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Modern Ecological Crisis and Deep Ecological Concerns in Bibek Debroy's *Valmiki Ramayana*

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Abstract:

The present world is under a severe ecological crisis, such as global warming, natural calamities, environmental pollution, disharmony between man and nature, as well as between man and animal, because of the advancement of the Western world, colonialism, and the needs of materialistic pleasures. The Valmiki Ramayana is respectful towards nature and accords moral significance to animals and birds. Arne Naess's concept of deep ecology holds that all living and non-living beings are equally important and should coexist within a cooperative design.

The present research article aims to sensitize readers to human nature harmony and explore and understand the deep ecological concerns of Bibek Debroy's Valmiki Ramayana. In the theoretical framework, Deep Ecology developed by Arne Naess, the forests, rivers, animals and relations between all living beings will be analyzed and interpreted using a qualitative research approach.

Keywords: Deep Ecology, Ecocriticism, Global Warming, Ecological Crisis

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INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Background of the Study

The present world is facing a critical situation in the field of ecology, where climate change, deforestation, pollution, loss

of biodiversity, and ecological imbalance are all problems. Human-nature relationships have been significantly disturbed by the rapid industrialization, urbanization, consumerism and overexploitation of natural resources etc. The effects of climate change

on the planet's ecology and humans are increasingly dangerous: ecological stability and human survival are facing threats from rising temperatures, floods, droughts and environmental degradation ("Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report"). So far, deforestation and uncontrolled development have destroyed habitats and reduced biodiversity all over the world.

Environmental pollution is also a serious problem. The pollution continues to cause damage to ecosystems and human health. Modern civilization has been shaped for the most part by the anthropocentric worldview that centers on humans and considers nature to be an object to be consumed. This anthropocentric mindset and approach to the environment are criticized by Arne Naess, who believes that ecological crises are being created because humans cannot understand the intrinsic value of nonhumans and the interconnectedness of the natural world (Naess 95).

The ecological crisis is thus not only environmental, but also ethical and cultural. In modern industrial society, economic growth and material progress are more important than ecological responsibility. This has led to a growing shift from ecological harmony to environmental

exploitation and consumerism. Here, it is essential to enhance the awareness and moral sensitivity of caring for the environment.

Over the past few decades, environmental concerns have gained prominence among scholars, environmental activists and literary critics. Ecological awareness means knowledge of the interdependency of people and the environment and the moral duty to maintain ecological equilibrium. Literature is important for building such awareness; literary texts can reflect cultural values, moral attitudes, and the human nature relationship. Ecocriticism thus explores the interaction between literature and the environment and how literary texts reflect issues of ecological concern and ethical values for the environment (Glottfelty and Fromm xviii).

In the field of ecocritical research, the Ramayana has become an important epic in the context of its ecological wisdom. Forests, rivers, mountains, animals, and landscapes are not just physical places, but places of spiritual and moral significance. It is a view of the world in which there is coexistence, moderation, respect for nature and harmony between human beings and nonhuman beings. In today's climate crisis and

environmental degradation era, these insights are of great relevance.

1.2 Bibek Debroy's *Valmiki Ramayana* as an Ecological Text

The Ramayana is one of the most important epics of the South Asian traditions. The epic is also a treasure trove of ecological information on forests, rivers, mountains, animals, natural features, and more, aside from its spiritual significance. The nature in the epic is not a passive backdrop but a sacred and connected presence that is linked to cosmic and moral order.

Bibek Debroy's translation accentuates this ecological richness by describing forests, rivers, and animals in detail. Forests are recognized as sacred spaces of peace, ascetic practice and spiritual transformation.

Rivers are also depicted with reverence and spiritual implications. Rama pays his vows to the Ganga before going to forest life, and shows his reverence to nature, acknowledging both its beauty and power (Debroy, Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga 52). Likewise, the image of Chitrakuta is an illustration of the beauty of the environment and a human connection with nature (Debroy, Ayodhya Kanda, 94-95).

The epic also shows concern for nature by presenting animals and nonhuman beings in the epic. The *vanaras* and Jatayu represent ecological connections and the coexistence of all. The compassion and ethical respect for nonhuman life are illustrated by Rama's grief over the death of Jatayu (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sargas 67–68). The cooperation and ecological equality between Rama and the *vanara* community is also an alliance of different beings (Debroy, Kishkindha Kanda, Sargas 1–4).

Debroy's translation with its ecological philosophy is quite reminiscent of the principles of Deep Ecology, a philosophy that promotes respect for all forms of life and that calls for the rejection of anthropocentric domination. There is an emphasis throughout the story on simplicity, restraint, ecological morality, and harmonious coexistence, rather than material greed. This vision makes the reader think differently about today's attitude towards nature and emphasizes the need to establish a more sustainable relationship with the environment.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

With the advancement of modern society, people's materialism and consumerism have gradually intensified, promoting the use of natural resources. While science and politics

strive to solve the climate and biodiversity crisis, decisions in reference to the ethical and spiritual connection between humans and nature have been neglected in large part.

In this regard, the *Valmiki Ramayana* by Bibek Debroy is relevant as it views nature as sacred, interconnected, and intrinsically valuable. The epic embodies ecological awareness and a profound ecological concern, which stand in contrast to anthropocentric thinking and call for coexistence. Thus, this research investigates the role of the ecological philosophy of *Valmiki Ramayana* in the present environmental issues using the Deep Ecology approach.

1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Bibek Debroy's *Valmiki Ramayana* represent nature and ecological relationships?
2. What deep ecological concerns are reflected in the epic?
3. How does the narrative challenge anthropocentric attitudes and promote ecological consciousness?
4. How can the ecological vision of the *Valmiki Ramayana* contribute to

contemporary discussions on environmental crisis and sustainability?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To explore ecological consciousness and environmental ethics in Bibek Debroy's *Valmiki Ramayana*;
2. To analyze the representation of forests, rivers, animals, and natural landscapes through the theory of Deep Ecology;
3. To examine how the epic promotes ecological interconnectedness, ecological equality, and coexistence between humans and nature;
4. To connect the ecological philosophy of the *Valmiki Ramayana* with contemporary environmental crises such as climate change, deforestation, and ecological imbalance;
5. To contribute to ecocritical scholarship through a deep ecological interpretation of Bibek Debroy's *Valmiki Ramayana*.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is important in several aspects. It contributes to ecocritical scholarship by studying ecological consciousness in a significant South Asian epic, where Eastern philosophies have received comparatively

less attention than Western traditions. This research uses Deep Ecology to analyze the *Valmiki Ramayana* as it expands the study of the environment in the field of literature.

Debroy's ecological perspective is particularly pertinent in the era of climate change and environmental degradation.

Both the traditional readings and this reading emphasize religious aspects, but the latter also points to ecological values, including coexistence, restraint, compassion, and interconnectedness.

Lastly, the book illustrates the enduring significance of ancient literary narratives to current environmental issues. The message of the ecological philosophy of the *Valmiki Ramayana* is a counterpoint to the anthropocentric worldview and calls for more ethical and sustainable human interaction with the environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ecocriticism and Environmental Literature

In the late twentieth century, a new field called ecocriticism was developed, where the human-nature relationship was compromised. Glotfelty and Fromm describe ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship

between literature and the physical environment” (xviii) and see it as an interdisciplinary study of literature's portrayal of nature, environmental ethics, and the relationship between humans and the natural environment.

Ecocriticism emerged along with the global environmental crisis of the 1990s, and the authors began to challenge the notion that ecological crises are cultural and ethical issues that are influenced by human attitudes. In his book on environmental literature, Lawrence Buell stresses the need to acknowledge the interdependence of human beings and the natural world, and to cultivate ecological sensitivity through imaginative interaction with the environment (Buell 2).

Anthropocentrism is a concept that is strongly opposed by ecocriticism, as it is based on the perspective of giving significance only to human life. Ecocriticism is strongly opposed to anthropocentrism in favour of an ecocentric and biocentric point of view, which involves the intrinsic value of all life. Greg Garrard outlines some "ecocritical terms" (Garrard 5) he considers to be central to help critics "read through" texts to ecological concerns: wilderness, pollution, animals, apocalypse, and environmental justice.

Eastern philosophies, indigenous ecological knowledge, and classical religious texts such as the Ramayana have been added to the ecocritical studies that are no longer limited to Western traditions in recent years. In these texts, the ecological worldviews are based on living in harmony and on sacred relationships with nature, and therefore, ecocriticism is a useful approach to understanding environmental consciousness in different cultures.

2.2 Deep Ecology Theory

Arne Naess's 1973 proposal of Deep Ecology is one of the most influential of the environmental philosophies of ecology. Naess carved out two branches, shallow ecology and deep ecology, the former being concerned with "Pollution control and resource conservation for human use" and the latter concerned with "Fundamental change in human attitudes towards nature" (Naess 95). Biocentrism is one of the fundamental tenets of Deep Ecology, that all living things have intrinsic value apart from human use. Naess contends that man is not better than other life forms; every life form has an equal right to flourish in the ecological world (Naess, Ecology, Community and Lifestyle 166).

Devall and Sessions remind us that nature has a spiritual, ethical, and ecological value beyond its economic use, and that we must live in harmony with it, and with prudence and care for all forms of life (Devall and Sessions 70).

In addition, Deep Ecology challenges the Anthropocentric assumption of unlimited human rights over nature, which is the root cause of pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and so on.

The spiritual and ethical ideals of the philosophy are closely related to those of the Eastern traditions and texts, such as the *Valmiki Ramayana*, which depicts woods, rivers and animals as sacred. Therefore, Deep Ecology has a powerful analytical tool for the study of ecological consciousness and environmental ethics in literary works.

2.3 Previous Studies on the *Valmiki Ramayana* and Ecology

In recent decades, scholars have increasingly examined ecological dimensions within the *Valmiki Ramayana* through ecocritical and environmental perspectives. Many studies argue that the epic contains ecological wisdom, representing nature as sacred, interconnected, and morally significant. Several ecocritical studies interpret the landscape of the Ramayana as an active part

of the narrative rather than a passive background. Rama's exile into the forest represents a shift from political authority and material luxury toward simplicity and coexistence.

Characters such as Jatayu, Hanuman, and the *vanara* community symbolize cooperation, sacrifice, and ecological interconnectedness, suggesting a worldview grounded in coexistence rather than domination.

Scholars have also explored ecological philosophy within Hindu traditions. Hindu traditions often connect nature with moral duty, harmony, and ethical conduct. Rivers like the Ganga and forests like Dandakaranya are consistently represented as sacred entities deserving protection.

Ravana's ambition and misuse of power are often read symbolically as forms of ecological disruption, whereas Rama embodies restraint and respect for natural order. Recent studies have also connected the epic's ecological philosophy to climate change, pollution, and deforestation, offering alternative ethical perspectives for modern environmental challenges.

2.4 Research Gap

Existing ecocritical studies on the *Valmiki Ramayana* primarily focus on sacred

ecology, environmental ethics, and spiritual relationships with nature. Although scholars have examined forests, rivers, and animals within the epic, comparatively little research has specifically applied the framework of Deep Ecology to Bibek Debroy's translation. Previous studies also provided limited discussion of core ecological concepts such as ecological equality, the intrinsic value of nature, and systemic opposition to anthropocentrism.

Similarly, insufficient attention has been given to how the epic's ecological philosophy relates to contemporary environmental crises. Another limitation is the lack of a focused ecocritical analysis of Debroy's translation, despite its growing academic importance.

This study attempts to fill these gaps by analyzing Debroy's *Valmiki Ramayana* through Deep Ecology. It specifically examines ecological interconnectedness, ecological equality, and the intrinsic value of nonhuman life, while exploring how the epic's philosophy challenges anthropocentric attitudes and contributes to contemporary discussions on environmental ethics and sustainability.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Arne Naess and the Principles of Deep Ecology

The overall theoretical approach in this study is based on Deep Ecology, an environmental philosophy introduced by Arne Naess in 1973. Therefore, Deep Ecology distinguishes itself from shallow approaches that see environmental problems as technical issues, and that the cause of ecological destruction is anthropocentrism (Naess, Ecology, Community and Lifestyle 173).

One of the key principles of this framework is ecological interconnectedness, which refers to the interconnectedness of all life and the fact that what happens in one part of the system has an impact overall. In contrast, Naess considers that the excessive consumption and materialism of modern industrial society are causing an imbalance in ecological relationships, and argues for a return to simplicity, sustainability and harmony (Naess, Ecology, Community and Lifestyle 181). There are also spiritual and ethical aspects to Deep Ecology, as humans become aware of their moral and emotional connection with living things when they become aware of ecology. These principles offer a solid framework for the understanding of the *Valmiki Ramayana*, which is consistently described as a sacred

and morally significant forest, river, animal, and landscape, not one to be exploited.

3.2 Application of Theory to the Text

In the story, woods represent sacred ecological environments of simplicity and ecological balance. Rama's exile is a transition from material luxuries and living in harmony with nature, as shown in the Aranya Kanda, where sages, rivers, animals and humans live in a balanced ecosystem (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sarga 1).

The rivers and nature are also regarded as sacred. Rama offers prayers to the rivers before assuming the role of a forest dweller. Animals also represent ecological equality. The characters like Jatayu and the *vanara* community are seen as morally relevant actors in the ecological world. Rama is portrayed as a character who has demonstrated ethical respect towards nonhuman life through his grief for Jatayu's sacrifice (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sargas 67-68), and his association with the *vanaras*, which exemplifies the concept of cross-species cooperation and mutual responsibility (Debroy, Kishkindha Kanda, Sargas 1-4). Finally, using the lens of Deep Ecology, this study sees the *Valmiki Ramayana* as a piece that condemns anthropocentric exploitative attitudes and

advocates for environmental ethics, sustainability and harmony between humans and nature.

3.3 Deep Ecology and Dharmic Ecology: Points of Convergence and Tension

The philosophical foundation is solid with Arne Naess's Deep Ecology, while the secular, biocentric approach is somewhat problematic when reading the ancient Indian works and requires some tuning. Hindu traditions often connect nature with moral duty, harmony, and ethical conduct. The Ramayana does not compartmentalize spiritual sentiments from environmental concerns as is done in Western deep ecology. The ideas of *prakṛti* (nature as dynamic manifestation) and *dharma* (righteous conduct) help to present ecological balance as a philosophy, but also as an ethical practice (Shiva 45). Moreover, Naess' focus is on self-realization through ecological identification, while the epic incorporates that realization into action, asceticism, and interspecies reciprocity (Naess 95). Understanding these intersections and conflicts avoids theoretical intrusion and enables the text to vocalize its own cultural epistemology, so that it becomes more than just a means of supplementing ecocritical thinking with indigenous ecological thinking.

4. Methodology

The study uses a qualitative research design, with a combination of textual, interpretative, and ecocritical methods to examine the issues of ecological consciousness, environmental ethics, and representations of nature in the translation of the *Valmiki Ramayana* by Bibek Debroy in the context of Deep Ecology. The close text analysis is the main method for this research, which explores forests, rivers, animals, and ecological relationships in the epic. The Ayodhya, Aranya, and Kishkindha Kandas are especially discussed, where the interaction between humans and nature and the description of nature are most prevalent. Seeking to illustrate how nature serves as a space of spiritual and ecological significance, these episodes from Rama's forest exile, river veneration, interaction with sages, and interspecies relationships are explored ecocritically, as opposed to being used as narrative settings.

The study uses an interpretative approach, focusing on the symbolic and philosophical dimensions of the epic text and its critique of anthropocentric attitudes (greed and materialism), as well as its emphasis on living in harmony and keeping in mind the natural environment. The contrasts between

the symbol of the palace-based civilizations and the symbol of forest-based simplicity are analyzed to shed light on the text's underlying ecological philosophy. This is in keeping with the concept of ecocriticism that explores the connection between literature and the natural world (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). As such, the research follows the epic as an example of ecological ethics, sacred connection with nature, and systemic interconnectedness.

To study the passage selection, the study uses purposive sampling and to analyze the data, the study applies three steps of analysis which are (1) Identifying the ecological descriptors explicit and implicit in Debroy's translation, (2) mapping the ecological descriptors to the core Deep Ecology principles, (3) doing close reading analysis on the syntactic, lexical, and narrative choices that mediate ecological perception. The primary analysis is based on Debroy's translation, and secondary scholarship in Deep Ecology, environmental humanities and Hindu ecological philosophy. Two caveats are noted: Debroy's prose is deliberately designed to be accessible to the reader, rather than ritual or botanical, and the epic's overarching structure may be more of a dharma than a straight ecological one. All ecological readings, then, are read as cultural

ideologies, not as comprehensive environmental manifestos. These methodological parameters contribute to the theoretical application being textually grounded, historically aware and critically exact.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Representation of Nature in Bibek Debroy's *Valmiki Ramayana*

In the version of the Ramayana by Bibek Debroy, nature plays a significant role and is not just the setting for human activities. The forest, the river, the mountains, the animal and the landscape are all seen as having spiritual significance and being part of a wider cosmic system. The account is constantly about nature as sacred and living, not about it being owned, controlled, and exploited by humans. This representation is an expression of an ecocentric worldview, which involves a philosophy of coexistence, balance, and respect for nature.

The forest is one of the most vital ecological areas of the epic. Forests are not portrayed as the domain of danger and violence, but as a place of peace, asceticism, and harmony with nature. Rama's forest exile represents his rejection of material wealth and political power, and his focus on simplicity and harmony with nature. In the Aranya Kanda,

forests are portrayed as a living area where hermitages, flowering trees, rivers and wildlife all coexist in harmony. The forest scene is represented as a place where “many kinds of trees were in blossom and many birds pleasantly chirped” (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sarga 1). This description reinforces the image of the forest as an environment that is harmonious and alive. These passages imply that nature has its own value, even beyond its material value. In this sense, the narrative makes nature a character, an active presence, a moral force, not only as the backdrop to human activity but as a vital part of the epic's moral framework.

The portrayal of forests is in line with the ecocritical concepts of wilderness, which are defined as a place for ecological consciousness and moral reflection. Buell argues that environmental texts view nature not as a backdrop for human life but as an active presence that is related to human life (Buell 7). Likewise, forests of the *Valmiki Ramayana* are areas of spiritual training and moral instruction. Rama's life in the forest is one of humility, self-control and harmonization, not control of nature.

Rivers are also celebrated throughout the epic with spiritual meaning and reverence. Rivers represent purity, continuity, nutrition

and ecological relations. Rama bows down to the Ganga and takes blessings from the elements, showing respect for nature (Debroy, Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga 52). The description of the Chitrakuta further reinforces the ecological representation in the narration. Forests, rivers, trees, and wildlife are beautiful to Rama, and he is emotionally attached to the landscape. He calls Chitrakuta a land of peace where “many species of birds delight in their song”, and rivers flow with beauty amidst the forest land (Debroy, Ayodhya Kanda, Sargas 94-95). This description captures the human, emotional, and spiritual bond between humans and nature.

The other noteworthy ecological element of the epic is the coexistence of man and nonhuman. The morality and emotion of the story are actively lived by birds, animals, and other creatures. Jatayu's episode is a particular case of respect for nonhuman life. Rama shows compassion to Jatayu and pays him homage and respect as a sacrifice and treats him with dignity and emotional recognition (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sargas 67-68). In the same way, the friendship between Rama and the *vanaras* is an example of the cooperation and interdependence of different forms of life (Debroy, Kishkindha Kanda, Sargas 1–4).

Therefore, in Bibek Debroy's *Valmiki Ramayana*, nature is being depicted with great ecological sensitivity and environmental consciousness. The epic sees forests and rivers and mountains and animals as sacred and connected facets of life and advocates for ecological balance as vital for human spiritual health and environmental protection.

5.2 Ecological Consciousness

Bibek Debroy's translation of the *Valmiki Ramayana* is a work of great ecological awareness, which shows the utmost respect for forests, rivers, animals, plants and the natural landscapes. Ecological consciousness is the awareness of the interconnections among people and nature and the ethical obligation to maintain ecological balance. Throughout the epic, nature is treated as a vital and sacred reality associated with moral, spiritual, and ecological balance, promoting coexistence, restraint, and compassion akin to the principles of Deep Ecology.

Trees, rivers, animals, and forests are not shown as lesser beings created only for the benefit of humans. Instead, they engage in action with the ecological and moral world of the story. Rama's journey into the woods is an example of ecological humility and living

in harmony with the environment, not domination over it. In the Ayodhya kanda, Rama takes up forest exile happily and in moderation, harmonizing with nature (Debroy, Sarga 27, Ayodhya kanda).

Morally significant places are also given to the animals and birds within the story. The characters like Jatayu, Hanuman, and the *vanaras* represent loyalty, sacrifice and cooperation among humans and nonhumans. The episode of Jatayu is a manifestation of ecological sympathy and ethical respect for the nonhuman world. Rama doesn't just grieve for Jatayu the bird, but for a noble companion who sacrificed his life for justice. During Jatayu's death, Rama voices his emotions, "This is the king of vultures who sacrificed his life for my welfare" (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sargas 67-68). This statement is an expression of ethical respect and compassion towards nonhuman life. This kind of representation is in line with the ecological philosophy of Devall and Sessions, who say, "Everything living is of value in and of itself, apart from human interests" (68).

This partnership between Rama and the *vanara* community in the Kishkindha Kanda further reinforces the interconnectedness and coexistence of all life forms (Debroy,

Kishkindha Kanda, Sargas 1-4). The epic, then, questions, challenges, and defies the hierarchy of human vs. nonhuman beings, and stresses ecological equality, coexistence, and mutual responsibility.

There is also a spiritual connection between people and nature conveyed in the story. Rivers, mountains, forests and landscapes are continually depicted as sacred and morally significant. Humility and gratitude for nature (Debroy, Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga 52) are shown before crossing rivers and entering forest areas. Hindu traditions often connect nature with moral duty, harmony, and ethical conduct.

Nevertheless, the narrative consistently promotes respect, restraint, and coexistence with the natural world. Thus, the *Valmiki Ramayana* presents ecological consciousness as an essential part of ethical and spiritual life. Through its respectful portrayal of forests, rivers, animals, and landscapes, the epic promotes an ecological worldview grounded in coexistence, interconnectedness, and reverence for all forms of life.

5.3 Critique of Human Greed and Exploitation

One ecological aspect of Bibek Debroy's translation of the *Valmiki Ramayana* is its

critique of human greed, materialism and exploitative attitude towards nature. From the epic comes a persistent theme of destructive power driven by excessive ambition, attachment to power, and uncontrolled desire that disrupts moral, spiritual, and ecological balance. The ecological critique is still very relevant in today's world, with the intensification of environmental problems and challenges like climate change, deforestation, pollution and biodiversity loss due to industrialization, consumer culture and uncontrolled growth.

In modern industrial society, excessive consumption and exploitation of nature are driven by economic development and material comfort. Forests are being cleared for urbanization; rivers are being polluted by industrial processes; and wildlife habitats are under greater threat from human activities. Deep ecologists suggest that this environmental degradation is the result of anthropocentric thinking that sees humans as being better than nature and treats the environment as an object of use and abuse (Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* 173). *Valmiki Ramayana* firmly questions this view of the world, portraying nature as sacred, interdependent and morally important.

This ecological critique is reinforced by the contrast between forest life and the civilization centered around the palace in the epic. Luxury, political ambition, and attachment to material comfort are associated with imbalance and conflict, while forest life symbolizes simplicity, restraint, spiritual discipline and living in harmony with nature. Rama accepts exile as a rejection of material life and an embrace of ecological simplicity. Rama gives up the royal wealth and rests content in the forest, a sign of his balance between morals and nature, and material wealth (Debroy, *Ayodhya Kanda*, Sarga 27). This ecological symbolism is like the concept of Deep Ecology, which is about sustainability, minimalism and being ecologically responsible, not consumerism (Devall and Sessions 71).

The epic also takes on the critique of anthropocentrism by highlighting the dignity of nonhuman life. Forests, rivers, animals and landscapes are not resources for endless exploitation but are sacred and interconnected parts of life. Ravana's character can be interpreted symbolically as being of destructive ambition and domination. His deeds also illustrate an ecological imbalance due to excessive desire and overuse of power. He demands too much control and power, and, in the end, this

causes him suffering and destruction. Rama, on the other hand, symbolizes restraint, living side by side and his ethical duty towards nature.

As such, the *Valmiki Ramayana* not only depicts greed and exploitation as moral issues, but also as ecological hazards. The epic's juxtaposition of materialism and ecological harmony calls on people to find a more harmonious relationship with the natural world. This relationship should be respectful and sustainable, too.

5.4 Deep Ecological Concerns in the Text

In the context of Deep Ecology, Bibek Debroy's translation of the *Valmiki Ramayana* can be seen as addressing significant issues like ecological interconnectedness, ecological equality, the intrinsic value of nature, and coexistence between humans and nonhumans. Such concerns challenge anthropocentrism and promote an ecological worldview in which humans are part of nature.

The interrelatedness of life is one of the main deep ecological issues in the epic. Humans, forests, rivers, animals, mountains, and landscapes are depicted as reciprocally interdependent components of a whole ecosystem. A state of ecological imbalance is harmful to human welfare and will impact all

life. The thought is similar to Arne Naess' concept that humans are not divorced from nature, but rather a part of the whole (Naess 95). The balance of ecosystems, the moral and spiritual order, and ecological balance are repeatedly suggested by the epic.

Throughout the story, the reader is given many examples of cooperation between man and nature. Birds, animals, forests and natural forces are fully involved in the experiences and moral challenges faced by the human characters. Ecological cooperation and coexistence of different forms of life are particularly represented in the alliance of Rama and the *vanara* community in the Kishkindha Kanda (Debroy, Kishkindha Kanda, Sargas 1–4). Nonhumans are often depicted as morally relevant actors in the ecological world, instead of being lesser than human animals in existence simply for human consumption or pleasure.

The episodes of Jatayu in Aranya Kanda further reinforce the themes of ecological compassion and interconnectedness. When Jatayu tries to save Sita, he dies and Rama deeply mourns and respects and thanks him (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sargas 67–68). The image embodies a strong respect for the natural world, where all living things are

seen as having intrinsic worth beyond human use.

A major issue that also comes up in the epic is ecological equality. Forests, rivers, animals, birds, and landscapes are depicted as sacred and morally significant, not consumable resources. Before entering the forest life, Rama prays to the rivers, also in a humble and reverent way towards nature. Acknowledging spiritual reverence for nature and natural forces, before crossing the Ganga, Rama reverently bows down and seeks their safe passage (Debroy, Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga 52). This is a reminder moment to the deep ecological reality that humans are part of nature and need to live in harmony with it. Likewise, Chitrakuta and Dandakaranya are depicted as dynamic spiritual environmental realms that are linked with the principles of peace, contemplation and harmony.

There is also a criticism of greed, domination, and material-based civilization in the epic. Ravana's lust and misuse of power represent the imbalance of nature due to desire and anthropocentric ego. Rama's forest living, on the other hand, is characterized by his restraint, coexistence and ecological morality. These profound concerns are ecological, and the *Valmiki*

Ramayana suggests an alternative ecological vision that is about balance, coexistence and respect for all life forms.

5.5 Relevance to Modern Ecological Crisis

Bibek Debroy's translation of the *Valmiki Ramayana* is still very relevant in the milieu of ecological problems of today. Global ecological crises, such as climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, pollution, and water scarcity, are largely driven by over-industrialization, consumerism, and exploitative attitudes towards nature.

Confronting these challenges requires not only technical solutions but also ethical and cultural changes in human attitudes towards nature. The epic's ecological philosophy provides valuable ethical and ecological guidance for solving these issues.

In the *Valmiki Ramayana*, an exploitative attitude towards nature is challenged through the ideas of ecological balance, restraint, and living in harmony with nature. The theme of harmony between human beings and nature is repeated throughout the narrative, emphasizing its importance for maintaining moral and ecological balance.

In contrast, forests are portrayed as sacred ecological spaces in the *Valmiki Ramayana*, which represent peace, wisdom, spiritual

discipline and harmonious living. Forest areas like Chitrakuta and Dandakaranya represent ecological balance and not the wilderness open for exploitation. Respectful life in the forest is a sign of ecological humility and environmental ethics (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sarga 1).

The epic also has ecological significance in the context of the global water crisis. The rivers are personified as the giver of life and are sacred, worthy of respect and protection. Rama bows down to the Ganga before going into the forest life, acknowledging his humility and the spiritual relationship with nature (Debroy, Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga 52). This textual reverence dovetails with David Haberman's comments on the rivers in the Hindu narrative tradition, where they are treated as living beings and are considered as objects of religious devotion, which is also an ecological and ethical responsibility toward water systems (Haberman 91). These values are ecological and counter to present-day philosophies, which view rivers as commercial resources.

The epic also shows an awareness of the importance of biodiversity and ecological equality. The animals, birds, forests, and landscapes are depicted as ethical actors in the ecological realm. The characters like

Jatayu and the *vanara* community embody the harmony and interdependence of various forms of life (Debroy, Aranya Kanda, Sargas 67-68). The story is represented in such a way as to encourage the experience of compassion and respect for nonhuman living systems.

This epic is a part of an ancient culture, but the essence of its ecological philosophy is quite noteworthy for today's environmental debates that focus on sustainability, ecological ethics, and environmental responsibility. The *Valmiki Ramayana* proposes that the environmental crisis demands not just technological solutions but also ethical consciousness, spiritual duty, and a fundamental change in human attitudes towards nature. The epic's ecological outlook encourages coexistence, moderation, simplicity and harmony with nature, and it resonates with the environmental crisis of today's times.

6. Conclusion

This paper discussed the ecological crisis and deep ecological issues in *Valmiki Ramayana* with the help of the concept of Deep Ecology as discussed by Bibek Debroy. The analysis shows that nature is not a passive background object but a sacred, interrelated, and moral object in the epic. The forests, the rivers, the

mountains, the animals, and the landscapes are depicted with an ecological and ethical dimension and build a view of the world based on living together and environmental harmony.

The epic's message of restraint, modesty, and peaceful coexistence offers a cultural and ethical complement to technological and policy solutions. Moral change and renewed engagement with nature are essential for ecological sustainability.

Debroy's reading of the *Valmiki Ramayana* in the context of Deep Ecology serves as a link between Western environmental philosophy and indigenous South Asian ecological ethics. This structure can be extended in the future via comparative ecocritical analyses of the Mahabharata, Buddhist Jataka stories or regional Ramayana traditions. Pedagogical possibilities could also be discussed that bring classical ecological knowledge into the contemporary EE.

In the end, the epic's message for the modern reader is that ecological sustainability is not just a matter of technology. It is a cultural, ethical and spiritual obligation. Human well-being relies on restoring balance within the ecological community.

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