Third World Critiques
(of western environmentalism)
Guha argues for two claims:
(1) Deep ecology is peculiar to the West.
(2) The spread of deep ecology to other cultures will bring severe social consequences.
Four Tenets of Deep Ecology

(1) Emphasis on **biocentrism** and the primacy of the anthropocentric/biocentric divide.

(2) Emphasis on **wilderness preservation**.
   Three causes of this:
   (a) Historical: continuing the Pinchot/Muir struggle
   (b) Moral: consequence of **biocentrism** (saving species for their own sake)
   (c) Biological: importance of **species diversity**.

(3) References to **Eastern spiritualism** (self: from ego to all)

(4) Views itself as the **vanguard** of environmentalism.
(1) Too much emphasis on the anthropocentric/biocentric distinction.

Deflects attention from the primary causes of our ecological problems: militarism and over-consumption.

“Neither of these problems has any tangible connection to [this] distinction.”
(2) Too much focus on wilderness preservation.

Preservation is …

• a direct transfer from the poor to the rich.
• not key to protecting the environment.
• a kind of **imperialism** by Western biologists.
Criticism of those Tenets

(3) Misuses Eastern spiritualism.

• The appeal to Hinduism is purely opportunistic.

• Pre-scientific knowledge is accumulated wisdom of what works with nature; it has nothing to do with spirituality.

• Eastern Spirituality “serves as a vehicle for Western projections.”
(4) Deep ecology is not radical.

- At best, it is the radical wing of the preservationist movement.
- Enjoyment of nature is an integral part of the consumer society.
- Deep ecology views environmental protection as a “full stomach” phenomenon and equates this with wilderness preservation.
Real Radical Environmentalism

(1) German Greens
   Four pillars of the Greens: ecology, justice, democracy, peace.

(2) Chipko (literally: “embrace”)
   These are the original tree-huggers, a movement of women in India who fought deforestation in the Himalayan foothills. Began in the early 1970s.

A truly radical environmental movement will focus on:

- Appropriate technology
- Alternative lifestyles
- Peace/anti-militarism
Maria Mies (born 1931), a German professor of sociology (Univ. Cologne), has worked for many years in India.
The “Catching-Up” Model

(1) Traditional “Development” means: working towards higher consumption.

(2) Underdeveloped countries need to “catch-up” (Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, 1960)—but this has never panned out. It is a myth.

(3) The “catching-up” strategy assumes that industrialization, technological development, and capital accumulation is all that is needed.

(4) In fact, the “development” of the West required colonialism.
“The poverty of the underdeveloped nations is not as a result of the ‘natural’ lagging behind but the direct consequence of the overdevelopment of the rich industrial countries who exploit the so-called periphery in Africa, South America, and Asia. In the course of this colonial history, which continues today, these areas were progressively underdeveloped and made dependent on the so-called metropolis.”

— Maria Mies
Capitalism and Colonialism

Capitalism requires colonies in order to grow. The northern hemisphere colonized the southern.

Other colonizations:

• Humans colonize Nature
• Men colonize Women
• Urban areas colonize Rural areas

These colonial relationships are possible only through force and violence; in the end the colonized adopt the values — their vision of the Good Life — of the colonizers.
This Model is Impossible

• The economic basis of colonialism is to **externalize costs**. To “catch-up” means to “colonize someone else.” (Women are often an “internal colony” of a society.)

• The whole thing is a **pyramid scheme**; it is **impossible** for everyone to “catch-up”.

• “It is impossible for the South to “catch-up,” not only because of the limits and inequitable consumption of the resource base, but above all, because … the gap between the two poles is increasing.”
This Model is Undesirable

• Has affluence made the West more happy? No.
• That “High consumption = The Good Life” is a lie — it is the ideological support for the “constant growth model” of modern industrial society.
• It assumes: There are no limits to growth, to resources, to technological progress.