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### **Eco-consciousness in Shakya's *Soch* [Thought]**

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#### **Abstract**

*This article aims at analyzing thought-provoking essays collection, Soch [Thought] by Karna Shakya highlighting environmental issues and eco awareness found in it. So, the article investigates the ecological issues and the sense of consciousness to protect existing environment while conducting developmental and economic activities. The article analyses what ecological issues are used and how they prioritise the preservative mindset of the writer to protect environment in future. To address these objectives, ecocritical perspective is used mainly the idea of sustainable development. The significance of this study is to contribute to the reader to see the essay collection as a serious message to maintain the balance between economy and ecology. The paper concludes that Soch is full of positive thoughts to preserve ecology during economic activities. It paved the way towards eco-awareness through Nepali literature to address contemporary environmental issues faced by not only Nepal but the world.*

*Keywords:* environment, ecosystem, eco-consciousness, sustainable development, conservation

#### **Eco-message in Nepali Literature**

Portraying nature in the background and presenting internalized eco-consciousness are separate matters in literature. In the past nature was used to give background setting or to beautify the scene unlike contemporary Nepali literature that keeps nature or ecology in its centre with the message of preservation. *Soch* [Thought], published in 2074 is a collection of essays written by Karna Shakya that strongly raises the environmental issues and the concept of preservation.

This article has the main objectives to analyze the eco consciousness portrayed in the text and to find out if the awareness of this text be one of the solutions to solve present ecological problems. This paper is limited within ecological issues and excludes other subjects mentioned in it. It has used only three essays among nineteen for textual

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analysis. It will be significant to those who want to study literary text from eco-critical perspective; who want to study *Soch* and who wish to make people aware to preserve ecology through literature. Eco-critical perspective is used to analyze the text. It is based on content analysis; therefore, the literary work *Soch* is the primary source. Other electronic and printed materials such as journal article, books, and blogs related to environmental criticism function as secondary sources to analyze it from environmental perspective. Since the text is in Nepali language, transliteration and free translation are used to analyze the text.

Different critics have approached Shakyas's *Soch* from various perspectives. The essay collection is often read as the glimpse of the writer's positive thought. Reviewing the book, it is said that *Soch* is a kaleidoscope that displays the pattern of perception and thoughts. It helps us distinguish many faces of truth, empowering a sense of judgement and it increases the power of positive thinking (goodreads.com). Similarly, contemporary writer Jagadish Ghimire commenting on the same work says that it is one of those few books which he has studied from the beginning to the end in a single sitting. This book is a boon for those who understood only Kathmandu Valley as their world (*Soch* cover page). This is shown through Shakyas's wide experience. About the same work, Gunaraj Luitel says that this book is the sum of the experiences of a successful person. Moreover, Durganath Sharma states that *Soch* is the medicine to those who are fed up with and view the present context of Nepal from negative perspective; and remark that Nepal is finished and destroyed (cover page). Likewise, Ratna Books reviews the same work by saying that in this book the author has tried to explain the ultimate truth and vision of life with the help of his real-life experience (shopratnaonline.com). Furthermore, contemporary Nepali critic Govindaraj Bhattarai mentions that *Soch* includes many examples of destruction and disasters found out by the writer being naturalist, environmentalist and tourism specialist (Bhattarai 102). Most of these reviewers review this work highlighting positive thoughts found in it. Therefore, the researcher has tried to analyze the text from environmental perspective.

### **Eco-consciousness in Literature**

Eco-literature gives strong emphasis on ecology and the awareness to change cultural behavior in the world. Eco-awareness in literature can be studied from ecocritical perspective. Defining ecocriticism, Peter Barry mentions that according to Cheryll Glotfelty ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment (Barry 203). It is a postmodern concept developed in the decade of 1970s. "It explores the relationship between organisms and environment within the ecosystem as a whole. It broadens the view of life to include nonhuman life forms and the environment as a part of the global community (Chhetri). This view of interconnectedness between the humans and non-humans is started to be the focal

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point in Nepali literature. Eco-awareness is pervasive in Nepalese literature during the early years of the decade of 2000s. Some of the literature of this period directly expresses eco-awareness focusing on the preservation of degraded environment and nature concerning the future.

literature is one of the mediums to aware people to preserve ecology especially for the country like Nepal which is rich and renowned for its bio-diversity. Within its small area, it is enriched with the lowest land to highest peak, lowest valley to highest waterfall so many species of plants, birds, fishes, and reptile dwell in these areas. Such natural richness and diversified ecosystems function as both opportunity and challenge. Opportunity in the sense to promote tourism and challenge to maintain, preserve and sustain it for long. Thus, at present the necessity of having a close study of Nepalese literature and establishing its connection with ecology or environment is inevitable literary scenario (Wagle 1). The national policy and plan are also based on the goals of the sustainable development of Nepal and environment is one of the dimensions of it.

The research is about eco-critical analysis of *Soch*. Thus, this article aims to portray various types of environmental problems and sustainable development as the solution for those problems mentioned in the text. The Brundtland Commission, conveyed in 1983 by the UN General Assembly, defined sustainable development in 1987 as: "development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Sustainable development has three broad strands: environmental, economic and social, all of which feed into each other (Hadfield 2009). While conducting economic and social activities environment should be the matter of concern. Such concern is started to be found in various Nepali literary scenario, too. *Soch* is one of the examples of it.

Environment is taken from different perspective. One regards environment as the matter ethics whereas other regards the matter of economy or utilization. Generally, our surrounding is regarded as our environment. Environment is defined as "The environment includes not just the natural environment, but also the built environment.... The term 'environmentalism' was coined in 1923, to refer... to the idea that human behavior is largely a product of the social and physical conditions in which a person lives and develops"(Jamieson 1). He further states that while the scope of the environment is very broad, contemporary environmentalists are especially concerned to protect nature. He further mentions the holistic idea included in environmental slogan that "humans are part of nature". This slogan is used to imply in the 'original sin' that is environmental destruction which is the attempt to separate ourselves from nature (2-3). Here, Jamieson's idea indirectly connects us with human morality to protect the interconnection with nature in a healthy way.

Environmental ethics is the discipline that studies the moral relationship of human beings to the environment and also the value and moral status of environment and its non-human content (Nalukenge 99). Nalukenge further clarifies the way human interacts with the environment depends on the ethics of a particular individual or society. Moreover, the outcome of such interaction affects both quantity and quality of the environmental resources. Though he focuses for ethical dimension to utilize natural resources, economic dimension plays vital role. To preserve nature the balance between economy and ecology is the essential things. This well -balanced utilization is the sustainability of the resources. *Soch* dealing with environmental issues, highlights sustainable development.

### **Fusion of Development and Preservation in *Soch***

Karna Shakya is a Nepalese environmentalist, conservationist, hotel entrepreneur, writer and philanthropist. He is a forester by academic qualification. It could be one of the reasons to find ecological issues in his writing. *Soch* (2074 BS), the collection of essays, has established the connection of literature and ecology. It includes nineteen personal essays with various issues such as tourism, hotel management, cancer hospital, entrepreneurship, politics and environment along with personal experiences of the writer. It includes various eco messages like preservation of environment, eco-friendly developmental activities, sustainable development, establishment of national parks and so on. This eco message is seen in the essay "Sakaratomaka Sochako Shakti"[ Power of Positive Thought] through:

*jahaan jastosukai baasasthan bhaepani Tyahaanko haawaapaani,  
waataawaraNa, paaristhitika praNaaliko sadupayoga garna ra so sthaanako  
TulanaaTmak laabha lina sakiyo bhane junasukai thaaunmaa pani anukula  
waTawaraNa sirjanaa garna sakinchha. Yo prakritiko niyama ho; If it is possible  
to take comparative advantages of any place and utilize the climate, environment  
and ecosystem in the proper way, the favorable environment can be created at any  
place. It is the law of nature. (Shakya 7-8)*

This idea of using natural resources focuses for sustainable utilization and highlights the benefits of sensitive utilization because practically without using natural resources, it is difficult to sustain life. This idea focuses to use natural resources and take benefit from them wisely but not to misuse them.

In the past there was a slogan related to the green forest of Nepal as "Green forest is the wealth of Nepal". At that time the available natural resources were enough to sustain the life of Nepalese population. This slogan is presented in the essay "VanabasaTarpha" [Towards the Exile] as:

*janggalako upayogitaa nai kaath bechera rajaswa kamaaune bhanne neeTi raheko hudaa nepaalamaa ukhaanai thiyo 'hariyo vana nepaalako dhana'. Tyasabelaa jaiwika ra vividhataa, ojona leyara, sanrakshaNakaa anya vidha ra nikunjako awadhaaraNaa aaunu Ta kataa ho kataa nikai taaDhaako kuraa thiyo...yasakaa laagi swabhaawata maile nepaalako jaivika vividhataa baare vishad adhyayana garnuparne aawasyakataa bhayo;* At that time the concept of forest was to earn money by selling wood. For this there was a slogan 'Green Forest is the Wealth of Nepal'. The concept of biodiversity, ozone layer, preservation and National Park were not existed. Then I realized to have detail study on biodiversity of Nepal (Shakya 44)

This realization of the necessity to have detail study over biodiversity of Nepal by the writer is the eco consciousness. As a conscious citizen of Nepal everyone must know the sensitivity of such diversified ecological condition of own country. Not only the Department of Environment and Forestry but literary discipline can also address these issues. Such awareness can also be one of the solutions to minimize ecological problems. However, in the past such eco-awareness was not found. People concerned only to utilize and sell green forest and earn money. Natural resources available at that time were enough to support the living of Nepalese people. So, the concept of preservation was not needed. But the writer was aware about the means of preservation of biodiversity.

The essay mentions eco awareness as "*jaba sunsaan naangga parwaTamaa paryatakakaa TaanTee oirinchhan, butaabutyana ra ghansa sameTa ukheli khaanaa pakaana thaldachhan, jaba bhirapaakhaakaa jhaarapaaTaharu sameTa nashta bhai pahiro jaanchha...*" When tourists gather together in the barren hills, when bushes and small plants are used for firewood, there would be landslide. (Shakya 47). This consumerist approach of the humans shows the encroachment into bewilder area that resulted into landslide. In a long run, it harms sustainability of the natural resources and creates environmental degradation.

Focusing on preservation of environment and sustainable development, the essay further mentions:

*paisaa bhayo bhane hanumaanDhokaaharu banaauna sakinchha, singhadarabaaraharu nirmaaNa garna sakinchha ra nyaaTapouharu punarnirmaaNa garna sakinchha. Tara suligaDha nadeeko ghanaa janggala, himaalee bhegako kalilo ikosistamalaee pharkaauna sakinna;* Money can construct Hanumandhoka or Singhadarbar. It can reconstruct Nyatapou. But it

cannot make the dense forest of Suligadh River and the naïve ecosystem of Himalayan Region returned back. (Sakya 48)

This theme of ecological conservation from the text compares human made things and natural resources. If human constructed things destroyed, that could be reconstructed but when natural resources or ecosystem is damaged, that is much more difficult to regain. This awareness is required to protect ecosystem of any place.

Moreover, the eco awareness is seen in the essay through: "*Tyasaile kaathamandanau pharkepachhi tikauliko satta raaptee paariko janggalama raashtriyankunja sthapanaa garnuparne sujhava pesa garen*. So, when I returned back to Kathmandu, I suggested that a National Park should be established in the forest across the Rapti instead of Tikauli"; (Shakya 51). This concept of establishing National Park to preserve ecology is praiseworthy. Establishing National Park plays vital role in preserving forest, wild life as well ecosystem or environment. This sort of concept was new at that time when the writer suggested for this. But later on, that was followed and National Park was established. The essay further states "*jaba wanajanggala nasa hunchha, janggalali jiwajanTu pahilebandaa kama dekhinchhan, haameelaee chinTaa hunchha ani sanrakshaNako aawasyakataalaaee haamee bujhchhaun*"; When the forest is destroyed, when wild animals are decreased, just then we start to think and realize the necessity of preservation" (Shakya 53). This condition shows that when one encounters the environmental problem, then, starts to think seriously and realize the necessity of environmental preservation.

Generally hunting is regarded as unethical. From the ecological view, sometimes turns to be the essential to maintain the ecological balance. This theme is portrayed through:

*janggalamaa chaahinebandaa baDhee rukhaharu umriebhane nachaahine rukhaharule raamraa raamraa rukhaharulaai baDhne maukaa didainan bhanejasTai kunai janggalama baDhi janaawarharu bhae bhane kehee janaawarharuko sikaara nagarikana anya janaawarharukaa laagi raamro waasasthaanako byawasthaapana garna sakinna*; If unnecessary plants grow in the forest, it hampers the growth of useful plants. In the same way if some wild animals are more in number, without hunting them; sometimes, it is difficult to manage for other animals. (Shakya 53-54)

Preservation does not mean to increase the number of plants and animals. If necessary, to minimize some plants and animals is also the form of preservation. It refers to maintain the balance among the creatures or vegetation. This awareness can be applied through the department of forestry in Nepal. This eco awareness is the result of the writer's experience as a forester in Nepal.

The essayist writes in the essay "Swarga Kahi Haina Yahin Chha" [Heaven is Nowhere but Here]: "*yaTi saano mulukamaa yaTi dherai jaibik wividhataa. ke garnu haameele haamraa durlabha sampadaaharulaaee chinnai sakenau*; This small country is enriched with enough biodiversity. However, we failed to recognize our precious resources" (Shakya 83-84). This message compares Nepal with heaven. Nepal is enriched with various ecosystems. The lowest land, the highest peak, mountains, hills, plain land, river, lake, pond, wetland all these are the various ecosystems. All these make Nepal heaven like country and one of the beautiful countries in the world. But the failure to recognize such enrichment for natural resources make this country backward which is highlighted in the above -mentioned description. Moreover, the same essay focuses for the preservation of Annapurna Range as it is the mixture of nature and culture. If we fail to preserve this area on time, it will be much more difficult to handle in future. Here the writer seems much more aware about the future ecological disaster to be faced if not addressed properly on time. The writer also suggests that the concerned authorities should make well organized plan to initiate this preservative program so that sustainability can be maintained for natural resources.

The essay further mentions:

*jabasamma vanajanggala TaThaa praakriTika srotasaadhanaharu mero ho, haamro ho ra yasako sangrakhshaNabaata malaai, mero pariwaara ra samudaayalaai phaaidda pugchha bhanne vishwaasa janamaanasamaa jagaana sakidaina, Tyasabelaasamma sangrakshaNa sahi maanemaa saphala huna sakdaina*; Unless one fails to aware people that preservation is for him/her or the community, the preservation could not be successful in a real sense. (Shakya 89)

This actual purpose of preservation focuses that natural preservation is beneficial not only for an individual but for the entire community. As the effect of environmental degradation is the global one, preservation also requires collective eco awareness.

Likewise, the concept of development and preservation is discussed as:

*bikaasakai awadhaaraNaabaata sanrakshaNakaa dherai upaaya nikaalna sakinchha. jaanee najaanee pahaaDee ksheTrama 25/30 digree koNamaa Dhalkeko bhuparidhimaa pani barshe baalee lagaatera bhusanrakshaNa garirakheko dekhna sakinchha. Tyastaa sambedansheela bhuparidhiharumaa phalaphula, baagawaanee, chiya bagaana, jaDibutee jastaa wanajanggalamaa aadhaarita nagade baalee waa saalabasalee banaspati umaarna sakiyo bhane swata bhusamrakshaNa pani hunchha, bikaasa pani hunchha*; Many preservative measures can be found through the concept of development. In the sloppy land of hilly area, by farming annual crops, the

measures of preservation can be done. Fruits, tea, herbs related crops can be grown in such sensitive lands. This leads to the environmental conservation along with development. (Shakya 90)

This theme of eco-preservation shows the measures to protect sloppy land of hilly area by planting durable vegetation suitable for that land structure and climate. It enhances development activities and ecological preservation simultaneously. However, following the traditional agricultural system is pervasive in Nepal that results into natural disaster in many cases.

In the same way, eco consciousness is expressed through:

*paanee pare baaDhi aaune, paanee napare sukhkhaa laagne Tyastaa jaggaamaa warsako ekchoti makai phalaauna uneeharule jaTi kosisa garchhan, Tyahi anupaaTamaa uneeharule raamro kheteeyogya jaminama parishrama gareko bhae saayad sunai umaaridithe holaa. Tara Tyaso huna nasakda uneeharu garibiko rekhaamuni janawarako jasto jindageemaaTra baanchirahekaa chhainan, jaanera waa najaanera sampurNa pahadako bhaugolika sanrachanaama pani praTikul asara puryaairaakhekaa chhan. aTyanTa bhiraalaa paakhaaharumaa khetee garda maato kordai lagiyo bhane alisaTi warsaale pani Tyahako maato bagaaunchha ra bhookshaya garaaunchha;* The fields where there is the problem of flood if rains and problem of drought if no rain, people are farming maize once a year. If such hard labour is done in some arable land, they can grow much more maize. In hills, people are living not only the life like animals but knowingly or unknowingly damaging the geographical construction of hills. Their farming activities on those steep land resulted into erosion. (Sakya 95)

This farming detail from the text talks about the topography of hilly area. Hilly region occupied most of the land in Nepal. There could be problem of flood and draught to grow crops. Annual crops are grown there. The life of this region is full with difficulty as they have to do much more labour in farming. But their farming tradition indirectly damages the ecology, too. If so, it could be problematic. Therefore, the writer suggests to preserve the ecology of hilly region by applying preservative technology in farming.

Sustainable development is one of the themes found in *Soch*. The writer says "*digo vikaasa garne ho bhane paryaawaraNa ra arthaTanTra arthaT 'ikonomee' ra 'ikologi' ko bhaashaa eutai hunuparchha;* For sustainable development the language of economy and ecology must be same" (Shakya 118). This idea of development focuses for the balance between economic activities and ecological state. If one fails to maintain this balance, that creates disastrous results. Most of the economic activities done in Nepal are without considering its ecological effects. Road construction in hilly



areas is one of the examples of such unplanned activity where local people themselves function as engineer to design roads without knowing the topography of that area.

Furthermore, the concept of well-planned development can be seen in these lines from the text:

*bhuupayogitaakaa aadhaarama bhabisyamaa saharikaraNa baDhaaunda pahaadee kshetrako seemanta jagga juna krisheeyogya chhaina, Tyaha baahiree chakrapatha banaera sahareekaraNako yojanaabadda bikaasa gardai laiijaane, kaathamanaDaulaadee gretar kaathamanaDauko swarupa dina deerghakaalina yojana banaune, bhuupayogitaakaa aadharamaa aawaasa ksheTra, vyaapaarika ksheTra, harita ksheTra Tatha krishi ksheTrako awadhaaraNaa kaathamanaDau upaTyakaama TurunTai laagu garne;* The utilization of land should be prioritized in the process of urbanization. The useless marginal land should be utilized for ring road with well planned development. To make greater Kathmandu, long term plan must be made. Residential area, Industrial area, green area and agricultural area must be determined according to the utilization of land. (Shakya 105)

This concept shows the well-organized plan for development because different pillars of development are interrelated. For any sort of development preservation of environment must be the basic norm. It is necessary to follow the land ethics while conducting any developmental activities.

Finally, Nepal has set SDG Goals to be achieved within 2030. Environment is one of the dimensions of setting SDG Goals. However, there are loops and lacks while making policy, plan, and doing developmental activities. In such context, *Soch* is successful to point out the interconnection between environment and developmental activities. In this regard eco consciousness presented in this literary text can be one of the solutions to address present ecological problems and make people aware about the possible consequences from them.

### **Conclusion**

In short, *Soch* by Karna Shakya highlights the preservation of environment and natural resources. It points out various environmental problems like flood, deforestation, ozone layer depletion, extinction of endanger creatures and vegetation and so on. However, it prioritizes the wise utilization of natural resources rather than eco-centric perspective. The text focuses for sustainable development of natural resources while conducting developmental activities. To solve various environmental problems and lead towards prosperity, economy and ecology must be balanced while

making the policy for ecofriendly developmental activities as environment is one of the dimensions of sustainable development.

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