity, as his work of safe-guarding and preservation of plants, animals, people and cultures is not over. Implication of Hsüan Tsang, the Buddhist scholar-pilgrim, brought back the famous “Heart Sutra” who condensed the whole philosophy of transcendent wisdom in his back pack (Snyder, *MRWE* 162).

In the book *Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth*, Richard Prime has tried to describe the Western culture in his own terms and points that it has restricted the human spirit and it is on the verge of decline. This spirit is incarcerated by its material

surfeit. Despite its sophistication, civilisation has failed to see the inner meaning of life (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 4). The Western civilisation needs to discover the balance and harmony which it has lost. This imbalance is also traced by Gary Snyder and he says that this suffering or 'dukkha' is the result of their actions and the lack of self-awareness that is found in the Western world. They have alienated themselves from nature and have lost their cultural roots, and this rootlessness is the cause of their suffering. The inner soul needs to be awakened to attain the light of Buddha or salvation from suffering. For that, strenuous practice and dedication is required to attain the same.

Richard Prime presents re-incarnation as an instruction ignored by Western civilisation, despite the fact that it has existed in various forms in the unofficial religions of Europe. This concept is important because it stresses the equality and transience of all life forms. It disregards the anthropocentric culture of the West, which allows human society to overpower the animal kingdom by dominating the different cycles of nature to satisfy their needs (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 5). Snyder is also dissatisfied with the anthropocentric culture of the Western world. Snyder often says he is a post-humanist in the sense he gives due respect to all living and non-living things in this world. In his view, the proper study of mankind is what it means to be human and nature, society and spirit are interdependent. He suggests a more embracing humanism where he includes non-human plant life, animals, mountain ranges and so on (Snyder, *PW* 68).

Richard Prime discusses forests as, "Forest at one level, means the world. It includes the whole creation. You are also part of that forest. It is not that you are outside the forest. You can reorder it, but you cannot bypass it" (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 8). In the poem "The Mountain Spirit", Snyder restructures the understanding

of mountains and rivers that launched the journey. “The Mountain Spirit/ Walking on walking, / under foot earth turns/ Streams and mountains never stay the same”

(Snyder, *MRWE* 146). The declaration of the poet, “streams and mountains never stay the same, is like a motto for the poet’s way of living. The continuous process of change that takes place in the universe is highlighted in the poem. And you cannot control the different cycles taking place in the universe. This shows that human beings are not above the forces of nature. The world has a spiritual realm that can be attained only through the hard practice of meditation and mindfulness. Through the poem, Snyder tries to give a clue to the impermanence and the change in seasons. This poem has a close connection with the Zen principle, which is to live in the present.

Here, we can also trace the echo of the philosophy of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus said, “You can never bathe in the same river twice.” The river is constantly flowing, so as soon as we climb out onto the bank and then return to bathe, the water has already changed. Furthermore, even in that short space of time, we have changed, too. In our body, cells die and are born every second. Our thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and state of mind are also changing from one moment to the next. So, we cannot swim twice in the same river, nor can the river receive the same person twice. Our body and mind are an ever-changing continuum. Although we seem to look the same, and we are still called the same name, we are different. No matter how sophisticated our scientific instruments, we cannot find anything in our person that remains the same and that we can call a soul or a self. Once we accept the reality of impermanence, we have to also accept the truth of no self (Hanh, *The Art of Living* 15).

There are two types of learning: the learning from tradition and the learning from the world forest. Early Vedic gurus gave more importance to the trees. The

Vedic texts are taught under the trees as they believe that there is an all-pervading presence of God beneath a tree. They considered it the right place for a disciple to receive spiritual instruction from a guru. For them, the tree was a symbol of patience and tolerance. This tradition of valuing trees was passed on to Indian culture, and it led to a subtle ecological relationship between human communities and forest communities. The forest is often considered as a place of peace and harmony with God, where the spiritual goals of life could be pursued by the forest sages. Human beings depend on forest for survival and prosperity, and therefore it is their duty to preserve and protect them (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 11).

Towards the end of the same poem, “The Mountain Spirit”, we can see that Snyder has gone to describe the peak itself as Buddha, the epitome of enlightenment:

When the axe-strokes stop  
 the silence grows deeper—”  
 Peaks like Buddhas at the heights  
 send waters streaming down

to the deep center of the turning world (Snyder, *MRWE* 148).

The enlightenment in the life of Buddha is exemplified, and Snyder suggests a spiritual life for all his fellowmen. He also wanted to make them aware of the importance of interconnectedness between various forms of life. The Buddhist concept of silence is also introduced, and deep silence helps one to understand the workings of nature in a proper manner, which will also lead to personal enlightenment. The forest is given a divine position in Snyder’s poetry. Though, Snyder does not despise the life in urban cities and the fruits of various industrial developments.

Every physical object symbolises some aspect of reality. Amongst these, the forest symbolises the divine attribute of totality that combines all life forms together in a single independent whole (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 10). In the Bhagavat Gita, Lord Krishna compares the world to a single banyan tree with unlimited branches in which all the species of animals, humans, and demigods wander. In *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, we can also see descriptions that indicate that the bond between people and trees is eternal.

Hindu tradition describes three basic types of forests. The first one is ‘Shrivan’, where you can enjoy all kinds of prosperity, and the trees guarantee the fertility of the soil, as well as purified air and water. The second type of forest is ‘Tapovan’, where one can contemplate as sages did in their search for the ultimate truth. The life of a holy person is meant to be one of self-control and penance through restricted diet, simple living, renunciation of belongings and meditation. The third type of forest is the ‘Mahavana’, the great natural forest where all species of life find shelter. This forest is another way of viewing the world as a village, which includes the forest, its animals, and humanity (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 10).

The concept of ‘Mahavana’ is akin to the Sangha concept of Gary Snyder, wherein he identifies the universe as a whole community that lives in complete interdependence. Snyder’s Buddhism is not a passive endeavour. He does not stay quiet by witnessing the damage caused to nature by its own inhabitants out of greed. Another commentator, David Landis Barnhill states in his critical work, “Great Earth Sangha: Gary Snyder’s View of Nature as Community”, states that Snyder fused Zen and ecology and extended the implications of the vow which all Buddhists take: “I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the dharma, I take refuge in the sangha” (Barnhill, *Buddhism and Ecology* 187). Sangha is a collective noun used to represent

people who follow the path of Buddha and practice dharma. In all Snyder's works, we can trace the presence of Sangha culture. It is clearly depicted in the poem "O Waters", where he invokes "great/earth/sangha" (Snyder. *TI* 73). In Barnhill's explanation,

Traditionally Sangha refers to the community of monks, people who have devoted their life to spiritual practice separated from normal society. Snyder has clearly departed from that notion here: the sangha is the ecosphere of the planet. In this one image is suggested two fundamental characteristics of his thought: a creative extension of both Buddhism and ecology by seeing each in terms of the other, and an overriding concern with community (Barnhill, *Buddhism and Ecology* 187).

When we speak of the environment, we cannot leave human beings out of the picture. If we want to restructure the environment, we will have to understand ourselves. When we start recreating ourselves, we have to look within our hearts and see where we have erred and made mistakes that lead to the imbalance of the whole system. This is a religious path, and we are ultimately moving towards God. In this way, the environmental approach becomes a religious approach, and it is part and parcel of spiritual culture, and it emerges from human self-development (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 19). Ranchor Prime goes on to define the seven facets of human existence that together makeup what he calls human ecology. In his analysis, each level of concern grows and is dependent upon each other's concerns.

The first concern is the forest splendour, where he says the beauty of the natural creation lies in the splendour of the moon, the stars, the rising sun, the winds, the sky, the vegetation, the animals, the birds, rivers, trees and mountains together. This beauty is termed as 'Vanavaibhava'- the forest splendour. Human beings are a

part of this forest splendour and should, therefore, love and respect it in their natural state. We are part of it, and it gives us our identity. The second is spirituality, which means understanding our relation with this forest splendour and looking into ourselves. Spirituality begins when we start looking at things from within. True spirituality is not only looking within ourselves but also at the whole of nature. That is to understand the internal reality of nature. When we feel ourselves as a part of the whole and become aware of the workings of all systems in the universe, real spirituality begins from there, and it cannot survive without reference to the natural environment. The third is culture, which is the outward expression of spirituality. As a painting expresses the spirit of the artist, likewise, the culture expresses the spirit of the society. It is expressed in the way a society leads its life, how people behave, and in its religious expressions. The Vedic culture has lasted for many thousands of years and is still visible now. It is known as Sanatana Dharma- the way of life which lasts for ever that is self-perpetuating and regenerating. The fourth is heritage, which develops from the human culture that is practised by human beings. We can see the permanent impressions left on stones, art, and literature, through which we pass on our values to the next generation. The fifth is a pilgrimage; the word itself denotes travel or wandering in search of knowledge. To understand the cultures and heritages, one must travel to various sacred places and find out how all these different patterns are tied together as a whole. This is indeed an act of finding unity in diversity. In Vedic tradition, the most enlightened souls are considered to be the Sanyasis, the wandering monks who move around to provide enlightenment to people. They travel from place to place to learn what truth is and to impart it to others. The sixth is human welfare, which is a common thread that unites all different expressions of human culture and heritage, and then we will have a full sense of human welfare. The welfare

of nature and humans cannot be separated from each other. The seventh is Human Ecology, which is a composite of all the above mentioned six concerns. If we fail to find our place in the forest splendour, which is the initial point of contact with our natural origins, we fail to find ourselves in relation to the world and truth (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 20-22).

This concept of 'vanavaibhava' is a recurrent theme in Gary Snyder's poetry. For instance, in the poem, "Piute Creek", Snyder narrates a scene from Piute Creek, a river in California with a bed of stones rather than sand:

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 (Snyder, *RR* 12).

Snyder feels this perfect scene of nature emanates positive energy and helps human beings to remove all kinds of "junk" from their mind (Snyder, *RR* 13). The poet is able to come out of his junk mind and is able to enjoy the warmth of the rocks. The hard rock changes its quality to a more fluid one. This means that nature allows the narrator to free himself from a stubborn mind. Rock and water differ in material quality, and this may refer to conflicts in society. Here, in this context, water takes the responsibility to shape the rocks, and the rock, in turn, guides the water through proper channels. This is the basic principle of co-existence, and by cultivating an open mind, vibrancy and harmony can be restored in the world.

In another poem, “For Nothing”, Earth is compared to a flower that is hanging from rotten cliffs without support. The vicious birds hover and flap its wings, make it tremble, and then leave her to suffer. Towards the end Snyder says, A Flower/ for nothing;/an offer;/no taker;/ snow-trickle, feldspar, dirt (Snyder, *TI* 34). So, he concludes by saying that there is no one to accept Earth as an offering, nor is there anyone to have her. The flower itself is a symbol of divinity. The flower mentioned here can be the Lotus of Buddha, the flower of enlightenment, but no one cares for it in this material world. Through this poem, he wants the public to introspect and follow the path of salvation.

The illuminating power of light or knowledge is explicitly presented in the poem “The Uses of Light”, where Snyder narrates the facilities provided by it for the proper functioning of the world. It is a source of energy that warms the whole universe, it helps the inhabitants to grow and flourish, educates us about the importance of day and night, and gives vision for a bright future. This is the same light that tempts a person to move beyond the horizon to find the ultimate truth. This is explained well in the last line of the poem. “If you climb up /One floor/You’ll see a thousand miles more” (Snyder, *TI* 39). This light is the divine spirit or the Light of Buddha, which helps us move forward without fear or hesitation and also aids us in nurturing an eco-friendly attitude.

Prime goes on to state that the Hindu tradition gives us three principles to follow: ‘Yajna’ (sacrifice), ‘Dhana’ (giving) and ‘Tapas’(penance). These are three ecological principles required for replenishing the Earth. Through ‘Yajna’, it symbolises the sacred fire ceremony that replenishes the Earth. Secondly, the Dhana is associated with charity, giving our money for the welfare of society, which we have gained through our intelligence, labour, and time. Through the third principle of

‘Tapas’, we can gain self-control and replenish our soul or our own internal spiritual environment. Together, by practising all these principles that involve meditation and silence, we can bring about peace in ecology, society and mind (Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* 72). The approach of Gary Snyder is non-dualistic in the sense that he tries to combine Eastern insights and Western revolutions with the help of Buddhist principles. They are both contained in the traditional three aspects of Dharma Path: wisdom (prajna), meditation (dhyana), and morality (shila) (Molesworth, *Gary Snyder’s Vision* 37). In the book *Gary Snyder Reader*, he mentioned this ideal in the essay entitled “Buddhism and the Possibilities of a Planetary Culture” as,

Wisdom is intuitive knowledge of the mind of love and clarity that lies beneath one’s ego-driven anxieties and aggressions. Meditation is going into the mind to see this for yourself-over and over again, until it becomes the mind you live in. Morality is bringing it back out in the way you live, through personal example and responsible action, ultimately toward the true community (Sangha) of all beings (Snyder, *Gary Snyder Reader* 42-43).

When we look at the works written by Gary Snyder, we can ascertain that Snyder was a person with spiritual and mythical fervour. In the two poems “Great Mother”, and “Prayer for the Great Family” of *Turtle Island*, we can see that Mother Earth is personified, and it is used as an archetypal imagery to invoke the divine spirit. In the poem “Spell Against the Demoniatic Energies”, Snyder says,

The release of Demonic Energies in the name of People must cease  
 Messing with blood sacrifice in the name of nature must cease  
 The stifling self-indulgence in anger in the name of Freedom must cease  
 This is death to clarity  
 Death to compassion

...The Demonic must be devoured!

Self-serving must be cut down

Anger must be plowed back

Fearlessness, humour, detachment, is power

Knowledge is the secret of Transformation! (Snyder, *TI* 16).

This is a well-explained verse of Snyder's attitude towards the demonic agencies existing in this world that literally murder us for their benefit. He ascertains the need to curb these evil forces with the divine knowledge attained by a Bodhisattva through the strenuous spiritual practices that bestow him with fearlessness, humour and detachment. This, according to Snyder, is the real spirit and secret of spiritual transformation. The poem ends with a divine sloka as follows: NAMAHA SAMANTHAH VAJRANAM CHANDA /MAHAROSHANA/ SPHATAYA HUM TRAKA HAM MAM (Snyder, *TI* 17). This prayer is one of the nine Vajra mantras. This incantation is a homage to all Vajra, the manifestation of great wrath. This Japanese verse states that this Vajra can remove all sufferings and use all the skilful means to bring all beings to salvation. It also means intuition is a powerful friend, and it determines our contact with the environment and the whole cosmos. This will help you to learn to love yourself and others. By acquiring divine knowledge through Bodhisattva, one can see the oneness in the universe and can teach his fellow beings about the necessity of cultivating a mind that can incorporate all entities with due respect. In this way, we will be able to abstain people from illegally encroaching on the faculties of nature.

In the book, *The Religious Mind*, by J. Krisnamurthi, the author talks about the necessity of developing a new mind, more accurately, a religious mind. To develop a

religious mind, we have to nurture the art of denial of acceptance. According to Krishnamurthi,

Religion is something that includes everything, it is not exclusive. A religious mind has no nationality. It is not provincial; it does not belong to a particular organised group. It is a mind that understands the total quality of thought-not only the obvious, superficial thought, the educated thought, but also the uneducated thought, the deep-down unconscious thought and motives (Krishnamurthi, *TRM 3*).

A mind has to develop into a state where it is able to perceive the totality of an entity, and it should know how to sieve the right from the false. This denial of the false will bring out a new mind that is religious and revolutionary. The anthropocentric world has a conditioning power over the individual who belongs to it. Actually, we have to become unconditioned to experience or discover something that is real or fake. If the tenets of various religions carry us away, it is not a religious mind but a traditional mind that is bound with fear. J.Krishnamurthi projects the importance of the art of listening without condemnation, comparison or dislike. We usually listen to agree and disagree and listen by connecting things we know with what we hear. This process actually causes distractions, and we cannot listen completely. The act of listening needs to be done without any kind of distractions. Only the act of listening can break down an individual's conditioned mind. The mind must be free from all dogmas and symbols of religion and have to accept logic and reality rather than going behind fancy and romantic.

A mind that is governed by a belief or dogma is incapable of creating an orderly world that is bereft of fear, sorrow and conflict. A religious mind is free from authority, and the beginning of a religious mind is self-knowledge. When we start

understanding ourselves, it is the beginning of wisdom and meditation through which we know what we are rather than what we ought to be. A mind that is free from ideals and that which flows along with the fact is required. A scientist who investigates a matter with the assistance of collected facts and acquires knowledge without fear. But science does not include the totality of things. Similarly, a religious mind is concerned about the totality of life, including science, buildings, anger, ambition, quarrels, and what we are (Krisnamurthi, *TRM* 5-11). By understanding ourselves, we can rectify our short comings, flaws and attitudes towards all living and non-living things.

Cultivating such a religious mind is necessary as such a mind gives equal respect to all forms of life and other entities in this world. A person who possesses it will know how to treat nature, understand the sufferings of the world, and try to alleviate it at any cost. The plausible solutions to the present ecological issues can emerge out of a clear and egalitarian mind.

When people belonging to other streams, like economists and sociologists, try to solve our problems, they can only partially solve them, which brings out more chaos. A religious mind is concerned about the total development and entity of an individual, that is, the inward and the outward movement of life. We have to know ourselves psychologically without denying and interpreting what we see. Freedom exists in ourselves, in understanding ourselves. We have to search our own minds to get a clear and sharp view of things:

So, self-knowledge, or learning about yourself every day, brings about psychologically, inwardly, a new mind -because you have denied your old mind. Through self-knowledge you have denied your conditioning and the conditioning of mind can be denied only when the mind is aware of its own

operations-how it works, what it thinks, what it says, what are the motives (Krisnamurthi, TRM 16).

Such a religious mind can receive that which is immeasurable. This kind of religious mind is the basis of Zen Buddhism, and the person who can afford to have it will reach the height of enlightenment.

Snyder has taken the title “Three Worlds, Three Realms, Six Roads” for one of his poems from Buddhist terms. The “three worlds”, according to Snyder, are the past, present and future. The three realms denote the concept of “triloka”, the universe in terms of desire, form and formlessness. The “six paths” are related to the territories of psychological passage and names the hells, the animals, the humans, delightful gods and goddesses, angry warrior geniuses, and hungry ghosts (Snyder, *MRWE* 161).

In the introduction of the work, *One Hand Clapping: A Collection of Zen Stories*, Zen is presented as a teaching that does not have scriptures and above words and letters that look directly into the mind which is the essence of man, that looks directly into one’s nature for attaining enlightenment. Po Chang (720-814), the Zen guru, summed it up in simple terms: “When hungry, eat; when tired, sleep” (*One Hand Clapping* iii). Zen is not a philosophy; it is an experience and a way of life. A deconstruction of our mind and the ignition of our own light that carries the science of emptiness and silence. There are no barriers in Zen, and it is open to all. The term Zen is the Japanese translation of the Sanskrit word “Dhyan” or meditation. An Indian monk, Boddhidharma, took this word to China in the sixth century and in China it got converted to “Ch’an”, and later, in the twelfth century, this term became “Zen” in Japan. When the mind is calm, the only reality that creeps in is emptiness. “No me. No you. No anything. This is Zen” (*One Hand Clapping* iv). If one follows the Zen teachings, his/her mind will become free of fear, doubt, praise, and blame and can live

humbly. We can do our duties gracefully with love and kindness. This realisation of oneness and everything is inevitably intertwined with Zen Buddhism can solve most of the issues in this world without a doubt.

Personal experience is given primary importance in Zen, and it persistently insists on our inner spiritual experience. The most practical method of attaining spiritual enlightenment is to follow 'dhyana', known as 'zazen' in Japanese (to sit in meditation). Zen is not a religion. It does not have a god to worship and ceremonial rights to observe. It is free from all dogmatic and religious encumbrances (Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen* 39). Zen is the spirit of a man who believes in his inner purity and goodness and who stands against all kinds of religious conventionalism and conservatism. Zen purposes to discipline the mind itself and to make it its own master by understanding its proper nature. This getting into the real nature of one's own mind or soul is the fundamental object of Zen. More than meditation and dhyana, Zen intends to generate a mental eye for looking into the very reason for our existence. Satori is the creation of a new point of view for looking at things. Without the attainment of Satori, no one can enter into the truth of Zen experience, that is, a sudden flash into the consciousness of a new truth unknown to the individual. In actuality, a rebirth or enlightenment takes place in the individual (Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen* 40).

The doctrine of Zen asserts that there is no specialised doctrine for attaining the ultimate truth. In a way, the Zen enlightenment is an understanding of things as they are, transcending the shaping power of language. Zen Buddhists believe that human language and thought create an illusion and cannot lead to enlightenment. Zen aims to liberate the human mind from all linguistic and cultural conditioning. More preference is given to silence in Zen Buddhism, which favours silent meditation. As

per the Zen Buddhist linguistic ideology, there are two antithetical positions in the use of language. Primarily, there is always a kind of distrust and denial of language and a longing for silence. On the other hand, the non-logical, poetic uses of language, such as paradoxical and illogical statements, questions, or dialogues, are essential parts of Zen Buddhist training (Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen* 41).

Another basic tenet of Buddhism is mindfulness, and by mindfulness Buddha means that one should be aware of their thoughts and should know how to control them and make them clear, positive and focussed. Mahayana is the great vehicle that carries us across the ocean of suffering to salvation. It stresses on loving-kindness and compassion and places great emphasis on the laity's capacity for enlightenment. Awareness and mindfulness help a person to abstain from the past and the future and to live in the present. A person who is living in the present can see and experience all the wonders of the universe and how all things are interconnected. Once we experience this interconnectedness of all beings, we will have compassion for all beings because we realise that nothing is separate from us. We are a part of the larger being. Through awareness and mindfulness, we will start recognising nature as an inevitable part of our being and that any kind of disharmony can affect the whole universe. In the *Lotus Sutra*, a Buddhist text about Bodhisattva, depicts him as a being of great compassion and is also known as the Medicine King. In Mahayana Buddhism, every Bodhisattva is described as another hand and arm of the Buddha. The Medicine King saw that there was great suffering, poverty, and cruelty around him, and as an offering, he poured the fragrant oil, set himself alight, and allowed himself to be burned by fire (Hanh, *Silence* 44). The Lotus Sutra is supposed to be composed by the disciples of Buddha. It is the most revered Sutra in Mahayana Buddhism. It teaches that everyone can attain Buddhahood in their lifetime if they

follow the Bodhisattva path. If we have a compassionate mind to help the suffering, we can enjoy true happiness. There is no text that explicates this sutra. The text is our own story, and it extols our capacity for imagination and the grandeur of our vision. Hanh discusses the four types of lotuses in Buddhism. Hanh states, “The white lotus represents mental purity and spiritual perfection. The red lotus is a symbol of love and compassion. The blue lotus represents wisdom and intelligence and is always pictured partially opened. A gold lotus represents an achievement of complete enlightenment” (Hanh, *Silence* 44).

In the book *Silence: The Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, he speaks about another crucial element required for enlightenment, that is silence. According to this Zen poet, to hear the call of life or love or beauty, we should have silence in ourselves, and we will have to insulate ourselves from the sound that irritates us. By the practice of mindfulness, we can mute the noise inside us. Since it helps us focus in the present, discarding the anxieties, fears and uncertainties of the past and future, we can listen to the call for happiness. Mindfulness makes us cease and asks us to silently listen by paying attention to breathing in and out. All actions need to be done in silence, and this collective silence can create a strong field of energy. Thich Nhat Hanh believes that if we have that thundering silence, we have enough freedom to enjoy being alive and are capable of healing ourselves mentally and physically. Since silence helps us focus on the present without bothering about the past and future, an individual will be able to achieve the faculty of strength to face the problems of the present and to find solutions for those issues. When a person becomes mentally and physically fit, new ideas and solutions will come out of the enlightened mind. As far as ecological problems are concerned, the concept of silence and mindfulness can transform the prejudiced attitudes of

people towards nature. The silence of the mind gives out a positive energy and insight that is capable of facing many problems in our lives as well as in the environment (Hanh, *Silence* 45-47).

In a very enlightening poem, “Avocado”, Snyder compares Dharma to the fruit, Avocado in the following way:

The Dharma is like an Avocado!  
Some parts so ripe you can't believe it,  
But it's good  
And other places hard and green  
With much flavor,  
Pleasing those who like their eggs well-cooked.  
In the middle,  
Is your own Original nature-  
Pure and smooth,  
Hard and slippery,  
It looks like  
You should plant it- but then  
It shoots out thru the fingers-  
Gets away (Snyder, *TI* 61).

The nutritious quality of the avocado fruit is likened to Dharma, which is the righteous action. Right actions come out of a person who has attained the original mind through meditation. Such a mind will be pure and noble and, at the same time hard and slippery. The poet urges the owners of such a mind to plant Dharma, but it shoots out through the fingers because it can be harvested only by righteous and mindful people.

Bodhisattva is a person with great compassion whose life is to ease people's suffering. Buddhism talks about the Bodhisattva named Avalokiteshvara, the one who listens deeply to the sounds of the world. Avalokiteshvara has the capacity to listen to all kinds of sounds. He can also utter five different kinds of sounds that can heal the world. The first category of sound is termed the wonderful sound -the sound of wonders of life like that of birds and rams. The second is the sound of silence or listening-sound of the one who observes the world, and the third is the Brahma sound- the transcendental sound "OM" which has a long history in Indian spiritual thought. The tradition is that the sound "OM" has the innate power to create the world. The universe was created by this sound. The fourth sound is the sound of the ascending tide - this sound symbolises the voice of Buddha. The teachings of Buddha can clear away misunderstanding, remove affliction and transform everything. It is penetrating and effective. The fifth and the last sound is the sound of impermanence- the sound that transcends all sounds in the world. It is also a reminder not to get caught up in particular words or sounds. Many considered Buddha's teachings as complicated, but he said things in a simple way without getting caught in words. His teachings and preachings are simple and uncomplicated. Mindfulness gives the practitioner an inner space and quietness that allows the person to look deeply to understand one's own self and life. According to Hanh, the practice of mindfulness is very simple. "You stop, you breathe and you still your mind. You come home to yourself so that you can enjoy the here and now in every moment" (Hanh, *Silence* 7). Thus, a Bodhisattva, a master of all these five sounds, wonderful sound, Brahma sound -transcendental sound "OM", sound of silence or listening-sound, the rising tide - this sound symbolises the voice of Buddha, and the sound of impermanence- the sound that transcends all sounds in the world knows how to treat nature with respect. Through

the experiences of practising all these five sounds, a Bodhisattva can enlighten and transform his fellow beings into better individuals who view and use the faculties of nature with perfect understanding. Such an organised living can make the world flourish with naturalness and harmonious relationships, thus reducing the chances of harming nature and natural resources.

In the poem, “TŌJI”, we can see the all-inclusive mind set of the Bodhisattvas residing in the premises of Shingon temple, Kyoto. They are not worried about anything and are sleeping calmly with an ecstatic mind. And Snyder doubts about the presence of Avalokita, the first Bodhisattva with the power of enlightenment:

Men asleep in their underwear  
 Newspapers under their heads  
 Under the eaves of Tōji,  
 Kobo Daishi solid iron and ten feet tall  
 Strides through, a pigeon on his hat.  
 ...Peering through chickenwire grates  
 At dusty gold-leaf statues  
 A cynical curving round-belly  
 Cool Bodhisattva—maybe Avalokita—  
 ...Loose-breasted young mother  
 With her kids in the shade here  
 Of old Temple tree,  
 Nobody bothers you in Tōji;  
 The streetcar clanks by outside (Snyder, *RR* 22).

Here, people are not concerned about their material requirements and are moving about like free individuals. The ladies do not feel shame in feeding their babies in public. This itself brings to light the oneness, the enlightened mind, and utmost happiness that the people of this place experience. This is the fruit of the real spirituality of the mind. The world will become free from prejudices and cease to criticise others for unwanted reasons. Their approach to nature also changes, and they come to the realisation that nature is not their own unique property; rather, it belongs to all entities in this universe.

Buddhist psychology identifies two major divisions in our mind. The store consciousness is the lower part of our mind where all the seeds of thoughts and emotions are stored. This consciousness is the reservoir of seeds of love, faith, forgiveness, joy, and happiness. There are also other seeds like the seeds of suffering, anger, enmity, hatred, discrimination, fear, agitation, and so on. All the talents, as well as the weaknesses of our ancestors, have been transmitted through our parents, and they dwell in the depth of our consciousness in the form of seeds. It is like the basement of a house. The other one is mind consciousness, which forms the upper part of the mind, and is like a living room. The seeds are stored in the basement, and whenever one is triggered or watered, they come up and manifest on the level of consciousness in the mind. Then, it is not a dormant seed but a zone of energy called a mental formation. If it is a wholesome seed like mindfulness or compassion, we enjoy its company, but when an unwholesome seed is stimulated, it can take over our living room like an unwelcomed guest. We have to practice watering the wholesome seeds so that they can manifest in our daily lives, and this is known as selective watering or the practice of diligence (Hanh, *Silence* 27). Mindfulness is reclaiming attention, and walking is a wonderful way to clear our minds. The practice of diligence attained

through mindful practice is crucial in solving many issues in our lives and also the problems of the outside world that surround us. The understanding of the dos and don'ts towards the environment is the primary step that needs to be done, and it is possible only through mindful living.

Right thinking requires mindfulness and concentration. If the ideas, thoughts and concepts are freed from our mind, space is provided for the true mind to develop. The true mind is silent of all words and ideals. Silence is something that comes straight from the heart. "Silence is essential for attaining mindfulness. We need silence just as much as we need air, just as much as plants need light. If our minds are crowded with words and thoughts, there is no space for us" (Hanh, *Silence* 13). The essence of stillness is also an important part of Buddhism. We can see the reflection of the moon only when the ocean is calm and quiet. The silence is something that comes from your heart and not from the absence of talk. The right thinking thus obtained through the practice of stillness makes the mind enlightened and will make the mind capable of embracing nature as it is and will not dare to harm such a scared entity.

Deep listening is a crucial practice in Buddhist tenets. In order to practice the right speech, the primary thing is to look deeply into ourselves and the person who is in front of us. The ability to listen with compassion is a strong requirement for a true friend. In Buddhism, listening to the sound of the bell is likened to the voice of Buddha. We have to listen not only with our ears but also with our intellect; one invites all the cells in one's body to join in listening to the bell, the bell that helps one wake up and come home to oneself (Hanh, *Silence* 49-52). The practice of healing, the power of stillness, paying attention to the suffering, understanding its essence and developing a mind to embrace it and transform it and so on are the other principles

practised by Buddhists. They also constantly practice walking meditation. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, walking on Earth is, “people say it is a miracle to walk on air, water or fire, but for me, walking peacefully on Earth is the real miracle. Mother Earth herself is a miracle. Each step is a miracle, and taking conscious steps on our beautiful planet can bring healing and happiness. Walking meditation is a wonderful way to come back to the present moment and to life” (Hanh, *Silence* 70). Deep listening is not an easy task to practice. It can be achieved only through constant practice and dedication. The lack of self-discipline is the main reason for the incapacity of harnessing this trait in human life. Deep listening sharpens our intellect triggers the thought processes and gives room for finding new solutions for the problems that cannot be solved through normal processes. It helps a person to have a deep insight into the problem and solutions that arise from a self-elevated mind. Such a mind, without doubt, can bring about changes in the lifestyle of the person and also the immediate surroundings.

Snyder, in his poem “The Circumambulation of Mt. Tamalpais”, speaks of walking as a meditation. Circumambulation, or “pradakshina” in Hindu terms, is one of the ancient human spiritual exercises that are done for mind control and concentration. During such “pradakshinas”, the devotee will stop at notable spots to chant hymns in praise of deities in the form of mantras, songs or brief slokas. In the poem, different mantras of Indian gods and goddesses are introduced, which points to Gary Snyder’s interest in Indian philosophies and religion. Mantras like the *Hari Krishna Mantra*, *The Heat Mantra*, *Om Shri Maitreya*, *Hari Om Namō Shiva*, *the Gopala Mantra*, and *the Sarasvati-Mantra* are chanted to save the Earth from various disasters (Snyder, *MRWE* 163).

In another pertinent work by Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Art of Living*, he says that spirituality cannot be considered a religion. It is only a way through which we can cultivate happiness understand and love each other so deeply that we will feel that we are living in the present moment. Through this spiritual path, we are trying to develop the strength to face difficulties and spread peace and happiness in this world. It can be achieved only through mindfulness and concentration. To develop this path, we need to understand that we are not an alienated being but one among the varieties of species. The next wrong thing that we believe is that we don't exist after our death, but in reality, we are interconnected with the past and present generations. The third is that we can find happiness and peace within ourselves. But we frantically go out in search of it without producing any kind of results. Understanding the following principles can lead us to a very peaceful life. The concentration on impermanence is the belief that we, along with our loved ones, will live forever. The next principle is non-craving, in which we analyse true happiness and it is available within ourselves and to live in the present. The idea of letting go permits us to figure out ourselves from suffering and enjoy a transformed life. By practicing all these principles, one can reach the apex of peace and freedom in nirvana. These techniques will aid us in becoming awakened individuals, and it is the art of living (Hanh, *The Art of Living* 6-9). Such a peaceful mind will radiate compassion, love, and kindness to all living and non-living things, thus reducing the chances of exploiting the natural world.

In the article entitled, "Look Deep and Smile", in the book *Buddhism and Ecology*, Thich Nhat Hanh states that "Meditation should be based on an understanding of mind" (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 101). It is a method to obtain peace. He recommends 'mindful breathing before action'. With such calm and deep understanding, any action brings about more harm than good. Then, he cites

another way to help ourselves in order to dwell in the present moment. It is obtained through reciting Gathas or mindful verses. When we focus our mind on *gatha*, we return to ourselves and become more aware of each action (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 104). Then he speaks about the miracle of a smile as “smile affirms one’s awareness and determination to live in peace and joy. Look deeply and Smile. The source of a true smile is an awakened mind” (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 105). Smiling helps a person to approach the day with gentleness and understanding. Meditation as Buddhists have devised, is a practical way of achieving a state of calmness in which the meditator perceives reality in a high state of clarity. In every stage of meditation, we have to do something. We must concentrate on a fixed object, such as breathing. We must be aware of the movements of breath and the different sensations that arise from it. This activity requires constant attention. The person should be at guard against mental agitation and sleepiness to develop an inner state of deep calm and clarity. This is a highly practical activity, and through constant practice, a person reaches a point where he experiences a state of oneness with nature and becomes awakened.

In the article, “Even the Stones Smile”, in the book *Buddhism and Ecology*, the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna has developed the idea of interpenetration into the doctrine of emptiness. Nagarjuna goes on and says, “to assert that all things are empty is not to deny that they exist; it is simply to deny that they are self-existing” (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 10). For Nagarjuna, the most convincing reason is that they are dependent upon external conditions to cause them to exist (Batchelor, *Buddhism and Ecology* 10). The concept of interdependence and co-living is pointed out by the author and he maintains that such a co-existence can eradicate many of the environmental problems in the present world.

In *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises*, Nikos Kazantzakis says that “Earth rises up in your brains and sees her entire body for the first time” (Kazantzakis, *The Saviors of God* 81). “Contend with the powers of nature, force them to the yoke of superior purpose. Free that spirit which struggles within them and longs to mingle with that spirit which struggles within you” (Kazantzakis, *The Saviors of God* 121).

There are remarkable parallels between Ecology and Zen Buddhism. It emphasises on the interfusion all things and underscores the artificiality of binary thought patterns. Both streams challenge the kind of bifurcated thoughts that leads to antagonist attitudes towards nature. Zen Buddhism views natural systems as mutually dependent, interacting spheres. In the novel *Zorba the Greek* by Nikos Kazantzakis, the narrator is obsessed with Buddhist compassion, and he says, “I was seized with Buddhist compassion, compassion not only for men but for all life which struggles, cries, weeps, hopes and does not perceive that everything is a phantasmagoria of nothingness” (Kazantzakis, *Zorba* 17).

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese immigrants started settling in Hawaii and California, and they brought with them the practices of Mahayana Buddhism, and they started building numerous Buddhist temples in these areas. Towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, a flourishing of Zen took place in America. The deteriorating impact of the Second World War and the Korean War had left the people in a frustrated state. They found refuge in Zen to escape themselves from the sweeping materialism and diminishing morality. The writers who wrote during the Great Depression and who passed through the Second World War also got disillusioned with the post-war culture of conformity and materialism. The Beat Generation poets like Snyder, Kerouac were inspired by Buddhism than any other religion. The relationship between Zen Buddhism and the Beat Generation was very

strong. The art of poetry, Zen and Asian philosophies were complementing each other in their development. The Beat writers attempted a revolutionary type of writing style, with new subjects, spontaneous in thought and representation, without giving much credit to the syntactic or grammatical structures. There is also an uninhibited discussion of clinical matters and personal experiences and themes related to the disowning of American culture and values, the fear of nuclear war, sexual escapades and road trips. The enormous space provided by Buddhism, with the all-encompassing awareness, served as a perfect antidote to the congested and restricted views of the government, the literary establishments and the customary organised religions. This all-encompassing awareness is required for the protection of nature and its resources. The concept of oneness and Buddhist compassion can lead humanity to a better realm where there is equality and respect for all entities in this universe.

Gary Snyder is indebted to Zen aesthetics in its precision, intuition and straightforwardness of spirit and expression. The concept of non-duality has the power to eradicate Euro-American anthropocentrism and egotism, and Zen followers use very simple, colloquial Koan language to communicate their ideas. Enlightenment is understanding one's own essential nature, the cosmos, and all things. Snyder is of the opinion that we can conquer ourselves and learn to live in harmony with each other and the natural world. The approach to nature needs to be non-possessive, and the pursuer must lead a well-examined life by creating a new world or society within the matrix of the old. Zen also promotes physical labour and getting close to nature so that one will get acquainted with the most archaic values of earth, which is the very basis of spiritual being. Snyder considers the creation of poetry as the representation of the real world and our real existence inside it. Snyder tried to bring about awareness of nature on different levels, such as the mundane, political, and spiritual.

The work with political and spiritual implications fails if it eradicates humanity from the natural world. The other highlighted terms in Snyder's works are dharma, social obligation, and reality.

In the poem "An Offering to Tara", in *Mountains and Rivers without End*, we can see eco-Buddhist and religious connections threading throughout the poem. In the following lines, the water from the fields is compared to Buddha's long, wide tongue. Snyder tries to project the teachings of Buddha that is eternal through these lines:

Water from the icefields  
 The long wide tongue of Buddha" led into asides,  
 divided down to little rock-edged channels-  
 wanders on the terraces  
 passes through barley plots  
 apples and apricots, popular stands:  
 finds its way back to the gorge (Snyder, *MRWE* 108).

The water from the ice fields is moving down the mountain ridges through the crevices and reaches the plains, and again, it finds its way back to the gorge. This happens in the form of a cycle, and it reaches back to the same point of its origin. It indicates the cyclical nature of all systems in this universe. In the next stanza of the poem, we can see the introduction of mandalas, which are considered ritual objects in Buddhism. This geometric design reflects the realm of cosmic beings along with their accompaniments and abode. It is being said that there are three types of mandalas: the sand mandalas that use pieces of coloured stones, the healing mandalas that calm the creator and the looker, the teaching mandalas, which are an important element in Buddhist religious training. After the teaching is over, they destroy the mandalas to point at the impermanence of existence. The sand used in mandalas is often dispersed

in running water to transfer healing powers throughout the world. The making of a Buddhist mandala in a Buddhist ashram is mentioned in the next stanza:

Tabletop mandalas made  
 by the monks over weeks—  
 screek screek, goes the rasp as the sand tube  
 is played like a brush—sand colors,  
 fine-ground minerals from  
 cut-banks and outcroppings,  
 pulverized rocks from the canyons,  
 monk-artists making vision palaces (Snyder, *MRWE* 108).

It is believed that these mandalas support meditation and visualisation of religious tenets, and finally, they are used for the attainment of Buddhahood. In general, dots in the mandala signify the idea that everything is one and the same and is the symbol of the unmanifested. The ring indicates entirety, uprightness and unity. The horizontal line divides the earth and the sky. The vertical line indicates connections in this universe and energy flow. The cross line in which two lines intersect forms the centre of the universe. The Buddhist mandala reminds us about the cyclical nature of all systems in this universe, and it also specifies the interconnection between all things in this world. This cyclical structure also brings to the forefront the idea that each system in this universe is connected with each other, just like a spider's web. Without this sort of co-existence, the workings of the universe will be in jeopardy. Environmental issues are also part of this system, and they can be solved by connecting the missing links and changing the negative pathways in this universal energy flow. It can be achieved only through the activities of an enlightened mind. In the next stanza, we can

see a tantric prayer to the Goddess Tara, and in tantric Buddhism, this mandala connotes the relationship between man and the cosmos:

We do the Ta-ra- mantra for the shrine

Om ta-re tutta-re ture swa-ha- ta-re ta-re ta-re

Om ta-re tutta-re ture swa-ha- ta-re ta-re ta-re

Om ta-re tutta-re ture swa-ha- ta-re ta-re ta-re (Snyder, *MRWE* 110).

Ta-ra-'s Vow, states that "Those who wish to attain supreme enlightenment/ in a man's body are many . . ./until this world is emptied out, serve the needs of beings/with my body of a woman" (Snyder, *MRWE* 111). Thus, she acquires a state of joy after doing her service to humanity. The all-encompassing term "OM", is included in the next line to suggest the purity of mind or enlightenment of Buddha. Then Snyder addresses the Goddess Tara as the lady of the stars in the next line:

Ta-ra- lady of the stars:

grimy-handed cutting barley,

leading water,

moving stones.

On the lofty mountain

Is the nest of a hawk;

On the lofty rock,

The nest of a white hawk;

The unchanged bird,

May you remain unchanged (Snyder, *MRWE* 114).

The Goddess Tara is the saviour and goddess of mercy in Vajrayana Buddhism. She is often considered the counterpart of Bodhisattva, the embodiment of enlightenment, wisdom and empathy or compassion and the mother of all Buddhas. She often stands

with her open hand, which indicates that she is granting boons to her devotees. The word “Tara” means star or planet, and stars are often associated with navigation and journeys. Snyder might have included this concept in his poem to indicate the spiritual crossing of the ocean from one part to another, that is, enlightenment. Snyder says that she protects all living and non-living things and prays that, just like the unchanged bird hawk, let her remain unchanged in her actions towards the whole universe. Actually, Tara was the wife of Brihaspati, the guru of Devas, and he was always concerned about the Devas, so he ignored Tara. One day, Chandra or Moon God, came to meet Brihaspati and was captivated by the beauty of Tara. In her myriad forms, Tara has the power to erase all kinds of inward and outward negativity, purify our minds and help us to fulfil all our dreams. The present generation has to imbibe this spiritual dimension explicated in Buddhism through Mother Tara. There is also an implication that nature is to be given the status of Mother as it provides all kinds of facilities for a harmonious living. The Buddhist mother, Tara, is capable of instilling Buddhist enlightenment and compassion in her disciples. If humanity is ready to accept these virtues from Mother Tara, it is certain that we can resolve many of the ecological issues we are facing today.

Like every Buddhist, Snyder recognises the interconnection between all beings. In one of his essays entitled, “Buddhism and the Possibilities of a Planetary Culture”, he advocates a “planetary culture- one in which humanity would know and love its place in the great web of interbeing-against the assaults of an irresponsible, destructive, soulless civilisation” (Coupe, *The Green Studies Reader* 1-8). Through Buddhist practice, he wanted to create a deep concern among the public regarding the need of radical social change and personal commitment through a variety of non-violent means. Along with Buddhism, Snyder has also followed the legacy of

mythology, as is seen in his earlier collection of poetry, "Myths and Texts". For Snyder, the mythopoetic poet is a person who constantly fortify the lores that educate us about ourselves and the place we inhabit. According to Murphy, "the poet would not only be creating private mythologies for his readers, but moving toward the formation of a new social mythology" (Murphy, *A Place for Wayfaring* 21).

Gary Snyder's central ideal was to remain faithful to the Mahayana tradition and to remain engaged with the environment. He had actively participated in the activities of the world, and that itself is the idea of Bodhisattva in Buddhist philosophy. Snyder did not prefer staying in an ashram or monastery to experience purity or to act. He lived among common people and ate the same food, so he was prone to all kinds of risks. Snyder following the tenets of Buddhism, emphasises the requirement of a revolutionary change in consciousness. He does this by collecting images from various systems, myths, archetypal imageries, and life experiences. All these aspects help Snyder in creating a new consciousness. Snyder uses the insight that he received through the Buddhist practice of meditation with other forms of learning, like Bioregionalism that unifies ecological and cultural knowledge. As per Snyder's ideology, we should learn about our region and need to be aware of what is happening around us. There should be a perfect understanding of the various life cycles of organisms around us and a judicious knowledge of the governing systems of our land. This additional learning and connection can add to the force of Buddhism in effecting a radical change in society.

According to Native American and Buddhist traditions, all things express the original mind, which is free from all kinds of conventions. Snyder is fascinated by the original mind that a shaman, Indian medicine man, or Buddhist teacher possesses. Snyder finds a connection between the shaman and the poet. Poems are at their best,

he believes, come from original mind (Snyder, *RW* 79) Snyder always likens him to a shaman, and he believes that the mind of a shaman poet will reach out to all manners, shapes and lives and give music to our dreams. He is a voice for the voiceless citizens of the wild -the creeping people, and the standing people, and the swimming people” (Snyder, *TI* 108). The primary difference between a shaman and a poet is that a shaman is connected with the primitive world, and the poet and artists are the spokespersons of the contemporary world.

In “Cold Mountains”, the last section of *Riprap*, we can see poems enriched with spirituality. For instance, in poem 11, Han Shan speaks about the cold mountain that is lit by the moonlight, and this white colour itself is a symbol of purity. “Spring-water in the green creek is clear/ Moonlight on Cold Mountain is white/Silent knowledge—the spirit is enlightened of itself/ Contemplate the void: this world exceeds stillness (Snyder, *RR* 40).

The poet goes on to state that this purity is attained through the silent knowledge that was provided by the spirits in the mountains. These lines clarify the position of Buddhist practitioners on the importance of practising and harnessing a mind of silence. Such a mind is capable of contemplating the gaps between the human and non-human world and is able to provide prompt solutions. Similarly, in poem 17, the poet loves to hide in the cold mountains to remain aloof from the materialist world that is filled with greed and vanity:

If I hide out at Cold Mountain  
 Living off mountain plants and berries—  
 All my lifetime, why worry?  
 One follows his karma through.  
 Days and months slip by like water,

Time is like sparks knocked off flint.

Go ahead and let the world change—

I'm happy to sit among these cliffs (Snyder, *RR* 43).

This poem gives a prophetic note about the future of this world. At present, the world is rotten, and the poet does not want to return to his native place. He is waiting for the transformation of his fellowmen in the near future. He says that he is leading a life of content in the recesses of the cold mountains. It is the place where he got enlightened and became free of worries.

His understanding of the concepts of Deep Ecology and Buddhism and his keen interest in oriental cultures are seen in his poetic collections. Snyder had an inkling towards Eastern culture and tradition, especially Indian gods and goddesses who are intricately connected to nature. Lord Siva resides in Mount Himalaya along with his spouse Goddess Parvathi. The power of the Sivasakthi concept is brought out in this poem. Lord Siva is considered the destroyer and protector of humanity and Goddess Parvathi is an incarnation of nature itself. There is also a mention of the Goddess Saraswathi, who is the illuminator of the whole world. She is capable of spreading knowledge and thus removes the darkness that exist in this universe.

In *Mountains and Rivers without End*, like “Bubbs Creek Haircut”, Snyder has included Indian God Siva and Goddess Parvati to represent the power of nature. In the poem entitled, “Three Worlds, Three Realms, Six Roads”, reminds us about the Eastern belief system that gives due respect to and worships the three worlds and the three supreme entities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswara. Snyder’s interest in primitive cultures and oral traditions is evident in his poems, and he prefers performance poetry as his medium of communication. Snyder feels that the world is made of stories, and stories are meant to be narrated and enjoyed. For Snyder, the

performance poetry is a social experience where the listeners participate in the whole process of rendering. Snyder believed that culture and civilisation consist of stories of our existence, and they teach us what is real, valuable and possible. Snyder had attempted mystical and mytho-biotic poems in many of his collections-particularly in *Turtle Island*. Here, Snyder envisions the rediscovery of land and the concepts of rebirth, reincarnation, solitude, fertility of soil, love and ecstasy of dance. Snyder believes that sacredness will be visible if we cleanse our doors of perception.

Gary Snyder is very realistic in his understanding of various problems we face, and following the path of religion and mythology, he tries to project alternative solutions for the preservation of the universe as a whole. Snyder feels that by reinhabiting a place:

Through knowing the land and its lore, we can overcome alienation as people and learn that community is of spiritual benefit and of health for everyone, that ongoing working relationships and shared concerns, music, poetry, and stories all evolve into the shared practice of a set of values, visions and quests. That is what the spiritual path really is (Snyder, *RW* 141).

To conclude, several principles mentioned in the above religious texts and articles can aid humanity in developing an egalitarian society where equal rights are given to all entities existing in the universe. The transformation from ego-centricity to eco-centricity can be achieved only through understanding of the concept of interconnectedness. Philosophers like Thich Nhat Hanh exhort us to entrust ourselves to Earth and to lead a simple and contented life. The concepts of self and spirit help humanity find the reason for existence. The concept of 'Sanatana dharma' introduced by Richard Prime in his book *Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth* can be compared to the Buddhist ideal of Bodhisattva ideal, which carries the element of compassion.

Compassion is not akin to pity, as pity arises from the level of superiority.

Compassion arises from the sense of equality and interconnectedness that is an inevitable part of human life. Through cultivating a compassionate mind, one can empower others by encouraging them to understand the strength and capacity inherent in them and to make use of it to find solutions to their problems. A person who has the facility of compassion knows the importance of mutual happiness and growth. It is a deep empathy that arises in the encounter with suffering, and that initiates an action worth developing the dignity of others. Compassion and wisdom are closely related to each other. Both aid in sharing problems with others, encourages others to understand their hidden potential and help them lead a positive life. Inner peace and wisdom are obtained through the practice of mindfulness, and we become content with ourselves. Deep joy and contentment are enjoyed by helping others, and that is the purpose and meaning of life. That is the legacy that we can leave behind for others to follow. The idea of happiness is often associated with money, fame, power, and pleasure, and this ideal destroys the body, mind, and family. True happiness is only possible through understanding, love, and compassion. We have to develop a compassionate mind, and when we feel that someone badly needs help, we have to be ready to help that person.

The concept of reincarnation stresses the equality and transience of all life forms. The wild environment or forest is an all-inclusive term for the whole creation. We have to go through two different kinds of learning experiences to understand more about nature and the way to deal with it. First, we learn from the traditions of humanity, and the other is from the wild forest. Forests, or the lap of nature, are places for spiritual enlightenment, and trees are given the status of patience and tolerance in Vedic scriptures. We are responsible for the degradation of our environment, and there is a dire necessity to create a human ecology where due importance is given to

nature, spirituality, culture and human welfare. The three principles in Hinduism that can help us in our environmental activism are sacrifice, giving, and penance and all of these are required to replenish our earth. The Zen Buddhist principles of compassion, deconstruction of mind, personal experiences, inner spiritual experiences, mindfulness, principles of impermanence and not-self, the power of silence, the essence of stillness, deep listening, non-duality and rightful thinking can be followed for replenishing our fervour for nature and natural resources. Gary Snyder's poems are laden with all these aspects and thus help in educating the public to find solutions for the existing environmental problems by practising these tenets mentioned in various religious texts.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion

The thesis, entitled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” tries to portray Gary Snyder sense of contentment and compassion through the lens of Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology. Through an investigation of his collections of poetry that embody the concepts of Buddhism, Deep Ecology and spirituality, this thesis tries to foreground Snyder’s deep commitment towards nature and the whole universe is reflected in his unwavering dedication and compassion towards all forms of life and non-living things in this universe.

The thesis elaborates on how Gary Snyder has used his poetry as an effective way to impart his ideologies of Buddhism, Deep Ecological concerns and Hindu beliefs for saving the earth from further degradation. In his poetry, Snyder tries to dissolve the barriers between the civilised and the wild and exhorts us to understand human life as a part of the whole universe. Snyder feels that without wildness in the mind, a poet cannot excel in his profession as a poet. Snyder says about the series of poems that he had written with the title “How Poetry Comes to Me” as, “I wrote them thinking about the ways I perceive poetry as being there or being accessible, and one particular poem, I think, was it stays frightened outside the circle of our campfire. I go to meet it at the edge of the light” (Snyder, *The Etiquette of Freedom* 20). Snyder used his poetry as a medium of expression to communicate his reflections. This thesis also focuses on how Snyder has used his poetry to highlight the various environmental problems existing in society by using suggestive poems. A thorough exploration and analysis of the works of Snyder are done to understand his poetry through the lens of Eco-Buddhism, Deep Ecology and Hindu philosophy.

Gary Snyder has encompassed Buddhist ideals in his poetry and has made it a remarkable manifesto that contemporary society can follow. Apart from Buddhism, Gary Snyder, being a political activist, was influenced by various cultural movements during the 1960s in the United States and the United Kingdom. The impact of the Great Depression and Cold War and his immersion in Marxian philosophies had changed his perceptions of human civilisation and nature. Gary Snyder introduced a new expression, 'true communionism', which blends communism and communion and promotes union and equality without subordination (Snyder, *RW* 44). Gary Snyder visualises a new community with its roots firmly rooted in nature. The works of Gary Snyder unveil the connectedness between Ecology and Buddhism and show how an understanding of both the philosophical foregroundings can go a long way in saving the contemporary world from the tentacles of modern-day globalisation, which threatens the very fabric of nature and the bounties we receive from her.

Through his poetry, Gary Snyder envisions the power of mindfulness and suggests it as one of the solutions for changing the attitude of the public. Such an enlightened person is considered as Bodhisattva, the reservoir of compassion, who eases the suffering of others and is capable of dwelling in the present and aware of the concept of interconnectedness. Furthermore, Gary Snyder suggests the development of a religious mind that is autonomous in nature and believes that a religious mind frees individuals from other forces, which marks the beginning of self-knowledge. Snyder recommends that the concept of celebrating all cycles of human and non-human life, like reproduction, harvest, fertility, and so on, in the form of rituals will have a significant effect on the public.

As an environmental activist, Gary Snyder's Buddhism is revolutionary, and he evokes the need for a change of consciousness. He tried to educate the public through

the introduction of myths, archetypes, and experiences from his own life. He exhorts people to learn and understand their own place and also to develop a judicious understanding of the different governing systems of our land. After enlightenment, we can trace the presence of the original mind in all beings. Snyder takes the role of Shaman, a primitive medicine man, to become a spiritual healer in the world. The shamanistic quality of Snyder's poetry is arguably the foremost characteristic of his works. Snyder ascertains the idea that the poet has to imbibe creative powers from primitive traditions. According to him, poets should live in close contact with nature, which is primitive culture. One should know the crude nature, in its nakedness, which is fundamental for all human beings. Being alive is firmly rooted in the physical environment and in its biological processes, which is a quality that the civilised mind has lost to a large extent. Through poetry, Snyder reconnects the body and mind, which have been considerably dissociated in modern America. Poetry has the capacity to revive awareness of the very close correspondence between external and internal landscapes. He took refuge in the Sangha concept of Buddhism, which is used to represent the collective people who were the followers of Buddha. But Snyder departed from that view, and his concept of Sangha is that of the ecosphere. Snyder's non-dualistic approach is visible in his works as he combines Eastern insights (individual insight) and Western revolutions (social revolutions). Gary Snyder is very realistic in his understanding of various problems we face, and following the path of religion and mythology, he tries to project alternative solutions for the preservation of the universe as a whole. By reinhabiting place through knowing the land and its lore, we can overcome alienation as people and "learn that community is of spiritual benefit and of health for everyone, that ongoing working relationships and shared concerns, music,

poetry, and stories all evolve into the shared practice of a set of values, visions and quests. That is what the spiritual path really is” (Snyder, *RW* 141).

The introductory chapter gives a preview of the thesis with a description of the overall structure. The chapter primarily deals with the aims, objectives and methodology employed in the thesis. A deep insight into the life and works of Gary Snyder is also enclosed. The research questions are briefly presented. A thorough explanation of the methodology of each chapter, along with the objectives, are presented. The thesis discusses the theoretical concepts of Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism used for the analysis of Gary Snyder’s poetry. The literature review also helps to identify the research gaps and foregrounds the relevance and scope of this research work. The thesis entitled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” is a unique contribution to the literary field in many aspects. The title itself is distinctive, and it deals with the understanding of the poems of contentment and compassion of Gary Snyder through the perspectives of Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology. There are research papers regarding the author and his works, but a Ph.D. thesis in this particular area is a new attempt. Most of the articles related to Gary Snyder are written by Western researchers, and the thematic precepts are more connected with Western thought and its locale. This thesis is grounded more on the Indian spiritual texts, and indeed, it is a fresh research work with some innovative ideas. Followed by the literary review, and chapter divisions are mentioned in the last section.

The second chapter, entitled “Bioregionalism in Gary Snyder: An Exploration of Ecological Identity and Interconnectedness”, is a detailed study of Gary Snyder’s Eco-Buddhism, politics and environmentalism. This chapter focuses on Gary Snyder’s perspectives on the intersection of Ecology, Buddhism and Politics and how

all these three elements are interrelated and define each other. This chapter also delves into Gary Snyder's Eco-Social Buddhism, examining his political orientation, political critique, social ideals, and various forms of activism. Along with this, it explores Gary Snyder's specific ecological views and examines how his environmentalism aligns with his political orientation. Through the analysis of Gary Snyder's poems, this chapter unveils how Snyder has used the language of poetry to educate the public about environmental degradation. This chapter fulfils one of the research objectives by portraying Snyder's concept of anarchism and how Snyder's concept of Bioregionalism is closely related to Buddhism and Anarchism. This chapter also tries to comprehend Snyder's version of post-humanism, ideas of space and place, re-inhabitation and Social Ecology. Through a thorough analysis of the works of Gary Snyder, this chapter tries to foreground the concept of wildness in Snyder's poetry.

Furthermore, this chapter delves into the analysis of human nature, which is an integral part of Gary Snyder's Eco-Social Buddhism. Additionally, this chapter underscores the importance of Snyder's Great Subculture, which is characterised by communalism and connects Buddhism and anarchist ideologies. According to Snyder, it is our mind that is the forerunner of every radical activity. This chapter establishes Snyder as a writer who is against violent approaches and methods of reformation. He follows the Bodhisattva ideal and the tenets of Buddhism that favour non-violence and ahimsa. At the outset, this chapter portrays Gary Snyder as a radical poet with a new consciousness. The idealistic path introduced by Snyder echoes the concept of Bioregionalism, which connects community, bioregional identification, and lifestyle to ecology. Consequently, this chapter foregrounds the interconnection between Gary Snyder's ideas of ecology, Buddhism and politics and how he embraced anarchism

that was shaped by Buddhism and environmentalism. Finally, this chapter explores ecological identity and interconnectedness in the poetry of Gary Snyder through his concept of Bioregionalism.

The third chapter, entitled “Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhist Paradigms: A Quest for Contentment and Compassion”, delves into the analysis of the works of Gary Snyder through the lens of Deep Ecology and Buddhism. Through this analysis, an attempt is made to elucidate the quest for contentment and compassion in the poetry of Gary Snyder on the basis of the above two principles. An in-depth analysis of all texts under consideration is done and Snyder’s poetry suggest a kind of meditation or spiritual exercise that elevates a person from his/her transitory life to the pinnacle of enlightenment. Such a person who had reached the summit of enlightenment will discard the exceptional world after detecting the infinite and eternal. The devastating nature of power and greed, rootlessness, the curbing of demonic energies, political entities, transformation, presence of divine spirits, and non-living entities given a respectable position, the concept of motherhood has been explored. The chapter also looks into the importance of community development, anthropology, concepts of wisdom, happiness, mind, rebirth, Gaia concept, and shamanistic qualities of a poet are some of the themes that appeared in the selected collection of poetry. Snyder’s alteration of national identity to nature identity, the connection between Zen-Buddhism and scientific knowledge, the introduction of gods and goddesses, eco-mysticism, Bioregionalism, spiritual nourishment, the divine path of nature, silence, medicine man Buddha, enlightenment, the mountain spirit and many other connected elements has been explored in the poetic collections. The chapter underlines the quest for contentment and compassion in the poetry of Gary Snyder. The analysis scrutinises the

similarities between Deep Ecology and Eco-Buddhism and establishes the capacity of these principles to save the natural world from degradation.

The fourth chapter, entitled “Religious Influences and Whispers of the Earth in Gary Snyder's Poetry: A Path Toward Environmental Healing”, establishes how the principles of Buddhism and Hindu philosophies aid in tackling the problems of the environment as represented in the poetry of Gary Snyder. This chapter deals with the analysis of some spiritual texts related to Hinduism and Buddhism that help in understanding the elements of spirituality in the poetry of Gary Snyder and how it provides solutions for the present environmental problems. The chapter unveils how Buddhism is intrinsically connected with ecology and suggests Buddhism as an alternative for present environmental crisis. The chapter also tries to prove Snyder’s Bodhisattva ideal as a possible solution for solving most of the problems related to environment. The chapter sheds light on how a Buddhist lifestyle that avoids self-deprivation and self-indulgence can lead to the development of a new culture that reveres nature. The communion between the natural and human beings, discovery of inner feelings, acting with the strength derived from other forces of nature, understanding of Bodhisattva, effects of Buddhism on nature, the power of the religious mind, understanding of the Zen principles, importance of silence, and Snyder’s Buddhism and ecological connections are explored in this chapter. The chapter underlines that the three principles in Hinduism that can help us in our environmental activism are sacrifice, giving, and penance, and all of these are required to replenish our earth. The Zen Buddhist principles of compassion, deconstruction of mind, personal experiences, inner spiritual experiences, mindfulness, principles of impermanence and not-self, the power of silence, the essence of stillness, deep listening, non-duality and rightful thinking can be followed

for replenishing our fervour for nature and natural resources. The chapter also tries to analyse the elements of compassion and the Sangha concept of Gray Snyder which considers the universe as a whole community.

In the present modern world, people are alienated from themselves and from their natural environment. The people began to recede from faith in religion with the advent of more scientific revelations of the different facets of nature. This in turn led to the decline of moral and spiritual values embedded in human mind. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution the humanity harnessed material pleasures at the expense of nature, thus making humanity more materialistic. The human world afflicted with greed and yearning for more facilities and properties, has become vicious and hostile towards nature. These vehement actions had led to the destruction of natural resources and we have estranged ourselves from nature through our deeds. The after effects of such heinous actions were the decadence of physical and mental health of people and the continuous destruction of the exhaustible natural resources and pollution. This moral degeneration of humanity due to greed, lust, ignorance, hatred and so on leads to a decrease in quality of life and depletion of natural resources.

In order to enter into a better future, we require an understanding of the communion of everything in this universe. The reason for the destruction of the planet is due to the lack of this knowledge. In this anthropocentric world, all natural entities, such as mountains, rivers, wind, and the sea, have become silent, and humans have started ruling the planet. The forests have been converted to places where human beings gathered their raw materials from. There were an infinite number of divine spirits residing in the woods, and animals, too, were denied their rights and alienated from human beings. All these human actions have led to the degradation of nature and

natural resources. The perfect understanding of one's own actions is the key remedy for protecting oneself and one's surroundings from its harmful effects.

The moment we realise the universe as a composite of all subjects, a new inner experience is awakened, the barriers dissolve, the revival of the soul and renewal of all kinds of natural excitements occurs. We have lost the realisation that the earth is something that is unique, and anything that gets tampered with is going to affect the whole system, and it cannot be reversed. The variety of species that went extinct will not appear again. A lot of hard work is to be done to make earth our first priority and to understand our trivial place in this vast canvas. All human actions need to be in accordance with the welfare of the whole earth system. In religion, humans depend on natural systems, and the grandeur of the universe gives a sense of divinity and sacredness. When these nuances of divinity are expressed through scriptures, it is insufficient, and the evidence of the natural world is taken for granted. So, the first thing that we have to discover in order to find a solution for the present-day environmental crisis is to understand the essence of the universe and the essence of the inner self.

To understand the essence of the universe is a transformative process, and for that we have to develop a new kind of revealing or eloquent experiences. This is a new kind of experience that forms the background for the future to understand the mysteries of the universe. The scriptures will become inefficient in providing a divine experience for the next generation. These experiences and the vast stories and transformations of the universe are to be adapted into new acceptable forms. As a revolutionary act, new rituals are to be introduced to celebrate the transformation moments that the universe has undergone in previous years. The stories of the origin of the universe, the solar system and the evolution of various biological systems like

reproduction, photosynthesis, respiration, sea life, the first flora and fauna, the birth of human beings and so on are sacred moments. It is believed that celebrating the occasions in the form of rituals would make our sense of sacred clearer. The final aim of all renewal processes is to establish a mutually dependent human life on earth. Every being, whether living or non-living, plays its part in maintaining the magnificence of the whole. To regain faith in our lives, three most important discoveries are mandatory. The first one is the discovery of what we have understood and felt; the next is the discovery of our own existence, and the third is the discovery of what can be possible through our actions. With the knowledge acquired from spiritual texts and the understanding of the various subtle systems in the universe can help humanity to retie the lost connection with nature.

In the process of finding the various causes of environmental problems, the discovery of what we know and what we feel is necessary, and it is a herculean task in the contemporary world. All the sources are focussing on the illusion that the human world is happy with the present life. Actually, human beings are not free from sorrow, suffering or fear, but we are accustomed to presenting ourselves as happy, sociable and content. Many psychologists are of the opinion that if we suppress our natural responses, it causes serious problems in our psyche. Understanding what we know and feel takes a little bit of courage, and it carries the elements of truth and force. This truth-force exists in the individual, and it cannot be triggered by the words of an expert or guide. It should develop from within by listening to oneself. When we master this art, we will be able to acknowledge our concern for the world, we will be able to realise the essence of compassion, that is to participate in the sufferings of others and to help them find solutions for their problems. Through this suffering, we

are introduced to the world of compassion, which can help us reconnect with nature and our own power (Gottlieb, *The Sacred Earth* 442).

Thus, after discovering our inner experiences, the next aim is to discover who we are. We have become followers of compassion, which is understood as Bodhisattva in Buddhism. This Buddhist model is aware of the fact that there cannot be individual salvation, and he works hard to return again and again to work for all beings. The bodhisattva is sure of the fact that there can be no healing or transformation without reconnection (Gottlieb, *The Sacred Earth* 443).

Now, after the discovery of the universe and the inner self, the third discovery is what can happen through us. Our strength to do things in life comes with the assistance of other elements in this world. We will feel empowered to act on behalf of the larger whole, as a supreme power will emerge from this larger whole that will aid us in our action. From the perspective of ecology, this can be understood as synergy. Indeed, this leads us to reconceptualise the idea of power. All open systems in this universe do not require an external agency to control them. This clearly negates the orderliness imposed by the culture that controlled the universe for centuries. However, in an egalitarian society, order is implicit in life and integral to life processes. The various living systems develop and evolve in complexity, intelligence and flexibility by interacting with each other. New responses and new plausibility provide room for creating effective changes. The emission of synergy, the new potential, is like a grace because it brings in an increased power that is indomitable (Gottlieb, *The Sacred Earth* 445).

The ways in which we can strengthen our Bodhisattva is through community and practice. There is a presence of extreme power in the spiritually-based communities and their actions are non-violent. There is a strong network of trust that

exists between people living in a community; they strive together, understand their situation, and work together to create a world where they can live without fear and injustice. By involving ourselves in base-level community activities, a sense of mutual commitment, enhancement of personal integrity and belief in what is possible will emerge. The next change that is welcomed is the nurturing of personal practice. This is a very crucial spiritual activity by purifying our mind and channelising its attitudes. To purge our mind from narrowed ideals of self, there is an urgent need to start regular personal practices like meditation and various kinds of recycling activities. There are many spiritual exercises followed by different traditions to generate respect for life, and the present generation welcomes them without prejudices. Through the practice of meditation, one can acquire a mind that is free from negative thoughts and filled with wisdom obtained through inner transformation. The element of compassion is an offshoot of this mindful meditation. It is different from the concept of pity, in which the individual becomes capable of removing hatred towards the living and non-living entities and fills the mind with love and empathy (Gottlieb, *The Sacred Earth* 446).

The research study titled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” endeavours to address the gap in existing studies on Gary Snyder. There are limited studies that link Gary Snyder’s works with Eco-Buddhism. The research study addresses this research gap by providing an extensive analysis of Gary Snyder’s poetry through the prisms of Deep Ecology, Eco-Buddhism and Hindu ideologies. A deep erudition of Gary Snyder’s poetry is done from the standpoint of his concept of Bioregionalism and an exploration into environmental identity and interconnectedness. This study portrays the elements of

contentment and compassion in Gary Snyder's Poetry from the view point of Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Recommendations**

The thesis entitled “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Reading of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” is a unique contribution to the literary field in many aspects. There are research papers regarding the author and his works, but a PhD thesis by connecting the areas of Eco-Buddhism, Deep Ecology and elements of spirituality is a unique attempt. Most of the articles related to Gary Snyder is done by Western researchers, and the thematic precepts are more connected with Western thought and their locale. This thesis is grounded more on the Indian spiritual texts and Buddhist texts, and it is indeed a fresh research work with some innovative ideas.

The title of the thesis, “Rhymes of Contentment and Compassion: An Eco-Buddhist Analysis of Gary Snyder’s Poetry” is a novel field to explore. The primary objective of the thesis is to explore the profound connection between Buddhism and ecology and how these precepts are embodied in the poetry of Gary Snyder. The thesis aims at understanding the sense of contentment and compassion in the poetry of Gary Snyder through the prisms of Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology. The thesis also evaluates the elements of compassion and the Sangha concept in the poetry of Gary Snyder, which is a pre-requisite for considering the universe as a whole community. By accepting the medium of poetry, Gary Snyder excelled in conveying positive attitudes and adequate solutions for restoring the lost harmony between human beings and nature.

This thesis is unique in its organisation and has tried to bring out a religious pathway for solving the present-day eco-crisis. The thesis deals with the analysis of some spiritual texts related to Buddhism and Hindu philosophies that help in

understanding the elements of spirituality in the poetry of Gary Snyder and how it provides solutions for the present environmental problems. The thesis exclusively evaluates how Buddhism is intrinsically connected with ecology and suggests Buddhism as an alternative to the present environmental crisis. Moreover, the thesis tries to prove Snyder's Bodhisattva ideal as a possible solution for solving most of the problems related to the environment. The communion between the natural and human beings, discovery of inner feelings, acting with the strength derived from other forces of nature, understanding of Bodhisattva, effects of Buddhism on nature, the power of the religious mind, understanding of the Zen principles, importance of silence, and Snyder's Buddhism and ecological connections are explored in this thesis. The Zen Buddhist principles of compassion, deconstruction of mind, personal experiences, inner spiritual experiences, mindfulness, principles of impermanence and not-self, the power of silence, the essence of stillness, deep listening, non-duality and rightful thinking can be followed for replenishing our fervour for nature and natural resources.

To discuss the scope of the research further, the researchers can go for a cultural and anthropological study of Gary Snyder's poetry. There are ample opportunities to do research on Gary Snyder's poetry using the theoretical background of Ecofeminism. A researcher who is interested in areas related to gender issues can attempt an analysis of Gary Snyder's poetry using theories connected with Gender Studies. To speak about the further scope of research, the researchers can pursue the concept of Post-Humanism in Gary Snyder's Poetry. There is also further scope for extensive research on Snyder's prose collections.

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