

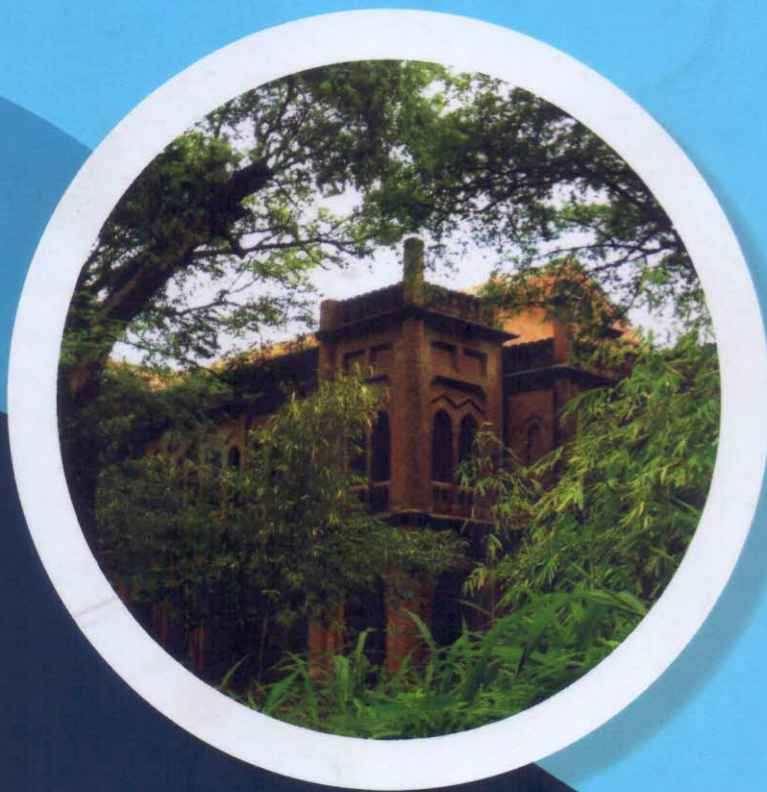


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Editor-in-Chief, Research Department of English
The American College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India
Email: acjell2012@gmail.com and jjohnsekar@gmail.com

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DEEP ECOLOGY IN ABORIGINAL POETRY

P. V. Christi Shanthi

Everything hangs together- everything is interrelated- everything is connected

Deep Ecology takes a holistic view which sees human as part of nature and not apart from it. Instead of placing human beings in the centre of the cosmos deep ecology places the birds animals tadpoles and plants as equally important beings of this rich and mysterious universe.. The ultimate goal of deep ecology is the understanding of the self as a large all inclusive self including all aspects of nature. It believes there is a chord which connects human beings with rest of the universe. Sessions views

Deep ecology is concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all members of the ecosphere but even toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere. Thus this attitude is intended to extend for example to such entities as rivers landscapes and even species and social system considered in their own right.qtd in Gerard21-22

The Aboriginal oral poems talk of a holistic system of the natural world which is the special feature of present day deep ecology. The chief subject of Aboriginal oral poems suggests best examples where humanism and biocentrism work in harmony. It reflects the aboriginals' emotional attachment to their land and forests. Winmar comes "Traditionally Aboriginal poems had many functions and it still does. It reinforced the Aboriginal people's ecological beliefs in the Dreamtime- their Creation and cultural stories of the Rainbow Serpent and their environment. They told of how the rivers and lakes hills, mountains and plains were formed and why the bird's animals and marine creatures act like they do."

The Aboriginal songs educate the younger ones that the land is their mother and they have the responsibility to care for it. It was a learning procedure and it empowered them for they knew they belonged within the social order of their faction. There is a deep sense that this world was not created especially for human beings. The Groote Eylandt clan song of the frog is an apt example of interconnections between animals and seasons, and of the topography of fresh water on land and in the sea:

Clouds rear up darkening there.

Over there they call to their mates in the pool.
Frogs of the rain clouds and fresh water,
In their spring out at sea they've slipped from sight.
(qtd. in Rose 53)

The aesthetics of Aboriginal's songs sing of a connection with everything that is natural; these include the belief in interconnectedness of all things including physical and spiritual worlds. Every religious festival includes suitable songs and dances which talk of the superiority of nature. The aboriginal's religious songs sing in praise of hills, sky, and river which are abodes of the God and ancestral spirits. The aboriginal songs communicate deep ecological thoughts that wisdom for human lies in being aware of life systems and taking responsibility to sustain the created world. Wright views in her book *Born of the Conquerors*:

The times before times, when aspects of us were merged – not imaged – in the natural world, are inaccessible to our disinherited age. But it would be quite wrong to think that these Aborigines tales are no more than moral stories or childish fancies. Like dreams, they have meanings we have forgotten or never known. (14)

The Aboriginal songs pinpoint the intrinsic value of other beings such as birds, kangaroos, flying foxes, rainbow snakes and all the rest of them and also identify that knowledge lies in being aware of life systems. The huge sky serpent is known throughout most of aboriginal Australia as the spirit of rain and water. Her tongues light up the sky of Arnhem Land at the beginning of the monsoon season. "The Tongues of the Lightning Snakes flicker and twist one to the other ... Lightning flashing through clouds, flickering tongue of the Snake" (qtd. in Kane 20).

In contemporary poems too, the song man or song woman is thought to have attained material and inspiration through communion with his or her personal spirit in dreams. Much also concerns the right relationships that human beings must have with the land, its creatures, relatives and others in the clan, and the spirits: some of it is concerned with sacred sites, some of it with symbols whose meaning