

Cries and Whispers: Nature, Value and the Development Crisis

Murali Sivaramakrishnan

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the present is riddled with *crises* and the ubiquitous development syndrome has been anything but awry and misdirected. The very concept is challenged. Further, the paper focuses on the idea that non-human nature has been indiscriminately exploited and this causes severe concern. Along with the voice of the woman and the subaltern, nature has been sidelined and all non-western philosophical and aesthetic positions have also been devalued. What is called for is a holistic awareness bordering on the spiritual which would in turn reorganize meaning, value and responsibility.

KEY WORDS

Nature, value, development crisis, deep ecology, environmental aesthetics



The recent tsunami that wrecked calamity on the southern coast of the Indian subcontinent has brought in a lot of international involvement, generated much human concern, support as well as aid, and revealed strong traces of those once almost *misplaced* humanitarian values. Apparently the entire world seemed to join hands for a cause that was definitely human and more than anything it was a matter of commitment and action in the world—the *corporeal* help to people in need and suffering. The *World Wide Web* did come in handy and the intricate systems of information proved their worth and reach—rescue, relief and rehabilitation were carried out with tremendous involvement and corporate support for those who lost everything they held dear the damage was irreparable and still at least this large scale involvement would stand our humanness in good stead.

For years now the post-Renaissance modern western man has continued his depredation of nature and the natural, ceaselessly priding himself on his superior sciences and its handmaiden technology, bracing his strength on rationality and logic, marginalizing the relevance of the other non-western discourses and unheeding the voice of the woman and the subaltern. The postmodern intellectual interlude, however, had to a certain extent raised conceptual challenges to the meta-narratives of industrialized progress and questioned the very idea of development. And yet policy decisions and power structures remained unassailable and still continue to be so. The tsunami could be read as a symbol of the wave of destruction, a premonition of things to come—the foreboding of the *unnatural* calamity—and it calls for stringent measures and action in a more holistic sense. This is the context in which my paper takes shape. I propose to problematise the

very idea of development and to corroborate my position drawing on non-western logic and un-reason—on those narratives that locate their meanings under different con/texts and diverse situations.

Very much like the *modern* that devalued and dismissed the *premodern* as mere superstition and nescience, the present undermines the past as illogical and irrelevant, immaterial to progress and advancement. When the wave receded it revealed much more than what was earlier apparent; the wave has helped us rediscover our interrelationship, our place in the intricate and fragile scheme of things. Nature is not merely on the outside, it is what breathes and heaves inside all the living and non living, human and non human alike.

My paper intends to foreground certain theories of the environment in terms of indigenous values that might go counter to the logic of development and material progress that currently leads the world. It is my strong contention that when the roots of perception are challenged and altered—ie., when the categories of our references are transformed—we tend to see things differently, and begin to gather newer meanings of life and living. It is necessary that the very notion of development as well as *knowledge/information society*, needs to be reevaluated in the light of alter/native ways of thinking. That there is a crisis in development that the so-called developed countries have been facing since the last quarter of the last century is now a given fact. Those countries that follow in their wake as developing societies are also ill-fated to confront the very same one on a similar scale.

To believe Theodore Adorno, it is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz. And to believe Michael Foucault and Edward Said it is impossible to think of any social situation without relating it to the politics of power and oppression. To believe the present post-tsunami situation, globally or locally, we need desperately to trans-evaluate our values.

More understanding, more tolerance and more sympathy with our non human living world is what is called for. What Mahatma Gandhi stood for—simple living and high thinking—is not totally irrelevant now. My presentation will attempt to rediscover the *Mahatma within ourselves*—through reframing ethics and aesthesis drawn from the

ethico-*religious* dimensions of Hindu thought.

Literature and Ecology

The study of literature and literary studies has undergone many significant changes over the last century, and the focus of attention has shifted many times from the text through the author to the reader. History and ideology have been challenged within the corpus of literary production and their means and methodologies almost minutely examined and critiqued. Strategies of reading and reception have been reexamined from the points of view of gender, class, ideology, race and nation. Wave after wave of theory and counter theory have subverted earlier readings and their strategies. It would not do now to hold naively on to the idea that the acts of reading and meaning production are such simple procedures. And yet, as I would attempt to present, these successive theorisings have left the text bare and tattered as the denuded earth in the march of blind science and its handmaid, technology. Value and responsibility have been laid aside conveniently. The literary has been trimmed down to the insignificant play of text and desire and pleasure. However, in my argument I shall endeavour to show how the text spills on to the globe and how environmental issues have served to re-contextualise the text in renewed light—what I call environmental aesthetics.

Many years ago when the dispute over the Silent Valley in Kerala was rampant and the great debate over the whole philosophy of Nature Conservation was in its incipient stages, a senior friend of mine who later was to become a naturalist of considerable renown, turned abruptly to me and opined: “[Y]ou are more of an aesthete than a naturalist!” His dismissive tone was on account of the significance that I advocated for the *idea of beauty and value* in nature. Nature conservation, I had then argued, began with the *love and devotion to nature and the natural*. However, the late seventies in Kerala, were quite unsuitable times for the aesthete and idealist! And by then, the *Sastra Sahitya Parishad*—the advocates for the peoples’ science movement—who radicalized the idea of science and technology, and

who were development-oriented and forward-looking, had taken over the entire struggle and popularized the idea of conservation and preservation. Ecology had become a household term and the idea of conservation of biodiversity was indisputably foregrounded as an integrated part of the agenda of development studies. Equating development with the progressive adaptation of science and technology was always held to be logical and unquestionable.

Of course, the arguments for and against *conservation* have not yet subsided. Even now there are many who believe that the entire idea of nature conservation is only suited for the developed countries, while the poor and needy in our part of the world can not afford such a measure! Economically such proceedings are not quite feasible at all. Ecology we need to remember was a comparatively recent science and it has been necessitated by the inadvertent march of human civilization! Because we overexploit our natural resources and remorselessly indulge in species annihilation, lethally poisoning our rivers and seas over and above damming and polluting them, smoke out holes in our atmosphere, and engage in a hundred different ways of self-destruction, we need to sit up and take stock before things get out of hand. If only we had listened to our poets and artists! If only we had heeded our now over-interpreted spiritual texts and good old religious seers! It is not as if everything about the past and those days of yore is to be seen as conservation-oriented. But then there had been one too many voices of dissent and disapproval raised against the mad march of development in the past. And the point is that they had perhaps resorted to the heart rather than the head. And that is where it all leads us to.

The argument that my scientist-friend disapproved of was that nature conservation was largely a matter of the heart than the head. I had cited the *green poets* and pointed out that *the ultimate historical foundations of nature preservation are aesthetic* (which I much later came to realize was the basis of the *environmental ethics* as formulated by the *deep ecologists*). We start by loving nature and the natural, and then begin to care for what we love and cherish. The deep blue sky, the wide expanse of the green earth, the songs and flutter of the birds and butterflies, the gamboling animals—all these begin to crystallize in our

hearts a deep fondness of indistinguishable delight, *a sense of nature*. This crystallization is not without its cultural and historical contexts. Nevertheless it is what binds us to the great wide world. The hard data of the like that *today a significant portion of the 15,000 plant species and 75,000 animal species found in India are threatened by the pressure of human activity on land and forests, and so many hectares of forest land are ransacked per the hour in the rain forests of the world*, are only supplementary and they add to our agony. The fragility and the resilience of the earth is first borne into our hearts through the wonder and amazement that our hearts accord. Perhaps this is the experience of the intangible behind the tangible that the spiritual masters have spoken of. This would bring us to the brink of metaphysics and religion. Perhaps, this is the right place to begin.

Religious thought, the world over, dovetails with that of the nature lover, because religion in its beginnings and ends has a bearing on nature. Almost all religions, sociologists would agree, have their roots in the worship of nature. The adoration of trees, birds and animals, the worship of sacred groves, and the attribution of sacredness to all life forms are true to the spirit of ancient religions. It may be that the reasons for their being so sacred might be slightly different from the ecological angle that we are seeking for; but however, in spirit, they come quite close to that. Of course, we are saddled with the virtues and hindrances of hindsight and therefore can see in history the reverence attributed to all life forms in the sacred texts of almost all religions. The finer aspects of differences may be a matter of significance only for the scholar: while most "pagan" religions identified the immutable with the divine, the Hebraic, especially the Christian religion, maintains the natural superiority of the human being over all other life forms, and insists on *his* (His?) superior ability to break the immutability of natural laws. As many perspective scholars have noted, it might be this underlying patriarchal power that laid the foundations for classical science and its strains are still visible despite the claims to universality and understanding of contemporary science. However, pre-scientific societies cherished a celebratory attitude to nature.

Reason/Unreason and Value

In the march of the Western history of ideas, the Enlightenment is often looked upon as the age of reason. Whatever else this might have entailed, the most significant aspect is that this age gave rise to a belief in scientism—a dangerous attitude indeed—a deep faith in the order of scientific thinking. Human emotion, feeling, and the entire “irrational” sphere of mankind were delegated a secondary insignificant position in the understanding of life. The intellect superseded the heart and analytical thought sought precedence over the intuitive. Values came to be reinterpreted, religion was relegated to superstition, and science got itself the supreme role as the interpreter of truth. In our own times even to speak of one’s beliefs is to rake up the ghost of pre-renaissance nescience! How could one speak of being moved by nature and the natural forms? Poetry and imagination are things of the past. These are days of rationality and intelligence. Religion breeds only superstition and nonsense; it works as an opium! This is not to demean rationality and intelligence *per se* but only to challenge their claims to being the only valid means of approaching the truth. While this being so, truth, in the logic of the postmodern, is multi-dimensional and multifaceted. Let us reorient ourselves to this fact that is not a *fact!* If fiction differentiates itself by not being fact, let us create the faction of the present! In the search for alter/native truths we need to heed and understand the other logic that may not resemble the logic we are used to. If the post-enlightenment logic declaims the validity of religion and metaphysics, then we need to reorient ourselves with regard to these two as well.

To recall Theodore Adorno, *it is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz*. And after Michael Foucault and Edward Said, it is impossible to think of any social situation without relating it to the politics of power and oppression. And of course after the great movements in Feminist thinking it is virtually impossible to understand any situation without relating it to the ideas of gender and politics. Likewise *race, class, ideology*—these concepts have all altered our

ways of understanding the present. In such a situation how could we relegate the idea of nature? In recognition of the present post-tsunami situation—globally or locally—we need desperately to trans-evaluate our values. What we understand by nature most certainly has a bearing on what we make of ourselves. And our understanding needs necessarily to be *holistic* and not *discriminative*. The efforts of environmental historians and environmental geographers have enabled us to understand the profound implications of the natural environment and our ways of responding to it.

Thus in our understanding of the world we live in, we need to reorient ourselves with regard to the values and our ways of response. It is my strong contention that aesthetics belongs to the order of values of which ecological value too forms a significant part. In fact the value which we attribute to the environment cannot be seen as distinct from our general aesthetico-ethical frame of reference. The value which we attribute to the environment is holistic and complete and not peripheral or derivative. Aesthetic value cannot be and should not be dismissed as subjective (in a Cartesian sense) when considering the value of environment and issues pertaining to conservation and preservation. The ecological activism that globally politicized these issues has come to be known as the Green Movement. There is a green politics and even a green speak! And over the last fifteen years a whole aesthetics of the green has also emerged under the name of ecological criticism or eco criticism. In the great welter of socio-political theorizing that had held sway over the last half of the twentieth century the concerns of the human individual and nature were virtually submerged. After the *death of the author* the individual artist/poet ceased to have any space to speak afterwards, and after the closure of the text, history ceased to exist at all. If one were to take the pains of going over the warp and woof of socio-political theorizing carefully, one can perceive the struggles of the author and the text in the light of meaning production. When we reinstate class, race and gender along with the voice of nature we regain the fuller meaning of human's being. When Thoreau wrote, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately . . ." and when Aldo Leopold spoke of the *land ethic*, they were giving voice to

an aesthetics of commitment and engagement.

Deep Ecology

What came to be called Deep Ecology stemmed primarily from the work of the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. According to Naess, "the aim of supporters of the deep ecology movement is not a slight reform of our present society, but a substantial reorientation of our whole civilization." Hence it is an ecosophy. It concentrates on the human relationship with the natural world and supplies a substantial reorientation to a world run astray. Let me provide the major points of this ecosophy as it is developed by the practitioners of deep ecology:

1. A rejection of anthropocentrism. All life on earth has an intrinsic value irrespective of the human angle.
2. Richness and biodiversity are valuable in themselves and humans have no right to reduce this diversity.
3. An identification with all life.
4. Caring for the other life forms is part of individual self realization.
5. A critique of instrumental rationality (emphasis should be not on quantity and efficiency but quality).
6. Personal development of a total world view. Individual thinking and action are of utmost significance and of lesser the collective and the social.

As can be seen the concept of deep ecology is akin to the spiritual. What is aimed at is life enhancing qualitative values very much similar to spiritual enlightenment or artistic fulfillment. After all, life becomes meaningful only when we start to live fully and selflessly.

In our present day to day life of hard reality at every point, we are habituated to turn to the physical sciences for concurrence and approval, for only they can account convincingly for our corporeal existence. Similarly, in spite of their theoretical differences the so-called social sciences get their sanction only because they meekly

follow the methodology of the non human mathematical sciences. And yet many perceptive minds have pointed out time and again that our thinking and perception have been determined by the technological environment rather than the natural. There is apparently little of nature that is left in us. Technology has taken over. This has become an automatic universe for us. Our constructions of our environment and our lives have become removed from the organic unity of the poetic and the spiritual, and so how could we sense and see the elemental harmony that is so apparent to the poet when he writes:

My beloved is the mountains
 The solitary wooded valleys,
 Strange islands . . . silent music
 (St John of the Cross)

or

*iyam prithvi sarvesam bhutanam madhu, asyai prithvyai sarvani
 bhutani madhu*

This earth is like honey for all creatures and all the creatures are like honey for this earth. (Brihadaranyaka V Bahmana1).

Environmental Aesthetics

It is however in imaginative writing and narratives the world over that a deep felt affinity to nature can be discovered. Some are overtly evident while some remain submerged under the rubble of dominant cultural narratives ill disposed to nature. In what has come to be called Green Aesthetics or Eco-aesthetics, efforts are being made by scholars in various disciplines to study the interrelationship of nature, human life and creativity. Of course, Eco-aesthetics is not too far from the *ecosophy* of deep ecology.

“In the woods,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson, “we return to reason and faith.” Despite the fact that this statement is loaded with nineteenth century American transcendentalist overtones, one could still see in it the essence of an environmental aesthetic. Ching-yuang, an early

follower of Zen reflects on his understanding of nature as follows:

Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains, and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains, and waters are not waters. But now that I have got its very substance I am at rest. For it's just that I see mountains once again as mountains, and waters once again as waters. (Qtd. in Lawrence Coupe 1)

It is an experience of *perceptual transformation* that the Zen master undergoes. The difference is between the guileless innocence of the Child and the achieved innocence of a yogi. The very first level of perception—seeing mountains as mountains—preceded all logic, ratiocination and language, while the second bracketed the world of nature as the *other* that is just a creation of the human unconscious (recall the Lacanian aphorism “The unconscious is structured like language”) where in the signifiers and the signifieds overlap to create a parallel reality or *the reality* as we understand it. The third stage is beyond all experience and transcends logic, reason, and language, having “got its very substance.” This is where Eco-aesthetics or green studies steps in, in the wake of theories and counter theories in the academia of twentieth century. It is post-deconstruction. As one green critic has claimed: these are days when the critic has turned from red to green! Green studies attempts to reinstate the real world of men and women and nature and human history. Kate Soper, hits the nail on its head directly when she pronounces dramatically: “In short, it is not language which has a hole in its ozone layer; and the real thing continues to be polluted and degraded even as we refine our deconstructive insights at the level of the signifier” (*The Green Studies Reader* 3). Green studies thus aims not merely to speak *about* nature but also to speak *for* nature. This is just where literature and the environment meet and the text spills over on to the globe, when we learn to see mountains as mountains and waters as waters once again. So much depends upon our sensibilities, the self-realisation of the

human being and the humanization of nature. Aldo Leopold one of the pioneers of this kind of thinking has spoken about the land ethic that calls for a biocentric vision. The point we have to remember is that the genuine environmentalist cherishes the values of love and affection that makes him/her a human being. The path of the Mahavira and the Buddha is not too far to seek. Or to put it in the words of the German poet Holderlin: “. . . *poetically* man dwells”

The Implications of Environmental aesthetics

In the post deconstructive academic world of today many sensitive critics are turning to green. It is in the US universities that green studies picked up in the beginning and later British universities followed suit. Prof. Scott Slovic of the University of Nevada at Reno has attempted to formulate certain key issues that the environmentally conscious literary critics are concerned with. Ecocriticism, for him “means either the study of nature writing by way of any scholarly approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human nature relationships in any literary text, even texts that seem at first glance oblivious of the non human world.” This leaning towards an environmental aesthetic is an indication in the present day world of the growing consciousness of the importance and fragility of the non human space. Eco-aesthetics has thus a wide range of significance and possibility.

Some of the major aspects of green studies:

1. environment and ecology—basic awareness of nature
2. writing about nature and nature writing—poetry, fictional/non fictional narratives
3. rereading history—Romanticism etc, Women and nature—ecofeminism
4. reclaiming the past—tracing roots of environmental writing and awareness
5. Especially in non-anglo-American situation—traces of environmental culture
6. religion and society and nature

7. environmental philosophy
8. environmental history
9. landscape studies
10. landscape and memory—mythical and spiritual connections to non-human world

Aesthetics as it began was that branch of philosophy which dealt exclusively with sensory experience. Now after a wealth of theoretical movements and counter movements, aesthetics has come to signify wider implications not only in terms of the text but also in the manner and methodology of its reception and the production of meaning.

Class, race, gender, and ideology are all significant factors that contribute to the production of meaning. And as we have seen, the idea of nature is equal, if not more significant. It not only contributes to meaning, but also constitutes the meaningful. Eco-aesthetics belongs not only to that order of the study of nature and the non-human world, but also implicates the human in the non human. It is holistic and inclusive, not exclusive and fragmentary. It bespeaks of meaning, value, and responsibility. However, it should not be reduced merely to being just another technical aspect of the theoretical framework, just as with another policy or strategy of reading like deconstruction. It brings with it more than a sign of the times; it bears responsibility. Let us examine these concepts one by one.

1. Meaning

Eco-aesthetics looks upon the act of literary and artistic production as a meaningful activity. Wave upon wave of linguistic and semantic theories have almost deprived the work of art of any worthwhile meaning. Meaning has become a guessing game. If with the New Critics it was the fallacy of Intention that came to be challenged, the structuralists and the poststructuralists ripped off the meaningful world from the space of the linguistic sign altogether. There was ultimately nothing but the play of signifiers and signifieds while the referent was altogether bracketed off. Literary and art activity was but a meaningless engagement of the intellect—a rhetoric of signs. Eco-aesthetics reinstates meaning at the heart of the aesthetic activity.

The aesthetic revolves round the idea of values.

2. Value

“Literature and the other arts,” writes Scott Slovic, “are ideal media for exploring and communicating systems of values—ethical frameworks—within specific communities and between one culture and another. This is not a particularly novel idea, but it flies in the face of postmodern critical theory, which is frequently noted for its indeterminacy, its devolution to textual (and meta-textual) problematics, and its indifference to real social problems. Many literary scholars in recent years have forgotten the traditional social function of the arts. . . .” (*A Companion to Environmental Philosophy* 254). Literature and the arts have a social dimension—a history and an ideology—a need to be committed to the here and now. Values are not peripheral and incidental—they are holistic and born out of a recognition of the responsibility of the writer the artist as well as the critic and the reader. The most significant of all values no doubt would be that which links the human and the non human worlds. Nature is the most valuable of all values and a *transvaluation* of all our value systems is the essential need of the hour.

3. Responsibility

There is more than ever an increasing need to recognize the social responsibility of literature and the arts. The aesthetic act is not something that takes place in emptiness. It is here and now, and the artist/writer needs to recognize the responsibility that she bears to the world at large. This need not reduce literature to the simplistic and the didactic. The text actually spills over on to the globe and the web of life implicates us in it. This is where Eco-aesthetics reaches into the sphere of ecosophy, as outlined earlier. The ideas of meaning, value and responsibility, actually is the recognition of the creative act as one that is sanctioned by the ethical—and it up holds the text as holistic, complete and harmonious with the rest of creation. In the end it is nature that triumphs.

All this might sound so remote and alien to those literary minded

writers and critics trained in the traditional or modernist academia. The long-time-too-familiar debate of the two cultures has now finally ceased to be. After all we have only one earth and a global recognition has dawned on us that our life itself is too brief *and rounded with a sleep* . . . The literature class room should once again be informed by science, this time more sure footed and alert, recalling at every step the too scientific fate of the New Critic of the Anglo American schools. For the text is not too confined in its form and meaning. It spills over on to the globe. As Terry Gifford has put it succinctly: "Literary criticism should also be informed by science and apply that learning with what appears to be the best rigour of clarification available at the time" (*Green Voices* 141). And, he continues: "When an engaged commitment is made to either work, or place, or inner energies in relationships, a responsibility for nature can, in turn, make a recognition of connectedness" (141). In the final analysis the plea for environmental aesthetics is this recognition of interconnectedness and totality.

Mahatma Gandhi and Environmental Thinking

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi lived his philosophy of life—his life itself is his message. Of course, Gandhi was not unaware of all the ideological movements of his life time, and yet he did not contribute much towards environmental thinking directly. He was quite impressed by Thoreau but not too keen on his transcendentalism, for Gandhi was more a man of karma of action in the world. For him love meant love for humanity and action meant action to help and aid his fellow creatures. It is reported that when the English historian Edward Thompson once remarked to Gandhi that wildlife was rapidly disappearing in India, Gandhi replied: "Wildlife is decreasing in the jungles, but it is increasing in the towns" (Lal 151). Yet despite this deep cynicism Gandhi recognized the intrinsic worth of the non human world and thus was a source of inspiration for many ecological movements as Ramachandra Guha has pointed out in his *Mahatma Gandhi and the Environmental Movement in India* (65–82). The

Mahatma's vision of life was simple enough. It bespoke of self sustained balance and harmony with all and everything. As he envisioned it: simple living, high thinking! Through out his life Gandhi preached the gospel of *ahimsa* just like Mahavira and the Buddha before him. His *satyagraha* was radical and aimed at catching the essence of truth; it was a mode of protest calling upon moral and ethical forces of the human being. This resorting to the soul force was his way of announcing to the whole world that there existed deeper forces of goodness and value in man that could affect the life of the planet considerably and in a positive manner. His was definitely a philosophy based on individual and collective responsibility. This is where he comes close to being a prophet of environmentalism. We should recall that a principle of biological egalitarianism formed the basis of Deep Ecologists and the Mahatma's vision is not far from this kind of egalitarianism. That Gandhi did not discuss ecology in any of his writings is quite singular; however, throughout his teaching and practice one finds a reverence for all life in equal measure. However, for Gandhi, the political philosopher, human life was greater than non human life, and yet he never preached from this point of view. Not for him a utilitarianism that founds everything from an anthropomorphic centre. Not for him a material affluence based on commercial values even if professedly for the common good of all. Most significant of all Gandhi depended a lot on himself for almost anything and everything, and as far as possible the Mahatma walked his way. In a way, one should read in this symbolic act the attitude to the so called developing society. For the basis of all development is the urbanization process, and urban living is described by the development of the road and traffic. Therefore the automobile could be seen as the symbol of urbanization. Our cities, their planning and growth, depend on the designing and laying out roads, and roads on their part are linked to our transportation systems. By electing to do a lot of walking the Mahatma was definitely making a statement with regard to the concept of development. As Vinay Lal has put it:

With the attainment of independence and the creation of the nation

state, the space for those who would rather walk than run had appeared to narrow, Gandhi's life was marked by an extreme regularity, and prominent in his daily regime of subversive discipline . . . was the daily walk of ten kilometers. It is on these walks that Gandhi encountered the poverty of a nation, and so came face to face with the village India that had all but disappeared from nationalist discourse; it is on these walks that Gandhi was flanked on both sides by his secretaries, who took down his dictation and so enabled him to reply to each and every one of the tens of thousands of letters that he received; and it is on these walks that Gandhi kept pace with the time of India and the rhythms of his own body. (156)

Hence Gandhi's walk needs to be read as a symbolic act of subversion of the dominant ideology and a way of protest against the forces of colonization and oppression. It is in such acts that we discover the ethics of environmentalism in Gandhi. Even while we as naïve and innocent children of the western *enlightenment tradition* are unconsciously whisked along in our *Ford Icon-s* and *Honda City-s* by the products of a consumerist culture that only serves to dehumanize us moment to moment, the Mahatma is still walking in our midst, unseen and unheeded. His entire act of rejection of foreign goods and cloths, insistence on self dependency and self-employment, and stress on indigenous values, all add up to the spirit of the unified philosophy that we had termed *ecosophy*. Hence it is not wrong to say that environmental philosophy in India stems from that of the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

Conclusion

The need of the hour is apparently a sort of Nietzschean *transvaluation of all values*. We need desperately to reexamine our value systems and our ideas of information, knowledge and wisdom. As the poststructuralists would have it, we need also to engage in critiquing ideas of modernity and those grand narratives like *development*. Without doubt, these notions are the produce of a certain

ideologies and a logic based on certain power structures. When we engage with these, critically armed with the insights and the outlooks of the postmodern and the post-enlightenment critiques, we come to recognize their political structures and foundations for what they are. As we have seen, any logic that inevitably challenges nature and the natural world naturally runs counter to the positive development of life and the living universe. My arguments, although attempting to take science to task, does not intend to run counter to science but only those hard and fast *scientistic* notions that swear blindly by science. We cannot live without science and the benefits that scientific thinking and technology have bestowed on us. Neither can we think of a life bereft of science. There is no rationale in revisionist thinking either. The present is a condition that we cannot live without, philosophically and politically. However, we can develop a more ecologically and ethically sustainable idea of the development idea. We need not only to think nature but we need to think for nature. Although we have achieved super powers over nature—power to wield and dispose of the non human world as we wish to—we have to recognize that we are an integral part of the natural that we manipulate and disarray at will. Those ethical values for which Mahavira and the Buddha stood for, and toward which the Mahatma constantly walked, are more than ever of great value and significance for our times. The Tsunami has defied our very living—our cities are ravaged, our roads disfigured, our sense of security and safety directly challenged. Our power over nature that we so proudly wielded has been revealed to be nothing but hollow. We need to reawaken to our essential selves—our very being is in the soul of nature. How could we have ever been otherwise? Mere information has led us astray from the heart of wisdom. The road to real living leads us back to nature. This is where our safety and security lies. This is our essential life. And the poet has seen it all, as always through the cries and whispers. Only we have forfeited our inner ears. The roar of the distant tsunami reveals the real roots of power and harmony.

I would like to close this with a poem of mine:

The Golden Oriole

I had not known so much happiness
 Until that rainy afternoon
 When the first oriole fluted
 From across the mango trees
 A clear delightful call
 Filled with the brightness of sunshine
 Slowly fading in the afternoon light.
 No night and day after that
 Could take away
 The golden oriole's fruity call
 It hung like a rhyme
 Over the mango trees.
 And it still does. The rains have come and gone.
 I cannot say the same thing about happiness.

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