

Tribhuvan University

Human-Nature Bond: An Eco-psychological Appeal in Kamal Rijal's *Deep Quest*

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Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

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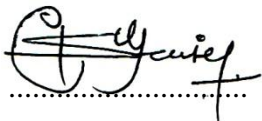
Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

January 2025

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I hereby, as the candidate of the degree for the Master of Arts in English, declare that this project titled " Human-Nature Bond: An Eco-psychological Appeal in Kamal Rijal's *Deep Quest* " submitted at Central Department of English, T.U. is an authentic and original record of my work carried out under the scholarly guidance of Associate Prof. Anju Gupta, PhD. I have not submitted the work elsewhere for any other degree. I have neither taken any assistance from Artificial Intelligence (AI) nor plagiarized any content to my knowledge. If the authorities find any breach in the ethical issues of this work, I shall be held fully responsible for the breach. My supervisor and the evaluation committee has guided me only through the academic and administrative process. I understand the meaning, academic and legal implications of this statement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shiva Gaire', written over a horizontal dotted line.

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Mr. Shiva Gaire has prepared the thesis entitled “Human-Nature Bond: An Eco-psychological Appeal in Kamal Rijal’s *Deep Quest*” under my supervision and guidance. I forwarded this thesis for examination and approval as per regular procedure for the Master’s Degree in English.



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### Letter of Approval

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Human-Nature Bond: An Eco-psychological Appeal in Kamal Rijal’s *Deep Quest*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Shiva Gaire has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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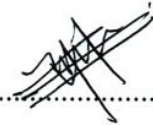
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Shiva Gaire

## Human-Nature Bond: An Eco-psychological Appeal in Kamal Rijal's *Deep Quest*

### Abstract

*This paper explores intricate relationship between human and nature in Kamal Rijal's Deep Quest highlighting how cultural values, social interactions, and technology shape ecological consciousness. The protagonist, Subhadra, travels on an incredible trip throughout several planets, experiencing ecological problems that resemble real world challenges such as deforestation, pollution, and resource exploitation. Through his experiences, the narratives illustrate how human actions directly impact environmental stability, emphasizing the interconnectedness of social, economic, and ecological systems. Based on Daniel Stokols's Environmental Psychology, the study shows that sustainability can be achieved by combining cultural, political, and social reforms with technological solutions. The significance of observing and learning in fostering a deeper connection to nature is focused, advocating for environmental education as a tool for promoting ecological balance. The loss of Subhadra's friend Sukarma symbolizes a decline of societal values, reinforcing ideas that good governance and ethical conduct are vital for preserving the environment. Furthermore, the study argues for a collaborative approach to addressing global environmental issues, reflecting the urgent need for a harmonious relationship between humanity and natural world. This study advances our understanding of human nature relationship and critical role of environmental consciousness in developing a sustainable future.*

**Keywords:** Ecological Consciousness, Environmental psychology, Cultural Values, Sustainability, Human-Nature Interconnectedness

Kamal Rijal's *Deep Quest* presents a vivid picture of how place attachment, cultural values, social interaction, technological mediation, social ecology, and environmental upheavals shape human behavior and its impact on natural world. By witnessing and learning these interactions, as shown by Subhadra's journey from Dwakar River to Dhurvalook. The story emphasizes the importance of social accountability and ecological awareness to achieve sustainability. Based on this study of human nature relationship, it becomes clear that ecological awareness needs to go beyond individual activities to include broader societal shifts. In *Deep Quest* Rijal demonstrates the way communities, not only just people, play the crucial role in solving environmental challenges. Subhadra's interactions with many planets highlight the value of collative responsibility, as celestial leaders convene interplanetary forums to address climate change and environmental damage. Central to Kamal Rijal's *Deep Quest* is the issue of intricate human nature relation. It identifies human actions influenced by cultural values, social interaction, and technology that contribute to addressing ecological crisis. The study emphasizes the importance of observation, learning, and collective actions in restoring environmental balance and fostering sustainable coexistence with the natural world. Furthermore, the novel proposes that, the technological innovations need to be properly integrated into environmental practices, so that they assist rather than they harm nature's integrity. Through his story, Rijal advocates for a balanced relationship in which human progress in technology supports the preservation of natural ecosystems, focusing that equitable prospect are achieved when communities, culture, and technologies collaborate to restore and protect the environment.

Kamal Rijal, who was born in Salmetar, Gumdi-7, Dhading, on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015 A.D. from Jibamaya Rijal and Homnath Rijal. He has been writing on

spirituality for a long time and is considered an exponential writer. He has been writing on the genres of fiction and non-fiction. One of Rijal's works, *Darshan Bhitra Ko Darshan* has been included in PhD curriculum in the department of philosophy at far-western university. He has worked formerly as the chief Editor of *Gorkhapatra Daily* and *Madhupark* literary monthly. Rijal is a freelance Journalist at the moment and writes for various papers and online portals.

His first novel *Sukarma* has received acclaim worldwide. This novel was published in 2069 B.S. and has received "Kumar Saraswati Excellent Literature Award" in 2070. Later, Nepal Pragya Pratisthan, a prominent publishing house published the very novel in Hindi edition. These days, we can find its English Edition with the access from Sahitya Post publication.

Except writing, he has been taking responsibility on dozens of social institutions from different positions but prefers to call himself a spiritual student. He says that he cannot go beyond the field of literature and spirituality. About six years earlier, he suffered from brain stroke, so he took a break from writing. For two months, he was under coma and suffered from paralysis but still he survived miraculously. Despite all these adverse circumstances in his health, he recovered afterwards and again started to contribute in literature and spirituality.

He says, "Writing is my interest, also religion and Karma. Though writing doesn't give economic benefit, it gives self-satisfaction and peace within one's mind. So, one should write until one reach to death bed. If one is not allowed to write, then God can take him/her away right now. If not, one should get opportunity to write until cremation" (Interview). This is his prayer and challenge to God. Let's wish that God will hear his prayers and fulfill his wishes so that society will get chance to smell and taste the sweet fragrance of such literary figures and their works.

Dhurvahari Adhikari observes, “Kamal Rijal is a person who knows how to delve into the areas of literature consciously along with expert knowledge of Eastern philosophy in modesty manner. He has been meticulously abled to travel on the area of literature in an open sky” (Adhikari “*Pritha’s* Blurb”).

Moreover, Kamal Rijal has a very imaginative power that makes us surprise. His creative writing makes his text more credible. Punnya Prasad Prasai notes that “Rijal has an imaginative time machine that leads to the dimension of creative thinking and attached with the power of universe” (Prasai *Pritha’s* “blurb”). He has published almost three thousand articles, novels, and reviews on spirituality as well.

Likewise, “Kamal Rijal is not only well known for his name Kamal Rijal. He is also a son of Hindu priest and he himself is a profound Nepali journalist and spiritual follower. He has been voraciously heading to eliminate darkness of the universe with the tune of knowledge” (Lamsal “Interview”).

Subhadra, the protagonist of the novel, sets out to find his friend Sukarma, who has gone missing from Dwaraka some five thousand years ago. In search for his friend, he searches every nook and corner of the Earth and moves to the outer space. He visits places from Chandralok to the Naksatralok, travelling through planets like Mangal, Budha, Brihaspati, Sukra and Shani, finally to search the land of the Saptarshis, moving past several black holes. Though he finds his friend in Saptarshislok, he fails to convince him to return home. Instead, Sukarma proposes to bring all the settlers of the Earth to the space itself.

Together with his friend, the protagonist visits Dhurvalok to find a way to bring his people there. Dhurva, the master of Dhurvalok, informs that the path had already been carved, but had been covered by grass for want to travelers. He also suggests

them a method to excavate it and sends them back to earth from Dhurvalok. From there, the protagonist comes back to earth and spreads the world.

The novel basically revolves around three characters. One of them, Sukarma has gone missing. Beside that, he has no other role in the story. Yet, he is in a central role. Another character, Sudarshan, takes interest in the loss, and besides that, he has no other role to play. Nonetheless, he is the one who drags the subject matter of the novel across the whole of the universe and brings it to the reader's table. The third character, Subhadra, is one who has set out to find his lost friend. In the mission, he has not only travelled through the Earth but also has rummaged the entire space, passing even through black holes to reach the land of the Saptarshis and finally Dhurvalok. Other characters are transitory. They come and go as and when required by the context.

Characters journey to and extremely lengthy adventure traveling several planets and diverse parts of the galaxy, including water, clouds, and thunder. The black hole is mentioned, along with the discussions about the mysteries of the universe, particularly the planets in the solar system. As the examine the past, consider the present and provide insight into the future, the teaching of the Vedic age throughout the course of several years are opposed to dushkarma. Enthusiastic endeavours come together to support the goal of freedom from the cycle of birth and death and to improve the well-being of all living things.

Once the Kali Yuga begins, the toxins and pollution that start to surface on earth are the only villains. The quest is the result of a sincere desire of to locate the environmental problems in order to stop the chaotic and painful sufferings that began on earth with the unset of the ominous time. At the end of the novel, the finding of Sukarma, who is represented as the proven righteous deed ensuring sustenance of the

earth signals the beginning of the understanding that issues and problems should be resolved to the very end rather than to overwhelm people.

Rijal's *Deep Quest* was originally published in Nepali language as *Sukarma* in 2012. Later translated into English by Mahesh Paudyal, *Deep Quest* apparently seeks a wider community of readers, including those beyond Nepal. Many academicians, critics and writers have attempted to make a descriptive and comparative study of this novel from other different perspectives. Professor P. Kharel, in his article *A Rare Literary Ride*, states:

*Deep Quest* represents a finely sculpted fiction embracing a literary genre rarely dwelled upon. The well-crafted story has settings not entirely unfamiliar as far as their environs and episodes are concerned. This is particularly so to the denizens of those parts of the world whose legacy evolves from the origin and evolution of the cultures of the Himwatkhanda that stretches from the Himalayas to much of the present-day South Asia and beyond. (*The Rising Nepal* Para 6)

He stresses the noticeable locales and events in the story, especially for a person associated with the culture and geographical legacy of the Himwatkhanda region. Kharal indicates *Deep Quest's* originality, calling it as a rare literary production that delves into subjects that are generally missed in literature.

The skillfully developed narrative unfolds in settings that have been familiar within seven continents along with the constellation of the universe. Similarly, critic Mahesh Paudyal talks about ancient Hindu astrological system which shapes the entire novel as a part of august project. He points out:

This text will require to equip themselves with the basic knowledge of the ancient Hindu astrological system, the shape of the universe and the

composition of the outer space. The fiction assumes that readers have the primary knowledge of the ancient scriptures that have heavenly bodies as character, and they are featured in several mythical stories. Ancient space science, including the idea of Pushpak Biman, the mythical version of a modern-day aircraft has been employed in the narratives. (10-11)

Thus, to grasp the clear vision of the text, we need to know about Hindu Mythological narratives. Readers need to have basic ideas of universe including heavenly bodies as characters which have been evolved since mythical narratives.

Furthermore, the novel breaks the traditional false assumption on the basis of religious metaphor. It tries to seek the development of religious narratives through the structure of ecological perspective. Eco-system itself as a scientific religious odyssey so in this sense Modanath Prashrit asserts that “It can play the role of a catalyst to make life worthwhile by tearing through the countless pretenses in the name of religion and following the path of truth” (*Sukarma's role*). Prashrit highlights that the character Sukarma is a transforming force, encouraging people to confront fallacies and accept the sincerity. Through promoting for the pursuit of truth, Sukarma helps people live lives of purpose and its true nature.

Aesthetic of this novel is the linear plot structured which has been beautifully crafted. There is no confusion and objection to understand it. We enjoy reading the text. Shiva Parsad Bhattraai says, “The novel has become very powerful with clear narration, simple, easy and effective style, interesting description, exciting self-imagination and philosophical thoughts” (*Gorkhapatra* np). So, simplicity in presenting the ideas makes it more balanced and credible to the literary piece.

Nirmal kumar Acharya conducted an analysis of the novel, aiming to identify allegorical satire pertaining to political, social, and religious dimension. The synthesis of the plot and characters imparts a distinct and profound message to the audience. According to Acharya, “Sukarma holds not only a singular interpretation but encompasses a specific significance in scientific calculations” (4). Acharya holds a significant status in his review of the novel exploring the allegorical satire with reference to socio-political and religious context.

Rijal’s novel has garnered diverse reviews from critic, yet there is a notable absence of research dedicated to exploring its relationship with eco-criticism, examining its application in literature, and delving into the interplay between human consciousness and environment upheaval. Consequently, my analysis will center on the text through the lens of ecological theory.

The study will incorporate diverse qualitative scholarly perspectives, examining the contribution and viewpoints of various scholars. Information will be sourced from primary and secondary outlets, including books, journal articles, and electronic resource. The study will comprise a close reading of the primary text. For the purpose, ideas forwarded by environmental theorist Daniel Stokols will be used to develop the theoretical tool for the analysis, as the ideas he has developed in his work “Environmental Psychology” (1978) which explains the relationship between discrete environmental stimuli and human response.

The early intellectual underpinnings of ecocriticism were laid by eighteenth and nineteenth century authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and William Wordsworth who highlighted the interdependence of human and nature. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) marks the entry of ecocritical issue in literature that is the harmful impact of excessive use of pesticides in farming to human and

natural environment. Her text joined science, literature and activism. Along with her text, twentieth century witnessed growing awareness of environmental consciousness. The same period also witnessed introduction of feminist and philosophical perspectives on ecocriticism. The term ecocriticism was first coined by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” in 1978. There are two waves of ecocriticism as identified by Lawrence Buell. The first wave (1980s-1990s) ecocritics focused on nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction . . . Here, environment effectively means natural environment (Buell qtd. in Mishra 168). The second wave ecocriticism (2000s) expanded to include urban ecologies, postcolonial perspectives, and environmental justice. The second wave ecocritics inclined towards environmental justice issues and a ‘social ecocriticism’ that takes urban landscape as seriously as ‘natural landscape’ (Buell qtd. in Mishra 168). This wave also engaged with postmodernism, ecofeminism, and animal studies. Contemporary ecocriticism includes global, intersectional, and interdisciplinary approaches. It also addresses climate change, Anthropocene discourse, and non-human agency.

The first person to coin the term “ecocriticism” was William Rueckert. He used the term ecocriticism in 1978 in an essay entitled *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* with the intention of focusing on “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. The originality of Rueckert’s ecocriticism “lies in locating the practices surrounding literature to the ecological web” (Habeb and Ms. Habeb 505).

The decade of 1990 saw the publication two important works on ecocriticism. In 1996, Cherryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm brought forth a volume titled *The Ecocriticism Reader*. In the same year, Lawrence Buell published *The Environmental*

*Imagination*. Buell defines ecocriticism as “a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” (430). His definition on ecocriticism involves interdisciplinary approaches to analyze environment as represented in the works of literature. Cherryl Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” which is one of the well-known definitions that emerged in the 1990s (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). In the same volume, Scott Slovic defines ecocriticism as “the study of explicitly environmental texts from any scholarly approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text, even texts that seem, at first glance, oblivious of the nonhuman world” (351). Definition provided by Glotfelty shows that she emphasizes on the larger environmental context of literature and others forms of human expression. According to Slovic, ecocriticism is a versatile and open field that can easily blend various critical approaches to uncover the ecological significance of all form of human expression, from high to popular culture.

Camilo Gomides explains the concept of ecocriticism as “the field of enquiry that analyzes and promotes works of art which rises moral question about human interaction with nature, while also motivating audience to live within a limit that will be blinding over generations” (16). She argues that on recent times, we need a narrower, and more precise methodology for the field.

The definition of ecocriticism has been extended by Jonathan Bate from the academic sphere to connect with larger audiences and movements for change. In 1997 interview, Bate says “If ecocriticism is to lead to a serious rethinking of the relations between humankind and the environment, it has got to operate within the language of intellectual enquiry as well as the practical getting your green welly boots on. . . All

revolutions need an intellectual arm as well as the people out there on the ground, taking the risks” (Newman 2). The renowned ecocritic Bate highlights two important aspects of ecocriticism; the first aspect of ecocriticism refers to the influence of literature or culture on nature and the second aspect explores the relation between the human and nature, by analyzing the literary works from an ecological perspective (Bate qtd. in Banerjee 4-5). Sandip Kumar Mishra in his scholarly work defines ecocriticism as “an earth centric approach to literary studies which promotes the understanding of who we are, where we stand, [and] how should behave with our mother nature” (169).

Since the late 1960s, Environmental psychology has been acknowledged as a branch of psychology, making it a relatively new area of study. In the first half of the twentieth century, Hellpach was believed to be the first academics to use the term ‘environmental psychology’. He investigated the effects of several environmental stimuli on human behaviors and activities. His subsequent research also examined urban issues including overstimulation, crowding, and he made distinction between various types of environments. Most people consider Brunswik and Lewin to be the ‘founding fathers’ of environmental psychology. Many subsequent research on human-environment interactions were influenced by their theories, which included interplay between psychological processes and the physical environment as well as the study of human conduct in real-life settings rather than artificial ones.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, when environmental psychology was just getting started, a lot of focus was placed on how the built environment, that is, architecture, technology, and engineering affected human behavior and well-being. So, the focus of environmental psychology was towards ‘architectural’ psychology with the goal of designing structures that support behavioral processes. Also, the

emphasis of environmental psychology was towards 'green' psychology in the late 1960s with the increase of people's awareness on environmental issues and problems. This led to research on environmental concerns, that is, how human activity affects the biophysical environment negatively and how to understand and modify these impacts, as well as how these humans caused problems (such as pollution and noise) affect people's health and life. In the 1970s, the discipline expanded to address issues like energy supply and demand as well as risk associated with increasing energy technologies. In the 1980s onwards, the field again broadened with the inclusion of issues like promoting conservation behavior and maintaining relationships between consumer attitudes and behaviors. Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, environmental psychology embraced global challenges focusing on environmental sustainability. In fact, it has been proposed that environmental psychology has been progressively transformed into a 'psychology of sustainability' over the past decades.

Linda Steg, Agnes E. van den Berg, and Judith I.M. de Groot define environmental psychology as "[T]he discipline that studies the interplay between individuals and their built and natural environment. This means that environmental psychology examines the influence of the environment on human experiences, behavior and well-being, as well as the influence of individuals on the environment" (2). Similarly, Daniel Stokols and Irwin Altman conceptualize environmental psychology as "[T]he study of human behavior and well-being in relation to the sociophysical environment" (135). Stokols's work has significantly influenced the evolution of environmental psychology, particularly in its application to real-world problems. His emphasis on the transactional/reciprocal nature of human-environment interaction, his focus on both natural and built environmental, social ecological dimension, environmental stressors, environmental sustainability and its psychological impacts, his instrumental

view on people-environment relation have shaped the field of environmental psychology inspiring researchers and practitioners to adopt a broader, more integrated approach to understanding human-environment relationship. Today, his frameworks continue to carry research and practice in areas like urban planning, public health and environmental sustainability. Due to the presence of eco-psychological appeal and environmental psychological essence in Kamal Rijal's *Deep Quest*, this study adopts the viewpoints and perspectives of Daniel Stokols to analyze the text on the basis of environmental psychology.

Stokols's approach is rooted in environmental psychology. His concept of "environmental psychology" that is "best represented as part of an emerging interdisciplinary field of environment and behavior, or human-environment relations" (255) can be applied to Rijal's *Deep Quest* by analyzing how the characters perceive and respond to their natural and built environments. By applying Stokols's "environmental psychology" framework, *Deep Quest* can be read as a narrative that not only highlights ecological concerns but also reflects on the profound psychological and behavioral dynamics of human-environment interactions.

Stokols's concept of "behavior-environment congruence" which emphasizes on "designing environments that are maximally supportive of users' goals and activities" (257) provides a compelling framework for analyzing *Deep Quest* in how the natural and constructed environments are presented and whether they align with the characters' goals such as survival, self-discovery, or ecological restoration and how the environmental degradation in the story creates a mismatch or incongruence between behavior and environment.

Analyzing Rijal's *Deep Quest* through the lens of Stokols's concept of "perceived control over the environment" (256) provides a basis to explore how the

perception of agency shapes human behavior and psychological well-being. His idea that focuses on the individual's sense of control over their surroundings significantly affects their ability to act freely and maintain autonomy. Applying this to *Deep Quest* will help to explore the themes of ecological or existential struggles faced by the protagonist and other characters in finding their lost friend Sukarma as the novel involves a metaphorical or literal journey, exploring how environments of different planets are navigated can parallel how control over such spaces is perceived.

Stokols's "instrumental view" of people-environment relations which "views the physical environment as a means for achieving important behavioral and economic goals" (642) will be utilized to analyze Rijal's *Deep Quest* on the basis of characters' observation of oceans, mountains, grasslands, forest and terrains, and how these environments serve as a means to achieve personal growth, survival, or economic prosperity. It also helps to explore the ethical implications of treating the environment instrumentally while balancing personal and communal needs. The physical environments also symbolize internal struggles or psychological quests. Stokols's "instrumental view" can be extended to examine how environment aids in achieving emotional or existential clarity, aligning with behavioral goals beyond just material success.

The "socio-ecological perspective" of Stokols that "emphasizes the integration of person-focused and environment-focused strategies to enhance individual and collective well-being" (15) will be useful to analyze *Deep Quest* in terms of how the characters' physical and mental health are influenced by their environment. It also helps to analyze how the novel portrays the environment not just as a setting but as a determinant of well-being, highlighting how ecological conditions (pollution, climate change, resource scarcity) impact individual and collective health. Also, how the

characters like Subhadra and others engage in efforts to restore harmony between themselves and their environment by engaging in a long journey to find Sukarma.

Stokols's concept of "environmental stressors like noise, heat, pollution and high density" that creates negative "behavioral and health consequences" (272) will be applied to analyze *Deep Quest* in multidimensional ways. This will be useful to analyze how the characters' struggling in harsh environments, be it polluted landscapes, extreme temperature, overcrowded urban settings or stress-inducing conditions impact the characters' physical and mental well-being. Environmental stressors often serve as metaphors for deeper social and existential crises. So, his framework helps to analyze how *Deep Quest* uses elements like noise, pollution and population growth to symbolize societal collapse, alienation, and the characters' internal turmoil. Also, using Stokols's framework, *Deep Quest* can be read as a commentary on how unchecked environmental stressors affect individual health, societal dynamics and human-environment relationships and in the same line, prompts collective action for change.

Stokols's insight on "environmental assessment" with its emphasis on 'evaluating the sustainability of the environment' (266) allows for the exploration of *Deep Quest* in the light of how characters in the novel perceive and respond to their respective surroundings. Also, how the protagonist Subhadra along with other characters evaluate the natural and built-environment of various planets, ecological or environmental consciousness in various planets, thereby embodying Stokols's idea of environmental assessment. The novel also can be viewed as a call to action, using its narrative to highlight the need for environmental assessment and sustainable practices that will ensure future generations. This aligns with Stokols's goal of promoting proactive strategies to address ecological challenges.

Natural environment provides a mental well-being thereby fostering a deep connection with nature. Natural surroundings help us to reduce stress, boost mood and improve general mental health. In *Deep Quest*, the protagonist of the novel experiences:

The village that near to the confluence of the river and the sea looked extremely beautiful. The fresh water, the attractive garden, and verdantly growing fruits seemingly outwitted heaven. The people of stout builds, round faces fair complexion, attractive postures and modest ways appeared like angels. Some of them ran toward the village on seeing me. I did not know why they did so, but in no time around twenty villagers showed up. They receive me and joyfully escorted toward their village. Their hospitality made me forget both fatigue and hunger in no time. (45)

Wherever natural and ecological system is balanced, there is always progressive human civilization. Likewise, Daniel Stokols states that, “[In environmental psychology], psychologist turned their attention to the study of behavior in relation to the built and natural environment” (Stokols 256). He highlights the importance of studying these interactions to a better issue of well-being and environmental design. The combination of natural environment and mental well-being is essential for human happiness.

The serene village in *Deep Quest* illustrates how nature can heal and uplift the spirit. Daniel Stokols approach emphasizes the necessity of understanding the connection between our surrounding and our behavior, forcing for design that promote mental and emotional well beings. This indicates the need of bringing natural components into our environments to improve our overall wellbeing.

Cultural values and traditions also play the great role to establish human and nature relationship and advocates for the integrating of these factors into environmental psychology. Cultural values and traditions influence the way communities engage with their surroundings and guide the ceremonies, custom, and belief that promote respect and responsible management of nature, so maintaining the continuation of this connection along generations. In *Deep Quest*:

The village surrounded by thick forests and high mounting in all its sides was the center of commercial activities in the region those days. Dominated mostly by the indigenous people of Aryan descent, the place was also quite in culture. They frequently had cultural celebrations. People sang, danced, and made merry for weeks. The celebrations were attended by everyone from the old to the young ones. Youngsters of marriageable age used to pick their life partners from such fairs. (53)

In the above lines, ecological psychology recognizes the influence and cultural values and traditions on human interactions with the natural world, and it advocates for the integration with these cultural elements into environmental activities. Blending cultural beliefs and traditions into environmental activities is essential for establishing profound and impactful relationship between individuals and the natural environment. Stokols explores that “to the extent that personal and cultural mediators of human response to the environment can be identified, it may be possible to develop criteria for designing environments that are maximally supportive of users goals and activities” (Stokols 257). Combination of cultural values and traditions into environmental practices not only strengthens the bond between people and nature, but also improves their effectiveness, matching with Stokols’s view of “behavior-

environment congruence” which depicts that human and cultural values tend to save the environment as per their personal and cultural needs.

Place attachment is important in maintaining human-nature relation because it fosters emotional ties that motivate people to safeguard and love places of natural beauty. The affective bond frequently results in heightened initiatives in preservation, as individuals are more willing to participate in actions that protect and sustain the natural environments, they have a strong attachment too. In search of Sukarma, Subhadra and his team reach Brihaspatilok. They get intimate with nature and its purity, “There were gardens flanking the room from two sides, and they had flower and fruit trees of various species growing verdantly. We could see playgrounds at places, and many pools of fresh water could be seen here and there. There also were gymnasium and swings in the premises. The house was wide, so was the strolling lot. Every place our eyes turned to looked extremely brilliant” (150). The pathway is fairly wide and clean. One would never be done with seeing and wandering around. It was a sort of wonder too hard to differentiate whether it was magic or reality.

Here they become obsessed and enjoying with the natural resources within this planet. It was quite different from others constellation that they had already visited, and its premises was a mesmerizing one; people are cultured and have high values. The security system was based on morality and legal system. Emotionally they forget their past sufferings while they enjoy the place. In Environmental psychology Stokols explores that “increasing attention has been paid to the importance of psychological or “perceived” control over the environment and behavioral freedom as determinants of human well-being” (256). Having control over one’s environment is necessary for psychological wellbeing, and it reduces stress and increases independence. People feel more satisfied and have better mental health when they believe they have control over

their environment. Behavioral freedom in a setting increases self-efficiency and overall pleasure.

Behavioral scenarios have a tremendous impact on human activities and happiness, highlights the importance to foster situations that promote appalling and meaningful experiences with nature. It helps to make systematic rules on ship, space, object, and social norms that together reinforce how people behave in a specific environment. Park, office, and public spot (*Chautara*), farms are examples of behavioral setting because these places are organized and constructed to support specific human behaviors and interactions. *Deep Quest* depicts how human activities ensure to engage with its natural flows. Subhadra has been searching Sukarma since long time and in the meantime, he has faced several behavioral settings: It was midday. People had moved out of work. Some had entered the forest with portable tools in their hands to gather grass, firewood, and tubers while other were busy working in their farms. “A few other were busy grazing their goats and sheep. I badly needed rest, for I was tired of a long trip by water. So, I stared for a place where I could rest. In the meantime, I saw a resting mound on the wayside. I walked up to it and reclined” (39).

This environmental phenomenon shows how behavioral settings are practiced in human activities. Nature has its own design that regulate people here and there for a certain purpose. Some people with the help of portable tools, are going to dense forest for taking some greenery and wild things to their domestic use. Some people seem to be working on farms and some are doing the job of shepherd. There is also a resting mound where Shubhadra takes rest for some time. So, every place and work have its own kind of significance to maintain human and nature relationship. Stokols notes “environmental-behavioral research reflects an increasing emphasis on the assessment

of ecological validity, or the extent to which phenomena studies in one situation are representative of those occurring in other settings” (Stokols 256). This concept, which is originated in ecological psychology, emphasizes the interaction between environment and human behavior. It focuses on ecological legitimacy, which assures that behavior observed in one setting extended to similar environments in another setting. This focus helps in the design of circumstances that consistently foster pleasant human nature interaction in a variety of everyday settings. Therefore, examining the relationship between behavioral setting and human activities highlights the importance of creating ecosystem that foster sustainable and good connections with nature, thereby improving both human well-being and ecological integrity.

Social interaction in natural settings have a significant impact for encouraging both personal and communal advantage. When people appear in parks, gardens, or outdoor recreational places, they build strong communities by their shared experiences, such as informal discussions, group activities, or environmental projects. These ties attached social connections along with to engage with and appreciate nature together. Nature helps to heal people’s suffering, pain, and mental stress. In search of Sukarma, Shubhadra reaches the southern hemisphere and spotted an island there where “villagers gather for a meeting at the wayside mound” (65). They are exchanging the information about Subhadra, how he has come here and why did he come without his leader’s permission. They ask all about the presupposition of his condition. Subhadra says that he is heading toward southern hemisphere to find Sukarma who was lost from earth some long time ago. All the people who appeared were from the religious background. Most of them considered him a person from their vicinity, but the reality was quite different. Later Subhadra allured them about his mission and narrated his past journey and villagers have been convinced dramatically.

He appreciates that, “Life, after all, is a journey. The only difference is that the way is dotted by rivers sometimes, and some other times by flooded brooks, high mountains, plain land, the sky and the sea” (90).

Enjoying with natural things can lead our journey to the target point where we can ultimately find good conduct, peace, and harmony. So, we need to interact with the natural setting as Subhadra faces, “The shore of the Atlantic Ocean was filled with people. The ships continued to come and go. Some were approaching and others receding. A few were putting great effort to drag themselves forward. Ship-repairing workshops had been opened from place to place” (89). Social interaction and natural setting promote personal healing and common strength through sharing experiences, as seen in Subhadra’s journey. When connecting with nature and other, helps Subhadra to overcome challenges and fulfill his mission. As Stokols acknowledges, “people are often forced by situational constraints to accept undesirable environmental conditions, or at best to ‘satisfice’ that is to achieve less than optimal improvements in their surroundings” (Stokols 258). Even in inadequate environments, engaging with nature provides motive and resilience.

A healthy combination of technology or instrument is essential for keeping human and nature connection because it must enhance rather than prevent direct environment with the natural environment. We can enhance environmental engagement while maintaining a meaningful connection with the natural world by carefully utilizing technology to supplement, rather than replace, direct natural experience. Rijal manifests the use of technological instrument, the protagonist of the novel fosters “People took up agriculture and animal rearing as their means of livelihood. I could not see factories and industries much, though people had started using simple tools like a manual husk lever, grinding stone, oil crushers and mortar

and pestle” (64). By using such simple tools, it gives the people to work trouble-free. Mostly farmers begin to use technology for their daily life. Cutting grass, digging the way of countryside, making housing and large mansion made their daily life easier. Stokols’s instrumental view on the research “analyses people-environment relations [and] measures the quality of environments by their capacity to promote not only behavioral and economic efficiency, but also enhanced levels of occupants’ comfort safety and well-being” (Stokols 642). It means research and technology need to be objective and value neutral, with an emphasis on solutions that promote nature friendly living and respecting the social and ecological dynamics of specific environments. Using simple technology, as seen in Rijal’s work demonstrates how technology can improve human interaction with environment while maintaining ecological balance. Technology promotes sustainability and environmental participation by helping daily work while maintaining a connection to the environment, rather than replacing direct experiences with nature.

Social ecology is one of the most prominent issue that is interlinked to social system and ecological systems, examining how social, economic, and ecological process connect to determine human behavior and promote environmental sustainability. It covers the area of sociological like cultural, economic, political, geographical aspects, and natural world as well. The study of society asks that environmental challenges be dealt with not just through the use of technology, but also through reforming by social system to make them fairer and more ecological. Mostly in urban area we see the garden and tree plantation to maintain ecological balance, that makes city healthy and beautiful. In pursuit of Sukarma, Subhadra and his squad reach Buddhalok. This planet has been facing lots of upheavals like thunder, snow, flood and snowstorms. This planet is ruled by Buddha. He is the son of

Chandrama. So, Buddha was too much responsible for their upcoming natural, economic, political, and geographical disaster. At that time, they organize inter-planetary meetings for its solutions. So, Meeting Buddha becomes more difficult than reaching Buddhalok for them. After long time Bhudha appears with apology and says: “At the moment, our country is passing through a serious crisis. Land here has started melting as result of environmental pollution. . . . To prevent the same from happening, I have declared a state of emergency. At such time, an administrator has hardly any leisure, and this is something you also know very well” (148). Social ecology includes initiatives to tackle imbalance that have environmental effects. This kind of ecological turmoil has been occurring in every planet. Subhadra sets his journey from earth to different constellation of the universe.

Meanwhile, he faces incredible challenges and obstacles. From them, he learns profound lessons about listening to his heart, following his institution, and overcoming fear. Every constellation has a different structure including geography, culture, language, rules, and regulation. So, Subhadra learns so many societal values and norms and picks the ideas to accept various difficulties and eventually becomes stronger to make his journey fruitful. In such large issues that is occurring on environmental turmoil, each community, place, village, province, country, and planet must work in a mutual understanding to minimise the possible environmental disturbance. Even reaching to the Brihaspatilok, Subhadra’s team face the same problems about ecological balance as they faced at Buddhalok. As Brihaspati is also busy on inter-planetary meeting, he takes a little bit time to appear with them informing them, “Please receive greetings from Brihaspati I am sorry for making you wait for long a long time” (171). His polite voice and cultured manner give some relief to Subhadra’s team. He further adds: “An inter- planetary meeting is going on.

We organize such meetings in every planet, turn by turn. The master of the host planet presides over such meetings. . . . I was the late because the meeting ran quite long.

You can understand that it is immodest to leave an ongoing meeting, he said, showing his utter modesty” (172). That means, people of every planet are too much conscious about ecological changes. They think that there is something gone wrong in the universe. On the other hand, Earth also has been facing the same kind of ecological imbalance. The cause of these environmental turmoil is lost of Sukarma. “Sukarma has gone missing from the earth. Loss of Sukarma means rise of *duskarma*. When *duskarma* is rampant, the deterioration of the environment becomes imminent” (117). Every nook and corner of the universe has been raising the same sorts of ecological challenges. People have been trying to maintain its natural cycle.

They have too much fear in any time, Brihaspati insights that, “We can face accident any moment. It seems the hour of apocalypse is at hand. We have not been able to keep our own seeds under control. We can hardly tell when we ourselves shall bump against someone else or others would come darting and attack us” (172). If we save the universe, it will shelter us. Otherwise, all the evidence of our civilization would be dumped with natural disaster. To save the soil, we need to think broadly in every aspect like cultural, economical, political, environmental, geographical, and social as well. American Psychologist, Stokols contends that, “The social ecological perspective encompasses certain core assumptions about the dynamics of human health and the development of effective strategies to promote personal and collective well-being” (7). Human health is determined by interaction among people, their communities, and the surroundings, that influence policies to enhance both personal and communal well being. Interconnection of social system and ecological progress, advocating for solutions that go beyond technology and encompasses cultural,

political, and environmental reforms. Subhadra's journey exemplifies how planetary disaster occur due to imbalance in various systems, showing the importance of collaborative actions to restore ecological equilibrium. The social ecological view emphasizes how these relationships impact human health and environmental sustainability, demanding collaboration among civilizations to maintain both their well being and natural world.

The intertwined relationship between human and nature is heavenly influenced by ecological challenges, in which human actions contribute to environmental stresses, that in turn an effect on health and well-being. Human action like, deforestation, industrial pollution, unmanaged urban areas, land degradation, and excessive use of natural resource led to the climate change and resource depletion. Gradually nature goes to unbalance, and it harms to people's health and occurs many diseases. The protagonist of the novel loses his friend Sukarma due to the natural imbalance. He says, "One fine day, I had been to the river Gomati for a bath. It was rainy season, and the river had been flooded. My friend Sukarma was caught in the guest flow of the river and disappeared" (20). The loss of Sukarma (meaning 'good conduct') means the loss of humanity, faith, social norms, values, rituals, good governance along with environmental sustainability. "Nothing is friendlier than nature, not only for human beings but also for the entire living world. It cares for them even more than a true mother does. If nature had not arranged for reclining and sleeping off, we can not tell how torturous life would have been" (100). That is why we need to water every aspects of ecology. Moreover, human activities harm to the purity of the nature and its natural cycle:

At present, we have neither the sea nor the mountains and rivers. From those days we don't have the remains of the ancient construction either. Huge

mountains occupy the spot where there was a sea before while the mountains have changed into seas. Yet, we still have some remains from the Mayan civilization. (88-90)

It demonstrates the ecological changes by the human activities in different places in different times. It totally changes the geographical shapes as well. In such case, human history, culture, civilization might be erased. Human subjectivity has been built by its direct effect. Stokols posits: “Children from noisy homes to be less proficient on a selective attentive task and less sensitive to auditory distraction than children from quieter homes. And in two related studies, pedestrians in noisy areas were observed to be less helpful to strangers than those in quieter areas” (Stokols 273). Ecological difficulties have a significant impact on the close interaction between human and nature, with human acts such as deforestation, population, and resource abuse to environmental stressors that disrupt both natural and human health. The novel’s loss of Sukarma, which represents ‘good behaviour’ emphasizes how pollution damages social value and the harmony of nature. Human cause changes in the natural world which destroys ecosystem, distort geography, and endanger civilizations. These changes demonstrate that environmental condition have a direct influence on human behaviour and good health, highlighting the importance of sustainable behaviour in establishing balance.

Raising environmental awareness through education is essential to establishing a balanced and responsible relationship between human and nature. Through the education, individuals gain the knowledge and provides necessary abilities to understand environmental behaviors as a result of actions. allowing them to make decision that contribute to ecological preservation and sustainability. Education equips individuals with the skills to tackle ecological challenges, make informed

choices, and actively engaging with the securing of natural environment for the upcoming generation. In looking for Surkarma, Squad of Subhadra reach to the Buddhalok and they find that the conscious level toward environment of that planetary beings was too much high. The planet is ruled by Budha and he said, tendering a long explanation: “We organize inter-planetary meetings from time to time. We discuss how we can minimize the degree of ever-growing population. We all realize our responsibilities and inform the citizens of our respective areas. We appeal them to follow the decisions taken at the inter-planetary meetings” (158). All the planets are facing the emergencies at the moment and are intensively discussing how they can save themselves from such problems. A general interplanetary convention had been recently convened to discuss the issue in order to prepare for the possible disasters that are likely to outburst in the environment.

Likewise, in Brishaspatilok, their environmental consciousness is very high “there was neither smoke, nor dust. The environment was equally clean. No noise at all. The places were as beautiful as they were silent” (163). So having people with proper education and awareness makes environment clean and ecofriendly. A vibrant theorist Stokols insists, “environmental assessment is concerned not only with people’s attitudes towards their present surroundings but also with their preferences regarding the shape of future environment” (Stokols 266). This type of assessments enhance education through fostering knowledge, helping people to understanding their current environment and make educated decisions about shaping sustainable future based on their preference and ecological values. Environmental education is essential for ensuring a sustainable relationship between human and nature because it provides knowledge and skills needed to make informed, eco-friendly decisions. Subhadra’s journey emphasises the significance of environmental consciousness, as

evidenced by planets such as Buddhalok and Brihaspatilok. Stokols perspectives supports this, emphasizing how education influences both current knowledge and long-term viability. Ultimately, education serves as a foundation for developing a society that is both ecologically aware and prepared to tackle further environmental challenges.

Observation and learning help people understand the nature and change their behaviour to live in peace with nature. Observing nature helps people discover how ecosystems works and why they should be protected. This understanding encourages actions such as resource conservation, lowering pollution and wildlife protection. Learning from nature helps people appreciate the environment and make decision that promote stability and harmony in their relationship with the natural world. While heading towards Mars the team of Subhadra face terrible natural disaster. They get trapped in a huge wave suddenly and they become senseless and find around the middle of hill. They move to cave nearby for shelter:

It was not a big cave though. Not too small either. It could possibly accommodate fifty to sixty people. In one hand, it was near the top of a hill situated in the middle of a sea; on the other hand, the place was surrounded by a thick forest from every direction. One could hardly imagine the presence of any human there. We could not imagine any form of life form, either. We didn't know how wide or tall the hill was, but what we could guess was that a sea surrounded it from all its sides. (125)

It refers observation and learning play a key role in transforming how human interact with nature, driving actions that support harmony and environmental responsibility. Subhadra's crew faces natural disaster on their journey to Mars, they directly experienced the nature's unpredictable force. This lesson shows how learning from

nature fosters a deeper appreciation for it and encourages behaviours that protect and preserve the natural world for generation to come. Likewise, Stokols states, “individuals acquire environmental awareness and change their action based on direct observation of their surroundings, which impacts how they engaged with environmental concern and long-term effort” (78). So, observing and learning foster a deeper connection with human and nature and they help to aware as well as strengthen human nature relation. Subhadra’s team also take much information by observing the natural surroundings.

Kamal Rijal’s *Deep Quest* investigates the complex relations between human and nature through the lens of social ecology and environmental psychology. It reveals the core relationship between human, nature, social interaction, cultural values, and technology on ecology and ecological consciousness. Based on Daniel Stokols’s “Environmental Psychology”, the research underscores how social and environmental factors alerts human activities, which have substantial impact on sustainability initiatives. The novel demonstrates that tackling ecological issues necessitates not only technological solution but also the change of social system to promote environmental responsibilities and social justice.

Subhadra’s trip across the planet represents humanities’ struggle with environmental deterioration, as seen by both imaginary planetary setting and real-world ecological challenges such as deforestation, pollution, and resource extraction. The story shows how the decline of social values, represented by the disappearance of Sukarma (a symbol for good behavior), is closely related to degradation and governance issues.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the role of education, observation, and learning in raising environmental consciousness. It promotes the importance of

building a profound connection with nature through environmental interaction as well as cultural values in order to promote ethical conduct. Social ecology, as addressed in the novel, argues for collaborative action and collaboration to restore ecological balance, with cultural, political, and social reforms, playing an important role. It suggests that, creating a sustainable future needs a comprehensive approach that combines technological breakthroughs with culture and social accountability, ensuring harmony between human and nature.

The novel intricately portrays human-environment interactions, where the natural and constructed surroundings influence both psychological and behavioral responses of the characters. By applying Stokols's concepts, such as *behavior-environment congruence* and *perceived control over the environment*, we gain insight into how the characters navigate their ecological and existential challenges. The characters' struggle to align their behaviors with their environments whether in the pursuit of survival, self-discovery, or ecological restoration reveals the deep psychological and emotional impacts of environmental degradation and human agency. Furthermore, the novel mirrors the broader societal and environmental issues that Stokols addresses, highlighting the importance of harmonious human-environment relationships in promoting both individual well-being and collective sustainability.

Moreover, Stokols's *socio-ecological perspective* and his ideas on *environmental stressors* further deepen our understanding of the environmental themes in *Deep Quest*. The novel reflects the detrimental effects of ecological pressures, such as pollution, climate change, and resource scarcity, on the characters' physical and mental health. Through the metaphorical journey to find Sukarma, the

characters not only navigate physical terrains but also confront existential struggles, with the environment serving as both a source of stress and a means of healing.

In conclusion, this research explores into the intricate relationship between human and nature in Rijal's *Deep Quest*, focusing on how ecological consciousness is influenced by cultural values, social dynamics, and technology. The novel depicts how human behaviour is modeled by natural surroundings and technological interventions, stressing the necessity of observation, learning and joint efforts in tackling environmental problems. Drawing on Stokols's "Environmental Psychology", the study reveals how human actions shaped by both social and environmental factors, contribute significantly to sustainability. Subhadra's journey across various planets signifies the importance of harmonizing technology with environmental responsibility to preserve balance between humanity and nature. The narrative highlights the essential role of cultural values and traditions in governing human-nature interactions, advocating for their integration into environmental initiative. As Subhadra faces ecological crisis on planets like Buddhalok and Brihaspatilok, the story line reflects the real-world environmental deterioration tied to the erosion of societal norms. The novel proposes that solving ecological issues demands not only technological advancement but also cultural, political, and social reforms. Environmental education and direct observation play a crucial role in cultivating a strong connection to nature, promoting actions that sustain ecological balance. Subsequently, the study points out the need for sustainable behaviour, connecting fictional narratives and psychological insights to expand our understanding of human nature relationship even in our day-to-day life.

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