

Searching Realities behind Mountain Culture and Sacred Mountains Themes

A Synthesis of Knowledge Systems: Deep Ecology, Religious Philosophies and
Indigenous Mountain Cultural Practices

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The base of the knowledge at the existence of the mountains lies to the deep understanding of their power of sacred and various dimensions of sacred themes. This can be well understood by the synthesis of philosophies of deep ecology, religion and knowledge domains of indigenous cultural practices. The deep knowledge behind the cultures and traditions of the mountain people and societies can help for building the trustworthy knowledge systems for sustaining the mountain environment, a unique nature and special geography, what harbors a diversified mix of human and natural entities throughout the planet. The synthesis of different knowledge systems will suffice the importance of the existence of such a unique and special geography in our planet and it will further shape a new domain of knowledge to balance the interfaces of the conservation and development in such regions.

Without understanding the basic domain of the knowledge systems behind the secret of this nature, the notions of conservation and development and practices thereof remain incomplete, even disastrous in extreme cases of the exploitation of nature by anthropocentric activities. Various emergent “green” forms of global and regional development are to be compared and contrasted in terms of a concept of sustainability that includes ecological, economic, and equity considerations. These understandings can be made possible only through a comprehensive knowledge at philosophical domains e.g. ecosophy (the philosophy of nature, the ecological wisdom) deep ecology, religious philosophies, cultural philosophies and socio-ecological knowledge systems.

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Sacred Mountains Themes

Edwin Bernbaum, a pioneer of the researches in the field of sacred mountain themes and teachings expresses his views as;²

As the highest and most impressive features of the landscape, mountains have an unusual power to awaken a sense of the sacred. As sacred expressions of some deeper reality, mountains have become associated with the deepest and highest values and aspirations of cultures and traditions throughout the world.

Himalayan peak of Mount Kailas directs the minds of millions of Hindus and Buddhists toward the utmost attainments of their spiritual traditions. Mount Sinai occupies a special place in the Bible as the imposing site where Moses received the Ten Commandments, the basis of law and ethics in Western civilization. The graceful cone of Mount Fuji has come to represent the quest for beauty and simplicity that lies at the heart of Japanese culture. Mount Everest stands out, even in the modern, secular world, as an inspiring symbol of the ultimate.

According to Bernbaum, The sacredness of mountains is manifested in 3 general ways. Firstly, certain peaks are singled out by particular cultures and traditions as places of Sanctity. These Mountains—the ones traditionally known as “sacred mountains”—have well established networks of myths, beliefs, and religious practices such as pilgrimage, meditation, and sacrifice. Primary examples would be Tai Shan in China, Mount Sinai in Egypt, and the San Francisco Peaks in the United States.

Secondly, mountains that may or may not be revered frequently contain sacred sites and objects such as temples, monasteries, hermitages, stones, springs, and groves, or are associated with the activities of important holy persons, such as Mount Koya and Kobo Daishi in Japan.

Finally, mountains commonly awaken in individuals a sense of wonder and awe that sets them apart as places imbued with evocative beauty and meaning. People of different cultures experience the 3 general expressions of sacredness in mountains through the views they have of them, such as the mountain as center of the universe or source of

² **Sacred Mountains: Themes and Teachings, Edwin Bernbaum, Mountain Research and Development Vol 26 No 4 November 2006: 304–309**

water and life. These views or themes differentiate the experience of the sacred and provide a starting point for developing a framework for identifying mountain sites and determining their potential for helping to conserve environmental and cultural diversity.

Annual report of the mountain institute describes the spiritual significance and sacredness of mountains as;³

Mountains are sacred to more than one billion people worldwide. At 22,000 feet, Mount Kailash in Tibet is sacred to millions of Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and followers of the Bon religion. In the United States, mountain environments, like those found in the Rocky Mountain West or the Appalachians of the East, enshrine cultural and spiritual values basic to American society, embodying what is interpreted as the original, unsullied spirit of the nation. The Japanese reverence for beauty in nature, an integral part of religious observance, bestows upon Mt. Fuji a symbolic meaning for the entire nation. It is this dimension of mountains that we also use effectively in our work, motivating communities to develop their economies and protect their cultural and natural heritage by drawing on the deeper values that are inherent in mountain landscapes.

About sacred mountains themes associated with mountains in HKH region, Mahesh Banskota *et. al.* reported as follows;⁴

Many religions have considered different mountains in the HKH Region to be very sacred as places of spiritual power and realization (Bernbaum 1997 as in Banskota *et.al.* 2000). Followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and the indigenous Bon tradition (in Tibet and parts of Nepal) have long standing spiritual association with these mountains. Even today there are important locations where thousands of pilgrims undertake long and arduous journeys in order to offer their prayers to the gods and goddesses that have become identified with the mountains. Mount Kailas, located in Xinjiang (Tibet) Province in China, is considered to be the most sacred peak in the Himalayan Region. The Hindus maintain that this is the location where Lord Shiva stayed on this earth. Shenrab, the legendary founder of the Bon religion, also introduced his

³ **THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE, 2005 Annual Report, HELPING MOUNTAIN PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD for 35 Years**

⁴ **Mahesh Banskota, Trilok S. Papola, Jürgen Richter (eds.), Growth, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Resource Management in the Mountain Areas of South Asia Proceedings of the International Conference held from 31 January – 4 February 2000 in Kathmandu, Nepal**

religion from this area. Hemkund, a mountain lake near the source of the Ganges, is the location where Guru Govinda Singh, the last of the principal teachers of the Sikhs, is supposed to have practiced meditation in a previous life. In another cave the Tibetan yogi, Milarepa, also meditated and attained enlightenment.

Mount Everest is referred to as Chomolungma by Tibetans and Sherpas. While there are various explanations of its precise meaning, one common reference is to the goddess in the mountain. Mount Nanda Devi in Garhwal (India) is seen as the Goddess of Bliss and next to the mountain are the two holy pilgrimage sites of Kedarnath and Badrinath where hundreds of thousands of pilgrims visit every year to offer their prayers. There are also many very old monasteries throughout the Himalayas. Buddhist shrines and monasteries are found in the mountains in Bhutan, China, and Myanmar, and many of these are in daily use as sites of prayer for local people.

10 different sacred mountains themes identified by Bernbaum, ⁵

1. Height- The symbol of attaining the material and spiritual heights – human can attain the unattainable

2. Center- An extremely widespread theme is that of the mountain as center— of the cosmos, the world, or a local region.

3. Power-Many sacred mountains are revered as places of power, both natural and supernatural.

4. Deity or Abode of Deity- The power of many sacred mountains derives from the presence of deities—in, on, or as the mountain itself.

5. Temple or Place of Worship- Many traditions revere sacred peaks as temples or places of worship.

6. Paradise or Garden-Shiva⁶ is said to reside in his heaven on the summit of Kailas. Numerous cultures, both traditional and modern, view mountains as gardens and paradises—heavens on earth.

⁵ **Sacred Mountains: Themes and Teachings, Edwin Bernbaum, Mountain Research and Development Vol 26 No 4 November 2006: 304–309**

⁶ **Shiva- means the formless form of god (NIRAKAR). Mahadev, the first Buddha, the enlightened one, is worshiped as the form of formless form (Shiva)**

7. *Ancestors and the Dead*-Another major theme Links Mountains to the other world as ancestors and abodes of the dead, often involved in origin myths. Mount Koya, the meditation center of Shingon Buddhism, has one of the most impressive graveyards in Japan.

8. *Identity*-Aoraki also illustrates the widespread theme of mountains as symbols of cultural and even personal identity.

9. *Source*- Throughout the world people look up to mountains as sources of blessings, such as water, life, fertility, and healing.

10. *Inspiration, Renewal, and Transformation*- In China Mountains are regarded as such ideal places for meditation and spiritual transformation that the Chinese expression for embarking on the practice of religion means literally “to enter the mountains.”

According to Berbaum, sacred mountains have great importance for a wide variety of people and groups, ranging from small to large. Efforts to conserve the environmental integrity and cultural diversity associated with sacred mountains need to take into account and involve the many diverse peoples and traditions that revere and care for them.

Spiritual, cultural values and their significance as the realities behind the sacred themes

In the context of the spiritual and cultural values and their significance, Josep-Maria Mallarach has articulated different views as;⁷

Cartesian distinction between the material and the spiritual does not exist, people considering instead that spiritual realities permeate everything and that humans, nature and the entire universe share the same material and spiritual dimensions (Smith 1967 as in Mallarach (ed.) 2008). To understand the meaning of cultural values it is first necessary to define culture. Culture has been defined as “a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group. In addition to

⁷ Josep-Maria Mallarach (ed.) 2008. *Protected Landscapes and Cultural and Spiritual Values. Volume 2 in the series, Values of Protected Landscapes and Seascapes*, IUCN, GTZ and Obra Social de Caixa Catalunya. Kasperek Verlag, Heidelberg.

arts and crafts, culture encompasses lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems and traditions” (UNESCO 2001 as in Mallarach (ed.) 2008).

Intangible cultural heritage has been defined as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge [and] skills (...) transmitted from generation to generation [that are] constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, [which] provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” (UNESCO 2003 as in Mallarach (ed.) 2008).

A subset of this intangible cultural values is related to traditional ecological knowledge, a concept that has been defined as a “cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationships of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment” (Berkes 1999 as in Mallarach (ed.) 2008).

In this context, spiritual values may be understood as another subset of the intangible cultural values of a given society. They include all the values that have a direct relationship with religion, traditional faith or beliefs systems.

Since these values are connected with the sacred, they are often considered to be the most significant. An important issue is the relationship between cultural and natural diversity. According to the *Fourth Global Environment Outlook*, “Biodiversity also incorporates human cultural diversity, which can be affected by the same drivers as biodiversity, and which has impacts on the diversity of genes, other species and ecosystems” (UNEP 2008 as in Mallarach (ed.) 2008).

Since there is this intimate relationship between these two kinds of diversity, it should come as no surprise that of all the new terms and concepts that have emerged in recent years, the concept of ‘bio-cultural diversity’ is the one gaining wide acceptance, revealing clearly the complex linkages of culture and nature (Maffi, ed. 2002 as in Mallarach (ed.) 2008).

According to the best available estimates, about 84 % of humankind follows some organized kind of religion or spiritual tradition. Of these, the vast majority (75%) are followers of one of the four mainstream religions: Christianity (33%), Islam (21%), Hinduism (14%) and Buddhism (6%).

The followers of all the remaining world's religions (Judaism, Taoism, Sikhism, Jainism, etc.) are substantially fewer in number than those that adhere to Buddhism. On the other hand, the number of primal spiritual traditions probably number over 6,000, although their followers only account for about 6% of humankind (www.adherents.com. 2008 as in Mallarach (ed.) 2008)

According to Josep-Maria Mallarach, following are the **categories of values and their significance;**

- The main values have a clear and distinct religious/ spiritual significance.
- A second group of values that mix spiritual and cultural aspects are related to lifestyles.
- Another group of cultural values is related to arts and crafts.
- A fourth type of cultural value is related to languages and the wisdom that they convey.
- A fifth group of cultural values is linked to beauty or aesthetics, being the source of inspiration for poetry and landscape painting, and to social or political identities, usually in relation to history and mythology.

Synthesis of deep ecology and religious philosophies

Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (b. 1912 as in Taylor and Zimmerman)⁸ coined the term “Deep Ecology” in 1972 to express the ideas that nature has intrinsic value, namely, value apart from its usefulness to human beings, and that all life forms should be allowed to flourish and fulfill their evolutionary destinies. Naess invented the rubric to contrast such views with what he considered to be “shallow” environmentalism, namely, environmental concern rooted only in concern for humans. The term has since come to signify both its advocates’ deeply felt spiritual connections to the earth’s living systems and ethical obligations to protect them, as well as the global environmental movement that bears its name. Moreover, some deep ecologists posit close connections between certain streams in world religions and deep ecology.

⁸ **Deep Ecology**

Bron Taylor and Michael Zimmerman

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature (London: Continuum, 2005).

One of the founders of the 'deep ecology' movement, Naess advocates an ethic of human 'identification' with all life, a mode of relationship entailing (according to critic Ralph Pite as in writings of praxis series) 'an extension of sympathy that reaches so far and becomes so constant that the self loses any desire to differentiate between itself and the world.' (Quoted in Hutchings 197 as in writings of praxis series)⁹

The following statement is “The Deep Ecology Platform” by Arne Naess and George Sessions, two eco-philosophers :(as cited in Henning, 2002)¹⁰.

(1) The well being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: inherent worth, intrinsic value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.

(2) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are values in themselves.

(3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.

(4) Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

(5) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.

(6) Policies must therefore be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economic, technological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

(7) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent worth) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be profound awareness of the differences between big and small.

⁹Blake, Heidegger, Buddhism, and Deep Ecology: A Fourfold Perspective on Humanity's Relationship to Nature, Louise Economides, University of Montana, in Praxis Series, Romanticism and Buddhism

¹⁰ Daniel H. Henning (2002), BUDDHISM AND DEEP ECOLOGY FOR PROTECTION OF WILD ASIAN ELEPHANTS IN MYANMAR: A RESOURCE GUIDE

(8) Those who prescribe to the following points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in attempts to implement the necessary changes.

Taylor Bron, in a critique of deep ecology essays, pointed out deep ecology advocates' arguments as;¹¹

1. Anthropocentric attitudes, emerging with agricultural and pastoral livelihoods, and subsequently grounded in Western philosophies and religions, are causing the current extinction episode.
2. Hope requires widespread resistance to environmental degradation and the evolution of bioregional governance and bio-regionally sustainable life ways.
3. This requires that we replace anthropocentric with ecocentric attitudes.
4. Such replacement in turn requires that we "resacralize" our perceptions of nature and, thus, a religious revival of indigenous and Eastern religions, or holistic metaphysics (such as Spinozan philosophy or 'scientific" pantheism).

Taylor, Bron, in "Deep Ecology and Its Social Philosophy: A Critique," in *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology* by Eric Katz, Andrew Light and David Rothenberg inferred in short, deep ecology posits that a transformation of human consciousness must take place if humans are to reestablish harmony with nonhuman nature.

And, he pointed out different needs to be focused and responded by us;

- 1. On Consciousness and Environmental Behavior-** We do not have convincing empirical (quantitative) research correlating environmental attitudes and behavior
- 2. On Spirituality and "Ecological Consciousness"-** What about the claim that we must resacralize our perceptions of nature? What of the ubiquitous assumption within deep ecology movements that re-sacralization requires a rejection of Western monotheistic (and patriarchal) religions? What of the belief that the worldviews and religious practices of Eastern religions and indigenous peoples, or pantheistic metaphysics, provide superior ground for environmentalism than Western religions or philosophies?"

¹¹ **Taylor Bron**, "Deep Ecology and Its Social Philosophy: A Critique," in *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology*, Eric Katz, Andrew Light and David Rothenberg, eds., MIT Press: Cambridge, 2000, pp. 269-299.

Planet Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. We affirm that Earth's life support systems and resources are the common heritage of all and a sacred trust. Ensuring a healthy and beautiful Earth with clean air, pure waters, fertile lands, expansive forests, and plentiful **oceans** are a basic common interest of humanity. . . .

General Principles: Respect Earth and all life. . . [and] the interdependence and intrinsic value of all beings.

3. On Bioregional Ideology, Decentralization, and the Question of Power -We have already reviewed the extent to which deep ecology has fused with bioregionalism.

Much bioregional theorizing has focused on the difficulties involved in demarcating bioregions. We can see that such difficulties are not insuperable, however, when we recognize that bioregional provinces are necessarily also cultural zones; they are social constructions, not just ecological realities. If they are to become governance units, they must be contested and negotiated.

If such philosophy were to spread widely, it would provide a social-philosophical ground for what Deudney thinks we shall need if we are to arrest the destruction of the biosphere: legitimate international governance grounded in a federal-republican Earth constitution." Deudney and those pursuing international environmental governance offer an important corrective to decentralist absolutism, for surely we must develop cooperative global responses to protect the planetary commons.

According to Taylor, Bron ; bioregional deep ecology will be more compelling if its advocates eschew reductionistic explanations for, and simplistic solutions to, our environmental predicaments. To their credit, many deep ecologists recognize that in addition to a proper spiritual perception and bio-centric morality, a social critique and a social philosophy are needed.

Modern environmentalists and spiritual traditions in sympathy with them constitute a great and dangerous error, according to Ken Wilber in his new books *Sex, Ecology, spirituality*, and *A Brief History of Everything*. Wilber argues this in spite of agreeing that we face a serious ecological crisis, and that he is "in complete sympathy" with the

attempt by many contemporary people to recapture the ecological wisdom of earlier tribal peoples.¹²

In the context of knowledge systems of deep ecology and religions, Zimmerman, Michael E., claimed as;¹³

‘Many commentators have remarked on the affinities between Heidegger's thought and East Asian traditions such as Vedanta, Mahayana Buddhism, and Taoism. One reason for recent interest in Heidegger's thought and in Buddhism is that both are critical of and claim to offer an alternative to the anthropocentrism and dualism that some critics say is responsible for today's environmental crisis. According to such critics, Western humankind is particularly anthropocentric. Regarding humanity as the source of all meaning, purpose, and value, humans justify doing anything they want with the natural world. Western humanity also thinks in terms of dualisms and binary oppositions, such as mind versus body, reason versus feeling, humans versus nature, male versus female. Those possessing the “privileged” properties (mind, reason, human, male) allegedly have the right to dominate those possessing the “inferior” properties (body, feeling, nature, female). In an attempt to gain godlike security and power for humankind, modern Western ideologies call for transforming the earth into a titanic factory, thereby threatening to destroy the biosphere on which all life depends’.

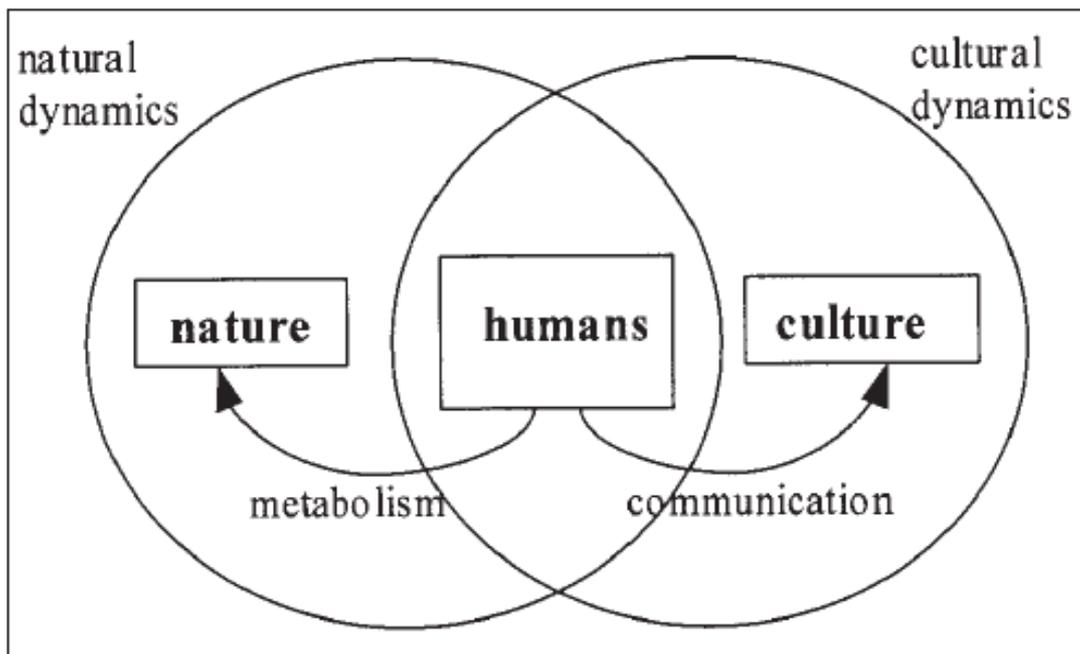
¹² From: Ken Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, (Boston: Shambhala, 1995 as cited in Ken Wilber's *Critique of Deep Ecology and Nature Religion: A Response by Gus diZerega*)

¹³ Zimmerman, Michael E. "Heidegger, Buddhism, and deep ecology." *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger: Second Edition*. Ed. Charles B. Guignon. Cambridge University Press, 2006. Cambridge Collections Online. Cambridge University Press

Deep knowledge systems of human-nature relations in practices- ecosystem management

Marion Glaser states,¹⁴ 'It shows that the interpretation of the social dimension in ecosystem management in each mind map advances the study of human-nature relations in a particular way. However, the dysfunctional reductionism of eco-and anthropocentric mind maps and the weak capacity of interdisciplinary mind maps to analyze intersystem and cross-scale linkages are only overcome by complex system approaches. Different types of complex systems mind maps are found capable of comprehensively operationalising the social dimension of ecosystem management for monitoring purposes and also of linking a variety of knowledge types in integrative analyses to support resilience-oriented management'.

Marion Glaser has presented, as given below, a model of societal metabolism showing interrelationships of Human, Nature and Culture.



Societal metabolism (adapted from Fisher-Kowalski 2004, 315 as in Marion Glaser)

¹⁴ Marion Glaser, *The Social Dimension in Ecosystem Management: Strengths and Weaknesses of Human-Nature Mind Maps*. *Human Ecology Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2006 © Society for Human Ecology

From his statement it can be inferred that there is need for a discourse of the importance of synthesis of value knowledge systems in sacred themes and cultural practices. Some critical debates in recent trends of development are also in the line of advocacy for the value of indigenous cultural practices and original knowledge systems. “Economics and Culture” by Stig Ingebrigtsen and Ove Jakobsen (as in Jason McLeod Monson)¹⁵ addresses the interaction between economics and culture, arguing that culture and sustainable development are threatened by “economism,” the economic invasion of culture and the domination of the mind by consumer conceptions. They argue that this is a threat not only to culture but also to economics in general. To counter this, they propose that stakeholder theory be interpreted more broadly to include real dialogue in a communicative arena between agents of the culture as well as agents of the economy. So, a genuine logic for realization of the synthesis of different knowledge systems comes here.

The recognition of the synthesis of value knowledge systems

(From the original views of the pioneer (Daniel H. Henning) in Buddhism and deep ecology)¹⁶

Today, there is greater recognition being given to the interrelationships between spiritual beliefs, religious practices of a community, and how that community relates to forest, wildlife, and environment; and to the world in general. As a result, more people are looking at the potential for finding spiritually based solutions to problems that get at the basic causes and values, including ignorance and greed as noted in Buddhism, i.e., deeper solutions.

¹⁵ Jason McLeod Monson, Review of *Business within Limits: Deep Ecology and Buddhist Economics*. (*Business within Limits: Deep Ecology and Buddhist Economics*. Edited by Laszlo Zsolnai and Knut Johannessen Ims. Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006, 324 pages, ISBN 3039107038)

¹⁶ Daniel H. Henning (2002), **BUDDHISM AND DEEP ECOLOGY FOR PROTECTION OF WILD ASIAN ELEPHANTS IN MYANMAR: A RESOURCE GUIDE**. (Suggested readings, from the same author: *A Manual for Buddhism and Deep Ecology* by Daniel H. Henning (2002), Ph. D. (Special Edition by World Buddhist University)

Buddhism is often summarized as the extinguishing of suffering. It presents an awareness and perception of nature through interrelatedness, “Oneness,” loving kindness, and compassion for all living beings. The Dhamma (laws and teaching of nature) and nature orientation of Buddhism has numerous principles and values that are correlated with Deep Ecology.

Buddhism is based on impermanence, that everything is constantly changing, that everything is constantly rising and falling away, and that everything is appearing and disappearing. It also acknowledges that everything that happens (human) depends upon the mind and conditioning.

Buddhism focuses on the extinguishing of suffering, which is caused by attachment to anything through ignorance (also includes “ignoring” what is right) and greed (many monks believe greed is really behind illegal logging and poaching)

On the Dhamma in nature, Dhamma basically means that we (humans) are simply a part of life along with other beings and that we are included in nature as just another species or living being among other species or living beings. It also means that there are laws in nature like impermanence that operate and apply to nature. Many of these values and laws from Dhamma can be correlated with Deep Ecology.

As a highly respected religion or philosophy in many Asian countries, Buddhism has a great potential for influencing people and their thinking, values, and behavior toward protection of wildlife and tropical forests under Deep Ecology orientations. However, much of this potential has not been developed, nor have many monks, nuns, and lay people been exposed to Deep Ecology orientations per se under the more anthropocentric orientations of some Buddhism.

With increasing pressures on wildlife and tropical forests, many Buddhist leaders are bringing forth more Deep Ecology orientations on an intuitive basis from their Buddhist backgrounds as well as through training experiences.

Now, Deep Ecology can be considered the spiritual dimensions of the environmental movement. It asks deeper questions that get at the real causes (such as ignorance and greed as noted in Buddhism) behind issues as well as the “place,” ethical concerns, ecological limits, and so forth.

According to Henning, Both Buddhism and Deep Ecology have an ecocentric, spiritual, and Oneness (holistic) approach. They both define those problems created by ignorance and greed and solve such problems by moving from an anthropocentric orientation to a spiritually based ecocentric approach. Both Buddhism and Deep Ecology are basically concerned with change. They use values and perspectives that are based on spiritual and holistic principles for positive change in paradigms (or worldviews), attitudes, and practices for environmental, tropical forest, and wildlife protection.

Such change is based along clear and realistic lines contained both within Buddhism and Deep Ecology. Both are very similar and can be combined for greater potential and depth in the way that they present a holistic, spiritual, and value-oriented approach to problems such as those presented by tropical forest destruction and degradation as well as wildlife poaching.

Although the “higher power” in Buddhism might be considered Dhamma (nature), Buddhism, with its philosophy and teachings provides a definite way of perceiving the spirituality of relationships, relating directly and indirectly to nature. Deep Ecology often refers to the “Ecological Self” which is spiritually based on relationships and responsibilities for all living beings and nature rather than the ego. Both of these spiritual approaches to nature are based on “Oneness,” relationships, all living beings, and ecocentric orientations.

Some of these values may include biological diversity, genetic diversity, species diversity, agricultural (genetic materials), medicinal, industrial, tropical forest people, and maintenance of the web of life, climatic, water conservation, wildlife conservation, soil protection, outdoor recreation, education, ecotourism, creativity, spirituality, cultural, and future generations.

Value knowledge in practice - cultural conservation practices

According to John Grainer and Francis Gilbert, Concurrent with biodiversity loss, the world's human cultural diversity is rapidly disappearing as indigenous people are displaced or acculturated, languages forgotten and traditional and other forms of knowledge relating to biodiversity are lost forever. Human cultural diversity and biological diversity are intimately connected. It is apparent that biological diversity in agricultural systems was higher in earlier times and has been reduced considerably as traditional agriculture and types of agricultural technologies have declined. Emphasizing on the importance of the indigenous knowledge and cultural practices in conservation of the unique geographies, John Grainer and Francis Gilbert has reported their project as 'From the outset of the Protectorate the management unit established a sustainable multi-faceted programme aimed at helping support local Bedouin communities and promoting their culture and indigenous knowledge'.¹⁷

When the early morning light quietly grows above the mountains. . .

The world's darkening never reaches to the light of being.

We are too late for the gods and too early for being.

Being's poem, just begun, is man.

-Martin Heidegger

The mountains, the teacher says, are walking. . . .

They are constantly at rest and constantly walking.

We must devote ourselves to a detailed study of this virtue of walking. . . .

He who doubts that mountains walk does not yet understand his own walking.

-DZgen, "The Mountains and Rivers Sutra"

¹⁷ **Around the sacred mountain: the St Katherine Protectorate in South Sinai, Egypt, by John Grainger and Francis Gilbert in Josep-Maria Mallarach (ed.) 2008**

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best.

It is always to leave the best untold. - Walt Whitman, a Song of the Rolling Earth

Conclusive remarks

Eco-centric principles should be followed in deciding issues of public policy affecting cultural practices, bio-cultural diversity, landscape-wilderness-nature preservation and socio-economic development.

The current practices should be justified by the fundamental and scientific basis of the different knowledge systems. Different development discourses should forge links of policy and practices with the meta-discourses and philosophies of the society, culture and the nature.

The reorientation and synthesis of knowledge systems from the nature, religion, culture and traditions have significance;

- For conceptualizing ecological democracy, the governance of the nature and the society, the governance of the self and the whole existence (where, the self is also with in the frame of the whole, not as separate entity).
- To understand and practice the attainment of oneness and universal simulation of being, to conquer the knowledge systems for shaping effective policies and practices of sustainable development.
- For the rediscovery of local knowledge – mountain peoples' deep knowledge of indigenous cultural practices are considered to be the central theme for their development.

At one hand, I put forward a challenge to the epistemological community of policy making on sustainable mountain development, for reorienting the deep knowledge systems behind the indigenous cultural practices in mountains. On the other hand, I want to launch a deep conscience for a state of revolt in awareness of the values and significance of indigenous cultural knowledge systems among different mountain communities.

Every head is the universe. There are simply... many ways of imagination, will, knowledge, power ...and much more beyond the mind.