

Snyder's Vision Of The World As An Interbirth

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Abstract

A lifelong Zen layman, Gary S. Snyder is the Pulitzer Awardee of 1975 and renowned as a deep ecologist, radical cultural visionary, and planetary poet. He has the deepest faith in the material universe as feminine. To some, he is a neo-tribal, reactionary, regressive mind. His poetry appears to be a network of philosophies like pataphysics, process philosophy, Eastern metaphysics, and some see him as a relativist, and others as an eclecticist. But Snyder's poetic vision works especially within the Buddhist metaphysics of which a possible misreading is quite common, but it evidences an enabling capacity to rejuvenate the worldwide beliefs in the mother principle. Moreover, his poetry has been an intricately blended trope for ellipse, nature, consciousness, and philosophies, especially Zen. This paper proposes to take an Eastern view and reexamine how the poet explores the intricacies of life and meanings of human existence in the world as an interbirth. With Snyder, it is fascinating to see this world not as a holistic standard, but as a living throb of interdependent sentience.

Keywords: Zen, process, planetarism, consciousness, interdependence.

I. Introduction

Snyder's idea of 'the world as an interbirth,' first of all, suggests that the world is not an interbirth as a process completed once for all time. This may be understood as a web of interaction and interfusion of the forces and consequences, or an unfolding web of reincarnating energy waves as Snyder and Zen Buddhists would like to image. It would rather evoke a continuous series of births, not external to itself, i.e., not manifestly produced by some extraneous authority. On the other hand, the world of matter undergoes changes and vicissitudes as interborn processes. So, the visible appearance of a thing may not be the whole fixed truth about it.

Snyder's Zen-rich poetry as well as prose writings raise a certain thought of process philosophy and even 'inhumanist philosophy,' as some critics find. Patrick Murphy treats "inhumanist philosophy" in Robinson Jeffers and Snyder as opposed to "Western logocentrism and the Judeo-Christian humanism" (53). The idea that the universe is a process and that this thought is held in the Buddhist worldview is understood from a Western perspective on historical revelation. The confusion as well as disorientation about Snyder's vision arises from an explicit or implicit comparison between an atheistic materialism concocted out of Buddhism and a process philosophy relevant to the socio-historical phenomena. Buddhism has historically suffered, when its no-self metaphysics is laid out as entirely atheistic or entirely nihilistic. To some Snyder's poetry appears to be a network of philosophies like pataphysics, process philosophy, Eastern metaphysics, and some see him as a relativist, when others perceive him as an eclecticist. Snyder's poetry points, of course, to Buddhist metaphysics of which a possible misapprehension or misreading is common. Nevertheless, Snyder's poetry has been an intricately blended trope for ellipse, nature, consciousness, and philosophies, especially Zen. This paper proposes to take an Eastern view and reexamine how the poet explores the intricacies of life and meanings of human existence.

In this context, we may note how Whitehead (1861-1947) the eminent English philosopher makes a brief reference to 'Vedanta and Yogachara Buddhism' under a certain specific category of his process worldview. He classifies the Indian worldview as a category of 'inclusive absolutism', which is contrary to philosophies of dualism and monism known foremost to the West. Thus, the so-called absolutist principle of the East is construed to hold the contingent (conceptually structure, thing, being) as 'dependent' on 'an independent absolute' that is a priori 'the whole,' while the whole is simultaneously 'included' in the contingent. And this process thought underlining simultaneous dependence and simultaneous inclusion being allegedly "popular in the East" makes for "partial truths that are abstractions from the fourth position," which is the "inclusive relativism" held by Western process philosophers as a superior process view (Kakol 209-10). Let us bear in mind the Mahayana premise in Yogachara philosophy, which would not preach the so-called absolute as a priori principle. The East has repeatedly called Yogachara and

Vedanta philosophies to be experientially validated, not merely derived from labors long meditated upon, nor book learnings. An experiential truth means the truth that is supremely proven as the fact of consciousness. In fact, the nature of consciousness has eluded Western thinkers since long; even university philosophers and scientists are equally skeptical of the Eastern order of consciousness. Undoubtedly, the process philosophy is more useful to understand human reality as a process, which is more pertinent to social reality and material world, better processed in the light of the Hegelian thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis. But Buddhism does not teach that the human reality is the end goal toward which the universe aims to materialize constantly. Thus, to straight-jacket Vedanta and Yogachara thought with a mutating and evolving social structure or any anthropocentric phenomenon is a gross limitation of the intellect. A 'grand narrative' which is secured by its center or even the 'little narrative' supported though by its decentered structurality does fail to explain the Hindu-Buddhist order of consciousness.

II. Consciousness and Process

As to consciousness, the view of William James has been academically and popularly appreciated in the West as 'stream of consciousness,' which underwrites the essential idea of flow or process. James has stated: "all experience is a process, no point of view can ever be the last one. Everyone is insufficient and off its balance, and responsible to later points of view than itself" (qtd in Kakol 210). One will clearly notice the fact of relativity here that reality is adorably a process, consciousness is a process, the world a process, and its history a process, which runs always toward some higher state or a prefixed goal ahead. This explanation as such has been satisfactory in the spirit of the West's dominant theology, dualism, relativistic philosophy. Here, we will have to understand that Vedanta or Buddhism does not propound the metaphysics of a graduated evolution along a linear process toward the absolute truth or Absolute Emptiness. As Buddhism emphasizes, the Middle Path is to realize Emptiness, which is not a domain of something or of nothing. To understand the absolute real, an experiential way or consciousness way (of chetna) is adoptable. In the first place, the concept of the Absolute in Eastern philosophies is not to conform to the likeness of an anthropocentric God. The idea of 'absolute' like the idea of 'whole' is not to be conceptualized by binary paradigms of the one entangled with the other. The absolute One is not an

individual element or object to conceive; it is the whole only, not a holistic whole. Therefore, the metaphysical idea of the absolute is not revealed by labored epistemologies, but experienced by a consciousness event. The consciousness event to occur needs the basis of the whole harmony of life, even if taken as a system, but not divided into the body/ mind divisions. Hence, the enlightened sages in the East have always talked of a breakthrough, fundamental and subtle, which is a breaking away, a leap from the plural world of process to the so-called absolute order or principle. In this context, Snyder's poetic lines may formally point to this break as an elliptic gap or silence or a pause to wonder, which will be shortly verified. How then to define or even imagine the nature of this absolute? One may remember the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, the oldest of Upanishads (7th century BCE!), which reveals the most fundamental nature; and it categorically states that the Absolute Real is 'FULL' (Purnam) already and always. And far significantly, the full remains full, if the full is subtracted from it, and the full remains the same, if the full is added to it (opening Sutra). Therefore, a processual theory is too short of measuring or knowing this consciousness. A theory is after the event, whereas the event itself is 'full.' Even consciousness ordinarily available to the humans is not adequate to explain what is the pure consciousness, which has been enunciated as the foundation of the universe. What is the proof? And the answer is in self-enlightenment, not in the master design of the intellect. This proof requires a consciousness event; it does not abide by the axioms of laboratory discovery or mathematical algetherism, which are no doubt useful observations about the material universe including deep or even dark realms of reality.

The idea of relative process or progress is only limited to a surface vicissitude what the process philosopher would like to overstress as truth. Is this truth including 'inclusive relativism' not a mind-driven design? Our intelligence and logic stagger here in respect of a non-process fullness of consciousness since its beginning. In more than one sense, Void is Full, as Buddhist and Hindu metaphysics agree. This absolute gets absolutized mostly in a language that is originally binary, as if it has been an independent locus of authority. On the contrary, this is accessible to the yogic experience, which reveals its concrete and indubitably fundamental character other than what any history-centric measure or dualistic logic could ever reach. Therefore, in Eastern philosophy, the thing (say, determinate) and the process (wave, flow, goal-driven),

the being and the becoming are not two, but one and the same in an unending yet complex play what the Zen Buddhist would describe: the Way is not a way. The Buddhist Sutra says: "The Way is basically perfect. It doesn't require perfecting." Zen would exemplify its simplicity thus: It is like when you drink water, you know how hot or cold it is, but you can't pass its nature onto others (Pine 29). Such insights will be of relevance to Snyder's poetic thought.

The being and the becoming both are one and 'full' always. It looks paradoxical to the logical mind, since verified on the visible material forms. From the Eastern perspective, to understand by a metaphor, a process formed or an event occurred is like a wave arising in the sea for a time, or a wind form playing in the air. It is natural, the vast void is full from which a wave appears and as well dissolves into its fundamental base or ground reality. There is no inertia, no ennui, no energy loss. No amount of sophisticated logic or mathematics would sever any individuated full from the Whole Full or the full field. Hence the world as a 'process' in the sense of its forward or backward motion is best a human conceptualization. But in reality, it is a play, not a growth or progress-driven orientation; and the play itself is the reward being full of great delight, which is to drive home the experiential idea or knowledge. This fact is beholden to by the Yogis and Lamas. This notion of delight may take a while to treat with reference to Snyder.

It is already observed that Zen thought based on Madhyamika metaphysics does not admit of God as the highest principle of the world. A few of the prime premises of Zen that inform Snyder's poetry may therefore be discussed now. The Zen metaphysics asserts that the phenomenal world is impermanent (anatta) and exists by 'the principle of dependent origination' (pratitya-samutpāda) which proclaims that the coming into existence of a thing is dependent on the coming into existence of others as interrelated things (Radhakrishnan 1999: 371). To quote the Eighth Dalai Lama:

Understanding interdependence, we understand emptiness,
Understanding emptiness, we understand interdependence.
This is the view that lies in the middle,
And which is beyond the terrifying cliffs of eternalism and nihilism.

(qtd in Ricard & Thuan 63)

The view is that everything is empty of essence and that there is no God, no soul, no-thing, no nothing; that there is only the Void, the Emptiness, which is beyond 'terrible eternalism and nihilism.' And Snyder finds spiritual strength and reason for his poetry in these Buddhist convictions. No need for overstressing the fact that Snyder had submitted to Zen practices for a decade in Japan. Snyder's Buddhist metaphysical tenet "no self in self, no self in things" exemplifies a mind that is in love with pure Zen. Zen's iconoclasm (its iconoclastic armory is inexhaustible) staggers the ordinary mind with its witty paradoxes and negativistic dialectics. Snyder's creative works have similarly an abundance of negative and apparently nihilistic expressions almost visible in every page (viz. alone in *Turtle Island*: more than 39 times). However, his use of the negative is meaningfully significant and shaped by the Zen logic. The expression 'no self in self' ordinarily confounds, contradicts and scandalizes the common sense. But to the Easterner, as it is taught by the Buddha and corroborated in Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on Relativity', all our concepts and theories of essentialism have been reduced to absurdities and thus indirectly establishing a negativistic monism of the real. At least Snyder a Zen-practicing poet of America could boldly and clearly speak of 'no centre' premises in Buddhism by a time, when academic philosophers and postmodernists in the 1970s were busy disputing and cracking Derrida's radical deconstruction as to critiquing structure or center. To speak pointedly, no idea of the 'centre' is viable or ever entertained in Buddhist metaphysics and belief; and this concept is million years old before some postmodernists could wrap it up in semiotic logistics or language game in the late twentieth century. Nevertheless, this spirit of Zen is assimilated by Snyder subtly into "It Pleases" (TI, 44):

And the Centre,
The Centre of power is nothing!
Nothing here.

The fundamental meaning of every line is 'here': the center to imagine, its power to feel, its 'nothing' is all to enunciate the sense of 'here'; all is empty of essence. The power center is not construed as absent; its reality is 'empty' rather of meaning, of logocentrism, of holiness, of unholiness, of the human mind. And the Emptiness is here-and-now. The use of 'no' or 'nothing' in Snyder does not mean the direct or complete opposite of what is generally conceived as positive; thus 'no-

self' does not imply merely an anti-thesis of the Self, in the manner of an evil opposed to a god. Here, any idea of polar dichotomies is neither evoked nor imagined. What is indicated by this epithet "no self in self" is the pure fact of Emptiness. Rather than being a state of pure absence or nihilism, the Void, according to Buddhism, is pure fact (even universal) as gravity is a pure fact at our level of the cosmic law; it is the self-existent reality, which is active, however inaccessible to the intellect. This is an inaccessible truth the ancient Veda declares to be approached by a method of "Neti, Neti" [not this, not that] (Panda 329). Probably consciousness experience (better not mystical experience), more than intuition, can help us with direct insight into Emptiness which is conceived in Buddhism as the Original Ground of all things and the universe. In this light, by 'no-self', Snyder does not imply the anti-self, or not-being which is again a self in some form, and which can be related to its not-self ad infinitum. Therefore, 'no-self' points to Sunyata, which cannot be mentally conceived or rationally defined, as it does not belong to any category that man has ordinarily seen, known, or invented. It is only accessible as pure experience to a believer or to an initiated practitioner as enlightenment; for example, a Buddhist monk or a Santana seer is witness to the truth. According to the Mahayana Buddhism, Nothingness or Sunyata is not a metaphysical category, but an ineffably pure state indicated by its synonymous terms: Suchness, 'the Original Nature', Tathatā, Such-nature, 'no self' (Capra 141-2). However, the doctrine of 'dependent origination' or the principle of universal relativity (beyond social or material relativity) points the way to this state.

And this idea of interdependence has informed Snyder's poetry. In the poem "On San Gabriel Ridges" (Turtle Island) the poet begins with his "dream" but drifts exploring into the intricate, interwoven zones of the human, the animal and the material knotted together.

O loves of long ago
hello again.
all of us together
with all our other loves and children
twining and knotting
through each other
intricate, chaotic, done.
I dive with you all
and it curls back, freezes;

(TI, 40)

Snyder is particularly conscious of the fact that in this living process of “twining and knotting through each other,” no humano-centric goal or ideal is purposely reached, nor is it projected. He affirms that we are here because “all of us together” have made our existence possible “with all our other loves.” Out of the poem there emerges its significance that all of us play the way sea waves curl and uncurl (‘the laws of waves’), the way ‘the wall of a canyon’ lies interlaced with all other things, significantly as ‘clear and sweet as long ago’; and there is no center to find anywhere. What is liquid and what is solid in the world are here with us, and we are in them intricately intermingled. And more, we chaotically embody and enfold each other, without losing into a meaningless lawlessness, for ‘chaos’ manifests the metaphysics of a higher dance in which mechanical reason is gone absent. After all, to the Buddhist and the Hindu, the metaphor of chaos is not a scare; it is ever-pregnant with fresh tendencies, new beginnings, sartorial states, unlocking of consciousness. All what is being done is our life of a co-existing, co-extending harmony, which attests to change and continuity, freedom and sweetness. And what is the meaning of it all? The poem answers elliptically: we are “woven / into the dark” intricately and chaotically. What is the meaning of a squirrel when its hairs and bones are “crunched tight and dry” in the belly of a fox? There is no human explanation to satisfactorily answer a willing destruction or an unwilling self-ruin; but in this ‘dark’ interwoven state of our co-existence, all of us together are here yet. In the ordinary sense, what is apparently meaningless is indeed the ground of our being. Ultimately, everything is ‘empty’ of essentialist meaning. For the Buddhist, this is rightly the true state of Sunyata that asks for nothing, that imposes nothing, that denies nothing, that promotes nothing, that holds to nothing.

In the same “It Pleases,” Snyder states a few pages later that there is no center anywhere and that the sky, earth and bird are “idly interlacing”.

And the center,
The center of power is nothing!
Nothing here
Old white stone domes,
Strangely quiet people,

Earth – sky –bird patterns

Idly interlacing
The world does what it pleases.
(Turtle Island, 44)

The last line “the world does what it pleases” clearly points to a non-anthropocentric vision of the poet in sync with the high Buddhist principle of Sunyata. One can well mark three significant images of center, chaos, and delight, which are particularly set to characterize a different view of life and the universe. Oriental thought has upheld that the world-process of change is a problem associated with ontology at the fundamental depth and not a simple question of the phenomenal reality on surface. Snyder’s wide awareness of this Eastern stance has gone into his creative exploration of the working of ‘universal relativity’. The idea of interconnectedness, interlaced pattern questions our orthodox belief in a center in the universe. In fact, the principle of ‘dependent origination’ itself embodies the very idea of man as a mere part of a vast intricate pattern that the universe is. The Chinese landscape painting of the T’ang era (Charters 489), which projects nature’s vastness with a little spot left for man has likely molded Snyder’s poetic sensibility early in this respect. The image of a diminutive man in a vastly expansive universe is a consanguine Taoist vision, which Snyder too cares to cultivate. But Western humanism is all for a world as process. It is rather a philosophic vision of the East, centuries old, before modern astronomy could only in the early twentieth century come to terms with a universe as boundless, bounded with no God at its center. Sometimes, the poet’s language goes elliptical on ‘power,’ imparting nevertheless the idea of power ‘within,’ which is the same ‘without’:

The power within
the power

without.

(“Without”, TI, 6)

About his elliptical style, Snyder himself said, ‘form – leaving things out at the right spot/ ellipse, is emptiness’ (qtd in Norton 40). At the heart of Emptiness is great delight, as Zen Buddhism believes. The Upanishads proclaim the same truth as Sat-Chit-Ananda. The idea of power here is pertinent in its metaphysical sense. More, there is further no center in ‘chaos’ as there is ‘no power’ in the center; the universe is not to be decentered, since it is without center already and forever. And the universe is not the same one as it was yesterday. The

universe is like a grand free play where all diverse tunes (the human element being a part) play a marvelous harmony. Some would misconstrue it as pataphysics. This aspect of the world tossing up or playing human actions in response to its motion may be seen in "Pleasure Boats" (RW, p.81):

Dancing in the offing
Grooving in the coves
Balling in the breakers
Lolling in the rollers
Necking in the ebb
Balmy in the calms
Whoring in the storm
Blind in the wind
Coming in the foam.

One may quickly cast the above as a Romantic word-painting on nature. Actually, it is beyond this, while it is admitted that Zen Buddhism seeks its blessed moments in responsive proximity with natural landscape. Even if an observer around is apparently deduced from the narration, his unimportance is played out sufficiently. The scene is replete with '-ing' verbs to present nature as an actively performing and living continuity, whereas the observer is inactive and his presence (on the boat?) irrelevant to the ongoing play or drama. The same postulate of ongoing continuity of the world process is marked in the above quoted 'Earth – sky –bird patterns / Idly interlacing.' Note that the idea is of a grand, limitless phenomenon; all patterns are empty, but all patterns are being unfolded in processes which admit of no caesuras, of no central intentions driven by man, hence "idly interlacing," not interlaced permanently in a tie. There is a sense of play to keep patterns internally unfixed and perpetually loose. And more, there is no menace of the time element for an outcome. Again, here between two sets of images a definite relation is made, and at the same time, the form potential and the form evident are not separate. From this, one may also get a sense of chaos which is so pregnant with unknown meaning, not terrifying to the Eastern mind. A specific characteristic of nature is seen to induce particularly a concordant response by a "pleasure boat": the extended meaning of this sea event appropriates the idea that human movements are a series of spontaneous adjustment to the forces and laws of nature. In contextualizing the view, it may be restated that the act of "dancing" is not done in the "the foam," nor is "coming" done in the "breakers" i.e., certain movements of the boat are

consequent upon certain specific forces or natural forms involved in the process. In short, to see from another perspective, reality sets man into a situation, which is already an existential condition (a problem!) to solve and find answer to; its interactive forces potentially mold the responses of man. This is also what science and psychology teach though belatedly what the Hindus' Vedanta and Buddhists' Zen had taught vis-a-vis the deepest level of being to be unraveled with an undisturbed mind. Snyder is well aware of these perspectives through his study of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures and philosophies.

But what is particularly emphasized, storied, and historicized, by human centrality in modern days is the man in action is construed as exemplary, his action as the enunciation. This also underlines the deluded man's self-importance in thinking that he is the central actor, whereas the truth remains that all human action is an effect or response inspired by the interwoven forces of nature, because he is bound to the law of his karma, i.e., the personal karma being part of the universe as a dynamic play of intricate systems; so as to understand that the total universe is a dynamic network of all connected acts, non-actors and actors (Capra, 1991: 100-1). In other words, man is no dot outside the cosmic ecosystem. It is not the anti-humanism that the Zen experience seeks; it is the innate Buddhahood (pure-consciousness depersonalized) that a little human seeks to realize within, the fact of which is adored by Zen.

Critical of the constant human interference in nature, Snyder observes that "our self-seeking human ego" is intolerant of nature and the wild; that "our civilization itself is ego gone to seed and institutionalized in the form of the State" worldwide (TPOW, 92). And the concept of nature as a chaos urging the State to create "order" is a testimony of the ego on march as well as our "self-congratulatory ignorance of the natural world." To Snyder, "nature is orderly"; but man has not cared to understand its apparently chaotic state, which is "only a more complex kind of order" (93). Nature's ruin is to our own peril. However, it cannot be permanently harmed by 'human projects,' temporary fissures notwithstanding. For Snyder the poet, the world is a complex network of overlapping realms, its intricate "weave" of things is believed to be recovering its wild norm after damage. This idea is highlighted in the poem "The Weave" in which while walking on "the Yuba canyon" through

buckbrush, berberia, and water-curling wilderness, the persona discovers:

all the lines sending
realms overlapping

Human projects break their weave,
they re-group
knitting and probing,
don't miss a beat.

(“The Weave”, LOIR, 136)

On the one hand, man's self-centered pursuits have resulted in his own alienation from nature, while, on the other, he is “but a part of the fabric of life – dependent on the whole fabric for his existence” (Turtle Island, p.91). Nature renews and heals by itself, and does not miss to live even the faintest beat of its re-creation.

However, the human self is not conceived with having an insoluble core in the vast network of the universe. Man is as ‘empty’ of substance as every next thing in existence. So, Snyder sometimes is found marginalizing the differences between two categories or zones: the traditional distinctions between the human and the non-living get dissolved into a unified identity which again suggests unity among diversities. For example, in a poem “Anasazi” an image of the prehistoric person in the Native American culture (Pueblo/ Navajo) is created in terms that blend cliffs, earth, Gods, eagle, lightning and sandstone, etc., into a whole image, a great harmony.

III. Between Spirituality and Science

Thus, Snyder's awareness of the doctrine of ‘dependent co-origination’ is found to have informed his creative vision. But at the same time, the reader does not miss in Snyder a persistent echo of modern scientific truth about universal relativity. Snyder's knowledge of modern sciences, especially, of the laws of thermodynamics, the fundamentals of ecology and biology has surly gone into shaping his poetic consciousness. For instance, in “Mother Earth: Her Whales” Snyder's mind may be seen working in interdependent levels:

The whales turn and glisten, plunge
and sound and rise again,
Hanging over subtly darkening deeps
Flowing like breathing planets
in the sparkling whorls of

living light –

(TI, 47)

This is a nonhuman universe; all the images of “deeps”, “whales”, “planets” and “light” together make, and offer to our mind’s eye, a great and living swirl of nature, here sea, which again enforces the idea of a dynamic and rhythmic interplay of different forces. The images of ‘breathing planets’ and ‘living light’ would undoubtedly reflect Snyder’s appropriation of the Tantra tenets of the world’s livingness as opposed to the common notion of the world as dead matter. Tantra philosophy emphasizes pre-eminence of the body and its health; it reinforces all is alive including matter within the cosmic spiral, a breathing vibrating mandala of consciousness. Again, the world of science and the realm of mysticism come into a harmonious blend in Snyder’s “Bubbs Creek Haircut” (MRWE) the idea of which is dramatically enacted through the mythical figures of Shiva and (Blue) Saraswati.

Some flowing girl

whose slippery dance

en trances Shiva

–the valley spirit / Anahita,

Saraswati,

dark and female gate of all the world

In India an ancient land of myths and legends since the Vedic times, both Hindu and Buddhist spiritual pantheons are creatively complicated and at times contradictory, involving the similar origins of Devi Saraswati (Hindu belief) and Blue Saraswati/ Tara (Buddhist belief). In Sanskrit ‘Anahita’ (sustaining support to life and being) is just describing the ‘dark and female gate’ of all life. And when she dances, the world moves from its inactive state into various (beautiful) forms; and ‘a universe of junk’ is washed off.

soft is the dance that melts the

mat-haired mountain sitter

to leap in fire

& make of sand a tree

of tree a board, of board (ideas!)

somebody’s rocking chair.

a room of empty sun of peaks and ridges

beautiful spirits

rocking lotus throne

a universe of junk, all left alone.

(“Bubbs Creek Haircut”, RMWE)

In Snyder's poetic realm, however, some interesting premises of Saraswati are found to be collated and intermingled to produce a new avatar, as it were, beyond the culture's predominant beliefs about the Devi. To note, the poetic sensibility here is stirred playing the material and elemental implications of the Devi and Shiva more than their cultural symbolisms. In one important sense, all goddesses despite their various configurations are one fundamental rhythm that flows like in a wave form, just as all gods are the non-active, self-absorbed and ever-stable origin of absolute power. The Hindu and the Buddhist throughout ages have contemplated many variations on this basic truth, spiritual experience. A creative writer like Snyder the Zen believer is surely to enjoy his point of mythmaking.

Thus, Shiva is the gimpy "mountain god"; "the flowing girl" here is "moon breast Parvati" who is again "the valley spirit / Anahita, Saraswati" and who dances in order to entrance a "mountain sitter," that is, Shiva sitting undisturbed in meditation and apparently indifferent to the world of senses. However, the tight-sitting God starts responding passionately to the soft dance of Saraswati (it is Blue Saraswati as the Supreme Feminine to the Buddhists, symbolically similar as well as dissimilar to the Hindu goddess Saraswati), and the result comes out to be entirely phenomenal: a living world of things is manifested. A mythological interpretation would say that the phenomenal world is created out of the dynamic and rhythmic dance of Shiva, the Cosmic Dancer. And many variations are built on the same theme by introducing Parvati in the roles of an enchantress who seduces the unworldly Supreme Being to create physically perceptible effects. (The Hindu could easily connect to the myth of suicidal daring of the dancer Rati, wife of Kamadeva known for irresistible amorous arrows of love, in order to wake Shiva from his meditation). But its scientific significance, in the present context, is not to be ignored, which is that the apparently stable and rigid world is in reality fluid and dynamic in its inner system. This is more revealing in the light of quantum theory of 'particle physics' which erases old classical distinctions in material physics between "a particle" and "a wave." And by identifying each with the other, the quantum theory further identifies their discrete existence as "complementary" with "the field" as the ultimate reality (Goswami 45). In the contrary but more familiar context, we all know that "the idea of a solid reality has dominated Western philosophical, religious, and scientific

thought for two thousand years,” and this reality as an objectively existing world is “governed by strict rules of cause and effect” (Ricard and Thuan 13). The quantum field reality manifesting the ‘uncertainty’ of concrete location and classification of subatomic particles in motion, which give rise to our material universe of stable laws, is a scientific mystery contradicting the common sense and classical science. The ancient Buddhist spiritual principle claims that the universe is of ‘inessential’ things (Emptiness as the final truth), and the Sanatan Hindu spiritualism claims that the entire world is Maya undergoing vicissitudes every moment without cessation. To agree philosophically with the Eastern spiritualism, it may be said that “our world is one of an endless series of worlds”; all are conditionals and potentials: none being true, none being final, and none is liberatory in the highest spiritual sense (Ricard and Thuan 23). It is strange that modern science, our most successful enterprise supported by billion investments including time and energy will have to speak the spiritual language, at last. Ironically, Eastern spiritual science demands no investment, or better say it demands an investment of the mind only.

Let us take a look, in the present context, Shiva is God imaged as the still-sitting mountain, and Parvati is the daughter of mountains, full of motion and dance. Well, as the quantum field phenomenon is explained by many imaginative aspects or actions of electron, now looking nearly like literary and digital film stories, so may the classical divisions between names like Shiva and Brahmā or Shiva and Parvati be storied in fascinatingly varied manners. This is poetic fusion, not to breed any confusion. But the fact remains that they are the same foundational unity, if they are identified by the principal ‘creation principle.’ Snyder’s creative mind may be working out an intermingling of the myths of Brahma-Saraswati with the Shiva-Parvati relationship, as once Zimmer in his philosophical study has referred to the creative spirit of the Hindu mind on a temporal plane (Zimmer 314-31). After all, in Hindu philosophy, different names and forms (nama and rupa) are contingent shadows, while the bottom reality is one, thus further clarified as the single unified consciousness. Ricard comments, “The universe and consciousness have always coexisted and so cannot exclude each other” (Ricard and Thuan 42). Now, the poet’s attributes to Parvati are as such “flowing girl” and “slippery dance.” Her image is none other than a fluid form of the mountain itself. Her identity as “the valley spirit,”

a mountain daughter, consolidates this idea. This amounts to repeating the same Eastern thought which obliterates the usual binary oppositions between an object and its ground reality, a wave and the sea, a 'particle' and the 'field'; and re-establishes the ground unity and immanence of the absolute reality.

The observable dualism vanishes as soon as Shiva becomes the valley and Parvati "the valley spirit" as the wave – rhythm of the valley. To put this in turning around, Shiva the Quiescent One waves himself into the dancing form of Parvati, the dynamic principle of Shakti; and in consequence a new creation emerges. One may also stress that Parvati is a lilting state of Shiva. The dynamic, intertwined form of Lord Shiva as half-male and half-female (Ardha-Nārishwara) is to be another overwhelming facet of this spiritual thought. This can also be understood as the One which trembles and its self-kinetism ripples out into many forms. All this is briefly an extension of the ancient Eastern thought that the phenomenal forms of the universe are but apparent and contingent ones, while the ultimate reality remains one and whole, and of course, the least explained. One deeply wonders if science is not worth its name only understanding and deciphering the deep structure of myths and symbols in its exact mathematical terms. This idea of the One as the self-sufficient and regenerative principle is echoed in Snyder's "No Matter, Never Mind" (TI, p.11), which reiterates Zen:

The Father is the Void
The wife waves

Their child is Matter

The poem's title is a paradox, for on the surface, it sounds like never mind, pass on. But it is inflated also with the classical opposition between mind and matter, while enhancing a Zen philosophy to suggest: if there is no 'matter,' there is no 'mind' possible and vice versa. This idea of mind can be so vastly cosmic and intrinsically present in nature. Dogen once said: "I came to realize clearly that mind is no other than mountains and rivers and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars" (qtd in Loy). This mind reiterates far beyond the thinking, self-pleasing and ailing mind of man. Apart from reinforcing Zen mysticism, Loy has tried to perspectivize 'nondualism in ecology' driven of course by Buddhist thought. In the cute song above, "Matter" (stable form) is created out of "the Void" (Emptiness) in consummation with "waves"

(fluidity/ Female), that is to say, the Void as the Formless – One makes it with the wife who is the wave-form; and the child ‘matter’ is born. Thus, matter is like an effect which is contingent, as Eastern metaphysics understands, and as such, it cannot be the fundamental basis to life. If it is so, matter is born out of the Void that is purely consciousness. Science cannot express this otherwise: The Void trembles, and what is created is matter.

Therefore, Hinduism claims of the Brahman just as Buddhism reclaims of Sunyata proclaiming that the ultimate nature of the universe is ‘pure consciousness,’ which is not an epiphenomenon of matter as classical science or Western philosophy might hold relying merely on empirical evidence by objective behavior. However, the new age science based on subatomic particle reality confounds the stable truths of dualism held sincerely by classicists in science even. The spiritual East holds: “pure awareness, the non-dual knowledge of the ultimate nature of both mind and phenomenon, beyond all concepts, is a quality of enlightenment” (Ricard and Thuan 36). This radical metaphysical position of the East is outright dismissed or ridiculed by scientific communities both of the West and the East, until in light of Vedanta (‘Atman= Brahman’), Schrodinger the renowned quantum mechanics scientist braves to say, “Consciousness is a singular the plural of which is unknown” (87) which denies dualism and relativism of all kinds. But to any scientist till date, to hold that the world is conscious or consciousness itself is a most monstrous fantasy, hardly worthy of a wink’s thought. It is because, the belief that the universe and the mind are endless and empty confounds their contrary principles and objective laws; or otherwise, their understanding of consciousness continues to be a dualism principally issuing from a center, which is manifestly the anthropocentric self (man as the instrumental measure). They are yet to acknowledge that all sophisticated tools and methods of inquiry being dead, material, and mind-driven have no clue to consciousness, with man’s conscious mind itself being a brilliant mode of dualism.

In the context of Snyder’s poetry cited above, Shiva and of Parvati, some clear relations of the Void (non-action/ nothingness) with Shiva and of Blue Saraswati with the wave-form wife may be made. Matter which may be seen as samsaric stuff turns out to be the phenomenal form and is distinguishable from the Void in appearance, while the essential fact remains that the Void and the Waves are

inalienable as a unity, an undivided reality, pure unity or absolute whole. A new creation thus comes into being when the Real One stirs or makes movement against Itself. One may associate the Tantric imageries of Shiva and Devi with Snyder's Emptiness and the dancing motion, which also invite analogy with Samkhya personification of Purusa and Prakrit (Zimmer 329-31). One does not even miss here the relevance of yin and yang principles (Capra, 1984: 96-9) of Taoism which combine continuously along their changing interplay to create new things.

IV. Conclusion

Zen Buddhism as a central interest in Snyder's creativity is an epitome of Eastern thought. One is the Kegon school of Buddhism of which the Avatamsaka Sutra of Mahayana philosophy proclaims the unity and interrelation of things by conceiving the universe as a vast 'Jewel Net' in which all are related "via a web of reincarnation" or, in other words, they are "interborn" (Snyder 1990: 97-115). It is as the ancient Vedic cosmology holds, which Buddhism creatively appropriates then, that the image of the world is an intricate net (Shakra/ Indra's Net) where "we are all jewels," all being interpenetrated, metaphorically and mystically imaged as knots (Malhotra 4; 15-16)

The other relevant influence on Snyder comes likely from thermodynamics and relativity of modern science, which too prove the world as interconnected and interdependent. One may be tempted to posit the Western Gestalt concept pertinent to music, psychology, and material structure to lend reasonableness to the above intricate knot. True, Gestalt proclaims the idea of 'all things hanging together.' However, in one specific and fundamental aspect, its conception does fall short of the Buddhist mark, that is, when the Gestalt theorizes that the whole cannot be experienced in the discrete parts constituting the whole, which the deep ecologist Arne Naess points out (Naess 59). Thus, in this light, the 'inclusive relativism' of the process philosophy would fail to address this critical issue. It is Zen Buddhism which stoutly celebrates that this whole is in the parts. As said elsewhere, the Atharva Veda metaphorizes the universe as a boundless net-like order (Indra's Net) held together with countless jewel points (knots), each jewel reflecting the other knot simultaneously, and essentially showing the same Atman all the way (Malhotra 4-5), which proves that truth, consequently. The One is the

ultimate unity with all its parts hanging as woven pendants, though essentially temporal, hence illusory. Buddhism would recreate this symbol significantly to suggest a distinctive universe (Indra's Net) without the soul or God (as traditionally conceived) at the center, thus, an interborn no-self samsara. In this regard, Snyder's poetic style playing ellipses and pauses is a poetic moment also to let the conceptual mind jump to the Zen vision of the interborn.

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