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SPECIAL SECTION ON ECOCRITICISM

1

Water's Societal Ripples: Ecocritical and Geopolitical Analysis of Subhash Vyam's *Water*

Bala Agarwal

Abstract

Subhash Vyam's works reveal undeniable environmental concerns, which indicates his interest in natural artistic methods such as folklore and graphic representations which reflect the pathetic plight of rustic people. It offers a profound visual narrative that transcends traditional artistic boundaries and delves into the realms of eco-criticism and geopolitics. This paper presents a concise analysis of the artist's depiction of water, examining its multifaceted role as a social, environmental, and geopolitical force. It reflects upon the ecological concepts of the novel with geopolitical implications. It endeavours to highlight the struggle of the rural people to assimilate with the political policies imposed by an invading group. It further offers a geographical blending of human and natural ecosystems involving political policies. Through the implication of ecocriticism and geopolitics *Water* presents the importance of the ecological balance between nature and human beings. Interweaving folklore and graphic representation, Vyam's *Water* illustrates ecological issues along with political conflicts and explains the geographical variations and the movements of people in the world from the marginalized point of view. It is more like a warning to those who neglect the promise of nature. He subtly explains the role of mankind in the destruction of nature and elaborates on the environmental and social injustice in the contemporary era through the angst of the rustic people and the aloofness of the elites. The geopolitical dimension of "Water" becomes evident as it highlights the disparities in access to this precious resource.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, geopolitics, folklore, graphic representation

Introduction

“Water, in all its forms, is our most precious resource. It’s the lifeblood of our planet, and its availability or scarcity can shape the course of nations.”

Ban Ki-moon

Eco-critical and geopolitical literature in English has evolved as an important field of literary study, analyzing the relationship between environmental concerns and world politics. This critical examination dives into the evolution, themes, and relevance of eco-critical and geopolitical literature, revealing how it contributes to our knowledge of the complicated link between the environment and geopolitics.

The roots of eco-critical and geopolitical writing may be found in the larger ecological campaign that gained traction over the twentieth century. While environmentalism was concerned with conservation and action, eco-critical and geopolitical literature evolved as a scholarly subject examining environmental concerns through the prism of literature and literary criticism. Eco-criticism may be traced back to the writings of writers such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, who admired nature’s beauty and raised awareness about environmental issues. Their writings paved the way for literary explorations of environmental issues.

Geopolitical literature, on the other hand, gained prominence during the 20th century as global conflicts and political tensions increased. Writers like George Orwell and Arthur Koestler produced works that reflected the geopolitical anxieties of their time, contributing to the genre’s development. Eco-critical literature investigates a wide range of environmental topics and problems, frequently questioning societal norms and emphasizing the effects of human actions on the natural world. Eco-critical literature often portrays nature as a character with agency (Glottfelty 18) and significance. Authors imbue natural elements with symbolic meaning, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life forms (Glottfelty 18)

Many eco-critical works address issues such as deforestation, pollution, climate change, and species extinction. Authors use their narratives to draw attention to the consequences of environmental

degradation. One of the central themes in eco-critical literature is the examination of the complex relationship between humans and nature. The authors explore how human actions affect the environment and challenge anthropocentric perspectives.

Ecocriticism is one of the modern trends to explore literary work from an ecological angle. Cheryl Glotfelty terms Ecocriticism as:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty18)

Glotfelty adds that “nature per se is not the only focus of eco-critical studies of representation. Other topics include the frontier, animals, cities, specific geographical regions, rivers, mountains, deserts, Indians, technology, garbage, and the body” (Glotfelty 23).

Subhash Vyam, a luminary in the world of contemporary Indian art, has transcended boundaries with his remarkable contributions to the revival of Gond art. His captivating works not only resonate with the cultural richness of his native Madhya Pradesh but also carry profound messages about nature, society, and human existence.

Subhash Vyam was born in the Gond-dominated area of Dindori in Madhya Pradesh, India, in 1970. His boyhood was steeped in the Gond people's rich oral traditions, mythology, and creativity. Vyam grew up in an atmosphere that appreciated and celebrated the earth and its inhabitants. This strong connection to the environment and indigenous culture will eventually serve as the foundation for his creative path. Vyam had a natural talent for drawing as a child, frequently sketching on the walls of his rural house with locally obtained materials. Jangarh Singh Shyam, a prominent Gond artist who played a vital role in popularizing Gond art outside tribal tribes, encouraged and taught him. Under Jangarh's tutelage, Vyam's creative talent blossomed, and he began to acquire acclaim for his detailed and evocative works.

In the early 2000s, Vyam's artistry caught the attention of the larger art world, leading to numerous exhibitions in India and abroad. His unique style, characterized by detailed depictions of the

natural world and the seamless blending of traditional and contemporary elements, set him apart as a visionary in the field of Gond art.

Subhash Vyam's masterpiece, "Water," is a testament to his deep ecological consciousness. This artwork, which weaves together elements of nature and human existence, exemplifies the quintessential Gond art style. Vyam's intricate detailing of flowing rivers, aquatic creatures, and human figures tells a story of the interdependence of life on Earth. It serves as a powerful eco-critical statement about the importance of preserving our water resources and biodiversity. The major concern of Vyam's novel is water scarcity, and how it affects people. "Water shortages can lead to conflict as competition grows for diminishing resources, as any scarce resource on which people depend is likely to become political at some point in time" (Anderson 4).

"Did we take more than our due?" (Vyam), by portraying a story around the elixir of water, Indian tribal artist Subhash Vyam explores the idea of sustainability and social justice in his novel *Water*. Through this novel, the author interprets the element of life and humankind's unquestionable relationship with it. With his personal experience, he draws a framework that demonstrates insurmountable affiliation with water and thus reflects moving international connections. The tale is about a small village and the people who reside there. The people in the village have everything available for their needs except one thing and that is water, which darkened their contentment in everything else. Slowly they developed things helpful for gathering water and soon become victims of the injustice of the conurbation. *Water*, which is part folkloric and autobiographical, hoists the geopolitical and ecological queries.

The geopolitical component of the artwork highlights how crucial environmental diplomacy is. "Water" serves as a sad reminder of the necessity for diplomacy and teamwork among states for handling shared water resources effectively in an era where transboundary water concerns necessitate international cooperation. "Thinking about international resource flows and the relations between democratic peace and environmental security suggests that these simple geopolitical frameworks are inadequate to understand

both the processes of political change and environmental degradation" (Dalbey 1999). Geopolitics is something that is directly attached to geographical features of the earth and shows how it works through variables to shape our society.

Subhash Vyam adds an indigenous viewpoint to the geopolitical perspective as a Gond artist. Indigenous populations usually take the most hit from resource extraction and environmental deterioration. The artwork underscores the significance of engaging various voices and viewpoints in global debates and environmental and water policies.

The profound masterwork "Water" offers a platform for eco-critical and geopolitical analysis. Vyam emphasizes the value of water as a life-sustaining force, the vulnerability of ecosystems, and the geopolitical issues surrounding shared resources through elaborate details and symbolism. Vyam's artwork serves as a potent reminder of the urgent need for group action, diplomacy, and the promotion of indigenous experiences to preserve our planet and guarantee reasonable access to vital necessities like water in a world beset by ecological issues and geopolitical tensions.

Subhash Vyam's storytelling techniques are distinguished by his ability to seamlessly blend traditional art forms with contemporary themes. He draws inspiration from his cultural roots, primarily the Gond and Bhil art traditions, which are known for their intricate detailing and vibrant colours. By infusing these traditional aesthetics with modern stories, he creates a unique visual language that resonates with a wide audience.

One of the most striking aspects of Subhash Vyam's narrative techniques is his adept use of symbolism and metaphor. He employs elements from nature, mythology, and everyday life to convey deeper meanings within his artworks. Vyam's narrative techniques are characterized by vivid and imaginative visuals that captivate the viewer's imagination. His storytelling prowess is characterized by symbolism, metaphor, and vivid visuals that transport viewers into a realm where art is a language of emotions and ideas.

Herein the novel, the writer uncovers a traditional village that is subjugated by the developments and derelict by human greed.

Expansions and obliteration of environmental resources are two sides of one penny. Here, Vyam raises the question of political chaos due to ecological division and that eventually ends up in a hegemonic setup. When it comes to developments, it serves the interests of upstream who have power. Enlargement is a strategic term that will progress with the needs of those who use it and elevate the question of environmental security in the present scenario importance of environmental security has special concerns over politics, and it often specifies the earth in terms of geopolitical chaos. The environmental sanctuary is incontrovertible from global change. Geopolitics and ecological degradation are the two recurrent themes in this novel and the author portrays how they affect two categories of people who are ecologically and economically different.

Geopolitics can be understood as geographical politics thus it entails that the environment will affect the whole political system. "Geopolitics can be well-defined as geographical politics, that it is the impact of geography on the entire political spectrum" (Ates). The effect of geopolitics can be seen through illustrations such as how authorities make judgments focusing on ecological aspects. Political variations and environmental destructions are intertwined in the vast expanse of geopolitics thus it elucidates that ecological traits are the heart of power relationships in political policies. "There is a fundamental opposition between two global powers and that is Geopolitics, precisely" (Dugin).

Geopolitics helps us to understand the world as a whole and suggests the strategic relationships in it. Here, through ecological scarcity, geopolitics portrays a hegemonic setup and the chaos produced by it. On the other hand, functions based on nature are the major functions in this world that help humankind to understand their role in this universe. When individuals intervene in the environment, nature punishes them through a natural catastrophe. So ecocriticism discloses the mandatory interrelation between natural surroundings and human beings.

People who are at cross-purposes with nature are cynical about mankind and ill-at-ease with themselves. Modern man must reestablish an unbroken link with nature and with life. He must again learn to invoke the energy of growing things and to recognize, as did the ancients in India centuries ago, that one can take from the earth and

the atmosphere only so much as one puts back in them. (Deloughrey and Handley 17)

Eco critical and Geopolitical Implications in Subhash Vyam's *Water*

Water explains the process of diplomacy connected with ecological regulations and vice versa. As the community in this novel grieves from water scarcity, it displays that ecological source scarcity can root political and economic division and further lead to political conflicts. Environmental dilapidation will cause political and social instability and produce inter-state conflicts. Thus here it sooner or later develops politically affected migration and it subsequently disturbs other policies. "I live in a city now, but I come from a small village. I'm an artist, and like many people in my community; I had to move in search of work" (Vyam).

As rural people concentrate more on agriculture, a small calamity can affect them negatively. Inadequate distribution and lack of resources led to an unbalanced growth thus it emboldens individuals who reside there to run away for better openings for their sustainability. This human displacement affects the identity of the community because of their long-term social mingling, kinship, and neighbourhood. Apart from ecological, sociopolitical and economic variables, it will further affect international relations. It will later influence every stratum to move and transform thereby affecting entire movements. "We had heard that life in the city was very different. Everything was available there, and it was not difficult to earn money and live comfortably" (Vyam). When people from one lower stratum migrate to an upstream where they can access everything easily it will raise an undeniable economic division and thus it will lead to a future generation with two opposite perspectives. For the elite's development, they strategically bring highly abled people from inferior strata. Thus these individuals from the village become homeless and destitute and they are the ones who suffer in the name of pseudo-development.

Most of the cities in the world face an unavoidable water shortage in this era. Even though they all are well-established, water scarcity is something that is a major threat to humankind. If water shortage is a threat to a well-established city there is no doubt how it

will affect the other strata. Vyam's village is mostly an agricultural area irrigated by rain and also a small lake a couple of kilometres away. Before the threat of industrialization, the relationship of people to their nature and their respect for it was intrinsic. But slowly a vast change occurred in the community's interactions with natural resources and especially with water. Soon, political policies intervened in their village in the name of profitable developments. As water shortage is a sustainability crisis for them, they are influenced to focus on new policies based on farming and their daily needs with more investments. So primarily they raised a well in their village as a symbol for development. In addition to that slow hand pumps and other signs of progress are indicated in this novel: "Over a while, people came up with simple but useful ways of directing water. They dug small canals, letting the water from the lake flow through their fields. Farming becomes easier" (Vyam). Then another big moment: "I remember when the first well was dug in the village" (Vyam). For their ease, they forgot the pact with nature and progressed another marvellous jiffy for them and Vyam marks in his novel as: "later, another great development came to the village: A hand pump" (Vyam).

Even though it was a boon for the individuals they remained unaware of what was going on there, as they were poor and illiterate they were not able to find out the strategy and crooked mind of the upstream. The power-possessing system has approached these poor people, as most of the resources come from there, not with an eco-friendly aspect but for their political stratagem thus these movements are contemporary. As water scarcity eventually produced these rural areas with unstable authority and human displacement to more developed areas, we can cognize how the geographical features have an emotional impact on the individuals in this world. Accordingly, geopolitics propagates much pertinent as it unites geographical features with how an individual transfers in this universe. *Water* explicitly implies this through the gradual displacement of the author from his origin to the neighbourhood. As the city has more promising situations and more suitable climatic conditions people reach out for these luxuries leaving their legacies. When he moves to the city he becomes aware of the power and political regulations, there he has running water in his flat but it is only available when the tank is full.

On the other hand, people with power enjoyed all the luxuries nearby, they could have those with assurance. The hegemonic setup is implied in this work as:

I was still poor, though I earned money. I lived in a small flat and missed the freedom of living in the village. The building I lived in had two huge water tanks up on the roof, and we had running water in the house, but only when the tank was full. In my neighbourhood, we often went without water, although not far from us there were rich houses with lawns and swimming pools. I discovered that you could buy water if you had money. (Vyam)

When rich ones attained their power over the accessibility of things rural individuals remained marginalized and through settlements for the urban the lower strata had to bear the burden. Despite collaboration for the crisis of their fellow being the privileged clamour to control them through various undertakings. Herein a group of inferior communities develops around the wide enlargement of the city and becomes victims of the drought, on the other hand, the elites exploit the abundance of water. When the city continuously develops and utilises a wide range of power whereas rural suffer. A most interesting example of this hierarchy can be seen in the novel when Vyam says:

However, a few roads and bridges appeared, and some of the houses got electricity...nothing very big, but they were welcome developments. Still, I have to say that the wealthier families in the village benefited from these changes, while the others continued to live in the old way. (Vyam)

Thus water politics of rural is another major instance of geopolitics in that they gather water for their needs from a small lake which is fed by a river and eventually which is undertaken by the elites. Privileged tries to exploit the lower strata for their strategic developments and people. In the contemporary era, the ones who possess power will try to exploit people below them. The major concern of geopolitics can be seen in this novel when the city begins to control the resources and thus begins bargaining between two spaces. They developed a plot to construct a dam across the river that fed rural individual's lakes.

I discovered that there were plans to build a large dam across the river that flowed upon the hills. This was the river that fed our lake, so what would that mean for us? No one knew for sure. It was all everybody

talked about. The village headman said that the dam was for making electricity for the city: could that be? Why did they want so much? It seemed greedy, without thinking about how and where it all came from. (Vyam)

In this world, most of all the large rivers are dammed in the name of development. However, it will never provide good to the local people or the rustic ones, so the large dams are raised as an ecological disaster. In this work, the dam will be constructed for the elite people for electricity but it will produce a contrary effect on the village. This dam which is to be fabricated across the river will subsequently submerge the village thus it will cause large-scale migration and glitches regarding rehabilitation. Environmental impact and the sustainability crisis are the other two major problems generated by dam construction. Here the significance of water rights becomes indubitable thus it stands out as a vital bargaining tool. It will make the life of the poor people difficult as they become landless and separated from their community thus eventually becoming estranged from their traditional way of life. Later these inferior sections lose their command over their land and they will come under the pressure produced by the mainstream thus their condition becomes more vulnerable because of unemployment and poverty. These migrated people will become part of expanding a particular sector for themselves with little wages and protection. In consequence, a wide range of haze faces can be seen in the lower strata. The dam is for the urban elites and not for the rural but ultimately the problem is to the rural and they are affected. At that point, the author remembered folklore which is about broken deals and consequences. That implies that in our mindless push to harness nature's power, we might lose our place in this universe.

We need nature's water, sun, and air to survive, but she does not need us. She is generous to us, but she has some conditions, and we have to respect them. The ring in the story stands for a bargain that the sisters made with the lake- a promise that they then broke. When you go against a bargain and become greedy, nature punishes you, as the lake did with the sisters. Her laws are very strict. You cannot exceed your limits, or take more than what is due to you. (Vyam)

Conclusion

Subhash Vyam's *Water* is one of the celebrated novels which is closely connected to the environment. *Water* is an outcry against the unending exploitations of nature by humankind in the name of progress. The author claims that the unconsciousness with which we shamelessly and greedily exploit nature will consequently end in our extinction in this universe. In this novel, folklore has a special significance because it is something derived from nature and it has the power to articulate things directly to human beings. Thus using folklore as a medium to interact with people Vyam exposes the outcome of the exploitation. Folklore explains the aftereffects of exploitation through simple stories so that it performs as an influential instrument to make people aware of the importance of the preservation of nature.

Geopolitics is the interrelation between geographical features and these features' influences on power relationships and people. And, emphasis on this theory in this novel illustrates more value and meanings to it. From the very beginning of this world, geography and the people are interdependent. One cannot withstand without the support of the other. There evolves the significance of geopolitics in the contemporary era as it deals with the geography of land and its effects on politics. Geopolitics is closely linked to the environment so that, from the very past to the contemporary scenario, it succeeds in covering a safe space for it. More precisely, the concept of geopolitics acts as the core of Vyam's novel *Water*. Thus, Vyam's novel denotes the idea that communities and human beings are all related to each other by our dependence on nature. So he conveys the matter that a small variation in geography can alter the entire functions of life in this universe.

Water implies the impact of geopolitics within it. As the individuals in the author's village are closely associated with nature, we can see how harsh geographical variations affect them. Punitive environmental discrepancy affects almost all their policies. The adverse situations they faced by these variations can be seen from a wide range of examples. When they organize their policies following geographical factors to endure denotes the impression of geopolitics. The drought was one of the major crises that existed in that village.

Thus we can see how the individuals in that village make new methods and decisions concerning those natural topographies to progress their lives. From the first well dug in the village to the last decision of the government to build a dam will refer to the geopolitical aspects. Migrations, their small developments, new policies, and their acceptance of the power and greed of the city possess the geopolitical elements in it.

With the existence of geographical politics, there will be political conflicts within the people. When there are political conflicts there will be power conflicts and the probability increases when one group is subdued to another. People who have more power and money will continue to enjoy the resources available and on the other hand, the other strata which are considered to be inferior remain the victims of the elite's enjoyment. Whenever there is a hegemonic set the lower strata will suffer and the trauma they faced once will hand over from generation to generation. As they were poor and closer to nature they are not capable of understanding the strategies and will remain under the privileged. Because of this hegemonic set, the inferior people were denied access to power and progress.

In *Water*, it is evident that the individuals who are not privileged are the ones who suffer. They have no voice in the hegemonic system and have to bear the burden of the city. As they have a scarcity of resources they are succumbing to the policies and political control of the city. Geographical features particularly give the individuals certain advantages. The city has numerous ways to accomplish its needs and is economically powerful. So when environmental adversities destroy a group of people both mentally and physically they will gradually remain under the control of the powerful ones. These pathetic conditions of the inferior strata can be seen in the past, present, and future. Because we have an undeniable bond with Mother Nature the variations in it will vary our lifestyle too. So that it will directly affect the people who are so close to nature.

Water is about a community that is so close to nature, it is about individuals who once made an honest pact with nature. So they are considered to be second class and are a threat to development. However apart from choosing an epic to portray the sufferings of

these poor people, Vyam uses the small but powerful ecofriendly folklore to imply their life.

Epics are always considered as the standard form of literature and people think that it has more content than any other form of literature. Human beings always value things which are said to be standard and powerful. For them, all other simple forms are local and with nothing particular in them. They never try to understand the hidden meaning in it rather they only try to devalue them and destroy them. Because of this reason, Vyam chooses folklore which is the traditional beliefs and stories of a community or people. More than epic, folklore can exclusively inform the individuals and can imply our unconscious turn towards the environment. Folklore can exist only with nature because it is derived from nature and thus it is one of the earliest forms. They perform as the mirror to the past and help one to view the workings of the present scenario.

When the author employs folklore in the novel it is a hope that the individuals will reconstruct our beliefs and primary values. As it is simple, every social group, no matter how powerful or minor, will easily recognize the moral lessons expressed in it. Folklores contain the key values of those poor people and will sort out in front of everyone the true values of these people. By using a folk tale, Vyam implies that this folklore is meant for us to use, to follow.

Folklores are the traditional beliefs, customs and stories of a community passed through the generations by word of mouth and will indicate a particular place, activity or group of people. "Most folk stories embody the hopes and aspirations of the majority of people in the society and are used to transmit and preserve cultural values of the group" (Shoniwa). It will allow people to give meaning to their lives and their surroundings. As it is more close to nature it will make clear sense in people about their connection with nature and will produce an opportunity to learn more about human experiences. "Storytelling and collective reflection can enrich efforts in environmental restoration" (Ghuman). When it comes to graphic representation, which is more authentic and has the audience thereby it can reach beyond all barriers. Graphic novels are probably the most diverse areas of children's literature. "If you do not take graphic

novels seriously, then you do not take contemporary literature seriously” (Murel). It is proficient in raising awareness about issues.

Vyam’s novel *Water* is a warning for the human kinds or in other words a requiem for nature. Through this novel, the author advocates the need for mutual co-existence. Thus this novel gives the impression of the understanding of the environment and declaring companionship and harmony. *Water* reflects the importance of our genuine love for nature and commitment to Mother Earth. Using folklore as a strong property Vyam denotes what is natural to us and what we are doing too. We, humankind need to fight for our necessities rather than exploit the ground resources for our greed. Nature is our mother which will offer consolation for our bleeding heart but if we do not respect nature it will make us bleed. Thus this novel serves to the relevance of the environment and cultural significance of things that are close to nature. The novel illustrates the wide immense power of geographical features in shaping the movements of individuals around the world. The analysis of rural individuals and their attachment to nature, socio-cultural conditions, geographical variables and movements of people explicitly portrays the scope for geopolitics in the contemporary era.

Along with Vyam, there is a cadre of other contemporary visual storytellers who, like Vyam, are pushing the boundaries of storytelling through art. Nidhi Chanani, an Indian-American artist, excels in using visual storytelling to explore themes of identity, migration, and belonging. Her graphic novels and illustrations often depict characters from diverse backgrounds, providing a glimpse into the complexities of multicultural experiences. Shaun Tan, An Australian artist and author, Shaun Tan has created a distinct visual language characterized by surreal and otherworldly imagery. His narratives often transcend language, relying on imagery to convey complex emotions and social commentary. His work, such as “The Arrival,” explores themes of immigration and displacement with profound impact. Marjane Satrapi, An Iranian-born graphic novelist and filmmaker, Marjane Satrapi is celebrated for her autobiographical work, “Persepolis.” Through simple yet powerful black-and-white illustrations, she narrates her childhood experiences during the Iranian Revolution, offering a glimpse into the tumultuous history of her homeland.

What unites these Indian visual storytellers is their commitment to telling diverse and multifaceted narratives. Whether they draw inspiration from mythology, history, contemporary life, or personal experiences, their stories resonate with audiences worldwide. They invite readers and viewers to explore the complexities of the Indian experience, often addressing issues like identity, social justice, and cultural heritage.

"The wars of the twenty-first century will be fought over water."

Ismail Serageldin

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2

Endangered Environment and the Graveyard-Bound Humankind: Romantic Ideals at Savior's Desk

Bhima Charan Nayak

Abstract

A healthy and harmonious relationship between humankind and the environment is of supreme existential interest to both stakeholders. But sadly enough, for some centuries now, there is least in sight the prevalence of any such relationship between the two. There has been witnessed rather a continuous negative attitude of humans towards nature. This negative attitude is manifest in the ongoing large-scale infringement of Nature by the human community. A couple of blinding passions, greed and power-hungriness, have completely taken over the human conscience. Under their effect, human beings have suffered moral decadence and spiritual bankruptcy. Rather than being grateful to Nature and Mother Earth for their origin and upbringing, the members of this supra-intellectual species have gone mad and morally blind. They have turned ruthless ravishers and rapacious plunderers of both Nature and Mother Earth. Their limitless infringements have resulted in serious damage to the environment and an alarming ecological imbalance. Unprecedented climate change, massive-scale melting of ice deposits in the polar regions, menacing rise in the sea level, persistent increase in global warming, and frequent recurrence of devastating natural calamities are the symptoms of the imminence of Doom's Day. Humankind is conspicuously graveyard-bound now and facing a serious existential crisis. At this critical juncture, the Romantic ideals and agenda appear to be of enormous remedial significance for the sustenance of humankind on this planet. With its pronounced spiritual fervour and pantheistic ideals, the quintessential principles of Romanticism plead pertinaciously for maintaining a healthy and harmonious relationship between Nature and the human community for the endearing and enduring survival of the latter on this paradisiac planet. The prime focus of this write-up is on the imperative need for reaffirming and reposing faith in the Romantic ideals for the greater existential interest of humankind.

Keywords: humankind, Nature, environment, infringement, and Romantic ideals

Introduction

The Paradisiac Planet & the Errant Humankind

Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge....

----- William Wordsworth

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

----- P.B. Shelley

The world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body.

----- William Blake

In the entire universe, the Earth happens to be the most wonderful and unique planet. She owes her unique features to the locational slot and advantages to which she alone has been privileged. It is presumably the only planet which has put up a rare and gaudy display of rich biodiversity. The wide encyclopedia of human knowledge and the most advanced supersonic scientific gadgets of the day fail to ascertain if there's any other planet in the entire multiverse which has any living organism. It is by her unique situational berth and advantages, that she has emerged to be the most vibrant and pulsating one in the entire planetary system. Our earth has been exquisitely lively, accommodative and hospitable. It has been the planet of plenty and splendour. Its outer surface is as much spectacular in colours and contours as its inner womb fertile and bounteous in life-supporting resources. Here her air is immensely animating. It is amusingly aromatic and ceaselessly resonant with the soul-soothing music too. Here gushes out nectar-like sweet and nourishing water from her innermost realm through innumerable fountains. Streams keep flowing here with a pleasant murmuring sound. Her sprawling landscapes are lush, productive, and strewn with a wide myriad of flora and fauna. Her waterscapes are awe-inspiringly deep and thronged with innumerable aquatic animals, both big and small. Here the day sky is flooded brilliantly with golden sunrays and the night sky is gorgeously strewn with countless twinkling stars, and bathed with silvery and soothing moonlights. The night sky is also beautifully embroidered with prolonged and flakelike milky-ways. Day in and day out, the air here is endlessly resonant with the sonorous twitters of multifarious birds

and the sweet chirping of innumerable insects. Life is nothing short of the Edenic one depicted in the holy scriptures. If there's at all in existence any such heavenly abode, it is only here on this Edenic Earth. Its two other sites, our imagination and the pages of the sacred narratives are virtual in nature and form. On that count, those two are little inhabitable by our corporeal beings. But the very physical version of such a wonderful and eternal abode has been kept at our easy and free-of-cost disposal for our blissful dwelling here on this paradisiac planet. We have been extremely privileged to live in such an amazing world here on the felicitous premises of our terrestrial home. Our planetary home of plenty, beauty, splendour and infinite treasure has indeed remained the Paradise on the earth. Talking in pragmatic terms and reasoned manner, it won't be unwarranted to say that this earthly idyllic home of ours has indeed been the womb of all our notions of heaven. It has been the foundational scaffolding of or corollary to, all our concepts of heaven and hell as well. Among the myriad classes, categories and forms of living organisms inhabiting the earth, we the human beings happen to be the most fortunate and privileged ones. We happen to be the most fortunate and privileged ones being created to rule over this wonderful orb.

If we go by the accounts of Western Biblical mythology, God created man in His image. That is why, human beings happen to be the dearest of God's all creations. Accordingly, they are made the most powerful and privileged of all creatures. The members of the human community are endowed with extraordinary intellectual faculties. They are made unsurpassable intelligent. They are empowered with superb agility, enormous energy, unwavering determination and inordinate willpower. They are infused with an astounding inquisitiveness. In terms of ability and adroitness, humans are second only to the Almighty God. As the book of Genesis of the Holy Bible depicts, after making man "in His image," God wished him, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (The New King James Version 1). In addition to this good wish, He also bade humans to abide by the Ten Commandments. Among different things to do and not to do, the Commandments tell categorically not to steal, not to covet, and not to kill. While pronouncing His good wishes and the

Commandments, He had expected that the humans would carry out each one of His decrees in letter and spirit without any discrimination. At that original point in human history, God had perhaps never imagined that in the furtherance of their journey of life, humans would turn so abominably sinful and so wholesomely offensive.

A review of human performances reveals that the performers have been very selective and discriminatory in their commitments to the divine biddings. While they have overworked day in and day out in carrying out the divine bid telling them to "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth," they have taken the stand and approach of damn care about the ten Commandments. As a result of their overenthusiastic implementation of the first instruction, the world today is overcrowded with the human population; it is completely occupied, overtaken by exorbitantly greedy and rapacious humans. Human beings have grabbed the homelands of the fish, flesh and fowl. They have rendered their fellow cohabitants either homeless or extinct. But with regard to the implementation of the Ten Commandments, they have shown utter disregard for them (Commandments) by their impassionate indulging in stealing, killing and coveting. In this regard, they have fully yielded themselves to boundless greed, rapacity, and wanton power-hungryness. In the mythological phase of their journey, their defiance of the divine order is manifest in the commission of the Original Sin. In the subsequent nonmythological phase, their wanton lust for power is prominently manifest in the monarchical setup of power exercise and human management. It needs no explanation to understand that monarchy is the supreme form of dominance over both humans and nonhumans. It is worth the mention that this extremely dictatorial and oppressive form of dispensation continued for the longest period in the recorded history of human power-play. It continued in varying degrees and under different names or nomenclatures such as monarchy, imperialism, kingdom and many other analogous nomenclatures denoting despotic power and unquestionable position. The regime implying power dominance, or power play, is still in vogue even today. In the present phase of human history, it is practised in

different forms and manners. Mostly democratic political setup is in currency today. In this new setup, the power centre has shifted from the singular individual to the plural state machinery, to the nation-state, to other corporal bodies like the MNCs. While the nation-state exercises both military and economic power, the MNCs exercise economic/capital as well as knowledge power. To rule supreme has always remained and invariably the common agenda or *mantra*. The chapter on human history dealing with the colonial regime in the past centuries is another glaring example of human beings' innate nature to dominate and rule, their hegemonic habits, power-hungriness, expansionist outlook and lust for wealth. It is an example moreover, of the aggressive nature of humans, of human exploitation and oppression. The point here this presentation seeks to underline is that down the ages, the humans have remained abysmally lusty for dictatorial power. They have been further, extremely rapacious, greedy and covetous to an alarming degree. We the humans have left no stone unturned in our act of being fruitful. We have worked unceasingly and relentlessly in multiplying our race. We have left no ways and means unutilized in filling the earth and subduing it. We have unfurled the flag of our supreme dominance over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. In our mad and desperate pursuits of power and material prosperity, we have left our mother earth shamefully denuded, utterly mutilated and irreparably defaced. That is not the whole story about human greed and covetous temperament. Not satisfied with their plundering the treasures of the paradisiac planet, of late, we have cast our covetous eyes on the other planets and satellites. Had God been aware that His replica, the human beings, would go to this extent in their mad pursuit of power and wealth, He certainly would not have created them in His image. He most probably would have created them differently in a different mould.

There's no doubt that we, human beings, have caused serious damage to our paradisiac planet. We have vitiated its erstwhile immaculate, scenic, serene, and sublime ambience. We have polluted its air. We have poisoned its water. We have brought out extensive deforestation and thereby caused serious damage to this planet's lush and green covers. We have dug deep into the innermost realms of our mother earth. Consequent to our prolonged and intermittent pursuit

of supreme power and materialistic well-being, the environment stands today dreadfully defaced. The erstwhile benign eco-system stands alarmingly affected and imbalanced. The disastrous consequences of wanton human greed, rapacity and lustfulness for power and wealth have already been felt. Many a species of wide biodiversity is already out of existence once and for all. The mighty and rare species of dinosaurs, to cite just one example, has been out of existence for a long. Jonathan Bate, an eminent literary critic of the ecocriticism school, has offered a succinct account of the repercussions of human wrongdoings. In his insightful work titled *The Song of the Earth*, Bate has written,

Carbon dioxide produced by the burning of fossil fuels is trapping the heat of the sun, causing the planet to become warmer. Glaciers and permafrost are melting, sea levels rising, rainfall patterns changing, and winds growing stronger. Meanwhile, the oceans are overfished, deserts are spreading, forests shrinking, and freshwater becoming scarcer. The diversity of the species on the planet is diminishing (Roe 199).

These are the minuscule clips of a trailer only. The full movie of human villainy and its tragic fallouts is going to take place soon unless we undertake some drastic remedial measures immediately. In the mythical era of humans, we have already lost paradise once in the persons of our first-ever ancestors for committing the Original Sin. In the present phase of our existence, there's no doubt, that we are very close to suffering a total racial extinction, which the gigantic species, the dinosaurs, has already undergone earlier. The Doom's Day, the nightmarish mythological prophecy, it appears, isn't far off.

Graveyard Bound Humankind

We, human beings, are undoubtedly the luckiest to be born as the dearest offspring of our divine Father. We have been graced by being accorded a special slot in the great chain of beings. As the dearest children of our divine Father, we have been gifted with intelligence, ingenuity, skill, creativity and inordinate willpower. Even though size-wise we have been made smaller than many other cohabitants on this planet, we overpower and rule over them by the strength of our intelligence and adroitness. In certain cases, we have taken them as hostages by confining them within the narrow cells of our zoological gardens. We, the homo-sapiens, should have been extremely grateful

to God, the Supreme Father, for empowering us with extraordinary intellectual weaponry, and for making our species what and how it is. But the sad part of the journey of our race is that instead of being very much grateful for and contented with being empowered in astounding ways, as the story of our deeds and mindset holds testimony, we have been extremely ungrateful and exceedingly insatiable. An exorbitant power-hungriness and unappeasable greed have evidentially taken control over us. Unappeasable greed, monstrous rapacity, lofty dreams and disquieting desires have taken over us and eclipsed our conscience and rational faculty. As a result, we have gone mad and blind, and we are unable to think in prudent and positive ways. We continue to indulge in negative investments of our talent, our inborn intellectual capital. In quest of infinite progress and prosperity, we have in reality, set out on the path of self-annihilation. In the early part of the Biblical mythological era, when we were given the privileges of a sojourn in paradise, we were allured to temptation, became disobedient and committed the Original Sin. In consequence, brought upon ourselves diseases, decay and death. We lost permanently the precious bliss of eternal youth. The worst of all, eventually, we had to undergo the loss of Paradise. Yet we could not learn a lesson from our past wrongdoings. Despite the exemplary irreversible loss of the unageing youth, of immortality and our heavenly abode, we continue to be under the illusion that we are immortal and invincible. In the modern phase of the journey of our racial life, we continue to pledge ourselves to wanton greed and rapacity. We continue to engage ourselves in the mad pursuit of supreme power and unlimited material affluence. This imprudent yielding to monstrous greed and insatiable lust for power has impelled us to undertake certain measures, which in the long run have proven to be extremely disastrous and made our journey of life graveyard-bound.

As a result of our yielding to monstrous greed and insatiable lust for power, we have indulged in, for instance, grabbing more and more territory, more and more wealth. Following this obnoxious mission, we have stepped out of our habitats and encroached unjustly upon other's territory. We have grabbed the living spaces of our cohabitants and rendered them homeless. There are no creatures of size both big or small, of category fish, flesh and fowl, which have

not been affected by our expansionist attitude and power-hungry passion. In the process, we have pushed many permanently to their graveyards. The most deplorable part of our rapacious tendency and wanton lifestyle is that we have caused a serious imbalance in the ecosystem. We have kept infringing on the precious natural environment. We have gone against the divine scheme and orders of things. We have brought about extensive destruction to the natural ambience and forest lands. We have vitiated incurably the life-supporting systems as well as the natural cycles and mechanisms of resource management. Besides taking illegal occupancy of other habitats, we have also polluted dangerously the entire environment comprising all three domains: air, water, and land. In our ways with Mother Earth, we have wholesomely plundered her, defaced and denuded her in every imaginable way. Our ruthless ravishment of both the earth and the surrounding environment has proven true Frank Buchman's observation, "There is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed" (Ratcliffe 126). It's no wonder, that unjust and unethical human actions have not remained inconsequential. Offences committed so long, so sinfully, and on so massive scale, cannot help being counterproductive. It is no wonder, in the circumstances, the gravely ransacked Mother Earth and the grossly vitiated environment have reacted in the most insurgent and outrageous manner.

The repercussions have started to be alarmingly grave and grim. They have turned out to be very expensive as well. The most pathetic and unjust part of our misdeeds is that, for none of their faults, many innocent and poor cohabitants have been made to pay a heavy price. And in some cases, the price has been too heavy to be borne by the poor cohabitants. Many have failed to adapt to the rapidly changing scenario. They have fallen prey to the adverse consequences arising out of the human wrongdoings. In course of the time, many a species of rich bio-diversity has suffered, to repeat it, complete racial extinction. We have already cited earlier the cases of the dinosaurs. This mighty and rare species is no longer in existence today. Their remnants present in the reduced minuscule form of the fossils have emerged to be a new subject matter for human research. Or at best, we look at and reimagine today those gigantic creatures only on the virtual spaces of the silver screen, or on the monitor screens of our

electronic gadgets not in their actual videography but only in their animated versions recreated artificially. They are in existence today precisely in their fake inanimate state, in the form of mere dummies or picture models. But there was a time at the remote end of animal history when the dinosaurs happened to be one among a few monstrous dwellers on this globe. As the cause of their extinction from the earth, the unbearable climate change is stated to be the principal one (cause). The saddest part of their life story is that, like many other creatures, both big and small, the dinosaurs could not cope with the changing environment. Thus, they disappeared from this planet once and for all. Dinosaurs are not the only creatures to suffer complete racial extinction. Many others are cutting across the diverse spectrum of species who have suffered the same fate as that of the dinosaurs in the still-elongating span of the reign of human invasion, terror and torture. The nonhuman beings suffer casualties because it is their bad luck that they have to cohabit with mankind. They lack the intelligence, resources, know-how and adaptability of the humans. That way, we humans do have an edge over all other creatures being amply gifted with superior faculty, prowess, skill, knowledge and expertise. These superior tools with which we are well armed help us in big ways in our defence mechanism. By then, we can protect ourselves from the menaces of the environmental disorders. Precisely, it is a question of our superb managerial skills and adaptability. But the poor and dullard creatures have fallen easy victims to the toxic external environment solely due to their lower IQ. The predicament of their fate is that we the humans commit crimes and they are made to suffer punishment. We, the real culprits, manage to pick up a safe route and avoid suffering the punishment of our misdeeds by our superior prowess and faculties. Nonetheless, it would be foolish on our part to assume ourselves fully-proofed against all odds and eventualities. No matter, how strong, how well off and well-sealed we are, the stark reality is that we are not all invincible. We are very much prone to danger. As such, mortality has remained the greatest human shortcoming. The unprecedented casualty, that humankind suffered recently from the pandemic known as COVID-19, tells in loud and clear terms, how protected we are and how invincible we tend to be! The alien CORONA virus, the root cause of this fatal pandemic, has disillusioned us with our sense

of vanity, of our false sense of being full-proofed and safe. Notwithstanding our superior prowess, our uncommon strength, our commendable managerial skills, and our incredible advancements in the field of medical sciences, we could not protect millions of our kith and kin from the fatal clutches of the deadly virus under reference. In this context, it is again worth the mention that, this deadly virus is apprehended to be one disastrous outcome of the negative investments we have made in our exclusive and uncommon capital, supra-intelligence, and talent. More often than not, mankind suffers from the problem of plenty – the surfeit of knowledge and extraordinary intellectual faculty and property. Perhaps not knowing what to do with this God-given invaluable gift (human intelligence), we go for investing it in the negative ways. Another example of the negative investment of our intellectual capital is manifest in the so-called defence sector. The mountains of sophisticated, mass-destructive weapons we have produced and preserved are meant certainly not to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, or various fatal diseases. We have produced and preserved those dreadful weapons to fight against any wild predatory animals either. Those are harvests of our intellectual property aimed at wiping out our kindred intellectual foes, the very humans. The extensive casualties they are meant to perpetrate will not remain confined to the human species alone. It will include the myriad species of biodiversity from the terrain of this vibrant and pulsating planet. The trailer of the nightmarish tragedy they aimed to enact on the stage has already been screened during World War II in the two Japanese cities named Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the complete decimation of these two cities, no longer remained unknown, unimaginable or enigmatic, the extent and the severity of disasters such weapons (particularly the nuclear and atomic bombs) shall writ or bring about on the earth!

These destructive weapons produced willfully by spending a lot of our resources in terms of money, time, energy and intelligence are the undoubted indicators of our monstrous nature and superbly devilish mindset. They moreover, corroborate our innate, insatiable, brutish propensity too. They manifest the human tendency to oppress and intimidate others; to rule supreme over others including over fellow human beings. What is most absurd, appalling and confounding about us is that in the face of this imminent, grim and

critical situation, at ease and very conveniently we pretend to be ignorant of the imminence of the D' Day. We fail to realize that we the humans alongside the nonhumans, are on a voyage being boarded in the same ill-fated sinking Titanic. Unless some divine power has grace on us, or, unless some good sense prevails upon us and urges us to undertake some immediate robust rescue measures, we, one and all, are going to have the common watery grave soon once and forever. With no hold on the divine power to turn it in our favour, at all costs, we have to put a break on our graveyard-bound journey by resorting to instant concrete preventive measures.

The Ancillary and Unacknowledged Literary Preoccupations

The hand of humans has remained discernibly instrumental to the history of apocalypse. As already outlined in brief in the preceding sections, right since their genesis, the members of this superior species called humans have remained at the helm of all affairs. They have taken a keen interest in making negative investments of their extraordinary inborn intellectual capital. By such investments, they have made a hell of heaven. The negative investment in human intelligence has reached its highest peak in recent times. Consequentially, the situation they have created today is extremely grim. It is grim but certainly not beyond repair or rectification. It is high time for the community to wake up from the state of its hibernation. The need of the hour is to wake up, explore and undertake prompt and highly effective measures to protect their species alongside the environment on this planet.

The remedial measures are many in number and type. Two out of many appear to be of utmost importance and optimal efficacy. Of the optimally important two measures, one is a religious one and another a literary one. Insofar as the first one (religious) is concerned, it cannot be recommended now in its present state of fanatic high tide. As a matter of fact, at the present juncture, religion is dangerously divided into so many mutually warring and irreconcilable faiths and factions. Under the banner of religion, mankind is more divided now than ever. It is increasingly indulged in coercive irreligious activities. The fundamentalist and fanatic followers of various religious faiths such as the Hindus, the Christians, the Mohammedans, the Jews and many others are now

at/logged horns with one another. In the name of religion, fanaticism and bigotry have taken complete control over the religious arena. In certain cases, it has taken the dreaded turn of terrorism. Being swept blindly by a stubborn and belligerent religious passion, the fanatic factions today fight with one another. Because of its divisive tendency and colours of bigotry, the religious measure cannot prove to be a productive option now. In the absence of a truly redemptive religious approach, we are left with no other but the second (literary) one. The literary one tends to have an edge over all other approaches for many reasons. It is the least partisan. It has no caste, creed, colour and religion. It has mass appeal and it has taken entire humankind into its amusing edifice. Notwithstanding the fact, its credential has never been taken seriously beyond its disciplinary boundaries, by its strong and genuinely humanitarian pose and approach, it has always enamoured the whole of mankind. With its exquisitely artistic visage and empathetic outlook, literary artifice has remained always and everywhere an exceedingly felicitous and astoundingly popular premise. The most important aspect of its enchanting premise is that it operates outrightly on the plane of the heart. It does so for the simple reason that the medium of its operation, words, does have its epicentre in the heart. In other words, the language of literature happens predominately to be the language of heart. The simple reason is that what springs from the heart pierces into the heart. Words in general are the common tool of verbal communication. Discourses of different provinces are constitutive of the common stuff, words. Depending upon the disciplinary nature and content which words deal with and intend to deliver, the discourses tend to be tedious, stark, arid, factual, dispassionate, serious, brain-cracking, insular and resistant. But that way, literary discourses tend to be steeped in high tides of feelings and delicate nuances. In the majority of cases, the heart being the fountainhead of literary discourses, they (discourses) brew and bubble with heartstrings. They are impregnated with the tidings coming from hearts. They have therefore the very feels of hearts. Another most important reason for their powerful appeasement of both the mind and heart is that they (words) are least churned, refined, inhibitory, and spurious or fake and artificial even though they have long been stigmatized to be quintessentially unreal, exaggeratory, falsifying, imaginary and

untruthful. In reality, literature offers a free and un-inhibitory passage and opportunity for pronouncing the unspeakable and expressing the inexpressible. In other words, it always offers a vantage ground for the silent but implosive ideas, for socio-culturally repressed nuances, feelings, emotions and ideas. It is indeed an aesthetic anaesthesia developed to numb bodies, minds, hearts as well and souls. It absorbs all aching elements and sickening pressures from the burdened bodies, hearts, minds and souls. It refreshes the burdened limbs by providing fresh and reinvigorating air. Precisely, literary artworks as a liberating force. Notwithstanding the age-old aspersions on its credentials, it has all along engaged itself selflessly in the service of mankind. Prolonged denial of intellectual approbation has never refrained it from playing the role of the pioneer. Despite long-standing adverse perceptions about its locus standi and role, it has continued to display an exemplary commitment to societal well-being and psychic health. The noted British Romantic poet, P.B. Shelley, is right to observe, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (1962). Literary artists happen to be the conscious points, the conscience keepers, the moral police and the mirror or barometers of the human society. As and when human society has either gone astray or suffered serious setbacks, it is literary art which has voluntarily come forward with definite remedial measures. It has provided the right direction to the human community and steered it out of the decadent situations.

In the era of the European Renaissance, for instance, English literature highlighted vividly the pitfalls of the contemporary individual's obsessively materialistic outlook and mad pursuits of inordinate ambition. The dramatic portrayals of Dr Faustus and the Macbeth couple respectively in the hands of Marlow and Shakespeare, are the befitting examples. The message to human society then and afterwards was loud and clear: the pursuit of disproportionate ambition is counterproductive. To cite another example, the great tragedy, *Justice*, by the modern British dramatist, John Galsworthy, impelled the British political dispensation of the time to bring out important reforms in the matter related to divorce and corresponding judicial provisions. The Victorian fiction, *Hard Times*, by Charles Dickens, to cite another example, powerfully narrativizes the disastrous consequences of the extreme form of

rational thoughts and the insensitive utilitarian philosophy. Moreover, modern novels like *Nostromo* by Joseph Conrad and *Women in Love* by D.H. Lawrence best depict, to use F.R. Leavis's phrase, "the malady of the individual psyche" which turns out to be the malady also of an individual civilization as well as industrial civilization (Leavis, 1955). To come to another province of literature i.e. American literature, Nathaniel Hawthorne, the nineteenth-century American novelist, has exposed human hypocrisy underlying the façade of puritanism in his famous novel, *The Scarlet Letter*. Whether overtly or otherwise, literary art has always and everywhere served human society as a strong dose of antidote to nullify the existing social ills, ailments and evils.

The Rise of British Romanticism

In the eighteenth century, Europe underwent a lot of socio-political upheaval. On a political plane, it was a period of war and revolution. On the socio-economic front, the period witnessed unprecedented economic growth and the rise of capitalism. In his book titled *Romanticism*, David Stevens mentioned such historical changes and the contextual significance of Romanticism. As he has presented it,

War and revolution are essentially dramatic examples of historical change, but other less dramatic contextual factors were also at work during this period, effecting profound and lasting social and economic changes in both British and Europe. Romanticism played its part here too, both as a symptom and as a factor in instigating these deep-seated changes. Crucially, the broadly Romantic period saw both economic expansion *and* hardship through the development of capitalism (Stevens 24).

Such historical changes have brought about significant changes in human behaviour, attitude and action. The changes in human behaviour, attitude and action were not necessarily all along positive lines even though the democratic temper and values received a boost following the French Revolution. Spiritualism in particular suffered certain casualties in the hands of rising capitalism. The era marked certain moral as well as spiritual decadence. About the paradoxical tendency and effects of the historical changes of the Romantic period, Stevens again has observed in the same book, "at the very time when material comfort and security were gaining ground, so too was dissatisfaction with their limitations." The art of the time was

likewise at the crossroads. Marilyn Butler, another scholar preoccupied with the contemporary socio-cultural milieu of the Western world, has observed, "The most obvious feature common to all the arts of Western nations after 1750 was the refusal to validate the contemporary social world" (1981). At this critical juncture, when European society was passing through a difficult and confounded phase of a moral dilemma - whether to go with the wind of capitalism and pursue the material goal or to shun such materialistic outlook and allurements, the Romantic literary art, particularly poetry, intervened in the matter pronouncedly with a rebellious or reactionary tone. The leading British poets of the Romantic school deplored the growing social trends of the time. By their profound poetic vision, they could foresee the negative impacts of the current social trends. William Wordsworth, the principal founder of the British Romantic School, for instance, has expressed his deep dissatisfaction with the mood of the age in the following lines.

The World is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! (Wu 274).

It is well-known a fact that the British Romantic poets were the fostered children of Nature. Their poetic imagination was profoundly nurtured by, in Wordsworth's terms, "nature and the language of the sense" (1974). The poetic sensibility, particularly of Wordsworth, was predominately moulded by the solemn and sublime presence of Nature. The serene and scenic natural environment of his native province, the Lake District, had cast a lasting and decisive impact on the making of his mind and imagination. In his famous poem titled "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," the poet has recorded this fact with a deep note of obligation. The following lines hold testimony to this fact.

... well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being (Green 77).

The poet has "felt" in Nature "A presence" that has disturbed him "with the joy/ Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime/Of

something far more deeply interfused." Moreover, Nature has induced "in the mind of man/A motion and a spirit." According to him, that spirit "impels/All thinking things, all objects of all thought;/And rolls through all things." It is because of the pervading presence of that spirit, admittedly he has turned "A lover of the meadows, and the woods,/ And mountains . . ." In tracing the key Romantic feature i.e. the presence of this divine force and spirit in Nature in the poetry of the poets preceding the great Romantic masters, the noted scholar, Aidan Day, has aptly observed, "Nature is understood as an expression of a divine force" (Day 47).

It is the sublime presence of the divine force in Nature that has been to Wordsworth "The anchor" of his "purest thoughts", "the nurse,/The guide, the guardian" of his "heart, and soul," and of all his "moral being." As an individual being, the poet has avowedly experienced Nature and also poignantly illustrated her in several of his verses as a mother spirit. Nature all along has remained a nodal point of reference as well as a reflection of self – a point galvanized with a moral, spiritual and intellectual aura and order. Thus, Nature does not exist in isolation from an individual being. She stands rather interconnected with the beings in an intricate weblike manner. She communes with as well as affects individual humans in the manner of a magnetic force. It is again the same noted scholar, Aidan Day, who has underlined the Romantic trait, as an inner and interrelated relationship between Nature and human beings. He thinks that,

. . . nature is structured according to the inward motions and transitions of the observing consciousness. The thoughts, reflections and memories of the individual mind are the subject and theme of this verse and nature becomes a token of - is assimilated to the representation of - those thoughts, reflections and memories. Individual subjectivity and nature are, moreover, transcendentalized: they are attributed to a spiritual dimension that is greater than the mere individual and the material. Nature is important insofar as it manifests the same transcendental energy that informs the human mind and at the same time provides an objective, material barrier which allows the individual subject to recognize transcendence without being overwhelmed by it (Day 45).

In those days of increasing materialism, there was a historical necessity for a strong remedial measure. Romanticism came up as an effective remedial measure. Coming under the strong wind of

materialism, the human society of the period had become too materialistic and blind to the greater transcendental force couched in Nature. Romanticism, particularly its poetic block, came up with a bang. It came up not simply to record the individual poets' obligation to Nature for her formidable contribution in nurturing their sense and sensibility but to undertake a much-needed social mission as well – a mission to reform the misguided society of the time. To put it slightly differently, the poets of the time initiated a drive to reorient the European human society towards the greater transcendental force and spirit embedded in Nature. It was a drive undertaken to counter the growing materialistic mindset and gross apathy for Nature.

William Wordsworth is not the one and only Romantic poet who has brought to the fore the spiritual dimension of Nature and the environment. His great friend and to some extent, his mentor as well, S.T. Coleridge, has also taken cognizance of an analogous intercourse between external Nature and human nature. In his famous poem, "Dejection: An Ode", for example, Coleridge has emphatically stated,

... we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud! (Green, 1974)

Unfortunately, the then society was very much oblivious of and insensitive to this seminal correspondence existent between Nature and humans. Wordsworth counted this attitude of the contemporary humans as "a sordid boon." He deplored, "We have given our hearts away." Individually he was well aware of the august and awe-inspiring presence of Nature. But he found society very much insensitive to this powerful and persuasive presence. The poet in him, therefore, lamented, "For this, for everything, we are out of tune,/It moves us not...." Being engrossed in the mad pursuit of material wealth and happiness, the society had alienated itself from the august and awe-inspiring Nature. The consciousness of this alienation in nineteenth-century men had deeply saddened his poetic self. One chief motive and key concern with his verses has been how to restore the lost link between humans and Nature. It has been to bring human society back to the tune and spirit of the reverent Nature. Jonathan Bate is right, "The business of literature is to work upon consciousness" (Roe 200). As a matter of fact, to a fair extent, the Romantic project, especially its poetic quarters, is hinged upon the

motif of consciousness. Consciousness as such has always remained the hallmark or the distinguishing feature of the human species. It is the hallmark which differentiates humans from the nonhumans. The Romantic poets were the poets of Nature. Nature constituted their central poetic motif. To put it in another way, Nature remained the very foundation of their poetic sensibility. To these poets, Nature has been as Aidan Day has aptly spelt out, “the same transcendental energy as informs the human mind.” Romantic imagination in which the entire Romantic project originated and thrived, is likewise very much broad and encompassing in its scope. The world both conceived and captured by this broad and all-encompassing lens is far from being simple and one-dimensional. It is constitutive of a multilayered reality extremely intricate and interlaced. To be specific, the spectrum of the worldview that has emanated from this multicoloured lens of the Romantic mind and imagination is veneered with a prominent streak of spiritualism. Besides, it has a streak of pantheism itself too. It moreover, has a certain transcendental core to itself as well. Nature thus has remained a wide vista of conglomeration of a multiple number of illuminating streaks. The opaque corporeal screen of Nature is radiant with these diverse phosphorescent coatings. In his insightful work titled *The Romantic Imagination*, Professor Sir Maurice Bowra has accordingly written,

The great Romantics, then, agreed that their task was to find through the imagination some transcendental order which explains the world of appearances and accounts not merely for the existence of visible things but for the effect which they have on us, for the sudden, unpredictable beating of the heart in the presence of beauty, for the conviction that what then moves us cannot be a cheat or an illusion, but must derive its authority from the power which moves the universe. For them, this reality could not but be spiritual, and they provide an independent illustration of Hegel’s doctrine that nothing is real but spirit (Bowra, 22).

The great Romantics had the intimations of the persuasive presence of ‘some transcendental order’ behind Nature. They had discerned in Nature the presence of ‘the power which moves the universe’ and they had the realization that ‘nothing is real but spirit’ – the spirit which operationally underlies Nature. In firmly recommending that humans live a life in complete unison with Nature, they had in a sense wished human society to tread on the

spiritual path, to abide by the transcendental order which explains the world, and to honour the power which moves the universe. The divine dimension of Nature is what most of the Romantic writers have underlined. The Romantic imagination is thus very much steeped in the idea of the divine being. It is well pronounced in the following excerpt from *A Vision of the Last Judgment* by William Blake:

The world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite and Temporal. There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Everything which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature. All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, The Human Imagination (Bowra 3).

By the logic of Blake, the human imagination is equivalent to “the divine body of the Saviour.” The point is reiterated in the pronouncement, “The world of Imagination is the world of Eternity.” The “Vegetable Glass of Nature” bears the reflection of the “Eternal.” The vast, sprawling Vegetable Glass of Nature thus turns into a limited sphere though, an arena for pantheism. Nature is precisely the Saviour in His vegetable form and incarnation. By recommending human society to live in harmony with nature, the Romantic legislators sought to protect mankind from its injurious addiction to gross materialism.

Revindication of the Romantic Agenda in the Ecocritical Discourses

For some time now, the world has been witnessing a euphoria of debates, discussions, and critical discourses occurring in academia and other intellectual forums under the banner of ecocriticism and environmental studies. The thrust of these intellectual preoccupations is, by and large, on the necessity for maintaining a healthy and harmonious relationship between human and nonhuman worlds, especially the environmental one. The Romantic agenda has refigured at these intellectual avenues. It's indeed a welcome initiative and the connoisseurs of these programmes have endeavoured to spread ripples of awareness among participants about the supreme importance of ecological order or equilibrium. To a considerable extent, the ongoing ecocritical and environmental

engagements are nothing but corollary to the Romantic agenda. Romanticism in general and the British Romantic Movement in particular has remained so to say, the launch pad of such ecological and environmental studies of recent time. James C. McKusick, the renowned ecocritical scholar, for instance, strongly pleads for “a human community dwelling in harmonious coexistence with nature” (Roe 203). This ideal mode of harmonious coexistence with nature has indeed formed the central argument with so many other ecocritical analyses of the present time. Most of the analyses are at one with the view that human society and Nature, or for that matter, the environment, are “complementary rather than mutually exclusive” (201). In the context, Lawrence Buell, another prominent exponent of Ecocriticism, sounds convincing when he states in his *The Environmental Imagination*, “the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (Roe 200). Keeping in mind this imperative implicated status of human history in natural history, Buell has termed human imagination as “environmental imagination.” Further, by the same logic, he has termed the texts which owe their origin to “environmental imagination” as “environmental text.” We have discussed in the earlier section of this presentation how William Wordsworth has attributed Nature to be “The anchor” of his “purest thoughts.” He has acknowledged Nature to be “the nurse,/The guide, the guardian” of his “heart, and soul” and his all “moral being.” Both ecocriticism and environment studies thus have been the revival of the Romantic agenda. Both Romanticism and the present-day critical programmes of study consider the natural environment to be the sole foundation of all the states of individual human beings: physical, spiritual, emotional, mental or psychic, ideational or intellectual.

Conclusion

The recent revival of interest in the Romantic line of thinking in the academic spheres and intellectual forums is a positive development. But such initiatives are too little and too late. The ripples of eco-consciousness spread by the conduct of such intellectual programmes are too fragile and limited. Such tiny and small-scale measures cannot save humankind from its imminent extinction. They cannot

browse the devastating wildfire in the gutting grip of which our environment is caught and smouldering today. What is needed is a strong mass movement. To counter the existing general apathy and callousness towards the grave environmental hazards, a powerful electrical shock of an urgent and imperative nature is most needed. To save the human species from its extinction, intellectual deliberations must be conjoined with certain concrete and result-insured actions on the ground. Translation of ideas into action is the call of the day. Literary revolution specifically of Romantic nature and objective appears to be of immense importance to the present context. With its discourse being the unmistakable statement of the heart, its spell being mighty, massive and mesmerizing, its innate temper being bouts of emotion, its music and nuances being the heartstrings, its courtship being amorous, endearing and maddening, literary legislation does have a definite edge over all other human undertakings. This is why the great Victorian humanist, Matthew Arnold, has strong ground to harbour hope and confidence in his important essay titled "The Study of Poetry" that in poetry "our race ... will find an ever surer and surer stay" (Enright & Chickera 260). That way, Romantic poetry in particular does score an additional point here for the simple reason that its core issue and foregrounded arguments are very much topical, focused and persuasive to the global crisis of the present time. The project aims to inculcate a culture which prioritizes an unmaterialistic outlook, spiritual values, and love and reverence for nature. Serious and sincere application of its pronounced pantheistic ideas as well as eco-centric ideals in the praxis and patterns of human living will bring back our deeply infringed earth to her originary Edenic state. The seeds of such a beautiful and benevolent culture are in the granary of the Romantic revivals. The sooner the decadent societal and cerebral fields of humankind are tended and the high-yielding literary seeds developed in the fecund Romantic farmhouse are sown the better for the perpetuation of both the species and the planet under reference. By cultivating the Romantic precepts we can make heaven of the ugly and horrendous hell which we have dismally degraded our otherwise paradisiac planet to by our evildoings in the recent time.

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3

Sustaining Sustainability: Re-reading the “Tree Poets” in Malayalam Literature

Betsy Paul C.

Abstract

The concept of sustainability that is ubiquitous now has, as Jeremy S. Caradonna well documented in his book *Sustainability: A History*, has been here for at least some centuries. This paper studies the involvement of Malayalam writers in what is known as the “Silent Valley Movement” or “Silent Valley Protest” in the 70s and the early 80s of the twentieth century. It reads select poems written by poets like Sugatha Kumari, Kadammanitta, ONV, etc., who, at the time of the struggle, because of their active literary and physical involvement in it, came to be disparagingly tagged as “Tree poets” by the supporters of the proposed irrigation project in Silent Valley, an evergreen, ecologically sensitive tropical forest in the foothills of Western Ghats in the Palakkad district of Kerala. The paper looks into the poems from the perspective of sustainability to see how the media of poetry can, with its literary forms, figures, and, symbols, sensitize the public about an issue of utmost importance to the future of humankind. It seeks to discover how proposed “developmental activities” which can damage the ecological balance of the planet are countered through literary means. The paper further looks into the ideals projected in the poems to see how far they correspond to the accepted sustainability goals of today.

Keywords: Sustainability, Tree Poets in Malayalam, Silent Valley Protest, Sujatha Kumari, Kadammanitta

Introduction

The concept of sustainability demands in itself a multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinarian approach for its praxis. The concerned and dedicated efforts of people from all walks of life are pivotal in the proper implementation of, and, achievement of sustainability goals.

For some time now we have listened to doomsday narratives about upcoming climate catastrophes. Yet, we also know that sustained and concerted efforts to bring out a better world have been

taking place in many parts of the planet. Jeremy S. Caradonna in his *Sustainability: A History* argues that “the fundamental idea of creating a sustainable society has a long genealogy that stretches back at least to 1700” (231). Chris Turner in *How to be a Climate Optimist* (2022) invokes his readers to “set doom aside” and “. . . focus on living. Living better” (11). He says that “in the face of the existential challenge of climate change” he believes that “the world will develop and implement better systems and technologies to meet our daily needs and reduce our global greenhouse gas emissions . . .” (10). Turner has even coined a phrase, “climate solution” to denote a “. . . tool (a technology, policy, concept, idea, gadget or notion) that is part of a general effort to reduce the amount of catastrophic climate change humanity is likely to cause (15-16).

This paper looks into one such “climate solution.” It looks into a first-of-its-kind struggle made by a group of litterateurs in Kerala towards preserving a tropical evergreen rainforest through literary activism in the late 70s and 80s of the twentieth century. The literary techniques used and the genres employed have served and can serve as blueprints for later literary engagements in similar contexts. The paper further analyzes the merits and limitations of such approaches from the vantage point of being able to look back at the whole struggle after half a century.

One of the proclaimed SDGs of the United Nations is action against climate change. Long before the UN formulated the SDGs, long before climate change was generally perceived as a consequence of human actions, some established creative writers in Kerala joined with an emerging movement of protest against, what was then generally seen as a scientific project bringing in development to an underdeveloped geo-political location. The project was the proposed “Silent Valley Hydro-electricity Project” and the writers who joined in the protests against it were pejoratively termed “Tree Poets” by those who supported the project.

Silent Valley Project

The Silent Valley is a tropical evergreen rain forest on the banks of river Kunthi in Palakkad district in the state of Kerala. The forest is considered untouched by human activity with an unbroken ecological history for crores of years. It is found to be a “treasure-

trove of biological diversity” (Ministry 9) and is home to more than 211 species of birds, 225 species of insects, 25 species of reptiles, and 128 species of butterflies apart from being a habitat for rare plants and animals thus making it a veritable mine of bio-diversity. Because of the dense forestry that covered it, the area remained resistant to deforestation attempts for centuries.

According to Global Footprint Network, “Humans use as much ecological resources as if we lived on 1.75 Earths.” And, sustainable development is being advocated as the only option for human survival. *Our Common Future* defines “sustainable development” as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (8). And, not compromising upon the needs of future generations requires an understanding of critical natural capital (CNC), the capital in nature that cannot be substituted by human action. In a Report prepared for the UK Conservation Agency English Nature CNC is defined as “consisting of assets, stock levels or quality levels that are highly valued, and either essential to human health or to the efficient functioning of life-support systems, or irreplaceable or not-substitutable for all practical purposes” (English Nature Research Report 14). And, the thick rain forests of Silent Valley can be counted as CNC based on all these aspects.

By the 19th century, along with increased human interferences over the geological plane, the need for energy multiplied. Hydroelectric energy was seen to be one of the most efficient means to meet the growing energy demand. Dams were being built all over the world and they were increasingly seen as symbols of development bringing in progress to hitherto “backward” areas. During the time of the British rule itself, the river Kunthi had been found as an ideal spot for building a dam and plans were made to the effect. There were government approvals and attempts to build the dam from the early 20th century onwards, but it was in the mid-70s of the 20th century that a dedicated move to build a dam across the river got approved by the government and the work got started in earnestness.

The project, popularly known as the “Silent Valley Project” was proposed and executed by KSEB, Kerala State Electricity Board which

was constituted by the Government of Kerala in 1957 for carrying out the business of Generation, Transmission and Distribution of electricity in the state of Kerala.

At the same time, many environmental activists and scientists opposed the Project since it was bound to flood a large tract of heavy forest which was ecologically unique. According to them, the project was seen to cause unalterable damage to the ecosystem and climate. Among those who opposed the project were many well-known scientists, writers, artists and social workers. M. S. Swaminathan, Dr. Salim Ali, Dr. Madhav Gadgil Mrinalini Sarabhai, etc. were among the many luminaries whose involvement -gave strength to the protest movement. Prof. M. K. Prasad, an academic and environmental activist, wrote many articles which opposed the project using objective and scientific arguments. He was a member of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad KSSP (transl. Kerala Science Literature Council) whose magazine, *Sastragathi* published many articles concerning the subject advocating the protection of Silent Valley. Many other periodicals at that time too published articles to and for the project. One such article, by Prof. M. K. Prasad, titled “Protect Silent Valley,” (1979) was published in *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, a popular and critically acclaimed literary weekly in Malayalam, put forth strong arguments for the preservation of the rain forest and countered the claims made by KSEB regarding development of the Malabar region which the project was supposed to sustain. Moreover, he put forth creative and practical solutions to solve the backwardness of the Malabar region and to bring about the needed power to the area. Thus, while the article objectively and poignantly argued for the preservation of the Valley as a unique legacy handed over to mankind, it stood apart since it made learned alternative suggestions to generate energy and sustainably preserve nature.

Among the readers who were motivated by the article was the noted Malayalam poet Sugathakumari. Inspired by the essay, Sugathakumari came to attend a meeting held to protect Silent Valley in a hotel in Thiruvananthapuram. (James 55, Radhakrishnan R., & Joji Koottummel 49). This brought a new dimension to the whole struggle and paved the way for the entry of many well-known poets and writers into the movement. Many writers including the legendary storyteller Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, poets like

Ayyappa Panikkar, ONV, Kadammanitta, D. Vinayachandran, G. Kumarappillai, and the acclaimed essayist and critic, Sukumar Azhikode joined in the protest.

The Poems

Consequent to this an organization for the protection of nature (Prakriti Samrakshana Samiti) was formed in 1980 under the auspices of N. V. Krishnawarriar, a well-known poet and critic. In 1983 Samiti published *Vana Parvam*, a collection of 31 eco-poems. These poems, in the words of K. L. Mohanavama, who was the Secretary of Kerala Sahitya Akademi who republished it in 1996 are a “creative revolution” against the human destruction inflicted on nature.

The poets themselves considered it a sacred mission to write in support of the preservation of gifts of nature. Vishnu Narayana Nambhoothirippad, who wrote the preface, equated their work to a yagna, a sacrifice. He even lists out the challenges they faced during the struggle, namely, The derisive tag “Tree Poets,” the prohibitions, the oppressive economic limitations, the lethargy of just souls, the inefficiency and uselessness of the administrative agencies to implement justice even at times when justice was established [by law-making bodies and courts], accusations that [they were] agents of every known political and apolitical conspiracies”. Yet they refused to stop the yagna convinced that “a writer’s identity and essence constitute in not learning to destroy and in being designated to create” (11).

The thirty-one poems (and a One Act Play by Vyloppilly Sreedharamenon) dealt with emotionally charged interactions with nature. The poems, like many other creative literary works where ecology and environment occupy a pivotal space, can be categorized based on the basic themes and emotions upon which they are focused. It is interesting to trace some of the UN SDGs being addressed in the poems, especially, SDGs 11, 13 and 15. This can point to the relevance of the SDGs as such along with shedding light upon the prophetic vision of the poets who evoked the SDGs even before they were conceptualized in systematic patterns.

One set of poems emanates a sense of nostalgia leading to sadness, lamentation, rightful indignation and a call for action. The

UN SDG 13 of “climate change” can find an early resonance in these poems where we can see the poets lamenting over the destruction of sustainable geographies leading to global catastrophes. Another set of poems invokes the oneness of man with nature by talking about delicate bonds between humans and animals, and by singing eulogies to the beauty of nature and its components. Some rare poems also offer inspiring examples of the preservation and reclaiming of natural elements. Preservation and respect of “life on land”, the 15th SDG is seen as the desirable end in these poems. Altogether, the poems in *Vana Parvam* bring in a compendium of arguments for a societal mobilization for sustainability.

The refrain “where, where” could be heard to echo in poems which nostalgically look at geographical spaces transformed by modernity’s interference with the natural world. “Every person, in every country in every continent, will be impacted in some shape or form by climate change. There is a climate cataclysm looming, and we are underprepared for what this could mean” (*United Nations “Sustainable Development Goals”*). The 13th UN SDG for climate action warns that “If left unchecked, climate change will undo a lot of the development progress made over the past years. It will also provoke mass migrations that will lead to instability and wars.” Many poems in *Vana Parvam* warn about the catastrophic consequences of unsustainable development and call for immediate action.

Dr Ayyappa Panikkar’s poignant poem asks the present generation a question from the past for the sake of future generations, “where are the woods, my children, where are the woods? (25-26).” P. Narayana Kurup laments the loss of sesame flowers in his poem (58-59). ONV goes one step further by writing a requiem for the “soon to die” planet Earth that “is not yet dead” (103-107). He says had to write it early since no human can remain alive at the time of earth’s demise emphasizing the interrelationship between man and his ecosystem.

M. N. Paloor writes about the coming days of no rainfall (71), while ONV wonders about the sights that await him when he returns to earth one day in the next century (94). Will he miss the flowers, the

birds, the fruits, and will all these turn to old stories, his queries anxiously?

The lamentations overflow to indignation and anger in Kadammanitta's poems. He invokes the baby not to drink breast milk and writes about the "Kattalan" (the aboriginal first dweller) who is coming to take vengeance against the ones who destroyed his pristine forest (90-93). Vylloppilly too brings in the same theme through his short play, "Mrthasanjeevani" (118-144).

As "Project Everyone", a United Nations Global Partner for SDG Advocacy and Outreach, puts it, the 15th SDG seeks to "protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss" ("Global Goals"). Poems of *Vana Parvam* written in the 1980s resonate with these ideals.

Many poems in the anthology invoke the understanding that we humans are part of nature. D. Vinayachandran's poem, "Forest" (60-63). What will "I name the forest," the poet asks and concludes that "I will name the forest my name." The human thus becomes identified with nature and then wields power over it as its ruler.

This oneness and identification can be seen in human-animal friendships as explicated by Vylloppilly's "Foster Daughter" where an elephant cured by a human comes back as his foster daughter (34-38). There are also eulogies praising the tree, the bird, and, the flower. When one plants a sapling, ONV avers, one is planting a shade, a carpet of flowers, and, he concludes, many saplings, and many shades (22-24). Sugathakumari praises the tree's varied benevolences in her "Praise be to the Tree" (19-22).

The images in the poems too are appropriately arranged to bring in the awareness of impending danger. P. Bhaskaran uses a heart-wrenching image of a cow (45) who stands for Mother Earth whose greedy children feed on her and kill her. Ayyappa Panikkar laments whether the planet Earth will wander about like a beaten cow (99-102). The image of the axe recurs in the poems of many poets. Some even equate it with the axe of Parashurama, the legendary figure who reclaimed the land of Kerala by throwing an axe into the sea. Yousaphali Kechery in his "Lament of the Forest" cries out to

Parashurama that his axe is now in the hands of thieves (46-49). Kunjunny in his micro poem subtly states that “a land made by an axe is disappearing because of axes” (42).

Some poems generate hope even after the atrocities man has done to nature. SDG 11 about “making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” visualizes a better future for all. Some poems in *Vana Parvam* too bring in such optimism.

Sugathakumari’s “To Thames” is one such poem of inspiration and hope where the poet is motivated by the story of the cleaning of the Thames River in London. She also writes about the ray of hope in the dread of darkness when she brings forth a mother and son planting a sapling amid pollution and smoke (138-39).

The tone and the rhythm too were used creatively by many poets to bring into the minds of the readers the necessity of immediate action. Kunjunny’s pithy lines and Sugathakumari’s poignant lyrical tones are appropriate to the themes. Poets like Kadammanitta have used the tone of incantation to evoke the urgency for action.

Conclusion

Thus, the themes, the images, and the rhythm and tone of these poems have served the purpose of sensitizing an indifferent public against the danger of environmental destruction and have brought about what Turner has termed as a “climate solution” (16). The mass sensitization brought about by these poems also influenced the Government of India’s final proclamation of the Silent Valley as a national park on 7th September 1985 thus putting an end to years of struggle. At a time when sustainable goals are made into national and international priorities such literary activism in the past can provide many lessons.

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4

Beyond the Wild: A Nietzschean Analysis of Sustainability in Jack London's Masterpiece

Chitra Jha

Abstract

Existence has always preceded essence. A glaring example of it is the recent pandemic the form of Covid-19 when Nature is seen in its most stunning structure. The genome-sized infection has shaken the world economy as well as constrained people to remain at home. Yet, a closure to this deadly dismay revealed a positive side when the environment grew in its natural way. A depletion in the ozone layer occurred, showcasing a quality improvement. Indeed, even the strict holiness of the river Ganges was visible. The creatures or species which couldn't come out of the group moved openly. They could feel comfortable with the encompassing day naturally. So this wild Nature here epitomizes Nietzsche's idea of saying, "Everything is essential." London's short, bold novel, *The Call of the Wild*, written in 1903, is relevant in the current context. However, it features the law of wilderness or Darwin's natural selection, with a curve making the peruser think of endurance not for minor presence but for power. Buck, the local canine and the novel's hero is sold into the administration as a sledge hound. Confronting various odd circumstances draws out the wild of him, which was basically for his reality. Nevertheless, adjusting to the new set-up, he wrestles even to keep his ethical quality, astuteness, and steadfastness and gains a situation for himself. Buck's reconnection with his instincts and his ability to adapt to the wild can be seen as a metaphor for the need for humans to recognize their place in the natural world and adopt a more sustainable approach to their interactions with it. By embracing the wilderness within ourselves and acknowledging our interconnectedness with nature, we can work towards a harmonious coexistence with the environment. London's novel and Nietzsche's philosophy both advocate for a shift in perspective, encouraging individuals to move beyond mere survival and embrace personal growth and self-realization. By recognizing our intrinsic connection to nature and adopting sustainable practices, we can strive for a more balanced and respectful relationship with the environment. Taking Nature with its uncertainty, this paper attempts to interpret London's Wild and Nietzsche's Naturalism with a sustainable viewpoint.

Keywords: Environment Interconnection Nature Sustainable Wilderness.

Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* is a bold and intense story of a pooch Buck, who fits himself to make due in various circumstances. He embraces and adjusts to whatever he faces. No position for the peruser, however, is for him to load up with assumptions. It may be so because Buck never is apprehensive or frightful of his circumstances. He continues pushing forward not to give up, but to invigorate himself. Here is the place where the novel investigates Nietzsche's naturalism. The story begins by indicating Buck as a credulous pup and, in the best of his occasion, unconscious of the preliminary en route. He is neither a "house-hound" nor a "pet hotel hound" but rather a canine with "the poise that happens to great living and all-inclusive regard" that empowered him to hold himself in a "right-regal fashion." However, this sovereignty doesn't keep going long, and he is "tossed down and flung into confine like a crate." (London, *The Call of the Wild* (Webster's Korean Thesaurus Edition 5)

The break with the past "transformed him into a furious devil," however, after a fierce battle with his new ace, Buck wakes up, quiets down, and learns the exercise of the "rule of crude law." (London 8) We can relate Buck's status to Nietzsche's concept of a 'Bad Conscience' that flashes a self-reflection strategy through self-conflicting. Nietzsche contends that man is aware of his requirement for upgrading the self. This knowledge generates confidence, and this, in turn, helps one to sustain.

Quoting Nietzsche from *Genealogy of Morals*:

The man who is forced into an oppressively narrow and regular morality... this animal which is to be 'tamed,' which rubs himself raw on the bars of his cage, this deprived man [...] who had no choice but to transform himself into an adventure, a place of torture, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness - this fool, this yearning, and desperate prisoner became the inventor of 'bad conscience. (Nietzsche and Smith 16)

The declaration clearly outlines Buck's point of view. The unavoidable realities that apply to everybody take Buck to a "fiercer point." Travelling long haul, the voyaging all over canines causes Buck to understand that all of them have to "go under the region of the man in the red sweater." With each savage execution, Buck comes to get comfortable with an activity that, "man with a club was a

lawgiver, an ace to be agreed.” The people who don’t watch the standard is to execute in “the fight for mastery.”(London 9)

Being passed from enlightened to a crude and natural life, Buck learns an exercise that he is no more once he is down in a battle. Furthermore, he determines to himself that he will never be down. Buck’s thinking again explains Nietzsche’s idea, “What man needs, what each littlest piece of a living creature needs, is an augmentation of intensity. Taking a stab at this, offers to ascend to both joy and pain.” (Janaway 127) The steadiness of the need to exact remorselessness consequently has a more profound clarification in the alleged truth that “most importantly, a living thing needs to release its quality – life itself is the will to power.”(Janaway 127). The philosopher’s impulse of opportunity as expressed through Will to control is that on the off chance that the living animals can’t discharge their quality, at that point, it is to remove from inside through some assurance. Buck must learn to be wild, which is the basic paradox of the story. In this work, wildness is not just a state of nature that may be attained or restored by a return to type, as the naturalist storyline of primordial atavism would have it. Attaining wildness necessitates a disciplined education, both technical and moral, a divide that has been blurred by the portrayal of work/writing. Buck’s renowned “call” is more about a sustainable calling than some strange intuitive drive towards nature. (Harold 32)

Furthermore, Buck does moreover when he promises himself not to get down. Also, Francois made sure that, “He secured with a will and set forth a bold exertion. In any case, it was all new and strange”. (London 13). The discussion of *Zarathustra in On the Despisers of the Body*, which explains Nietzsche’s investigation of the self, is material here. He explains what the importance sounds, what the brain thinks, and that it has never its end in itself. Even though the mind and soul would incite us to finish all things; the strategies by which vain they are. Sense and soul are instruments and toys: behind them, despite everything, lies oneself. Oneself comparably looks for the assets; it additionally tunes in with the soul’s ears. Reliably one tunes in and looks for: it analyses, overwhelms, vanquishes, annihilates. It controls and is liable for the inward personality too. There stands a trustworthy ruler behind one’s considerations and emotions, a mysterious researcher named self. (Tai 23)

This definition is exemplified by Buck when he takes for perseverance. He moreover comprehends his altering limits in the developing conditions. Else he would have met his "frightful death." The activity law of friendship and affiliation, respect for private property, and individual assumptions were the bits of his moral nature in the Southland transformed into a "handicap in the savage fight for nearness" in the Northland. Buck's understanding is that he learns all the laws of the club and tooth intending to succeed. He authenticates the self-confliction overcomes it, and 'fits the new technique for life.' The author places this distinction in Buck as the man's club in the red sweater had beaten into him an undeniably fundamental and unrefined code. Acculturated, he could have kicked the container for a moral idea, expressing the obstruction of Judge Miller's riding-whip. Nevertheless, the culmination of his de-human advancement was to save his stowaway and to show his willingness to escape from the comfort of a moral notion. Since the object of his stomach, though, he did not take for the pleasure of it. He didn't strip straight, anyway. He took it quickly and cleverly, remembering the club and the tooth. He did the stuff to lay them out because it was better than not to do them.

Buck's activities and his technique for learning it take up another idea of Nietzsche, where he clears the complexity of Culture and Civilization. For Nietzsche, Civilization isn't merely "returned to nature"; instead, it's a potential standard of Culture over Civilization. With the new experience, Buck turned his long driving forces alive. His prepared Self left him soon, and he invigorated the old life and old deludes inside him. There is a necessity of his usual Self, his foul culture astounding from the current human advancement. As London depicts this way, as a token of what a puppet thing life is, the old tune overflowed through him, and he made his imprint again. He went ahead of the grounds that men had found a yellow metal in the North and considered how Manuel was a cultivator's accomplice. The latter's wages didn't lap over his life partner's prerequisites and jumpers little copies of himself.

From the chance of the animal, he ways towards the case of the soul, as Nietzsche calls it. Vanessa's *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*: explains that instead of human advancement, culture is unequivocally ill-advised

and degenerate. What portrays culture is the opportunity from counsel, from the “willed and obliged animal controlling” of social progress, and from its extremism toward “free spirits.” When culture manages the overturn of events, what rules is the animal’s chance and spirit? (Lemm 12)

Buck continues adjusting to the new condition where the best approach to nearness is autonomy. From a human headway creature that may pass on for a moral idea, the original Buck is anxiously taking food from specialists. Curley’s passing, Hunger, Life with the new managers, and Rivalry with Spitz – urge Buck to search for a “transcendent primordial beast.” This Buck-Spitz fight at first takes after as a neck-to-neck fight, yet later on, the writer shows how Buck executes Spitz cautiously. He doesn’t just attack Spitz head-on wisely but makes his get-together with the more delicate canines, incapacitating Spitz’s capacity. With this, he builds up the structure of his power. This tact is political for Nietzsche delineates that what portrays human progression’s administrative issues is a “continued with brutality to animals.” (Lemm 34) Since the animal contradicts the continued methodology of its social advancement and socialization, “engaging ‘improvement’ (quelling) needs every kind of irons and torment to keep up itself against obnoxiousness and savage of-prey natures.” (Lemm 34) Just before Buck kills Spitz, the author inserts with an applicable sustenance to life:

There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier, war-mad on a stricken field and refusing quarter; and it came to Buck, leading the pack, sounding the old wolf-cry, straining after the food [a rabbit] that was alive and that fled swiftly before him through the moonlight. He was sounding the deeps of his nature, and the parts of his nature that were deeper than he, going back into the Womb of Time. (London 33–34)

The novelist depicts it as a ‘peculiarity of living,’ where one is, for the most part, blasting at the creases with complete interruption. Buck feels excitement when he finds the depth of his tendency and

the bits of his personality returning into the gut of time. Ensuing Spitz, Buck is broadcasted as a "productive victor," the predominant beginning-past beast who had made his butcher and found it acceptable.

Buck's triumph over Spitz signifies his power with the gathering of canines. Regardless, the community itself is constrained by people, for instance, Francois and Perrault. Even Buck required his master to embrace his triumph. Buck needs Francois and Perrault to give- in and recognize his strength and compensation. He will raise the gathering's introduction higher than any time in recent memory by driving them. The revolt for predominance is demonstrated not by escaping but instead of pulling back around and around, clearly stating that he will be substance and satisfactory when his aching meets. This craving of Buck is coordinating his progression from tame toward a wild one. This improvement is through their strategy for comprehension, freeing from all custom, significant quality and establishment, and remembering for the movement stacked with troubles to comprehend his Self.

It is here that Nietzsche finds a symbolic connection between a butterfly which is flying high and the independent soul, the butterfly needs to get past his packaging; he tears at it, and he pulls it: by then, the dark light, the space of chance, is blinding and bewildering him. The primary undertaking would cause men who are fit for the pain to check whether society can change itself from a descent into sharp humanity. All have advanced in the hover of moral quality, shifting, altering, all is flowing, it is substantial: anyway, everything is spouting forward further – to one target (Tai 71). Here, Nietzsche points out clearly that the wild is customary, and everyone is a free entity willingly facing extraordinary and awful things to experience Nature typically.

Despite how a canine is the novel's legend, the writer has joined human emotions to show the animal-human and the human-animal, i.e., the restrained and the strong. In the wake of getting authority over his masters, Buck, much of the time, ponders his life at Miller's home; nonetheless, he never has compassion or hopelessness. Or maybe, the quality time which he secures makes the sunshine dull and decrease before him. The memories of his heredity and the

faculties of antecedents which transformed into his affinity kept him alive reliably. The 'mutt' dream makes him show two sorts of life the individual who lived in wearisome fear of things seen and unnoticeable and as indicated by the mind-boggling beast of prey. It is possibly the "broadest sentiment" of Nietzsche's naturalism as Christopher Janaway delineates it. Janaway notes that remarkable strength is limited to Nietzsche, regardless of whether it is Plato or Christianity or Schopenhauer. He considers it an excuse for the useless spirit, the free will to power, or the unadulterated psyche that is self-transparent. Instead of focusing on the body, examining the animal thoughts of individuals and attempting to explain different ponders by conjuring drives, motivations, and impacts, which he arranges in our physical, genuine nearness. Individuals are to be 'translated go into nature,' since we misshape their history, their cerebrum science, and the possibility of their characteristics – concerning all of which we should know assurances, as a route to the all-important explore and conceivable revaluation of attributes. It is Nietzsche's naturalism in the broad sense (Janaway 34)

The accompanying activity Buck gains from his individual Dave, who fails miserably in any case yet fills Buck with a sentiment of self. Despite the way that Dave was not at standard with Buck to the extent that quality, he continued slumping on the fragile snow where the going was outrageous. He made sense of how to stand up till the end. Through the time spent during the turn of events, the author depicts Nietzsche's dreams of disentangling individuals as normal beings for they acknowledge their life. The moral issue "concerns the faultlessness, not of society, nor most of the men yet the remarkable individual" (Tai 45). As Nietzsche says, "We find as the ripest natural item on their tree the sovereign individual, the individual who resembles no one anyway himself, who has before long part away from the significant nature of custom, the independent supra-moral individual" (46). Dave resembles Nietzsche's concept of a sovereign individual who persistently vanquished himself and independently kicked the basin. In Nietzsche's words, 'to have the choice to vouch for oneself, and to do as such gladly, is to hold the benefit to stand up for oneself,' and that is what Dave does. (50)

Next in the story, we see Buck's confrontation with the terrible specialists Hal, Charles, and Mercedes. They were unseemly and

lacking, and because of this, the canines needed to persevere through a lot. The mistaken finish of food, immaterial empathy by Mercedes, and the over-weight which the mutts draw closer to pull made the situation inauspicious, especially for Buck. With the hopeless and sad newcomers, the gathering needs to work twenty-five hundred miles of predictable follow. Buck can't hold up under the hardness any more drawn out in this manner; he pulled where he could, in conclusion, tumbledown, regardless of how he was whipped and injured, even his muscles passed on to knotty strings, and the tissue pads had disappeared. Buck here addresses the 'genuine characteristics of power turns over perseverance drives,' where power drive is fitter for continuance. Nietzsche delineates, "Animal species, like the plants, have generally achieved a change following a particular territory, and now have something fixed and controlling in their character." (Richardson 60) Buck's rib and each bone were 'wrinkled in folds of openings, which was awful yet simply 'Buck's heart was unbreakable.' (London, 78) Buck's attitude portrays the 'essential employment' of power or the 'basis' of Nietzsche's progression.

The fundamental use of this point is to the heredities that are Nietzsche's genuine creatures (i.e., "becomings") here. Over profound developmental time, a genealogy keeps going by enduring or imitating, however, by progressively conquering phases of itself – by advancing. (Richardson 61) Richardson explains Nietzsche's impact of pointlessness as, "And authority over self, self-enduring, is beating one's obstacles – and as needs are solidifying one's old self, as corrected past, into an all the more full, progressively extraordinary self." It further uncovers Nietzsche's way of ensuring that each living thing the people expect for heritage advancement. The hard work of following and trial hefts Buck's life to come to an end, and he needs a holy watchman messenger, which he gets as John Thornton. The author's depiction of progress in the atmosphere, making 'everything defrosting, contorting, snapping,' yells a change. Hal, Charles, and Mercedes are inefficient and fresh; however, Thornton knows the assortment in this way. He urges the pooch owners to make a stop; anyway, Hal requests that they should keep moving. Disregarding how the gathering starts crawling always, Buck advances no endeavour, considering how the relationship with the rough world

licenses him to distinguish the moving toward destiny. His optimistic attitude hit the blow of Charles without hurting a great deal. Still, he required Thornton to save him as the last vibe of misery has left him. This 'drive' of Buck is to keep his 'world condition,' as Nietzsche explains. "Our astuteness, our will, even our encounters are reliant on our worth decisions: these solutions to our drives and their real conditions. Our drives are reducible to the will to power." (Richardson 80)

From the grip of the frightful trio: Hal, Charles, and Mercedes to the present companion out of luck, the sort-hearted John Thornton, Buck regains his strength 'into another existence'. He experiences a genuine and exhilarating love, far away from a ruined pet or the day worker, worked out to pull the sledge. It is difficult to describe 'happiness' from Nietzsche's viewpoint. The philosopher acknowledges the unusual challenge of becoming an authentic individual. Living with the contrast of calmness and wariness and remaining awake to 'goals,' to 'prosperity,' to happiness is the condition for wantonness is to combat one's detections: as long as life grows, euphoria and instinct. (Tai 12)

Buck saves Thornton's life, yet humankind doesn't justify his love, 'Thornton alone held him.' Regardless, the activities of experience made him 'in-humane.' He knows either to the expert or be aced, 'execute or be butchered,' 'eat or be eaten.' His procedure shows the unit of his real Self from the obliged human mind. Buck reflects the superhuman characteristics portrayed by Nietzsche, i.e., the responsive behaviour, and decision to serve oneself. (Richardson 96)

As a result of getting money from the bet, Thornton deals with his commitment and keeps wandering close by Buck and various puppies searching for a valley overflowing with gold. At a suitable time of time, Buck finds another friend, a wild wolf. He influences the two characters one as a sledge dog in Thornton's camp and distinctive as a rugged tracker in the forest area. Buck keeps visiting woods, pursues, butchers bears, and fishes for salmon the conduit. In the wake of getting animated from the forest area, he returns to find a calamity. The pro-Thornton was dead and all the doggies too. The Yeehats have attacked the camp, and Buck growled with furiousness

because of his uncommon love for John Thornton. By transforming into a live tempest of fury' and a 'scalawag fundamentally,' Buck thundered the Yeehats and pulled them to the forested zones. With this, he had executed man, the noblest round of all. Buck laments for his master, but this breaks the last tie with the man for him. 'Man and the instances of man could no longer tie him,' he heads towards the forest area to be with his 'wild kin.' Buck explains the 'New Aesthetics' by Nietzsche, which centres around getting a charge out of, judging, and making greatness, i.e., progressing under typical and social assurance to settle on new flawlessness of self-determination.

Buck is an independent ruler, who faces the brutality of the cold-hearted world, but expert in it. This transition is presented by the author as a victory, not a tragedy, turning out to be what involves a defeat of oneself that is indistinguishable from an experience of self-distance and self-distraction, a meeting that results from a presentation of oneself to one's (creature) otherness. Character and self-personality are known by one's life, turning out to be what one is subverting. For Nietzsche, life is a progression of examinations and encounters where the point isn't to discover who one genuinely is, however, who else one could be. (Lemm 108) In the entire story of continuous battle, London's wild straightforwardly has Nietzsche's naturalism. Regular drives and social propensities press towards clashing arrangements of the end for creation- a creation that makes the esteems and lives in the light of them. (Richardson 270).

To conclude, London's and Nietzsche's thoughts on sustainability, while not explicitly stated in their writings, can be inferred from the broader philosophical ideas. Nietzsche's emphasis on embracing one's instincts, questioning conventional moral norms, and striving for self-actualization aligns with the principles of sustainability. His call for individuals to transcend societal norms and cultivate their unique potential can be extended to advocating for a harmonious coexistence with the environment. Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" can be interpreted as a call to recognize our agency in shaping our world, urging us to consider the long-term consequences of our actions on the environment and future generations. Additionally, his exploration of eternal recurrence and the cyclical nature of life can underscore the importance of responsible practices that ensure the well-being of the planet over

time. While Nietzsche's writings don't directly address modern sustainability concerns, his philosophy encourages a mindful and holistic approach to human existence that resonates with the ideals of sustainable living and ecological stewardship. Lined up with the same concept the author imagines a different way of being in the world that is desperately needed right now because our human-centred behaviours have taken us to the verge of multiple calamities of our own making. When protecting his life, Buck can be brutal, but he also teaches readers about the honour of belonging to a team and experiencing a strong sense of community. Jack London prompts us to consider if our urge to survive is founded on anything other than sheer power, or if it is based on a will to coexist with others in tenuous harmony, including other species and nature itself.

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5

Environment and Women: A Study of Deep Ecologism in *The Forest of Enchantments*

Daisy Rajbongshi

Abstract

This study follows the life of Sita and other women figures in the novel *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, as they navigate their way through a male-governed society. A close reading of the text unearths the varied facets of discrimination faced by the female characters because of violence perpetuated towards them. Sita, one of the most significant female characters in Indian Literature and Indian myth, is finally given a voice to express her feminine experiences, which were initially neglected in Valmiki's masculine narrative. Divakaruni's retelling assists in understanding gendered differences from a female perspective, especially through the personalized stories of characters such as Kausalya, Kaikeyi, Surpanakha, etc. This paper primarily aims to investigate the innate spiritual relationship between women and nature through the approach of deep ecologism, an environmental philosophy. It advocates the necessity of replacing anthropocentrism with ecocentrism to avoid further ecological damage while allowing nature to heal naturally. A detailed character study of Sita reveals her transcendental affinity with her natural environment, right from her mysterious birth to adulthood. This peculiar bond between her and nature is predominantly the subject of this paper, further explored through the dichotomy of deep ecology and "shallow ecology." Therefore, it is an integral study at present times, as it draws the vitality of establishing an ecological equilibrium by reinstating a healthy relationship with nature through female characters like Sita.

Keywords: Deep Ecology, Literary Re-telling, Spirituality, Ecofeminism

Introduction

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, in her retelling, of *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019), makes inquiries into an important space of discussion that stems out of her research on the Hindu epic

Ramayana: the female space. Research suggests that the epic reveals an undeniable presence of masculinity that negates the female space. It is, therefore, imperative to study the neglected space of women to establish an impartial point of balance at present. Divakaruni notes the “lack” of space for women in the dominant male narrative, *Ramayana* and therefore procures a female space, for the relegated female characters. *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019) re-interprets the epic from Sita’s perspective and unearths her side of the female experience. Sita’s gift with nature and her outlook on events make a staggering difference in the feminist space. It raises the question of stoicism in men and further investigates their lack of humility towards their natural environment. This stoic approach is a reflection of their “shallow” ecological views regarding their supremacy as humans, while Sita’s ethereal bond with nature resonates with the selfless motive behind the movement called “deep ecology.”

Her voice represents the ‘muted’ female characters and the voiceless green environment. She is the ecocentric feminist torchbearer of marginalized human and non-human figures at a time when hegemonic masculinity (anthropocentrism) governed Indian literature. The novel divulges her ability to overcome any challenge with resilience through her special bond with nature, making her a towering female character. Divakaruni brings to the surface an existing dichotomy of the gender binary in the ecological aspect that allows modern discourse in the feminist space. Valmiki’s epic emphasizes masculine perception while aligning itself with the societal or cultural beliefs of that time, leaving little space for female experiences. This immutable fact is observed in the “Prologue” of Divakaruni’s novel and later through Sita’s perception of the forgotten female characters. The narrative also uncovers an innately harmonious relationship that exists between Sita and her green environment. Her strange affinity with plants and nature gives her a distinct, earthly appeal with other-worldly qualities. While the paper primarily focuses on the environmental spectrum, it is also important to observe the above in the light of feminism since women are born with a ‘stronger’ biophilic inclination towards their natural surroundings.

This ethereal connection of women with nature is not simply restricted to an aesthetic value; it rather expands to the spiritual and

sensory realms. The bond can be extensively studied through Sita's natural disposition to protect and nurture which is one of the basic tenets of deep ecology. Her constant need to heal, grow plants, or be in the constant presence of nature (also known as biophilia) opens this space to a modern-day environmental discussion. The movement, called deep ecology, promotes an ecocentric worldview that works towards the protection of environmental life. It seeks to transition from the current anthropocentric tradition to an ontological one for a better rapport with nature. This is observed when Sita forsakes her consumerist life in the palace for a sustainable life in the forest. Her nature is far removed from "shallow ecologism" because she views the world through an ecocentric lens and accepts that she is only a mere part of the larger natural environment. Thus, this paper is an integral study at present, as it brings to the surface the influence of the deep ecology movement in *The Forest of Enchantments* and of Sita's ineradicable relationship with nature.

A Feminist Ecocentric Retelling

Divakaruni captures the myriad struggles faced by Sita and the other displaced female characters in *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019). It is an interpretation of the liminal spaces where these women were abandoned in the course of the events that gave Valmiki's narrative its masculine appeal. Throughout the history of Indian literature, the female space was never remembered, for such was the height of neglect that the absence of the female narrative made no difference to the story. The early male writers gave rise to an archetypal woman: fragile, morally lax, unintelligent, sinful, and inferior. These marginalized characters were forced out of their existence to take shade in the eerie no-woman's land where they were still dependent on the patriarchal structure. Women were stigmatized as a cause for the man's impending misfortunes, which is evident from the story of Kaikeyi, or the washerwoman. Thus, it is imperative to vocalize the views of the relegated "others" by first creating a fissure in the stereotypes of the female characters – meek, submissive, and silently stoic through all their trials and tribulations.

Women, often believed to be "the other" gender have always been understood and explained in terms of binary opposites, as whatever the man is the woman is not...Many writers depend upon ancient myths to negotiate such patriarchal ideologies. As a result, women in

literature, especially in mythologies are either silent or have been largely misrepresented and portrayed negatively. The lack of male characteristics and qualities makes women inferior, according to the general patriarchal beliefs but with the support and encouragement of various feminist movements, many writers have made attempts to rewrite and reinterpret these myths. (Kapoor 89).

Divakaruni lends her voice to Sita, the torchbearer of feminist and ecocentric thought, for the sole purpose of celebrating the collective silent battles of women and the environment against the rigid cultural ideologies that threaten their existence. The current trends in modern feminist retellings have helped to debunk the misrepresented stories of “the other” characters. Nature is dominant in the book, for most events occur in and around the periphery of the green environment. In *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019), the stoic male figures fail to connect naturally with their green environment, unlike Sita, who unknowingly draws nature toward her. This masculine stoicism eventually leads to a war that further damages the serene natural environment. An ecocentric undertaking verifies the centrality of nature, however, it also proves that nature exerts an influence only on Sita.

The meek Sita, portrayed in earlier works was simply a facade, for in reality, she was a force of nature: “As eldest, I knew it was my role to watch over the others...Ram wasn’t the only one who knew where his duties lay” (Divakaruni 45). She was wronged by Ram on several counts, but still, her selfless love for him stood the test of time. She took a stand for herself and the women of Ayodhya: “You who care so much about the citizens of Ayodhya, did you think of the impact your actions would have on the women of the city? That men would punish their wives harshly or even discard them for the smallest refractions, saying *King Ram did so. Then why shouldn’t I?*” (Divakaruni 356).

Divakaruni emphasizes the way women were treated unjustly without a fair trial to prove their innocence. For example, when Sita was accused of losing her purity, Ram intervened by humiliating her publicly on two counts. She had to go through the test by fire. These were not the proper conduct of a fair King. It catered to the whims and fancies of the male characters, who were themselves promiscuous by nature.

The nature-women bond was at its pinnacle through Sita's deep ecological appreciation for her green environment. A harmonious equilibrium between the foundational concepts – feminism and ecocentrism, was strengthened through the biophilic tendency of Sita to seek and form a natural bond with her environment.

Such unconventional interpretations were not possible with the past male narrative, for it left little to no space for feminist or ecological discussions. This modern feminist ecocentric retelling not only allows for a re-interpretation of the text but also addresses the issues noted earlier. Retellings, therefore, hold a great power to bring changes to a rigid narrative.

Biophilic Tendency and The Dichotomy of Deep Ecology and Shallow Ecology: Gendered

Biophilia is defined as “the innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes” (Wilson 1). It is a personal connection that one seeks to establish with their immediate environment. This human inclination towards other forms of life is a natural disposition that stems out of a biologically driven want or ‘need’ to connect with nature. Wilson was himself indicative of this biological tendency that created an emotional bond between man and nature, surviving centuries of traditions. However, given the current situation, it is evident that modern humans mourn the death of a primordial connection. This man-nature binary has existed for the longest, but in the face of a progressive anthropocentric society, there can only be the dominance of man.

The human relation to nature is vastly more subtle and ambivalent...The unique operations of the brain are the result of natural selection operating through the filter of culture. They have suspended us between the two antipodal ideas of nature and machine, forest and city, the natural and the artifactual, relentlessly seeking, in the words of the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, an equilibrium not of this world” (Wilson 12).

A similar concept that emerged out of biophilia, the biophilia hypothesis (20), proclaims “a human dependence on nature that extends far beyond the simple issues of material and physical sustenance to encompass as well the human craving for aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive, and even spiritual meaning and satisfaction”

(Kellert 20). This stands as a testimony to the influence that nature carries over human life and, in doing so, aids in its progression. The peculiar bond between man and nature is far greater than any on the face of the Earth. Our deep affiliation with nature has led to stronger survival instincts, which have been genetically transmitted through generations over time. But this instinct has been suppressed as a direct repercussion of the environmental concept of shallow ecology. Earlier, the man-nature relationship was strong; however, today, modern man is mostly surrounded by towering skyscrapers, which makes the survival of this bond nearly impossible. The progression was achieved as a result of alienation and endangerment of nature.

Deep ecology seeks to protect the environment, while Shallow ecology furthers the centrality of man by simultaneously taking preventive measures to protect the environment. The selfish motivation of “shallow ecology” is hidden behind the apparel of selflessness. In *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019) the gendered experiences represent the dichotomous relationship between the two environmental concepts. Deep ecology or the female experience is held by Sita, whereas, Shallow ecology, or the stoic male experience is held by Ram. The two sexes are therefore divided in their outlook on ecology.

The paradoxical nature of “shallow ecology” led to a “technocentric” view of the world, which took away the natural essence of nature by placing a higher value on technology. It supports the use of more technological advancement to come up with preventive measures for environmental protection. On another note, it is observed that the biophilic tendency to seek the presence of nature is more profound in women. There is an earthlier connection over and beyond the innate biological bond that exists in men, found in women. Nature is feminine. Therefore, the approach to nature will always be different for men and women.

The Deep Ecological Ethics: A Study of Nature-Women Bond

The article entitled “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary” (Naess, 1973) introduces an environmental concept called ‘deep ecology’. It is defined as “the rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of *the relational, total-field image*” (Naess 1). Naess places an intrinsic value on the living environment

and all the other forms of life that exist within its domain, which is now relatively vulnerable to threats from excessive human interference. The basic tenet of deep ecology lies in the notion that humans are merely a part of a larger picture and not the centre of it. Nature is the dominant force that needs to be respected and safeguarded from all vile human-centric activities. On the contrary, "shallow ecology" has a different approach: "When nature is viewed from the perspective of a market economy, it appears to be a collection of "resources" having the potential to be transformed into commodities" (McLaughlin 1). It places anthropocentrism at the heart of its movement and simultaneously seeks to protect the environment from further damage. The interconnectedness that exists within this human and non-human world is oftentimes overlooked by the modern consumerist tradition. As a result, modern humans have lost their spiritual side.

In the philosophical sense, this environmental movement "...argues for a new metaphysics and an ethic based on the recognition of the intrinsic worth of the nonhuman world. It abandons the hardheaded scientific approach to reality in favour of a more spiritual consciousness" (Salleh 339). Furthermore, deep ecology favours ecocentrism over the human-centric anthropocentric, or technocentric worldview, which relies on technology and science for environmental protection. Here, Naess initiates bringing fundamental changes to the ecology through a 'deep' penetration into the capitalist mind. The mind needs to go through a holistic transformation to reinstate the lost but still existing connection between man and nature. An awareness of such a relationship will cause a significant change in the mindsets, leading to a perpetual equilibrium with nature. Such a striking transition from the anthropocentric view to ecocentric thought may provoke a faster result to aid in the present ecological crisis. It is, thus, necessary to first bring about a transformative change in the modern capitalist mind to achieve bigger and more fundamental changes in the preservation of the environment. There needs to be a permanent rather than a temporary solution. Such instances of environmental concern have permeated literature and other disciplines, making it a universal concern.

In *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019), Divakaruni brings into the female narrative an ethereal bond between women and nature. For the most part, men dominated the action of the epic *Ramayana*, leaving women to brood in the shadows and margins of a patriarchal society. This retelling, as “Sitayan” (Divakaruni 4), has opened the doors to feminist ideologies and interpretations, echoing the collective harrowing reality of women. “You don’t know my despair” (Divakaruni 2). Sita, the eponymous female character, represents the voice of nature. Nature was an integral part of her life: “My strange gift with plants was a mystery to me. Perhaps it was because, like them, I was earth-born” (Divakaruni 7). This is true because she was found as a foundling in the field beside the palace by King Janak, wrapped in a piece of exquisite gold fabric. Her empathetic nature is revealed further by her actions: “I was the overseer of the palace arbours, an unusual duty for a princess” (Divakaruni 5). Her bond with nature becomes progressively ethereal as she constantly finds herself in its company. “...I was filling my basket with flowers. I didn’t like plucking them. It was a kind of murder. But if I refused, the priest would just make one of the maids do it, and they’d hurt the plants. At least I was careful to pick only the blooms that had spent most of their lifespan already” (Divakaruni 11).

In Mithila, she often questioned her place on Earth, for she had no clue about her biological parents. Her answers were somehow drawn from the natural environment: “Because what called to me most powerfully were the forests that I could see from the palace turrets” (Divakaruni 7-8). This ‘deep ecological’ bond is more concentrated in Sita than in any other character in the novel. Although she enjoyed the comforts of palace life, the call for nature was even greater. Nature, for her, was the source of her healing abilities, and she held nature with deep reverence. Even the forest became a feverish dream: “I wanted to visit a forest someday, though I didn’t think I’d ever be granted the opportunity. It wasn’t something that women did” (Divakaruni 8).

Sita was aware that the human impact on Mother Nature was negative and therefore took measures to ensure its protection. On her journey to Ayodhya in her palanquin, she finally had a glimpse of freedom. Her solitude gave her plenty of time to enjoy nature and the other forms of life that it offered, but soon she was distressed over the

way Dasharath's soldiers were treating the trees. Sita remarked, "This is their home, and we are visitors...We should treat them with courtesy and not cause them needless pain" (Divakaruni 56). This natural tendency to feel "deeply" for the natural environment is stronger in women than in men. When she expressed her deep ecological concern for the innocent plants, Ram looked at her quizzically: "You are tender-hearted, my dear. I can't fault that. It's right and necessary that women should be so" (Divakaruni 56). Ram viewed this as a womanly trait. Sita was appalled by his remark: "I wanted to ask him, wasn't it as important for a king to feel the hurt of others as the woman did? Wasn't he responsible for the animals and birds and trees in his realm, as well as the people?" (Divakaruni 56). Sita's thoughts resonate with the central tenet of deep ecology, which caters to an ecocentric view of the world. She felt the pain of nature deeply and vocalized its misery caused by "shallow" anthropogenic human activities.

In banishment, she felt that her lifelong bond with nature had reached its pinnacle. She befriended many creatures, but her male companions did not approve of that. Nevertheless, Sita was more content with her life there than in the conforming life in the palace. On the contrary, Ram and Lakshman's relationship with their natural environment was unanimated and "shallow" on an ecological level. They were aware of the consequences of war on the environment, yet they agreed to move forward with their plans. This stoic side of masculinity is present in most of the male characters. Many things could have been easily averted had it not been for Ram and Lakshman's apathetic nature. Their mistreatment of Surpanakha was a metaphorical stamp of the reality women and nature faced at the hands of humans. She was a victim of an unjust society.

Likewise, Sita's only blunder was wanting to nurture an innocent forest creature—the deer. Her need for the animal grew more as a replacement for wanting a baby, which Ram refused in the first place. However, that motherly instinct cost her freedom, for she ended up on Lankan soil with Ravan. Ram's male ego hindered the acknowledgement of his mistake – the mistreatment of Surpanakha, which eventually led to Sita's captivity. Had he not felt the need to hurt Surpanakha, Sita would have lived a tragic-free life. However, the masculine drive present in him led to the abandonment of Sita,

another instance of the rape of nature. Such events may also be viewed from the ecological perspective, whereby Ram represents the anthropogenic worldview and Sita becomes the symbol of Mother Nature.

Despite her captivity, Sita still maintained her deep ecological view of the world around her: “The plants and trees were innocent...we grew to love each other” (Divakaruni 187). A remarkable alliance was established between her and the Ashoka tree, which gave her a sense of security and consolation, both emotionally and physically. It reciprocated her feelings.

Since deep ecology propagates the idea of bringing about fundamental changes by first intercepting the capitalist mind, this view resonates with Sita. Her love for nature somehow penetrates the minds of other characters, like Kaikeyi, who looks after her plants for years as one form of repentance, and her sons as well. An unnatural yet seemingly natural bond between Sita and nature brings to light the connection that women have with their environment. It serves as an instance of the power that comes with being a woman, in possession of motherly instincts that resonate with Mother Nature. Initially, the abandonment of Sita in Valmiki’s hermitage causes her great misery, but after the birth of her sons Lav and Kush, she feels wistful love pouring out of her. Her knowledge of plants is transmitted to her sons in hopes of maintaining a positive equilibrium between them and nature. They show deep reverence for their environment and other forms of life, mostly because Sita never allowed the “shallow” anthropocentric view to enter their minds. This propagates the idea that the first fundamental change can only occur when humans are taught to move out of their human-centric worldview. Once it is achieved, the true ideals of the “new conservation” movement can be seen.

Women and nature have a bond that can only be represented through feminist reading and interpretation. Sita was the daughter of Earth, the goddess who sacrificed herself twice for truth and fought for the betterment of women and nature. Thus, the efforts made by women in the conservation and protection of the environment must be valued as life-altering, for their actions are selfless. The eloquent concept of deep ecology, therefore, is most definitely reflected in

Sita's character. Although Ram had re-instated his lost spiritual bond with nature, a return to civilization once again loosened the ties on his end. Sita, however, remained true to her nature and maintained the grand tradition of her past life in Mithila. Her "deep ecological" reflection of the world allows nature to seamlessly voice its sorrow, while the "shallow ecological" perspective of the male characters constantly creates a fissure between man and nature. Therefore, through the study, it is observed that Sita empowers herself, other women, and nature.

Conclusion

The Forest of Enchantments (2019) provides both female and ecological space for the interpretation of the voiceless communities. Even though at the heart of *Ramayana* lies the great battle, this retelling brings in a more humane, ecological, feminine, and emotive side of the characters. Sita is not simply the daughter of earth, her value lies in her empathetic and forgiving nature, otherwise not recognized in the male narrative. She is the progenitor of independent thought and strong perseverance at a time when male characters dominated the scene. Her "deep" affection towards nature is the direct antithesis of stoicism displayed by the men in her life. While Sita's thoughts resonated with Mother Nature, her final sacrificial act reveals an even deeper ecological bond. The reverence shown towards her by nature in return for her selfless act reflects her heart. The deep ecology movement sought to transform the selfish, capitalist mind into one that worked to protect all other forms of life. This study, therefore, aimed to express the deep-rooted connection of women, like Sita with nature in *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019).

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6

Mizo Myths and Folklore: A Posthumanist Study

Lalthansangi Ralte

Abstract

The origin myths of the Mizos, a time when humans and non-humans lived together in harmony will be taken into study. The time when humans interacted with non-humans, speaking with each other and understanding one another will be analysed alongside the historical aspect of Mizo society. Mizo tales speak of a time when *Keimi* (weretigers), *Khuavang* (beings that resemble goblins and are sometimes regarded as nature's guardians) and *Bakvawmtepu* (a bear-like non-human creature) roamed among the humans. Mizo indigenous belief system *Sakhua* whereby Mizos of the Pre-Christian era worshipped plants, trees and spirits of forests and animals will be studied to enable an understanding of Mizo folklore. Thus, this paper will show a post-humanistic study of Mizo myths and folklore.

Keywords: folklore, animistic practices, archetype, Mizo culture, *Sakhua*, *Keimi*, *Bakvawmtepu*, non-human, posthumanism.

Introduction

The Mizos, a people living in the northeastern region of India, were once worshippers of forest spirits and animals. From 1894, with the entry of Christian missionaries, they gradually changed their belief system and practices. In the hill areas of Northeast India, folklore is the key to reconstructing the past as well as understanding the culture. This was first noticed by colonial ethnographers who initiated the collecting of folktales in the second half of the nineteenth century. The folktales of the Mizos which have been passed on from generation to generation by word-of-mouth play an important role in presenting the oral history of the Mizos. The Mizos have a tradition of story-telling which continues till the present day. Folktales of the Mizos act as a source through which traditions and memories of the past can be understood as texts which depict their history. In his book *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye writes that Literature imitates the

total dream of man (1957). He uses the term 'archetype' which stands for a recurring pattern of experience which can be identified in works of literature and human sciences and can be identified in the form of recurring actions and reflections of primitive, universal thoughts. Frye writes that these primordial images reside deep in a person's psyche and seek an outlet in works of art (Nagarajan, 2017, 142). This paper will deal with how primitive thoughts are embedded in the folktales of the Mizos. The first part of the paper will deal with the *Sakhua*, the indigenous belief system, of the pre-Christian Mizos explaining the myths and folklore of the Mizos. Many of the Mizo myths and tales explain how certain places of the present day came into being thus bringing to light the politics of location, territory and identity. The paper will give an in-depth study of human-animal relationships, and how human consciousness is shaped by its co-evolution with other life forms as stated by Pramod K. Nayar in his book *Posthumanism* (2014). The folktales picked out for study are taken from a collection of folktales *Folklore from Mizoram* translated by Margaret L. Pachuau, *Mizo Songs and Folktales* edited by Laltluangliana Khiangte and *Mizo Myths* a collection of Mizo folktales translated by Cherrie L. Chhangte.

Mizo Sakhua

In the pre-Christian era, before 1894, the Mizos followed a particular mode of worship or Sakhua. Vanlaltlani defined the term Sakhua as 'the belief and worship of one good unseen God, Pathian, dwelling in heaven, who is the creator of all and who blesses and protects all his creations' (2009, 51). Saiaithanga, on the other hand, thinks that Sakhua is not the worship of Pathian, nor of the Ramhuai (forest/land dwelling multifarious spirits), but of Khuavang, considered by the ancestors as the one who protects and blesses (Saiaithanga, 1981, 51). Rev. Liangkhaia thinks that this Pre-Christian mode of worship was committed to spirit appeasement. Sadawt (priest, one who pierces the sacrificial animal) performed the task of offering sacrificial animals to the Ramhuai. Rev. Liangkhaia explained that Sa refers to one's clan and Khua refers to the protector of one's village (Liangkhaia, 1976, 21). Zairema shares this argument and says that Sakhua is the guardian spirit of one's clan by whom one is identified (Zairema, 1988, 36). Vanlaltlani, a theologian, said that animism is only one

element of pre-Christian Mizo Sakhua. As children took the religion, Sakhua, of their father, it was taken for granted that women did not have a Sakhua as they had to follow whichever Sakhua their husbands followed. In earlier pre-Christian times, there were tales of Phûng who kidnapped people and can read the minds of its victims. Phûng is described as “a spirit, a bogey, a spook, an ogress, a genie, a goblin, a hobgoblin” (Lorrain, 1982, 364). The Mizos generally regard Phûng as a female entity and it was believed that they even had the power to inflict illnesses upon humans using sorcery and witchcraft. Serious illnesses like epilepsy were seen by pre-Christian Mizos as inflicted by the Phûng even naming the illness as Phûngzawl (under the power of the Phûng). Sacrifices would be offered to appease the Phûng spirit in attempts to cure the person with epileptic fits. As such, it was believed that earlier Mizo Sakhua began offering sacrifices to the spirits for good health and sometimes good harvests (Khangte, 2023, 180). There are tales of ogresses like Hmuichukchuriduninu, named one of the more popular Phûngpuinu (a huge ogress) in Mizo folktales. It is said that instead of a nose and a mouth, Hmuichukchuriduninu has a protruding beak like a bird’s with which she would peck the heads of little children and eat their brains and drink their blood. This Phûngpuinu is not a spirit but a creature of flesh and body who would pretend to be a human and kidnap children and devour them. Tales of Hmuichukchuriduninu always ended with a moralising note instructing children not to stray far away from home lest they may be abducted by the evil ogress.

In pre-Christian times, the Mizos worshipped spirits but were also known as people who would cast spells over their enemies and sometimes even kill them with spells. In the tale of Kungawrhi, a man from the Keimi community fell in love with her. A Keimi is a mythical tiger-man/woman, possessing the magic power of changing himself/herself at will into a tiger, and back again into a human being. These “changeling” tales of the Keimi community are retold in Margaret L. Pachuau’s retelling of the story of Kungawrhi, of how a Keimi cast a spell on her –

One day, a young man from the Keimi community lifted the footprints of Kungawrhi from the ground and preserved them by drying them over the fire. As soon as he did this, Kungawrhi fell ill and could not recover from the illness. (Pachuau, 2013, 91)

This tale speaks of a non-human creature casting a spell over a human. But Kungawrhi, the woman who is considered human, was also a supernatural creation born from a man's festering wound on his thumb, a story similar to the tale of Thumbelina. In Mizo tales, we find these magical creatures bordering on fantasy whereby there is "a network of linkages and crossings with all forms of life" (Nayar, 2014, 5).

How the world came into being – Origin myths of the Mizos

Mizo folklore gives a clear depiction of their appreciation of the natural world. The Mizos view nature as feminine; Khuazingnu, a powerful goddess, is considered to be the creator of the earth. In the origin myths of Mizos, nature plays an important role in creation. Margaret L. Pachuau, in her book *Folktales from Mizoram*, writes about the creation myth of the Mizos:

In the beginning of time, much before the formation of the world as we know it now, there existed a world that was bereft of human beings. However, there was a powerful deity known as Khuazingnu. Khuazingnu was regarded to be the benevolent deity who created the earth and all that was around it. It was believed that she also created the environment that surrounded all creation. Amongst this was the land that covered all the earth. Finally, Khuazingnu found a solution to the problem. She would throw open the windows that grew out of the sky. After this, she would also hurl water from these very windows out from the sky and onto the arid dryness of the earth, all to maintain the greenery that was slowly but steadily diminishing. To this day, very often when the rains fall, some Mizos still exclaim that 'the goddess of the heavens is dousing us with water'. (Pachuau, 2013, 25)

Mizo culture was an oral culture for a long time until the entry of the white man into their land in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Creation myths play an important role in bringing about meaning and explaining the universal question of existence. There are similarities in creation myths among various tribes and cultures of Northeast India. Vern A. Westfall writes of the importance of creation myths stating that "They provide a constructed identity through myth while etiological myth explains either human or natural phenomena. Creation myth is as extensive as the human experience in itself. It stretched across time from the earliest accounts of man to the present" (2003, 20). In Mizo society, stories were passed

on by word-of-mouth for generations and these stories have been put in print only recently. In the introduction to *Mizo Myths*, the author Cherrie L. Chhangte writes about the importance of story-telling in an oral culture. She writes about how –

...all narratives can be traced to folk stories. Tribal societies in general are very rich in oral narratives, and within these narratives, the wisdom, beliefs, preoccupations and folkways of a people can be discerned. At the core of seemingly simple tales are embedded folk attitudes regarding social structures, gender relations, spiritual beliefs and practices, relationships with nature, and survival strategies. Moreover, elements of song and dance, the poetic and the prosaic, the mythical and the ridiculous, all come together to form a unique fabric of narrative structures that are unlikely any other “modern” plot – and yet paradoxically use the same archetypes found in so much of today’s literature, in any genre. (v-vi)

In ‘The Story of the Beginning of the World’ Cherrie L. Chhangte re-tells the story of how the Mizos originated from Chhinlung rock. In this tale, Chhangte narrates how a representative couple from each human clan and each animal species were placed inside a cave by the goddess Khuazingnu. And when everyone was inside, she sealed the cave with a huge rock called Chhinlung. After generations were born inside the cave Khuazingnu lifted the Chhinlung rock thinking that enough people were born to repopulate the earth. All the different clans came buzzing out from the cave in multitudes. When the Ralte clan, known to be loud and noisy, came out from the cave, Khuazingnu decided to put back the Chhinlung rock over the mouth of the cave thinking that enough people had come out due to the great noise made by the Ralte clan. Till today, the Ralte clan are called “Ralte bengchheng” meaning noisy/rowdy Ralte.

In “Telling our Stories: Reflecting upon Oral Narratives in Mizo”, Margaret L. Pachuau writes, “The oral narratives that existed with the precolonial domains were inherently reflective of the beliefs that were pertinent to Mizo society... in many ways, the importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism and desire emerge” (Pachuau, 2023, 183-184). When one studies the oral narratives, the myths and tales of a people, it is important to remember that these tales need to be studied “without seeking realistic, logical, or rational

explanation” (Chhangte, vii) as some tales even border on the nonsensical.

The Non-Human

Non-human creatures like Bakvawmtepu, Keimi, Phûng, Khuavang Lasi and many others are seen in Mizo folklore. In Mizo folklore, these creatures exist and live among humans, sometimes in hiding and sometimes as one of the humans. Fairies and goddesses often mingled in the affairs of the humans in earlier times. The non-human entities would converse with the humans and interact with each other without many problems. Z.D. Lalmangaihi in her article “Narrating Mizo Literature for Children” writes about how the conversation between nonhuman characters in the folktales “offers a broad spectrum for the readers in terms of how orality is deeply entwined in the culture of the Mizos” (Pachau, 2023, 152). In Mizo myths and folklore, the non-human creatures are given human-like qualities and rational thought and a language similar to and understood by humans thereby showing that “a community cannot evolve without speech because speech enables a community to be formed” (152). In the tale of ‘Chhawnlaihawihhi’ a young girl named Chhawnlaihawihhi lived with her seven brothers in an iron house. She would also stay at home while her brothers went out hunting. When they returned they would sing –

My sister Chhawni, Chhawnlaihawihhi,
Open the eight-layered door for me (Khangte, 2002, 27).

Then Chhawnlaihawihhi would open the door and let them in. This tale reminds one of the story of Rapunzel who was kept “captive” in a tower by the evil witch. But in this tale, Chhawnlaihawihhi is not kept captive but she is kept under lock and key in a house with iron doors for safety reasons. Bakvawmtepu, a bear-like non-human creature, heard the song and memorized it and went to their door three days later and sang the same song. When Chhawnlaihawihhi opened the door for him, he abducted her. When her brothers found out that she was kidnapped they rushed home. After a long and tiresome journey, it was her youngest brother, her only brother left alive, who rescued her from the evil Bakvawmtepu. In Mizo tales, non-human creatures like Bakvawmtepu are depicted as villains that disrupt the lives of the humans. In the tale of

'Mauruangi' (Pachauau, 2013, 69-80), Mauruangi's mother was pushed off a bridge by her husband on their way back from their jhoom. Soon after her death, he took their neighbour as his wife; this woman was cruel to Mauruangi and would never give her good food to eat. One day, when Mauruangi went to the stream, she met her mother who had transformed into a catfish. On seeing her beloved daughter thin and frail, she lovingly told her to always come to the stream whenever she was hungry. They would have endless conversations as though nothing had changed. Even after her transformation into a non-human, Mauruangi's mother was still the nurturing, ever-giving mother. Alas, Mauruangi's stepmother came to find out that her mother had turned into a catfish and was feeding Mauruangi with fish and other delicacies. In anger, her stepmother called the men of the village to catch Mauruangi's mother, the catfish. Mauruangi heard of this and so she ran to her mother and told her of the plans to capture her. She told her mother that she should swim towards the mouth of the stream when she told her to swim towards the bottom of the stream and swim towards the direction opposite to what she would tell her to escape being caught. When the villagers were unable to catch the catfish because of her they stuffed her mouth with a rag and took her away. After they caught the catfish they cut it up and distributed the meat among themselves. Mauruangi gathered the bones of her mother, the catfish, and placed them in an earthen pot. She also took her mother's heart and buried it in a white ant hill. It turned into a beautiful Phunchawng tree. The tree soon flowered and gave nectar and when Mauruangi sang to the tree –

Mother lean gently
 Mother phunchawng darhniangi
 Mother lean gently. (Pachauau 2013, 73)

the tree would lean down, enabling Mauruangi to consume its sweet nectar. Once again, her stepmother found out that she was being fed by her mother who had turned into a tree. The men of the village were once again called to cut down the phunchawng tree. Mauruangi shouted with all her might –

Mother stand your ground
 Mother phunchawng darhniangi
 Mother stand your ground. (Pachauau 2013, 73)

Mauruangi's mother was able to stand her ground while her daughter was shouting out to her, but after Mauruangi was taken away, her mother was unable to stand strong and was cut down by the men of the village. Even after her mother transformed not once, but twice into a non-human form Mauruangi still called her "mother" and by no other name likewise her mother still nurtured her like she did when she was a human. This clearly shows the intermingling of humans with non-humans, how one needs the other for survival. The story goes on and her step-mother continues to mistreat her. Mauruangi is rescued by a Saza, a Serow, when she is killed by her stepmother. This Serow is not given any other name like Bakvawmtepu so it can be considered to be in its true "animal" form when he rescued Mauruangi. Mauruangi then takes care of the Serow's child and sings to the baby narrating how she once used to be the wife of a king from the plains but is now taking care of her master, the Serow's child. A Serow, an animal, is given human characteristics of love and sympathy whereby the human returns the good deed by taking care of his child.

In the tale of Khualtungamtawna we find a man, a human, fall in love with a woman of the Keimi (half-tiger, half-human) community and in the story of Kungawrhi we find a man of the Keimi community fall in love with a human-like woman born under supernatural conditions. In both these tales revolving around the Keimi, women are depicted as objects to be married off to suit the sentiments of the male members of the family. In the story of Khualtungamtawna, the brothers of the Keimi woman were killed by Khualtungamtawna. Not knowing about all this, he fell in love with the Keimi woman as he was captivated by her beauty. Her father and her brothers who were still alive agreed to give her a hand in marriage so that they would be able to take their revenge and kill Khualtungamtawna. So, she becomes a mere tool as she cannot voice out that she is not willing to marry the hateful man who killed her brothers. In the tale of Kungawrhi, Kungawrhi was unable to recover from an illness. Her concerned father gave out the order, "Whoever can cure my daughter from illness shall be given her hand in marriage, bereft of the bride price" (Pachau, 2013, 91). In both tales, the women were never asked for their opinion in choosing their husbands. The Mizos have a saying "Hmeichhe thu thu ni suh,

Chakai sa sa ni suh” which means “A woman’s word is no word to be taken seriously in the same way that crab’s meat is not considered meat” which justifies how women are silent spectators even in situations which are directly related to them.

Conclusion

In the tales selected for study, we find the mingling of humans with non-humans, how in some stories the lives of humans are controlled by the non-humans and vice-versa in other stories. In these tales, there is a uniform show of power from both sides; at times when the humans are not strong enough they are helped by the gods and deities. Many Mizos still believe that having a bee hive in one’s home is a good sign for the future. They also believe that finding geckos in their homes brings good fortune. These beliefs are a clear sign that Mizos were a people who lived peacefully with animals and non-human life forms. In his book *Posthumanism*, Pramod K. Nayar writes about the interconnectedness between humans and non-humans, how “New cultural studies and theory... emphasizes the human-animal relationship as one based on empathy and connectedness” (97). He also explains that “critical posthumanism does not see the human as the centre of all things, it sees the human as an instantiation of a network of connections, exchanges, linkages and crossings with all forms of life” (5). Linkage of all forms of living things is seen in this study of Mizo myths and folklore where we find the co-evolving of humans with the non-humans. And so, in the words of Pramod K Nayar, critical posthumanism “entails an ethics and a *politics* of response and responsibility toward all forms of life, toward difference” (101). In Mizo tales, as seen in the tale of Mauruangi, the non-human, including plants and trees, is centrally situated in the fabric of human life forms. Fairies, ogres, animals and bear-like creatures, creatures that are not ‘complete’ humans bring to light “the boundedness of the human, the ‘status’ of life and living” (Nayar 101). This aspect of Mizo folktales also brings forth an alternative reading of Mizo culture and history. Stories, or the act of story-telling, become a significant instrument in imparting a deeper knowledge of society and culture, and how belief systems evolve with time.

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7

Nature's Fury and Human Frailty: Ecological Perspectives in *Macbeth*

Mir Mahammad Ali

Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the ecological elements of William Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* through the lens of eco-criticism. This paper aims to identify the deeper ecological themes, symbolism, and warnings that the play communicates by examining the relationship between literature and the natural world. The disruption of the natural order, the use of nature as a moral standard, the impact of human behaviour on the environment, the meaning of deforestation, and the viability of restoration are all examined. Through this research, the study highlights the link between human behaviour and the play's portrayal of the natural environment. The paper examines the relevance of *Macbeth's* ecological elements in the modern day by establishing connections to current environmental issues. It exposes their ongoing significance by looking at how the play addresses topics like resource exploitation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental justice. The psychological states of the protagonists are also taken into account concerning the ecological aspects of the story, emphasizing the link between their internal turmoil and the ecological imbalance caused by their actions.

Keywords: Nature, Ecology, Macbeth, Environment, Deforestation

"What brings me to *Macbeth*, then, is the role in the play of what used to be called Shakespeare's Natural History: the references to weather, birds, animals, flowers and trees, so constant throughout the play as to constitute the continuous presence of an ecosystem in which the human characters and their desires and actions are embedded. I am coming to this as an ecocritic now, but it was always an integral part of what excited me in this and other plays."

Richard Kerridge, "An Ecocritic's *Macbeth*"

The primary goal of eco-criticism as a literary theory is to examine how literature and the environment interact. The interdependence of people, the natural world, and the larger ecosystem is emphasized in

eco-criticism as it examines how literary works portray and engage with ecological challenges. Eco-critics use an ecological perspective to analyze literature, looking at how writings affect how we perceive the natural world and the problems that the environment presents. Examining how literature contributes to, critiques, or reflects our interaction with the natural world is the main goal of eco-criticism. It views literature as a means of conveying our relationship with nature and the effects of human activity on the ecosystem. Eco-critics attempt to understand the complex interactions between people and their natural surroundings by examining how nature, landscapes, animals, and environmental issues are depicted in literary works.

Eco-criticism was pioneered by Lawrence Buell's book *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* in 1996. Buell provides a framework for understanding how *Macbeth* might be examined via an eco-critical lens by examining how literature affects how we perceive nature and the environment. Although in a different vein, Rachel Carson's book on Environmental Science *Silent Spring* (1962) brings the direct effect of pesticides upon nature. Ecocriticism takes an interdisciplinary approach that believes literature is intricately entwined with social, historical, and ecological settings rather than existing in a vacuum. Eco-critics examine how literature tackles ecological problems engages with environmental topics and reflects societal values, attitudes, and ideas about nature. Literature's ability to raise environmental awareness, cultivate a feeling of ecological responsibility, and promote sustainable behaviours is also acknowledged by ecocriticism. Readers' relationships with the natural world are intended to be reconsidered by eco-critics by exposing the cultural, psychological, and imaginative components of environmental challenges through literary analysis.

William Shakespeare's one of the most well-known tragedies, *Macbeth*, provides a rich backdrop for analysis when viewed through an eco-critical lens. The play, which was written in 1605, tackles the negative effects of unrestrained ambition and power-seeking while also delving into the nuanced interactions between people, the natural world, and the natural order. The first step in introducing *Macbeth* as a literary work for eco-critical analysis is to acknowledge the play's ecological dimensions and look at how Shakespeare

interacts with environmental topics. *Macbeth* considers the fundamental ecological consequences of human behaviour and its effect on the natural world through dramatic imagery, symbolism, and the description of human deeds.

The destruction of the natural order and its effects on the environment is a major theme in *Macbeth*. Elizabeth Gruber, however, in her book *Renaissance Ecopolitics from Shakespeare to Bacon: Rethinking Cosmopolis*, studies the drama as “the entwining of ecological and epistemological concerns” (109). Thunder and lightning signal a disruption in nature and provide an ominous tone for the play’s opening scenes. The disturbance grows as Macbeth’s desire drives him to murder the king and take the throne, and is represented by several weird happenings, such as the darkness during the day and the tales of strange and abnormal behaviour in animals. These disruptions show how human behaviour and the environment are intertwined, meaning that Macbeth’s thirst for power is what disrupts the natural order. In addition, the play makes extensive use of nature and environmental symbolism and imagery. Blood is a repeating motif that is used to symbolize remorse as well as the deterioration and pollution of the natural environment. The blood on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s hands symbolizes how the moral and natural worlds have been tainted by their acts. The disruption of the natural hierarchy is symbolized by the images of birds like the owl and the falcon, which also foreshadows the chaos and loss of equilibrium brought on by human ambition. Gabriel Egan in his book *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* comments:

The play’s ubiquitous analogies from nature become its dominant tone once the central couple are together and Lady Macbeth counsels her husband to ‘look like the innocent flower, | But be the serpent under ‘t’ (1.5.64–5). Nature’s threat to humankind is to be emulated, but often the direction of agency is unclear: are the evil things of the Earth sympathetic to the Macbeths’ evil, or vice versa? Lady Macbeth’s ‘The raven himself is hoarse | That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan | Under my battlements’ (1.5.37–9) is supremely ambiguous in that regard, but seems to imply that evil nature corresponds with her evil thoughts.... (86)

William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* thus explores the ecological dimensions of human-nature relationships by depicting the disruption of the natural order, the symbolism of nature, and the

effects of human behaviour. It does this by highlighting the connections between human ambition, environmental degradation, and the requirement for ecological balance.

II

The play *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare has as its main theme the violation of the natural order. Shakespeare emphasizes the effects of this disruption and its repercussions for both the human characters and the natural environment using a variety of dramatic devices. Under King Duncan's dominion, Scotland is portrayed in the play's opening scene as a peaceful and well-run kingdom. The existing order is disrupted when Macbeth commits regicide due to his ambition and thirst for power. The play is affected by this act of regicide, which upsets the natural order and brings forth chaos and anarchy. The disruption of the natural world is one of this disruption's most obvious effects. Shakespeare conveys this disruption through vivid imagery and paranormal components. Storms, darkness during the day, and animal screams are examples of unnatural events that symbolize the unrest brought on by Macbeth's acts. For instance, Ross notes that when Macbeth kills King Duncan, "By the clock, 'tis day,/ And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp" (2.4). These disruptions represent the ethical and ecological imbalance brought on by Macbeth's sins in addition to acting as dramatic techniques.

The natural order is being disturbed on a human scale as well. In addition to contributing to Macbeth's demise, his actions have an impact on those around him. His ambition sets off a chain of events that results in agony, bloodshed, and a loss of morality. Even the characters themselves are aware of how strange their actions are. As an effective metaphor for the irreversible harm brought about by their disruption of the natural order, Lady Macbeth, for example, has guilt paralysis and sleepwalks while trying to wash fictitious bloodstains off her hands.

The disruption of the natural order also represents a bigger issue with how people interact with the environment. The disdain for the delicate balance of the natural world is mirrored in Macbeth's thirst for power and his willingness to break moral and natural norms. Macbeth represents the destructive powers that take advantage of

and manipulate the environment for one's gain by usurping the throne and pursuing his goals. The prediction that Macbeth won't be vanquished until Birnam Wood moves perfectly captures this notion. Although it is difficult for the forest to move literally, as the performance goes on, the destruction and exploitation of nature as a metaphor become more apparent. As a result of human desire, the destruction of the natural order in *Macbeth* serves as a potent image. Shakespeare emphasizes the ecosystem's fragility and how interrelated humans and the natural world are using dramatic devices and images. The play serves as a warning against upsetting and exploiting the natural order and emphasizes the necessity of maintaining a balance between human behaviour and the environment.

Nature acts as a potent moral barometer in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, reflecting the characters' interior emotions and moral quandaries. Shakespeare makes a connection between the natural world and the moral decisions made by the characters, emphasizing the effects of their deeds on both their conscience and the larger environment. Shakespeare does this through the use of vivid imagery and symbolism. Nature serves as a mirror for the characters' internal feelings and moral dilemmas throughout the play. For instance, after killing King Duncan, Macbeth feels terrible guilt and regret. The speaker states in his soliloquy that "Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse/The curtain'd sleep" (2.1). Nature is portrayed as being dead and perverted in this scene, reflecting Macbeth's troubled conscience. The chaos and gloom in the natural world are a reflection of the chaos and gloom in his psyche. Similar to Lady Macbeth, who tries to wash away the imagined bloodstains from her hands while sleepwalking, Lady Macbeth exhibits guilt. The figurative link between the protagonists' moral culpability and the tarnished environment emphasizes the consequences of their deeds are unavoidable.

Additionally, nature is frequently linked to innocence, purity, and harmony in *Macbeth*, emphasizing the characters' departure from moral excellence. For instance, the play's opening language describes nature as "fair," "gentle," and "blessed," which reflects the kingdom's original balance and order. This concord is disturbed, though, when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth plot and carry out their

crimes. Blood, gloom, and bad weather are all symbols of the depravity and degradation of both the human world and the natural world. The clash between the destabilized natural order and the protagonists' moral failings highlights the significant consequence of their deeds on the environment. In addition, the play implies that human morality and the state of the natural world are mutually correlated. In addition to upsetting the natural order, Macbeth's activities lead to ecological imbalances. The symbolism of damaged crops and arid landscapes represents how the environment has been tainted by human activity. The witches in Act 4, Scene 1 create visions of the future, one of which is a "show of eight/Kings, and Banquo last with a glass in his hand," signifying Banquo's offspring who will succeed in the kingdom. This vision suggests that the return to moral and political stability is closely related to the return to ecological equilibrium.

In *Macbeth*, nature not only reflects the moral standing of the characters but also acts as a moral example and cautionary tale. The play's natural setting serves as a moral compass, delivering messages and highlighting the effects of the characters' deeds. Nature's reaction to characters' immoral actions is one way it serves as a moral barometer. For instance, the night is full of frightening noises and disruptions in the natural world after Macbeth kills King Duncan. The earth trembles as the owl, a bird typically linked with death and gloom, screeches. These commotions stand in for the natural world's disgust and turmoil in response to Macbeth's immoral deed. Similar to this, the natural world displays signs of disarray and turmoil in response to Macbeth's order to kill Banquo and his son Fleance. The use of natural occurrences to represent moral transgression highlights the connection between human behaviour and its effects on the environment.

Additionally, the inclusion of paranormal components, such as the witches and their prophecies, emphasizes the link between nature and morality even more. With their ability to predict the future, witches appear to derive their power from nature. Their emergence during the stormy weather on the lonely heath raises the possibility that the evil forces at play in the play are connected to the natural calamities. The protagonists are advised to think about the moral ramifications of their decisions by the predictions they get, which,

despite being frequently ambiguous, function as warnings and guides. Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe, however, make an ecofeminist reading of the witches' role in the play:

An ecofeminist reading of the play thus compels us to reorient ourselves to the weird sisters, to the other-than-human, which brings us to a vision of the world that is about multiplicity, possibility, one that embraces wonder and the not-yet-known. Repeating their famous incantation ('double, double, toil and trouble'), the witches use nonhuman ingredients in such a way that evokes women's domestic medicine and cookery. (101)

In *Macbeth*, the characters' deeds upset the harmony of the natural world, which is shown as being harmonious, balanced, and righteous. For instance, when thinking of killing King Duncan, Macbeth says, "Stars, hide your fires,/ Let not light see my black and deep desires" (1.4), recognizing the intrinsic wrongness of his plans. The morally ambiguous nature of Macbeth's deeds is highlighted by the contrast between his dark aspirations and the purity and radiance of the stars. In the play, nature is also frequently linked to goodness and morality. Malcolm is referred to as having a "good and virtuous nature" (4.3), emphasizing the relationship between moral character and the natural world. Malcolm is the legitimate heir to the kingdom. This relationship suggests that moral integrity and keeping harmony with nature are strongly related and that moral degradation results from upsetting the natural order.

Again, In Act 1, Scene 4 of the play, when Macbeth and Banquo victoriously return from the battle and meet King Duncan, their conversation with Duncan reflects a prelapsarian stage of the perfect symbiosis of the human and natural world. Banquo's reply to Duncan in Act 1, Scene 4: "There if I grow/The harvest is your own." (1.4.27–33) is an example of 'horticultural imagery' in *Macbeth* (Egan 84). Regarding this imagery, Randall Martin in the book *Shakespeare and Ecology* comments: "Presenting himself (Duncan) as the nation's good farmer, he vows to restore Scotland's productive fertility by 'planting' Macbeth to 'make [him] full of growing' (1.4.29–30" (102).

The theme of deforestation in *Macbeth* serves as a potent condemnation of human greed and ambition by metaphorically representing the merciless exploitation of natural resources. Shakespeare emphasizes the detrimental effects of using the

environment to one's advantage through vivid imagery and metaphorical connotations. The theme of deforestation is frequently employed in the play to highlight the rapaciousness of Macbeth's goals. The witches summon apparitions in Act 4, Scene 1, to give Macbeth a prophecy. According to one of the predictions, "Macbeth shall never be vanquished until/Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill/Shall come against him." Since woods cannot move, this prophecy seems implausible. But as the play progresses, the audience sees Malcolm's English army sneak up on Dunsinane Hill while concealing themselves with branches from Birnam Wood. The literal shifting of the forest is a metaphor for how Macbeth's deeds have harmed and exploited nature. In the Foreword to Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton's edited book *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, Greg Garrard mentioned that:

Harrison's reading of history is, like Heidegger's, *epochal*, and *Macbeth* is positioned at the terminus of an era in which the forest functions as a refuge for justice in the face of civic barbarism: "As the city becomes sinister, forests become innocent, pastoral, diversionary, *comic*."¹ The violation of natural law by Macbeth and his wife – themselves its victims, afflicted as they are by sterility – is avenged, appropriately enough, when Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and "We see the law of the *land* in a strangely literalistic guise."² For Harrison, the Christian promise of redemption blunts the force of ancient tragic conflicts, and so, despite the bloodshed, *Macbeth* concludes comically. The forest shadows civilization – or in Macbeth's case, besieges him – as the proof of its corruption, and so its victory is paradoxically the reassertion of law. (Garrard xvii)

A potent metaphor for the careless pursuit of power and contempt for the environment is the motif of deforestation. Macbeth's callous exploitation of the land's resources, which is similar to how deforestation depletes forests for personal benefit, is caused by his ambition. The destructive powers that alter and exploit the environment without taking into account the long-term effects are symbolized by Macbeth's deeds. The theme of deforestation also represents the upheaval of the natural order and the imbalance it brings about. By disrupting the ecosystem with tree removal and forest devastation, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and unfavourable climate effects result. Similar to how Macbeth's ambition for power upsets nature's order, it leads to chaos, violence, and the

disintegration of society's moral foundation. The motif of deforestation emphasizes the connection between moral standards decay and environmental damage.

III

Shakespeare examines the prospect of restoration in *Macbeth* and emphasizes the link between the reestablishment of law and order and the re-establishment of ecological balance. The play makes the connection between the restoration of moral principles and the healing of the natural environment through a variety of motifs, images, and symbolic representations. The idea of heavenly or cosmic justice plays a significant role in *Macbeth's* restoration. The drama presents a society in which moral failings are not tolerated. The natural order is upset by Macbeth's takeover of the throne and the accompanying acts of tyranny and bloodshed, which result in a moral and political upheaval. The play, however, makes the case that there is a force at work to bring things back to balance. Despite being cryptic, the witches' prophecies ultimately come true and aid in the restoration of moral and political order. The fall of Macbeth and the ascent of Malcolm, the legitimate heir, denote the restoration of justice and legitimate power. This restoration affects the natural environment in addition to being a political action.

Additionally, the play's theme of the therapeutic properties of water represents the potential for recovery. Water is frequently linked to purification and cleaning. Characters like Lady Macbeth are driven to water as a means of atoning for their transgressions because they are overwhelmed by remorse and moral decay. The yearning for atonement and the restoration of moral integrity is shown in this symbolic action. The repeating image of water is a metaphor for the purification and healing of the human spirit, which can bring harmony and balance back to the natural world. The idea of restoration in *Macbeth* implies that the moral and political order must be restored before the natural world may be healed. Shakespeare communicates the idea that the health of the human realm and the natural environment are intertwined by weaving these subjects together. When one is disturbed, the other is likely to follow, and when one is repaired, the other may follow.

In conclusion, it can be said that *Macbeth* explores the upheaval of the natural order, the effects of human behaviour on the environment, and the potential for restoration in both the moral and natural spheres. Shakespeare emphasizes the connection between people and nature via the examination of these subjects, stressing the significant influence of human behaviour on the environment. The play urges viewers to consider their duties as stewards of the natural environment and the necessity for sustainable practices to preserve the ecosystem's delicate balance as it serves as a cautionary tale. We can better comprehend the ecological aspects of the play *Macbeth* and its broader implications for how we interact with the environment by looking at it through an eco-critical lens. Gabriel Egan, however, in his Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare book *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory* makes a critical estimation of the ecocritical reading of this text by saying that "Georgia Brown's essay naming *Othello* and *Macbeth* is in truth simply about monstrosity and its role in our conceptions of what is normal and natural, and it has little connection with ecocriticism" (27).

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Folk and Indigenous Knowledge in Environmental Sustainability: A Study in the Context of Odisha

Manoranjan Rath

Abstract

Technological advances and rapid industrialization have affected our economy, environment, and society at large. In other words, the most important aspects of sustainability have become the victims of the symptoms of modernity. The indigenous knowledge system which revered the environment as a divine form and advocated a harmonious living with one's surroundings, never promoted any deviation that might affect the environment adversely. Tribal people have lived amongst Nature from time immemorial and made it an integral part of their lives. Their concept of environment is formed as an organic whole that sustains and nurtures. There is not a single event in their lives which is not related to Nature. The presence of the environment in their collective consciousness is best understood through an analysis of their cultural heritage. In this context, the indigenous knowledge system of Odisha, particularly the tribal wisdom regarding sustainability should be studied in detail to build a framework for combining conservation with development goals. This concept becomes more pertinent as the indigenous people are victims of environmental degradation and are generally blamed for this degradation. The assumed gap between indigenous knowledge and scientific practices fuels the argument. The paper proposes to explore the ideas of the indigenous people of Odisha towards sustainability. The paper aims to study their views as reflected in their folklore, myths, legends and traditions. The study is likely to dispel certain misconceptions about the indigenous people who are assumed to be apathetic towards sustainability and thus incongruous with the global discourse on development.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge system, sustainability, folklore, environment, conservation

Sustainability, with its modern connotations, is a relatively new concept that has entered the academic world. According to the

Oxford English Dictionary 'sustainability' is the ability to continue economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of human society and the nonhuman environment. In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs¹." The term gains much significance considering the fury of Nature in various parts of the world-the recent horrible examples in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Assam. Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre reports that natural disasters triggered 2.5 million internal displacements in India in 2022 (The Hindu, 18 May 2023). Moreover, the havoc created by rain in and around the urban centres has made people ask a common question- "How much risk can be taken in the name of development?" In this context, this paper aims at exploring the idea that the usual life lived by the indigenous people can be useful in protecting and nurturing a major aspect of sustainability-that is environment. The study tries to highlight the way of life as lived by the indigenous people of Odisha and suggests that it can be taken as a model for sustainable development.

The adivasis generally live in the forest, hills and relatively isolated regions known as a rule by different names meaning either the people of the forest and hill or the original inhabitants. Their lives are in harmony with nature and the environment. The entire span of their life revolves around nature in a significant way. Their symbiotic relationship with the environment which is generally rich in biodiversity is central to their existence. Therefore they have protected and preserved these resources for so many years down in the history of humankind. However, they are blamed for their 'ecological ignorance' by their so-called civilized counterparts. Thus, it becomes pertinent to reason whether this allegation can be countered by analyzing how they interact with their natural environment. The socio-cultural life of the indigenous people is hugely dependent on nature; thus creating an 'ecological imperative' in the larger order of necessities.

Xaxa gives two basic states of dependence by the indigenous people-existential and cultural (102-106). This dependence can be considered to be 'constructive dependence' which turned into a 'destructive' one due to industrialization and other such aspects of

development (Fernandes 147-48). The dependence on forests for life and livelihood is a vital part of indigenous people. From time immemorial, they have been amidst nature and exploiting it constructively to survive. Apart from shifting cultivation, their dependence on forest produce for food, medicines, fodder, house building and implements is noteworthy. Their dependence on food varies between 50 to 80 per cent (Fernandes 48). There are about 3900 plant species which are used by the tribal people as food². Further, they depend on the forest produce to make their various tools and equipment including household items, agricultural tools and weapons. Apart from this, they depend heavily on the forest produce as far as their knowledge to treat their diseases is concerned. The rich biodiversity in India is known for the ethnobotanical study of plants. There are about 7500 species used by the indigenous people for their medicinal value³. Moreover, the indigenous people depend on the forest to earn their livelihood. Firewood, lac, *mahua* flower and fruit, *kendu* leaves and fruit, bamboo etc. are the forest products that give the indigenous people a major portion of their income. Thus, the entire life of the indigenous people is intimately connected with the forest in various ways.

In the same way, the indigenous people depend on the forest for agricultural purposes. Their traditional method of cultivation is known as '*daahi*' or '*jhum*'. This traditional method of cultivation is criticized as it is done by cutting down trees and rendering the land infertile after two or three cycles. It is also argued that this practice leads to soil erosion. The following extract from an essay published in *Utkal Sahitya* talks about the *Juanga* community of Odisha practising this method of cultivation. The author Sri Prabasi⁴ advises to discontinue the practice of shifting cultivation and resort to the modern methods of cultivation;

Daahi is not there in any other Garhjaat except Paallahadaa. The subjects here are mad for *daahi* which is one of the reasons for the backwardness of the place. *Kamaana's* method of cultivation is the monopoly of the Bhuyans, Juaangs, and Kohlas. *Daahi* cultivation belongs to the primitive races like Soaras, Malhaars, and Bhumijas. The primitive people have been cultivating without paying any tax using these methods till now. Chasaas also used to do *daahi* chaasa; they have stopped for the last two or three years considering the loss in this. The peasants have lost their interest since that time. For *daahi* cultivation

method, Sal and other precious trees are cut down and piled knee-deep on a little bit of land. When the trees dry up, they are burnt down, which burns about eighteen inches of the soil. After rain the burnt land is cultivated and seeds are sown.

Daahi is of two types- *Kangu daahi* which is cultivated at the foot of the hill and *dhaana daahi* which is cultivated in plain land. In *Kangu daahi*, they cultivate Kangu, and then cereals in the first year followed by different crops in the subsequent years. In *dhaana daahi*, paddy is produced for two years and then it is stopped. In *daahi* cultivation, there is plenty of harvest during the first two or three years; then the land becomes completely infertile. (pp 224-26)

However, several scholars have also supported shifting cultivation as a practice evolved in response to the physiographical character of the land'.⁵ It is argued that shifting cultivation helps the environment. In this context, the observation by Aryal and Choudhury is pertinent. They argue that shifting cultivation can be beneficial in several ways. They support this traditional practice as a supplementary to the modern methods of cultivation.

The disappearance of shifting cultivation will mean the simultaneous loss of the management approaches inherent in the practice. In our determination to replace shifting cultivation, we are inadvertently 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'. We need to ensure that the strengths of shifting cultivation – maintaining inter- and intra-specific crop diversity and the principles of fallow management – are incorporated and assimilated into 'modern' agricultural development and into forestry- and landscape-management policies and practices. Ignoring lessons from the management practices of shifting cultivation – practices that evolved across the entire time in which humans have cultivated the Earth – could prove to be too high a cost in the context of our future, and the threats of climate change. The world, and especially its many marginalized communities, can ill afford such a cost. (p 287)

Apart from their dependence on subsistence, indigenous people also protect the environment for cultural purposes. Nature is omnipresent in their customs. Their festivals are often associated with natural environment. Moreover, they lead a community life as distinguished from the individualistic life of modern people. Duryodhan Swain gives a vivid picture of the Santal festivals in Odisha. His essay⁶, 'Santali Parbaparani' depicts the community life of the adivasis as opposed to the individualist society of the Odias. Here the writer argues that Santal festivals are community based whereas

Hindu festivals are more individualized. This contrast brings out the community life of the festivities. Like the Hindu practices, most of the Santali festivals are associated with agriculture. The growth of Santal life is simple and musical in the midst of natural beauty. Their lives are a playfield of several festivals which are associated with different agricultural forms. Whereas their counterparts in the plains observe certain festivals individually at their homes, they celebrate the festivals collectively. A majority of their festivals are connected with nature in one way or the other. Duryodhan Swain observes;

Erosim is the first agricultural festival. Before sowing seeds in June, they celebrate this festival for three days continuously.

Harialasim is another festival. In July the seeds turn into plants. Santals feel ecstatic to see green paddy fields with the hope of a good harvest. Thus, they celebrate the *Harialasim* festival. Puddling of paddy cannot be done without observing this festival. Here Santals thank Gods for the fruit of the labour of June. Only the village deities are worshipped during this festival and the prayers are the same as those during the *Erasim* festival. This is their puddling festival without their folk dance.

Then comes the harvesting festival. The early paddy ripens in August and a type of wild grass 'Gundlu' also ripens during this time. No one is allowed to cut *Gundlu* before this harvesting festival. This festival is known as *Ilagundli*.

Sohrai or *Bandhna* is the greatest Santal festival. On the first day of the festival, all of them gather near water and sing in chorus. Their song describes the beauty of the creation and the world with its wonders. Then they eat and drink together.

Another important festival is '*Shalei Puja*' or '*Pani Parba*'. This festival continues for three days. Their New Year starts with the advent of spring. It is said that they do not use any new leaves of new flowers till the completion of this festival. Sal leaves, *Mahua* flowers and fruits, and other forest products are their main sources of livelihood. Before the completion of the festival, women cannot wear any new flowers on their chignons. Anybody breaking the law is punished by the priest. (pp 608-10)

In the stories and folklore of the indigenous people, we come across trees, animals and birds. Mr. C.H. Bompas has translated some of the stories and published a book named *Folklore of the Santal Parganas*⁷. In the story 'The Fox and the Crow', the fox betrays its intimate friend Crow and eats its flesh. In another story, the fox makes a hen its sister and in the end, kills its entire family and eats

them. There are also other animal characters. There is a description of a race between an elephant and an ant despite the dissimilarity of strength and intelligence. In another story, the friendship between a tiger cub and a calf has been a consistent one.⁸ Even in their myths, nature and its aspects assume great significance. The creation myths are there in almost all races. The origin myth always depicts a tale about the creation of the universe and the ancestors of a particular community. Santals believe that human beings first originated in the distant eastern part of the earth. Initially, the earth was covered with water and there was soil under the water. Then God created some water animals like crocodiles, fish, tortoises, and prawns. The myth also connects with birds, *Mahua* Tree, and earthworms.

Oraons are described as a progressive tribe engaged in agriculture and rural crafts in Odisha. They as well as other tribes have certain pre-wedding customs that are intimately connected with nature. The setting of *marwa* is an important custom in which nine sal saplings are planted in the courtyard. Branches of bamboo, *sidha*, *bhelwa*, mango, and mahua are also planted. The mango suggests the perpetuity of descendants, the bamboo symbolizes progeny, the *sidha* stands for marital fidelity, the *bhelwa* offers protection from the evil eye, and the mahua symbolizes the love between husband and wife (Xaxa 105).

Mahendra Kumar Mishra observes that adivasis have an intimate relationship with nature. To justify this he gives the example of *Mahul* or *Mahua* tree⁹;

The Mahul tree is an indispensable part of the socio-economic life of the adivasis. They prepare liquor from its flower and also collect and sell it. The boiled flowers are eaten. The fruit is called 'tola' fruit and its peel is called the 'tola peel'. They eat the curry prepared by boiling such raw peels whereas they eat the ripe peels as they are. The dried raw tola peels are also preserved for many days before cooking them as a curry which is called 'shola'. Further, tola oil is extracted from Mahul flowers. Adivasis apply this oil to their bodies and use it for cooking. They also earn something by selling this oil which is believed to cure skin diseases. The epiphyte on the Mahul tree is used to prepare medicine. The tree is also used as firewood.

During wedding ceremonies, branches of *Mahul* trees are erected as good omens. Sitting on two *Mahul* branches the bride and the groom

have their bath on the third day of their marriage. This shows the intimate connection of adivasi life with the *Mahul* tree. (pp 169-70)

The worship of nature in her various forms is another reason for the adivasis to go to the lap of nature. Like the people of the Vedic age, they have prayed to nature because they get so much from nature. They protect nature because they are completely dependent on nature for its vital role in their socio-economic and cultural life. Mishra opines that the hymn that prays for plenty of rain, plenty of harvests, the spread of vegetation all around, and the welfare of the kingdom is a worldview that is inspired by the adivasis.

Self-sufficiency is another aspect of tribal life which is connected with sustainability. Indigenous people get all their requirements in their surroundings and live a satisfied life. In this regard, the following observation by Tripathy and Mohapatra is noteworthy. The authors also highlight how the so-called civilized pursuit of lifestyle takes away their traditional ways leaving a space;

They (adivasis) are far behind us as far as industry and technology are concerned. In this modern age, they cultivate in the ancient style by burning the forest or hillsides, and by using those outdated tools without any knowledge of manure or fertilizer. Somewhere they believe that animal sacrifice will yield a better harvest. In comparison with the caste system of India, it is evident that they don't depend on a particular occupation. They are their washermen, barbers, and carpenters, and they do not depend on others. Thus they do not have many labour divisions and they do not have scarcity. Moreover, there is no extra production as the greed and opportunity for hoarding are nowhere to be seen.

In several tribes, the dormitory for unmarried boys and girls (*dhangdas* and *dhangdis*) is a useful organization. They learn all the basics of a healthy life-social rules, economics, law, religion etc.-and there is self-learning here. Thus they live comfortably keeping pace with the time. They also select their life partners here. The fine arts like singing and dancing flourish here and continue. However, due to external pressure, they reject it as an 'uncivilized tradition'. As a result, they have moral degradation and their happiness and liveliness are fading away; their confidence is disappearing.¹⁰ (pp 500-06)

The above discussion shows the unique interaction of the environment with the indigenous people's flow of life in the mountains and the forests. This consciousness and intimacy with Nature creates a symbiotic relationship between the indigenous

people with nature. A survey among 4 PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) by SCSTRTI in Odisha, shows that about 90.8 % of households are highly dependent on the forest for deriving essentials of their livelihood¹¹. The survey further says that the indigenous people treat the objects of flora and fauna with respect for their ritual significance. They believe that any kind of ignorance or insult to these objects would lead to loss of property and lives. This veneration for nature is a significant aspect of tribal life and it contributes towards sustainability immensely.

Indigenous people's contribution to sustainable development is generally woven around their basic lifestyle. Living in harmony with nature which helps in protecting biodiversity and conserving natural resources including water resources, respect for community living and collective decision-making, regenerative agriculture and self-sufficiency are the aspects of indigenous people's lives which may show us the way to sustainable development. Moreover, indigenous practices and knowledge play a vital role in resource management and conservation. Scientific documentation of indigenous knowledge is the need of the hour. Odisha has rich biodiversity and accordingly has a large repository of indigenous knowledge systems that should be analysed and made available for further research. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the central government, and both the local and the state administrations should work in an integrated way to minimize the adverse effects of development and create a sustainable society for all. Involving the local communities in the protection and conservation of the environment will bring tangible results.

Notes

1. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf> (accessed 20.09.2023)
2. <https://www.fao.org/3/xii/0186-a1.htm>
3. <https://www.fao.org/3/xii/0186-a1.htm>
4. *The Primitive Race of Odisha Juanga*. Published in two parts in *Utkal Sahitya*, Vol.-8 No.-8, 1904 and Vol.-9, No.-7, 1905. The author used a pen name Sri Prabasi. The translation is mine. All the translations from '*Utkal Sahitya*' are from my PhD thesis.
5. P.K.Bhowmik quoted by Xaxa in *his State, Society, and Tribes: Issues in Post Colonial India*, Pearson, 2008, p. 104

6. Duryodhan Swain. "Santali Parbaparbani (Festivals of Santals)", *Jhankar*, Vol. 02, No. 7, 1950. The translation is mine. All the translations from 'Jhankar' are from my PhD thesis.
7. Cecil Henry Bompas. *Folklore of the Santal Parganas*. David Nutt, London.1909.
8. Duryodhan Swain. "Santali Galpa (Santal Tales)", *Jhankara*, Vol. 03, No. 02, 1951. All the translations from 'Jhankar' are from my PhD thesis.
9. Mahendra Kumar Mishra in his *Loka Sanskruti Parikrama* published by Grantha Mandira. 2017. pp 169-170. Translation mine
10. Kshetrabasi Tripathy and Lakshman Kumar Mohapatra. "Odishara Parbatiya Jati (The Hill Tribes of Odisha)", *Jhankara*, Vol.03, No. 06, 1951. Translation mine. All the translations from 'Jhankar' are from my PhD thesis.
11. https://repository.tribal.gov.in/bitstream/123456789/74427/1/SCST_2014_research_0338.pdf

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Love, Separation and Reconciliation in Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

Miti Sharma abd B. K. Anjana

Abstract

Love, being a classic, timeless, and universal theme, has always occupied a distinguished place in literary circles. In literature, it is generally projected in varied forms including familial love, romantic love, platonic love, physical love etc. Authors often use this universal theme to explore the nature and complexities of human relationships. The two towering figures of literature, Kālidāsa and William Shakespeare have given a new paradigm to this much-celebrated subject. In their seminal works, *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and *As You Like It*, both the dramatists have used love as a driving force in shaping the narrative of the plays. However, the characters in both the plays have to undergo the trials and tribulations of separation, till their subsequent reunion. The present paper attempts to compare and contrast the treatment of the universal themes of love, separation, and reconciliation in both plays. It also depicts the fact that literature treats love as a perennial emotion that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

Keywords: Love, separation, reconciliation, reunion, literature

Kālidāsa (5th century BC) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616) are considered to be the greatest luminaries of Sanskrit and English literature respectively. Their contribution in their respective fields is so immense that the scholars of Sanskrit and English literature will always remain indebted to them. They are believed to be the most notable figures that the world has ever produced. The fact that their works have been translated into all the major languages so that they can gain accessibility to the majority of people living in different parts of the world is indicative of the literary brilliance that both of them possessed. Universality and originality are the hallmarks of their writings. Through their artistic creations, they have left an

indelible mark on the entire gamut of literature. Though belonging to different times, nations, and cultures, and writing in different languages, there are certain elements which are found common in their writings.

Kālidāsa, who flourished around the fourth or fifth century BC in India, was a Sanskrit dramatist and poet whose literary genius rests on three plays, namely *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (*The Recognition of Śakuntalā*), *Vikramōrvaśīyam* (*Ūrvaśī Won by Valour*), and *Mālavikāgnimitram* (*Mālavikā and Agnimitra*), two epic poems *Raghuvamśa* (*The Dynasty of Raghu*) and *Kumārasaṃbhavam* (*The Birth of Kumāra*), and two poems *Ṛtusaṃhāra* (*Medley of Seasons*) *Meghadūta* (*Cloud Messenger*).

Of all his plays, *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* is considered to be his masterpiece and is widely acknowledged for its metaphorical language used elegantly. It was originally composed in Sanskrit, but it made its appearance before the English audience when it was translated by Sir William Jones in 1789 and became the first Indian play to be translated into any Western language. The story of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* is taken from the *Adi Parva* of the epic *Mahābhārata*, however, Kālidāsa altered it in his ways which makes the play immortal. The play depicts the love story of Duḥśanta and Śakuntalā, who experiences the pangs of love at first sight. They marry each other secretly, but before their marriage can be acknowledged publicly, they are separated. Subsequently, they were reunited with the sudden turn of events.

William Shakespeare was an English playwright, actor, and dramatist who contributed significantly to English literature. The body of his literary writings consists of one-hundred and fifty-four sonnets, thirty-seven plays, and two long narrative poems. He was undoubtedly an artist who completely transfigured the field of English literature.

As You Like It is perhaps Shakespeare's greatest and finest romantic play. The elements of romance mingled with certain comic elements in the play delight the readers. The setting of the play is a remote forest named Forest of Arden, which makes it a pastoral comedy. The plot involves the banishment of Duke Senior by his younger brother, Duke Frederick, the deprivation of Orlando by his

elder brother, Oliver, Rosalind and Orlando falling in love at first sight, the unjust banishment of Rosalind by Duke Frederick which forces Rosalind and her cousin Celia to move into the Forest of Arden in disguise, the unexpected meeting of Orlando and Rosalind in the forest, Celia and Oliver falling in love, and the final reconciliation and reunion of all the characters. Though the play has many subplots, they all are connected to the main plot.

The most remarkable feature of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and *As You Like It* is the setting. The setting of both the plays is idyllic and the principal action in each one of them takes place in the forest. Love too in both the plays ripens in the lap and charming beauty of nature. In *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, it is only in the forest that King Duṣṇanta and Śakuntalā fall in love with each other and marry in secret. Similarly, in *As You Like It*, the love between Orlando and Rosalind reaches its height in the forest of Arden when Orlando comes to woo Ganymede, imagining 'him' to be his Rosalind. The love between Celia and Oliver and Touchstone and Audrey also blossoms in the forest.

The most significant aspect of both the plays is that all the lovers fall in love at first sight, though in different ways. Love, at first sight, finds its best abode in *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. When Duṣṇanta watches Śakuntalā for the first time, he is beguiled by her beauty. He goes on to describe the different organs of her body by employing enchanting metaphors. He says to himself "my noble heart yearns deeply for her." (Kālidāsa 251)

The same is the case with Śakuntalā. When Duṣṇanta appears before her to cure her of a bee sting, Śakuntalā experiences the same emotions as experienced by Duṣṇanta. Her friends easily guess the magical impact of Duṣṇanta which made Śakuntalā blind in love for him. She was not able to hide her feelings as according to Duṣṇanta, "love neither shone radiant nor was it concealed." (Kālidāsa 264) She asks herself:

"How is it that seeing this person, I am overcome by an emotion wholly inappropriate in hermit groves." (Kālidāsa 252)

Mādhavya, the court jester and the closest friend of Duṣṇanta reveals Duṣṇanta's condition after meeting Śakuntalā. According to him, from the moment Duṣṇanta met the "beautiful hermit girl"

(Kālidāsa 258), he has forgotten everything including sleep. He no longer wishes to return to the capital but keeps on thinking and admiring her beauty all the time. The same condition of Śakuntalā has been described by Pruiyamvaadā. According to her, Śakuntalā has become restless and dejected after meeting Duḥṣanta. Śakuntalā too confesses her deep love before her friends. She says that from the very moment she saw Duḥṣanta, she has become lovesick. She was so much deeply in love that she longed to marry him as soon as possible. She says “Every part of me/ yearns to be one with you.” (Kālidāsa 275). Most of the time she becomes speechless and spellbound when she sees Duḥṣanta. After realising their true love for each other, they marry in secret according to the *Gandharva* rite.

Shakespeare has immortalised the concept of love in his writings. The element of love is present not only in his comedies but also in his tragedies. No other English writer before him has presented love in such a brilliant manner as Shakespeare. However, love is given a new angle in *As You Like It*. The charm of the play lies in the different kinds of love it presents which include courtly love, romantic love, realistic love, and sexual love. Though the play presents love in its varied forms, the lovers fall in love with each other at first sight. Phebe’s remarks “Dear shepherd, now I find thy saw of might/Who ever lov’d that lov’d not at first sight?” (Shakespeare 112) apply to all the characters of the play. As soon as the hero and heroine, Orlando and Rosalind, see each other, they are maddened at each other’s sight. It is only love that compels Rosalind to persuade Orlando to withdraw himself from the wrestling match when she learns that the latter has challenged Charles to a duel. She says:

“The little strength that I have, I would it were with you.” (Shakespeare 30)

When Orlando wins the wrestling match, Rosalind is so overjoyed that she gifts her necklace to him. Orlando too in turn is captivated by Rosalind’s beauty. He becomes speechless and overwhelmed:

“What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue?
I cannot speak to her, yet she urg’d conference.
O poor Orlando, thou art overthrown!
Or Charles, or something weaker matters thee.” (Shakespeare 34)

Throughout the play, both of them show their deep love and devotion to each other. For instance, Orlando's true feelings are revealed when Rosalind in her disguise says to him that she will not marry him. He shows his true love saying that he is even ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of love. Similarly, Rosalind becoming unconscious after seeing the blood-stained napkin indicates her true love towards Orlando.

Celia and Oliver too fall in love with each other at first sight. Rosalind gives a beautiful account of their love for Orlando in the following words:

"For your brother and my sister no sooner met but, they looked; no sooner looked, but they loved; no sooner loved, but they sighed; no sooner sighed, but they asked one another for reason; no sooner knew the reason, but they sought the remedy." (Shakespeare 147)

The comedy in the play reaches its zenith when Phebe writes a long love letter to Rosalind. She has fallen in love with her (in her disguise as Ganymede). Her love letter made Rosalind furious. Hence, the principal characters in both plays are swayed by their deep love for each other.

However, in both the plays, the happiness caused by love is short-lived. The playwrights have tried to show the fact that one has to undergo the pains of loss, separation, and sadness if he/she wants to achieve true love. In *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, the couple was separated soon after their marriage. Duḥṣanta returned to the capital, while Śakuntalā remained in the hermitage, deeply lost all the time engrossed in the thoughts of her lover. On the other hand, Duḥṣanta, after reaching the capital gets himself engaged in the affairs of the state and completely forgets about Śakuntalā. He had the least remembrance of the fact that once he married the hermitage girl. When Śakuntalā comes to the capital, accompanied by the holy hermits with the motive of reuniting with her husband, Duḥṣanta fails to recognise her. Thus, instead of acceptance, she received rejection. To fill the cup of her sorrow, she realized that the ring (which could have played the part of a recognition sign) had been lost. Śakuntalā was so grief-stricken by the repudiation that she wished to bury herself deep into the core of the earth. She could not imagine herself being separated from Duḥṣanta.

However, when Duḥṣanta sees the ring and regains his memory, he cannot bear the pain of separation from Śakuntalā. He becomes sleepless and loses interest in the affairs of the state. He simply pines for Śakuntalā. He no longer seems to enjoy the company of nature and, therefore has cancelled the celebration of the spring. Miśrakeśī, an *Apsara*, who was eavesdropping on the entire scene reveals that Śakuntalā too is in the same miserable condition as Duḥṣanta. Thus, both lovers were not able to endure the pains and agonies of separation.

Similarly, in the play, *As You Like It*, the condition of the pivotal characters becomes pathetic in the absence of each other. When Rosalind reaches the Forest of Arden after being banished by Duke Frederick, she longs to be in the company of Orlando. When Silvius describes his unrequited love towards Phebe to Corin, Rosalind is reminded of her love towards Orlando. She says:

“Alas, poor shepherd, searching of thy wound,
I have my hard adventure found mine own.” (Shakespeare 56)

Her words reflect the depressed condition of a beloved in the absence of her lover. Orlando too can be seen in the same miserable condition when he reaches the Forest of Arden. He keeps missing his beloved Rosalind badly. He is so distressed at his separation from her that he writes verses in praise of her charm and beauty and hangs them on the trees. When Rosalind learns that Orlando too is in the forest, her joy knows no bounds. But she considers herself to be quite unfortunate as she is disguised as a male and Orlando would never be able to recognize her in this disguise. However, she finds a remedy. When she meets Orlando, she asks him to come and woo her and consider ‘him’ as his Rosalind. It was just to cope with the trauma of separation that Rosalind devised such a hilarious plan. They both enjoy the love game.

Though Rosalind has found a solution to her problem, Orlando hasn’t. His sadness due to his separation from Rosalind is evident when he reveals to Ganymede that he can no longer imagine ‘him’ to be Rosalind and make love to him. His brother will be married soon, but he is the one who is experiencing the utmost grief. His sadness compels Rosalind to reveal her identity to everyone. But before revealing her identity, she takes full consent from Duke Senior,

Orlando, and Phebe. She asks Duke Senior to allow Rosalind to marry Orlando if she produces Rosalind before him. She even reminds Orlando of his promise to marry Rosalind if she appears before him in person. She asks Phebe to marry Silvius if Phebe herself refuses to marry Ganymede. Everyone agrees and finally, Rosalind and Celia shed their disguises and appear before them which makes everybody surprised as well as happy. Thus, the reconciliation between the lovers takes place and the play ends in a flurry of marriages on a happy note.

However, the treatment of the theme of separation by both the playwrights is quite different. The characters of Shakespeare in *As You Like It* are separated due to certain situations. But in *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, the separation of Duḥṣanta and Śakuntalā is not due to any particular circumstances, but their separation is the result of the curse of sage Durvasā. Under the influence of the sage's curse, Duḥṣanta forgets his memories associated with Śakuntalā after reaching the town and fails to recognise her when she appears before him after several years. Thus, the lovers or other characters in the play are not responsible for themselves as Duke Frederick is responsible in *As You Like It*.

The scene of reconciliation between the lovers in *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* is the most overwhelming and sublime of all the scenes in the play. Duḥṣanta at one moment felt that his separation is permanent. For him to get his love again was merely a pipe dream. But when he was coming back to the earthly realm after fighting the demons, he stopped at the hermitage of the holy sage Mārīca. He meets his son Sarvadamana (Bharata) and wife Śakuntalā. The body of Duḥṣanta in these miserable years has become pale, and Śakuntalā therefore feels doubtful of his appearance at first. But as soon as she recognises him, she cries:

"Take courage, O my heart; envious Fate seems to have relented at last; this is indeed my noble Lord." (Kālidāsa 338)

It is quite interesting to note that in both the plays, supernatural agents aid in the reconciliation and reunion of characters. In *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, the reconciliation takes place in the realm of celestial hermitage in the presence of a heavenly couple, Mārīca and Aditi, while in *As You Like It*, Hymen, the God of marriage appears in

the last scene and facilitates the marriage and reunites all the characters.

Hence, it can be asserted that both *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and *As You Like It* validates the literary genius of their respective playwrights. The themes of love, separation, and reconciliation are handled by Kālidāsa and Shakespeare gracefully and artistically which give a universal appeal to both the plays. The playwrights have proved successful in depicting the fact that life is not always the same; it is neither black nor white, but grey. It has shades of happiness as well as sadness. To achieve their true love, the characters in both plays have to suffer the trials of separation. But their separation was not permanent, they were consequently reunited by the unexpected turn of events.

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Interconnectedness of Man and Ecology in the Puranas: A Study in Eco- Ethics

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Abstract

One of the burning issues of the present day world is the ecological imbalance which has resulted in generating an adverse situation for mankind on the surface of the earth. The development of the productive forces and technology have resulted into the unrivalled use of natural resources as useful objects for human beings under the capitalistic system, which has transformed nature beyond all recognition. Human kind currently faces the prospect of environmental disaster coupled with irreducible climate change because of its passionate pursuit of material wealth. It has quite simply upset the balance of nature and endangered the very ecosystems that make human life possible. It has also destroyed the interconnectedness between man and ecology which begins with the evolution of man on earth. Initially the created ecologies. (Manmade structures) were in harmony with the natural ecologies. The entire development was sustainable. However, the desire to become the 'master of universe' has led to extreme exploitation of natural resources. Human avarice and greed has destroyed the interconnectedness of man and the natural world and has resulted in the establishment of 'Anthropocentrism' i.e. Human Chauvinism. Human race has thus become dominant over other species and the environment. Primitive religions often drew no distinction between humans and other forms of life, and for that matter, little distinction between living and non-living objects. All things are alive, stones, rivers, mountains, and even the earth itself, often conceived of as 'Mother Earth. My paper seeks to explore how we can bring in the interventions from our ancient wisdom and re-establish this interconnectedness through ecological consciousness and a sense of 'Holism' that can be found in different Indic scriptures.

Keywords: Man, Ecology, Interconnectedness, Holism, Puranas.

"Dyauh shantihi, Antariksha shantihi, Prithvi shantihi, Aapah shantihi, Aushadhayah shantihi, Vanaspatayah shantihi, Vishvedevaha shantihi, Brahmah shantihi, Sarvh shantihi, Shantirev shantihi, sa ma shantiredhi." (Shukla Yajurveda, Madhyandina Shakha, 36/17).

It means “May peace radiate there in the whole sky, as well as in the vast ethereal space everywhere. May peace reign all over this earth, in water, and in all herbs, trees and creepers; may peace flow over the whole universe; may peace be in the Supreme Being Brahma; and may there always exist in all peace and peace alone.”

This *mantra* (hymn) from the *Yajurveda* recognizes the need for peace on earth, space and the entire universe, and wishes that peace be upon one self and all being. It speaks volumes about the Eco-ethics and the peaceful co-existence of human beings and all the elements. It speaks about the harmony and the inter-connectedness between all elements biotic, abiotic or physical and energy components that are found to exist in the environment.

According to some environment geographers external elements are necessary for the growth and development of biotic communities like human beings animals, plants etc. These living entities are surrounded by the physical attributes such as land, air water etc. Thus, environment or '*paryavarana*' (derived from Sanskrit, which means that which covers man from all sides), includes nature wherein physical attributes support and affect life in the biosphere. It has been observed by environmentalists that the elements of nature are closely related to one another. There is a constant interaction among the elements especially between natural ecologies and the created ecologies (man-made structures). The natural environment is at the root of human development and the responses of human social structures to the environment. That is why a harmonious and peaceful, syncretistic as well as symbiotic relation between both man and environment is mandatory. In olden days, people were highly conscious of their surroundings and the elements of environment, which were objects of human veneration as sacred entities of the cosmos. The entire development of mankind was sustainable. However, human avarice and greed has led to the exploitation of natural resources, has destroyed the interconnectedness of man and the natural world. We have forgotten the golden rule of sustainable development.

Ecologists have criticized the most basic assumption upon which conventional ideology is based. The humanist ideologies of the Renaissance commit the mistake of believing that human beings are

the centerpiece of existence. Ecologists argue that this anthropocentric exclusive concern for humans has damaged the relationship between the human species and the natural environment. Instead of preserving and respecting the earth and the diverse species that inhabit it, constituting its biotic community, human beings have sought to become in the words of John Locke, 'the masters and possessors of nature.' (Heywood, 2015: 253)

The ancient Indic Scriptures are replete with the wisdom that establishes the inter-connectedness of man and everything in the cosmos. The *Ishopanishad* says:

*"Ishavasyam idam sarvam, yat kinchat jagtyamajat
Tein tyakten bhunjithaha, ma gridhah kasyasvidhanam."* (Ishopanishad. 1.1)

"Whatever there is in this world, is covered by *Ishvar* (God) and belongs to him. Man should consume what is righteously his and not covet what by right belongs to others." (My translation).

This verse epitomizes man- nature relationship in its perfect harmony towards the preservation of earthly resources as well as realization of the simple fact that environment is for all, not for human kind alone. Thus 'Anthropocentrism' is the new ideology and human race has become dominant over the other species and the environment. Joanne Macy in '*Towards a Healing Self and World in Key Concepts in Critical Theory- Ecology*' by Carolyn Merchant states: "Anthropocentrism means human chauvinism. Similar to sexism, but substitute *human race* for man and *all other species* for woman. [It is about the human race being oppressive of the species and the environment.]" (Merchant, 1996: 292). The harmony, the interconnectedness is lost. We have turned the peace of our environment into violence, which expresses itself form of floods, cloud outburst, landslides, storms, heat waves etc. This ecological imbalance coupled with massive climate change, has become one of the burning issues of the present day world. The development of productive forces and technology has resulted in the unrivalled use of natural resources as useful objects for human beings under the capitalist system, which has transformed nature beyond all recognition. Andrew Heywood in his '*Political Ideologies: An Introduction*' rightly comments:

“Human kind currently faces the prospect of environmental disasters, coupled with irreducible climate change because of its passionate pursuit of material wealth. It has quite simply, upset the balance of nature and endangered the very eco-systems that make human life possible.” (Heywood, 2015: 268)

Christopher Manes in the chapter ‘*Nature and Silence*’ in ‘*The Ecocritical Reader Landmarks in Literary Ecology*’ quotes a Tuscarora Indian remark that unlike his people’s experience of the world, for Westerners, the uncounted voices of nature are dumb. Manes states:

“The language that we speak today, the idiom of Renaissance and Enlightened Humanism, veils the processes of nature with its own cultural obsessions, directionalities, and motifs that have no analogous in the natural world.” (Glottfelty, 1996: 15).

We are so anthropocentric in our attitude that despite Copernicus, all the cosmos rotates around our little globe; despite Darwin, we in our hubristic attitude consider ourselves superior to nature, are contemptuous of lesser species and exploit nature according to our whims and desires. This unchecked, rampant exploitation driven by a merciless capitalistic economy has led to a skewed idea of development and the resultant environment crises that we face today.

To re-establish the peace, balance and harmony we need to redefine our approach towards environment or ecology. Andrew Heywood in his iconic book ‘*Political Ideologies*’ also establishes the idea that ecologism requires a new style of politics which starts not from a concept of reductionism to see nature in parts rather than as an interconnected whole, but from a vision of nature as a network of precious but fragile relationships between living species- including the human species- and the natural environment.

Perhaps the most influential concept for modern ‘Greens’ has been developed by looking back to pre-Christian ideas. Primitive religions often drew no distinction between humans and other forms of life, and for that matter, little distinction between living and non-living objects. All things are alive, stones, rivers, mountains, and even the earth itself, often conceived of as ‘Mother Earth.’ In ‘*Gaia, A new look at Life on Earth*’ (1979) James Lovelock developed the idea that the planet itself is alive and gave it the name ‘Gaia’ after the Greek goddess of the Earth.

Thus, ecology becomes a kind of outlook or sensibility that stresses interconnectedness of creatures with each other and all the habitat that sustains them. As Carolyn Merchant in '*Key Concepts in Critical Theory- Ecology*' puts it:

"Tribal societies pursued their needs through the imitation of nature. Human beings became as much like the animals they hunted as possible. Power over nature, hence self-preservation was achieved through imitative magic. Enlightenment thinking disenchanting nature by removing that magic and turning the subject into an object, and that process of objectification distance subject from object." (Merchant, 1996: 2)

Lynn White Jr. in the chapter 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis' states:

"In Antiquity, every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects." (Glotfelty, 1996:10).

Though, ecology has been regarded as a modern movement by Western thinkers, it has been the very identity of the Indian way of life and ancient scriptures. Ecological consciousness can well be traced to ancient Indian *Vedic* and *Puranic* literature and other philosophical scriptures and treatises that have since time immemorial echoed the ethos of environmental consciousness. What modern Western ecologists have now begun to voice their concerns over, was an intrinsic part of the holistic living in ancient India. Ancient texts are replete with examples about the entire biotic as part of the same cosmos reflected in:

"Yat pinde, tat Brahmande"

(Whatever is in the material body is in the cosmos).

My paper seeks to explore how we can bring in the intervention from our ancient wisdom and re-establish the ecological consciousness and a sense of 'Holism' that can be found in different Indic scriptures. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* speaks of the fundamental synthesis of cosmology through the concept of '*Sarvam*

Khalu idam Brahmah' i.e. everything in the cosmos is '*Brahmah'* or the Ultimate Consciousness /Absolute Truth. (3.14.1).

The *Agnipurana* expresses thus:

*"Sarobhuteshu va atmanam, sarobhutani cha atmani
Sam pashyinnatma swarajyamadhighachhati."* (Agnipurana 1.65.9).

"One must treat all living beings with respect as part of one's soul. This shows the basic syncretism among all things, creatures, creeds, thoughts, sects and systems." (My translation).

The *Puranas* contemplate the idea of the survival of man; but it should be interpreted as the ability to co-exist and co-operate in complex relationship with earth's biotic community, rather than the ability to kill, exploit and suppress nature. 'Live and Let Live' is a powerful ecological principle of the *Puranas*, than 'either it's you or me.'

*"Har harim vidyataaram ya pashyatya ekrupinam
Sa yati paramanandam shashtranameva nishchayah."*
(Vayupurana 6.49).

Jonathan Bate provides an example from Wordsworth's poem 'The Excursion' and the insight that "Everything is linked to everything else, and most importantly the human mind must be linked to the natural environment." (Bate, 2013: 66). Andrew Heywood in *"Political Ideologies"* quotes the Australian philosopher Warwick Fox who advocated the concept of "transpersonal ecology", the essence of which is the realization that 'things are', that human beings and all other entities are part of a single unfolding reality." (Heywood, 2015: 266-267).

A need for ecological wisdom and a way of life that encourages compassion for fellow human beings, other species and the natural world is reflected in the *Vishnupurana*, where it is stated that God smiles upon him who is compassionate towards the living beings and does not harm them:

*"Na tadyati no hanti praninoanyashch ya dehinah
Yo manushyo manushyendrastoshyate tena Keshavah."* (Vishnupurana. 3.8.15).

One way to practice this compassion is mentioned in the *Yoga Sutra* of Maharishi Patanjali.

“Ahimsa-satyasteya-brahmacaryaparigraha yamah. Yoga Sutra II.30”

(Bryant, 2009: 242-243).

“The *yamas* are non-violence, truthfulness, refrainment from stealing, celibacy, and renunciation of (unnecessary) possessions.”

(Bryant, 2009: 488).

I.K. Taimni in ‘The Science of Yoga’ explicates that: “*Ahimsa* really denotes an attitude and mode of behaviour towards all living creatures based on the recognition of the underlying unity of life.”

(Taimni, 2015:210).

The *Yoga Sutra* as also Jainism and Buddhism emphasize that the ideals of *Ahimsa* and *Aparigraha* should be followed. ‘*Aparigraha*’ is an ethical concept in the sense that it underscores the fact that a man should keep as his possessions only that he requires for his livelihood and not subsume what is rightfully of others. Such an individual does not assert his ownership of anything nor is his individual ego tied up with such possessions. *Aparigraha* as Taimni comments in *The Science of Yoga* is not only absence of greediness but also non-possessiveness.

This concept is reflected in the term “Buddhist economics” advocated by E.F. Schumacher (i.e, the principle of right livelihood) which is also reflected in the words of *Yayati*, the King in the *Kurmapurana*. He says that no amount of riches, wealth and resources are enough to fulfil the greed of man. So, one must follow the principle of *Aparigraha* and abstain from keeping more than is necessary.

“*Parityajyarth kamau yausyatham dharmavarjite
Sarvokviruddhashch dharmampyacharennanu.*” (Kurmapurana. 2.16.1).

“Deep ecologists have viewed nature as the source of moral goodness. Nature thus has ‘intrinsic’ or ‘inherent’ value, not just instrumental value deriving from the benefits it brings to human beings.” states Andrew Heywood. (Heywood, 2015: 275).

The ‘Ecological egalitarianism’ proposed by the Norwegian ecologist Arne Naess in the concept of Deep Ecology (Merchant, 1996:121) finds expression in the concept of *Panchtatva* (the five elements from which the material world is made of) and refrainment

from violence towards all living entities as mentioned in various Indic texts of yore:

*“Na hinsyat sarobhutaninanthrin va vaden kwachit
Nahitamnapriyavakyamstensyat kadachan.”* (Kurmapurana. 1.16.1).

The *Puranas* are also replete with descriptions of human dependence on the resources of nature. The mountains, forests, rivers, etc. were considered to be gifts of nature creating resources for the sustenance of living beings. According to *Agnipurana*- ‘Aditya’, the Sun God) favours the earth with rainfall. Rain water produces ‘anna’ (food) and then the ‘prajas’ (human beings) come down to Earth. (*Agnipurana*. 216.11). The Sun has been praised in the *Matsya Purana* (125. 27-35) as the sustainer of all living beings.

The *Agnipurana* mentions that water is the elixir of life, so God’s first creation was water:

*“Apo naraitiprokta apo vaei nar soonavah
Ayanam tasya taha purvam te narayana smritah.”* (*Agnipurana* 70.7).

The scriptures state that the earth’s biotic environment was a living, breathing entity and animate with its own spirit. In the *Atharv Veda* the *Rishi* (sage) says that water can be seen and heard (by our sensory perceptions); water also has a heart that can feel:

“Idam va apo hridayam” (*Atharv Veda*. 3.13.7).

It further states that man is considered the offspring of water:

“apasputra so” (*Atharv Veda*. 1.5.2).

Nearly all the *Puranas* lay emphasis on purity of water, because polluted waters can cause several diseases. Water pollution is the biggest problem today and causes of 80% of diseases in human beings, one of the greatest cause of cancer is contaminated water. Major water resources have become dumping grounds for human waste, chemical and radioactive waste. People have been warned not to pollute the water. The *Markandeyapurana* admonishes thus:

“Napsu mutram purisham ya nishthiyam na samacharet.”
(*Markandeyapurana* 31.25).

The Manu Smriti, that highlights the codes laid down by Manu, mentions that man should not put such affluent like excretion, spittle, blood, or toxins and contaminate the rivers. *The Manu Smriti* provides

for stringent punishment and even execution of anyone who defiles or contaminates water or water resources.

*“Tadag bhedakam hanyavapsu suddhvedhanva
Yadyapi pratisankuryat apaystutam saham.”* (Manu Smriti. 9.279).

Even Kautilya, the famous political philosopher, often equated with Machiavelli in his treatise on economics the ‘*Arthshastra*’ mentions stringent punishment for someone who pollutes or contaminates water. He mentions:

*“Punyasthanau daksthan davegrah raj parigrheshu
Panotara vishtha dandaha mutreshvardh dandaha.”* (Arthshastra.2.36).

‘If a citizen spoils or destroys a fresh water pond, whose water is fit for consumption by humans and animals both, then the king must execute him and if he offers to rebuild the pond the same way it was, he should be levied with a punishment of a thousand’ *pann*’ (currency) and then only be spared.”

The plant world has also been given much importance in the *Puranas* as plants were considered as the primary producer in the biosphere, which directly or indirectly provided food to all terrestrial and aquatic animals, including human being and the plants thus played a significant role in shaping the biosphere. Plants are found to act as intermediaries between the biotic and the abiotic components of the environment.

Even trees in our mythology were supposed to be the givers of ‘*Prana*’ or life nurturing and were considered sacred. In the *Kurmpurana* it is said that felling of fruit bearing trees and uprooting trees which are in their full bloom called upon the sinner to repent of such deeds; felling of trees was considered a sin tantamount to ‘*bramhatya*’ (Murder of the sacred Brahma). The Mahabharata quotes that those who plant trees should look after them as they do their own sons.

*“Tasya putra bhavantiyete padapa naatra sanshyah
Putravat paripalayashch putraste dharmatah smrita.”*

(Mahabharata. Anushashan Parv. 58.3, 58.27).

In the same epic we find Maharishi Bhrigu in a dialogue with Rishi Bhardwaj wherein he says that ‘When a tree is felled it sprouts new life and it is aware of both pleasure and pain. Therefore I see that

even trees are living beings. They are not inanimate.” (*Mahabharat. Shanti Parv.184.17*).

Description of the gardens of Varanasi in the *Matsyapurana* points towards the life cycle and interdependence of living beings. It is stated that gardens abound in trees, creepers and bushes of various types. These remain the habitat of animals, insects, birds etc. The ‘*gulmas*’ (Creepers and shrubs) lying on the ground offer safety to the deer when chased by wild animals. Tall trees and sprouting grasses serve as grazing fields. Bees find shelter in flowers while dense forests provide habitats to lions. Tender plants serve as food for elephants. (*Matsyapurana. 180. 24-44*). This description epitomizes man-nature relationship in perfect harmony and mandates the preservation of earthly resources as well the realization of the fundamental fact that environment is for all and not for human kind alone.

Thomas Berry in his essay ‘*The World of Wonder*’ in Lee Llewellyn Vaughan ‘s *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth*, mentions that ancient cultures like India, China, Greece, Egypt and Rome had sacred rituals and sacred centres that bound humans to the universe. He writes:

“There were other rituals whereby human communities validated themselves by seasonal acknowledgment of the various powers of giving ceremony, where the sun, the Earth, the winds, the waters, the trees, and the animals each in turn received expressions of personal gratitude for those gifts that made life possible.” (Vaughan, 2013: 10).

The *Puranas* also contain references to people’s total dependence on plant based food materials for their sustenance. (*Brahmavaivarpurana.4.21.99*). The *Agnipurana* (281.20) recommends a selection of plant based food material for preservation of human health. The *Matsyapurana* reflects upon the hallowed importance of food material. The word ‘*anna*’ is used in this *Purana* to mean rice meals in general. Food is considered to be the ‘*Brahma*’ himself, who appears in concrete form to sustain the life process. (*Matsyapurana. 83.42-43*) The study of various *Puranas* reveals that plant world played a significant role in moulding human society in its cultural, social, agricultural, economical, religious and aesthetic development since the dawn of civilization. References are found of trees and plants, vegetables, pulses, grasses etc. that were included in the diet

chart of all the sections of society in ancient India. Plants also supplied material for clothing. (*Matsyapurana* 154.308) house-building and construction, (*Matsyapurana*.262.20) cosmetics ornaments and toiletries (*Agnipurana*.266.13). The *Puranas* also contain a detailed description of medicinal plants and their uses for curing different ailments. *The Agnipurana, the Matsyapurana and the Bramhavaivartapurana* describe a wide variety of the kingdom of flora and their medicinal properties for curing ailments of all types. In the *Agnipurana* (141.2-5) mention is made of thirty- six plants as *hartitaki, nimba, aksa, bala* etc. which were used in different combinations for treatment of different diseases.

In the *Bramhavaivartapurana* earth has been depicted as Mother Earth who protects and nourishes human kind. Everything is sustained by her:

*"Pradhanaha shasyarupa cha prakrateshcha va vasundhara
Adharbhutam sarvesham, sarv shasyaprasutika."*

(*Bramhavaivarta Purana*.1. 61-68).

Taking the anagogic trope further, we find the following in the *Skandpurana*:

*"Sarvopjiviyarupa sarvasamapatti dayini
Yatha vina jagat sarvam niradharam characharam."*

(*Skandpurana*.9.29).

"Earth represents all living organisms, she is the provider of all riches, and without her the world would become rudderless." (My translation).

In the *Vamanapurana* it is quoted thus:

*"Prithvi sagandha sarsastathah sparshashcha vayurjwalan sateja
Nabhah sashabadam mahta sadeiv yachhantu sarve mum suprabhat."*

(*Vamanapurana*. 14.26).

"Praying to Mother earth the Rishi eulogizes her as fragrant and beautiful with pure water and wind as well as glorious with radiance; her skies resonate with melodious sound; I bow to her in the morning and may she bless me with her benevolence."

(My translation).

Though the ancient seers had firmly established the interconnectedness between the man and his ecology, yet they were

aware that basic human nature was full of greed and avarice and they also knew man's proclivity to control and dominate nature and exploit its resources. So, in order to discipline human behavior, certain ethical behaviors towards ecology were marked. The deification of Mother Nature by the Vedic Aryans was a drive towards conservation of the environment as well as sustainable development. The trees were considered to grant riches, blessings happiness and peace. (*Agnipurana*.194.5). It is interesting to note that before collecting wood from the forests for construction purposes one had to propitiate the deities and perform pujas and offer sacrifices to the trees. (*Matsyapurana*. 257.2) Trana, Vriksha, Lataa and Gulma were considered to be the offspring of the sage Kashyap and Ira. (*Matsyapurana*.6.46). Such belief of 'one family, one universe' led people to develop a special bonding with each and every species of flora and it fostered an inseparable bond between the people and the natural environment. In the *Vishnudhamattarapurana* the elements of environment are included in the category of 'Lok Devtas' especially the *Vanaspatis* (Vegetation) that are described as deities to be worshipped. *Vishnudhamattarapurana*. 3.222-228) In the *Vishnupurana* mention is made of worshipping the seasons, mountains, and rivers, *Vanaspatis* in form of religious vows or rituals throughout the year as beneficial (Ishta) gods. (*Vishnupurana*. 5.1.101).

Importance has been given to tree plantation, respectful usage of rivers etc. In the *Puranas*, planting tree was considered as important as raising a child. It has said in the *Matsyapurana* that planting a tree takes one to heaven. (*Matsyapurana*. 154.512) A tree is more important than tens and thousands of sons, as it provides protection, shade, fruits, flowers and the vital elements for life. In the *Agnipurana* (227.21, 62) it is mentioned that a man who causes any damages to the trees, who makes injury even to a small piece of grass is punished heavily. In the *Shivapurana* (5.13-18) it is stated that felling trees without a valid cause is a religious offence. A man who commits such sinful an act is destined to go to 'Asipatravana' a region in hell. In the *Matsyapurana* (227.92-95) it is found that felling of trees without reasons or burning down of any forest was totally banned. In this connection the *Matsyapurana* narrates a story of *Kartyaviryarujna*, who destroyed a whole forest including the hermitage of sage *Aapava*. In his rage, the sage cursed him that he would meet the same fate. The

message is clear. Anyone committing such a scale of destruction of nature or causing deforestation, uprooting trees, destroying greenery etc. is heavily punished or levied penalty for such acts. (*Matsyapurana*. 44.2-14).

It is interesting to note that animals essential for the preservation of ecological balance have been depicted as the vehicles of different gods and goddesses in Indic scriptures. As animals and birds do a great service to mankind by providing milk, transportation and clearing the debris created by man, they should be protected:

“Goshvostadgadarbhshwanah, sarika grahgodhika
Chataka bhas kurmadhaha, kathita gramvasinah.”

(*Agnipurana*. 231.9, 11, 12, 13).

The importance of rivers and mountains was established in the Puranas. Every river is considered to be sacred and has been termed as ‘mother.’ In the *Harivanshapurana* Lord Krishna calls upon the peasants to worship the Mount Govardhana, not the God Indra, (King of the Gods in Hindu mythology) as the mountain was the mainstay of their agricultural life. The teachings of queen Madalasa in the *Markandeyapurana* that all elements and entities on this earth are sacred and are to be respected, reflect the ecological consciousness. (*Markandeyapurana*. 19.66-75).

Above all the concept of Earth as one’s mother in the *Atharv-veda*’s ‘*Bhumi Suktam*’ never allowed its exploitation.

“Mata Bhumihi, putro aham Prithivyaha.” (*Atharv-veda* 12.1.12).

“The earth is my Mother and I her son.”

Environmental ethics mandates that man is not the conqueror or master of ‘Mother Nature’ but an integral part of the biotic community and is therefore responsible for the welfare and protection of not only the natural environment but the entire biotic community. John Muir questions the very notion that nature created plants and animals for the happiness on man alone. Ramchandra Guha quotes Muir, “Why should man value himself as more than a small part of one great unit of creation? And what creature of all that the Lord has taken the pains to make is not essential to the completeness of that unit- the cosmos? The universe would be incomplete without man; but it would also be incomplete without the

smallest trans-microscopic creature that dwells beyond our conceitful eyes and knowledge.” (Guha, 2000: 52).

Thus, in order to save our environment and to deal with our problems in the present day world, a more sweeping and insightful body of knowledge, scientific as well as social is required. This can be fulfilled by a systematic and deep rooted study of the *Puranas*. As Lawrence Buell in his iconic work *The Environmental Imagination- Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* states: “The rhetoric of nature’s personhood speaks merely to the nominal level; what counts is the underlying ethical orientation implied by the troping. “Mere projection or personification,” as environmental ethicist John Tallmadge writes, signifies far less than the commitment to perceiving the nonhuman world not “as an object, but..... as a presence. “ (Buell, 1995: 217).

Naess’ Deep Ecology becomes germane here because it calls for a change from anthropocentric consciousness to ‘cosmological consciousness’. As Heywood mentions: “At the heart of this is an inter-subjective model of selfhood that allows for no distinction between the self and the ‘other’, thereby collapsing the distinction between humankind and nature.” (Heywood, 2015: 275).

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Development is a Myth: Reading Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* as a Postcolonial Eco-Fable for the Age of Anthropocene

Rumela Saha

Abstract

This paper aims to examine how Amitav Ghosh in his latest literary work *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2023) questions the ideas of development which are completely borrowed from the Western colonial extractive models. At the heart of Ghosh's fable is a "Living mountain", called the *Mahaprabat*, which is a source of sustenance for the indigenous people living in the Valley. The indigenous people highly revered the Great Mountain. None of the indigenous people inhabiting the Valley ever dared to set foot on the slopes of the Great Mountain. It was told by their ancestors that the *Mahaprabat* would protect them only if they told stories, sang, and danced for it – "but always from a distance". But an environmental crisis unfolds when a group of people from outside – the 'Anthropoi', starts to climb the forbidden peaks, out of their eagerness to explore and exploit the *Mahaprabat*. The crisis turns into a catastrophe when eventually the indigenous people also join the race of greed with the 'Anthropoi', mistaking exploitation as development. The present paper thereby attempts to analyze Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* as a postcolonial eco-fable that shows how the promised development is a myth and nothing but a disguised form of neo-colonialism.

Keywords: development, Anthropocene, environmental crisis, neo-colonialism, postcolonial, eco-fable

There was nothing to be done, but to keep on climbing. And so we did, but with heavy hearts now, for we could not forget that with every step we took we were advancing towards our doom.

Amitav Ghosh, *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times*

The Jnanpith awardee author, Amitav Ghosh has grabbed global attention as an eminent climate thinker after the publication of the

insightful non-fiction *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* in 2016. After *The Great Derangement* (2016), Ghosh has published *Gun Island: A Novel* (2019), *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021), and *Jungle Nama* (2021), wherein all three works he distinctly addresses the issue of global climate change. Amitav Ghosh right now is leaving no stone unturned to show how as an author one can respond to the crisis of climate change and environmental degradation. As a litterateur and climate thinker he is trying to capture the crisis of global climate change in literary language. Amitav Ghosh believes in the power of stories. He believes that stories have a transformative power. As we all respond emotionally to stories, the emotional stimulations generated by stories have a transformational capability. Environment-centric stories are thus potentially a way to make readers imaginatively engage with the present environmental crisis. Environment-centric narratives can help to facilitate conversations about environmental crises among its readers, which in turn might help guide future decisions. Amitav Ghosh's recently published book comprising only 39 pages, titled *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2023), is one such kind of environment-centric narrative that has the potential to make us imaginatively engage with the ecological crisis of the age of Anthropocene. In my paper, I therefore attempt to analyze Ghosh's environment-centric narrative *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2023) as a postcolonial eco-fable for the age of Anthropocene that counters the western extractive idea of development.

First, we have to understand why I am referring to this text as a postcolonial eco-fable. To understand this, first I would like to draw your attention to the definition of colonialism given by Elleke Boehmer in his book *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (1995). According to Bohemer "colonialism is a settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources and an attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of the occupied land often by force" (Bohemer 2). This definition indicates the fact that colonialism and ecological aspects are intimately related to each other. Colonialism cannot be understood without understanding the ecology or ecosystem that the colonizers try to transform, control, disturb or disrupt.

Now let me explain what is postcolonial? To explain postcolonial I shall fall back on the definition of the term postcolonial given by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their phenomenal book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989):

We use the term 'post-colonial'... to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. (Ashcroft 2)

So, postcolonial is the continuity of colonial means of production or controlling lives. The kind of life we live today is a direct continuity but a highly transformed form of our colonial past. Thus we can say that the postcolonial is a continuation of the colonial modes with a disruption. Hence the way it is impossible to talk about colonialism without an understanding of the ecological disruptions, in a similar manner, it is impossible to understand postcolonial condition without understanding how some of our most useful resources that we use on an everyday basis like land, air, water, and food are politicized or strategically deprived.

So a new branch of study named *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* emerges where we find an alliance between postcolonial and environmental studies. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in their landmark book *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010) elaborates on the relationship between postcolonial and environmental studies by foregrounding that:

Postcolonial studies have come to understand environmental issues not only as central to the projects of European conquest and global domination but also as inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism on which those projects historically – and persistently – depend. Not only were other people often regarded as part of nature – and thus treated instrumentally as animals – but also they were forced or coopted over time into Western views of the environment, thereby rendering cultural and environmental restitution difficult if not impossible to achieve. Once invasion and settlement had been accomplished, or at least once administrative structures had been set up, the environmental impacts of Western attitudes toward human beings in the world were facilitated or reinforced by the deliberate (or

accidental) transport of animals, plants and peoples throughout the European empires, instigating widespread ecosystem change under conspicuously unequal power regimes. (Huggan, Tiffin 6)

Huggan and Tiffin therefore talk about the impossibility of discussing modern imperialism without paying attention to the massive ecological destruction that is at its root. Even Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) describes imperialism as "...an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control" (Said 77). One of the central objectives of postcolonial ecocriticism to date has been to contest the Western extractive ideologies of development. The tragedy of contemporary South Asia is that the kind of development that we seek today is completely borrowed from Western colonial models. We have to understand that postcolonial ecocritics are not against development or anti-development. They are voicing against the blatant social and environmental abuses that continue to be perpetrated in the name of development. The Western extractive idea of development is just a myth or rhetoric. It is simply a myth of gigantism. Such a development cannot deliver anything that it promises. Hence postcolonial ecocriticism according to Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin is "...broadly counter-developmental, rather than explicitly anti-developmental...which is committed to recognizing the existence of alternative social and environmental knowledge that are neither acknowledged nor necessarily understood by development experts in the West" (Huggan, Tiffin 20).

Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2023) is such a cautionary postcolonial ecological fable that is countering the extractive developmental ideas propagated by the West. At the heart of Ghosh's fable is a "Living mountain" – "...an immense, snowy mountain, whose peak was almost always wreathed in clouds" (Ghosh 7), called the *Mahaparbat*. This *Mahaparbat* is a source of sustenance for the indigenous people living in the Himalayan Valley. The indigenous people highly revered the Great Mountain. None of the indigenous people inhabiting the Valley ever dared to set foot on the slopes of the Great Mountain. The people of the Valley believed that "of all the world's mountains, (theirs) was the most alive" (Ghosh 7). It was told by their ancestors that the *Mahaparbat*

would protect them only if they told stories, sang, and danced for it – “but always from a distance” (Ghosh 7). Every day the Valley people got proof that the “Mountain was a living being” that cared for them. There was a tree that grew only in that Valley and “produced things that were so miraculous” (Ghosh 8) that was referred to as the “Magic Tree” (Ghosh 7). The flowers of the Magic Tree produced flavourful honey, the fruits were delicious, and its roots nurtured rare mushrooms but the nuts that lay within the fruits were the miraculous produce of the tree. The nuts were known for their medicinal uses and these miraculous nuts attracted traders from the Lowlands. An environmental crisis unfolds across the Valley when a group of traders, called the ‘Anthropoi’, comes from the Lowland in search of medicinal nuts. The ‘Anthropoi’, starts to climb the forbidden peaks, out of their eagerness to explore and exploit the *Mahaparbat*. For the ‘Anthropoi’ the *Mahaparbat* is just like any other mountain that produces “valuable trade goods” (Ghosh 11). The *Mahaparbat* does not hold any emotional and sacred value for the ‘Anthropoi’. Hence the ‘Anthropoi’ belittles the indigenous people’s local beliefs and knowledge about the Great Mountain. They even inflict a sense of insecurity on the indigenous people. We see the ‘Anthropoi’ saying to the native people of the Valley that: “...the reasons why they were so much stronger than us (Valley-folk) was that their ideas were universal – unlike the false, local beliefs that circulated amongst us (the) Valley-folk” (Ghosh 26). They laughed at the native people’s inherited ideas of the Mountain’s sacredness, saying “That was all ignorant, pagan superstition” (Ghosh 26).

In Ghosh’s story the ‘Anthropoi’ completely resembles the white colonizers from the West. They behave exactly like the British colonizers who tried their best to make us believe that they were only the enlightened ones. Hence it is the white colonizer’s moral duty to bring Western civilization to the less enlightened populace of the East. The ‘Anthropoi’ does not try to understand the environmental knowledge of the Valley people. The *Mahaparbat* is like any other mountain for the ‘Anthropoi’ that just needs to be “...climbed if only the climbers were strong enough, intelligent enough, resolute enough” (Ghosh 26). Only by climbing, exploring, and extracting resources from the Great Mountain, they believed they were going to bring development to that region. This idea of the development of the

'Anthropoi' is a "disguised form of neo-colonialism" (Huggan, Tiffin 27). The primary purpose is to extract commercial benefits of the Great Mountain and in no way this development is sustainable. The story does not end with the 'Anthropoi' climbing and exploiting the Great Mountain. It ends on an even more catastrophic note when we see the indigenous Valley people also joining the race of greed with the 'Anthropoi'. The result is the mountain becomes destabilized. The combined weight of all the climbers unsettles the snow that resulting in a "series of devastating landslides and avalanches" (Ghosh 24) across the Valley. Environmental catastrophe unfolds all across the Valley. Even after realizing that the race of greed is a threat to their survival, they cannot stop because climbing the Great Mountain has become "like a drug to them" (Ghosh 30) and that eventually takes them to their doom.

So, Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2023), is a postcolonial ecological fable that critiques the neo-colonial western ideologies of development. Ghosh shows that the extractive idea of development that the 'Anthropoi' believes in is just a myth. It is a myth of gigantism that not only fails to deliver what it promises but also causes irreparable environmental catastrophe in the age of the Anthropocene. Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2023) creates a counter-developmental narrative, where the aim is to acknowledge the existence of alternative social and environmental pieces of knowledge of the natives that are never appreciated or understood by the development masters in the West. To conclude I would like to refer to an oft-quoted statement of Sundarlala Bahaguna regarding the environmental catastrophes unfolding in the Indian Himalayan belt. Bahaguna says that "the ecological crisis in the Himalayas is not an isolated event (but) has its root in the (modern) materialistic civilization (that) makes man the butcher of Earth" (Huggan and Tiffin 1). The Anthropoies from Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* quite resemble us – we who now function as the butchers of postcolonial India. But we often do not realize that we are the butchers who are poisoning the entire ecosystem at a terrifying rate in the name of development. Hence an environment-centric fable like Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* is a need of the hour that has the potential to make us imaginatively engage with the ecological crisis of the age of the Anthropocene.

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12

A Three-Legged Approach for Sustainable Environments through Reinforced Awareness

Sooshilla Gopaul

“But in this fleeting world, nothing is forever,
desire is potent, and greed hard to conquer.”
Amitav Ghosh *Jungle Namah* (2021)

Abstract

The 21st century Anthropocene could be heading towards a planetary catastrophe. Today flooding, sinking of skyscrapers and the westward movement of the Anatolian plate are all concrete facts of climatic crisis. However, “hope springs eternal”. Sustainability is a three-legged scheme made of economy, society and environment and in this paper, I put forward each of these aspects. I draw from Yuval Noah Harari. He has pointed out that some countries will benefit from the melting ice while other ones might be threatened with desertification. He adds that thus a deglobalization will occur. As a result, some countries will prosper through economic growth which nevertheless carries ecological crisis. The prosperous countries will wield power and become proficient with AI while the rest of the world population will be deprived ones. The rich countries will keep on producing and inflation will rise while sustainability of environments will be neglected and exploitation of natural resources will continue. I propose a three-legged approach for sustainable environments in which the first step should be to reduce consumerism in a considerable way. Second, I recommend the use of solar and eolian energies. Third, I suggest that youth power be allowed to flourish. I refer to Benjamin Myers and Benjamin Zaphaniah.

Keywords: Three- Legged Approach, deglobalisation, youth.

Today’s Situation:

If up to 2008 climate change was taken as a possibility, today climate catastrophe is here and we are experiencing it either directly or through the media and nurturing empathy for those involved. Fiona Harvey, the Environment Editor for *The Guardian*, on 8 June 2023, reported that the greenhouse gas emissions have reached an all-time high and that it is threatening to push the world into “unprecedented”

levels of global heating. In September 2023 Libya had 100 times the monthly rainfall in 24 hours only. In almost every part of the planet, we are examining our physical features and taking safety steps. Unfortunately, it is only after the catastrophe that we can evaluate the viability of our preventive measures.

In 2019 European Union set up a GREEN DEAL Target: By 2050 carbon neutrality should be reached. By 2030 at least 55% of net emission should be reached. At the 18th Summit meeting of G20 held on 9 and 10 September 2023, in Delhi, Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General declared that it was time for global compromise. On 19th September 2023 at the UN General Assembly referring to the new multilateral agreements, taken during the past year, on the right to a clean healthy and sustainable environment, he declared that tools and resources were available but what was required was determination. On 21 September 2023 at the summit on Climate change Antonio Guterres, declared that “Humanity has opened the gates of Hell”. He added that we can still limit carbon emissions to the limit of 1.5C and that we have to move fast and aim at solidarity and climate justice. He ended by saying that the future of humanity is in our hands.

There is a necessity for a three-legged approach to a sustainable environment. For a fairly long time, the problem of climate change has been taken in isolation. Now and then attention was drawn to the fact that climate change concerns all. Yet not enough has been done as the 1.5 C target still seems a dream to be achieved. We have only seven years to attain the 55% net emission. Today it is clear that climate change is inherently linked to other components of society.

Yuval Noah Harari in his book *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (2018) points out that during the early twenty-first century, most humans have enjoyed peace and prosperity to a degree never attained so far because it is under the aegis of liberalism. However, he adds :

“But liberalism has no obvious answers to the biggest problems we face: ecological collapse”.

Some countries have had economic growth.

He adds :

“However economic growth will not save the global ecosystem-just the opposite, it is the cause of ecological crisis” (16).

The Three-legged approach proposed :

Less Consumerism

The idea of reducing consumption was brought forward by Ayse Lahur Kirtunc at the 4th Literature and Cultural Studies Conference held at Ege University in Izmir Turkey on 3rd to 5th May 2023. Indeed banks are now planning to consider the environmental social and risk factors before granting loans for projects. A sustainable loan at preferential rates is often recommended. Some banks have decided not to finance projects linked with coal.

Taking the cue from the Covid period a campaign for less consumerism may be undertaken and put into practice. There is a glut of goods appealing to those who can afford them but also to those who cannot for these people are helped through the higher purchase system. Needs and desires have been blurred and this has not only benefitted industry but also contributed to the degradation of the ecosystem.

The contradiction between the claim to find money urgently required to address climate change and the claim for minimizing consumerism is striking. A similar contradiction is seen when it is reported by Eurostat, an official website of the European Union on 16 August 2023, that in the first quarter of 2023 greenhouse gas emissions showed a decrease of 2.9% compared to the same quarter of 2022. But this decrease took place simultaneously with a 1.2% increase in Europe's gross domestic product.

When faced with such a dichotomous situation, the only solution seems to turn to individuals who can act on their own and contribute on a personal basis. Even if it is on a regional basis, no matter how minimal, it will count and contribute to the worldwide scheme. There is no end to the list of the various ways the individual action can help in redressing the climatic crisis. These individual actions “to be effective, they must be on a global level” says Harari (119). Individuals can act on their own, in different parts of the world and thus create a global effect without being under the umbrella of a formal governmental or international organization. Today through the advanced means of communication provided by modern

technology instant inter-personal connection is easily achieved. Members of families living in different parts of the world, far from one another, can join up, form, maintain and sustain relationships over a network. Similar steps can be taken by individuals. These individuals can care for the environment in different parts of the world, each in his or her own way, tackling problems particular to their locality. Thus they can achieve the goal of attending to the climate imminent crisis at a global level, as recommended by Harari. Individuals, careful not to be contaminated or to contaminate other people, even after the restrictions connected with the COVID-19 pandemic imposed by governments were removed, must have helped in limiting the spread of the disease and all its mutating new strains. In the nineteen fifties the slogan “ the personal is political” became a battle cry and was a change-maker as far as the second wave of feminism was concerned. Personal efforts, by individuals can be encouraged and harnessed to tackle the problem of climate crisis be it in the form of unexpected floods, drought, land slide, damaged crops or in any other form.

The Second Leg: The use of Solar and Aeolian energies.

It is known that what the sun provides to the earth in one hour can be sufficient to cover the energy the planet requires during one year. However, unlike rain water, we cannot store it as suggested by Jonathan Swift, 300 years ago, in his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). It is not a constant source as it is weather-dependent. It is not ubiquitous, manageable or easily accessible everywhere on the planet Earth. It also requires space and its storage is expensive. Besides some toxic materials used during the process of solar photovoltaic installation can indirectly impact the environment. Yet its maintenance and repair costs are rather low. This renewable source of energy, currently used in the form of solar heaters, is a provider of free street lighting but it could be exploited widely had direct action been taken by governments.

The Aeolian energy is recognized as cheap, clean and renewable. It is considered to be a sustainable natural form of energy. It has a minimal impact on the environment compared to what burning fossil fuels can have. The turbines that are used occupy small areas and do not produce emissions; hence there are no greenhouse ill effects or

acid rain resulting. Just as solar energy can be used for domestic purposes; it can also produce a substantial amount of energy for modern life in cities as well as for people living in the countryside. Normally the windy areas are not used for agriculture but owners of such land can rent out their property. Already some wind parks have been created in India: the Jaisalmer Wind Park in Rajasthan and the Muppandal Wind Farm in Kanyakumari.

The Third Leg: Youth Power.

Benjamin Zephaniah in his novel *Refugee Boy* (2001) shows how young people can create sufficient pressure to create awareness within the community and on the national level regarding problems that officials and courts do not understand. As a result, they might make errors and might take inhuman measures. In this novel, set in England, Alem a 14 year boy is left alone in a hotel room by his father. The latter simply disappeared. They had been fleeing a home country which was being torn by civil war in Africa. They had entered England as tourists. Overnight Alem becomes a refugee and has to apply to the Home Office for political asylum. In the meantime, he is assigned to a foster family, the Fitzgeralds whose daughter Ruth finds that he must be helped. She initiates action. With the help of the school, where Alem has been admitted and where he is highly appreciated for his dedication to studies and the young people of the local community, a pressure group is built. Then, different groups of the community rally together in his favour. In the meantime, his father, who had reappeared, is killed in a street attack. Alem had already lost his mother; she had been killed in what had become an ongoing civil war in his home country. In the end, the court recommends, in an official way, to the home Office that Alem should stay in England. Youth power has contributed immensely to raising the awareness of high officials regarding the plight of a refugee whose parents had been killed and could not be deported to a war-torn home country on humanitarian grounds.

In India, young people's capacity for work and eagerness to forge ahead is recognized. In England during the First World War, their enthusiasm was tapped in a most futile way. The British war poet Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) highlighted the great waste of the energy of young people in his poems *Anthem for Doomed Youth* and

Dulce et Decorum. But now they can contribute to the world's engagement in attaining 1.5 C and in sustaining it.

Another text illustrating that young people can lead people back to nature is Benjamin Myers' *The Offing* (2018). In this novel, a young adult, at the end of his college days, decides to spend his summer holidays walking. He was mostly interested in mathematics. Once his final examinations are over he sets out walking. He walks away from his village near Durham, England. He sleeps in the open air and survives on minimal food offered to him by farmers until he is spotted by Dulcie Piper, an elderly independent woman who lives with her dog Butler in an almost decrepit cottage. During conversations over shared meals, she introduces him to well-known authors in English literature, including poetry. While he is doing a minor repair on the cottage, he discovers a manuscript with the title *The Offing*, left by a former lover, a German poet. Later she reveals some secret transactions carried out during the World War between herself and someone on the continent.

This novel highlights living with minimal consumerism but also points out that youth power can foster a return to nature for a sustainable future. Repair of damage done and concrete efforts towards sustainability are possible with willpower and global commitment.

A Required Re Awakening of Awareness.

Repetitions of warnings cause boredom and can lead to failure in effectiveness. Parents as well as those in authority are fully aware of this fact. However, a reinforced awareness can be fostered through sustained reading and public debates on the climate crisis. Amitav Ghosh in his non-fiction *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) points out that in future, leaders and politicians will be blamed for not attending to the issue of climate change and he insists on the responsibility of artists and writers (181). Ghosh highlights the point that we need to respect Nature, more precisely, in the sense that we need to ask her permission before entering certain areas. Any action that can disturb the creatures or appear to challenge them or invade their privacy can be highly offensive and be heavily punished. It is seen in his novel *Gun Island* (2019) where Deen, the narrator, walks into Manasa Devi's temple without permission. A

blood-chilling incident follows. Rafi, with “eye-popping terror” watches on while Deen slowly walks towards the exit. Deen was not aware that a huge king cobra, a hamadryad, was right behind him, with its hood raised and its head above his shoulder. The cobra was emitting the growling sound which Deen had heard but had by mistake attributed to Rafi. Deen realized the extent of what he had escaped only when it struck Tipu, another village dweller and friend of Rafi, “with astonishing speed and power”. Tipu had tried to subjugate the cobra by throwing a net on it. Deen becomes aware of the gravity of the mistake he had committed and of the danger he had created for himself when he learns that “a King Cobra’s bite can kill an elephant”. Deen, awe-stricken, helplessly watches when Tipu becomes delirious and has seizures. (78-97)

In *Gun Island* (2019) there is another incident which clearly shows that human beings might face death if they invade the territory of non-humans. Later Deen, meets Cinta, a friend in Venice. Cinta wanted to show Deen the spot where her uncle had tried to spot the Sea Monster of the Customs House. It was dark; they were on the pier. They used their cell phones. Cinta used a hairpin and pricked at the rotten wood. They saw shipworms “wriggling inside the wood” of the pilings. Immediately the railing they were leaning on “slipped away”, “their cellphones flew” and “vanished into the water”, “a creaking sound” was heard and “a mass of squirming shipworms came pouring out of the broken logs”. They “came swarming towards” Cinta and Deen. Soon “the worms were swarming over” them. The narrator adds: “It was as though the earth itself had sent out tentacles”. This time it is Tipu who has entered Venice and saves them. They are taken to a hospital. Later Deen meets Rafi, who is working at the hospital; the latter casually says:

“The worms. It’s just like the Sundarbans”

They talk about Tipu and the seizures which he still has. (250-256)

Ghosh has made it clear that human beings have to respect nature and that it is one body though dispersed over the planet.

Ghosh in his non-fiction *The Nutmeg’s Curse: parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021) says:

“It is often said that climate change should be tackled as though it was a war” (164).

Yet he adds that it is unlike the two World Wars of the first half of the twentieth century, climate change does not have a human enemy for environmental changes are “forever wars”. Further on Ghosh points out that climate change is an ongoing war which perpetuates ‘slow violence’ and is caused by inaction. (164-165).

Another text that emphasises the commitment human beings have towards trees is Richard Powers’ *The Overstory* (2018). In this novel trees are the heroes and characters mark important events of their life by planting trees. There are nine main characters and the narrator displays the way each of them engages with trees. It is also about those activists who protest vehemently against logging. The idea that trees are like human beings and can communicate among themselves comes up.

However, it is Barbara Kingsolver’s review of Powers’ *The Overstory* (2018) which is most interesting. According to her trees and human beings have much in common though they have different life spans. She explains that trees look after their families, undertake sacrifices for their sake, offers gifts, communicate among themselves, cooperate, save and record important events in their lives. She adds that trees even send some members of their families to settle elsewhere, spot intruders and deal with them. She also draws attention to the fact that human beings admire trees yet walk on their hearts.

For a reinforced awakening.

A concrete step in re-awakening awareness concerning climate change can be established through direct educational programmes. Today through online teaching thousands can be reached in one session and this can be multiplied exponentially. The fact that through educational institutions messages for improvement can be transmitted to great numbers within a short time must be exploited. The COVID pandemic has frightened the world so much that some universities felt the need to include a module on ways to manage the stress that can be caused by such calamities. In 2021 Susmita Talukdar drew up a programme entitled *Pandemic Politics, Health and Society* for the Pokhara University in Nepal. If in response to the Covid pandemic, innovative measures are introduced in educational institutions, there is no doubt that efforts can be mustered to awaken

awareness through the inclusion of courses dealing with climate change.

Furthermore, Kiri Manookin's article entitled *Ecopedagogy in Action: An Example of engaging and connecting/ Making a case for Ecopedagogical Writing Program in Nepal* (2021) can be interpreted as a reinforcement of the point made above. Manookin points out that ecopedagogies can promote eco-justice and a sense of biophilia which in turn can foster a feeling of being connected to all living entities. In addition, she asserts that digital literacy must not obliterate 'nature literacy'. Referring to her former teaching sessions, in which students from different parts of the world, were present she explains that during a four-day trip, students had the opportunity to practise sustainable habits and record their reduced environmental effects; they also experienced being 'digitally disconnected'. It is seen that the students had to analyse their chosen topics, which as seen from the programme could be related to their home countries. One of the topics was :

"Illegal cutting of rosewood in Madagascar."

The exploitation of rosewood and sandalwood might result in a situation similar to what happened in Mauritius in the seventeenth century when oak trees were cut down for shipbuilding by colonial powers and the Dodo birds became, more than ever, easy prey.

Hence for a sustainable environment a three-legged approach, with a focus on reduced consumption, use of solar and aeolian energy and youth power, could be implemented. An immersion into the fictional world created by a novelist would help those away from calamities to imagine the consequences of being disrespectful towards nature. Including educational programmes directly related to the climate crisis would reinforce awareness regarding the urgency for the adoption of remedial measures.

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Dr Sooshilla Gopaul

Mythology and Conservation in the Sundarbans: Unveiling the Bon Bibi Narrative from Amitav Ghosh's 'Jungle Nama'

Swati Sharma

Abstract

Nature and humans have always been intricately related to each other. The presence of numerous folk tales, tribal stories, myths and legends from the profundity of dense forests testifies to the close interdependence of forests, human creativity and the narrative – real as well as imagined. In the Indian context, the concept of nature is constructed to a great extent by cultural and mythical narratives. In the remote rural and indigenous communities of India, the conservation of nature has been a significant part of cultural quintessence. Stories have always been a repository of knowledge and have been significant enough to teach, convince, explain, warn and make us conscious. However, in this vast realm of stories, there are some special ones which we have knowingly or unknowingly associated with our lives and have now become an integral part of our existence. Such stories are called myths. Even though the myth is far from the truth, it is still given a lot of importance because it is grounded in culture and faith. Myths are transhistorical and cultural embodiments of cultural knowledge passed on from one generation to another and often accepted by the new generation without any questions asked. The research aims to explore the role of myth in the conservation of nature focusing on the Sundarbans. The myth to be explored in this paper is the myth of Bon Bibi as reconnoitred in *Jungle Nama* by Amitav Ghosh.

Keywords: Myth, eco-criticism, Folklore, Cultural Studies, Indian Tradition

Forest and humans have always been intricately related to each other. The presence of numerous folk tales, tribal stories, myths and legends from the profundity of dense forests testifies to the close interdependence of forests, human creativity and the narrative – real as well as imagined. The historical analysis of human interaction with the forests in ancient India is of great significance. The people of ancient India were concerned about the ways forests affected them

and how they were affecting the forests leading to the emergence of measures to conserve the forests. The Vedas and other sacred texts serving as a metaphor of life and a metaphor of event makes for an important element of the philosophical presupposition about the idea of 'forest'. In the sacred '*Prithvi Sukta*' a hymn in '*Rigveda*' solely dedicated to celebrating the bounties of Mother Earth, the forests are revered and the cosmos is seen as a thousand-branched tree (*Rig Veda* 3.8.11). In the Indian context, the concept of nature is constructed to a great extent by cultural and mythical narratives. In the remote rural and indigenous communities of India, the conservation of nature has been a significant part of cultural quintessence. These people develop a spiritual relationship with the environment around them and consider it their paramount responsibility to protect it.

Life in the Sundarbans has always been a mysterious one. The fierce natural attributes of the dense mangrove forests covering the large delta region created by the Ganga, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna rivers along with their numerous tributaries spanning across West Bengal and Bangladesh constitute a singular phenomenon of the Indian subcontinent. It spreads over ten thousand square km in India as well as Bangladesh and constitutes thousands of habitable and inhabitable islands. In his latest *Story of the Sundarban*, Ghosh writes:

Thousands of islands rise from the rivers' rich silts,
crowned with forests of mangroves, rising on stilts.
This is the Sundarban, where great rivers give birth;
to a vast jungle that joins the Ocean and Earth.

(Ghosh qtd. in Sengupta)

Sundarbans has a unique legacy of human settlement. People live near the untamed nature. Human beings co-habit the mangrove with wild animals where forest has the power to destroy human life and hope. In the backdrop of such locus myth and folklore take up a central position to give the inhabitants a glimmer of hope to hold on to. One such important tradition is the dedication of the patch of wood to God and Goddess calling it the sacred grove. Ovid said, 'Here stands a silent grove black with the shade of oaks; at the sight of it, anyone could say, "There is a god in here!"' (295). Sacred grooves can be described as a diminutive version of the ecosystem containing a rich depository of unique biodiversity. According to

Hughes, sacred groves are defined as “segments of landscape containing vegetation, life forms and geographical features, delimited and protected by human societies under the belief that to keep them in a relatively undisturbed state is an expression of an important relationship of humans with the divine or with nature” (224). Sacred grooves consisting of exceptional natural elements are revered and almost always have an oral narrative associated with them. The ‘legend of Bonbibi’ is one such narrative associated with Sundarbans and is extensively explored by Amitav Ghosh. Amitav Ghosh is a well-known post-colonial writer exploring the stories of modern India with the lens of Eco-Criticism. He is particularly interested in nature and its phenomenon and has taken it upon himself to traverse the mysterious Sundarbans. Ghosh’s *Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Countdown* (2010), *The Great Derangements* (2016), etc. have eco-criticism as a substantial theme.

Ghosh’s latest endeavour is *Jungle Nama: A Story of the Sundarbans* (2021) a graphic verse adaptation of the folk legend of Sundarbans known as ‘The Bon Bibi Johurnama.’ While talking about the genesis of his new work, *The Jungle Nama*, Ghosh states, “In January 2000, I accompanied Annu Jalais and a group of villagers from the Sundarbans, on a trip to a remote island for a Bon Bibi puja. We went in rowboats, and the puja was performed on a mudbank where a tiger’s fresh pugmarks could be seen. It was an amazing experience. You could say that was when the story of *Jungle Nama* began” (Ghosh). A commodious amount of work written between 1200- 1750 has a hint of the presence of supernatural powers in the Sundarbans. The most notable among this cycle is *Johurnama* written by Abdur Rahim in the late nineteenth century. Rahim adapted his work from an epic poem from 1686 called *Ray-mangal* by Krishnaram Das (Jalais 7). *Johurnama* is the story of the birth of Bon Bibi and her brother Shah-Junguli. They are blessed with supernatural power and have an ongoing dispute with Narayani, mother of Dokkhin Ray over the possession of Sundarban’s mangroves. Dokkhin Ray is a clairvoyant and through his mythical powers can take up any form and shape, primarily of a tiger. *Johurnama* comprises Dukhey Jatra (journey of Dukhey) which is a story of a young boy whose life was saved from the seizure of

Dokkhin Ray by the goddess Bonbibi. Forest workers identify themselves as Dukhey and before venturing into the forest they plead to goddess Bonbibi to protect them from the terror of tigers, the same way as she protected Dukhey.

Stories have always been a repository of knowledge and have been significant enough to teach, convince, explain, warn and make us conscious. However, in this vast realm of stories, there are some special ones which we have knowingly or unknowingly associated with our lives and have now become an integral part of our existence. Such stories are called myths. The word 'myth', originated from the Greek word 'Mythos' which the Greek philosophers used in opposition to the word 'Logos.' 'Logos' as defined by Kohanski, is a "logical form of expression that is suitable to the analytical bent of mind" (17). 'Mythos' on the other hand is explained by Hatab (334), as a story which has an emotional effect on listeners and thus not a decisive account". Even though the myth is far from the truth, it is still given a lot of importance because it is grounded in culture and faith. Myth motivates humans to act in a model way and thus give meaning to their existence. Myths are transhistorical and cultural embodiments of cultural knowledge passed on from one generation to another and often accepted by the new generation without any questions asked. As Pattnaik says, "myth is a special kind of communication that establishes a relationship between the macrocosm (universe), mesocosm (society) and microcosm (humans)" (14).

Junglenama is a graphic verse, a coalescence of pictures and text about the journey of Dukhey who became a target of greedy Dhona, his encounter with tiger Dokkhin Rai and his eventual rescue by jungle goddess Bon Bibi. Gosh "tried to use the moral compass that lies within folktale to arouse environmental consciousness among the people of the area" (Sneha 1). The story of Bonbibi is not a mere myth regarding a forest goddess but a congenital adaptive practice of the inhabitants of the mangrove in the backdrop of their ecological awareness and their compliance with the uncongenial forest. This practice persuades the people to conserve the forest and extract resources only for survival and not to satiate their greed. Ghosh believes that the people of Sundarbans understand the need for a balance between their own needs and nature's requirements and

respect it to not disrupt the equilibrium. Their belief in Bonbibi accentuates the need to limit greed which is a positive step in this anthropocentric era. Bonbibi is the protector of all barring caste, gender, creed and, colour difference. All the inhabitants of the mangrove pray to her before entering the forest and she acts benevolent towards all of them.

Junglenama written in dwipod poyar meter (couplets of around 24 syllables broken into roughly equal lines) has alluring illustrations by Salman Toor that add more exuberance to the novel. Ghosh begins the novel by introducing the demon king Dokkhin Roy who haunts the mangrove and pry on the lives of innocent villagers in the guise of a tiger. When the forest goddess got to know about his terror, she and her brother Shah Jongoli came from far Arab to help the villagers. Dokkhin Roy was so full of himself that he sent an army to fight the brother-sister duo but his army was brutally destroyed. They came back saying, "They're too strong, they wailed, 'this is a fearsome pair'" (Ghosh 7). A fierce fight between Bonbibi and Dokkhin Roy followed and he was confined to a particular area of the forest. The southern part of the forest was given to him which had all the resources and no human was allowed to enter it. Likewise, he was constricted to his part and was prohibited from entering the other part of the forest. Although a clear distinction was created by Bonbibi which resulted in the availability of enough resources for villages greed and desires know no bounds. One such greedy villager was Dhona. He was rich and already had plenty to live a luxurious life but the avarice to want more led him to the forbidden part of the mangrove. He planned,

That spring Dhona was seized by an aching desire;
I'll go the mangrove, seven ships will I hire,
There's much to be had there, I'll take all I can see;
Honey, wax timber, and all of it for free. (Ghosh 9)

Although Dhona was reasoned by his brother Mona that the biggest gift of life is contentment and that greed always results in disaster in the mangrove. But Dhona couldn't be stopped and he gathered all the resources essential for his voyage and also hired his poor nephew Dukey to be used as bait when need be. Dukhey was young and credulous and couldn't understand the greed behind his uncle's sudden love for him. But his mother was wise enough to see

past the deceit. She asked Dukhey to not participate in this deception but all in vain. When her requests did not work on her son, she warned him about the terror of Dokkhin Roy and taught him a prayer to call Bonbibi if he found himself in a life-threatening situation. She says,

There's someone you can turn to when in need of succour,
She's the lady of the Jungle, Maa Bon bibi;
She'll protect you with her brother Shah Jongoli. (Ghosh 20)

In the turn of events, Dhona met the shape-shifter, Dokkhin Roy. The tiger promised to load Dhona's ship with all kinds of forest riches in return for Dukhey's life. The greed of Dhona was strong enough to overthrow any humanity left in him and he made a venomous plan to leave the boy there. Sooner than later Dukhey understood the conspiracy woven against him by his uncle. Although he pleaded with his uncle and reminded him of his howling mother Dhona had his riches to focus on. Dukhey, left alone in the territory of Dokkhin Roy was trembling and waiting for a barbaric death when he remembered his mother's advice. He pleaded to the Forest goddess, Bon Bibi in the meter of wonder and asked for rescue. Bon Bibi showed up and along with her brother Shah Jongli taught the tiger a lesson. He was forgiven on one condition,

Never again, said she, could he hunt a human,
If he should yield a temptation;
It's you who will be hunted. Make sure your words are not broken.

(Ghosh 44)

By the end of the story, Bon Bibi sends Dukhey back home to his loving mother with more riches than his uncle so that he can live a comfortable life. Dukhey reconciled with his uncle and his uncle arranged a marriage for Dukhey. Now, Dukhey was not sad anymore and lived happily. Ghosh ends the novel with the lines,

All you need to do is be content with what you've got,
To be always craving more is a demon's lot. (Ghosh 56)

Ghosh's *Junglenama*, a modern adaptation of a traditional fable is rooted in the relationship between humans and forests; predator and prey; and animate and non-animate things. It presents hope and a way for the peaceful existence of all the elements on Earth. Ghosh in this story traced the root cause of violence to greed. When people like

rich merchant Dhona, and the shape-shifter beast Dokkhin Roy seek to take more than they need from the forest, it disturbs the harmonious equilibrium and Forest fights back in the form of Bon Bibi. The moral of the story is *parimiti*, measure, and *parimitachar*, moderation. Nature asks humans and non-human organisms to moderate greed and to share her bounty equally.

“Capitalism only survives in circumstances of discontent. It makes people want more, more and more. And now, you know, we are the endpoint of that wanting more. It has brought us to this planetary catastrophe that is going to end human civilization as we know it” (Sreevatsa). Humans have never been able to keep their irrational desires in check. They are following the anthropocentric trend and consider themselves to be the finest creation of God and all the elements of nature are there to serve them. In this selfish journey, they are destroying the robust environment. Early humans interacted with nature in different ways. They used to live amidst nature and were dependent on it for their food, shelter, clothes, etc. Although they extracted their livelihood from the forests, they never let greed disrupt the balance. They believed that God resides in nature and that to respect nature is to worship God. The concept of sacred grooves developed from this chain of thoughts as well. Sacred grooves or *Kaavu* are patches of forested land that are protected by beliefs based on religion or local folklore. They are remnants of local forest types that previously covered an entire region. Rural communities relied on this myth of the presence of God in the forest to protect it. The significant taboos and traditional rules in these sacred grooves help to keep their integrity and save biodiversity. For instance, *Iringole Kaavu*, a 25-acre sacred groove is one of the largest sacred groves in Kerala. According to the reports of the Kerala Forest Research Institute, it is home to 185 species of flowering plants, 95 species of butterflies and 55 species of birds. *Kammadam Kaavu*, another sacred grove in southern India has five brooks flowing through it and it is home to rare leeches. *Ponnakudom Kaavu* in Ernakulam is home to rare flora such as *Syzygium travancoricum* (*Vathamkollimaram*) a medicinal plant. Many studies have reported a higher count of flora and fauna species in the sacred groves than in the adjoining forests.

Sacred groves have rules, taboos and myths on the use of resources in that area. Forest deities are to be consented to to make any decision regarding the grove. The rules are expected to be followed and violation leads to punishment. People believe that the forest deity is invincible and is observing all the activities of the forest. The general belief is that if one tries to destroy the harmonious relationship between humans and the forest, the deity will punish them. Social, religious and environmental taboos enhance the sanctity of sacred groves and promote species conservation (Parthasarathy 3). Deep religious respect for nature is the primary reason for the preservation of sacred groves. Other than respect for nature, fear is also a significant driving factor in nature conservation. The fear of being punished if one decides to take more than what is required is one of the reasons that indigenous communities protect the sacred groves. In India, the infringement of the rules and disturbing the holiness of the grove is considered a sin and is believed to result in disease, natural calamities, famine, etc. Resource extraction from sacred groves is considered to be a serious offence and the indigenous communities believe that the person responsible for the destruction would be reborn as an urchin for thousands of years (Chandrakanth 199-211).

Though adequate evidence shows that sacred groves are significant for biodiversity conservation, in recent times there are indications that they are threatened by cultural changes, neglect, violation of rules and taboos, weakening of traditional beliefs, changing socio-economic conditions, etc. These threats have led to alterations in size and are often sacrificed to construct concrete structures such as parking spaces, buildings, and auditoriums for modern temples. The fear is that this threat will keep on escalating as the younger generation is not subservient to the myths and taboos of the forest. This necessitates developing alternate strategies more suitable to the socio-cultural environment of the sacred grove. Government and individuals must work together with the indigenous people to conserve our sacred groves. Cheryll Glotfelty, a famous environmentalist remarks:

We have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems. We are there. Either we change our ways or we face

global catastrophe, destroying much beauty and exterminating countless fellow species in our headlong race to apocalypse. (20)

Amitav Ghosh's graphic novel *Junglenama* is a warning to humans to check their growing desires. Ghosh emphasizes the necessity for limits and for humans to recognize boundaries. To conclude, the earth should be a place where humans observe certain limits about the earth, and about the world, to the environment.

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Navigating Loss in the Anthropocene: Self, Species and Environment in Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations*

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Abstract

Migrations by Charlotte McConaghy is a climate fiction that is situated shortly after the prolonged consequences of existing climate criminality. Through the depiction of the endangerment of the Arctic Terns, who are on their final migration pathway it also sheds light on the compromises of livelihood and stability: physical and psychological, that all species will undergo. Situated in an ever-changing environment, consistently altered by climate change, it portrays the life of characters who are wanderers: seeking life-improving mobility or embarking on life-sustaining mobility. The mobility or displacement of the characters and the displacement of the environment as a reaction to climate change-related consequences will be analysed as an agential right that is caused due to severe traces of ecological grief. The paper will further analyse how agential pluralism and conjunctions of the grief-stricken life trajectories of the human and the non-human produce interconnectedness. The common ground of climatic criminality experienced by the community of birds as well as by the human characters and its production of grief in the communities will be explicated.

Keywords: ecological grief, species loss, environmental mourning, solastalgia, displacement, climate migration, eco-nostalgia, climate change, species extinction

Introduction

The novel, *Migrations* brings to the forefront the repressed trauma, neglected issues, negated climatic concerns and the issues that are denied, repressed and dispersed across space and time. The protagonist of the novel, Franny undergoes a journey of unlayering her repressed trauma, unhealed memories and ravages of a difficult past. The novelist parallels Franny's journey of loss with the climatic

crises. The novel is based on the character's navigation in a world of personal grief, ecological grief, personal abandonment, solastalgia, death, extinction and ecological devastation. The fictional work contains elements of more than the human coexisting and growing into the human. The journey of Franny paralleled with the plight of the terns and the changing world of the Anthropocene has evoked emotions of ecological grief. The research paper aims to explore the transition of the world towards the Anthropocene, the transformation of agency in humans and non-humans, and the universality of ecological grief and anthropocene anxiety that affect the multispecies communities.

Dan Bloom who coined the term 'cli-fi' argues that "the best of cli-fi does two things: it delivers a powerful and emotional story and it pushes the reader to wake up to the existential threat that man-made global warming poses to future generations" (qtd. in Murray 18). Most works of climate fiction depict the environmental crisis either as the backdrop of human actions or as the primary agent moving the pace of the plot but as Bloom has argued few works of climate fiction serve the twofold purpose. Charlotte McConaghy serves both purposes in her fictional work through the overlapping of the personal and the ecological, which produces emotions of grief and the need for urgent climate action.

Personal Collapse and Climate Crisis

McConaghy depicts Franny "on the cusp of collapse, consumed with a world that is every bit as broken as she is. *Migrations* offer a grim window into a future that doesn't feel very removed from our own, which makes Franny's voice all the more powerful. In understanding how nature can heal us, McConaghy underlines why it urgently needs to be protected" (Guttermann 99). The author shapes the lives of Franny and the environment to make the readers believe that there is still time for reconciliation, negotiations on coexistence, and healing with the help of each other. By putting across the thought of climatic reconciliation through coexistence, she establishes a space of security, hope and the possibility of utopian dreams in a dystopian setting.

The novel "tells the fascinating and perilous story of a woman named Franny and her desperate attempt to follow the world's last flock of Arctic terns from Greenland to Antarctica, on their very final

migration” (Murray 3). Throughout her journey, the plot slowly unravels the personal and climatic issues that have been engulfing her. It unravels Franny’s voyage to follow the Arctic Terns on their last migration route as the species is moving towards extinction due to global warming. She undertakes the responsibility of finding the arctic terns not only due to her love for the community of birds but also to fulfil the last wish of her dead husband. Her late husband was the only person who had comprehended the complexities of Franny’s personality and being an ardent lover of the Arctic terns, his last wish was the following:

If there are no terns left, I would like to be buried, so that my body can give its energy back to the earth from which it derived so much, so that it might feed something, give something, instead of only taking. If there are terns left ... I close my eyes for a long moment. Preparing myself. If there are terns left, and it’s possible, and not too difficult, I would like my ashes to be scattered where they fly. (245)

The fulfilment of the final wish of her husband leads to the progression of the plot brings out the complications of the climate crisis and resolves the personal complications of the protagonist.

Solastalgia and Eco-nostalgia in the Age of the Anthropocene

The novel revolves around a consistent search for one’s home, which has been degraded, reduced to its basal instincts, and slowly crumbling. The idea of home in the anthropocene has turned out to be a vulgar idea, wherein the feeling of belongingness or home has been littered in various periods, spaces and emotions. The impacts of globalization, carbon emissions and anthropogenic acts have enabled the transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene, which has reconceptualised one’s idea of home. Home used to be an idea of family, a secure environment, peaceful coexistence with non-humans, and a source of fulfilment of one’s physical, mental and emotional needs. But with the advent of climatic crimes, the home has become an entity of the past or an emotion of grief that persists due to the present degraded state of the environment. The term solastalgia was “developed to give greater meaning and clarity to environmentally induced distress”. (Albrecht 95)

The age of the Anthropocene is characterized by ‘homesickness’ wherein the inhabitants of the ecology can no longer relate to their

home environment as it has been climatically altered and destroyed. The inhabitants of the particular location experience displacement without physical movement or relocation as the components of the environment have been radically altered in terms of resource availability, nature, non-human, and all aspects of livelihood. In “Solastalgia: the Distress Caused by Environmental Change”, the author elaborates on the lived experience of profound environmental change and on solastalgia “The people of concern are still ‘at home’, but experience a ‘homesickness’ similar to that caused by nostalgia.” (Albrecht 96)

In the novel, the loss of a sense of home in the environment is prevalent through the state of the ecology. The ocean is changing and is slowly becoming uninhabitable as the population of fish has reduced drastically. The fishermen who accompany Franny start the journey to fish but after they find the fish with the help of the terns, they refuse to fish. Instead one of the fishermen says, “I stopped wanting to catch them a long time ago. I’ve just needed to know they’re still out here somewhere, that the ocean is still alive” (250). This statement brings to light how the life of a human or more than the human relies on how it supports and aids other life forms. The oceans cease to be alive when they fail to support the survival of the fishes and when they find the fishes; the fisherman deems the ocean alive.

Solastalgia is employed to depict the environmental loss that is a part of the anthropogenic crisis and is equated with “the lived experience of the physical desolation of home” (Albrecht 96). The terms solastalgia, nostalgia, ecological grief and so on are used interchangeably to refer to the loss of environment and the feeling of homesickness. The term ‘eco-nostalgia’ is used to refer to situations wherein the inhabitants feel the loss of a home when they return to their former place of residence but realise that the place is no longer a home as it has been radically transformed due to the impact of climate change or anthropogenic development. The term differs from solastalgia because, in the former, there is no lived experience of the losses and transformation and the inhabitants witness the anthropogenic product or the result of the climate crime directly. Whereas in the case of eco-nostalgia, “their nostalgia for a past reality that they were once intimately connected to will produce serious

melancholia” (Albrecht 12). The Arctic terns suffer from eco-nostalgia as they come back to an anthropogenically altered environment and produce serious melancholia in comparison to human characters that are characterized by emotions of solastalgia.

Mobility and Displacement: Human and the More than Human

The novel also features a major intrinsic trait of birds: movement and parallels it with the human characters. Drawing such a semblance though it is far-fetched and strange, serves its purpose in interconnecting the human and the more than human. It also establishes a common ground for negotiation and comprehension. The trait of mobility is projected into humans not in an anthropocentric manner but as an extension of the trait of the birds, wherein certain life forms move, migrate, relocate and are mobile not due to certain reasons but simply because it is in their nature. The concept of mobility creates impediments in the continuance of the survival of the species in the birds and likewise isolates and reduces the quality of life of the human inhabitants. As Tuan puts forth, a sense of place is “a projection of the human psyche” (95) and humans can’t make sense of the ever-changing associations. To comprehend place is to accept Thrift’s notion of an “ecology of place” that explores how “places are ‘passings’ that ‘haunt us’” (qtd. in Cunsolo 95). The novel through its portrayal of characters who are wanderers explores the unstable associations with place as we are placed in consistently displacing planes of existence.

The protagonist’s mobility can be interpreted as an attempt to escape from various situations that try to cage her: domestic, psychological, emotional and criminal. Her first trace of wandering was after her mother’s demise, then she leaves the dysfunctional domestic life provided by her grandmother, wanders away from the psychological trauma of losing her parents, runs away from the grief of losing her child, breaks free from emotional attachment she holds with people and finally she escapes from prison. Franny was in prison for committing two murders but it was not her fault as it was an accident but she seeks redemption through punishment. Her tenure in prison was stacked with abuse, pain and above all the discomfort of being caged in. Her prison mate understands her nature of being a wanderer and says “Don’t die in here. Not in a cage.

Get free and die if you have to" (139) and Franny sets her mind to a plan of dying free. So, she escapes from prison, lies to the crewmen of being an ornithologist and a scientist, and embarks on the voyage to trace the final migration of the Arctic Terns.

The wandering nature of Franny is just like the nature of the Arctic Terns, they migrate because it is in their nature too. The Arctic Terns migrate and keep searching for fish till they die out of starvation not because they cannot sense the climatic displacement but because it is in their nature to wander. The Arctic Terns are called the 'world's migration champion' by Wells W. Cooke, also known as the father of bird migration studies because they "have the longest migration of any animal in the world, from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back again within a year" (23). Their migration can be perceived as their response to seasonal or climate changes and they move in search of food, sunlight, moulting and suitable breeding grounds. The climate change altered migration pathway kindles the interest of Niall who wants to follow them on their last migration as it would lend information "not just about the birds themselves but about climate change, too." (168)

In the Yellow Stone National Park, the research team performs experimental procedures on various species of flora and fauna to promote the conservation and sustenance of wildlife. The conservation society has been "breeding more resistance into some of their creatures, trying to grow new habitats, rescuing wildlife" (209). The migration pathway would lead to the extinction of the species as it is already endangered and due to food scarcity and other unfavourable circumstances, the species would get wiped off from the planet. This is a prominent threat as the birds "are genetically engineered to go in search of food but when no food can be found the journey becomes fatal. The birds die of exhaustion." (212) To prevent such an outcome, the team has caged the terns during their migratory period and has been force-feeding them grass instead of fish.

Franny is grief-stricken by the plight of the tern which "flies around her cage, around and around, her wings brushing futilely against the metal, forever trying to reach the sky" (221) as it has been her nature since creation. The crisis of climate change itself is a product of anthropocentric, capitalist, and non-inclusive activities

and to counter the same by prioritising human-centric tendencies and expressing sheer neglect for biocentrism and the concerns of the multispecies communities do not offer any resolution. The caged Arctic Terns cannot reproduce in captivity and have been tortured as their wilderness is locked inside a cage.

The reaction of Franny towards the entrapment and captivity of the Arctic Terns evokes respect for non-human agency and empathy for their current plight. Through the comparison of the wandering of Franny and the migratory tendency of the Terns, the novelist constructs “instances where the human characters at least attempt respectful interactions with their nonhuman counterparts in ways that honour and affirm the value of their animal lives.” (Murray19)

Personal Grief and Mourning

Her difficult past and dysfunctional family patterns form the basis of her initial period of grief. As she progresses into adulthood, there are only two things that provide Franny with the contentment that she has longed for in life: her husband's love and the bond that she has with birds. Whale and Ginn in “In the Absence of Sparrows” bring out the association between humans and non-humans, especially birds. They put forth how “In times of both abundance and scarcity, birds have been a source of inspiration and fascination for the human imagination” (92). She has been a bird lover and shares an intimacy with crows from the beginning of the novel wherein she feeds the crows regularly and they bring her gifts in return. It was the love for birds that led her to her husband as they bonded over conversations about birds. It is the loss of both that makes her undertake the voyage of following the Arctic terns on their last migration route to redeem her from emotions of personal and ecological grief.

Motherhood has been one of the major sources of personal grief in the novel: the presence or absence of one and the process of becoming one. Franny had never wanted to give birth to a child but the loss of the child that she never even wanted in the first place evokes intense emotions of grief and mourning. The moment she holds her daughter in her hands, she feels the weight of the traumatic absent presence of her mother dissolve but the loss of her child is unbearable to her as she describes “no matter how often I try to leave

it behind there will never be an end to this ache, this pain, the feel of her unbearable weightlessness in my hands." (122)

Franny's complicated personality is an outcome of her grief: the losses of her past, the death of her child followed by her husband's demise. Niall identifies the complexities in her personality and responses invigorated due to instances of grief for which Franny says "My father strangled a man to death," I tell him softly. "My mother hung herself with a rope about her neck. Edith drowned on the fluid in her lungs. And my body suffocated our daughter" (122). The death of every familial tie: physical or non-physical has transformed her personality and has functioned as a grief-producing repressed memory.

Ecological Grief and Environmental Mourning

In the novel, personal grief and ecological grief are entwined with each other, wherein each functions as a metaphor for the other. The protagonist's "self-destructive impulses echo humanity's" (Becktold 52) as the climatic crisis is the outcome of prioritising selfish interests which means turning self-destructive in the distant future. She wants to end her life after fulfilling her husband's last wish "but as the novel progresses, she also taps into positive life forces, like the desire to nurture, giving her the will to fight for her own and the planet's future" (Becktold 52). Nancy Menning in "Environmental Mourning and the Religious Imagination" explores how emotions of grief, though largely passive, victims can cultivate "capacity for grief by practices that create, nurture, or draw our attention to connections". (58)

Ecological grief stems from various causes: "grief over physical losses (like flood devastation or deforestation), grief associated with loss of identity, and grief over anticipated future ecological losses" (Zaraska 26). The loss experienced by Franny in the novel is manifold as she experiences physical losses as the environment has been climatically altered, she experiences identity loss as she transgresses through dysfunctional relationships and grief arising from the anticipation of species extinction. Clark resonates with the same idea in his definition: "ecological grief at the loss or destruction of a particular place is an emotion felt personal, as an affront to those who valued that place, creature or ecosystem: it has the source of a

personal assault” (Clark 65). The impact of ecological grief has its tremors felt across the social, personal and political as the Anthropocene has turned out to be a geological period of consistent disappearance and relocation.

Kinship and Interconnectedness: Call for Multispecies Justice

Ecological grief is an outcome of the revelation of ecological interconnectedness and ecocentrism. When Franny questions Niall about what the climatic crisis means to them, he replies “that we are incomprehensibly brief sparks, just as the animals are, that we are no more important than they are, no more worthy of life than any living creature. That in our self-importance, in our search for meaning, we have forgotten how to share the planet that gave us life” (197). The comprehension of coexistence and peaceful negotiations for shared livelihood is essential for the process of mourning and climate action.

Though the novel is considered to be a dystopian representation of the climatic crisis of the present, it also holds utopian instances that are “found in the instances where the human characters at least attempt respectful interactions with their nonhuman counterparts in ways that honour and affirm the value of their animal lives” (Murray19). The major utopian theme of the novel is its promotion of peaceful coexistence and emphasis on the interconnectedness of the human and the non-human.

Timothy Morton in *Ecology without Nature*, echoes the same as he equates the Anthropocene as “a time for grief to persist, to ring throughout the world” (185). Though the process of experiencing environmental loss causes grief, it is essential to channel the process of grief through mourning, understanding and climatic action. The comprehension of the gravity of the ecological collapse occurs when the human characters strip away anthropocentric pride and ideologies. There are many instances in the novel, wherein the human characters prioritise the lives of animals over humans as when Franny says “I wonder if this matters. I wonder if there is meaning in any death, ever. There has been meaning in the deaths of the animals, but I am no animal. If only I were.” (180)

The few climate coping measures and wildlife preservation actions undertaken revolve around the process of selecting a few

lives over the other not on the ecological requirements but based on anthropocentric favour. The novel is set in an era of mass extinctions and they have even “declared the crow extinct.” According to the Taxonomy of hierarchy in anthropocentric ideologies, humans are placed in at? the top and the other species are placed as per their use to humankind and not based on their function in the ecology. Niall and Franny in the novel dismantle the anthropocentric pyramid of classification by realising that “Saving specific animals purely based on what they offer humanity may be practical, but wasn’t this attitude the problem to begin with? Our overwhelming, annihilating selfishness? What of the animals that exist purely to exist, because millions of years of evolution have carved them into miraculous beings?” (211)

Though the novel decentres the significance assigned to the human species, it does not discount the accountability of humans as the primary geological force responsible for the climate crisis and climate-induced species extinction. The peak of her ecological grief-provoked responses is when Franny accommodates the crisis from the perspective of the terns. They have been fighting relentlessly to survive but their death is not due to their compromised function or inability to adapt but due to corruptive anthropocentric interventions. Overcome with grief and empathy for the terns Franny musters up the strength to finally say “So – for my sanity – I release the Arctic terns from the burden of surviving what they shouldn’t have to, and I bid them goodbye”. (223)

Conclusion

The novel broods in the undertone of doom and climatic crisis but ends with a glimmer of hope as the Arctic Terns have managed to survive. Though there is no promise of prolonged survival or futurity of the species, they have managed to withstand the climatic pressures in the migration route. The ending is a call for the urgency of collective climatic action and negotiation for multispecies justice. Franny changes her decision about committing suicide as she prioritises the ecological grief of the anthropogenic world over her grief and devotes her life towards performing meaningful climatic action: “We are not here alone, not yet. They haven’t all gone and so there isn’t time for me to drown. There are things yet to be done”

(254). These lines serve as a reminder to the readers that there is hope even amidst the anthropogenic crises if proper climatic action: political, social, economic and scientific are undertaken in a humane and species-inclusive manner.

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GENERAL SECTION

1

Urban Space in Kamel Daoud's Novel '*Meursault Contre-Enquête*'

Azzeddine Bouhassoun

Abstract

What is a city like in Algeria and how is it represented in contemporary Algerian literature? This paper aims to focus on space in an Algerian novelist Kamel Daoud's Novel 'Meursault Contre-Enquête' (2013) which is akin to human invasion and control of natural space. Cities in Algeria were regularly conquered and raped, and after independence, urbanization attracted migration from rural areas. The city changes and the environment evolves monstrously. Slums develop in great densities around big cities. Squalor and dirt epitomize the failure of government policies, and the unnamed narrator in the novel feels the implications of the failure on both the urban and the natural tissue of the city. As if aware of the Anthropocene as a new epoch and a human turn in (his)story, he protests against the human condition in postcolonial Algeria. In *Meursault Contre-Enquête*, a woman is vulnerable and weak as a response to the cognitive and human understanding and relating to the environment. Both male and female body is violated and despised. In the novel, the female body represents both nature and Algeria. Right from the beginning, the narrator's brother, Moussa, seems to hate his mother for some obscure reason. However, if the French are not allowed to violate the natural order of the Arabs, the latter's sense of patriarchy considers the city as a woman. Both are neglected in historical and socio-cultural imbrications. In fact, as a product of the Anthropocene, the French created two cities, the upper world, and the inferior world following Persephone's myth. The Arabs in general and Women in particular live in Hades, an unnatural world. Patriarchy is reversed when the son commands his mother.

Keywords: Anthropocene, city, crime, Kamel Daoud, patriarchy, women.

Introduction

If scientists first coined the term Anthropocene, it has nevertheless reached the world of literature through many writers. Postcolonial literature has also contributed to denouncing man's destruction of nature and landscape by both the colonizer and the former colonized. Kamel Daoud's novel *Meursault Contre-Enquête* (2014) might be a good reference where both voices fuse in an aesthetic ambiguity. The Anthropocene has provoked significant destruction of nature and the city, history and culture and at last man. If the Anthropocene involves the human domination of the globe, it certainly englobes the colonial domination of vulnerable regions of the world.

Indeed, *Meursault contre-enquete* is the story told by an individual in a bar, but very often, the reader has the impression that the narrator is not only a victim of his nocturnal drinks but psychological problems that he has been dragging since his childhood. The novel tells, therefore, the story of an investigation into a crime committed in 1942 and whose facts are reported in a novel, *The Stranger* (1942), by Albert Camus. In his novel, the criminal is imprisoned only by his indifference and nonchalant attitude at the burial of his mother. The investigation conducted by Haroun and his mother offers us new perspectives on the crimes of the Arabs. He is no longer an anonymous Moorish, but it is Moussa, Haroun's brother. Haroun takes revenge by killing a Frenchman one day after independence. If the novel reveals the suffering of Algerians during colonialism, it remains that he denounces fanaticism and its ideology in this independent Algeria, an opportunity for Haroun to conduct his investigation of his identity.

The City after Darwin OR the Destruction of the city

Natural selection is not only about the fittest but it is also about the superior and the inferior, the powerful and the vulnerable. The direction of the selection is well-known. The whole environment, imagination, and culture are going to be affected. Natural selection seems parallel to Nietzsche's will to power, annihilating the 'other', his dreams and his environment.

The destruction stretched to the city. The image of the mother is often that of the city, is a shadow. The city of Oran, which has always

received foreigners, seems a perfect example of the prostitute. 'C'est une ville qui a les jambes écartées en direction de la mer,' (12), or 'J'aime l'endroit, mais parfois j'y devine les effluves d'un sexe de femme, géant et épuisé.' (12)

What is shocking in the novel is that the city of Oran looks like Algiers in its filth. The narrator does not recognize himself anymore. After centuries of destruction, the imagination has been infected and the post-colonial narrator sees only filth in the city. Nothing has changed, at least in the imagination. The city has been destroyed twice, by the colonizer and by its own 'children' during independence. 'Oui, Alger, dans ma mémoire, est une créature sale, corrompue, voleuse d'hommes, traîtresse et sombre.' (15) The reference to his brother is clearly there, but the author wants to describe the city in the consciousness of the Arab:

Regarde un peu autour de toi, ici, à Oran ou ailleurs, on dirait que les gens en veulent à la ville et qu'ils y viennent pour saccager une sorte de pays étranger. La ville est un butin, les gens la considèrent comme une vieille catin, on l'insulte, on la maltraite, on lui jette des ordures à la gueule et on la compare sans cesse à la bourgade saine et pure qu'elle était autrefois, mais on ne peut plus la quitter, car c'est la seule issue vers la mer et l'endroit le plus éloigné du désert. (16)

[Take a look around you, here, in Oran or elsewhere, it seems that people are mad at the city and that they come there to devastate some kind of foreign country. The city is a booty, people consider it an old whore, we insult it, we mistreat it, we throw garbage in its mouth and we constantly compare it to the healthy and pure town that it once was, but we can no longer leave it, because it is the only way out to the sea and the furthest place from the desert. (16)]

The city is considered, in fact, as a prostitute we love but despise at the same time. The city in Daoud's novel makes us think ipso facto of the city of Europeans before independence but the city-war booty after independence, it is in this treacherous, prostitute mother that identity is hidden. It is precisely in the labyrinths of this new dirty and corrupt city that the search for this identity will begin.

Destruction of history

Any city does not live out of history. The falsification of history: a way to maintain colonial power, and the French excelled in the profusion lies about Algerian history and their Crimes. : 'La raison de

cette omission ? Le premier savait raconter, au point qu'il a réussi à faire oublier son crime, alors que le second était un pauvre illettré que Dieu a créé uniquement, semble-t-il, pour qu'il reçoive une balle et retourne à la poussière, un anonyme qui n'a même pas eu le temps d'avoir un prénom' (07)

Tyranny of the father

Anthropogenic transformations to the Algerian man speeded up at the beginning of the 20th Century. The historical destruction of Algeria provoked unprecedented changes in man's thinking, mentality, and culture 'Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of nature and are pushing the Earth as a whole into planetary *terra incognita*.' (Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill in Clark 01) This perfectly suits what French colonialism performed in Algeria during 132 years i.e. from 1830 to 1962. The 19th Century was a century of Industrialization and colonialism as well. It is not innocent that the Anthropocene finds its origins in industrialization. The mighty hands of destruction polluted landscape, culture and aesthetics. It has certainly significantly modified the environment, urban cities and the traditions of people. Anthropocene may have a face of alienation despite its recent adoption by the humanities. This is certainly valid at least in the postcolonial Algerian literature.

Haroun the ambiguous new Algerian character

Kamel Daoud uses ambiguity as a literary aesthetic device to create chaos in understanding, multiple voices, and fluid interpretations, but his ambiguity is also connecting bridges between the elements of intertextuality, historical viewpoints, and fiction in his novel *Meursault Contre-Enquête* (2014). The latter novel is interknitted with Camus's *The Stranger* (1942).

If Freud's Oedipus complex belongs to the Western tradition, what is the status of the postcolonial Oedipus complex in Daoud's novel? Kamel Daoud is an interesting instance of the ramifications of post-coloniality and postmodernism. From Lyotard's metanarrative to personal biography, in his quest for 'truth', how does an Algerian author express his will to Self-assertion, identity and, to use Julian Barnes's expression, 'pure story'?

Haroun's anxiety personality and identity disorders are precisely the result of a reaction to a postcolonial dogma and a protective vision of identity at the same time. Haroun confirms 'Il y a de l'angoisse de bâtard dans cette histoire, non ?' (11)

The Oedipus complex culminates in the tyranny of the father. Despite the latter's absence some time after Haroun's birth during the 30's, the protagonist has nothing but to imagine him. 'C'est pourquoi je me l'imagine toujours sombre, caché dans un manteau ou une djellaba noire, recroquevillé dans un coin mal éclairé, muet et sans réponse pour moi' (11). 'un manteau' or 'djellaba' creates this scepticism towards history and unreliability of both the French colonial and Algerian metanarrative of history. 'Cela a duré presque dix ans, cette histoire. Je le sais parce que je connais les deux textes par cœur.' (63) History is confined to some linguistic construct, a text, or two texts (deux textes).

History and metaphysics are a mere 'parole', linguistic creations to soothe the ego of a nation or a community, a people, but no one can check the veracity of their narratives. Consequently, fiction and metafiction are the sole substitutes, and personal interpretations are the only valid appropriation of history and even metaphysics. Each individual can interpret any history according to his understanding. Knowledge becomes relative

'Mon histoire te convient-elle ? C'est tout ce que je peux t'offrir. C'est ma parole, à prendre ou à laisser. Je suis le frère de Moussa ou le frère de personne. Juste un mythomane que tu as rencontré pour remplir tes cahiers... C'est ton choix, l'ami. C'est comme la biographie de Dieu. Ha, ha ! Personne ne l'a jamais rencontré, pas même Moussa, et personne ne sait si son histoire est vraie ou pas.' (75)

'Does my story suit you? That's all I can give you. It's my word, take it or leave it. I am Moussa's brother or nobody's brother. Just a mythomaniac you met to fill your notebooks ... It's your choice, friend. It's like the biography of God. Ha ha! No one has ever met him, not even Moussa, and no one knows whether his story is true or not.' (75)

Chasing the father from the narrative universe dismisses the metaphysical realm as well.

'Je suis le seul à payer des factures d'électricité et à être mangé par les vers à la fin. Donc, ouste ! Du coup, je déteste les religions et la soumission. A-t-on idée de courir après un père qui n'a jamais posé son

pied sur terre et qui n'a jamais eu à connaître la faim ou l'effort de gagner sa vie ?' (38)

'I'm the only one paying electric bills and getting eaten by the worms at the end of it. So, ouste! Suddenly, I hate religion and submission. Do you have any idea of running after a father who has never set foot on earth and who has never had to know hunger or the effort to make a living? " (38)

History is often recorded and reported by the mother. It sits between myth and memory, lost in the realm of fiction and legends. Identity seems to slide between improbable events and stories, fantasies, or perhaps even conscious lies.

Faithfull to the Oedipal rebellion, Haroun tries to subtract himself from his complex of inferiority. A crime against a crime, he was dreaming of committing one. Writing a novel becomes a crime 'Ah, tu sais, moi qui pourtant ne me suis jamais soucié d'écrire un livre, je rêve d'en commettre un. Juste un !'(53) 'Ah, you know, I who never bothered to write a book yet, I dream of doing one. Just one! '(53) He commits a 'perfect crime' towards the end of the novel, like Meursault, using Baudrillard's term, just after independence. From this perfect crime, Baudrillard will say

The artist, too, is always close to committing the perfect crime: saying nothing. But he turns away from it, and his work is the trace of that criminal imperfection. The artist is, in Michaux's words, the one who, with all his might, resists the fundamental drive not to leave traces (Baudrillard, P.C., 06)

The dissolution of the ego is the consequence of fear and anxiety in the development process of the Oedipus complex. Oedipus, who is always in quest for the mother in the outer world, does not have a strong consciousness of identity and reality. Consequently, Haroun attempts to free himself from the strong hold of his spiritual father's influence 'C'est d'ailleurs pour cette raison que j'ai appris à parler cette langue et à l'écrire; pour parler à la place d'un mort, continuer un peu ses phrases.' (07) That's why I learned to speak and write this language; to speak for a dead person, continue his sentences a bit. ' (07)

Aware of cultural, artistic and literary challenges, Daoud's narrator asks, '*Comment dire ça à l'humanité quand tu ne sais pas écrire de livres ?*' (12) How do you say that to humanity when you can't write books? '(12) Haroun seems to confirm the novel's

belonging to Western epistemology, to the colonizer. The narrator denounces the fact that the novel of which he speaks ignores the other and does not even mention the name of the assassinated Arab.

'Le succès de ce livre est encore intact, à en croire ton enthousiasme, mais je te le répète, je pense qu'il s'agit d'une terrible arnaque. Après l'Indépendance, plus je lisais les livres de ton héros, plus j'avais l'impression d'écraser mon visage sur la vitre d'une salle de fête où ni ma mère ni moi n'étions conviés. Tout s'est passé sans nous.' (37)

"The success of this book is still intact if you believe your enthusiasm, but I repeat, I think this is a terrible scam. After Independence, the more I read your hero's books, the more I felt like I was crushing my face on the glass of a party hall where neither my mother nor I were invited. It all happened without us. '(37)

Daoud uses metafiction as a hybrid technique to approach the representation of reality. Therefore, the inception of this vision of the outer world starts from the form/body since identity and form seem to take a single hybrid body. Identity determines the form that shapes the novel, the language, the register and the conception of the world.

Metafiction, according to Patricia Waugh, introduces a conflict between voices, characters and the demurge writer. Daoud's novel opens with the murder of a character, the same individual reported in Camus's novel *The Stranger* (1942). In the chaos of comings and goings to Camus's *The Stranger*, of which the author adapts entire passages, the confusion of words and polysemy seems to create another murder. It is the author of our novel who is the murderer. The narrator incriminates him. It is no longer Camus's novel but Daoud's novel. He is '*l'écrivain tueur*' (50) the killer writer '(50), *'ton écrivain, semblait m'avoir volé ... mon portrait, et même les détails de ma vie et les souvenirs de mon interrogatoire !'*' (69) 'Your writer seemed to have stolen from me ... my portrait, and even details of my life and memories of my interrogation!' (69) He is confused with the murderer in the novel of Camus because the layers of narration become one in Daoud's novel '*Ton écrivain meurtrier s'est trompé, mon frère et son compagnon n'avaient pas du tout l'intention de les tuer, lui ou son ami barbeau.*' (35) "Your murderous writer was wrong, my brother and his mate had no intention of killing him or his friend Barbeau at all." (35)

Daoud uses a few other hybrid techniques of oral tradition coupled with metafiction in order to convince, persuade and play on the emotions of the reader. ‘Cela fait des années que je t’attends et si je ne peux pas écrire mon livre, je peux au moins te le raconter, non ?’(09) “I’ve been waiting for you for years and if I can’t write my book I can at least tell you about it, right?” (09) To tell a story does not seem to bring back the truth even though it is a crime. But this crime does not seem real, except for appearances according to Baudrillard. ‘Were it not for appearances, the world would be a perfect crime, that is, a crime without a criminal, without a victim and without a motive. And the truth would forever have withdrawn from it and its secret would never be revealed, for want of any clues [traces] being left behind.’ Baudrillard, PC, 06)

From the beginning, we have the impression that it is an individual in a bar who tells a story to a student. It would seem that Camus’s novel and the narrator’s story become one and overlap until the narrator uses masks according to his desires defying the author and confesses in complete freedom ‘*Je pouvais passer de vie à trépas et de l’au-delà au soleil en changeant seulement de prénom: moi Haroun, Moussa, Meursault ou Joseph. Selon les envies, presque.*’ (56) ‘I could go from life to death and beyond in the sun by just changing my first name: me Haroun, Moussa, Meursault or Joseph. Almost as you wish. ‘(56) When he speaks of the ‘book’, the narrator deliberately creates confusion and we no longer know whether the referent is his novel or that of Camus. ‘*Moi, je connais ce livre par cœur, je peux te le réciter en entier comme le Coran.*’ (09) “I know this book by heart, I can recite it to you in full like the Koran.” (09)

Metafiction, therefore, introduces intertextuality but at the same time confesses a technique to exhume an emotion and a consciousness of the narrator by involving his reader. It is also another challenging gaze on history and a rebellion against the stifling ‘presence’ of the father.

Metafiction, hybridity and truth

For Patricia Waugh, ‘[T]he lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. The two processes are

held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction.' (Waugh, 06). Daoud uses the technique to shed light on his story and his conception of Algerian history.

The colonizer's position seems to be reinforced by his identity but above all by his 'superiority' over the colonized. The latter dreams of imitating the literary production of the colonizer. This inability of the colonized to detach himself from his ex-colonizer drives him towards mimicry. It becomes a manner to express, similarly, a meaning. Haroun, the protagonist, travels from layers of narration in a way that overlaps the novelist's position this time, understands his role and seems to accept his status as a victimized former colonized without seemingly apparent resistance. Yet, mimesis helps him to develop his own identity.

The colonizer's discourse seems to radicalize the polarity between the superior West and the inferior East that Edward Said undertook in his *Orientalism* (1978), and Bhabha seems to find in Said's work a support for his discourse of hybridity rather than polarity. The novel, according to Bhabha, is precisely a tool that marks Western superiority. However, ironically it also marks the resistance of the colonized. Daoud also seems to reinforce the idea by showing that the criminal wanted to confirm, unconsciously perhaps, that the European is superior to the Arab, who remains unnamed in Camus's novel. It is only by giving him a life, an identity, a family, and a name, Moussa, that Daoud rejects this superiority. Haroun knows it bitterly because

'[a]près l'Indépendance, plus je lisais les livres de ton héros, plus j'avais l'impression d'écraser mon visage sur la vitre d'une salle de fête où ni ma mère ni moi n'étions conviés. Tout s'est passé sans nous.' (37)

'[A]fter Independence, the more I read your hero's books, the more I felt like I was crushing my face on the glass of a party hall where neither my mother nor I were invited. It all happened without us.' (37)

Although Haroun seems to want a compromise, a negotiation, a rejection of polarity and difference through aesthetic devices such as hybridity, the Europeans seem to deny and repudiate it. Haroun has nothing left but anger to show the attitude of Camus's hero. This

anger is aesthetically carried out. Metafiction is the only way to rebel against the father, to assert his will to life and his will to annihilate the metanarrative of the Europeans. Mimicry helps to erect a new world although impurely similar to the original, an artefact. *‘[c]’est simple : cette histoire devrait donc être réécrite, dans la même langue, mais de droite à gauche.’* (09) *‘[It]’ is simple, so this story should be rewritten, in the same language, but from right to left. “(09)*

History, just like fiction in general and a novel in particular, is a linguistic construct. Kamel Daoud seems aware of it in his quest for truth.

‘Le meurtrier est devenu célèbre et son histoire est trop bien écrite pour que j’aie dans l’idée de l’imiter. C’était sa langue à lui. C’est pourquoi je vais faire ce qu’on a fait dans ce pays après son indépendance : prendre une à une les pierres des anciennes maisons des colons et en faire une maison à moi, une langue à moi. Les mots du meurtrier et ses expressions sont mon bien vacant.’ (07)

“The murderer has become famous and his story is too well written for me to imitate him. It was his language. That’s why I’m going to do what we did in this country after its independence: take the stones one by one from the old settlers’ houses and make them my own house, my language. The murderer’s words and expressions are my vacant property. ‘(07)

Writing history coincides with fiction while the author gives his metaphorical opinion on major events of his country. It is the opinion of an elderly man gazing at his past. History turns out to be not a matter of logic causality, but the product of emotions and memories, past events that resist veracity especially when narrated by an old heavy drinker

‘Ça s’appelle comment, une histoire qui regroupe autour d’une table un serveur kabyle à carrure de géant, un sourd-muet apparemment tuberculeux, un jeune universitaire à l’œil sceptique et un vieux buveur de vin qui n’a aucune preuve de ce qu’il avance ?’ (71)

‘How is it called, a story that brings together a Kabyle waiter around a table giant-build, a deaf-mute apparently tuberculous, a young scholar with the skeptical eye and an old wine drinker who has no proof of what he’s saying?’ (71)

If history shrinks into family past events or a simple biography, in this case, the narrator complies with the rules of interpretation.

Haroun is aware of it, and his articulation of history is one simple drop of consciousness in this vast realm of meaning. It has taken Haroun years to realize that he cannot resolve the mystery of history, the crime, and his brother's murder. Old age seems to be the knowledge pot to collect all moments of history, and yet it is not enough to understand anything

'Pardonne au vieillard que je suis devenu. C'est d'ailleurs un grand mystère.

Aujourd'hui, je suis si vieux que je me dis souvent, les nuits où les étoiles sont nombreuses à scintiller dans le ciel, qu'il y a nécessairement quelque chose à découvrir quand on vit aussi longtemps. Autant d'efforts à vivre ! Il faut qu'au bout, nécessairement, il y ait une sorte de révélation essentielle. Cela me choque, cette disproportion entre mon insignifiance et la vastitude du monde. Je me dis souvent qu'il doit y avoir quelque chose, quand même, au milieu, entre ma banalité et l'univers !' (72)

'Forgive the old man I have become. It's a great mystery. Today I'm so old that I often tell myself on nights when the stars are many twinkling in the sky, that there is necessarily something to discover when you live that long. So many efforts to live! At the end of the day, necessarily, there is some sort of essential revelation. It shocks me, this disproportion between my insignificance and the vastness of the world. I often tell myself that there must be something, though, in the middle, between my banality and the universe! "' (72)

This opinion is not always of his construct as the influence of the spiritual father, Camus in this case, is omnipresent. The same dialectical relation existing in the Oedipus complex seems to regulate the hate-admiration feelings. This ambivalent feeling towards the father creates the ambiguities and the chaotic entanglements of the narrative. Haroun the protagonist and the narrator shapes hi(s)-story with a variety of techniques pertaining to metafiction. According to Patricia Waugh, some of these are

'dehumanization of character, parodic doubles, obtrusive proper names..., self-reflexive images ..., critical discussions of the story within the story..., continuous undermining of specific fictional conventions..., use of popular genres ..., and explicit parody of previous texts whether literary or non-literary.' (Waugh, 22)

In her major book, *Metafiction* (2001), Patricia Waugh defines the concept as a self-conscious writing about fiction and its relation to reality. Exploring the theory of fiction and their construction, 'such

writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.’ (Waugh, 02)

Metafiction intrudes as a game and a play and displays the narrator’s self-reflexivity. It is twofold in our novel. It is consciousness of the narrative mode and the intertextual dialogue between Daoud and Camus’s novels. On the one hand, it sounds like an oral story told orally by a man in a bar to whoever wants to listen to him. He is an old man who brings pieces of memory, assumptions, and facts based on family and personal events in a chaotic nonlinear sequencing. On the other hand, the ludic principle does not seem to offer that much importance to the ideas that history puts forth. Metafiction tries to set Haroun the protagonist on a personal, empiric experience of past events, and very often introspective enquiries about ‘truth(s)’ and the self, history and the present. The quest for ‘truth’ about the crime is intermingled, but which truth since there are varieties of truths. This incredulity towards metanarratives is simplified into a ‘vulgar’ crime committed in both novels, but apparently, Haroun incriminates his mother *‘J’en veux à ma mère, je lui en veux. C’est elle qui a commis ce crime en vérité.’* (50) However, of this crime, he confesses that *‘M’ma avait mille et un récits et la vérité m’importait peu à cet âge.’*(13) “I blame my mother, I blame her. It was she who committed this crime in truth.” (50) However, of this crime, he confesses that “M’ma had a thousand and one tales and I didn’t care much about the truth at that age.” (13) Each seems to have his interpretation of a past event, but ultimately even Haroun has his own *‘La vérité est que l’Indépendance n’a fait que pousser les uns et les autres à échanger leurs rôles.’*(11) “The truth is, Independence only pushed each other to switch roles.” (11) The reader himself can create several interpretations of the novel depending on the perspective. It is an investigation of a crime, an unsuccessful love story, and an existentialist interpretation of life in postcolonial Algeria. The list may go on. It sounds as if there is no ‘truth’ at all, and the narrator witnesses a succession of truth collapses. The only truth that remains is his and his conception of it, hi(s)story and the world around him.

It is important then to claim that the role of metafiction is pinning identity to narrative and fiction. The personal self-reflexivity and self-consciousness appear to be elements of self-identity. Waugh

puts forth that 'by studying metafiction, one is, in effect, studying that which gives the novel its identity.'(05) The two cultures remain in contact, and language creates and invents the identity that depends on a back-and-forth movement between the former colonizer and the colonized's novel, therefore culture. This seems to avoid the clash of cultures. Daoud's metafiction seems to gather together a world arising from intertext and another that he would like to complement but based on justice and equilibrium. The narrator speaks of hybridity in a relational context. It can be political, cultural, and social. He calls it 'justice' or 'equilibrium'

Comprends-moi bien, je n'exprime ni tristesse ni colère. Je ne joue même pas le deuil, seulement...seulement quoi ? Je ne sais pas. Je crois que je voudrais que justice soit faite. Cela peut paraître ridicule à mon âge... Mais je te jure que c'est vrai. J'entends par là, non la justice des tribunaux, mais celle des équilibres (09)

Don't get me wrong, I am not expressing sadness or anger. I don't even play mourning, only... just what? I do not know. I think I would like justice to be done. It might sound ridiculous at my age ... But I swear it's true. By that I mean, not the justice of the courts, but that of balances (09)

For Bhabha, colonialism should not be seen as a negative factor in the history of nations but as a period of cultural and intellectual contact. From the matrix of violence and domination is born a culture, not without continuity. Decolonization does not occur in peace and serenity. But it seems to be an endless process from which certain spasms are to be revisited and meditated. Identity, it seems, is no longer of that ideal purity that some venture to seek in the meanders of history because it flows between the cultural interactions bequeathed by the colonizer and the local culture; it is the fruit of this negotiation.

The linguistic problem in post-colonial Algeria remains one of the thorniest and its complexity is obscured between the ideology of a nascent, developing country seeking a place in the concert of the nations of the world and a language which imposes both a vision and a meaning. Haroun seems to be aware of this when he announces that '*[la] langue se boit et se parle, et un jour elle vous possède; alors, elle prend l'habitude de saisir les choses à votre place, elle s'empare de la bouche comme le fait le couple dans le baiser vorace.*' (09) '[The] tongue is drunk

and spoken, and one day it possesses you; so she gets into the habit of picking things up for you, grabbing the mouth like the couple do in the ravenous kiss. "(09) Language seems to have an erotic dimension and so does memory especially when it reveals its perfidy and inability to bring truth from the past. Identity then becomes fluid, swerving between mental representations and linguistic constructs. *'Je suis le frère de Moussa ou le frère de personne. Juste un mythomane que tu as rencontré pour remplir tes cahiers...'* (75) 'I am Moussa's brother or nobody's brother. Just a mythomaniac you met to fill your notebooks ...' (75)

Haroun recognizes his state of neuroticism *'J'ai une vision de névrosé, je te l'accorde.'* (62) What is troubling in the novel is the dissolution of the ego. For P. Waugh, paranoia establishes a new contact with reality and is a celebration of new forms of narration. This deconstruction of the real gives the reader a better understanding of the narrative.

Metafictional deconstruction has not only provided novelists and their readers with a better understanding of the fundamental structures of narrative; it has also offered extremely accurate models for understanding the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems (Waugh, 09)

This is also the hell fruit of the narrator's schizophrenia. Identity, space, the body, Haroun's psychological condition, and the mother seem to be the references on which stands the narration in the novel. Haroun, speaking of the other, another 'himself' at the end of the novel is obvious. This other does not exist in the 'real' world, but Haroun creates individuals starting with his brother Moussa *'J'avais des voix dans la tête. C'était peut-être Moussa qui parlait.'* (43) "I had voices in my head. Perhaps it was Moussa speaking. '(43) One has the impression that the characters do not exist outside the head of the narrator. Moussa is none other than Haroun. *'Il tremblait de peur devant ma résurrection alors qu'il avait dit au monde entier que j'étais mort sur une plage d'Alger !'*(50) "He was trembling with fear at my resurrection as he told the whole world that I had died on a beach in Algiers!" (50)

The schizophrenic theme is an original technique that invites the other and immerses him in the realm of disorder and confusion as a

'legitimate' double, another self, with whom the narrator must compose to recover his identity, a hybrid identity. Hybridity is precisely erotic because it brings together antagonisms and opposites, irreconcilable and incompatible. Haroun, evoking his feminine principle, also experiences it with Meriem, a character that flows straight out of his delirium in his quest for erotic hybridity *'Pendant que nous nous regardions avec une curiosité nouvelle, inaugurée par le désir des corps, elle m'a dit : "Je suis plus brune que toi."' (70)* "As we looked at each other with new curiosity, ushered in by lust for bodies, she said to me: 'I am darker than you.'" *'(70)* Just like Moussa, Meriem does not seem to exist of course. Everything Haroun relates about her, the scene, the encounter and even the declaration of boneless love of words seem to be a lie, *'un board. De bout en bout. La scène est trop parfaite, j'ai tout inventé.'*(70) *'A canard. End to end. The scene is too perfect, I made it up.'* (70)

The 'word' of the schizophrenic that reports history does not seem to reflect the referent, the real, so what about history when reported through memories? *'Le mot chez moi est flou et imprécis.'* (68) *"The word for me is vague and imprecise."* (68) Haroun shows the arbitrariness of the sign when he informs us of his conception of language. It is the quest for identity that generates this movement between the real and the unreal in perfect hybridity. A slip and a slide in both worlds takes place through words. The novel becomes a field of multiple hermeneutics where history, philosophy, politics, and religion seem to coexist to create an identity and give meaning to life.

If the novel is inspired by a historical 'reality', it remains only a mere fiction. The elements of history, however, seem to produce a certain causality even if the historical fact is not integrated in its totality. Aesthetically, the graft does not seem rejected but rather accepted to create a technical innovation not only in the field of writing. Daoud's narrator rejects the murder as a whole, but the reminiscence of the texture returns to the original text, a past and a philosophy *'La vérité est que je l'ai déjà fait. À six reprises... Oui, j'y suis allé six fois, sur cette plage. Mais je n'ai jamais rien retrouvé, ni douilles ni traces de pas, ni témoins, ni sang séché sur le rocher. Rien.'* (33) *'The truth is, I already have. Six times ... Yes, I've been there six times, on this beach. But I never found anything, no cartridge cases or footprints, no witnesses, no dried blood on the rock. Nothing.'* (33) History no longer seems to

have a frontier with the unreal. Yet, it reads as a simple construction among so many others open to multiple interpretations without 'eternal verities' as stated by Waugh 'Contemporary metafictional writing is both a response and a contribution to an even more thoroughgoing sense that reality or history are provisional: no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures.' (07)

Metafiction explains this in-between between purity and impurity. Daoud's novel reads as a criticism of Camus' novel as impure but at the same time as a critique of our novel. Pure and impure is no longer recognizable, and metafiction is part of the narrative structure of fiction itself, 'metafiction becomes indistinguishable from the fiction itself.' (Krysinski, 186)

Pour une fois que j'ai l'occasion de parler de cette histoire... Elle a pourtant quelque chose d'une vieille putain réduite à l'hébété par l'excès des hommes, cette histoire. Elle ressemble à un parchemin, dispersé de par le monde, essoré, rafistolé, désormais méconnaissable, dont le texte aura été ressassé jusqu'à l'infini – et tu es pourtant là, assis à mes côtés, espérant du neuf, de l'inédit. Cette histoire ne sied pas à ta quête de pureté, je te jure. Pour éclairer ton chemin, tu devrais chercher une femme, pas un mort' (31)

For once I have a chance to talk about this story ... Yet there is something about an old whore reduced to stupor by an excess of men, in this story. It looks like a parchment, scattered around the world, wrung out, patched up, henceforth unrecognizable, the text of which will have been rehashed to infinity - and yet you are there, sitting by my side, hoping for something new, for something new. unpublished. This story does not suit your quest for purity, I swear. To light your way, you should look for a woman, not a dead man' (31)

The transformation or metamorphosis of the two narrative systems is a hybridization of two discourses, an impurity, and a third voice. The pure and the impure become indivisible because the impurity affects even the city which impurity is rather post-independence and affects all fields of activities. Daoud's narrator knows this very well. He knows that his work cannot equal the original one even in its impurity. Haroun's voice seems to echo Borges' ideas that a book is written somewhere, in another language, another culture, and that his work was precisely to criticize this invented work. 'The idea that came to Borges was to pretend that the

book he wanted to write had already been written by someone else, some unknown hypothetical author – an author in a different language, of a different culture – and that his task was to describe and review this invented book.’ (Krysinski, 190) Likewise, Haroun, also thinks that his novel was written in another language and culture. ‘*Cela a mené à une sorte de livre étrange – que j’aurais peut-être dû écrire d’ailleurs, si j’avais eu le don de ton héros.*’ (64) “It led to a weird kind of book - one that maybe I should have written somewhere else, if I had your hero’s gift.” (64)

What we retain is the intersection of metafiction, time and space. Metafiction reminds us that the project of modernity fades and that the literary text reflects a double vision: that of the colonizer whose image is reflected in the production of the colonized. The one who is disturbing the vision of the colonizer. The literary text of the colonized awakens the demons of the former colonizer and his colonial origins. ‘Because literature is so often a matter of doubling, it is for Bhabha central to the processes of his postcolonial perspective, a perspective that reimagines the West and reminds it of its repressed colonial origins.’ (Huddart 02)

A zombie in quest for love

The Zombie is the product of Western colonialism. Two points need to be remembered now. Haroun is the Abel of the story, the genesis. He is the one, the Frenchman murdered. And only through love does he resurrect. In fact, after a tumultuous relationship with the mother, Haroun seems unable to create healthy love relations. Meriem is the only woman who resuscitates him ‘*Dans ma vie, la seule histoire qui ressemble un peu à une histoire d’amour est celle que j’ai vécue avec Meriem.*’ (39) “The only story in my life that looks a bit like a love affair is the one I had with Meriem.” (39) Meriem is Haroun’s only dream of a post-independence woman full of passion, fresh, young and full of dreams and ambitions. She is brave enough to stand in front of his mother’s will but then has to submit, and their relationship dilutes through time. ‘*[e]lle a cessé de m’écrire et tout s’est dilué.*’ (39) “She stopped writing to me and everything got watered down.” (39)

The metaphor of love is also a metaphor of death, life and resurrection ‘*Elle est la seule femme qui ait trouvé la patience de m’aimer et de me ramener à la vie.*’ (39) “She is the only woman who has

found the patience to love me and bring me back to life.” (39) However, this resurrection is that of a zombie. Haroun is marginal in his own society after independence, walks like a ghost, ‘J’ai vécu comme une sorte de fantôme observant les vivants s’agiter dans un bocal.’ (72) “I lived like a kind of ghost watching the living move around in a jar.” (72) This marginality is the product of the ‘unfit’ in post-colonial independent Algeria. There is some sort of nostalgia for a certain culture, an ambivalent feeling towards what the colonizer erected in terms of culture and civilization on the one hand, and the inability of his people to remain on the same path of modernity on the other hand. Language stands for this lost culture ‘Le pays est d’ailleurs jonché de mots qui n’appartiennent plus à personne et qu’on aperçoit sur les devantures des vieux magasins, dans les livres jaunis, sur des visages, ou transformés par l’étrange créole que fabrique la décolonisation.’ (07) ‘The country is littered with words that no longer belong to anyone and that can be seen on the fronts of old shops, in yellowed books, on faces, or transformed by the strange Creole that decolonization produces.’ (07)

It is yet important to mention Baudrillard here since he argues that modernity is the fatality that the whites want to impose on the world. But the logic of modernity is that the white wants to impose it on the whole world, that the fatum of the whites should be that of the race of Cain, and that no one should escape this homogenization, this mystification of the species. In opposition to the metaphor of ‘cannibalism’ developed by Baudrillard, Daoud’s narrator seems aware that he is not a ‘writer’. ‘Le meurtrier est devenu célèbre et son histoire est trop bien écrite pour que j’aie dans l’idée de l’imiter. C’était sa langue à lui.’ (07) ‘The murderer has become famous and his story is too well written for me to imitate him. It was his language.’ (07)

On the other hand, conscious and aware of his state of zombie ‘[c]ette histoire, c’est un cadavre qui l’a écrite, pas un écrivain’ (08), “[T] his story, it was written by a corpse, not a writer” (08), he still cannot admit his status as a dying-reviving creature, a zombie, and thus embodies the famous solemn Mass of Recife, Brazil, in the sixteenth century, mentioned by Baudrillard, where ‘les évêques venus tout exprès du Portugal pour célébrer leur conversion passive, sont dévorés par les Indiens – par excès d’amour évangélique.’ (Baudrillard, 03) ‘The bishops who came expressly from Portugal to celebrate their passive conversion, are devoured

by the Indians - out of an excess of evangelical love. '(Baudrillard, 03) This excess of fatherly love distorts, if not history, space and art, their vision.

The fear of imitating the father, which is peculiar to the Oedipus complex, reveals this ambivalent feeling. Indeed, the father '[Il] écrit si bien que ses mots paraissent des pierres taillées par l'exactitude même'(07), or 'Il semble utiliser l'art du poème pour parler d'un coup de feu !'(07) "[He] writes so well that his words sound like stones cut by exactitude itself" (07), or "He seems to use the art of the poem to speak with a shot!" (07) However, now, Haroun seems incapable of recreating a story, but he dreams of it 'Ah, tu sais, moi qui pourtant ne me suis jamais soulié d'écrire un livre, je rêve d'en commettre un.'(53) Ah, you know, I who never bothered to write a book yet, I dream of doing one. '(53) Writing bears connotations with violence. It is probably an act of cannibalism. He has learned the language to defend his deceased brother Moussa. It is perhaps clear and legitimate to believe that Daoud thinks he does not have the same gift as his literary father 'J'aurais peut-être dû écrire d'ailleurs, si j'avais eu le don de ton héros.'(64) "Maybe I should have written elsewhere, if I had your hero's gift." (64) But he knows he does not have the means 'J'aurais été bien inspiré d'écrire tout ce que j'avais inventé alors, mais je n'en avais pas les moyens.'(64) "I would have been inspired to write everything I made up then, but I couldn't afford it." (64) As an artist-zombie, Haroun, the narrator, digests all the cultural and aesthetic innovations without, it seems, being aware of his cannibalistic condition, or even realizing, as Frantz Fanon points out, that '[u]n homme qui possède le langage possède par contrecoup le monde exprimé et impliqué par ce langage ... il y a dans la possession du langage une extraordinaire puissance.' (Fanon, 14) '[A] man who possesses language, in turn, possesses the world expressed and implied by that language ... there is an extraordinary power in the possession of language. '(Fanon, 14) The narrator himself confesses that the language of the colonizer becomes his after independence 'Les mots du meurtrier et ses expressions sont mon bien vacant.' (07) The murderer's words and expressions are my vacant property. '(07)

From the textual tapestry of the novel to his brother's body, identity seems fluid and unable to find stability. Crime, violence and death engulf the narrator in an almost schizophrenic quest for

identity. Thus, he keeps looking for his national identity while wondering about his brother's body or perhaps his

Dans le tas, personne ne s'est demandé quelle était la nationalité de Moussa. On le désignait comme l'Arabe, même chez les Arabes. C'est une nationalité, "Arabe", dis-moi? Il est où, ce pays que tous proclament comme leur ventre, leurs entrailles, mais qui ne se trouve nulle part? (72)

In the crowd, no one wondered what Moussa's nationality was. He was referred to as the Arab, even among the Arabs. It's a nationality, "Arab", tell me? Where is it, this country that everyone proclaims as their belly, their entrails, but which is nowhere to be found? (72)

Yet, the verb is not enough to live or even survive. Haroun enshrines the end of all ideals through metafiction after the collapse of his love '*Ces dernières lignes m'avaient bouleversé. Un chef-d'œuvre, l'ami. Un miroir tendu à mon âme et à ce que j'allais devenir dans ce pays, entre Allah et l'ennui.*' (69) "*These last lines had upset me. A masterpiece, friend. A mirror held out to my soul and to what would become of me in this country, between Allah and boredom.*" (69) In fact, for Haroun, love seems the only ground for genuine identity. This is where Waugh goes when she states that 'When there is explicitly no fixed point of origin or reference, then digression becomes progression, and identity escapes.' (Waugh, 07)

Conclusion

If colonialism is part of that big destructive power of the West, in his quest for identity, Daoud seems to re-evaluate the metanarrative of French colonialism as a civilizing institution when time was orderly, whereas, his postcolonial fiction is a disorderly set of events. Shocking, choking and transgressive, Kamel Daoud explores the issues of identity starting from the body, his brother's or probably his, to reach national identity.

The parricide mourns the spiritual father, and the novel tries to be fair to him while introducing such narrative concepts as hybridity and metafiction. If hybridity is the discourse to erase colonialism, it is also that of combining and collecting opposites. The crime in the novel seems to dissuade all forms of love. It is perhaps legitimate in this way to claim that metafiction is also a hybrid technique used to bring two lovers together, man and his past, man and woman

Our author tries, through hybridity and metafiction, to lay the foundations of differences and to erase them, to correct the identity between past and present and to present a new identity that transgresses all political and ideological taboos, socio-cultural and linguistic to move towards modernity. It is in multiplicity that unity resides.

Hybridity seems to gather from its real/unreal dichotomy all antagonisms, opposites, irreconcilables, consciousness and fantasies, lucidity and hallucination in a well-united literary tissue that allows our writer to express his visions of society, and cultural diversity where pure and impure do not seem to have a place. Hybridity precisely tends to eradicate the polarization of the ego and the other. Through metafiction, the Algerian novel seems to be an artistic response to the European novel in general and the French one in particular. It is no longer a one-way relationship, but a dialogue and a back and forth in culture and the novel world. The Algerian novel of French expression no longer seems to incriminate the French colonists. On the other hand, he paints a picture of postcolonial Algeria. He opens a new page, that of metafiction, to initiate a dialogue with the other and a dialogue through introspection.

Baudrillard introduces the fable of Borges 'the people of mirrors'. "Si on reprend la profonde parabole de Borges sur le Peuple des Miroirs, où les vaincus, relégués de l'autre côté des miroirs, sont réduits à la ressemblance, à n'être plus que l'image-reflet de leur vainqueur... Mais, dit Borges, voilà que peu à peu ils se mettent à leur ressembler de moins en moins et, un jour, ils refranchiront le miroir dans l'autre sens et mettront fin à l'hégémonie de l'Empire." (Baudrillard, C&C, 03) If we take Borges' profound parable on the People of Mirrors, where the vanquished, relegated to the other side of the mirrors, are reduced to resemblance, to be nothing more than the reflection image of their victor. But, says Borges, slowly they start to resemble them less and less and, one day, they will cross the mirror again in the other direction and end the hegemony of the Empire". (Baudrillard, C&C, 03) It is the fatum of the West, wishing to 'civilize' the whole planet by instituting its political, ideological, economic, religious, cultural and even aesthetic values, it disintegrates cultures while awaiting its own end.

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2

Classroom Management Strategies for English Language Teaching in the Context of Diverse Proficiency Levels, Interests, and Learning Styles

Divya Deevi and Khamar Jahan Sk

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to discuss the significance of competent classroom management in the context of English language teaching (ELT). Classroom management is critical in generating a positive and suitable learning environment for language acquisition. The fundamental components and tactics of effective classroom management in ELT contexts are examined in this research. It emphasises the importance of setting clear expectations, norms, and routines to promote a sense of structure and order. It also covers approaches for regulating student conduct, motivating students, and meeting individual learning requirements in the ELT classroom. This paper deals with Changing English instruction to recognise and accommodate students' diverse learning styles as well as provides English language teachers with insights and practical recommendations to help them improve their classroom management skills, resulting in more successful and enjoyable language learning experiences for students.

Keywords: Competent classroom management, Language acquisition, Inclusive classroom environment

Introduction

Effective classroom management is a critical component of successful teaching and learning. "Good classroom management is the art of dealing with problems positively and looking for solutions together so that everyone is involved and willing to find a remedy" (Ghosh). It refers to the tactics and practises used by educators to establish a pleasant and productive learning environment in which children can prosper intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Classroom

management in the context of education includes a variety of components such as establishing routines, controlling student behaviour, boosting student participation, and fostering a healthy classroom climate. It is impossible to emphasise the value of good classroom management, particularly in the context of English language teaching (ELT). Diverse students from different cultural communities and linguistic skill levels frequently fill English language educational institutions. Additionally, good language acquisition demands active engagement, communication, and practice, all of which are dependent on well-managed classrooms. “Classroom management refers to skill in the organization and presentation of lessons in such a way that all students are actively engaged in learning” (Smith 76).

The goal of successful classroom management is to foster student learning and growth while minimising interruptions and distractions. It entails setting clear expectations, norms, and processes that provide as a foundation for behaviour and learning. Building strong relationships with students, establishing a sense of belonging, and cultivating a supportive and inclusive classroom culture are all important aspects of effective classroom management. There are various advantages to competent classroom management. Students feel protected, respected, and driven to learn in a well-managed classroom. They are more likely to actively participate, get involved with learning activities, and take responsibility for their education. Effective classroom management strategies also help to improve academic performance, student accomplishment, and overall classroom dynamics.

A General Comparison between Traditional and Modern Classroom Management Techniques

Aspects of classroom management	Traditional Methods	Modern Methods
Discipline	Punishment and strict discipline	Expectations and positive reinforcement
Instructional Strategy	Teacher-centred	Student-centred
Learning Mode	Repetition and memorization	Critical thinking and active

		participation
Student-Teacher Relationship	Authoritarian style	Cooperative and encouraging
Motivation	Intimidation and fear	Motivation from within and self-control
Expectations and Guidelines	Mandated by the instructor	Respected and developed through cooperative efforts
Individual Variations	Limited accommodations	Individualised instruction
Classroom Setting	control and submission are stressed	A favourable and welcoming environment
Integration of Technology	little or none	Integration for participation and learning
Community Development	Not the main priority	Fostering a sense of belonging and deference

Effective classroom management in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT): principles, tactics, and best practices

At the beginning of the academic year or course, clearly express classroom expectations, regulations, and procedures to students. Ascertain that expectations are in line with language learning objectives, and offer students a framework for behaviour and engagement. Create a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment in which children feel safe, respected, and appreciated. Encourage students’ mutual respect and collaboration, and foster a climate of open communication and active listening. Positive behaviour and efforts should be recognised and reinforced. Celebrate accomplishments, give constructive feedback, and recognise students’ progress throughout their language learning journey. Moreover, positive reinforcement increases motivation and promotes desired behaviours. Create deep bonds with students based on trust, respect, and concern. Demonstrate real interest in their specific needs, backgrounds, and learning methods. A healthy teacher-student

relationship encourages participation and offers a supportive learning environment.

Engage students in the learning process by using a variety of interactive and participatory activities. Incorporate group projects, pair projects, conversations, and hands-on activities that promote language practice and meaningful communication. Recognise and address individual learning needs by differentiating instruction. Provide assistance and challenges based on students' language competence levels, interests, and learning styles. To accommodate a wide range of learners, use a variety of educational materials and methodologies. Maintain orderly transitions between tasks, making sure that students are aware of their responsibilities at all times. Utilise cues, signals, and time management strategies to keep the activity flow fruitful. Regularly assess students' progress and give timely feedback on their language skills, homework, and responsibilities. Individualised feedback to address specific growth areas and celebrate achievements.

Allow students to have a role in classroom activities, and projects by involving them in decision-making procedures. Encourage student participation and collaboration to foster ownership and responsibility for their learning. Be adaptable to new classroom dynamics and demands. Based on student feedback and assessment data, modify teaching tactics, pacing, and activities. Flexibility enables substantial adaptations that improve learning results. Engage in self-reflection and solicit input from colleagues, students, and mentors to consistently improve classroom management practices. Reflect on your triumphs and challenges, identify areas for improvement, and look into professional development options. By implementing these concepts, tactics, and best practices into English Language Teaching, educators may create an atmosphere that maximises language learning opportunities, increases student engagement, and fosters a good and productive classroom experience.

The Significance of Developing a Welcoming and Accepting Learning Environment

A welcoming and supportive classroom environment fosters a safe and comfortable environment in which students are encouraged to

take risks and practise their language abilities. Students are more likely to engage in meaningful communication when they feel accepted and supported, which improves their language acquisition and fluency. Students are more eager to give ideas, ask questions, and participate in conversations when they feel valued and respected. This results in increased engagement, deeper comprehension, and a sense of ownership over their learning. Students' comprehension and retention of English language concepts improve when they actively participate and interact in the learning process. The inclusive classroom setting encourages collaborative learning by allowing students to benefit from one another's experiences, viewpoints, and linguistic abilities, resulting in improved learning outcomes for all students. Students learn to respect cooperation, social skills, and effective communication tactics when they work together in a supportive setting. Collaboration not only improves their language abilities but also prepares children for encounters in the real world.

When students work together in a supportive environment, they learn to value teamwork, build social skills, and develop effective communication strategies. Collaboration enhances their language skills and prepares them for real-world interactions. When students are exposed to diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences, they learn to appreciate and respect differences. This leads to the development of empathy, tolerance, and cultural sensitivity, crucial skills in today's interconnected world. Creating a friendly and inclusive classroom environment increases students' active participation, engagement, and mutual respect. It boosts language acquisition, improves learning outcomes, instils confidence, fosters respect and empathy, promotes well-being, encourages collaboration, and fosters a healthy classroom culture. "An effective teacher manages a classroom, an ineffective teacher disciplines a classroom"- Harry Wong. Teachers who provide such an environment enable their students to prosper academically, verbally, and socially.

Differentiate instruction in English to recognise and accommodate students' specific learning

Determine the students' starting position by evaluating their past knowledge before introducing a new concept. This will enable you to modify the instructions to meet their unique needs. Additionally,

offers a variety of reading materials at various reading levels to accommodate readers of varied reading levels. Give advanced readers challenging materials while providing simplified texts, audio versions, or graphic novels for struggling readers. Organise the class according to the student's skills, passions, or learning preferences. Use adaptable grouping techniques, such as pairs, small groups, or solo work, to offer individualised guidance and assistance. To improve learning, use multiple senses during instruction. For instance, use visual aids, audio recordings, interactive exercises, and examples from everyday life to teach English.

Provide students with a range of assignment choices that fit their interests and skill levels. Give students the option to complete a research assignment, a presentation, or a fiction. If needed, adjust the complexity level and offer more assistance. Split up difficult jobs into more manageable pieces. Give students precise directions, role models, and examples to help them learn. Provide more assistance as needed, and then progressively hand over responsibilities as students progress. Adapt educational materials to suit individual needs. To aid comprehension and expressiveness, shorten reading passages, supply sentence-frames or word lists, and provide visual organisers or graphic organisers. To differentiate instruction, use technological resources and tools. Online learning environments, educational apps, and interactive websites can offer tailored instruction, flexible testing, and immediate feedback. Continually evaluate the achievements of students and give timely feedback. Based on their performance, modify the lesson plan and provide development opportunities. You can create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for English learners by recognizing and accommodating their individual learning needs.

Use a Range of Instructional Strategies and Activities to Engage Various Learners

Individuals frequently have a mix of learning preferences, therefore incorporating a variety of strategies and activities that cater to diverse learning types is important. Flexibility and adaptation in your teaching style will aid in the creation of an inclusive learning environment. Examples of various kinds of learners are.

Visual Thinkers:

- To represent information, use visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and graphs.
- Include movies, animations, and slide shows in your classes.
- Encourage the use of note-taking and colour coding or highlighting to organise information.

Auditory Students:

- To promote active listening, arrange discussions and debates.
- Provide audio recordings of lectures or readings.
- Encourage students to discuss subjects by speaking or participating in group discussions.

Kinaesthetic Learners:

- Include hands-on activities, experiments, and role-playing exercises.
- To illustrate concepts, use manipulatives such as models or real items.
- Encourage mobility while learning by pacing or utilising fidget gadgets.

Reading/Writing Learners:

- Textbooks, essays, and hand-outs are examples of written materials.
- Encourage taking notes and summarising material while writing.
- Assign reading and writing tasks that allow for individual reflection.

Logical/Mathematical Students:

- Present data in a logical and structured manner.
- To engage critical thinking skills, use problem-solving tasks and puzzles.
- Incorporate real-world examples and principles' applicability.

Social Learners:

- Promote group work, cooperative projects, and peer-to-peer discussions for social learners.
- Encourage pupils to impart knowledge and clarify concepts to one another.
- Create study groups and engaging learning activities.

Solitary Learners:

- Offer chances for individual study and self-paced learning.
- Provide specialised tasks and projects.
- Give access to online tools and online learning environments.

Challenges Based On Students' Language Proficiency Levels, Interests, and Learning Styles

It's essential to take into account each student's unique needs and to create an engaging and inclusive learning environment when developing challenges for students depending on their language skill levels, hobbies, and learning styles.

Beginner Level

- a) *Vocabulary Race:* Form teams of students and offer a list of vocabulary words. Make them compete to match the words with the corresponding images or definitions.
- b) *Role-Play:* Assign different roles and scenarios to students to act out using basic vocabulary and sentence structures. This improves both speaking and listening skills.
- c) *Picture Storytelling:* Give children a series of photographs and encourage them to make up a story by describing the pictures in simple terms.

Intermediate level:

- a) *Debate Club:* Assign debate themes that are relevant to their interests. Divide learners into groups and ask them to use persuasive language to deliver arguments and counterarguments.

- b) *News Analysis*: Share relevant news items or videos with them. In groups or through written tasks, ask students to summarise, analyse, and discuss the content.
- c) *Creative Writing*: Give students questions or story openers and encourage them to produce short tales, poems, or dialogues utilising new vocabulary and language structures.

Advanced Level:

- a) *TED Talk Presentations*: Have students select a TED Talk that corresponds with their interests and language aspirations. They can summarise the talk, analyze its substance, and present it to their peers.
- b) *Literary Analysis*: Assign literary excerpts or short stories. In written or oral presentations, make students evaluate the themes, character development, and writing style.
- c) *Research Projects*: Allow students to investigate themes of their choice and report their findings using academic language and critical thinking abilities. This stimulates independent investigation and improves their language competence.

Increasing Classroom Management Abilities

To build a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere, encourage strong teacher-student and student-student interactions. Encourage respect, cooperation, and open communication among all students in the classroom. Recognize and congratulate pupils' accomplishments, efforts, and progress to provide positive reinforcement. Rewarded behaviour is usually repeated and becomes a habit" (Machado, 1985). To motivate and encourage desirable behaviours, use verbal praise, prizes, certificates, or a class reward system. Make a lesson plan that includes precise learning objectives, activities, as well as due dates. Organise materials, resources, and classroom layout so that transitions are simple and disruptions are kept to a minimum and make it clear what is expected from them in terms of behaviour, engagement, and academic accomplishment. Ascertain that learners are aware of the rules, penalties, and rewards related to their conduct. To maintain consistency, revisit and reinforce these expectations regularly. Differentiate instruction to recognise and

address students' unique learning requirements. Provide a variety of activities, materials, and evaluation methods to accommodate various learning styles, talents, and interests. Create and implement engaging activities that encourage active student participation, such as group projects, discussions, games, and hands-on activities. To increase participation and develop meaningful learning experiences, incorporate technology and multimedia resources

Develop great communication skills to clearly and effectively express instructions, explanations, and feedback. Use active listening skills to better understand your students' needs, concerns, and points of view. Use proactive measures such as proximity management, nonverbal indicators, and engaging educational techniques to prevent misbehaviour. Anticipate possible issues and develop interventions to address them before they become a problem. Encourage student autonomy and ownership of their learning by giving those options, fostering self-reflection, and including them in goal-setting and decision-making processes. This fosters internal motivation and learning responsibility. To help students shift without losing instructional time or focus, use signals, timers, and explicit directions.

Utilise restorative practises to resolve disputes or disciplinary issues productively. To repair relationships and strengthen constructive behaviours, encourage conversation, empathy, and introspection. Reflect on your actions and look for professional development chances. To discover new classroom management tactics, techniques, and approaches, enrol in workshops, conferences, or online courses. Consistently reviewing and improving skills will result in a happy and productive learning environment that also supports students' language development and overall progress.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers can use a variety of strategies to encourage motivation and engagement in their students, such as introducing interactive activities, offering meaningful and relevant information, and recognising students' accomplishments. Since students may differ in their language competence levels, interests, and learning styles, it is essential to take these differences into account while planning lessons in ELT classrooms. To meet these various demands,

teachers should use diversified teaching methodologies and adjust their resources, giving each student the chance to advance and achieve. Teachers can foster a positive and encouraging learning environment that improves students' language learning experiences by employing efficient classroom management techniques. The importance of excellent classroom management in ELT ultimately resides in its capacity to foster a positive and productive learning environment that maximises students' potential for language acquisition. Teachers can help students learn languages successfully and enjoyably by carefully preparing, implementing, and adapting their lessons.

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3

Categories of International Migration in Select Works of Amitav Ghosh

Roohi Huda

Abstract

This paper posits that migration stories that appear as the central theme in some of Amitav Ghosh's key migration-oriented novels can be categorized according to some theory of migration, namely Hein De Haas's Theoretical Migration Categories based on positive and negative liberty types. In this vein, the paper explores select migration narratives through textual analysis from the novels that make up the Ibis Trilogy as well as standalone novels: *The Glass Palace*, and *Gun Island*. It appears that all the narratives discussed here can be explained through the four migration categories defined by de Haas: Precarious Migration, Distress Migration, Improvement Migration, and Free Migration. By fitting the migration narratives from the large cannon of Ghosh into broad categories the paper fills the gap of an under-researched area- migration theories vis a vis migration narrative in literature, and looks beyond the academic tendency of looking at migration from only native points of view.

Keywords: Theoretical Migration Categories, Hein De Haas, Ibis Trilogy, The Global South, Amitav Ghosh

Introduction

Amitav Ghosh is one of the best-known contemporary ethnic Indian authors writing in English today and is also celebrated for his significant contribution to Postcolonial Literature (Dave 17). Ghosh is considered a literary cosmopolitan, and his best-known works benefit from his background as a peripatetic author who travelled around the globe in his quest to examine deeply, through research, the subjects and issues that populate his novels (Dave 19). Not a stranger himself, firsthand, to the complex issues that surround international migration, Ghosh's most famous works feature international migration and displacement as central themes of these works. The

Ibis Trilogy, constituting three novels by Amitav Ghosh, is considered his magnum opus, and in these novels, we encounter international migration in different forms and scales. *The Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh's first novel of the trilogy, features the Indian Ocean as a site of transnational connectivity and commerce, under the auspices of the British, where migration is a key factor that brings about this connectivity (Arora 33). In the second novel of the trilogy *River of Smoke*, Ghosh deals with cultural exchanges, and a clash of socio-cultural practices when migrants from one country are forced to integrate into another country (Vidhya and Venkatraman 201). In the last instalment of the trilogy – *Flood of Fire*– Ghosh reimagines the era of the Opium War, and plausibly evokes a world of merchant ships sailing between China and India where thousands of Indian and East Asian individuals are in the process of de-facto migration as these ships traffic to China not only opium, but also coolies, indentured labourers, servants, local officials, and even Indian merchants (of Persian extraction mainly) to another land (“History Meets Fiction in the Indian Ocean” 1521). In *Flood of Fire*, all key protagonists undertake physical journeys across the sea that take them from 19th century India's Opium producing hubs- Assam, Bombay, and Calcutta to the product's consumption nerve centre- China's Canton. In this novel each protagonist, regardless of their socioeconomic position, finds himself or herself emigrating for a cause (Lalami). Set in the historical backdrop of the deposition of King Thibaw, the Burmese King, at the hands of the British, and the subsequent complete establishment of British rule in Burma, Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*, utilized Migration and Displacement as major themes (Das 177). The patterns of international migration that we observe in his Ibis Trilogy are outnumbered in *The Glass Palace*. In this novel of Burmese setting we experience the plight of the Indian protagonists who are forced to shuttle back and forth between India and Burma as migrants, to the United States as freedom-loving political migrants, and to the Malayan jungles as colonial army officers. The forces of history, economy and the global power order dictate their fates. *The Glass Palace* is a novel which is predominantly about migration, and the hybrid identity that attaches itself to those who are subject to it (Sukanya and Sobana 123). If we fast forward to more recent works produced by Ghosh, we find amongst them his fictional work- *The*

Gun Island -which deals specifically with the issue of Climate Migration. He also poignantly evokes the perils that are braved by the illegal South Asian migrants who risk drowning in their bid to emigrate to Europe. In its denouement, the novel brings into focus how the illegal migrants from Asia, Africa, and nations like war-ravaged Syria, and Afghanistan, trying to enter the European Union (EU) via its sea frontier, are viewed in terms of political power-play only. Their universal human rights are undermined by the European Union (EU) which, quite ironically given the context, claims that it is founded on that very discourse (Som). In the works that have been discussed so far, we find Ghosh engaging with the idea of migration in a variety of patterns, each of which encapsulates certain degrees of complexity. By the timeline of the publication of stand-alone novels, we find *The Glass Palace* to be the earliest (published in the year 2000), and *The Gun Island* to be the latest (published in the year 2000) (McGaw). The Ibis trilogy was published over seven years: *Sea of Poppies* in 2008, *River of Smoke* in 2011, and the last novel of the series, *Flood of Fire* came out in 2015 (McGaw).

In this paper, the specified standalone novels were chosen to examine the widely differing patterns of migration that Ghosh depicts in the two novels which are separated by a gap of 19 years in terms of their publication period. The Ibis Trilogy was chosen not only for its critical significance in the literary canon of Amitav Ghosh but also owing to the differing patterns of migration that we come to read about through the lives of the novels' protagonists as all the instalments of the trilogy get published over 7 years. Extant academic papers on Amitav Ghosh's novels discuss the causes of migration that are featured in his work, especially their historical context of colonial rules. Papers discuss the conditions of oppression and exploitation in which many of the colonized characters of Ghosh's novels lived: conditions which caused them to emigrate. While such literature enumerates and describes the causes of migration in the Amitav Ghosh canon, they scarcely look for "patterns" or categories of migration through any 'theory of migration' lens. This paper attempts to reduce this gap through a two-step process: First, textual analyses of select texts are made, chosen from the works described above, which deal with international migration. Secondly, the analysed output is then utilized to compare against the migration theory

developed by Hein de Haas known as The Aspirations- Capabilities framework (de Haas 17). In this manner, the paper seeks to identify specific categories or patterns of migration that are found in Amitav Ghosh's novels against the backdrop of a theory.

Theoretical Migration Categories of Hein de Haas

There is a dearth of theory-making in Migration Studies as an area of social-scientific enquiry (de Haas 2). Many scholars in the field contend that thinking concerning migration has remained attached to nineteenth-century concepts, assumptions, and models of migration, and little has changed (Massey 7). In recent years there has been a huge increase in the number of empirical studies on migration, starkly contrasting the theoretical development on migration (de Haas 18). One of the detrimental outcomes of lack of systematic theorizing is the inability to meaningfully interpret empirical facts, understand how macro-structural factors shape migration processes, and explain the huge diversity in migration experiences across different ethnic, skills, gender and class groups (de Haas 18). That migration research, particularly recent works by anthropologists and sociologists, has focused on studying and conceptualizing the lives, identities and experiences of migrants from an internal or native point of view, and does not lend itself to broad pictures, and theorizing is also unhelpful in developing broad categories of migration (de Haas 20).

In his bid to proffer the Aspirations- Capabilities framework, Hein de Haas offers a final criticism of the present state of theorizing by stating that "Both qualitative and quantitative approaches have failed to adequately capture the vital role of difficult-to-quantify structural factors such as inequality, power and states in shaping migration processes, or to develop meaningful idea of human agency beyond the voluntaristic assumptions of neo-classical models or the portrayals of migrants as more or less passive victims of capitalist forces, as is common in historical structure theories" (22). Hein de Haas arrives at four different categories of migration by informing his Aspirations- Capabilities framework with Noble Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen's concept of Human Capability (19), and Russo-British philosopher Isaiah Berlin's concepts of Positive Freedom and Negative Freedom (24). According to Amartya Sen,

Human Capability is defined as the ability of human beings to lead lives they value, and that enhance the substantive freedoms that human beings may enjoy. In his view development constitutes not only income growth but also the expansion of the capabilities of people to control their own lives (Sen 201). In this sense, migration is undertaken to improve one’s life, and one possesses the capability to migrate. Isaiah Berlin’s Positive Liberty entails the ability to take control of one’s own life, and thereby realize one’s fundamental purposes and aspirations. His Negative Liberty refers to the absence of barriers such as oppression, regulation, war or violence that constrain people’s freedom and their lives (de Haas 25). Negative Liberty and Positive Liberty are structural in the sense that in a nation these are structurally determined, and thus affect the mobility and migration decisions of that nation’s people (de Haas 26). For example, in a nation where oppression and political violence exist, its people will aspire to migrate elsewhere to gain freedom from such oppression. Yet that aspiration may well be stunted owing to their lack of capability to move or migrate as the government may have active exit restrictions in place, and the people may also choose to remain to protect family members, and their community (de Haas 27).

In the presence of Positive Liberty access to social, economic, and cultural resources increases, and that also means that the individual’s capacity to aspire increases: making him or her aware of alternative lifestyles, and places which fit individual aspirations, and making one feel that migration may be within one’s reach (and prompt one to acquire the capability to migrate) (de Haas 27). Based on the above de Haas has come up with four migration categories (see table 1):

Table 1. Theoretical Migration Categories Based on Positive and Negative Liberty Types

Categories of Migration	Short Description
Precarious Migration	Generally short-distance, often internal, by relatively poor people vulnerable to exploitation, i.e., poor rural-to-urban migrants, undocumented labour migrants, ‘failed’ asylum-seekers, internal displace) (relevant theories: historical structural; dual labour-market)

Distress Migration	Deprivation of mobility freedom through the absence of a reasonable option to stay; applies to refugees fleeing potentially life-threatening conditions but possessing the resources to move abroad and obtain legal status (relevant theories: historical structural; network; new economics of labour migration)
Improvement Migration	Internal and international, often through networks, recruitment and pooling of family resources (relevant theories: new economics of labour migration; network and internal dynamics; cumulative causation; dual labour-market; mobility transition)
Free Migration	Relatively unconstrained mobility in and between wealthy countries or by wealthy people, skilled workers, 'lifestyle' migrants (relevant theories: neo-classical; human capital; mobility transition)

Source: De Haas, Hein. "A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework." *Comparative Migration Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00210-4>.

Upon textual analysis of some of the excerpts taken from Amitav Ghosh's Ibis Trilogy as well as his stand-alone novels *The Glass Palace*, and *Gun Island*, we will be exploring what different categories of migration from Ghosh's narratives match the categories delineated in de Haas's theoretical migration categories (as depicted in table 1).

Migration Categories in Ibis Trilogy

In *The Sea of Poppies*, the first book of the Ibis Trilogy by Amitav Ghosh, we meet one of his most powerful female protagonists: Deeti. She is one of the subaltern migrants who feature in *Sea of Poppies* as a woman not only doomed in a marriage to an opium addict impotent husband but also the social oppression and lack of agency that dictated the life of women in 19th century rural India: communities which were in the thrall of a strict caste system with some of its most onerous attendants such as the *Sati Dah* or widow sacrifice practices. Indeed, Deeti is introduced in the novel as one who has been a victim of the worst possible outrages that can be perpetrated against

women. Before joining the Ibis- the migrant ship on a voyage across the sea, after a series of trials and tribulations, she is united in her escapade with another scheduled caste social outcaste- Kalua- who protects her and befriends her during her journey. Upon escaping from the funeral pyre of her husband Deeti finds herself, with the help of Kalua, on a large boat making its way on a river to deposit its cargo of migrant labourers. Ghosh describes Deeti's experience inside the hold of the migrant boat with remarkable poignancy:

The hold ran the length of the vessel, and had no compartments or internal division: it was like a floating storage shed, with a ceiling so low that a grown man could not stand upright in it for fear of hurting his head. The hold's windows, of which there were several, were usually kept shut, for fear of thieves, thugs, and river dacoits; after the rains came down they were almost permanently sealed, so that very little light penetrated inside, even when the clouds cleared.

The first time Deeti looked into the hold, she had felt as though she were about to tumble into the well: all she could see, through the veil of her hung, were the whites of a great many eyes, shining in the darkness as they looked up and blinked into the light. She went down the ladder with great deliberation, being careful to keep her face veiled. When her eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom, she saw that she had descended into the middle of a packed assembly: several dozen men were gathered around her, some squatting on their haunches, some lying curled on mats and some sitting with their backs against the hull. A gangsta seemed like a paltry shield against the assault of so many curious eyes, and she was quick to seek shelter behind Kalua (Ghosh 231-232).

From the above narrative, we can discern that a mass of indigent and helpless labourers were subject to local, and international migration during the 1830s when the British colonial rulers were consolidating their grip in India as its principal administrators. Their conditions of transit in the cargo hold of a large boat are telling and confirm the abject and inhumane conditions in which they were treated. Deeti's plight as a newcomer from a village having to encounter the unsettling scenes of the boat as she makes her escape from the horrors of her life in her native village is also quite unsettling. The description fits de Haas's category of 'Precarious

migration' in which he defines such migration as rural to urban, usually made by impoverished people vulnerable to exploitation, and often undertaken by undocumented labour migrants (see Table 1).

Deeti and Kalua ultimately proceed to be shoved aboard the Ibis—the migrant labourer ship bound for China. Ghosh depicts the moment when Deeti teeters aboard the erstwhile slave ship Ibis:

Through the veils of her sari, Deeti looked up at the masts, towering above. The sight made her a little giddy, so she kept her head bent and her eyes lowered. Several maistries and silahdars were positioned along the deck, ushering the migrants along with their lathis, shoving them in the direction of the booby-hatch. *Chal! Chal!* Despite their shouts, progress was slow because of all the clutter on deck; everywhere you looked there were ropes, casks, pipas, bimbis, and even the runaway chicken and bleating goat.

Deeti was almost abreast of the foremast when she became aware of a voice that sounded strangely familiar: it was shouting obscenities in Bhojpuri: *Tore mai ke bur chodo* (Ghosh 366-367)!

In the description above we see that the migrants were almost treated like cattle as they boarded the Ibis. Their subaltern status and lack of power made them subject to extreme brutality, abuse and maltreatment. Once again the scene above places the migrants belonging to the category of 'Precarious migration' (see table 1).

Seth Behram Modi, the Indian entrepreneur of Parsi descent is one of the central characters in *River of Smoke*, the second novel of the Ibis trilogy. This novel is mainly based on the critical events that took place in China's Canton (or Guangzhou of the present day) that led to the first Opium War of the 19th century. Here we find Modi as the only Indian opium merchant who has eked out a position for himself as a trader amongst the many Occidental merchants who have settled themselves in their respective factories of Canton to get a slice of the very attractive opium trade that was taking place between East India Company controlled India and China (at the behest of the British). Seth Modi, although an Indian, does not share the plight of the rural masses who are oppressed, exploited, and are mere minions for the production of opium that finances the growth of rich lifestyle of the British, Europeans and Americans who control the trade. Here we

find Modi a wealthy Indian merchant who has an opulent lifestyle that is equally privileged in India and China. Settled in Canton in his factory to look after the opium trade as a direct result of his imports to China, Modi owns his merchant vessel that carries him, and his cargo of precious opium along the sea routes of the South China Sea, and Indian Ocean:

Until then the voyage had been uneventful and *Anahita* had sailed through the few squalls that had crossed her path with a full suit of sails aloft. A sleek and elegant three-master, she was one of the few Bombay-built vessels that regularly outran the swiftest British- and American-made opium carriers, even such legendary ships as *Red Rover* and *Seawitch*. On this voyage too she had posted very good times and seemed to be heading to another record run. But the weather in the Bay of Bengal was notoriously unpredictable in September, so when the skies began to darken, the Captain, a taciturn New Zealander, wasted no time in snugging the ship down. When the win reached gale force he sent down a note to his employer, Seth Behramji, recommending that he retire to the Owners' Suite and remain there for the duration (Ghosh 27).

In the description, we find a well-heeled Seth Modi ensconced in the well-appointed cabin of his merchant ship in the wake of a tropical storm on the high seas of the Bay of Bengal. He has an international crew to man a very elegant ship and is the only person who is calling the shots. His trade interests in Canton have made him a resident in that city- a sort of wealthy migrant from India who travels back and forth in his conveyance. What we find here is not de Haas's 'Precarious migration', but what he categorized as 'Free migration': free unconstrained mobility of wealthy people between countries (see table 1). Wealth and privilege certainly enabled Modi to enjoy a lot of Positive Liberty (as defined by Isaiah Berlin) (de Haas 24), and this eventually amounts to the kind of Free Migration that the likes of Modi come to enjoy in colonized India.

Flood of Fire, the last instalment of the Ibis Trilogy is mainly about the second and last Opium War, which contains as a denouement the decisive and tragic defeat of the Chinese navy at the hands of the British. The war was waged with the help of thousands of Indian mercenary soldiers who were led by their British commanders to kill

and deliver a devastating blow to the Imperial Chinese war machinery which wanted to end the lucrative opium trade that was killing their nation. Havildar Kesri Singh was one of the Indian mercenaries- a central character in the novel- who was transported by sea to China to fight on the side of the British, and wage war against the Chinese. Finding life in his native village too limited, Kesri Singh had run away and joined the army as a havildar for an improved and adventure-filled life. Initially, the experience of being transported as part of his company of troops did provide a sense of novelty and strange experiences that were welcome:

But the next day when they arrived at Barrackpore, the novelty of seeing the sahib-log paled before the utter strangeness of everything else. Even before the boat docked they spotted a building that was nothing like they had seen before- a palace overlooking the river, with peacocks on the roof, and a vast garden in front, filled with strange colorful flowers.

Hukum Singh sneered at the awed expressions on their faces. The Barrackpore bungalow was only a weekend retreat for the Burra Laat- the English Governor-General: it was a mere hut, compared to the Laat Sahib's palace in Calcutta (Ghosh 108)

In the above, we see a distinct example of 'Improvement Migration' as suggested by the theoretical migration categories of de Haas (see table 1). Here, as in the theory, international migration is enacted by the use of networks and family resources. Hukum Singh who allowed Kesri Singh to become part of the British military expedition in China, was known to Kesri Singh from his village. The sole reason for joining the army had been centred around the desire to gain new experiences and enjoy a different life that the staid village could not provide. In this initial portrait of the recruits staring agape at the lifestyle of the colonial rulers, we find a picture of that hunger for novelty being satiated.

Migration Categories in The Glass Palace and Gun Island

The Glass Palace is a large canvas, on which is painted the stories of Indian migrant family members from British India who had settled in the newly colonized Burma at the end of the 19th century after King Thibaw, the Burmese king was deposed by the British. This is an

intricate novel about migration to Burma, and then re-migration to India and the USA by the many protagonists that people in the novel. They are subject to different categories of migration, and fit some of the categories suggested by de Haas (de Haas 27). Rajkumar, the main protagonist of the novel, came to Burma, first as an impoverished child labourer aboard a small boat (or *Sampan*), and his story of migration is a clear case of the 'Distress migration' (see Table 1). Fleeing from abject poverty in East Bengal, Rajkumar is orphaned when his mother dies of cholera in transit to Burma, and he is left with nothing but the small gold ring that his mother passed on to him during her death. It was by sheer chance that Rajkumar found himself as a boatman on the day of the British attack in Mandalay in 1886 that launched his migrant life in alien Burma (Ghosh 102). But this novel is not only about distress migration. Rajkumar, through the vagaries of fortune, eventually emerges as a very wealthy businessman leading the Indian community in Rangoon, Burma's capital, and one of his relatives Uma, eventually migrates to the USA of her own volition with financial help from Rajkumar. Uma, the widow of a colonial civil servant, exercises almost unconstrained mobility when she decides to buy a ticket on an ocean liner bound for the USA, and this is a fascinating example of 'Free Migration' (see Table 1) during the early part of 20th century in this Amitav Ghosh novel.

Gun Island is one of the recent Ghosh novels which portrays the issue of climate migration within the backdrop of narrative fiction (Kaur 114). The protagonist Tipu, one of the central characters, is not only adversely affected by the ecological changes that take away livelihood opportunities in his native Sundarbans, the mangrove forest region in the Southeast corner of India (and Bangladesh), but also his same-sex amorous inclination toward his Muslim friend-Rafi. His decision to use illegal migration channels to move to Italy (in the EU) is also no less influenced by the access to technology and internet via smartphones which can feed images of a free and affluent life in the Global North, and induce individuals to aspire for lifestyle migration. Ghosh implicates the pervasive hand-held devices for inspiring individuals to migrate from the Global South:

This in turn raises the question: what is the nature of the migrant's agency in these circumstances? Take the case of the boy in

the Bengal village: Is his decision to migrate wholly his own, or is it, to some degree, the product of his interactions with the “cognitive assemblage” that manifests itself in his handheld device? If that is the case, then to what degree are young migrants responsible for their decision to move?

Today there is a widespread awareness of the ethical and philosophical dilemmas that arise when humans interact with self-guided machines—for example autonomous weapons, like killer drones. If we are unwilling to accept that the same dilemmas may arise also at the other end of the human and technological spectrum—that is, about poor people in the global South—it is perhaps because we are unable to acknowledge the true scale of the disruptions that have been set in motion by the technologies of our time (Ghosh 716)

From the above, we can discern that Rafi’s migration to Italy, and later in the novel Tipu’s migration as an illegal migrant, was a curious category which straddled two different categories of migration as suggested by de Haas: simultaneously a ‘Distress Migration’, and also an ‘Improvement Migration.’

Conclusion

This paper makes an important contribution by looking at the stories of migration in some of the select Amitav Ghosh novels which eminently deal with migration, and trying to find patterns in these migration stories. In our vein to find patterns we utilize a migration categorization offered by influential migration researcher Hein de Haas, and look at the migration narratives through the lens of four migration categories offered by de Haas. It is evident from the textual analysis that Ghosh’s various narratives of migration can be accommodated within the four broad categories of migration that have been discussed here (see table 1). The discussion deepens our understanding of the complexity of migration, yet at the same time helps us look at the holistic picture, and frame the migrations undertaken in different eras, and different circumstances within a theory of migration.

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4

Exploring the Indigenous Aesthetics in Shamanic Ethno Dance Performances

Raj Kumar Gurung

Abstract

This paper explores the indigenous aesthetics in shamanic ethno-dance performances like *Sorathi*, *Ghaṭu*, and *Krishna Charitra* observed by Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Baram, Darai, and Dura in mid-west of Nepal. These dance performances are the cultural aesthetics of indigenous literature that reflect indigenous groups' sociocultural and mythological backgrounds. They observe these shamanic ethno folk dances, as the shaman practices, with the belief in faith healing, good harvest, and protection from evil spirits. They believe in shamanic treatments for controlling and curing several ills. The ways *the dance masters* invoke the aura of these dance performances by chanting to make the dancers perform the dances are artistic and classical. The melodious songs and artistic dance performances are the beauties of indigenous aesthetics. The entire narrative songs of these dances themselves are chanting. The songs are a kind of mantra that hypnotises the dancers. The study focuses on why indigenous people are backwards despite their topmost performing arts in music and literature. They are backward and backgrounded because of their carefree nature, character, and superstitious beliefs. Some patients die negligibly during shamanic treatment processes. The study attempts to minimize such superstitious belief systems among the indigenous people and make them aware. The beauty of these dance performances is a cultural spectrum of indigenous literary prospects. It has the universal implication that the world is not yet free from shamanic practice. The study employs Thomas Michael's shamanism and Freud's psychoanalysis theories to analyse these dance performances.

Keywords: chanting, aura, indigenous aesthetics, shamanic ethno dance

Introduction

This paper explores the indigenous aesthetics and shamanic reading of the *Sorathi*, *Ghaṭu*, and *Krishna Charitra* ethno-dance performances. These folk or ethno dances are the icons of indigenous literature. *This*

practice is followed mainly by indigenous Nepali tribes like Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Dura, Darai, Baram, and Aryal Kshetri. They observe these folk ethno dances, the shaman practice, with the belief in faith healing, good harvest, and protection from evil spirits. Mainly, Gurung and Magar observe all three dances, whereas Dura, Darai, and Tamang observe only *Ghaṭu*. In all three performances, chanting, incantation, and invocation are common characteristics of shamanic practice. The villagers expect “to receive a blessing from the deities . . . such as sufficient rain for their crops” (Shepherd 259). In Majhitar of Nuwakot district of Nepal, Aryal people observe this cultural activity expecting timely rainfall for their crops and faith-healing purposes. They believe that precipitation takes place after they perform this cultural activity. It is a kind of prayer to the deities.

Although the study discusses the three cultural activities, it focuses on the *Ghaṭu* folk ethno-dance. There are two major legendary characters in this ethno-dance. They are King Pasramu and Queen Yemphawati, who died young. Their relatives are supposed to have been observing this cultural activity to remember the royal couple’s bravery and heroism. The *Ghaṭu* villagers expect a blessing from them for a good harvest. The deities, here, means the dead souls of the royal couple, the king and his consort.

It is not only in Nepal; the shamanic traditions are followed globally, especially in Tibet. “In Tibetan culture, the five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and space—are considered the substance of all things and processes” (Rinpoche 1). Similarly, indigenous peoples of Nepal observe these shamanic ethno-dance performances as the worshipping of nature in which these five elements exist. Most Nepali indigenous peoples follow shamanism for certain benefits. They claim that they benefitted. So, “Shamanism rests on the belief that the universe consists of seen and unseen dimensions, that spirit forces animate it, and that suffering is a result of disharmony or negative interactions between humans and their social and natural environment” (Sumegi 5). This shows that there should be harmonious relations between humans and their social and natural environment, respectively. Indigenous peoples observe these cultural activities to maintain the harmonious relations between mundane and spiritual worlds. Shamanism often involves rituals and ceremonies that incorporate artistic expressions.

Indigenous communities around the world practice shamanism with a particular purpose. These shamanic ethno-dance performances, like *Ghātu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra*, often showcase unique indigenous aesthetics deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the above-mentioned indigenous groups in Nepal. All these three dance performances are the performing arts of indigenous people who have gained their dancing arts from nature, not from any institutions paying tuition fees. Nature itself is the teacher of the indigenous peoples. Most indigenous people gain knowledge from nature and their self. The term 'self' is significant among indigenous peoples. "To begin with, the word "self" is one of the translations of 'nafs,' which can denote soul, spirit, mind, life, animate being, living creature, person, individual, self, personal identity or nature" (Anwar 3). Most indigenous people depend on indigenous knowledge as indigenous aesthetics gained from their soul, spirit, mind, and life experiences. The assigned teachers do not teach them. They get the knowledge from their self-practice. They are self-intuition people. So, the aesthetics of indigenous knowledge is always worthwhile.

The indigenous peoples practice several costumes on certain occasions, like Lohsar. These costumes are often adorned with feathers, animal bones, shells, colourful fabrics, and traditional ornaments that hold cultural significance. The costumes not only serve a decorative purpose but also help to connect the performer with the spiritual realms and ancestral power. The way they decorate these costumes reflects indigenous aesthetics. Most indigenous people are supposed to have been granted the blessing of nature. They are always very close to nature. Most props used in the *Sorathi*, *Ghātu*, and *Krishna Charitra* performances are wood from trees and plants. They use some feathers, bones, and shells of the animals. They are all close to nature. The narrative songs of these dance performances are all about nature and its activities. The way the dance masters sing songs is also close to nature, and the ways the dancers dance are how the rivers move and how the branches of the trees sway, which we find in these ethno-dance performances. As "Prakriti grants the blessings of nature as a gift; she has consequently to be honoured and wooed" (Prakash 167). Therefore, why do these ethnic groups observe the performances as nature worshipping? The power centre of the indigenous peoples is nature. They believe that nature is all in all. Because "Nature moves everything and creates this movement through differences in

temperature and potential” (Schauberger 87). For indigenous people, nature is a teacher, healer, culture, literature, and whatnot, as it is indigenous aesthetics.

Indigenous aesthetics often encompass specific sacred colours and patterns that hold symbolic meanings within the community. Gurungs and Magars use white and yellow colours. By the end of the performances, they put white or yellow colour rice mixed in water or curd on their foreheads. Some of them use red colour, which is called *tika* in Nepali. The clothing, body paint, or props used during shamanic dance performances may reflect these colours and patterns. Each colour and design is chosen based on its association with particular spirits, deities, or natural elements relevant to the ritual or ceremony. Indigenous aesthetics in shamanic dance performances often emphasise a close connection with nature. This can be seen using raw materials like leaves, flowers, and wood in costumes or props. The dance movements may also mimic the natural world, symbolising the movements of animals, flowing rivers, or swaying trees, embodying a deep reverence for the natural environment. This is what we find in the *Ghātu and Krishna Charitra* dance performances. *The slow movements of the dancers in trance mode indicate the movements of animals, flowing rivers, swaying trees, and so on. There are several meanings except this.* These Shamanic dance performances often incorporate symbolic gestures and movements with spiritual significance. These movements may represent animals, spirits, natural elements, or significant cultural events and stories.

Whatever kind of performances the indigenous peoples observe, they aim to give pleasure to the audience or readers. The beauty of performing arts by indigenous people is unquestionable in many respects. The audience and readers quickly get attracted to such indigenous performances. As a poet’s “first aim is to give the reader a peculiar kind of pleasure” (Blamires 292), the aim of indigenous cultural activities like *Sorathi*, *Ghatu*, and *Krishna Charitra* is to give the audience and readers a peculiar kind of pleasure. In this regard, Freud’s pleasure principle works well. These indigenous aesthetics as *Ghātu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra*, are often accompanied by specific traditional music, songs, chants, or double-ended drums. These rhythms and melodies of music are deeply ingrained in cultural and spiritual practices, and they play a crucial role in creating an

immersive and transformative experience for the performers and audience alike. In the performances, “songs, pictures, personalities, and natural objects are all forces which can produce pleasurable sensations” (Blamires 290).

In a real sense, there is no direct connection between man and god, but these indigenous people think there is always a link between them. They think deities bless them if they make them happy through their performances. The farmers always expect timely rain for farming, so they expect it from the *Ghaṭu* god. This study focuses on these research questions. What makes the dancers in *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* go into trance and dance? How does the aura possess the dancers in these performances? Is shamanism practical for faith healing and other blessings? The narrative songs and melodious music make the dancers go into a trance mode and dance. Moreover, when all the dancers start forgetting who they are but enacting the like characters of *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra*, the aura gradually possesses them. These indigenous peoples also take shamanism practical for faith healing and other blessings.

Mostly the dancers’ psychology makes them go into a trance. They believe in gods in an obsessed way. That is their psychology. The aura possesses them when the chanting (wordings) and melodious music reverberate in the air and capture their “self.” Then the dancers go into a trance. Shamanism is practical as many people are benefitted, too. So, many people follow this practice in many countries. It is not only the underdeveloped countries and indigenous people; many developed and nonindigenous countries have also been following shamanism. There are some accidental cases of deaths of patients during the treatment process that seem futile. Otherwise, shamanic practice is not too disadvantageous. Therefore, this practice is still in existence.

Ghaṭu practitioners observe this cultural activity to solace the royal couple’s dead souls every year in the springtime. They take shamanic vows because “vows are commonly for good health, relief from debt, prosperity, good agricultural yields, to be blessed with a child, protected from evil spirits” (John 207). Some childless couples hope to be blessed with a child if they pray to *Ghaṭu* god. The observance of *Ghaṭu* is supposed to solace the royal couple’s dead

souls. Their dead souls are supposed to be hovering on the earth, and this harms all the people. Some become ill, and some may die, too. “The villagers believe that the deposed souls of the king and the queen are supposed to go on hovering. This hovering is supposed to be harmful to those who are their relatives” (Gurung 17) and other people in that village. To protect from this, the villagers observe *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* annually so that the dead souls become happy and do not bother anyone. This is the Nepali cultural belief system and indigenous aesthetic beauty.

Most *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* followers depend on shamanic practices for their general treatments because this is cheaper and easier than medical treatments. Some ills are also treated, whether it is a coincidence or a natural effect of shaman practice. This allures the indigenous people. So, the indigenous people go on observing it with positive thinking. So, positive thinking is the most essential thing in these cultural activities. All the *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* observers invoke the aura by chanting and incantation. These are the characteristics of all kinds of shamanic practices. The entire narrative song of *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* is chanting or incantation. It is a shamanic system in that an entire team of dancers must be possessed by the *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* auras for the performance. “When the gurus start chanting and invoking the *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* gods, the dancers start feeling a possession. The audience realises the possession when dancers’ eyes get closed” (Gurung 90). Not only this, but the dancers start behaving abnormally. They start quivering like a witch doctor. They change their activities as well. This makes the audience think that they are possessed. According to shamanism theorists, possession means gods to man, or gods come down to man’s body and possess. Chanting means singing, and this singing gradually “creates a trance-like atmosphere and initiates the dancers into a subconscious state” (7). The dance masters cannot predict after how many rounds of singing the dancers get possessed. Some dancers are easily possessed, and some are not. There is no guarantee of possessing the dancing girls. Sometimes, “the aura does not possess some girls or any girls” (160). This happens too in *Sorathi* and *Krishna Charitra*. If the aura does not possess the dancing girls or dancers, there will be no performance that year. However, it has not

been so. The dance masters go on singing until all the dancers are possessed. When the aura possesses all the dancers, some start behaving abnormally as they have entered the spiritual world from this mundane world. This process is called shamanism. The gods or aura possess the dancers as they are psychologically affected. This process is called possession. The former is a journey from man to god, and the latter is from god to man. All the dancers do not look like general humans now. They are in a trance state. They do not communicate with anyone because they are no more humans for the time being. The gurus sing in a sentimental tone after all the dancers get possessed by the aura. The possession is because of their psychology. The tone is lovely and audible because of the singing arts. This is the aesthetic beauty of the indigenous performance.

After the possessing performance, “the gurus stop singing and chanting when the aura possesses the dancers. This makes the dancers stop crying and quivering. The gurus sprinkle the water on them as they have been qualified to dance for three years” (Gurung 161). All the dance masters and the dancers take a rest for some time. They drink water, have some fruit, and go to the toilet. The performance is entirely based on shamanic presentation. Though medical science can never be ignored, shaman practice still occurs in developed and developing countries.

Methodology

The study employed the shamanism theory and Freud’s psychoanalysis theory which deals with the relation between shamanism and possession and the psychology of the dancers in the *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* ethno dance performances. In addition, document analysis theory has also been adopted for the analysis of available documents on shamanism and indigenous aesthetics. This paper is qualitative research in nature. The researcher has interviewed and talked to the resource people like *dance masters*, former dancers, and some scholars for primary data. The researcher has consulted the available book chapters, journal articles, and magazines for secondary data. The website is another source material. The researcher’s observation is the primary source for the analysis. Therefore, this research paper combines primary and

secondary data and the researcher's experiences and observations, as it is empirical.

The *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* represent the shamanic practice integral to indigenous and non-indigenous people in Eastern and Western countries. The shamanism theory deals with the separation between shamanism and possession. "Here shamanism (in Eliade's sense) and spirit possession are treated as antithetical processes. The first is an ascent of man to the gods: the second the descent of the gods on man" (Lewis 44). In *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* the dancers ascend to the gods with the help of gurus chanting. This process is called shamanism. When the gods descend to dancing girls or dancers with the help of the same chanting, this is called possession. "Modern shamanism theory has not been content to maintain the strict separation between shamanism and possession, although it has continued to produce various definitions of shamanism built upon various conceptions of ecstasy and trance that are not limited to soul flight; possession is regularly seen as a typical element of the shamanic séance" (Michael 678). Shamanism has been defined in different ways.

The dead soul is supposed to have possessed a person, and there is a connection between the material world and the spiritual world or man and spirit. The tribal peoples like Gurung, Magar and others practice shamanism and possession as it is their aesthetic beauty. These indigenous groups gain different types of visual and performing arts knowledge and are transformed into better lifestyles. "We have yet to fully gauge the impact of such aesthetic transformations on tribal peoples and societies just as we have yet to fully gauge the impact of such transformations on western peoples and societies" (Herman 32). There is a difference between indigenous and Western aesthetics. Western aesthetics depend on technology, whereas indigenous aesthetics depend on their local understandings. The source of indigenous aesthetics can be historical, religious, conceptual, generational, tribal, or cosmological.

Discussion and Results

This section of the study explores the indigenous aesthetics in shamanic ethno-dance performances like *Sorathi*, *Ghaṭu*, and *Krishna Charitra* observed by Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Baram, Darai, and

Dura in mid-west of Nepal. The study discusses some significant results in detail. The focus is on how shamanism existed among indigenous peoples as their aesthetics from time immemorial. Shamanism is the integral relationship between living and dead. The indigenous peoples practice shamanism for some faith-healing treatments and other blessings. Shamanism is easy, cheap, and effective for indigenous peoples. This makes them follow shamanism. "In ancient Greece, the continued existence of the dead depended upon the continuing remembrance of the living" (Buckland 10). This trend is worldwide. The dead were not supposed to be dead. It was dependent upon the continuing remembrance of the living. The relatives always remember the dead, and the dead are alive as long as their relatives remember them. Remembering the dead is a practice of indigenous aesthetics.

The above-mentioned indigenous groups observe these tribal festivals, *Ghātu* and *Krishna Charitra*, in memory of the dead souls or to memorise the dead. "Both the ancient Greeks and the Romans made contact with their dead through the agencies of their priests" (Buckland 10). Here, the agencies are the *Ghātu* gurus or dance masters through whom the dead are supposed to contact the living. "There are so many reasons for spirits to want to contact us, never mind the reasons we may have for wanting to contact them" (12). The spirits should have been willing to contact the living for maybe love.

Similarly, the living also want to contact them for the same because they cannot forget them. There is a culture that observation time of *Ghātu* is the springtime every year. Likewise, "[i]f you have your séance every Wednesday (let's say) at 9:00 p.m., then the spirit will get used to the fact that this is the best time to make contact" (Buckland 26). For a week, Wednesday has been the day to contact the spirits. Contacting another day may not be meaningful. This shows that man can habituate the spirits, too. "The apparatus was invented in 1853 by a Frenchman and was quickly adopted by Spiritualists around the world. It is applied to a small moving platform used to communicate with spirits" (52). What technic, apparatus, or props are used by the agency first is followed by other spiritualists. For instance, every *Ghātu* dancer wears the headgear while dancing. So do the *Krishna Charitra* and *Sorathi* dancers. This headgear or turban-wearing system is followed by other *Ghātu*

practitioners' dancing. Wearing a turban is an indigenous aesthetic. Buckland clarifies that the "Spirit World is a real world, just as real to spirits functioning through their spirit bodies as the physical world is to us who function through our physical bodies" (16). Treating the spirit world as a real world is indigenous knowledge. Though the spirit world is unseen, it is there that all ordinary people cannot realize. This world is like the physical world. Only what science defines is not the world; the world has other definitions, too, as it is indigenous aesthetics.

What is a shaman in the real sense? Different people have different views on it. A shaman seems to have been personified as below:

A shaman (a see-er) is a person who journeys to nonordinary realities in an altered state of consciousness at his or her own will and brings back knowledge that can affect physical or mental changes in this realm for healing or knowledge. Shamans reach these realms in various ways – by chanting, drumming, dancing, and consuming hallucinogenic brews. (Beery 24)

There is no lab-tested truth about shamanism. It is a blind belief system. So, a shaman is supposed to go into the spiritual world, which ordinary people cannot do, and bring back knowledge or healing to the people living here on the earth. There is an agency like a priest or gurus through whom the general humans connect with the spirit world. For this, they chant, drum, dance, and consume hallucinogenic brews to reach the realms of spirit. Then they come up with the knowledge of spirits and use it for several purposes like faith healing. The *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi*, and *Krishna Charitra* sites could thus be seen as a kind of guide to shaman practice. It is an ongoing practice even in the age of science and technology. Narrative songs and music are the products of indigenous knowledge.

The performers make the dead souls of the royal couple happy by singing in musical tones with the music of double-ended drums and by sacrificing the animals and hens or chicks. Besides these, they use different props that differ from village to village as "shamanism and spirit possession are separate phenomena" (Lewis 49). However, people think that they are similar. It shows it is a kind of meeting point between the material and spiritual worlds. All the indigenous peoples possess these arts as indigenous aesthetics.

By mistake, some people lose their lives in the treatment processes, but “spirit possession and shamanism have also been viewed as pre-scientific psychotherapy (Lewis 172), which medical science also entertains. Shamanic treatment is a kind of psychotherapy. The study shows that shamanism is a psychological treatment because “the more meaningful equivalence is that psychiatry, and especially psychoanalysis, as Jung, would perhaps have admitted much more freely than most Freudians would care to, represent limited and imperfect forms of shamanism” (Lewis 178). Medical treatment also entertains psychological treatment.

According to shamanism, *dancers of Ghātu, Sorathi and Krishna Charitra are shamans*. Sunkashi Gurung, one of the former dancers, tells her dream experience. She sees this dream in her trance mode. She is a shaman in this respect. As she goes into the trance means, she ascends to the gods. She also shares her next adventure. Once when she was in India for two years, she felt awkward experiences. She felt something crawling on her body and had a hang and headache. It would happen every year at the time of *Ghātu* performance in Nepal. However, when she would light the incense and request the *Ghātu* aura to go to Nepal, where the version is taking place, she would feel fresh to some extent (personal talk with the Sunkashi Gurung), which is a mysterious thing. This mystery is a beauty of indigenous aesthetics.

Another incredible thing about the indigenous aesthetics and this tribal festival is that the former dancers must be very careful during the performance. The *Ghātu* aura possesses the former dancers when they overhear the chanting. Overhearing the recorded *Ghātu* songs also captures the former dancers without fail. This happens in *Sorathi* and *Krishna Charitra*. This is because of perception and a person’s psychological impacts. The following is dreadful evidence of how the aura captured the former dancers during the performance:

In Rashtriya Nachghar – National Concert Hall – opposite Tourism Board Nepal in 2005, the former dancers, who were present as the audience, were possessed by *Ghātu* aura. The announcer had warned of such possible happening to the former dancers, if any, but they did not care about the announcement. When the *Ghātu* music started, two of them started quivering, and the audience stirred up to run away from

the hall. The programme organiser suspended the performance for some time and convinced the audience not to leave the hall, as the audiences were afraid of adversity. (Gurung 142)

There were house-packed audiences in the hall, and they were very curious to see the *Ghātu* performance as it was a supernatural activity. It was not only the *Ghātu* performance; there were other programs. This performance was about ten/to fifteen minutes. The former dancers were possessed as soon as they heard the *Ghātu* music. There are many unbelievable things we find in the *Ghātu* performance. *Believing in spirits and artistic presentation is the indigenous aesthetics.*

Moreover, Rupesh Karmacharya, from Chitwan, shares his life experience. He was willing to take a photograph of the *Ghātu* performance. The dancers were on the floor for the performance. “When *Barkat* was thrown in front of them, they instantly fell into a trance, closed their eyes, and started to swing their body rhythmically. (I was ready with my camera to snap this moment, but I was stunned momentarily and completely forgot to take the photo.)” (Karmacharya n. p.). The dance masters had warned the audience to be alert but not to be afraid because there would be a kind of magic. Karmacharya still does not know whether it is magical realism. Presenting magical realism is another indigenous aesthetic. Likewise, Laxman Bhatta, English faculty of Ratna Rajya Laxmi campus, T. U. shared his experience of not being able to video record the temple activities that were going on inside it. So, the existence of shamanism can never be ignored or neglected.

These are the surprising activities of shamanism. This shamanism is practised for several purposes, as said above. One primary purpose of performing *Ghātu*, *Sorathi* and *Krishna Charitra* is faith healing though there are others. The healing process of allopathic treatment and shamanic treatment differs. Comparatively, shamanic treatment is riskier than medicinal treatment. Some patients lose their lives during shamanic treatments because some shaman practitioners treat them inhumanely. Dipak Sapkota has twitted such an inhuman treatment process that is too pathetic (Shamanic treatment n. p.). The patient loses her life during the treatment process. Hundreds of people have passed negative comments on it. The patient, who looks like a thirteen or fourteen-

year-old girl, is dead. In the age of ultramodern science and technology, some people face death because of superstitious beliefs. According to the comments posted by Dipak Sapkota, the witch doctor is Christian. Whosoever she is, this is the extreme torture of shamanic treatments. This short video clip sensitises the people, but it is happening in many corners of the world. Therefore, this paper makes the indigenous people aware of such conservative thoughts.

However, the treatment process in *Ghātu* performance is not inhumane and deadly. The girls who participate in the performance are supposed to cure their ills. For example, “Sapana Gurung from Tanahu claims that her heart problem has been dramatically minimized after participating in the dance, although it has not been fully cured” (Gurung 22). However, the gurus do not perform any treatment activities for the dancing girls or individuals. After the *Ghātu* performance, the ills of dancing girls and the villagers are supposed to have been treated. This performativity is something beyond this Twitter video clip. This cultural activity has a broad horizon of treatments, entertainment, and artistic presentations of indigenous aesthetics.

Moreover, *Ghātu* dance is a mythico-cultural performance based on myths and legends. So are the *Sorathi* and *Krishna Charitra*. “Milton uses myth for what it is, the imaginative projection of all man’s deepest hopes and fears” (Daiches 439). Whatever the legend or myth is there, chanting affects the dancers. Every cultural activity seems to have sustained in society because of its positive impacts. Every man has hopes for good results and fears of bad. This is the universal implication. The Indigenous peoples observe these cultural activities with incantation and invocation to minimise their doubts and suspicions and to have a better life. The beginning of *Ghātu*, *Sorathi* and *Krishna Charitra* is an incantation to summon the god. The belief “begins with the love of God and includes hope and sometimes even faith” (Shuger 121) as the practitioners love god. The dance masters chant the songs repeatedly to make the dancers dance. “The chanting usually became highly emotional and was mirrored in bodily gestures” (Ibrahim 93). The effect of chanting is realised even by the audience. They see that the dancers’ “eyes are closed, images can be seen in the heart. The god who dwells in the heart makes this possible” (Parish 153). By the end of the *Ghātu* performance, the

dancing girls' eyes get closed for two days or so. This is because "[c]hanting and repeating a mantra creates a sound vibration that generates an energy circuit throughout the body" (Gurung 189).

The dance masters sing the song playing the double-ended drums in a slow rhythm that helps the dancers to be hypnotised. The hypnotised state occurs in the dancing girls when "the music and song reverberate in the air, which ultimately captures the self of the performing girls" (8). Thus, the trance mode of the dancers is mandatory. This is how the performers get possessed by the *auras*. The chanting, drumming and melodious singing arts of the gurus help the dancers enter trance mode. This trance mode is a shaman's journey from a man to a god. So, the beauty of shamanism is the beauty of indigenous aesthetics.

All three ethno-dance performances are entirely based on shamanic presentations. Chanting and invoking the gods like Deuchuli, Barchuli, Himculi, or Gangachuli are mandatory in the performance's beginning, middle, or end. 'Chuli' means peak, on which the *Ghātu* god is supposed to have seated. 'Him' means snow; 'Ganga' means river; 'Bar' means banyan tree; and 'Deu' means god. It begins with the following chanting:

Lipana ho ré bhaiya lipana horé
Mali gaiko gobarlé lipailā . . .
Kali gaiko gobarlé lipailā.
Satai mulko panilé lipailā. (Thapa 25-6)
 Smear oh brother! Smear!
 With the dung of black cow, smear!
 With the dung of spotted cow, smear!
 With the water from seven sources, smear. [Translation mine]

This is how chanting and incantation function in *Ghātu*, *Sorathi* and *Krishna Charitra*, respectively. The dance masters sing these verses of the song repeatedly until or unless the dancers get possessed. Similarly, the Balun, a non-ethno dance performance, is performed by the Khasa-Brahman community. As in the *Ghātu*, *Sorathi* and *Krishna Charitra*, the chanting sends the performer into a trance. In this religious, shamanic performance, any young man or age-old man enacts Hanuman, the monkey, through hypnotism. The audience cannot acknowledge the old or young person in the performance. The performer forgets his identity and starts acting like a monkey as the

dancers enact the queens in *Ghātu*. Lalbihari Mishra presents this phrase that sends the dancer into a trance in *Balun* dance:

*Ādou Rāma tapodipodipa banāra, hatwa mrigé kanchanam
Vaidéhi haranam jatāyu maranam, sugriva sabhasanam
... yētadibha Ramayanam.* (335)

Ram was exiled, a deer was killed,
Sita was kidnapped, and the eagle was killed
Ram made Sugriv, the monkey his friend
... This is what Ramayana is. [Translation mine].

This phrase entices the dancers to go into a trance, and they forget their selves. After the performance, there is a reverse chanting to release the dancer from the Hanuman aura into normal condition. If he is not released, another phrase is also sung as necessary. There is no other verse except this which is the last one to release the dancer:

*Ādou Dēvaki dēva Gopi griha varajanam,
Maya Putan sārānam Kanshakshé dhanagouravadi hananam,
Shrikrishna lila mritam.* (336)

In the house of Vasudev-Devaki, Shrikrishna was born

Devil Maya and Putanakha were burnt down
Heredity and property of Kangsa were delved down
The story of Krishna was put down. [Translation mine]

After singing this counter rhythm of Krishna's story, the dancer returns to normal. This entire thing shows a strong imprint of shamanism and the link between the *Ghātu*, *Sorathi*, *Krishna Charitra*, and *Balun* practitioners. The chanting is common in all these performances. There are different ways of presentation. Whatever ways there are, many societies follow shamanism for several reasons. "Some would go into states of possession by the goddess (Kali *bhava*) or other deities, induced by chanting tantric *bija* mantras or singing hymns to the *devi*" (McDaniel 165). Similarly, the dancers also go into states of possession of the auras induced by chanting tantric mantras of the narrative songs of these ethno-dance performances. However, *Balun* is observed by non-ethnic people, Kasha-Brahman. Anyway, they also follow shamanism. After possessing the aura, the dancers forget themselves and act like legendary characters in the performances.

A shamanic presentation entirely guides these supernatural performances that dance masters cannot control though they seem to hold it. They know how to sing and what to sing, but they do not know how long after the impact upon the dancers takes place. The dance masters begin the performances by singing the narrative songs repeatedly. After how many rounds of their singing, the dancers get possessed by the aura is unpredictable. They also do not know how much time chanting the tranced dancers get released.

Conclusion

This research paper, likely to offer insight into a changing belief system of shamanic treatments, was carried out to explore the indigenous aesthetics in shamanic ethno-dance performances, *Ghaṭu*, *Sorathi and Krishna Charitra*. The study concluded that the dancers' psychology makes them go into trance and dance. The effect of music, chanting with wordings, and melodic singing arts of dance masters help them get possessed by the auras. The continuous music or any sound or chanting can capture the individual's self. Shamanism was and is still beneficial for many people regarding faith healing and other blessings as it benefits them. The study found that some patients died during treatment, and it is not good to entirely depend on it. The *Ghaṭu* practitioners claimed that the *Ghaṭu aura* cured some of their ills, and they had good harvests and protection from evil spirits. The main concern of this paper was to make the indigenous people aware of such superstitions so that they should acknowledge that it is not the ultimate treatment solution. Although medical treatment is not hundred per cent safe, this is the last solution. The literary beauty of performing art of this *Ghaṭu* trance dance is worth having. For simple treatments, one can depend on shamanic treatment, but it is risky to rely on it entirely. The literature shows that indigenous people's dancing and singing arts are always unquestionable. Although it is a local cultural activity, it has several universal implications.

The study employed Thomas Michel's shamanism theory and psychoanalysis theory to analyse *Ghaṭu's* performance. In addition, document analysis theory also analysed this site. By reading this article, it is not only the indigenous people who will become aware of having the naive belief in superstitious shamanic practices; other

people who have been following the shaman practice will also be mindful of such risky activities. Moreover, scholars and researchers will find this article crucial for several reasons. The study suggested that the indigenous people do not entirely depend on this shaman practice. The Twitter video tells us that the patient lost her life because of the demonic way of the treatment process. Many people might have been losing their lives in the same way. The study attempted to control such over a superstitious belief system. Some people can follow this shamanic practice for minor ills, but it is risky to believe this treatment process even for fatal diseases. Overall, indigenous aesthetics in shamanic dance performances are rich in symbolism, spirituality, and cultural significance. They serve to honour and connect with ancestral traditions, commune with the divine, and reinforce the cultural identity and values of the indigenous community. These aesthetics testify to indigenous cultures' resilience, richness, and ongoing contribution to the performing arts world.

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BOOK REVIEW

1

Hungry and Untamed: Exploring the Odyssey of Survival and Self-Discovery in Lauren Groff's *The Vaster Wilds*

Shruti Das and Ranjit Mandal

Groff, Lauren. *The Vaster Wilds*. Hutchinson Heinemann, 2023, pp. 256, £15.99, ISBN: 978-1-529-15291-3.

Lauren Groff's *The Vaster Wilds* presents an epic tale of survival and self-discovery in the untamed wilderness of early colonial America. Groff masterfully delves into the themes of servitude, identity, and power dynamics, weaving a compelling narrative that effortlessly bridges the historical past and contemporary sensibilities. The fiction chronicles the profound transformation of a young girl, who dares to defy the shackles of societal constraints and embarks on a perilous quest for freedom. Through harrowing trials and tribulations, the author paints a vivid portrait of the indomitable human spirit facing extreme adversity. *The Vaster Wilds* is a profound exploration of resilience, making it an exceptionally transformative and captivating journey for literature enthusiasts seeking a unique blend of history, survival, and self-discovery. The book exposes the reader to the harsh reality of early 17th-century America, specifically within the Jamestown colony during the infamous Starving Time. This historical backdrop was marked by famine, illness, and an overwhelming sense of despair that gripped the settlers as they struggled to survive in the fledgling English colonies. After consuming their horses, other animals, like dogs, cats, and mice, as long as they were available, they also resorted to consuming shoe leather. The dire circumstances led to accusations of cannibalism, with starving settlers resorting to

exhuming corpses from graves to satisfy their hunger (Jamestown Rediscovery). Groff's narrative draws from such actual struggles faced by early settlers, allowing readers to step into a world where survival is a relentless battle. In her struggle for freedom and self-discovery, this historical backdrop of hardship becomes a vivid canvas for the girl, acknowledged as Lamentations in the parish poorhouse, with her family name being Callat.

Groff's storytelling technique is masterful with alternating narratives that shift between the girl's perilous journey and her complex back-story. It demonstrates the author's skill in captivating readers on various levels. This storytelling approach not only adds a layer of suspense to the plot but also gradually unveils the circumstances that led the girl to escape the colony. Such storytelling encourages readers to engage in introspection and contemplation, prompting them to reflect on the past while resonating with contemporary sensibilities. Groff employs omniscient narration that provides a comprehensive and panoramic view of the protagonist's journey. This narrative approach allows readers to observe the girl's experiences from an external vantage point while delving deeply into her inner world. By adopting such narration, the author describes the nuances of her transformation, highlighting her resilience and evolving sense of identity. This narrative style facilitates a broader exploration of the societal and historical context, offering insights into the complex power dynamics and interactions that shape the girl's world. The reader is taken on an exceptional expedition into the wilderness alongside the girl whose origins are veiled in mystery. Her path to freedom is an arduous odyssey that paints a real portrait of the experiences of early settlers in America. As the narrative unfolds, we find ourselves deep within dense forests, witnessing her unrelenting battle against hunger and her gritty confrontation with the merciless forces of nature. Her passage into the vast wilderness is fraught with the perils of the untamed wild – from the lurking shadows of wild beasts to encounters with native people- such that she had not known before. "Into the night the girl ran and ran, and the cold and the dark and the wilderness and her fear and the depth of her losses, all things together, dwindled the self she had once known down to nothing" (5). This narrative, brimming with mystery and danger, is a testament to the protagonist's resourcefulness and sheer will to survive. The voice within her quivers: "I run toward

living, I run toward the living... Away from a certain wretched death, away from the devil that prowls invisible in the settlement" (9). Her only goal is to "live". In her determination to survive, she consumes whatever she finds along her path, like, raw fish, filberts, dried mushrooms, berries, female duck and her eggs, pigeon eggs, crayfish, bark of trees, and even soft mud. When there was nothing to be found, she extended her slumber to stave off the pangs of hunger: "her mouth moved in chewing and swallowing until, inside her dream, her appetite was contented" (20). There were times when her hunger was so intense that she attempted to eat the softer clumps of dried mud at the forest's edge, as they somewhat resembled mushrooms. Her sunken cheeks and bared teeth reflected her hunger, but her determination to stay alive remained indomitable. Groff emphasizes, "She was weak; she was deeply ill. But the place itself told that here she could live" (236).

Groff's vivid and visceral portrayal of the natural world as indifferent to human existence stands in stark contrast to early American religious views, where nature was seen as an extension of God. *The Vaster Wilds* offers a perspective of the wild North American landscape as mute and ungraspable, an ever-present backdrop that shapes the girl's unyielding journey toward uncertain freedom. Images of nature, including turbulent waters, untamed oceans, frozen fish, deceptive ice, and treacherous rivers, emphasize its harsh and wild aspects. While Groff occasionally portrays nature's beauty, her brutal depictions overshadow it, intensifying the hazards of the protagonist's journey. "In the bare light from the moon, the ice looked thick and welcoming, but ice was deceptive when covered with snow, and at the trail of winter, rivers went brittle, and she was sure there were places out there that could not bear her weight" (33). Thus, her writing evokes the untamed beauty and brutality of the wilderness, making it a character in its own right. The girl's interactions with the wilderness and its inhabitants, whether they are human or animal, encompass moments of awe-inspiring magnificence and agonizing brutality. The exploration of identity and power dynamics sets *The Vaster Wilds* apart from conventional survival tales. Groff delves deep into the girl's struggle to assert her identity and agency, shedding light on the societal constraints and servitude she escapes from. As the girl navigates the hostile wilderness, she simultaneously navigates the intricate terrain of her own evolving self. While

undoubtedly a gripping tale of survival, the fiction also serves as a meditation on the enduring human spirit and our remarkable ability to adapt and evolve. The girl's odyssey through the wilderness becomes a metaphor for the broader human experience, where survival often becomes a transformative journey. "She had once believed that in the deepest reaches of everything was a nothing where men had planted god; but now she knew that deeper within that nothing was something else, something made of light and heat... out of the light and heat all goodness poured" (244). Thus, one of the remarkable features of *The Vaster Wilds* is its profound character development. The girl's journey is not merely a physical one; it is a profound expedition into self-discovery. Her battle against the wild elements, solitude, and personal limitations leads her to uncover her true identity and untapped potential. Groff masterfully captures the girl's internal struggle as she undergoes a remarkable transformation from a servile, nameless individual to a resilient and self-empowered person. In line with Michel Foucault's insight that "Where there is power, there is resistance," the girl's liberation from servitude symbolizes her resistance to the power structure that held her captive (95). Her journey through the wilderness symbolizes her transformation into an autonomous individual who seizes control over her destiny. The power she once faced within the colony is transcended by her newfound power for self-determination and survival. This focus on character evolution enriches the narrative and elevates the novel to a level of storytelling that transcends the conventional survival narrative.

The language serves as an evocative and immersive vehicle that plunges readers into the physical and emotional world of the girl. Groff's writing effortlessly captures the sheer determination and persistent desire for survival that drives the protagonist throughout her journey. Her prose strikes a harmonious balance between lyrical beauty and unflinching realism, resulting in a narrative that is both immersive and intellectually stimulating. Her distinctive style excels in vividly depicting the harsh landscape in which the girl navigates, ensuring the empathy of the reader who feels the cold, the hunger, and the pain that accompany her on the troublesome journey. Groff through her rich, well-crafted narratives and masterful storytelling, makes *The Vaster Wilds* a work that not only deserves to be read but also savoured and discussed.

The Vaster Wilds reminds the reader of Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (2008) as they share a common backdrop of colonial America. While the former is set in the early seventeenth century during the struggles of the Jamestown colony, the latter takes place in the late seventeenth century, providing a glimpse into the evolving colonial landscape. Both novels explore themes of survival, resilience, and the challenges faced by settlers in the New World. However, they approach these themes in distinct ways. Both Groff and Morrison narrate journeys of escape, survival, and self-discovery respectively, taking young girls as their protagonists. Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* delves deeply into the psychological and emotional aspects of her multiple characters while exploring issues of slavery, race, and survival in America's untamed wild, while Groff focuses on one girl. These two novels offer readers different perspectives on American history, both in terms of the timeframes they cover and the thematic richness they bring to the forefront.

Readers seeking a literary journey that transcends the boundaries of traditional survival narratives will be captivated by *The Vaster Wilds*. It beckons to those who relish stories of survival and resilience, particularly within the historical tapestry of colonial America. The novel's lyrical yet intriguing prose, which portrays the harshness and splendour of the natural world, will attract any reader who appreciates rich and evocative descriptions. The girl's journey through the wild, marked by physical survival and self-discovery, presents a complex narrative, underscoring the remarkable potential of individuals to shift from servitude to self-empowerment. Thus, the novel is an invitation to contemplate our journeys in the past and the present, and a testament to the strength that resides within us all.

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2

Race, Roots and Revelation – Reviewing Jonathan Escoffery's *If I Survive You*

Deepshikha Routray and Pratikshya Tripathy

Escoffery, Jonathan. *If I Survive You*, Harper Collins, 2022, pp.272, £14.99, ISBN: 978-0-008-50121-1.

Jonathan Escoffery's debut novel *If I Survive You* (2022) is a compilation of eight interlinked stories which revolve around an immigrant family from Jamaica grappling with racial oppression in the U.S. Longlisted for the 2023 Man Booker Prize, the provocative novel deals with the sensitive issues of immigration, racial oppression, sibling rivalry, financial hardships and identity crisis of the Jamaican immigrants struggling for survival in a White-dominated American milieu. Set against the background of the political violence in Jamaica in the 1970s, the novel depicts the family's hardships after they relocate to Miami. It features multiple characters, who go through their life journeys and transform themselves into mature individuals. Trelawny, the protagonist, navigates his journey from a romantic to a self-aware individual, echoing the themes of a coming-of-age narrative. Deeply layered and original in structure, the novel brings out the gradual decay of a family frantically chasing the American Dream.

The stories oscillate between first, second and third-person narratives providing a unique structure to the novel. Out of the pivotal characters in the novel, Trelawny emerges as the most promising voice trying to assert his position in a foreign landscape, which ironically happens to be his birthplace. Trelawny's life is very similar to any black immigrant subjected to exclusion because of a dark skin tone. The opening story, "In Flux" shows the anxiety of a nine-year-old Trelawny searching for a sense of belonging among his friends, who constantly questions his racial features. The title of the

first story is relevant to Trelawny's existential crisis, bereft of familial love and affection. He is sometimes referred to as a "Nigga", a "Yankee" and at other times, a "Black-American". Trelawny relentlessly reflects on his ethnic origin, whenever he is confronted with the question, "What are You?"(3). It becomes a painful exercise for him, as he struggles to explain his ambiguous identity in a multicultural landscape that makes him vulnerable to his judgmental friends. In his insightful book review of *If I Survive You*, Ian Williams remarks, "Just give the boy some security, some freedom and a sense of belonging and much of his angst would evaporate". Unfortunately, Trelawny fails to find a home. The young man is disconnected from his family and seeks comfort in his dreams to achieve success in life. Trelawny's existential crisis evolves from the neglect of his parents, especially his father, Topper who calls him defective. Growing up as a young child, Trelawny develops a toxic trait of despising his father and elder brother, only to prove his worth. Throughout the first story, Trelawny's struggles are realistic, resonating with countless young immigrants ostracized on account of their diasporic blackness. Trelawny is homeless, both literally and metaphorically. Trelawny can neither communicate through Spanish nor engage in an emotional connection with anyone. He remains trapped in an "in-between" space, neither too white to classify as an American nor too black to identify as a Jamaican. His distorted identity secludes him and simultaneously fuels his desire to fit into a thriving American ecosystem that he cannot afford to leave.

The second story is narrated from the perspective of Trelawny's father, Topper who takes the narrative back to the times he married Sanya hoping that their children will bring them prosperity. Topper speaks in a Jamaican patois accent, which adds a touch of authenticity to his struggles. Topper is quite a sympathetic character since he has never achieved the success he dreamt of. His hopeless search for a homeland shows the vulnerability of a Black immigrant thwarted by a capitalist American society. Topper's struggle to be identified as an ideal husband, a good father and most importantly, a provider for his family, is heart-wrenching. Topper is deprived of everything- parental love, a happy family, a stable income and permanent shelter which become the reasons for the unrest between him and his wife, Sanya. His situation is similar to any typical family

man trying to provide the best for his family in the face of odds. Navigating life's hardships, Topper loses out on everything and lives with the guilt of separation from his wife. The title of the story is symbolic, where the "Ackee tree" stands as a symbol for the conflict between the two sons of Topper, Delano and Trelawny. The Ackee tree in the story represents the Jamaican culture, reflected in Topper's mannerisms.

In the third story "Odd Jobs", the narrative again shifts to Trelawny, who recounts the various lowly jobs he has engaged himself in the past few years. He goes on to do several odd jobs, sometimes working for an ad agency and at other times, doing short-term internships that barely fetch him any money. Williams in his review talks about Trelawny's reckless attitude when he takes up an unethical job for the privilege of "a toilet on which to sit and unload your twisted clogged colon", just for the sake of survival. The story reveals the reckless side of Trelawny, a passionate youth who believes in his potential to earn a huge fortune. His struggles transform him, and he becomes deeply involved in the Capitalist rush to secure a prosperous future. Trelawny bonds with several people around him, meet old friends and acquaintances and shares his struggles to find a respectable position for himself. His psychological scars become apparent when he remembers his father's aversion towards him. Trelawny's confessions in the story hint at his repressed hatred against his father who he believes is the reason for his fragmented existence. Trelawny believes that he would prove his father wrong by proving himself better than his elder brother Delano (81). Trelawny's ambitions numb his senses, and his aggressive behaviour to exact revenge on his elder brother shows his immaturity at a tender age.

The longing for a home is constantly echoed throughout the novel, be it the residence back in Jamaica or the one in Miami. Trelawny has no fond memories of his roots, but he does witness the devastation caused by Hurricane Andrew that hit Miami. Trelawny reminds the readers of Pip's embarrassing connections with his home. Pip remarks, "It is a most miserable thing to feel ashamed of home...Home had never been a very pleasant place to me..." (Dickens 104) The story "Pestilence" is a similar account of Trelawny's ambiguous relationship with his family, and most importantly, the indistinct idea of a home. While the physical

devastation is caused by Hurricane Andrew, the psychological and generational divide in the family stems from “poverty” that plagues their lives.

Escoffery excels in portraying the character of Cukie, one of Trelawny’s cousins who shares the same fate as the former. Cukie can be seen as an antithesis of his father Ox who hardly cared for his son. The story “Splashdown” is a brilliant testimony to Cukie’s passion to dive into the past and find the reason for his abandonment. The story has flashbacks of Cukie’s childhood turmoil, his longing to experience fatherly love and most importantly, his desire to protect his mother. Cukie’s abilities to deal with his identity crisis and shoulder familial responsibilities simultaneously make him one of the most mature characters in the novel. His character is an urgent reminder to make peace with a troubled past and look for a promising future ahead. Cukie’s act of jumping into the water and emerging with a splash is symbolic of his transformation from a nostalgic son to a responsible father.

The idea of living an independent life and providing for their partners gradually leaves the two brothers disillusioned. The mad pursuit of wealth and prosperity leads to a gradual decay of their morality. On multiple occasions, Trelawny feels guilty for causing suffering to his family members, but his fragile ego stops him from transforming. He reminds himself, “You want a home. You want to win back your girlfriend’s admiration. You want to prove that your father bet on the wrong son. But you don’t say any of this...” (239). Delano, his elder brother, too concludes when his wife calls him a liability (Escoffery 186). Delano accepts the defeat when he feels “an odd sense of euphoria in accepting this fact” (186). It is when their partners abandon them, that they realise what they have lost in the process of chasing social visibility. This is like an epiphany, a beginning of realisation, as a composed Delano “remembers his purest, most concentrated self” (203).

Trelawny’s life takes a turn when his gigantic dreams gradually collapse. His childhood memories return to him when he finally confronts his father. His casual affairs do not bring him peace, and he finally understands that it was never about defeating his brother, and that beating him was not a route to get what he needed (253). He

reflects on his decisions and decides not to return to his girlfriend, Jelly since he understands that they can never end up together (254). Trelawny can be seen as a modern representation of Dickens' Pip, as he realizes the improbability of a romantic relationship with Jelly. His realization reflects the growth and refinement in his character, and ultimately brings him closer to his family.

Trelawny's transformation into a forgiving character is the finest achievement of Escoffery's experiments with creating a bildungsroman. The themes of race, identity and self-discovery are well-sewn together to form a coherent plot. The story-within-a-story format of the novel unravels a plentitude of experiences shared by immigrants in the Capitalist American society. Despite the ambiguity of the patois language, the novel speaks a lot more through the backgrounds of the characters and retains its potential to connect with a large group of readers. The sufferings of the characters haunt the readers until the end and the complex questions of cultural identity, racism and familial conflicts make it a rich and versatile text worthy of appreciation.

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