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The Impact of Anthropocentric View on the Global Ecology: A Study of Kathmandu Valley

Prakash Bikram Raut

Abstract- In this article the researcher unfolds the impacts of anthropocentric view on the environment and ecology of the Kathmandu Valley. The research approach adopted in this article includes the anthropocentric view that separates humans from nonhuman and nature and adversely impacts the environmental ecology. The main conclusions drawn from this study about the impacts of the anthropocentric view to nature are: anthropocentric view separates humans from nonhuman and nature, leads to the global ecological crisis, human centered perspective has caused ecological crisis in the global ecological chain, human centered view through technology has disrupted the natural environment of both urban and rural parts of Nepal and it is even harmful for humans.

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Introduction

The anthropocentric view refers to the human centric view that takes humans as the superior beings who dominate the world and all other beings are means to the human end. According to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, Homo-sapiens are supposed to have evolved through natural selection. This view paved the way for interpreting the natural world in a different way and the long established view toward the natural world underwent change. This theory itself became a root for human centered views about the universe. This is hypothesized as an anthropocentric view that posits humans at the center and that adversely impacts the natural environment. I argue that anthropocentric views about nature have led to the deterioration of the natural world.

The purpose of this research is to explore whether anthropocentric view impacts the ecology of Kathmandu valley furthermore the reason behind the human centered attitude. Similarly, the aim of this research work is also to judge whether anthropocentric practice is the root cause of ecological crisis in Kathmandu valley.

The research applies some conceptual and theoretical tools to analyze the issues that are a global concern. As the research delimits its scope selecting the geographical area of Kathmandu valley, the issues being discussed and analyzed have a global relevance. To conduct the entire research, both primary and secondary sources have been used. In addition, the concept of environmental ethics and Eco symbiotic perspective have also been employed to analyze the environmental issues in general and Kathmandu valley in particular. Furthermore, I figured out ecocentric ideas through environmental literature and interviews.

As the epistemological assumption, the output of anthropocentric view is tested with environmental issues. Such a test researches whether the anthropocentric views impact on the ecology, and moreover given the pace of urbanization how it is likely to grow in future adding to more ecological predicament of Kathmandu valley. The research attempts to address the following research questions to study the behavior of the people living in the city areas that has promoted anthropocentric view affecting the ecology of Kathmandu valley:

1. What factors have led to the anthropocentric view among the inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley?
2. How has such an anthropocentric view affected the environment of the Kathmandu valley?
3. How can the views derived from environmental ethics help minimize the environmental pollution at the global level and in the Kathmandu valley in particular?
4. How does anthropocentric view impact ecology?
5. Why is the relation between ecology and nature necessary?

For the followers of anthropocentric view, humans are supposed to have originated as the superior to all nonhuman species. But environmentalists argue that anthropocentrism is ethically wrong and it is the root cause of ecological crisis. Human beings, according to anthropologists and nature biologists, originated much after the world environment turned conducive for living organisms. This clarifies that all life forms including humans would not have been possible if nature did not form a life supporting system known as ecosystem. For this regard, the scientific study of nature and living organisms has produced possible evidence. For example, Darwin, a pioneer in this field came up with his theory of evolution that totally negated the divine theory, and yet the theory that explains the creation of the universe has remained inconclusive. In the same way, the universe designed by God with some purpose has been refuted by scientists with the claim that the supreme invisible being as an architect of the universe has no scientific foundation. Among all the species of animals that appeared in nature, the Homo sapiens

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learned to adapt to nature and live in a community. They also developed a language to communicate with each other. Unlike other species, they also developed tools to accumulate more food and for traveling to other places. These two qualities namely, tools and language made humans distinct from the rest of the animals. They grew up in nature, developed more tools to use resources for survival and also gave name to nature with their inherent cognitive mind. In other words, it is humans who constructed the word nature as they are sentient creatures with conscious minds. Concluding the above mentioned data, Pablo Solon, the environment activist argues "The anthropocentric viewpoint is that human beings are the central and most important entity in the world; that humans are superior to non-human life because they are the only ones that have consciousness, values and moral status" (107). Such a feature of anthropocentric view creates the superiority of human beings to the nonhuman that becomes manifest in humans consuming products of nature and manipulating the ecological paradigm to interpret nature and its phenomena. Human dominance over nature has been seen at various levels from global to local. The study aims to examine how such anthropocentric views have led to the global ecological crisis and how the attitude of the inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley too is shaped by the same view that has triggered the deterioration of the environment of the valley.

The ecological issue is global and local as well. In global standpoint, the study, compiled over three years by more than 450 scientists and diplomats demonstrates the ecological issue. Highlighting this issue, Jonathan Watts, the environmental editor of the Guardian writes "The biomass of wild mammals has fallen by 82%, natural ecosystems have lost about half their area and a million species are at risk of extinction – all largely as a result of human actions" (Human society under urgent threat from loss of Earth's natural life.). Such data elucidates the adverse effect of human activities on ecology that can produce a catastrophe for the entire ecosystem. Furthermore, such global ecology and nature, obstructed by anthropocentric views, is also reflected in Kyoto protocol. Concerning this issue, the Eco critic Jennifer Kuzma argues "The United States exited Kyoto protocol because of the influence of the fossil fuel lobby and its Stranglehold on the Republican Party, a situation that persists today" (10). This fossil fuel lobby apprehends the reduction in human friendly technology and consequently contributes to the decline of ecological equilibrium. On the other hand, censorship in such technology decreases economic output but improves the quality of biosphere. Despite the fact that ecology is more significant than economy, the United States has politicalized Kyoto signature in order to favor the economy rather than ecology which is an entirely anthropocentric view.

This ecological issue, produced by the USA, clarifies the lack of solidarity which is an obstacle to protect the ecosystem. Consequently, such human spotlighted view impacts entire terrestrial, aquatic and air ecology including human beings, the fact that the existence of ecology without bio centric view is not conceivable. As a matter of fact, ecological existence is contingent on the relation amid the organisms. Emphasizing on ecological significance, Sylvia Batista illustrates, "It is worth noticing that if we consider ecology as the study of the relations that organisms establish with one another and with their physical surroundings, a post-human reading aims to look at those relations in order to problematize a privileged human position in the world" (187). The above mentioned data point out that all the organisms are in the ecological chain, whereas the privileged humans are in the center of ecology being superior to nonhuman.

In addition, the anthropocentric view clarifies that human supremacy challenges the natural environment globally. Furthermore, Eco critic George S. Session researches the ecology and argues, "The search for causes of the environmental crisis has tended to move to the deeper level of examining" (72). This environmental crisis has been recognized in the global scene and consequently appeals to conserve the ecology from anthropocentric impact. The above mentioned data indicates that anthropocentric view produces the boundary between nature and human whereas Vanessa Hull, et al researches the relation between human and nonhuman animals and concludes "In today's globalized world, humans and nature are inextricably linked" (15). But humans' attitude of taking nature for granted and viewing it simply as an object created for him has invited ecological problems. Such an anthropocentric view separates humans from nonhuman and nature and adversely impacts the environmental aspect.

Moreover, the anthropocentric view splits human beings as entities from the entire ecosystem including all flora and fauna. This has a deteriorating effect on the relationship between nature and ecology which leads to existential crises of ecology in all three aquatic, terrestrial and atmospheric levels. In the global environment, human highlighted outlooks have marginalized and disrupted ecology. For example, global warming, climate change and declining drinking water resources are evidence to divulge the cumulative impact of anthropocentric views. Such evidence clarifies that human centered perspective has caused ecological crises in the global ecological chain. The fact is that the anthropocentric view is socially fabricated knowledge to produce the intrinsic value for human beings. Moreover, this anthropocentric view produces instrumental value for the nonhuman world. Furthermore, the human centric view through technology adversely impacts the entire ecological predicament. Such data illustrates that

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anthropocentric views exploit nature and ecology in a vulnerable way. In this context, the paradigm to the adaptation of ecology is essential. In a broader sense, the justice for both human and nonhuman is significant to harmonize the entire ecology.

Additionally, the practices of such a human centered view through technology the surging technology as a tool of anthropocentric view impacts the relation of the biotic and abiotic environment in the earth including lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere. Even scientifically, the researchers have concluded the natural disruption is the consequence of anthropocentric view through technology. Such anthropocentric view has centered the man excluding and othering nature including aquatic, atmospheric and terrestrial ecology. This trend has been increasing at a global level including developed as well as developing countries and Nepal is not exceptional.

Every year, the climatic condition of Nepal is deteriorating which adversely impacts the ecology. As shown above, the cause behind such deteriorating climatic conditions is related to human's perception about nature and their activities. According to the environmental report of The Asian Development Bank, "Nepal faces unique challenges. Temperatures are rising fastest at the highest altitudes, causing quick melting of snow and ice" (7). Such temperature rising and melting of ice justify the sign of climate change. Climate change is directly related to greenhouse gas which is the root cause of global warming.

In environmental terms, the human centered view through technology has disrupted the natural environment of both urban and rural parts of Nepal. Moreover, such a human centric idea has produced an adverse impact on the entire ecology. Claiming the impact of anthropocentric ideas, the environmental researcher Ashutosh Mohanty explains "The biodiversity was remarkably rich. But with the growth of population and expansion of the city, large-scale deforestation took place. Concrete jungles disturbing the flora and fauna of the region replaced the natural Jungle" (131). This research of Mohanty illustrates that the deep ecology is also deteriorating in Nepal due to anthropocentric views. The deep ecology rejects anthropocentrism and advocates for biocentrism. In this background, all the flora and fauna have equal rights and intrinsic value. For example, rivers, air and land are sacred in the tradition of Kathmandu valley. While observing the present cultural trend of the Kathmandu valley, the humans have exploited the sacred entity of deep ecology through modernism and consumerism. For instance, the land has been concretized, rivers have been used for the disposal of excrement and air contains emission of old vehicles. While pointing, such deteriorating deep ecology disharmonizes the entire ecology of Kathmandu valley. As a fact, the deep ecology is a sacred relation among the entire living organism. The way humans have disrupted the abiotic world, adversely impacts on the holy entity of ecology. The fact that the biotic world requires an abiotic world for survival. Such data clarifies that deep ecology is at the root of interdependence of all living organisms and non-livings entities. This relation is religious as well as spiritual concept.

The research applies different ecocentric and biocentric concepts as its theoretical tools. It includes the concept of deep ecology and environmental ethics as a central focus along with other scientifically oriented theoretical framework to analyze the issues. One dimension of deep ecology manifested in Buddhism that highlights the importance of the forest. Buddhism holds the belief that "forests are delightful, where the world finds no delight, there the passionless, for they not for pleasure" (The Dhammapada). Dhammapada proposes that forests represent the significance of nature and ecology including all the flora and fauna. This doctrine specifies that forest as the representative terrestrial ecology and nature can enhance the delight. This is the way to experience pleasure from nature. On the contrary, the anthropocentric view through technology has consumed and domesticated the forest in Nepal. Accordingly, the destination of anthropocentric view is towards catastrophe.

The above mentioned idea clarifies that modern technology and economic activities as the mode of anthropocentric views, have demoted and disrupted nature and ecology. For example, climate change, natural disaster and declining indigenous drinking water. Resources are evidence to reveal the increasing impact of anthropocentric views on ecology. This evidence elucidates that human centered view through technology has created ecological crises in the lithosphere, atmosphere, rivers, lakes and ponds. In the same way, the human centered view evaluates the human as intrinsic and nonhuman as the instrumental. According to L. Goralink and M. P. Nelsion, "Anthropocentrism literally means human-centered, but in its most relevant philosophical form it is the ethical belief that humans alone possess intrinsic value. In contradistinction, all other beings hold value only in their ability to serve humans or in their instrumental value" (Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics). This idea concludes that natural disruption is the consequence of anthropocentric views. Additionally, the practice of such anthropocentric view leads the ecology and natural environment of Nepal towards more natural calamity in the comparison of the past. To save Nepal from natural calamity and ecological crisis, the government of Nepal, local and international organizations have endeavored through environmental acts, pressure and awareness. But most of such efforts are less effective in Nepal.

Human activities based on anthropocentric views have polluted the environment of Kathmandu valley adversely impacting the terrestrial and aquatic ecology. Explaining the impact of human centric view,

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the environmental researcher Sadhana Kaysta and Bidur Upadhya wrote, "The Bagatti River is the dumping ground for domestic and industrial effluents. In the Bagmati river, carbonate contribution is noted to be 32.5 % from carbonate weathering and 67.5 % from silicate weathering" (26). This shows how the residents of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur are least concerned about the environmental pollution. Similarly, the worsening geological condition of the Bagmati river demonstrates how the increasing urbanization has disrupted the built environments. The growing modernism and consumerism of Kathmandu city, the rapidly developing materialism and urbanization have skyrocketed the price of the land. This has led to the commercialization of private land consuming it for monetary value and consequently exploitation of forest areas too has increased. Such change in the land use pattern can affect the living organisms that are deprived of its natural environment as ecological predicament is contingent on the proactive role of the human organism. Forest is a source of various human needs. For example, the Eco critic Robin Sears, et al argue "Forests clearly provide subsistence goods and income through provision of forest products" (17). But the forest area of Kathmandu is decreasing every year due to human centric activities affecting the balance between humans and nature. Thus human privilege is the root cause of environmental degradation in Kathmandu valley. Moreover, the technology as the mode of anthropocentric view, is rapidly domesticating the ecology of Kathmandu valley. For example, rivers are biologically dead, and temperature is increasing due to human behavior and unethical environmental practices. Therefore, the natural environment is deteriorating in Kathmandu valley which is the adverse impact of anthropocentric view.

To elucidate the idea of environmental studies, the evolving philosophies illustrate the significance of both ecology and nature, the fact that modern society needs both nature friendly ideology and symbiotic harmony solving the unprecedented set of problems. The solution of such a problem is urgent and unavoidable for symbiotic harmony and environmental tranquility. Therefore, an option to ecological conservation is essential to sojourn the adverse impact of anthropocentric view on ecology. However, this is challenging to harmonize the entire ecology of Kathmandu valley due to increasing modernism and consumerism.

Besides, the anthropocentric view problematizes the ecology through humanism, modernism, consumerism and technology for the prosperity of homo-sapiens. As claimed by the nature writers, humanism focuses on the privilege of human beings and accordingly endangers both biotic and abiotic environments. Observing this environmental reality, Ehrlich et al, the American Biologist explains, "When humanity exterminates other creatures, it is sawing off the limb on which it is sitting, destroying working parts of our own life-support system" (Sixth Mass Extinction of Wildlife). This data clarifies that the life support system due to humanization, utilizes the nonhuman as the instrumental value. As a result, such a mode of anthropocentric view leads the organism towards the brink of extinction. According to nature writers and environmentalists, the Sixth mass extinction is supposed to happen in the future. This is the adverse impact of anthropocentric views on ecology.

In the same way, Consumerism as the mode of anthropocentric view, demands more commodities and appliances and accordingly such human needs are fulfilled through the consumption of natural resources. This is the objectification of nature which disturbs the adaptation of organisms in life supporting ecosystems. As a result, the degree of consumerism is beyond the biospheric capacity. Furthermore Mayell, Hillary explains, "Approximately 1.7 billion people worldwide now belong to the consumer class – the group of people characterized by diets of highly processed food, desire for bigger houses, more and bigger cars, higher levels of debt, and lifestyles devoted to the accumulation of non-essential goods" (67).

The demand of consumers is contingent on modern production. The point is that consumerism, in this background, supports modernism which produces a system to impact on ecology. This type of modern trend emphasizes production exploiting nature and the environment. In fact, anthropocentric views dichotomized the organism as human and nonhuman. Furthermore, the technology as the mode of anthropocentric view contributes to the Homo sapiens to fulfil the consumption.

The anthropocentric view stemming from humanism, consumerism, modernism and technology, centers the human beings and that adversely impacts nonhuman and natural environments. Such an impact of anthropocentric view is against the existence of the entire ecology. The human centered view is even harmful for humans because the existence of homo-sapiens is not possible without an ecosystem. Therefore this research focuses on why and how anthropocentric view impacts the ecology at a global level and also examines at a micro level how it has affected the geographical area of the Kathmandu valley leading to the environmental deterioration. Thus as the delimitation, this research focuses on the anthropocentric view on terrestrial and aquatic ecology of Kathmandu valley. The major emphasis is on the urban part of Kathmandu valley.

As the urban areas of Nepal have witnessed an increasing amount of environmental pollution affecting the quality of life of humans and nonhumans as well as their habitats, the research will contribute to reassessing the attitudes and behaviors of the inhabitants of the

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Kathmandu valley. This will change their anthropocentric view and develop an eco-friendly view that is likely to bring positive change in the ecology of Kathmandu valley and same to global level. Such environmental awareness contributes to protecting the ecological predicament and nature. The fact that Kathmandu valley has suffered from the massive ecological crisis has been recorded by many researchers and environmentalists. This research is a continuation of examining the same issue but with a different perspective and framework which produces the instrumental value for the conservation of nature and ecology. In addition to such importance, this research rediscovers the value of environmental ethics.

In the collusion, modernism, consumerism and technology as the modes of anthropocentric view are the factors to cause the environmental degradation and accordingly ecology of the Kathmandu valley is in crisis. This is a challenging issue because both ecology and modernization are important to us. So, modification in technology seems essential.

In spite of a number of scientific researches, endorsement of environmental acts and commitment of major stakeholders, the implementation side is less effective to improve the environment of Kathmandu valley. Delaying the initialization of environmental acts on time, leads the entire ecology of Kathmandu valley to crisis. Similarly, the impact of anthropocentric views on the ecology is more in the core city area, however, less in the rural area. The adverse impacts can lead the ecology on the brink of extinction. In this framework, the human centric perspective is the root cause of environmental degradation as well as ecological crisis. Hence, modernism and consumerism as the mode of anthropocentric view has transformed the green Kathmandu valley into a polluted city which produces the crisis for the entire ecology.

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