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Deep Ecological Consciousness in Majid Majidi's *The Color of Paradise*

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Letter of recommendation

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Deep ecological consciousness in Majid Majidi’s *The Color of Paradise*”, submitted to the Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mrs. Parvati Rawal, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

This research work focuses on the issues of the inter-relationship between organism and ecosystem in Majid Majidi's The Color of Paradise (1999). The protagonists of the movie are guided by ecological awareness and evoked their sense of love and empathy to nature through their empathetical deeds. This ecological consciousness gives intensive insights or convey long term deep messages to the people who are anthropocentric regarding their everyday activities. The study examines the issues of the inter-relationship between human and nature throughout the film. The characters devote themselves for the welfare of others and are engaged so seriously in order to protect the non-human creatures that most of the people generally ignore. This research addresses the importance of empathetical sense or ecological awareness to avoid global ecological crisis. In order to analyze the text, the ecocritical study with reference to the philosophy of deep ecology from the perspective of Arne Naess, George Sessions and Bill Devall is used as the theoretical tool in the research. By using the theory of deep ecology the research gives the message that all human and non-human life in nature has equal intrinsic worth and renunciation of materiality and adoption of ecofriendly notion is inescapable for welfare and happiness. The Color of Paradise presents deep ecological insights in the form of visual art that the protagonists of the film through their empathetical deeds extends ecological awareness against anthropocentrism.

Deep Ecological Consciousness in Majid Majidi's *The Color of Paradise*

The project entitled "Deep Ecological Consciousness in Majid Majidi's *The Color of Paradise*" deals with the issue of inter-relationship between organism and the ecosystem. Deep ecology is an ecological and environmental philosophy which promotes the equal intrinsic worth of human and non-human life. It argues that the natural world is a subtle balance of complex inter-relationship in which the existence of organisms is dependent on the existence of others within ecosystems.

Deep ecological consciousness is the realization of the fact that everything in nature has intrinsic worth. It is the state of renunciation of materiality and adoption of ecofriendly notions for happiness. Deep ecologists believe that human beings can keep ecosystem above narrow human interests only by sacralizing their perceptions of the natural world and ecological catastrophe by learning to live harmoniously with the natural world.

Majid Majidi is trying to raise deep ecological awareness in his film *The Color of Paradise*. He is trying to respond to growing ecological crisis by evoking a sense of love and empathy to nature. The film presents deep ecological insights with minimal affirmation that the protagonist of the film is differently able who through his empathetical deeds extends deep ecological consciousness against anthropocentrism. He feels the nature around him and seems to understand its rhymes and textures as language. This thesis applies deep ecology as a supporting theoretical tool. Through this application, it suggests that Majidi's film *The Color of Paradise* captures the scenario of deep ecological consciousness which is opposed to human-centered worldviews and global market oriented mentalities in modern industrialized society.

Intensive study of the film in itself is at the concern of this research project as a primary source to justify the hypothesis. The film centers on the issues of the relationship between human and nature, sense of love and empathy to non-human creatures and faith on nature as religion. The central character Mohammad follows the sounds of nature, bird, cat, the rustle of leaves, discovers and rescues a bird that has fallen from its nest. Nature is at the centre of the film. It deals with the story of poor family who are living simple life struggling, surviving and getting life with hope, though they are more affectionate and sympathetic towards nature and natural beings that most of the people generally ignore.

Deep ecology's core principle is the belief that the living environment as a whole should be respected and regarded as having certain legal rights to live and flourish. But the overconsumption of natural resources is growing day by day only to fulfill human desires. The proponents of deep ecology believe that the world does not exist as a resource to be freely exploited by humans. Bill Devall and George Sessions claim:

Ecological consciousness and deep ecology are in sharp contrast with the dominant worldview of technocratic-industrial societies which regards humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation. But the view of humans as separate and superior to the rest of nature is only part of larger cultural patterns. For thousands of years, Western culture has become increasingly obsessed with the idea of dominance: with dominance of humans over nonhuman nature, masculine over the feminine, wealthy and powerful over the poor, with the dominance of West over non-Western cultures. Deep ecological consciousness

allows us to see through these erroneous and dangerous illusions. (65-66)

The ecological problems faced by the world today are due to the overconsumption of natural resources and loss of the traditional knowledge, values, and ethics of behaviour that celebrate the fundamental values and sacredness of the natural world and give the preservation of nature prime importance. As Timothy W. Luke claims, “Anthropocentric view of nature separates humanity from nature and deadens it. By seeing nature as inanimate matter, humans gain the power to dominate it” (4-5). So, the main cause of ecological degradation is human superiority to other life and the assumption that nature is mainly to serve human will and purpose.

The origin of environmental movement responded to increasing levels of smoke pollution in the atmosphere during the Industrial Revolution. Humans are interconnected with all the living things in the world. Ecological problems faced by present world are due to the human interference with or destruction of the natural world. Deep ecology has had a response to the anthropocentric view and it offers a philosophical basis for environmental encouragement which can guide human activity against self-destruction. Human life is made possible due to the harmonious balance of interdependent relationships between biotic and abiotic organisms. But, the action of modern civilization threatens global ecological well-being. Ecological consciousness promotes human relationship with nature and natural beings.

Theory of deep ecology regards human centeredness or anthropocentrism as the fatal feature of the ecological crisis. In Lynn White’s paper “*The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*”, he identifies anthropocentrism as being the main cause for the environmental problems and the solution of ecological problems lay in the abandonment of anthropocentrism and this is possible with freeing our minds and

emotions from the deep rooted understanding about human's hierarchical superiority over other beings.

The research examines Majidi's film *The Color of Paradise* on the basis of ecological consciousness in the mind of its character. In this movie, the story revolves around the blind boy named Mohammad and his devotion and love towards the nature and non-human life. Mohammad, the protagonist, represents himself as a smart blind boy with deep ecological consciousness who touches and feels the nature around him; counting the sounds of birds, animals and imitating them. He finds the patterns of Braille in everything around him. The film shows glimpses of unique attitudes of a blind boy towards nature and his empathetical love to non-human beings. There is an early scene where a young boy Mohammad hears a baby bird fall from a nest, he spends his several hours feeling on the ground for the baby bird, he chases away a cat, finds the bird, gently takes it in his hand, keeps it inside his pocket, climbs a tree, and puts it back in its nest with an acute sense of hearing. It is the most beautiful and impressive scene, where a blind boy successfully rescues a baby bird despite his inability to see which is an empathetical appeal to address global ecological crisis by rectifying the anthropocentric view points deep rooted within human beings.

The major objectives of this research is to explore the emotional intelligence and empathetical love to non-human beings for ecological consciousness and the importance of deep empathetical sense to live in harmony with our surrounding. Despite his ability to see, the so called handicapped (differently able) boy Mohammad takes a high risk to protect an insignificant creature, a baby bird. A minimal event of empathetical love to non-human being can give an intensive insight for ecological awareness? How much an emotional intelligence to empathetical touch can transform the patterns of the audience for deep ecological insights? The researcher focuses upon

the close observation of Mohammad's love and devotion to human and non-human life being around with his family and society to investigate human-nature relationship and avoid human negligence and destruction of nature.

The global connectivity through information technology does not necessarily interconnect people with nature and spirituality. Economic activities have a bad effect on natural resources. It has become very important to reconnect people with nature and all the living beings created on the earth. Anthropocentric environmentalism is concerned with conservation of the environment only for exploitation by and for human purposes. Then, what are the significant features of motivating Mohammad to be engaged so seriously in order to protect the non-human creature that most of the people generally ignore and what are the long term deep messages his empathetical action convey to the people who are more anthropocentric regarding their everyday activities. Can shallow ecological slogans and campaigns address a global ecological crisis or we should have a very deep empathetical sense? To answer these questions, this thesis examines the textual space in Majidi's *The Color of Paradise*. The analysis shows that it tells a story about faith and belief, unconditional love and compassion, hardship and hope. Majidi shows the nature of amazement that fills the boy's (Mohammad's) life. In this way the power of narratives persuades viewers towards the depth of native values and friendly relationship with nature.

Various cinematic techniques used in the movie clearly present central character's sense of love and empathy to nature. This movie utilizes the standard lighting technique. Lighting is one of the important technique in any movie. It plays vital role in molding the image depending on its impact. It helps to show the mood, feelings and thought of the character. Sometimes it also helps to show the theme of the movie and helps viewers to understand setting as well as characters and actors

within setting. There are main categories of lighting. They are low key, high key, and three points. In this movie, the lighting for most part is bright or high key. Three point lighting techniques are used in different situation to show the real expression of character in the movie; like Mohammad's happiness while roaming around the nature, Mohashen's daily life phenomenon as a responsible member of the family and Granny's loving expression. Making an image more or less bright is a technical work. The movie has utilized the close-up technique several times to show the real expressions of character in different situations which help the audience to know and feel the happiness and pain faced by the characters. So, the cinematography throughout the film is remarkable.

Different critics have examined *The Color of Paradise* from multiple perspectives. The film has received wide critical acclaim from different perspective of family and cultural values, spirituality and cinematography. However, environmental issues or deep ecological study of the film is not found to be done in an appropriate way. Mohammad's blindness is actually a heightened and uniquely sensual mode of perception that Mohammad discovers the beauty of the landscape through his fingers. Majidi says, "Nothing appears to be ordinary to the blind." This is true of the film, also. Throughout the film, Majidi is portraying a close bonding between human and nature and its values with creative and innovative cinematography. The critic Roger Ebert writes about *The Color of Paradise*:

[. . .] the ending after a great sequence in which the boy is in great danger, will strike some as contrived. Certainly, it is not subtle by our cynical western standards. If Hollywood told this story, the father would have a change of heart. In Iran, Heaven intervenes more directly as if God, having tested Mohammad as much as dares, has the change

heart of himself. “*The color of Paradise*” is a family film that shames the facile commercialism of a product like “pokeman” and its value system based on power and greed. But they do not condescend to young audiences. Majidi’s film of course are observing for adults as well, and there is a lesson here: Any family film not good enough for children. (3)

Roger Ebert tries to highlight the story of coal-mining father and the pressure he and his family have to raise a blind boy in the country yard. The film shows the glimpses of shame and pity that Hashem felt for himself and his son all along. The critic also focuses on the socially restricted circumstances of rural Iran and the constant struggling life of it.

Majidi shows us wonderful samples of Iran and the daily phenomenon of family life. This film simply lets nature echo in the background. Nature is also exemplified in the movie both audibly and through the eye of the camera. Majid Majidi has proven that he is able to demonstrate weighty ideas of ecological awareness through simple depictions of everyday life. Critics Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat analyze the film from the perspective of spirituality:

[. . .] Mohammad is a true innocent filled with wonder and a sensitivity to everything that surrounds him. Seeing with the eyes of his heart, he is a world apart from his father who has no idea of what a treasure he has right in front of him. Taken as a spiritual parable *The Color of Paradise* speaks indirectly about the bounties of grace and emptiness of a life not filled with gratitude to God. (2)

The critics analyze the film in terms of its theme of spirituality. They focus on the scenarios of the film where human and their relationship with religion are deliberated

many times. People can read themselves and get true happiness in the lap of nature. So, nature and human have very close ties with God. As Barry Commoner says, “Everything is connected to everything else” (qtd. in Cheryll Glotfelty. xix).

Cinemas are the real depictions of everyday life and because of its meaningfully presented story it can throw the message towards the society and its people. People can grab the message of ecological awareness and importance of making and seeing movie after watching *The Color of Paradise*. Next critic Maria Gracia examines the film in terms of family values mainly the father-son relationship being around with other family members too. She writes likewise:

Mohammad’s greatest disability is not his blindness, but the attitude of his father’s toward it. Hashem is a widower in the process of arranging a second marriage; he believes his son stands in the way of his new life. Only Granny, Hashem’s mother (SalimeFeizi), perceives the implication of her son’s attitude towards his only son, of the hurt and humiliation it has caused Mohammad, and it is she who tries, unsuccessfully, to save Hashem. Mohammad, on the other hand, embodied the special qualities of those with inner sight: He never mistakes anyone’s intentions. While he suffers deeply from his father’s rejection, he comes alive in the embraces of his grandmother and two sisters, who love him unconditionally ... (1)

Gracia highlights more about father’s bad behaviour with Mohammad and loving manner of grandma and sisters as well as cultural values of Iranian society where a blind son is remaining as obstruct for his father’s second marriage. Father tells the school officials that he is too poor to take care of a blind boy and asks if he can be

kept at the school. Indirectly, father wants to keep his son far away because of his blindness and burden of his raising and caring.

Film made cinematic advances on many fronts, and its most significant contribution to cinematography came from the use of a technique known as deep focus. Deep focus refers to having everything in the frame, even the background, in the focus at the same time and overlapping actions and the physical environment in which a film take place. Critic Mutt Heffernan investigates the film in terms of its cinematography. He says:

[...] Majidi captures this aspect of the film with great skill, creating an intriguing character that doesn't depend on any Hollywood conventions. Besides this character study, what is most striking about this film is the color. Most Americans probably think of Iran as a desolate desert, but here we see a bucolic wonderland that supports the presented fable. Between these moments of beauty, however, are too many slow parts that reveal the slight nature of the film... (Par. 4-5)

Heffernan claims that film presents the brighter scenario of Iran. It is portraying Iran as a country where reform movements and revolution abides, though the film gives a message for the world to realize that there exists another side of the beautiful realm too. The green countryside of Iran is magnificent, giving serenity to the eyes of the observer. These all scenarios and daily life phenomenon are presenting meaningfully. Viewers can grab the meaning through the focus point of camera.

The Color of Paradise has religious allegory, started out from the visible, physical world and then hinting further at a religious dimension. Critic Stephen Holden's review excerpt is as follow, which appeared in *The New York Times* on Sept.25,1999. Stephen explores the movie as a religious movie. He writes:

As much as any film can, this explicitly religious movie offers a visionary experience of the natural world. Moving through fields of flowers and misty forests, across streams and into the craggy backwoods country, the film makes sure that we hear as well as see the rugged Iranian landscape in all sorts of weather. The soundtrack is a constantly shifting chorus of birds, insects, wind and rain. This soundtrack is especially significant because the movie focuses on the uncertain fate of a blind 8-years-old boy, Mohammad (Mohsen Ramezani), whose widowed father (Hossein Mahjur) balks at caring for him. While the movie makes the continually aware of the sounds Mohammad hears, it also shows us the beauty he is unable to see. (Par. 2-3)

The characters of the movie feel the grace of God with the close encounter of the nature. There are many scenarios where people worship the nature as god. Grandma has planted some flowers to dye woolen threads with them to weave colorful rug and in next area of land she planted some kind of flowers only to worship the god. In the film, soundtrack with the sound of birds, insects, animals, wind and rain is equally meaningful along with the flow of film story.

In this regard, it becomes clear that the film has been analyzed through various perspectives by various critics. The theory of deep ecology has not been applied. So, there exists a strong need to carryout research on this film from ecocritical study with reference to the philosophy of deep ecology. The present researcher adopts deep ecology as the tool from the perspective of Arne Naess, Bill Devall and George Sessions. Therefore, this research explores how deep ecology is an appropriate to challenge the global ecological crisis.

The phrase “deep ecology” was coined by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. He first articulated a sharp distinction during 1972 between “Shallow environmentalism” and “deep ecology,” which he published in a 1973 article, *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary*. According to Naess, every being in nature has an equal right to live and blossom. He advocated that a true understanding of nature would give rise to a point of view that appreciates the value of biological diversity and understanding of dependent of the interrelationships in nature. His ecological philosophy emphasizes on self-realization of man’s narrow selves, that people must realize themselves as a part of an ecospheric whole. When Arne Naess coined the term *deep ecology*, he compared it with *Shallow environmentalism* which he criticized for its utilitarian and anthropocentric attitude to nature and for its materialist and consumer-oriented outlook. He writes:

The shallow ecology movement is concerned with fighting pollution and resource depletion. Its central objective is the health and affluence of people in the developed countries. The deep ecology movement has deeper concerns, which touch upon principles of diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness. (95-100)

Naess contrasts his new “deep” (radical) ecological worldview with the dominant “shallow” (reform) paradigm. He finds shallow worldview to be typical of mainstream environmentalism, its reason for conserving wilderness and preserving biodiversity are tied to human welfare and it rewards nonhuman nature mainly for its use-value. Shallow ecology is more anthropocentric point of view that it holds values of nature entirely on the premise that nature’s sole purpose is for human needs. Deep ecology, by contrast, questions the fundamental assumptions of anthropocentrism and

advances the concept of biocentrism or ecocentrism which attributes equal intrinsic moral worth to human and non-human life forms. It criticizes and rethinks many aspects and deep connections of modern technocratic-industrial societies between humans and nature.

Naess expresses the ideas that nature has intrinsic value apart from its usefulness to human beings, and all life forms should be allowed to flourish and fulfill their evolutionary destinies. Human's motive balances the relation between individual and nature. People should combine ethical rules and motive in a good way, so that they can neither act in an immoral way nor can be anthropocentric. He opines:

Every living being is connected intimately, and from this intimacy follows the capacity of identification and as its natural consequences, practice of non-violence. Now is the time to share with all life on our maltreated earth through the deepening identification with life forms and the greater units, the ecosystem, and Gaia, the fabulous, old planet of ours. (22-23)

Human relations of selves and others come from the interrelated relations between organism and ecosystem, and excavating these relationships. Deep ecology as a whole is an answer to anthropocentrism with its all basic principles and its attitude towards nature.

After defining deep ecological ecosophy during the 1970s by its opposition both to advanced industrialism and shallow environmentalism, Naess and Sessions developed eight essential principles for deep ecology in the mid-1980s in their book *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*. These are: (a) The well-being of human and nonhuman life on earth has intrinsic values, separate from human uses or purposes. (b) The diverse richness of all life forms contributes to realizing these

intrinsic values. (c) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity of life except to satisfy vital needs. (d) The flourishing of human life and culture is compatible with a substantial decrease in human populations. Indeed, the flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease. (e) Human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive and worsening. (f) Policies must be changed to transform economic, ideological, and technological structures into a situation much different from the present. (g) Human satisfaction must shift to appreciating the quality of life (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to higher material standards of living. (h) Those who subscribe to these points have an obligation, directly or indirectly, to try to implement the necessary changes. (70)

Deep ecology has been a newly emerged environmental philosophy that has attempted to start solving the environmental crisis with a new form of thought, laid out in eight basic principles as a guide for how human thought needs to change concerning the environment and the world around us. With the hopes of attaining some gain through appeal of moral obligation of care for the nature, deep ecology has combined the thought of many environmental movements and religious ideals as well. Shallow ecological supporters prioritize economic considerations over environmental concerns whereas one of the defining characteristics of deep ecological principles is that human needs and rights are not placed before all others, as in shallow ecological.

The deep ecology movement was growing during the 1970s. Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* (1962) cited as the beginning of the contemporary, long-range deep ecology movement. Timothy W. Luke considers deep ecology as a political philosophy emerged as a critical reaction to the reform environmentalism of the 1960s, which developed, in turn, as a response to the unfettered exploitation of nature during the global economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s. Deep ecology remains as a

branch of environmental philosophy that most radically challenges the assumptions of anthropocentric humanism.

Deep ecology is not normally considered a distinct movement, but as a part of the green movement. The deep ecological movement defined as those within the green movement who hold deep ecological views. It has had a broad general influence on the green movement by providing an independent ethical platform for Green parties, political ecologists and environmentalists. The philosophy of deep ecology helped to differentiate the modern ecology movement by pointing out the anthropocentric bias of the term “environment”, and rejecting the idea of humans as authoritarian guardians of the environment.

Philosophy of deep ecology is grounded in a quite different set of philosophical assumptions. It takes a more holistic view of the world human beings live in and seeks to apply to life the understanding that the separate parts of the ecosystem function as a whole. It provides a foundation for the environmental ecology and green movements and has nurtured a new system of environmental ethics promoting wilderness preservation, human population control and simple living. In their 1985 book *Deep Ecology*, Bill Devall and George Sessions claims that “If we harm the rest of nature then we are harming ourselves. There is no boundaries and everything is interrelated” (68). The central spiritual belief of deep ecology is that the human species is the part of the earth, not separate from it. So, the existence of human is dependent on the diverse organisms within the natural world.

As stated in the theory of deep ecology, the event of protecting an insignificant creature, a baby bird, is no other than the deep ecological consciousness within the boy, Mohammad. Though he knows that it is difficult to climb the tree and find out the bird’s nest because of his inability to see, he takes the risk and successfully

rescues the bird. If bad actions of human affect the world and make changes on it, then they should think that their good actions can also affect the world positively and make changes that support the world. Even if they do something minute or that may seem to them as insignificant, that thing triggers the bigger system and in this way what they do may be the cause of a bigger change.

The Color of Paradise reveals that how deep ecological consciousness functions in the mind of individuals and its impact to address global ecological crisis. It excavates that emotional intelligence and empathetical love to non-human being can give an intensive insight for ecological awareness. The film inspires its viewers to look at their own world with new eyes avoiding human greed. In deep ecology, human beings are part of nature and what they do is natural because of this reason care flows naturally. Self-realization within human must be achieved in a right way and this is possible only with reasoning. Samuel Taylor Coleridge opines, “The highest perfection of natural philosophy would consist in the perfect spiritualization of all the laws of nature into laws of intuition and intellect” (41). Human beings are not apart from the nature. Humans and all the other things constitute the whole. Whatever people do in this huge system has an effect on everything. The solution of the ecological problems cannot totally come from technological progress; rather it should come from social and psychological improvement of human beings and from understanding their real place in nature as being a part of it. And, seeing themselves as a part of nature rather than seeing apart from it, may be a good approach in order to escape from anthropocentrism.

Majidi in his film *The Color of Paradise* displays how his characters Mohammad (Mohsen Ramezani), Hashem (Hossein Mahjoub), Granny (Salameh Feyzi), Hanieh (Farahnaz Safari), Bahareh (Elham Sharifi) Carpenter (Morteza

Fatemi) are produced within the influence of biotic and abiotic relationship. And deep ecological consciousness has been functioning in unveiled form through these characters deeds. None of the shots is theatrical throughout the film. The green countryside of Iran is portraying skillfully. The soundtrack is also significant because the movie focuses on the uncertain fate of Mohammad and his widowed father. And while the movie makes continually aware of the sounds Mohammad hears, it also shows the beauty he is unable to see. The soundtrack in the film is alive with natural sounds of woodpeckers, birdsongs, insects, and nature where a blind person can get a good idea of the locations. Majidi tells the story in easy-to-read close-to-medium shots. Majidi has adopted the cinematic technique, point-of-view and about point-of-view, Blain Brown writes that:

Point of view is a key tool of visual story telling. We use the term in many different ways on a film set, but the most often used meaning is to have a camera see something in much the same way as one of the characters would see it: to view the scene from that characters point-of-view. (10)

Using the cinematic technique ‘point-of-view’ Majidi presents his characters in such an artistic way that he becomes successful to explore deep ecological consciousness within individual characters through their movement and gestures. While presenting his characters, he makes them to represent the certain aspect of natural world. There is a world so joyful, beautiful, and blissful, but one is left lacking, blind to the world or blind to that which matters most in life. Though, it finds pleasure in the smallest things, and isn’t afraid to examine deep into twinges of pain.

Majidi’s film is the extension of opticalviews. The film opens with slowrevelation, a black screen and the sounds of children recognizing tapes that are

played in a cassette recorder. When visuals appear, there is the last day of summer break at school for blind in Tehran. Soon all the children are picked up, except one boy Mohammad, whose father is late in coming and he waits outside of the school. Set design, art direction, lighting and cinematography are combined to present the perspective realism is single-angle mono-dimensional viewpoint. This can be exemplified through the opening shot of special school for visually impaired children in Iran with its beautiful surrounding in the given picture.



Fig. 1: Mohammad outside of Special School in Tehran

The shot is taken long in order to include the school surroundings which seems natural adjoining with thick trees and different chirping sounds of birds. While Mohammad waits outside among those trees, he hears the sound of a baby bird, searches it around in the dried fallen leaves, with great care and willpower, he restores the baby bird in its nest hearing the cries of the lost one's nest-mates. It's a skillfully edited sequence and reveals something about the way Mohammad relates to the world around him. He is acutely in harmony to the world around him and provides a quiet reproach to the materialist consumerism of present world where people generally ignore the existence of such insignificant beings. Here in the given picture Mohammad is searching a baby bird by listening its chirping sound.



Fig.2: Mohammad Finding Baby Bird through Leaves

Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is worsening due to lack of sustainability. The close-up shot of above is from the scene where Mohammad was searching the baby bird through the piles of dried leaves. The focus point of the camera is into the minimal being, a small baby bird and dried leaves to show the equal intrinsic worth of human and non-human life. The scene clearly shows the boy as being more smart and clever who devotes himself to the welfare of others with lack of self-centeredness. So that a minimal event of empathetical love to non-human being can also give an intensive insights for ecological awareness.

In the subsequent scene, Mohammad gently and patiently feels the branches of tree displays his careful kindness and curiosity. As Matt Heffernan says, "Without being distracted by sight, he is able to achieve a higher sense of spirituality" (1). Moreover, he has a very deep empathetical sense and his empathetical actions convey long term deep message to the people who are more anthropocentric regarding their everyday activities. In deep ecology human beings are part of the whole system, humans have a role and responsibility in protecting this system, and protecting the whole is an effort to protect the self. The boy's attempt to rescue a bird is an empathetical appeal to address global ecological crisis.

Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves. Majidi uses suspense and sentiment to manipulate the audience well. While Mohammad is returning to his family's rural woodland home with his father, their journey by bus, and then by foot through lush forest and horse is long which takes him to his village situated in the lush, green Caspian area of Iran for a joyful reunion with his two sisters and grandmother. Along his way, Mohammad reads everything with his finger. The inquisitive hands of Mohammad eagerly caress everything that can be touched and even things that cannot.

The following dialogue between the film character Mohammad and his father Hashem, while they were on the bus is presented to show how Mohammad is conscious and curious to feel the ecstasy of natural environment.

Hashem: Bring your hand inside.

Mohammad: I want to catch the wind . . . what is over there?

Hashem: Woods, forest,

Mohammad: And farther away?

Hashem: Forest again. (20:06-20:24 sec.)

Mohammad can feel an ecstatic sensuousness of nature along with his journey to home. Critic Jake Wilson says, "The sightless Mohammad is extraordinarily receptive to all the other messages nature sends him. Majidi unfolds this film through the sightless eyes of young Mohammad whose other senses are so acute we feel that he can see into the souls of those around him" (1). Mohammad returns his home through the thick forest where he feels the sounds of birds and animals, roaring of water flow. And he seems smiling while imitating their sounds. In the given picture Mohammad is coming home crossing pastoral lands of Iran.



Fig. 3: Mohammad with Father

The widespread imagination of Mohammad displaces on the rural pastoral lands while he is unable to see the sights that actually exist, he talks as if he can see. The film character father and son trek home from the busy streets of Tehran into traders' and jewelry shops, then to the green mountains and fertile plains in Iran. On their way back while they were crossing the river, Mohammad feels the flow of water and reads pebbles in the given picture.



Fig. 4: Mohammad Reading the Pebbles with the Flow of Water

Mohammad's fingers into the water shows that the boy reads the alphabet left in the nature by the arrangement of pebbles in the stream, as if they are coded in Braille. The film offers a visionary experience of the natural world. Moving through fields of

flowers and cloudy forests, across streams and into the rocky backwoods country, the film makes sure that it can be heard as well as seen the rugged Iranian landscape in all sorts of weather.

Mohammad's intimate encounter with the natural world of his village, abetted by the close relationship with his sisters and grandmother is full of joy and wonder. He learns the language of nature, just as he has learned Braille at his school. As Jack Wilson says, "The world is a miracle that needs to be physically felt and continually rediscovered, as if for the first time" (1). Mohammad's grandmother grows many crops and flowers in fields. Mohammad takes all of this in, although he cannot see it. Every leaf, petal of flowers and stones are there for him to touch and feel.



Fig.5: Mohammad and his Sisters in the Field of Dazzling Flowers

Mohammad happily roams around the farms surrounding by dazzling fields of flowers with his sisters and grandmother. It can be seen and felt both, the beauties of the boy's surrounding and his own world where touching and hearing replace seeing. Mohammad's appreciation for nature is almost addictive; whether it walking through fields of flowers, or running his hands over ripening grain, or having fresh water running through his fingers, or hearing bird's songs, or examining the sounds of a gathering storm; he literally finds the patterns of Braille in everything around him.

The richness of the film lies in its ability to portray basic elements of nature in their ordinary State. The beautiful country of Iran and its pastoral lands are there in which Mohammad trying to discover the wonders of the world. In the given picture Mohammad is so eager to read the nature around him through the grains of wheat.



Fig. 6: Mohammad Reading Grains in the Wheat Field

The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes. Surroundings of the boys are brighter and full of the mild sounds of bird and water. The cinematographic technique used in this scene is long-medium shot technique. The camera angle was taken from front side which focuses on the character's expression and his surrounding. James Monaco states that:

'long shot' film theory as that which deals with film in context, which judges its political and social implications. 'medium shot' film criticism, focuses on the human scale in the film, which is what most reviews concern themselves with. 'Close up' theory, however, "breaks down" the film into its parts, and "resolves the film into its elements". Film semiotics and other theories that attempt to treat the 'language' of film for example are Close-up approaches. (312)

James Monaco claims that cinematic techniques are used to judge its social and political implication and it has specific language and deals with the relationship between film and nature, film and culture, film and society. Film theorists used cinematic terminology to describe the difference between various approaches to the film study.

In the film, Hashem is the victim of materialism. Widowed for past five years Hashem hopes to find the companionship of another wife. But it is not easy to marry for a man who is neither young nor rich in socially restricted circumstances of rural Iran or any other materialistic society where human sentiment is dominated by materialism. The growth of human and their culture incompatible to nature; there is a need of biocentric worldviews. In the given picture, Hashem is trying to convince girl's parents and approaches them with gifts and money earned after his constant struggle in coal mine and they give him approval.



Fig. 7: Hashem Offering Gifts

As deep ecology argues human satisfaction must shift to appreciating the quality of life dwelling in situations of inherent value rather than adhering to higher material standards of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness. The above shot is taken long in order to include distance

between Hashem and the girl's family members who are rich people of their society. And the camera angle is taken from side which focuses sincerity of Hashem in front of them. Nevertheless, he has to get approval of the girl's family which in Iran requires sufficient dowry from the groom. Hashem works hard to achieve his simple dreams and provide a better life for his family. And he tries to hide the fact that he has a blind son because he feels embarrassed to let them know and fears the girl's family will not accept his marriage proposal.

Mohammad enjoys the familiar routine of family life, until his father apprentices him to a blind carpenter in a nearby village. He goes to the mosque to worship, listens to woodpeckers, helps to gather flowers from the fields and collects eggs from henhouse. The conversation between the boy and his grandmother is while they were roaming around the field.

Grandmother: Dear Mohammad, can you tell me what is over there?

Mohammad: Where? I want to see.

Oh! This is the very tree I planted last year.

Am I taller than this tree?

Grandmother: It is taller than you by one leaf.

Mohammad: What are you growing here, Granny?

Grandmother: I have planted here alfalfa, my boy. I planted wheat over there . . .

Mohammad: Granny, do you know what they are saying?

Grandmother: Who my son?

Mohammad: Those birds.

Grandmother: That is a woodpecker's sound.

They are making a nest and seeking food.

Mohammad: But the birds are talking . . . (30:49-39:45 sec.)

Mohammad seems curious to see his farmland where his grandmother has planted crops. There is a sound of woodpecker in the background with both characters and their beautiful surrounding. He passes his everyday wandering around his farmland, observing different plants with his fingertips, listening the sounds of birds and is curious to know the language of birds. He reads the code tapped out by woodpecker. He wants to learn the language of nature, so that he can go on and participate in all the dialogue of nature.

Against the wishes of grandmother, Mohammad is left in the care of a blind carpenter who agrees to make him an apprentice. There is a wonderful scene where the very kind, young, blind carpenter begins to teach Mohammad about the woods they use, how to feel the shape of a bird and reproduce it by carving. In the given picture the carpenter apprentices Mohammad by feeling the shape and different parts of birds.



Fig. 8: Mohammad and the Carpenter

The carpenter apprentices the boy by examining the shapes of real and carving birds and woods. Mohammad gets settle in with the carpenter, he reads the shape and different parts of bird and starts to learn carving despite his ability to see. Mohammad

says to the carpenter that God does not love him and thus made him blind and tells how his teacher told that God loves them more as they are blind. He collapses down in tears, questioning God, even if he cannot see the color of paradise. The boy pours out his grief:

Our teacher says that God loves the blind more, because they cannot see. But I told him if it was so, He would not make us blind so that we cannot see him. He answered, 'God is not visible. He is everywhere. You can feel him through your fingertips.' Now I reach out everywhere for God till the day my hands touch him. (1:45 min.- 1:01:17 sec.)

Mohammad expresses his feelings with the carpenter and weeps uncontrollably. It is clear that in every happiness and sadness, Mohammad is connected with the direct relationship with nature who wants to see God. He discovers the nature to find the god. Everywhere and every time he tries to feel the presence of god through natural phenomenon. He assumes nature as god and god as nature. He reads the nature and finds his lost identity being around with it. The carpenter just says that he agrees with his teacher and walks away, possibly affected by the boy's words, as he himself is blind.

Mohammad's grandmother is an old woman who assures him that she loves him so much "I would die for you." (45 min.) She says. Mohammad's absence, and the reason for it, breaks the grandmother's heart. After a furious anger with his son she picks up her few things and decides to leave the house, even though there is a heavy rainstorm. Hashem says to his mother that he took the boy away for his own good. The scenario with Mohammad are brighter which are contrasted with Hashem's

struggle to sustain his livelihood as coal worker in the more restricted world of economic society.

The characters Mohammad and his grandmother develop deep ecological consciousness throughout the film. After her few walk, she sees a stranded fish outside of water. Despite of her upset condition and frustrate mood, she helps a stranded fish get back into the stream. Here in the given picture grandmother is rescuing the fish.



Fig. 9: Grandmother Keeping Stranded Fish into the Stream

The extent and nature of human interference in the various ecosystems is not sustainable, and lack of sustainability is rising. The close up shot of a non-human being, fish over grandmother's hand shows an example of humanity, simplicity and genius ideas which are beautifully presented to show that all living being have intrinsic worth. The focus point of the camera is over a minimal being, a fish outside the stream and then in the hand of Grandmother. Grandma forgets her anger while keeping the fish into the water. It shows that she is kind-hearted in her hopelessness condition too.

Mohammad's father quickly recovers himself and rushes after his mother, bringing her back to the house where his two daughters care to her in the sweetest ways. Hashem and his daughters work hard to improve the mud and straw walled

house, painting it in white and blue for the coming big day. But, the grandmother dies and with her, Hashem's hopes for marriage. The men of the girl's family return Hashem's betrothal gifts and tell him "The marriage is not propitious for us"(1:16:08sec.). They see the grandmother's death as a bad omen and cancel the upcoming marriage.

With the death of his mother, and end of his marriage hopes, Hashem seems to understand that he cannot keep his son away from home. Just as Mohammad gets settled in with the carpenter and starts to learn the craft, his father goes to the carpenter and brings Mohammad back home. While crossing the bridge on their way back to their home, the bridge collapses, and Mohammad falls into the river. Hashem runs to help and jumps into the river, but the whirling water is too rough for him to catch his son. Hashem is eventually dropped, unconscious, on the river bank.

With the sound of birds, Hashem regains consciousness, he looks about him and sees the figure of Mohammad some distance away, lying on the shore. Rushing over, Hashem sees that the boy is dead, and he weeps uncontrollably, with the boy in his arm. In the final shot, a flock of wild birds flies overhead and the camera moves in from above to a close-up of Mohammad's hand.



Fig. 10: Mohammad's Moving Fingers

Mohammad's fingers slowly start to move with the sounds of woodpecker; perhaps he is reading the sound with his fingers. At the same time so many birds are flying in the sky and whenever Mohammad is coming in the frame there is a special sound effect; the same sound effect come when his fingers move. It symbolizes that there is a hope that he is coming to life again and the boy sees the world with the sound of birds in the sky. In the close-up shot of Mohammad's hand, there is a light focusing on his moving fingers as if he is reading the sound of birds he heard. Mohammad also regains his consciousness with the sound of bird as his father does. The strong inter-relationship between human and non-human life is presented till the ending scene of the film.

Film is one of the modes of depicting human-nature relationship in the form of visual art. Any form of art, culture including religion, morality, politics and the legal systems are dominated and premiered by the inter-relationship between human and nature. This research focuses on the deep ecological consciousness in Majidi's *The Color of Paradise*. The film highlights the images of ecological consciousness which drives the person to work for the welfare of others. The characters like Mohammad and granny's devotion towards nature and non-human beings is no other than the performance of showing deep ecological consciousness over anthropocentric view points. As H. E. Phan Wannamethee says, "Buddhism and deep ecology belong in the same title because at their core they are both talking about how to be at home in the universe" (qtd. in Henning. 2.). Majidi naturalizes minimal events of ecological consciousness which gives intensive insights or long term deep messages to avoid ecological crisis. The characters of the movie have sense of love and empathy to nature and non-human being whereas the people of present world do not care such insignificant beings and rule over nature to gain power and superiority.

One of the basic principles of deep ecology is that decisive improvement requires considerable change. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting states of affairs will be deeply different from the present. Majidi reveals the fact that all the people throughout the world should have ecological consciousness and learn how to live in harmony with our surroundings. To support this idea he portrays the blind boy, old woman, small children and poor worker who live their life helping others and protecting nature. He further portrays the rich people of the same society who neglects poor people and dominate their feelings over them. It means all the people in the society are not equally sincere towards society and natural phenomenon. The people with ecological awareness as portrayed in the film are conscious towards the relationship between biotic and abiotic organisms and presented to convey deep messages to address global ecological crisis. Whereas the people guided with anthropocentric world views not only neglects the non-human creatures, and also the people of lower living status.

Majidi's *The Color of Paradise* presents the ideas of deep ecological awareness artistically. The protagonist of the film Mohammad and Granny are guided by ecological consciousness which is illustrated through their empathetical deeds. But the next character Hashem is measured for material prospective by the people of his society when Hashem is seeking for new relationship with them therefore Hashem cannot get married. The materialistic mentality created by the people of their society is another subject matter of the film where Hahem becomes the victim of materialism. Material condition is determining force for them to establish their relationship. People with anthropocentric view points cannot consider over spiritual feelings whereas material possession decides their relation.

Through the minute study of the primary text in accompany of deep ecology, researcher has come to the conclusion that Majidi's *The Color of Paradise* is the criticism of the anthropocentric view points deep rooted in human beings. It also criticizes the human dominance over nature to gain power and superiority. It not only focuses on the destruction of natural environment by the people but also the lack of ecological consciousness within human beings. Hence, the text presents the idea of deep ecological consciousness in its character in which they devote themselves in the nature and non-human beings which reflects the concept of wholeness and harmony. Thus, they can understand human nature and human relationship with the earth within the process of creation and continuation of the world. This understanding corresponds with deep ecological consciousness.

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