

An Online, Peer-reviewed, Refereed and Quarterly Journal



EISSN 2456-5571



BODHI



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
RESEARCH IN HUMANITIES ARTS AND SCIENCE

VOLUME 9 | SPECIAL ISSUE 5
JANUARY 2025 | E-ISSN: 2456-5571



Special Issue on

ECO-NARRATIVES: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF
ENVIRONMENT AND LITERARY STUDIES

Editors-in-Chief

Dr. PADMA V MCKERTICH
Dr. SUJITHA S | Dr. C.L. SHILAJA



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International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science

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Vol.9

Special Issue 5

January 2025

E-ISSN: 2456-5571



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An Online, peer reviewed, refereed and quarterly Journal with Impact Factor

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From the Editor's Desk

With environmental concerns becoming increasingly urgent, literary studies has greened itself in an attempt to examine the myriad ways in which creative and critical literature have engaged with these concerns. The publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in 1996 spearheaded a number of critical, philosophical and creative works that opened many nuanced ways of studying the intersections between literary studies and the environment. From ecosophy and Deep Ecology to ecofeminism and environmentalism, ecocriticism has today become a vast and extremely popular reading method.

The essays in this issue use some of these methods to read both canonical texts as works by new and upcoming writers. The essays also effectively expand our idea of a text by reading visual texts such as documentaries and series meant for children using the lens of ecocriticism. Together, the essays encourage a more ecocentric approach to texts from across genres and geographical regions.

Editors

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Vol.9

Special Issue 5

January 2025

E-ISSN: 2456-5571

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Academic Excellence in research is continued promoting in research support for young Scholars. Humanities, Arts and Science of research is motivating all aspects of encounters across disciplines and research fields in an multidisciplinary views, by assembling research groups and consequently projects, supporting publications with this inclination and organizing programmes. Internationalization of research work is the unit seeks to develop its scholarly profile in research through quality of publications. And visibility of research is creating sustainable platforms for research and publication, such as series of Books; motivating dissemination of research results for people and society

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AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SUMANA ROY'S *HOW I BECAME A TREE*

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Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to analyse Sumana Roy's How I Became a Tree through the perspective of Ecocriticism. Ecocriticism emerged as a critical school of inquiry into the relationship between literature and environment and its significance in unearthing and exploring literary texts and writers who foreground nature and environment in their writings thus providing solutions to present day environmental crises. This paper firstly attempts to explain the concept of ecocriticism through nature and nature writing. It then proceeds to understand the development of ecocriticism through different stages called as waves of ecocriticism. Sumana Roy is a writer and faculty of creative writing course with novels, non-fiction, editorials, articles, and poems to her credit. In this thought-provoking and nuanced memoir on trees, Roy exhibits a rare sensibility and sensitivity towards the nonhuman element of nature – trees and gives them a human agency and persona. She writes at times with empathy, humour, and surprise at the relationship between human and trees and identifies herself with trees drawing parallels from art, science, literature, religion, mythology, rituals and philosophy, making the book a platform to articulate her responses towards environment and nature.

Keywords: ecocriticism, nature, human and nonhuman, Roy

"I need to say it again: among all other desires to become a tree. . ."

writes Sumana Roy in her book of non-fiction titled *How I Became a Tree* (2017) that centres on the premise of the author's desire to identify herself with a tree. The book is divided into nine parts articulating Roy's identification with tree as a botanical being, art, literature, religion and philosophy. The book is a testament to the writer's association with trees in her hometown of Siliguri at the foothills of Himalayas and that trees have always been a part of her existence. Roy touches upon trees throughout the book, from her existence to relationships, marriage and literary marvels on trees. The writer arranges the nine chapters of the book into linear categories as "A Tree Grew inside My Head", "I Paint Flowers So They Will Not Die", "See the Long Shadow that is Cast by the Tree", "Supposing I Became a Champa Flower", "I

Want To Do with You What Spring Does with Cherry Trees", "One Tree is Equal to Ten Sons", "Lost in Forest", "Under the Greenwood Tree", and "The Tree is an Eternal Corpse"- all these chapters evocatively express Roy's innate desire to be identified as a "Tree".

Ecocriticism as a literary movement came out of an upheaval, namely the environmental crisis. The twentieth century witnessed dramatic changes to nature and the environment such as mindless consumption of natural resources, depletion of resources, cutting of trees and forests for urbanization and to meet the needs of urbanized society, water problems, more recently thinning of ozone layer, carbon footprints and climate change-the biggest challenge of all crises. The disciplines of science and technology had started to address these challenges and were providing solutions to them.

Literature and literary studies had “apparently ignored the most pressing contemporary issue of all, namely global environmental crisis. The absence of any sign to suggest an environmental perspective in contemporary literary studies would seem. . . scholarship remains academic. . .” (Glotfelty XV). Ecocriticism was born out of a single idea of revisionist strategies by literature and literary studies in response to the environmental crises and by 1993, ecological literary study had established as a critical school more than relevant today and in the years to come with scholars researching and widening the scope of ecological perspectives on literature, literary studies and media through interdisciplinary approaches.

Ecocriticism is defined as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. . .” (Glotfelty xviii). It shares the fundamental premise that human culture is inextricably connected and linked to the physical world affecting it and affected by it, “the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman” (Glotfelty xix).

Roy’s book on trees negotiates the human and the nonhuman through an ecocritical lens. Ecocriticism underwent three stages known as ‘waves’ since its inception. These are modelled on Elaine Showalter’s model of three developmental stages of feminist criticism (Glotfelty xxii) to describe the three waves. The first stage is significant here – consciousness raising by literature about representations of nature in literary texts and writers foregrounding nature and environment. Roy’s book is located in the first wave of consciousness raising about nature – ‘trees.’ The fact that trees have

existed and lived longer than us makes it an important point to think and write about. Roy seems to be doing precisely that. It is pertinent that Roy’s book published in 2017 should speak strongly for nature and how nature and natural world is intimately connected to the human world. The anthropomorphic worldview places human at the centre of the ecosystem making the nonhuman vulnerable to human agencies. “Ecocriticism expands the notion of the world to include the entire ecosphere. . . . “Everything is connected to everything else”” (Glotfelty xix) and literature is connected and enmeshed in the global network of matter and energy of human and nonhuman world.

The nonhuman world is engaged in its own time and speed, oblivious to the human world, making it special and endearing. Roy finds the slow pace of trees soothing as she writes, “I was tired of speed. I wanted to live tree time” (4). The book references tree time and the ethereal quality of trees that testify to time, history, religion, philosophy, art, and literature. The book is a modern ode to trees as sacred beings, agency of hope, succour, and life. The writer looks at trees in every aspect of her life from growing-up years to the present. She also presents her research on numerous aspects and dimensions of trees as valuable nonhumans through readings across disciplines: “Privileging of creatures with eyes over those who didn’t have them. Trees and plants ‘remain ahistorical creatures’” (16).

How I Became a Tree beautifully portrays the significance and relationship of nonhuman agency in the human world. At times, Roy sounds politically correct in speaking for trees and, inadvertently, for nature. Ecocritical writings stem from a deep and observant study of nature, the natural world and surroundings, and its articulations in literature. William Howarth in “Some Principles of Ecocriticism” observes that, “We know nature through images and

words, . . . Ecocriticism observes in nature and culture the ubiquity of signs, indicators of value that shape form and meaning. Ecology leads us to recognize that life speaks, communing through encoded streams of information that have direction and purpose. . . ." (Glottfelty 77). Roy intersperses many stories woven around trees and the need to let trees simply be trees, not decorated or beautified to suit the human eye, taste, and pleasure. She writes about her life being always surrounded by trees and how she attempts to engage and negotiate her life around trees for most of her life. She finds trees to be always giving without asking: "Trees were not politically correct. . . they wanted to be" (16). The writer provides many illustrations and situations about memorizing the entire list of trees and writing them down as a young girl. Ecocriticism investigates language and suitable linguistic expressions "to represent, examines its ability to point (deixis). . . More developed in Asian than European languages, deixis locates entities in space, time, and social context. . . In learning to read land, one can't just name objects but point to what they do. . . the landscape contains many names and stories, so that learning and writing become a way of mapping cultural terrain. A bio-geographer works in similar ways, reading regional life and land forms, then using ecology to map their interactions" (Glottfelty 80). Roy desires to be an active part of the terrain of trees and posits the juxtaposition between nature and culture by becoming synonymous with trees. She points out that the name *Suman* means flowers in the Hindi language, and her name *Su mana* refers to a good, intelligible mind that is different from the Hindi meaning. Roy also writes humorously about the Bengali penchant for naming girls after flowers, Indian or English, a tradition that continues even today, probably delving deeper into the psyche of the

Bengali families using trees and flowers for naming children but not beyond that.

Roy personifies trees akin to humans and transfers human agency to the nonhuman nature through touching episodes like applying Burnol, an ointment used to treat burns on leaves getting burnt after pouring hot water by her maid. She also attributes trees as 'sahrydaya' (39) and becomes embedded in the vastness of the tree. Roy provides literary research through Sharanya Manivannan's short story of having a boyfriend like a banyan tree-sturdy and eternal to reflect on other human writings on nature. Similarly, she also describes an actor marrying a tree to support the cause of environmentalism only to realise and accept the tree as his lawfully wedded wife. Trees are the life force for the painter Nandlal Bose, who enriched the writers' understanding and love for trees and projects 'plant life – as person equivalence' (40).

Literary references to trees take the readers to Rabindranath Tagore and his love for plants, flowers and trees, evident in his stories, songs and letters to his family. The concept of Shantiniketan as an abode of peace fills him with the contentment and satisfaction of planting trees inherited from his father about planting a wide variety of trees, both native and foreign species. She also writes in detail about Tagore's habit of baptizing his plants with new names that have a beautiful charm and rhythmic sound to them (91). In Tagore's poetry, ordinary trees like cacti also find a significant place. Wordsworth's poem on "The Thorn" succinctly describes an ubiquitous object like a thorn, an easily dismissed and neglected part of the plant kingdom. Tagore believed that and Roy also ascribes to the thought that Shantiniketan "shall be the place for ordinary trees like me. . . but this is what I wanted to become, grass, moss, weed, something that would not draw attention to itself" (94) and "What his students had inherited through this

course was a sense of trees as participant, friend and neighbour, in the ongoing drama of daily life, not merely as background. Tagore was insistent that trees be studied as individuals" (98). Tagore's philosophy about trees and Roy's mention about tree huggers of the Chipko Movement enshrine and foreground nature and the environment as having individual agency.

The interdisciplinary approach of ecocriticism finds a kindred soul and true voice in the form of Jagdish Chandra Bose and in writings about plants possessing emotions, feelings that speak to the scientist. Roy describes the passion of Bose in promoting the language and speech of plants understood by highly sensitive human beings. Bose stands as an exemplary figure who makes the marriage of science and emotions compatible with each other. Similarly, Bhubutibhushan Bandopadhyay's novel *Aranyak* pitched for the life of forests that motivated the writer to re-read the novel in the forests all by herself. Kate Soper in "The Discourses of Nature" writes, "In its commonest and most fundamental sense, the term 'nature' refers to everything which is not human and distinguished from the work of humanity. Thus 'nature' is opposed to culture, to history, to convention, to what is artificially worked or produced, in short, to everything which is defining of the order of humanity. . . when 'nature' is used of the non-human, it is in a rather more concrete sense to refer to that part of the environment which we have had no hand in creating. . ." (Hiltner 267).

A taxonomical understanding of Roy's book becomes an interesting premise on ecocriticism and nature writing. Thomas J. Lyon in his essay "A Taxonomy of Nature Writing" writes, ". . . the literature of nature has three main dimensions to it: natural history information, personal responses to nature and philosophical interpretation to nature. . . essay of

experience in nature, . . Essays of solitude or escape between conventional existence and the more intense, more wakeful life in contact with nature." (Glotfelty pp 276-79). The writer, throughout the melange of memoir and personal experiences, recounts her connection with nature, especially of trees, with a renewed enthusiasm and interest bordering on an enlightened understanding of trees.

Roy's book *How I Became a Tree* joins the expanding and widening environmental discourse on nature and nature writing with a substantial contribution to ecocriticism. The third wave of ecocriticism discusses environmental justice and empathy towards nonhuman species gleaned through writings and literature. She makes a point that trees do have a voice and articulates through the empathic responses of the writer towards them as, "The lack of rebelliousness, of protest, by plant life, like the lack of resistance by forest dwellers to intrusive political systems, have left both marginalized for centuries. If plants have agency, if they could move, raise flags, cause bloodshed in humans and if humans. . . they would not be treated the way they have been" (160). Roy concludes the book with a fitting reassurance for trees as "A tree has more afterlives than men" (208).

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CLIMATOGLOSSIA: EXPLORING THE LINGUISTIC IMPACT OF TAMBORA ERUPTION IN BYRON AND SHELLEY'S POETRY

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Abstract

As one of the most catastrophic eruptions in recorded history, the eruption of Mount Tambora, also Tamboro, in 1815 led to unparalleled ecological and socio-cultural upheaval such as crepuscular light, frigid temperatures, storms, food riots, and the "Year Without a Summer" (1816). This paper engages the theoretical framework of Climatoglossia to examine the linguistic implications of this ecological disaster, zeroing in on how environmental perturbations influence poetic lexicon. Relying on the poetic compositions of George Gordon Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, this study argues that their post-Tambora poetry articulates an unprecedented engagement with climatic volatility in an apocalyptic linguistic register, destabilized diction, and heightened glossary of environmental anxiety. The literary endeavors of Lord Byron and P. B. Shelley, commencing in 1816 and extending into subsequent years, are paradigmatic texts that enunciate the dialectic between the vulnerability of humankind and the omnipotent forces of nature. The paper deals with the volcanic atmospheric anomalies that, by recalibrating Romantic sublime attitudes, evoke feelings of wonder but turn devastating. Close textual analysis reveals the unique climatoglossic imprint wrought with broken rhythmic patterns, stark juxtaposition, and grotesquely haunting images of desolation, mimicking the ecological disturbance of the Tambora aftermath. This article positions its findings within the larger discourse of environmental humanities, arguing that the poetic response to Tambora anticipates the ecology-based concerns of today. Byron and Shelley, through their climate-oriented language, articulate a proto-ecological consciousness and emphasize the capacity of poetic language to articulate and store anthropogenic anxieties created by environmental disasters.

Keywords: Byron, climatoglossia, romanticism, Shelley, Tamboro

Introduction

Mount Tambora is an active volcano in Indonesia, located on Sumbawa Island, which exploded in 1815 ("Mount Tambora Volcano"). Approximately 150 cubic kilometers of tephra and ash discharged while the ash-laden plume spread up to 1,300 kilometers ("Mount Tambora Volcano"). The eruption commenced on April 5 and became more violent on April 10, with the sounds audible 2,600 kilometres

away (Stothers 1191). Three plumes combined while soaring up, transforming the mountain into liquid fire, and volcanic ash and pumice descended. Pyroclastic flows cascaded down the mountain, into the sea and destroyed the inhabitants. Tsunamis 1-4 metres high were reported across the region (1192). Tambora is dubbed "Pompeii of the East" due to its similarity with Mount Vesuvius's explosion (79AD). In October, 3,600 kilometres west of Tambora, the British ships

found large pumice rafts (Asiatic Society 161). The finer ash lingered from months to years for a radius of 10-30 kilometers dispersed globally by longitudinal winds and the coarser particles settled in 1-2 weeks. The number of casualties is estimated to be 60,000-100,000, including direct deaths and the subsequent ones related to hunger and disease (Reid; Tanguy et al. 138).

In 1816, there was a 0.4-0.7 °C decrease in global temperature due to the release of Sulphur dioxide (Stothers 1197). Summer temperatures across western and central Europe were 1-2°C cooler in 1816 than the average temperature for 1810-1819 (Oppenheimer 245). The fog periodically reported from 1815-1816 significantly diminished sunlight. Snow began falling in Canada, Dennysville, Maine, and Albany, New York, on June 6, 1816, while Cabot, Vermont had 46 cm of snow cover on 8 June ("1816: The Year"). At high altitudes of these places, including New Hampshire, frosts caused crop damage (Skeen 56). Typhus outbreaks in southeast Europe and the eastern Mediterranean Sea (1816-1819), crop failure in India and a new strain of cholera in Bengal are attributed to the post-Tambora climate (Evensen and Peterson 11; Oppenheimer 253). Cattle deaths in New England, German famine riots and harvest failure in the British Isles and Ireland because of low temperature and rainfall led families to undertake journeys, begging for food (Oppenheimer 251). The year 1816 came to be known as the "Year without a Summer," "Eighteen Hundred and Froze to Death" and the "Poverty Year" ("1816: The Year").

Impact on Byron and Shelley

The impact of the eruption is reflected in the letters and journals of the Shelleys and Byron. Mary Shelley's travel narrative *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817) describes a trip she undertook with P. B. Shelley and Lord Byron across Europe in 1816. She

recorded weather disruption as delayed Spring, excessive cold, rain, thick snow and occasional sunshine (Shelley, *History of 90*). Writing about the weather in May, she mentioned snow in Les Rousses (92). In Letter II (1 June), she observed that the weather in Geneva was initially slightly better when they arrived, but it soon worsened with perpetual rain and thunderstorms (99-100). P. B. Shelley's Letter IV (22 July) articulates profound environmental pessimism due to post-Tambora weather: "...this globe which we inhabit will at some future period be changed into a mass of frost" (161-62). Byron's letter 242, described the weather as stressful: "I am thus far (kept by stress of weather) on my way back to Diodati..." (Moore 247) and in Letter 244 (29 July), he explains the weather as comprising "mists" and "fog" (251).

Climatoglossia in the Poetry of Byron and Shelley

Climatoglossia is a term derived from the words "climate", which refers to weather conditions and "glossia", which means language. It is defined as the climate-inspired language, words, phrases, and sentences, whether lexical, scientific, or poetic, that allude to climate and climate change in literary texts. It encompasses language and language patterns in literature that explicitly or implicitly reflect climatic conditions. It is a linguistic phenomenon that connects atmospheric science and literary criticism via climate sensibility. In essence, this interdisciplinary approach opens the doors for explicit decoding of how climate (favorable or adverse) is presented in these texts, thus revealing the presence of climate consciousness, a shift from anthropocentric perspectives to climate-centered perspectives within human thought. Climatoglossia can be understood as a neuro-linguistic system where climatic language is produced with the stimuli from atmospheric realities. Climatoglossia governs

the meaning, and when words are charged with climate-centric meaning, they influence the minds of readers and provoke their thoughts. Romantic poetry composed post-Tambora eruption (1815) is an example of climatoglossia, where significant weather anomalies functioned as neurochemical stimuli, thus endowing romantic poets with climate-centric diction that immediately related to post-Tambora weather. Within climate literary studies, climatoglossia thus acts as a bridge between environmental sciences and literature.

A desolate, apocalyptic vision emerges in Byron's "Darkness" (1816) where the sun is extinguished and the earth is desolate and frozen, roaming through space. The stars do wander "darkling", and there is disruption in the alternations of day and night. Such imagery foreshadows the collapse of natural order, presenting a world cold, dark, and barren of rejuvenation. Through the visions, Byron sketches humanity's fragile existence against climatic ruin.

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went-and came, and brought no
day. (Byron 468)

The concept of climatoglossia is interwoven in the poem, which is shaped by the catastrophic aftermath of the Tambora eruption through its climate-altered worldview that manifests via Byron's poetic diction. The line "The bright sun was extinguish'd" (Byron 468) vividly captures the literal obscuration of the sun caused by volcanic ash and aerosols released into the atmosphere following the eruption. These words evoke the darkening of the skies and the gloomy atmosphere characterizing the post-Tambora period. The phrase "icy earth" (468) relates to the drop in

temperature and the freezing conditions caused by reduced sunlight. Diction in the sentence "Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day" (468) greatly expresses the interruption of natural cycles, symbolizing the prolonged absence of sunlight, one important characteristic of the post-Tambora climate. This impact of the volcanic winter, the sun's inability to shine for life, and the stability of climate plunged the entire earth into a period of trial and turmoil, influencing Byron's poetic diction in the "Darkness" (1816).

The line "The day drags through though storms keep out the sun" (Byron 225) from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III (1816) is again an illustration of climatoglossia where the words depict the atmospheric disturbances around Tambora days. The continuing storms hiding the sun directly allude to the aberrations of the "year without a summer" (1816). The recurring depiction of tumultuous weather in the poem illustrates the significant impact of climate disturbances on Byron's poetic language driven by Climatoglossia as a neurochemical stimulus that bridges environmental crises and creative expression.

In *Manfred* (1817) Byron portrays Mont Blanc as a bastion of nature's power, capable of destruction and demonstrates the relentless advance of the glacier that could threaten humanity. Phrases such as "Monarch of Mountains" (Byron 480) and "cloak of clouds" (480) serve to animate the nature of that mountain as malign. The second spirit's words add to the feeling of destruction: the glacier, in its restless motions, becomes the embodiment of nature's unstoppable might. Byron describes an ominous vision of the climate identical to post-Tambora cooling.

The Glacier's cold and restless mass
Moves onward day by day,
But I am he who bids it pass,

Or with its ice delay. (Byron 480)

The first line of the stanza is deeply climatoglossic, summoning the dire nature of the unseasonal cold accompanying the year without a summer (1816). Byron's use of the word "restless" indicates the ceaselessly disturbing nature of this climatic disruption. It means the malignant weather is not only constricting but also unpredictable, an unbroken, and merciless force. This restlessness surely expresses Byron's dawning anxiety of that unnatural cold, viewed as possibly heralding a disaster. The anxiety in "The Glacier's cold and restless mass / Moves onward day by day" (Byron 480) turns the diction climatoglossic as it illustrates the chilling image of the climatic condition which makes the poet see the chilling image of the glacier as cruel and powerful climatic shift which is also an existential threat to humanity.

P. B. Shelley's "Mont Blanc" (1817) illustrates the psychological imprint of the climate after the Tambora eruption. The line "The glaciers creep / Like snakes that watch their prey" (Shelley 530) creates a chilling, almost predatory vision of climate in a manner that epitomizes the overpowering force of nature following the event of the eruption.

Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far
fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power.
(Shelley 530)

The juxtaposition with the snake underscores the sense of danger, reflecting the fears and upheavals after climate disturbances. The last line adds another layer of contradiction: whilst the frost is a cold and indifferent force of nature that would preserve the cycle of life in its rigid grasp, the sun casts its scornful, dry glare upon the world, ironically accentuating the agonizingly paradoxical climatic and

weather changes following Tambora. The realistic representation of the climatic conditions makes this stanza epitomize climatoglossia in its unique convergence of the physical effects of environmental calamity on poetic language.

A similar reference to the movement of glaciers is made in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), composed between 1818-1819: "The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears" (Shelley 205), further demonstrating the enduring influence of the catastrophic climate on his poetic diction. This climatoglossic verse is indicative of the post-Tambora climate as a neurochemical stimulus imparting a lasting impact on Shelley's creativity. It is an allusion that reinforces the linguistic preoccupation with the relentless forces of nature, symbolizing the persistent aftermath of the Tambora eruption.

While the second stanza of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" (1817) delves into the transcendently ephemeral force fostering human consciousness, marking a step towards creative and philosophical illumination, the poem, composed in the summer of 1816, does indeed invite a fresh reinterpretation through the lens of the climatoglossia. Select words and sentences within the poem resonate intriguingly with the chaotic post-Tambora climatic conditions of the time, embedding within the verse an undercurrent of atmospheric dissonance.

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river.
(Shelley 526)

From a climatoglossic perspective, this stanza reflects the neurochemical and linguistic imprint of the Tambora eruption on Shelley's poetic diction. The

transient presence of the Spirit of Beauty reinterpreted as the sun, which shines to provide life to all living entities, is identical to the declining sunshine during the “Year Without a Summer,” due to aberrant atmospheric conditions. The “dim vast vale of tears” (Shelley 526) resonates with the desolate climate after the eruption, while the description of the sunlight not weaving rainbows across the mountains: “Ask why the sunlight not for ever” (526) relates again to the darkened climatic conditions of the post-Tambora period.

Conclusion

Thus, this research reveals the significant influence of the Tambora eruption on the poetic diction of Lord Byron and P. B. Shelley. Through the framework of Climatoglossia, it illustrates the apocalyptic linguistic register and destabilized diction of their post-Tambora works exhibiting intense environmental anxiety and incorporating realistic allusions to the climate they directly witnessed across Europe. Their poetry is characterized by a glossary of heightened intensity in word choice that mirrors the environmental chaos with a sense of instability and unease reflecting the broader climatic turmoil. By resetting the stage for the romantic sublime, their poetry foresaw climatic concerns, embodying a proto-ecological consciousness.

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ECOFEMINIST STUDY OF CITY OF REFUGE BY STARHAWK'S *CITY OF REFUGE*

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Abstract

The world is today a number of challenges like ecological crisis and discrimination against women and marginalized groups. The term eco-feminism connects these two very crucial and inseparable parts of human life: women and nature. The term foregrounds how nature and women are exploited and degraded by patriarchy and scientific-industrial development. This research paper studies how eco-feminism can be used to examine emerging problems of exploitation of environment and women City of Refuge. While industrial development has been beneficial to the some people, a majority of the people have to suffer much due to its harsh effect on their daily life and environment. According to ecofeminists women suffer acutely due to climate change and environmental degradation. This research paper examines how Starhawk has handled and treated women and nature, especially its elements soil, earth, water and fire. It also appeals the human beings to adopt sustainable living to save our mother earth. It's time to express our kindness, love and affection to our nurturing phenomenon, 'women' and 'nature', without both of who it's impossible to survive on the earth.

Keywords: eco-feminism, environment, sustainable development, environmental degradation, social injustice.

Introduction

The term ecofeminism is an amalgam of two terms 'feminism' and 'ecocriticism'. The term was coined by Francoise d'Eubonne, the French writer, in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (1974). Ecofeminist thinkers believe that women and nature are exploited in similar ways by patriarchy, modern science and western industrialization. They assert that women and nature are connected deeply in multiple ways: both are life-givers and both are taken for granted and exploited by society and patriarchy. There are many subbranches of ecofeminism such as spiritual ecofeminism, vegetarian ecofeminism, materialist ecofeminism, cultural ecofeminism etc.

City of Refuge was written by American author Starhawk in 2016. Starhawk is a renowned ecofeminist writer and author. She has written around thirteen books on different subjects like ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, paganism,

witchcraft, permaculture along with some non-fictional topics. Born on 17th June 1951, Starhawk's real name was Miriam Simon. She believes that women and nature are life-givers to humans and that patriarchy has destroyed both of them. She advocates maintaining a healthy relationship with nature and its elements *Mind Body Spirit*, a magazine, listed her as one of the 100 Most Spiritually Influential Living People.

Eco-Feminist Concerns in *City of Refuge*

City of Refuge is a sequel of Starhawk's novel *The Fifth Sacred Thing*. *The Fifth Sacred Thing* ends with Maya, Madrone and Bird having defeated the Stewards army with the help of other city dwellers and having sent them back to the south. However, the invasion of the Steward army had splintered the whole city. The people of North had defeated them in that battle; however, they know if they don't liberate

southland from the Stewards, the Stewards army will be back again soon. Hence, Madrone and Bird have decided to liberate south part of California. The Angel City suffers from severe droughts, water, air and soil pollution and drastic destruction. To fight against Stewards army, Madrone and Bird formed an army led by River. In the south while their army strides on the steward's army, Madrone and Bird undertake other tasks such as camps and healing centers.

People of Angel City had lost hope of having a new life. They are completely under the constant threat of Stewards, living an unhygienic and unhealthy life. Madrone and Bird can be said to be embodiments of real-life environmentalists and nature-lovers who are involved in activism in an attempt to make a positive environmental impact. Throughout the novel they emerge as the real heroes and teach many lessons to live healthy and sustainable life.

The novel opens with a picture of destruction in Angel City. The last invasion of Stewards has damaged the whole city and shattered the life of its inhabitants. Trees are torn apart, gardens are completely ruined, roads and highways are damaged, sacred groves are collapsed, and many people are beaten badly as they near death. Stewards had enslaved people and made them toil hard to live their own lives of leisure. They had also built breeding centers where they bred humans and used them against the city people. The people created at the breeding centre are called 'Sojuhs' in the novel. Almost all of them look alike with pale skin and blond hair. This Sojuhs are trained and programmed to perform particular tasks such as to serve the Stewards army, harass city dwellers and to produce more humans like them. The Stewards army enslaved women, raped and used them as machines for human reproduction.

These girls are named as 'pen-girls' in the novel. Stewards used these pen-girls to breed in their breeding center. They make them pregnant and after delivery they don't give the child to their mother. They also forced pen-girls to serve the Stewards army men in the camp.

The people of the city employed ecofriendly methods for renovation and rebuilding in order to preserve the environment. Sea walls were made from recycled concrete and layered with 'turf'. After the destruction of the Stewards army, the pen-girls were freed. Another great work performed by city dwellers was to include pen-girls into their society, give them respect, appropriate works and jobs which they deserved. Madrone took all the pen-girls from the Stewards' barrack to the city's shelter house. Pen-girls were taught and given practice in yoga in the shelter house. They are also given self-care classes. Madrone organised an honoring ceremony for them so that they feel confident and stand with pride in society.

Then Bird and Madrone make a trek to Angel City. This was done at night so that they could not be visible. Then they visited the university, hospitals and research center of bio-weapons. They met their old friend Beth who was a doctor but Steward banned lady doctors in the city so now she has a small center of nursing students. Bird suggests that Beth grow her own backyard garden of vegetables and herbs. However, Beth replied that they didnot have enough water for gardening.. Bird provides a solution to use the greywater from shower and laundry. A practical solution provided to save water such as washing utensils with sand and water.

There were similar practices in the olden days when charcoal powder and coconut fiber were used to clean utensils. Now, these eco-friendly items have been replaced with toxic and non-biodegradable plastic scrubbers. Coconut can be eaten and then its

fiber used for cleaning. After it decays, it can be used as fertilizer. Modernization has destroyed this connection we have with the natural world.

Water is essential for any developmental task. However, it was not easy to get water in the south. The Stewards had already levied taxes on water so they could not easily utilize water from Beth's house. For plantation and farming they needed water in huge amount. Therefore the very first challenge for Bird and Madrone was to search for pure water. Bird knew some hidden underground springs. After some days' hard work emerged successful and finally got underground pipelines. But those pipe lines were too deep inside. At first Bird goes underground with the help of the rope which is held by Madrone at ground level. Initially, they hardly get five jugs of water as both of them were tired and in pain. This entire mission was performed at the night in the advantage of darkness. This incident reflects current world's condition where to get pure and fresh water to drink is very tough in many areas.

Gradually, Bird and Madrone started to build their Refuge. They began by giving practical education to children like plantation, light up the fire, paddle canoe etc. They give training for diving, fitness, pool practice etc. They start to make solar equipment for cooking, energy, electricity etc. from old waste materials got from the wrecked buildings. They toast their breads on the tiny toaster oven which works on the electricity generated from the gentle wind by the wind reeds on the roof.

Another challenging task for them was to make the soil fertile. As they see the condition of soil in the farms, they were horrified by see the condition of the Earth. They concluded that it was not a soil but it was a desert of toxic chemicals which goes deeper into the earth and had made it poisonous. It was because of the constant war, nuclear attack, use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Experts gave them hope

that it was not a hopeless task to grow crop but the soil needed almost five years to heal and recover. First of all they need to plough all the upper part of the soil and discard it. Then they need microorganisms and bio brews to infuse in the soil to transform organic matter into the plants. They also had to breed and feed worms, mealy bugs and pollinators. They started farming with growing plants which grew quickly like acacias and Siberian pea shrub. Making natural compost fertilizer in bulk was another big challenge. As the condition of soil and the amount of crops they want to grow will demand more and more fertilizer. Only their kitchen would not be enough to make huge amount of compost and hence they used old papers, dead leaves, old cloth shopping bags, paper's scrap but still they need more and more kitchen waste to make it richer in nutrients. They also needed more hands to work more in field and farms. Bird had a brilliant solution and he began trading waste instead of kitchen waste and other garbage accepts plastic. He went door to door and sales waste and in back he takes garbage. City people believed he was a fool. When they asked him what will you do with the garbage, he replied, "I'm a magician—I turn garbage into gold.....And what do I want? Only your garbage. No plastic please! Just anything that was once alive, or is made from something once alive without too many steps in between" (Starhawk 280).

They also started to trade herbs, green vegetables and Fruits and the diet of the people of the Angel city also improved in time. The war and the Stewards' dictatorship meant that Angel City didn't have organic food. The Stewards had started factories of packaged food and processed food and cut short the supplies of vegetables, fruits and grains to the city people to make more and more profit in their business.

Slowly and steadily, Angel City becomes economically strong. The cattle had full large fields of fresh and organic grass to gaze. People made houses from clay, straws and woods to keep the inner environment cool rather than from concrete and cement.

Finally, the day came when the refugee camp was ready to open for everyone. It was given the name 'Welcome Plaza'. It was thoroughly planted with lavish bright and colourful plants. Nasturtium was planted on the foot path whereas jasmine was planted on the north facing wall which spread sweet scent to people who pass over from there. The place was filled with herbs, spices and plants such as rosemary, sages and lavender that require less water. Bees come down there from the hills and forest to fill their hives. Plaza is, now, fully flourished with health and abundance. As by further go inside the plaza there is another inner plaza where other plants like quinoa, beans and chia were grown. There was a continuous supply of water that provided a soothing and refreshing sound. At the center of the plaza was a huge kitchen where meals were constantly being prepared for the city's residents. To ensure efficient operation, the kitchen has established a cooking schedule for the chefs. Cafés have also begun to open in the city, serving customers even during late-night hours. Madrone felt proud and contented as her dream finally came true

true after facing so many challenges and hurdles. She experiences the same fulfilment a mother feels while watching her children grow from childhood to adulthood, realising her vision of success for them.

To conclude, *City of Refuge* reflects the theme of ecofeminism. It promotes the same ideology of ecofeminism and encourages a sustainable lifestyle that helps to save nature and empower women.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL ECOCRITICISM IN *THE FOLK OF THE AIR* SERIES BY HOLLY BLACK

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Abstract

This research examines the interconnectedness of nature and humans in Holly Black's *The Folk of the Air* series, through the lens of Psychological Ecocriticism. The Faerie world is presented as a reflective space that mirrors the emotions of the characters who face internal conflicts and societal struggles. Jude Duarte, the female protagonist and a mortal in the Elfame faces various discrimination and pressure to live among the deceptive Fae creatures. Ecocriticism not only lays emphasis on the harmony of humanity and nature but also talks about the destruction inflicted upon nature by the changes which takes place in the present times. This paper explores the exploitation of nature, reflecting the moral decay among the presumptuous Faeries, while the restoration of nature resembles the emotional resolution. The study further delves into understanding how these emotions manifest and reflect on the environment. This research uses the eco-critical approach of Simon C. Estok to understand the entwined relationship between nature and the human psyche.

Keywords: ecocriticism, psychological ecocriticism, uncanny, nature, environment, ecological responsiveness.

Introduction

Ecocriticism, as a literary theory, investigates the intricate balance between literature and Environment. It emphasizes humanity's interdependence with nature. As Simon C. Estok notes, "The environment is a reflection of humanity's psychic and physical state" (109). In Holly Black's *The Folk of the Air* series, the Faerie world named Elfame serves as a fantastical setting and as an active participant in the narrative. The magical landscapes of Elfame and ecological responsiveness of the space echo the psychological and moral struggles of characters such as Jude Duarte and Cardan Greenbriar.

This paper delves into a psychological eco-critical lens, exploring how the Faerie world externalizes the internal struggles of its inhabitants. The theories by Estok, Timothy Morton's Ecological

Entanglement, and Sigmund Freud's concept of the Uncanny, aid in analyzing how the exploitation of Elfame's environment parallels the characters' inner conflicts and moral decay. Additionally, these frameworks highlight the intricate interconnectedness of life and ecology, emphasizing the importance of balance for achieving harmony.

Material and Methods

The primary texts for the analysis include *The Cruel Prince*, *The Wicked King*, and *The Queen of Nothing* by Holly Black. The texts describe the Faerie world's interaction with the characters and their responsiveness to their actions. This study employs psychological ecocriticism as its framework, emphasizing the interconnectedness of ecology and the human psyche. This analysis relies on Simon C.

Estok's notion of landscapes as psychic mirrors. Ecophobia, a term coined by Estok is a condition that exists on a spectrum and can embody fear, contempt, indifference, or lack of mindfulness towards the natural environment. Morton's ecological thought and Freud's theory of the uncanny substantiate in understanding how Elfame's sentient environment reflects and influences the emotional and moral dynamics of the characters.

Findings and Results

The findings reveal that the Faerie world in *The Folk of the Air* series functions as a dynamic force intertwined with the characters' personal and societal struggles. The Faerie environment reflects the psychological turmoil of its inhabitants. During the protagonists' times of crisis, the unconscious reaction is to help the High King, Carden Greenbriar, and the High Queen, Jude Duarte. When Madoc stabs Jude Duarte, the earth heals her. "Pack the wound with earth and leaves and then stitch it.... the High King is tied to the land, how Carden had to draw on it to heal himself. I remember she made him take a mouthful of clay" (Black, *The Queen of Nothing* 134-35). Similarly, the ecology shifts to protect Jude on the command of the High King. "...the brugh itself closed around us. Doorways cracked and shrank. Vines and roots and leaves obstructed our way, closed like vises on our necks, crushed and strangled us" (76). This states the deep connection and entanglement of the characters with nature. During oppressive times, nature renders a protective barrier, helping the characters in crisis. "The king is tied to the land...cursing the king means cursing the land itself" (231). This shows the symbiotic relationship between the ruler and the land, indicating that the health of the environment is directly linked to the leadership.

Alternatively, when the characters are in an emotional turmoil and make rash decisions, nature

shows signs of its disapproval. "I look out at the waves all around us, the expanse of ocean in every direction with its constant, restless, white-tipped waves" (Black, *Wicked King* 276). This anomaly in the sea's agitation mirrors the external conflicts, highlighting the delicate balance of the ecosystem and human psyche. The exploitation of Elfame's natural world is parallel to the moral and societal decay. Polluted rivers, decaying gardens, and uneasy landscapes symbolize the consequences of greed and betrayal. The restoration of ecological harmony often coincides with emotional or moral growth. For example, the renewal of the High Court's gardens mirrors the resolution of Jude and Cardan's complex relationship.

Interpretation and Discussion

Holly Black's portrayal of the Faerie world exemplifies the symbiosis between human emotions and the natural environment. As Timothy Morton posits in *The Ecological Thought*, "Nature is not something out there; it is intimately connected to us." This concept is vividly illustrated in the series, where the land's sentience is inseparable from its rulers' emotional and moral states.

Jude Duarte, a mortal striving for power in Elfame, experiences the environment as both ally and adversary. The writhing roots and darkened waters symbolize her internal struggles, particularly her conflicting desires for belonging and dominance. Similarly, Cardan's transformation from a reluctant, hedonistic ruler to a compassionate king is paralleled by the land's shift from chaos to stability.

Simon C. Estok's theory states that landscapes serve as psychic mirrors. It provides a critical framework for understanding these dynamics. For instance, the polluted rivers in *The Cruel Prince* symbolize not only ecological degradation but also the moral corruption of Elfame's court. Similarly, the

uncanny beauty of the Faerie realm, described by Freud as simultaneously alluring and repelling, underscores the duality of nature as both nurturing and dangerous.

The series also critiques the exploitation of natural resources. For example, the descriptions of decaying gardens and uneasy landscapes suggest the consequences of unchecked greed and deception. However, ecological renewal often signals emotional and societal healing, reinforcing the idea that environmental and psychological health are deeply interconnected.

Conclusion

The Folk of the Air series by Holly Black offers a compelling exploration of eco-critical themes, particularly through the lens of psychological ecocriticism. The Faerie world's sentient landscapes not only mirror the characters' inner conflicts but also actively shape the narrative. The sons of the previous High King murdering their kin for the land and throne shows the immeasurable power the land holds and the greed for attaining it. By highlighting the consequences of ecological exploitation and the potential for harmony, Black emphasizes the

interdependence of nature, morality, and personal growth. This study underscores the importance of understanding the interplay between environmental and emotional elements in literature, encouraging further exploration of eco-critical themes in contemporary fantasy fiction.

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AN ANTHROPOGENIC READING OF *RIVER OF SMOKE* BY AMITAV GHOSH

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Abstract

The Anthropocene marks a significant stage in the geological history of planet earth. The current research paper seeks to explore the human influence with special focus on oceanic ecosystem. The focus from land to water has gained momentum in recent years with the emergence of Blue Humanities. The current research is one such attempt to examine how man commercializes nature and its resources for his profit and exploits natural resources leading to the degradation of life at sea. Colonialism as the mother of all disasters becomes the key focus of the study which unfolds how colonialism is not simply about colonization of land but is more about the colonization of the minds as observed by post-colonial critique Ashish Nandy. The paper further delves into depicting how human activities have a huge impact on the destruction of the marine ecosystem. The research will explore environmental crisis through the lens of imperialism, colonial trade, and globalization. The novel "River of Smoke" explores how the colonial trade of opium had increased revenues through the colonies and had utilized the sea routes for trade and hence act as the prime agents of ecological destruction. This research paper goes further to analyse the effects of colonial ways of thinking and life style that had resulted in species loss, habitat destruction and climate injustice.

Keywords: colonial trade, oceanic degradation, ecological impact, imperialism, Anthropocene

Introduction to Eco criticism

Ecocriticism was formally recognized with the release of two foundational texts in the mid-1990s: *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell. Initially, the scope of Ecocriticism was quite narrow, concentrating solely on Nature writing. It became more established within the literary community, Ecocriticism expanded to encompass a diverse range of methodologies and topics.

"Under this broad and umbrella term environmental literature, nature writing, deep ecology, the ecology of cities, the literature of toxicity, environmental justice, bioregionalism, the lives of animals, the revaluation of place,

interdisciplinary eco-theory has been added" (Sumathy 3).

Ecocriticism encompasses a wide range of perspectives and is referred to by various terms, including Green Cultural Studies, Ecopoetics, and Environmental Literary Criticism. The fundamental principle uniting all these approaches is the belief that the relationship between humans and their natural surroundings can contribute to addressing the ecological crisis.

The origin of the term "Ecology" (from oikos and logos) indicates it as the study of household science. Selvamony states that "the oikos integrates the natural, the cultural and the sacred" (314). Consequently, ecology should not be viewed merely

as a binary interaction between an organism and its environment; rather, it encompasses the intricate relationships among the environment, society, and the individual. Analysing a text through the lens of these three elements is referred to as Oikocriticism—Ecocriticism or Oikopoetics—Ecopoetics. The term Ecocriticism is derived from the Greek words "oikos," meaning household, and "kritis," meaning judge, which refers to "an arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order" (Howarth 69). Glotfelty provides a definition of Ecocriticism as follows:

Simply put, 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-centered approach to literary studies. (xviii)

Today ecocriticism has become a widening arena. Various writers and scholars have come up with diverse perspectives. In *The Song of the Earth* (2000), Jonathan Bate contemplates essential inquiries regarding the role of literary criticism amid an environmental crisis. Bate posits that the primary objective of literature is to influence human consciousness. He asserts that nature is our dwelling place and ecosystem is a part of humanity.

Glen A. Love in his book *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology and the Environment* (2003) *Ecocriticism*, encompasses non-human as well as human contexts and considerations. He emphasizes to engage with literature by adopting a renewed sensitivity to the emerging voice of nature. He asserts that this voice can solely be articulated in literature through human depictions of non-human entities and environments. Additionally, he emphasizes Ecocriticism as a diverse and multifaceted approach.

A Brief Survey of Ecocriticism in India

India is a country known for its vast and varied ecosystems. In Indian culture, nature has been revered and worshipped for centuries, with many plants and animals considered sacred and integral to traditional practices, such as Ayurveda, which utilizes medicinal herbs and plants to heal and balance the body. Indians have a deep reverence for the natural world and emphasize living in harmony with nature. This is reflected in Indian Writing in English as well.

Classic Indian fables like the Panchatantra and the Jataka tales, as well as the writings of often feature nature as a central theme, emphasizing its wisdom, symbolism, and interconnectedness with human life. These stories and poems frequently use natural imagery to convey moral lessons, and by personifying nature, they encourage readers to develop a deeper appreciation and respect for the natural world.

The uniqueness of Indian literature in English lies in exploring the intricate relationship between man and nature. This is predominantly seen in the works of prominent writers such as Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Ruskin Bond, and Kiran Desai. These authors have skillfully woven the Indian landscape, culture, and traditions into their narratives, often using nature as a backdrop to delve into the human condition, spirituality, and the complexities of Indian society, thereby creating a distinct and rich literary heritage that reflects the country's diverse cultural and environmental tapestry.

Amitav Ghosh is no exception. A highly regarded author, Ghosh was born on July 11, 1956, in Kolkata and spent his formative years in India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. His educational journey took him through institutions in Delhi, Oxford, and Alexandria.

Ghosh's literary contributions include notable titles such as *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines*, *In an Antique Land*, *Dancing in Cambodia*, *The*

Calcutta Chromosome, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide*, and *The Ibis Trilogy*. *The Ibis Trilogy* comprises *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire*. His non-fiction work, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, was published in 2016 and received the inaugural Utah Award for Environmental Humanities in 2018.

The Circle of Reason earned the Prix Médicis in France in 1990, while *The Shadow Lines* was honored with both the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Ananda Puraskar. *The Calcutta Chromosome* was the recipient of the Arthur C. Clarke Award in 1997, and *The Glass Palace* won the International e-Book Award at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2001. In January 2005, *The Hungry Tide* was awarded the Crossword Book Prize, a prestigious Indian accolade. His novel *Sea of Poppies*, published in 2008, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize that same year and also received the Crossword Book Prize and the India Plaza Golden Quill Award.

Amitav Ghosh stands out as a prominent contemporary postcolonial author, with his works frequently examined as examples of Postmodern and Postcolonial literature. He also focuses on environmental issues throughout his oeuvre. Ghosh's ecocentric perspective is apparent as he perceives the world as an intricate, interconnected entity. He is among the few Indian authors writing in English who intricately weaves together elements of legend, experience, myth, and history to portray nature in his fictional narratives.

Ghosh's novels break the confines of time and space, illustrating the historical transformations brought about by colonization. The impact of these transformations on both human and non-human realms, particularly regarding their interrelations, emerges as a recurring theme in his works. His writings explore grand themes such as travel and diaspora, history, memory, political conflict,

communal strife, as well as love and loss. The fusion of history and fiction, along with its implications for transcending temporal and geographical boundaries, invites a range of interdisciplinary interpretations of Ghosh's novels.

In Amitav Ghosh's works, elements of nature often serve as a backdrop to explore themes such as culture, history and human relationships besides allowing an exploration of environmental challenges. His works address several ecocritical issues. In his works he highlights ecological degradation, climate change, environmental issues. For instance, in *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*, Ghosh highlights the fragile ecosystem of the Sundarbans. *The Hungry Tide* delves into the intricate relationships among the state, marginalized communities, the diverse flora and fauna, and the surrounding environment, thereby exposing the tragic irony inherent in the conservation efforts within the Sundarbans. The Sundarbans serve as a backdrop where the perpetual clash between land and sea creates ongoing challenges for both plant and animal life. The disturbances within the natural ecosystem are exacerbated by humanity's relentless encroachment. Set in the captivating and picturesque Sundarbans, *The Hungry Tide* portrays a life marked by unpredictability and instability for its inhabitants. The threat of tiger attacks looms large, while unrest and the risk of eviction are ever-present. Tidal floods can disrupt the delicate balance of island life without warning. Ghosh's narrative frequently reflects on the struggle between humans and nature against the backdrop of the Sundarbans, which straddles Bangladesh and India. The Tide Country is depicted as a perilous environment, rife with danger and various forms of mortality. The inhospitable nature of the landscape, along with its capacity to challenge and eliminate human presence, remains an undeniable reality.

Further the novel also explores how colonial exploitation has led to environmental deterioration. This is seen in his novels such as *The Glass Palace* and the Ibis Trilogy, which consists of *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, *Flood of Fire*.

The River of Smoke is the second volume of Amitav Ghosh Ibis trilogy. The novel is divided into three parts – “Islands”, “Canton” and “Commissioner Lin”. When the novel begins, the three ships *Redruth*, *Anahita* and *Ibis* run into a raging storm off the coast of Canton, the Chinese port city. The owner of the ship *Anahita* is Bahram Moddie who is a Parsi Opium trader of Bombay and son in law of Rustamji Mistrie. The ship *Redruth* is owned by Fitcher Penrose who is on an expedition to collect rare species of plants from China. From the previous trilogy is the ship *Ibis*, which is carrying convicts and indentured labourers to Mauritius. On board the of *Ibis* ship are two convicts namely Neel Ratan, a Bengali Zamindar, and Ah Fatt, a criminal from Canton who is half-Chinese and half-Parsi, addicted to opium and the only son of Bahram Moddie. Both escape from the ship along with many lascars.

As Steve Mentz explains, the sea is inextricably linked to the human sphere “because of its metaphorical vastness [that] constructs an allegory for literary history and literary culture on a global, connected scale” (“A Poetics of Planetary Water” 140). In the first part of the novel the sea plays a crucial role to disrupt the smooth course of the sailing ship and to change the fate of the characters, The sea acts as a crucial link between natural and the human world. The ship *Ibis* is on its way transporting coolies and opium to Mauritius. While the storm raging over the ship it provides an opportunity to fugitives such as *Neel*, Ah Fatt, Serang Ali and Kalua to escape from the *ibis* through the lifeboats and to reach the other islands. Thus, it changes their destiny.

The fugitives from the *Ibis* ship successfully navigate their way to the Great Nicobar Island, where Serang Ali provides them with insights regarding the mesmerizing flock of birds that gracefully wheel and soar through the sky. The natural environment, encompassing land, water, and the diverse flora and fauna, has consistently bestowed upon humanity a vast array of resources. However, this bounty is often met with exploitation by mankind. A pertinent example of this is the hinlene, a species of bird indigenous to the Great Nicobar and which the local revere and protect. For the islanders, these birds represent a signific. In stark contrast, outsiders engage in the unethical practice of stealing and selling the birds' nests, which not only disrupts the birds' natural habitat but also poses a serious threat to their survival, potentially driving the species toward extinction. This situation illustrates how the sea serves as a vital link between the natural world and human activities, highlighting the intricate relationship between the two realms.

The same storm played a significant role in the life of Deeti and Neel. Ghosh uses the characters such as Neel and Deeti to describe the destructive and regenerative forces of the sea. The image that Neel conjure of the storm and its yes after reading from the journal was “... of a gigantic oculus, at the far end of a great, spinning telescope, examining everything it passed over, upending some things, and leaving others unscathed; looking for new possibilities, creating” (*River of Smoke* 20).

It is the storm that links all the legendary ships that are sailing. The legendary ships such as *Ibis*, *Red Rovers*, *Seawitch*, *Anahita* are opium -loaded ships. British, American and Indian ships used sea route for exporting opium. The ship *Redruth* was used for transporting plant specimen by Mr. Fitcher Penrose. Thus, man was dependent on the sea for their profit and livelihood. From the perspective of the

merchants and traders, such as Bahram Moddie, Mr. Fitcher Penrose the sea served as a crucial link to connect various geographical regions especially with regard to opium trade.

The ship *Anahita* was struck by the same storm when it was less than a hundred miles west of Nicobar Island. *Anahita* was a Bombay-built vessel which was known for its sleekness and elegance. The ship's cargo was entirely filled with opium. Due to the storm hundreds of chests broke loose, that the contents of opium in the earthenware containers were spilled. The opium got dissolved into the sea water. This leads to oceanic degradation. Bahram faces a huge loss of opium; the figurehead of the ship was ripped off. Thus, nature is seen as the powerful force and the destructive nature of the sea is reflected in the novel. From this incident one can learn a profound lesson that man can never dominate nature. Man should follow the laws of nature and learn to live in harmony with nature. In this way the ocean resists the human control.

The second part of the novel revolves around the central character Seth Bahram Modi, an Indian opium trader is striving to rival British merchants. His fortune making depends on the sea voyages at Canton and Fanqui Town; both these towns are known for international trade of opium and for British imperialism.

With his cargo of opium hidden in his ship, he waits for the right opportunity to sell the opium in the Chinese markets. He himself with foreign interests, he adopts a new identity: Barry Moddie, characterized as "confident, forceful, gregarious, hospitable, boisterous, and enormously successful" (*River of Smoke* 125). He represents one of the many traders benefiting from British imperialism. For him, "opium is like the wind or the tides: it is outside my power to affect its course. A man is neither good nor evil because he sails upon the wind. It is his conduct

towards those around him—his friends, his family, his servants—by which he must be judged. This is the creed I live by" (*River of Smoke* 105).

Bahram is depicted as a businessman of "exceptional ability and vision...a kind of genius," (*River of Smoke* 224) a self-made entrepreneur who confidently interacts with British traders as an equal. It is through allies like Bahram that the East India Company was able to thrive in the opium trade, initially targeting the leisure class and gradually ensnaring the entire Chinese populace in addiction, which "is such a thing that once people start using...they can't stop; the market just gets larger and larger" (*River of Smoke* 90).

Bahram suffers significant financial losses due to a storm at sea that damages both his ship and its substantial cargo of opium. The strategic decision by British traders to relinquish their opium stock dealt a devastating blow to his aspirations. He is confronted with an arrest warrant and faces scrutiny throughout Canton, exacerbating his predicament: "Everywhere he looked, eyes seemed to be following him; despite his efforts to walk quickly, the two-minute journey felt like an hour" (*River of Smoke* 494). Bahram, who claimed to be "the most loyal of the Queen's subjects" (*River of Smoke* 453), is engulfed by a profound sense of betrayal, leading him to perceive his reality as an illusion (*River of Smoke* 518). Characters such as Burnham, Jardine, and Dent symbolize the white exploiters with whom Bahram had aligned himself. He comes to regret this alliance when he ultimately faces betrayal. As his debts mount and his hopes for a desired future fade, his character takes on a tragic dimension, retreating into a private world filled with memories of lost love and thoughts of suicide by the River Pearl. Bahram recognizes himself as a mere pawn in the hands of colonial authority, left with nothing in the end.

The ocean has served as the backdrop for imperial conquest and colonial adventure. From the perspective of colonizer, the sea was a means to explore the unexplored land and to assert their marine dominance. Carl Trocki in *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy* posits that “the British empire, the opium trade and the rise of global capitalism all occurred together” (“Transoceanic Perspectives in Amitav Ghosh’s Ibis Trilogy” 112)

As seen in the novel, the Cantonese outpost is populated with traders of the British East India Company. It is surrounded by flotilla of boats that ferry smuggles goods also serve as eating and pleasure house. British forces are stationed outside Canton, In this way they create a market for opium in China. In the name of free trade but their intention was to invite the armed intervention of none other than Her Majesty’s government. This free trade emerges as an imperialist strategy employed by European powers and Chinese merchants in the novel. Free trade becomes a convenient justification for the British to exploit China economically, spreading opium to the masses and draining China’s wealth.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century ocean was instrumental not only for expedition of the unexplored lands, but also for circulation of goods, transportation of slaves and forced migration. This has led to formation of multi-cultural society. Amitav Ghosh describes transoceanic voyages which leads to migration of people on large scale. This is seen in Fanqui-Town which dissolves national and ethnic parameters. Fanqui-Town has many of its inhabitants from India. They come from disparate places in the Indian subcontinent such as Sindh, Goa, Bombay, Malabar, Madras, Coringa, Calcutta or Sylhet.

It is through the narrative of Robin Chinnery’s letter to his childhood friend Paulette that the multi-cultural social life of Canton is revealed. In Fanqui

town, Canton there are innumerable people whose livelihood depended on boats, and fishing. Thus, they rely on the precarious life in marine ecosystems. There are frequent ferries from Whampoa to Canton. This again points out that people depend on nature for their livelihood. The river is the greatest of Canton’s Suburbs. The boats are so numerous that they are moored along the water’s edge that one cannot see water beneath. From this one can infer that the inhabitants of Fanqui town, Canton rely on the marine ecosystem for their livelihood. Here the sea acts as a resource provider.

Robin uses the imagery of ocean to describe the Fanqui town. He mentions: “...In a way Fanqui-town is like a ship at sea, with hundreds – no, thousands – of men living crammed together in a little sliver of a space” (*River of Smoke* 185).

Neel points out that the drug opium comes from India, the opium trade was in the hands of the Britishers. Under the hands of imperialism peasants in India are forced to grow it and Chines buy it. It was the British who started sending opium to China. If Indian merchant traders refused to do opium trade, the British and the Americans would ensure that opium continued to pour in since they earned a huge revenue from the opium trade. For purposes of trading opium and flowers, sea routes were used. Often, seas were used to smuggle opium, thus allowing the opium trade to thrive in China.

Further Ghosh points out the impact of Anthropocene activities on the river. Most of the factories in Fanqui town, including the British factory along with twelve other factories are situated near by the riverbanks. The creek factory was the last building on the side of the Fanqui town. The creek factory had close proximity to the water. According to the novelist this was the greatest advantage to them since the creek factory discharged the factory waste

along with the waste generated by the people living in the city. Ghosh points out

...The so called creek, from which the factory took its name, was really just a nullah- a combination of open sewer and tidal stream. The nullah was one of the principal conduits for the city refuse, and at low tide, when it shrank to a trickle and its bank was exposed to plain view, a more noxious sight was hard to imagine. The tides would often deposit the carcasses of dogs and piglets in the refuse clogged mud there they would lie, buzzing with flies and creating a vomit-inducing stench until they swelled up and exploded. (*River of Smoke* 318)

From the above paragraph one can infer that the release of industrial waste into water bodies contaminates natural sources of pure water, posing significant environmental and public health risks. Harmful chemicals and heavy metals can lead to the degradation of water quality, destruction of habitats, and bioaccumulation in fish and other wildlife. This diminishes biodiversity.

Through Zadig, Robin learns about the condition of the pearl river. The water in the pearl river was clear and opaque. Once a careless jewel merchant from across the sea had carelessly dropped the best of the pearls into the river. The Pearl did not disappear. It lay at the bottom glowing like a lantern. Zadig tells to Robin "...Now you have seen how muddy the water is? How quickly things disappear?" (*River of Smoke*, 378). This narrative is a hint to suggest man's exploitation of the natural resource and man has polluted the water resources.

At the end of the novel, the ocean is seen as a battlefield creating the geopolitical tensions and conflicts of the era. It embodies the struggle for dominance over trade routes, particularly with the opium trade that fuels competition between British

and Chinese interests. When China decides to put an end to opium trade. When China decides to resist the imperial authority through the character Lin Zexu. Naval encounters and the threat of piracy create an atmosphere of conflict, highlighting the ocean's role as a site not just for commerce but also for confrontations over power and control. Through vivid descriptions of maritime disputes and the experiences of seafarers, Ghosh illustrates how the ocean becomes a stage for imperial aspirations and the violent repercussions of colonial ambitions.

Ecological imperialism is also seen in the novel. Amitav Ghosh uses the character of Fitcher Penrose to depict ecological imperialism. Martin Rix in his book *The Golden Age of Botanical Art* mentions that between 960 and 1279 AD the Chinese were forerunners of in plant and animal portraiture during the reign of the song dynasty. Amitav Ghosh also portrays that the Chinese were far ahead in the field of horticulture. For instance, dwarfing was a Chinese gardening method which was popularized in Great Britain (Ghosh 99).

Brosch *Botanical Imperialism: The Stewardship of Plant Genetic Resources in the Third World* points out that the voyages of discovery and plant collecting went hand in hand. The pillaging of natural resources is also described in the novel. Other countries such as Holland, France and British were competing among themselves to possess Chinese rare and valuable flora. British naturalists like Joseph Bank, William Kerr, James Cunningham were sent to collect valuable trees and plants from China and transport them it through ship to England.

When British naturalists entered into China they started sending many plants specimen to England. As a result of which the Botanical and Horticultural Society in London prompted them to send more specimens and its illustrations. Therefore, the British naturalists had to seek Chinese artists to illustrate

plant species Many of the specimen were sent back to England along with its illustration.

...the celestials seemed to have a keen appreciation of the value of their natural endowment. Their gardeners and horticulturalist were among the most knowledgeable and skilful in the world, and they guarded their treasures with extraordinary vigilance: even toys and trinkets that satisfied natives elsewhere had no effect on them; even lavish bribes could not persuade them to yield their riches. (*River of Smoke* 101)

From the above passage one can recognise that British naturalists were keen to obtain Chinese knowledge and expertise in both horticulture and husbandry. China emerged as a repository of rich indigenous knowledge on gardening. Thus, the Chinese can be seen as conservationist of their botanical species, whereas European countries went on botanical expedition for commercialization. Through this the novelist depicts how nature resources are exploited for materialistic purposes.

One such example is Fitcher Penrose, who was a British naturalist. His greed and money-making instincts are seen in collecting rare flora and fauna from the colonies to sell them in the West. He considers China as a country "singularly blessed in its botanical riches, being endowed not only with some of the most beautiful and medicinally useful plants in existence, but also with many that were of immense commercial value" (*River of Smoke* 101). This ecological imperialism serves as exploitive system.

Penrose's ship the Redruth serves the purpose of ecological imperialism. His ship acts as a vehicle to conduct business to transport plants across the seas. He looks upon Nature as an "assortment of puzzles" which could provide him "rich sources of profit" (*River of Smoke* 79).

Robin Chinnery was entrusted by Fitcher Penrose with a quest to find Golden Camellia and its illustrator. In the eighteenth century a British Botanist named James Cunninghame visited China twice. During his first visit he spent most of his time in the port of Amoy. He finds out that the Chinese painters were skilled in realistic depiction of plants, flowers and trees. As a collector his aim was to amass seed and to assemble 'dried gardens'. He added 'painted garden' one of the illustrations of the Golden Camellia, were sent to England by William Kerr. The curator of Kew Gardens, Joseph Banks wants Mr. Fitcher Penrose to find the flower.

Mr. Fitcher Penrose's desire to possess Golden Camellia is revealed in the novel. From the camellia family had given to the world tea bush family, *Camellia sinensis*, which was already lucrative. Cunninghame had special interest in the flowers of camellias since he heard from the Chinese legend this plant could cure lung ailments and could turn white hairs into black, restore the suppleness of aged joints. He was very sure its value would be very high. The novel also reveals how the Chinese thwarted the European attempts to claim the Golden Camellia.

Ghosh depicts the multifaceted nature of the sea. The sea serves as a source of life and a site of conflict and disruption. The sea serves as a vital artery for trade and cultural exchange. The Anthropocene activities such as colonialism, Ecological imperialism, the opium trade, which led to ecological changes. Thus, the writer depicts the sea is not just a backdrop but a central character influencing the destinies of those who depend on it.

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ECOCRITICISM AND ANIMATION: IMPACT OF ANIMATION FILMS ON CHILDREN

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Abstract

Animation demonstrates exceptional connections with the eco-sensitivity of Ecocriticism because it influences child audiences through its cultural environmental investigations. Environmental concepts become easy for children to grasp due to the impact of animation storytelling through visual elements, it enhances the narrative by creating engaging and immersive experience for the audience. This research investigates how children experience environmental learning through animated movies which address environmental themes by measuring their development of nature knowledge and environmental empathy along with their comprehension of sustainability principles through examples like WALL-E, My Neighbor Totoro. The content analysis demonstrates that these stories both help children develop and inspire to care for the environment. Animation serves as a leading educational approach that supplies both entertainment and learning to teach younger audiences about defending their environment. The development of ecological awareness in children represents a fundamental requirement which will create a lasting foundation for sustainable living. Due to their creative visual techniques and interesting storytelling animated films demonstrate the potential to inform and motivate young viewers. Research on this topic remains scarce despite the need to understand how these films influence children's learning about environmental issues and their development of sustainable viewpoints. The research tackles this knowledge gap by studying the combination of ecocritical analysis with animation while examining how these films impact childhood environmental awareness and environmental conduct.

Introduction

Vibrant cheerful tones in design attract children through sensory appeal but soothing cold hues provide peaceful settings alongside warm hues that produce energetic impressions, thereby enhancing the interest of children in watching animated videos and movies. Through animated movements and expressive techniques animation engages children through enjoyable storytelling that represents intensive interaction with narratives in an entertaining way. The visualisations of animated narratives often use plain understandable geometric forms to show

what characters feel and believe since round shapes present friendliness but angular shapes reveal tension or evil nature, While making animated videos for children people usually use round shapes to make the characters friendly and cute. Through their collective effect these components establish an involving connection between children and the story by creating an experience which encourages deep engagement and emotional intimacy.

Through animated characters animated films display environmental protection activities which demonstrate personal impact on environmental care.

Children learn about their planet protection responsibilities through watching characters in animated films work for sustainability while securing environmental justice ("Cartoon films and its impact on children's mentality" 2020).

Theoretical Frameworks in Ecocriticism and Child Development

Ecocriticism in Animation

Through ecocritical analysis the authors challenge human-centered perspectives while working towards preserving an equitable relationship with nature. In animated storytelling non-human characters and natural ecosystems often play essential roles which align with ecocritical standards. Through animated visuals about environmental mistreatment audiences of any age can easily learn about complex ecological concepts.

Cognitive and Psychological Impact on Children

Young audiences master environmental themes in animated films through stories that belong to entertaining narratives and feature approachable characters. Young children understand environmental themes better when they watch appealing stories featuring characters they love such as WALL-E and Totoro. Kids learn their lessons most effectively through engaging stories with vibrant and authentic characters as they continue developing older knowledge skills. Animation that combines amusement with educational messages helps children both retain valuable environmental teachings and develop stronger environmental awareness.

Ecofeminism and Indigenous Knowledge

The appearance of eco feminist alongside indigenous viewpoints in animated narratives extends basic environmental insights through integrated ecological perspectives. Through film integration of these themes viewers can discover various methods for

preserving sustainability and cultural heritage concepts.

Analysis

My Neighbor Totoro

Plot Synopsis

A Celebration of Harmony with Nature

The inventive story world contrast exists when *My Neighbor Totoro* by Hayao Miyazaki offers a peaceful rural setting which celebrates natural connections between individuals and their environment. Through its plot two siblings Satsuki and Mei discover the mystical forest spirit Totoro after relocating to a rural setting. Through beautiful hand-drawn scenery viewers experience an unspoiled natural world that develops both awe and deep respect for environmental protection.

Instead of frightful messages *My Neighbor Totoro* uses a different approach to represent environment care by avoiding both direct flashes of danger and climactic disaster warnings. The film nudges children toward an understanding that nature exists to boost their happiness and bring peace while acting as therapeutic balm. Throughout the film Totoro demonstrates partnership with nature when he uses dance to make plants grow. Experiencing Totoro shows children several core messages involving empathy and both existing harmoniously with nature while becoming community members. (*My Neighbor Totoro*, 1988).



Fig-1 My Neighbor Totoro

WALL-E

Plot Synopsis

WALL-E earth remained uninhabited for an unspecified future because excessive pollution created an environmentally devastated wasteland. The story uses visual elements to demonstrate how consumer culture, pollution and environmental degradation destroy our world. Over a desolate Earth filled with garbage the film shows the perfect nature of space and the rebirth together with taking responsibility for our planet. WALL-E features a cute robot character to teach environmentally serious topics to children without overwhelming them while promoting both careful analysis about our endless buying patterns and Earth stewardship.

- Through entertaining audiences WALL-E, delivers sustainability lessons alongside environmental insights about human-made nature damage and the transformative power of change (Pixar Animation Studios. *WALL-E*. Directed by Andrew Stanton, 2008).



Fig – 2 WALL-E

Animation as an Educational Tool



Fig -3 from Octonauts

Engaging Young Minds

Through its combination of educational value and entertainment elements animation effectively teaches children about environmental problems. Through storytelling, Octonauts introduces concepts about marine conservation and biodiversity to viewers.



Fig -4 The Lorax

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REIMAGINING THE FUTURE: ANALYSING 2040 AS AN ECO-NARRATIVE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

This paper examines Damon Gameau's Australian documentary film 2040 (2019) as an eco-narrative that envisions a sustainable future through the lens of Arne Naess's concept of deep ecology. Naess's philosophy advocates for a profound shift in human attitudes and values, emphasizing the intrinsic worth of all living beings and the interconnectedness of ecological systems. 2040 exemplifies these principles by presenting a hopeful, solutions-oriented perspective on climate change and ecological restoration, offering tangible pathways toward a regenerative future. Through its participatory approach, the documentary explores innovative solutions in energy, agriculture, transportation, and education, aligning with deep ecology's call for systemic change rather than superficial fixes. This analysis highlights how 2040 challenges anthropocentric worldviews by promoting an eco-centric ethos, where human well-being is viewed as inseparable from the health of the planet. It also explores the narrative techniques used to inspire a collective ecological imagination, including the use of future-oriented storytelling and visualizations of sustainable practices. By drawing on Naess's framework, this paper argues that 2040 serves as a transformative eco-narrative, inviting viewers to embrace a deep ecological perspective that transcends individualism and consumerism. Ultimately, the documentary is not only a roadmap for action but also a call to cultivate a harmonious coexistence with the Earth, positioning itself as an essential cultural artifact in the fight against climate change.

Keywords: deep ecology, 2040, eco-narrative, environmental transformation, arne naess.

Introduction

In an age of escalating ecological crises, rethinking humanity's relationship with nature has become critical. Issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and environmental injustice require innovative approaches beyond superficial fixes. Damon Gameau's documentary 2040 (2019) offers a hopeful vision of a regenerative future through sustainable solutions. Unlike many environmental narratives focused on degradation, 2040 emphasizes actionable strategies, inspiring

audiences to reimagine a future of harmony between human activity and natural systems.

This paper positions 2040 within Arne Naess's deep ecology framework, a philosophy advocating a fundamental shift from anthropocentrism to an eco-centric worldview that values all living beings. Deep ecology calls for systemic change by recognizing the interconnectedness of ecological systems and promoting holistic sustainability. Applying these principles, this paper examines how 2040 transcends

conventional environmental narratives, envisioning ecological restoration and social renewal.

The film's solution-focused structure aligns with Naess's call for systemic change, integrating voices from scientists, innovators, and children to present a future shaped by renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, and education. *2040* challenges individualism and consumerism, fostering a collective ecological imagination. It advocates for a shift from shallow fixes to transformative systems prioritizing sustainability, critiquing exploitative practices while inspiring viewers to envision change. This paper argues that *2040* is a transformative eco-narrative, redefining humanity's role in the ecological web and serving as a call to action for environmental stewardship.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses Arne Naess's concept of deep ecology as the theoretical framework for analysing the Australian documentary *2040*. Naess introduced the term in his 1973 article, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary." While Ernst Haeckel first coined "ecology" in 1866, deriving it from the Greek words *oikos* (home) and *logos* (reason), Naess expanded its scope. He distinguishes between shallow ecology, which addresses surface-level issues like pollution and resource depletion, and deep ecology, which advocates a more profound systemic shift. There are deeper concerns that must be discussed such as "diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness" (Naess 95). Naess distinguishes between the shallow and deep ecology movements.

According to Arne Naess, shallow ecology focuses on combating pollution and resource depletion, prioritizing the health and affluence of

developed nations. In contrast, deep ecology emphasizes seven key aspects.

- 1) Rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total-field image: This approach values all organisms and biosphere elements equally, highlighting their intrinsic interconnectedness. Organisms exist as part of a relational field, where the relationship between components (e.g., A and B) is essential to their identity.
- 2) Biological egalitarianism: Arne Naess comments that "any realistic praxis necessitates some killing, exploitation, and suppression" (Naess 95) and that an "ecological field-worker acquires a deep-seated respect, or even veneration, for ways and forms of life" (95). "The equal right to live and blossom" is the main motto of the concept of biological egalitarianism. This feeling results from "the deep pleasure and satisfaction we receive from close partnership with other forms of life" (96) and an attempt to ignore the principle of interdependence and to establish a master-slave relationship contributes to the alienation of man himself.
- 3) Principles of diversity and symbiosis: In the words of Arne Naess, "diversity enhances the potentialities of survival, the chances of new modes of life, the richness of forms" (Naess 96). The members of a diverse ecosystem should develop the "ability to coexist and cooperate in complex relationships, rather than ability to kill, exploit, and suppress" (96). The principle of diversity and symbiosis observes "live and let live" as a more powerful ecological principle than "either you or me." Deep ecologists fight against ecological, cultural, and military invasion and domination.
- 4) Anti-class posture: Naess argues that exploitation and suppression create disparities in

human living standards. He supports an anti-class stance, advocating equality within the ecosystem and aiming to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries.

- 5) Fight against pollution and resource depletion: Deep ecologists struggle to find supporters who look beyond pollution and resource depletion, as focus often remains limited to these issues. Thus, if prices of life necessities increase because of the installation of anti-pollution devices, class differences increase too (97). The ethics of responsibility turns the ecologists responsible to serve not the shallow but the deep ecological movement.
- 6) Complexity not complication: Naess argues that the complex relationships among organisms prompt ecologists to consider vast ecosystems, revealing human ignorance of biospheric connections and the impact of disturbances. The complexity-not-complication principle favours division of labour, not fragmentation of labour (Naess 97). It favours more sensitivity towards our state of ignorance.
- 7) Local autonomy and decentralization: "The vulnerability of a form of life is roughly proportional to the weight of influences from afar, from outside the local region in which that form has obtained an ecological equilibrium" (98). This supports our efforts to strengthen our local self-government and these efforts aim towards decentralization. In Arne Naess's words, local autonomy is strengthened by a reduction in the number of links in the hierarchical chains of decision.

After listing out the tenets of deep ecology, Arne Naess ends his work by differentiating between ecology and ecosophy. According to him, "ecology is a limited science which makes use of scientific methods. Philosophy is the most general forum of

debate on fundamentals, descriptive as well as prescriptive" (99). He coins the term 'ecosophy' which is the philosophy of ecological harmony.

Film Analysis

The film *2040* envisions a future where climate change is resolved for Damon Gameau's 4-year-old daughter, Velvet. Concerned about her future, Gameau travels globally, meeting innovators and change makers to explore solutions. Structured as a visual letter to Velvet, the film combines documentary, dramatized scenes, and visual effects to imagine a regenerated world for future generations. Narrated by Damon Gameau, the film explores his concerns about the future his daughter will face amid climate change. Using his home as a metaphor for Earth, he explains how the industrial revolution disrupted the carbon cycle. He burns logs representing industries, steam engines, and cars, symbolizing carbon emissions exceeding 400 ppm. In the bathroom, he shows how excess carbon dioxide harms ocean life, as species like oysters struggle to form shells. Extreme weather, rising sea levels, and melting ice are visualized, culminating in Gameau extinguishing the fireplace to emphasize the challenge of reducing carbon to 350 ppm.

Damon travels the world seeking solutions for a better 2040, different from current social media concerns. He meets various groups of children who dream of a future with machines that eliminate waste, halt deforestation, grow meat from seeds, a clean environment to prevent disease, government action on global warming, and greater respect for Earth. Damon visits Bangladesh and meets Neel Tamhane, a 23-year-old Decentralized Renewable Energy Specialist. Tamhane explains that Bangladesh has the most solar-powered homes globally, with rural areas adopting solar panels. He and others aim to connect these systems, allowing villagers to trade

solar energy using sol-boxes with money. This creates micro grids within villages, which can link to others. Gameau compares this system to the way body cells multiply in nature.

Tamhane compares villages to swarms of bees or schools of fish, pooling their energy to move in unison. A decentralized energy system fosters resilience, unlike centralized ones, which take time to rebuild after disasters. By providing each household with its own energy source, people become independent of the government. He proposes that countries like India subsidize energy systems, allowing people to own their sources, keep trade profits within the economy, and strengthen community bonds. Damon leaves the village with renewed hope, seeing this solution as key to environmental health. He imagines a 2040 where cities run on microgrids, with solar glass windows, cheaper recyclable batteries, and the ability to donate excess energy. His daughter shares her extra electricity with a neighbour before leaving town, with her AI assistant congratulating her. Damon envisions a future where, despite man-made disasters over the next two decades, renewable energy growth will create jobs. He believes workers in the fossil fuel industry should be supported with training and funds for new careers.

Damon meets Kate Raworth, economist and author of *Doughnut Economics*, who explains that human well-being depends on the planet's stability, which should be central to economic systems. She proposes a new economic framework for today's challenges, addressing inequality where the top 1% thrive, leaving the majority underprivileged. Raworth describes the doughnut model: the inner hole represents the underprivileged, lacking basic needs like food, housing, and energy, while the outer crust is stretched, causing climate change, biodiversity loss, air pollution, and deforestation. Damon believes

micro grids can help change the doughnut's outer boundaries by reducing climate change and air pollution. They also help improve the inner boundaries by lifting more people from poverty, promoting better health through less kerosene use, providing education with lighting, ensuring income equality by keeping profits local, and fostering networks by connecting households.

The scene returns to children's visions of the future: airplanes that travel in seconds, electric cars to reduce pollution and global warming, and rocket boots replacing cars. Gameau highlights that vehicles contribute 20% of emissions in the USA and predicts over a billion new cars by 2040. Damon suggests driverless cars as a solution. He tests and rides in one, and Genevieve Bell explains how cars symbolize independence and wealth. Gameau argues that reducing demand for cars, like CDs and DVDs, would free up roads and parking. He envisions 2040 with driverless cars, community-owned vehicles, and rocket boots, reclaiming cities for people, not cars.

Extra urban space could be used for low-cost sustainable homes, while empty parking lots might host urban food farms, and rooftops could grow fresh produce. The 2040 generation would marvel at past global food trade. Damon sees electrified transport reducing fossil fuel demand, allowing oil fields to transform into green forests. He envisions future cities with public parks, urban farms, and cleaner transport, creating healthier environments with birdsong in the city. There's a need to remove and store excess carbon, which Damon discusses with Paul Hawken, founder of Project Drawdown, focused on reversing global warming.

Gameau meets Colin Seis, a regenerative agriculture advocate, who uses fewer chemicals than traditional farming. Plants convert carbon dioxide and solar energy into sugars, some of which are pumped

back into the soil through roots, feeding microbes that convert atmospheric carbon into soil carbon. Damon and Seis visit land damaged by chemical fertilizers, where water can't penetrate and plants can't grow. Seis suggests stopping planting and letting cows graze, turning the land into grasslands and using cow dung as natural fertilizer. He also criticizes the shift from grass-fed to grain-fed cattle, which was unnatural for them. Damon concludes that climate change cannot be addressed without farmers. He envisions 2040 with greater awareness of food's environmental impact, reduced meat consumption, and alternatives replacing it. Cattle will return to grass-fed regenerative farming, improving their health by eating grass, crop residues, and food waste. Agroforestry will grow fruits like papayas, bananas, coffee, and avocados on small lands. Damon hopes his daughter Velvet will one day read about how the world achieved this dream life.

Brian Von Herzen, executive director of The Climate Foundation, explains that the ocean absorbs 93% of global warming, causing warming and acidification that harms marine life. His solution is to restore ocean circulation, bringing up colder water to support seaweed growth. Seaweeds are valuable as animal feed, fertilizers, fibres, and biofuels. They improve water quality by reducing carbon dioxide and are rich in DHA, antioxidants, and nutrients. Damon addresses his daughter Velvet in 2040, warning of rising sea levels, warming oceans, and the potential for droughts that could increase refugees and global unrest.

Kate Raworth stresses the need for proactive governments to prevent such disasters. Damon believes investing in marine permaculture could create many jobs. In climate-vulnerable areas like the Bay of Bengal, seaweeds could provide food, fertilizer, and biofuel, boosting the local economy. She discusses how the take-make-use-loose policy

has led to climate change and pollution, emphasizing the need for humans to reconnect with nature to understand the impact of their actions. Damon meets John E. Petersen, Professor of Environmental Science at Oberlin College, who advocates using visual teaching methods to instill the concepts of pollution and environmental change in young minds, fostering a collective 'we' mind-set over the self-serving 'I.'

Damon learns that female empowerment can help reverse global warming. Sixty-five million girls lack education, as they are forced to work, marry young, and have many children. Dr. Amanda Cahill explains that educating girls, providing reproductive health services, and better job opportunities helps them delay having children, reducing population growth, and easing competition for resources. Female empowerment is the key to family planning.

Damon imagines a future with mushroom coolers, seaweed-based bio-plastic, spider silk sneakers, beer ring by-products, and coffee cups for reforestation. Food waste would be collected, methane extracted to power vehicles, and leftovers used as fertilizer. Damon hopes girls worldwide in 2040 will have equal educational opportunities like his daughter Velvet, helping reduce the middle space in the doughnut economy by ensuring equal access to food, health, education, income, political voice, and gender equality.

Damon concludes his letter to Velvet, sharing his vision of a hopeful future. He believes hope is everywhere and tells her that in the coming years, she would see less meat at dinner, more food waste in compost bins, and new tools in her classroom. He stresses the need for better leadership to guide them to a better 2040. Damon hopes imagination and innovation will drive change, with greenhouse gas levels decreasing and solutions benefiting many people. The film ends with children dreaming of a

world where the homeless have homes, jobs, and food, where people care for the world, and everyone has equal rights and opportunities. Damon returns home, plants a tree with his wife and daughter, and concludes by asking viewers what their 2040 looks like.

Conclusion

Naess's philosophy calls for a shift in human values, emphasizing the intrinsic worth of all life and ecological interconnectedness. *2040* reflects these principles by offering a hopeful, solutions-driven view of climate change and ecological restoration, with practical paths toward a regenerative future. The documentary explores innovative solutions in energy, agriculture, transportation, and education, aligned

with deep ecology's call for systemic change. *2040* challenges anthropocentrism by promoting an eco-centric view, where human well-being depends on the planet's health. Drawing on Naess's ideas, the film invites viewers to embrace a deep ecological perspective, urging a harmonious coexistence with Earth in the fight against climate change.

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VOICES OF THE WILD: AN ECO-CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ELEPHANTS AND HUMAN INTERACTIONS IN SELECT DOCUMENTARIES

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Abstract

The paper attempts to explore two documentaries titled "The Elephant Whisperers" and "Attenborough and the Giant Elephant" using the reading method of Ecocriticism. Both these documentaries focus on human-elephant bonds, environmental ethics, and conservation. The documentaries introduce elephants as creatures deeply embedded in culture. The Elephant Whisperers focuses on indigenous knowledge systems, while emphasising harmony between humans and wildlife in Southern India. The story of "Attenborough and the Giant Elephant" speaks of Jumbo, an exploited elephant that serves the purpose of man's entertainment, and poses questions regarding anthropocentrism. Based on both ecocriticism and animal studies, this paper aims to study how these documentaries criticise the dominance of human beings over nature and forces viewers to question their relationship with nature. The films try to emphasise the ecological empathy as well as sustainable coexistence by using visual storytelling and emotive narratives. The article uses comparative qualitative analysis in the exploration of the thematic, visual, and ethical elements of the documentaries. It draws mostly from theoretical frameworks used by scholars in the field of ecocriticism, including Greg Garrard and Val Plumwood. The objective is to discuss how these films address the pressing environmental concern and encourage conservationist thinking. According to the study, in the long run, these documentaries are critical cultural texts that create ecological consciousness and reimagine human responsibilities toward the natural world.

Keywords: ecocriticism, elephants, environmental ethics, anthropocentrism, conservation

Introduction

Ecocriticism has emerged as an indispensable lens for examining the relationship between literature, media, environment, and society. It is nurtured by ecological interconnectedness, which rejects the human-centered approach and endorses a biocentric world. According to Cheryll Glotfelty, one of the foundational figures of ecocriticism, "Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts of literature and other artificial forms" (12). Ecocriticism allows intricate reading of how texts communicate with the environment and laments human exploitation of nature. It suggests various

models of sustainability within which humans can exist in harmony with nature.

This paper analyses *The Elephant Whisperers* (2022) and *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* (2017) in terms of their depiction of elephants as ecological and cultural symbols. *The Elephant Whisperers*, directed by Kartiki Gonsalves, focuses on indigenous knowledge and cohesiveness between humans and wildlife. Bomman and Bellie, an indigenous couple from Tamil Nadu, dedicate their lives to nurturing orphaned elephants. The film reflects biocentrism where human lives are interlinked with non-human life. *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant*, narrated by Sir David Attenborough,

is an investigation into the life and history of Jumbo, the first elephant celebrity. Anthropocentrism is presented in the exploitation of Jumbo for human entertainment contrasting to the contemporary conservation of elephants. Both documentaries elaborate on the importance of elephants as keystone species, showing that they are the animals that have crucial roles in the ecosystems' health and balance. Elephants manipulate landscapes by forming water holes, scatter seeds, and uphold idle grasslands, all serving to promote biodiversity. Val Plumwood, in *Environmental Culture: An Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002), argues that Anthropocentrism excludes nonhuman others from the ethical domain and diminishes our capacity to see their intrinsic value.

The central research question is how do *The Elephant Whisperers* and *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* critically analyse human-nature relationships? Analysing the films' storytelling techniques, ecological narratives, and moral considerations can be ways to raise ecological insight. It looks into the depiction of elephants as sentient beings having depth of feelings. Understanding the role of elephants in film scenarios comes as a crucial step in surpassing a broader environmental problem. Elephants remind us of how all species are interconnected, and how fragile these systems are under human domination. This paper asserts that the films do not only provide just a critique for human practices but also a prospect for co-existence and harmony. According to Aldo Leopold in his work *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949, We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we come to see the land as a community to which we belong, we may come to love and care for it. The same can be said for our relationship with elephants and other non-human species in these thought-provoking films. Greg

Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2004) offers an excellent primer to the field and its major ideas, including species interconnectedness, ecological thinking, and environmental justice.

The ecological crisis is also a crisis of representation, in which our dominant cultural narratives fail to reflect the interconnectedness of life on Earth. With its focus on the species interconnectedness, "the primary aim of ecocriticism is to dissolve hierarchical distinctions between humans and other life forms and foster an ethic of coexistence and care for the environment" (Garrard 57).

The Elephant as a Central Ecological and Cultural Figure

For a long time, the elephant has represented ecological balance and cultural significance. They both cater to the fragility of ecosystems, and the relationship between humans and nature. Both *The Elephant Whisperers* and *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* feature the elephant as the keystone species that is vital for its habitat as well as having emotional intelligence. These documentaries highlight in unique ways where elephants intersect discourses of ecological, cultural, and ethical meaning.

In *The Elephant Whisperers*, elephants are portrayed as emotional and intelligent beings with a great sense of family bonding. The film revolves around Bomman and Bellie, an indigenous couple from Tamil Nadu, and their care for orphaned elephants in a Reserve. There is one particularly poignant scene in which Bomman soothes the young elephant Raghu, who was rescued after losing his mother. Raghu is portrayed, not as some dependent animal but as a being who can respond to his owners with deep, emotional bonds. This was the moment epitomising an indigenous understanding of coexistence and how humans feel themselves to be

wardens rather than masters of nature. The documentary also highlights the ecological significance of elephants. In a sequence showing the lush landscapes of the reserve, the audience learns how elephants contribute to seed dispersal and landscape maintenance, thus ensuring biodiversity in their environment. These depictions resonate with Val Plumwood's assertion in *Environmental Culture* (2002) that "Indigenous knowledge systems challenge the dominance of anthropocentrism by embedding humans within ecosystems rather than above them" (114).

In *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant*, the narrative focuses on Jumbo, a 19th-century elephant whose life reflects the tension between exploitation and affection. Jumbo became the world's first celebrity elephant, beloved by the society but subjected to cruel treatment as part of his role in a travelling circus. Archival footage and recreations show Jumbo chained and overworked, highlighting anthropocentric exploitation. The documentary also discusses the scientific relevance of Jumbo. Sir David Attenborough digs into the remains of Jumbo to explore the physiological and psychological impact of his life in captivity. One of the most moving moments is when analysing the bones of Jumbo, which show that he had suffered from stress fractures due to captivity and overwork. This scientific discovery is contrasted with Victorian accounts of Jumbo as a friendly animal and the ability to create emotional bonds with children. These scenes represent the paradox between the tender love the humans professed for Jumbo and the atrocities he suffered, which perfectly reflects what John Berger observed in *Why Look at Animals?* (1980): "The animal is a being of story, a presence of absence in human imagination."

Both documentaries showcase elephants' unique qualities while placing them in a wider environmental

and social setting. *The Elephant Whisperers* presents Raghu and Ammu as one-of-a-kind creatures. Their fun interactions and emotional ties show how deep their awareness goes. The film also stresses how vital elephants are to keep forest ecosystems in balance. In the same way, *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* uses Jumbo's personal story to bring attention to elephants' tough situation worldwide when it comes to captivity and exploitation. By zeroing in on Jumbo's emotional pain, the film makes his experience relatable pushing viewers to think about the moral aspects of how humans and animals interact.

Anthropocentrism vs. Biocentrism in the Documentaries

On the one hand, *The Elephant Whisperers* appeals for a biocentric view of recognising the value of nonhuman life. On the other hand, *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* critiques the anthropocentric exploitation of elephants by searching into the historic ways that human beings treated animals as commodities. So, those two conflicting views bring to the forefront the ethical and ecological consequences of these opposing worldviews.

The Elephant Whisperers is an example of a biocentric text, as this film shows the traditional lifestyle of Bomman and Bellie. Bomman feeds Raghu, a young elephant orphaned by his family, with utmost care, as he narrates how they take care of him as one of their own family members. The close relationship between Bomman, Bellie, and Raghu reflects a world view where humans and animals are considered integral components of a shared ecosystem. The film also shows how indigenous practices fit into ecological sustainability. Bomman and Bellie's love for elephants is very closely interwoven with their knowledge of forest ecosystems. Documenting the peaceful coexistence

between Bomman and Bellie and the wildlife, this documentary aligns with Val Plumwood's criticism of anthropocentrism in Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, "Anthropocentrism denies the agency of nonhuman animals, reducing them to passive objects in a human narrative" (83). *The Elephant Whisperers* tells a different story of the role played by the elephants in the ecological balance.

Attenborough and the Giant Elephant engages this perspective by critically looking at how humans exploit elephants in an anthropocentric way. It focuses on the tragic life of Jumbo-the Victorian-era elephant whose life was celebrated as a "gentle giant" while suffering greatly. It describes how this physical strength and larger size were used for human entertainment by offering the elephant as a spectacle for circuses. Archival materials reveal Jumbo paraded and overworked and symbolised the commodification of elephants for economic and cultural gain. The voiceover juxtaposes this same society that admired Jumbo for the image of innocence it represents against this treatment where the same man endures and suffered under the hand of a brutal society.

The Elephant Whisperers fights back against the human centrality as it depicts the elephants with the capacity to perceive and also an integral part of ecological communities. *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* questions the historical consequences of human supremacy over nature. This contrastive depiction makes the challenge clearly stand out: there is now an ethical necessity to move from anthropocentrism to biocentrism; to acknowledge that nonhuman life has agency, value, and is connected. Both movies implore audiences to reconsider human involvement within the overall ecological environment by urging people towards a coexisting and respecting the world.

Environmental Ethics and Conservation Messages

The documentaries offer different views and insights on how humans interact with elephants and support ethical treatment of animals and conservation as a means to preserve biodiversity. In *The Elephant Whisperers*, the conservation effort is structured as a strongly communal effort located in indigenous practice. The film highlights how the daily interaction by Bomman and Bellie maintains not only single lives but rather the larger eco-system of the Reserve. One sequence shows the couple guiding Raghu and Ammu, the young elephants, through the forest as they instinctively interact with their environment—breaking tree branches, dispersing seeds, and fertilising the soil. These scenes demonstrate the ecological role elephants play in maintaining biodiversity and illustrate how the couple's nurturing efforts align with ecological principles. The documentary argues for a model of conservation that respects local traditions and emphasises coexistence by focusing on indigenous practices. This approach reflects Aldo Leopold's principle that ecological ethics require us to rethink our role not as conquerors, but as stewards of the earth. In *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant*, a retrospective reflection on Jumbo's life, exposes the disastrous repercussions of human disruption of natural sites. The movie explains how an animal, once wild and needed to be running free in their original habitat, was captured and transported for human amusements. Through archival records and scientific analysis, it is evident that this interference did not only bring Jumbo physical suffering but also disrupted his natural behaviors and emotional well-being. Sir David Attenborough uses Jumbo's story as a cautionary tale, highlighting the broader implications of human actions on wildlife. For example, the documentary attacks the Victorian tradition of capturing wild animals from their natural

habitats for zoos and circuses, an activity that had led to the decline of wild elephants.

Both documentaries place their stories in the context of urgent global concerns for conservation. *The Elephant Whisperers* subtly points out the impact of habitat loss as elephants increasingly rely on human intervention due to shrinking forests. In one scene, Bomman describes how human encroachment into forested areas has disrupted traditional migratory routes for elephants, forcing orphaned calves into human care. At the same time, *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* places Jumbo's life to take a long-term stance against the effects of poaching, deforestation, and global climate change and its impact on elephants. It suggests community-based conservation, rigorous enforcement of anti-poaching laws, and a worldwide approach to habitat destruction. They also talk about the considering animals not as resources but as living beings that require care and respect. Together, these documentaries inspire viewers toward a more ecological and ethical approach to conservation, in line with Leopold's vision of man as earth's protector rather than its exploiter. In doing so, these films transcend their immediate narratives to offer powerful calls to action, urging global audiences to engage in protecting the planet's ecological balance.

Indigenous Knowledge vs. Western Science

The documentaries offer distinct perspectives on human interactions with elephants, reflecting the tension and potential synergy between indigenous knowledge and western science. While *The Elephant Whisperers* focuses on the deeply rooted traditions of indigenous communities who have coexisted with elephants for generations, *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* adopts a western scientific lens, emphasising historical analysis and biological insights. Together, these approaches provide a

complementary framework for addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

In *The Elephant Whisperers*, indigenous knowledge is a lived, experiential understanding of elephants and their ecosystems. The protagonists, Bomman and Bellie, depend on their intuition and ancestral practices to care for orphaned elephants like Raghu and Ammu. Bomman interprets Raghu's behavior when he resists food—a subtle indication of an underlying health issue. Unlike modern veterinary methods, Bomman's way is through the eyes of observation, empathy, and an intrinsic need to understand how the elephant needed him. The forest is treated as a shared space rather than a resource to exploit. They understand the rhythms of nature, recognising that all species stand connected. This approach embodies biocentric and challenges the anthropocentric narratives dominant in Western frameworks. On the other hand, *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* is more of a Western scientific approach since it uses a case study, Jumbo's life, to explore the biological and psychological reality of elephants. It reconstructs physical and emotional suffering through archival research, expert interviews, and advanced scientific methods like analysis of skeletal remains found of Jumbo. This analysis gives insight into how exploitation impacts not only individual elephants but also broader populations. The film goes on to show the evolution of Western science's understanding of elephants. While Jumbo's treatment in the Victorian era emphasises the importance of creating sanctuaries and studying elephants in their natural habitats. For example, the scientists featured in the documentary note that captive elephants, like Jumbo, exhibit stress-induced behaviours and reduced lifespans, findings that have guided modern practices in the hope of improving animal welfare.

Conclusion

The two documentaries, *The Elephant Whisperers* and *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant*, show compelling understandings about human and elephant relationship. It reveals ecologic interrelation, preservation, and moral reasoning. This occurs by showing opposite visions, one that comes from indigenous biocentrism, the other through anthropocentrism. The *Elephant Whisperers* focuses on indigenous knowledge systems, highlighting the harmonious coexistence between humans and wildlife. On the other hand, *Attenborough and the Giant Elephant* reveals historical exploitation of elephants, as evident from Jumbo's tragic life, to challenge the anthropocentric worldview. Both these narratives focus on the dual responsibility of biodiversity preservation and respect for intrinsic value in nonhuman life. Building upon theories of ecocriticism and animal studies, this essay is to elaborate that these are critically cultural documentaries because they teach audiences to have a new mindset in their lives in relation with nature. There is a need for awareness toward ecological sustainability and ethical behaviour towards conservation. The papers focuses on promoting interconnectedness within species and work for a much kinder coexistence. It reminds us that the survival of keystone species like elephants is linked to the health of the planet.

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ON UNFOLDING THE ECO-FEMININE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FEMALE CHARACTERS OF HOMEIRA QADERI AND KHALED HOSSEINI

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Abstract

Environmental degradation and its consequences have been a recurring theme in global literature and discussion forums. But still there are regions and environmental issues that need to be addressed. Afghanistan is one such war-torn country which is still on the darker side of discussions and contemplations. The Afghan war ruined the agricultural set-up of the region. Many farms were left uncultivated, and erosion of rich topsoil led to the degradation of land and subsequent fall in production. This paper tries to understand how subjugation of women and of the environment leading to large scale environmental degradation is explored in the writings of Homeira Quaderi and Khaled Hosseini. By reconnoitring the association between woman and nature, women and the social order, and women and the self in the respective novels, the study discloses the incarnation of ecofeminism and analyses how these novels echo the genuine predicaments of the Afghan culture, ecology and women's state of being. The difficulties in the war-scarred nation have not only carved off the societal relationships with culture but has also affected the human-nature relationship.

Keywords: eco-feminism, environmental degradation, patriarchy, oppression, revival, gender exploitation.

Introduction

Afghanistan is a country which grabbed global attention in past decades for the recurring conquests, withdrawals, Taliban attack, implementation of the Sharia rule et al. It is a place where even the basic rights were denied to the women folk, under strict patriarchy. The strict religious country believes that men's position is above women, who were considered meek and irrelevant. The patriarchal societal structure leads to gender domination and subordination. According to the norms of a patriarchal society, Femininity is defined by mandatory rules governing how women should behave, look, and even what attitude to possess in the society. By contrast, masculinity is considered as a cultural identity of men. The concept of identifying women with nature dates to the times of ancient classical mythology or philosophical trends. Nature is generally

considered feminine because it is believed to have the same characteristics as women, such as the ability to reproduce, and its mothering and nurturing nature. Ecofeminism sees a special connection between women and nature that is not only physical but also emotional and spiritual. The view sees a relationship between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature, a connection that challenges traditional binary modes of thinking and proposes a more complex and pluralistic view of the world.

Ecofeminism contemplates the subjugation over women in a male-controlled society, which is linked with dominion over nature. Ecofeminism consists of two words which are ecocriticism and feminism. Ecofeminism objects to both androcentrism and patriarchy. The term ecofeminism itself was coined by the French science fiction writer and feminist,

Françoise d'Ebonne in *Le Féminisme ou la mort* (1974). Ebonne believes the wielding of power by men threatens the environmental deterioration that affects the oppression of women over a few thousand years. Women are always in a marginalized position compared to men because of women's reproductive ability. Philosophical theorists recognize that women are associated with nature while men with culture.

Material and Methods

To understand how the issues of women subjugation and harassment of nature are reconnoitred in the literatures of Afghanistan, the works of Homeira Qaderi and Khaled Hosseini, two prominent writers who have made incredible contributions to the socio-economic, environmental and political concerns of the region, are taken into concern.

Homeira Qaderi is an Afghan writer who was widely acclaimed for her literary ventures which powerfully voiced her experience as an Afghan woman. Her poignant portrayal of a mother moving out of the cultural confinements of a strict patriarchal religious nation forms the major thematic concern of her memoir *Dancing in the Mosque: An Afghan Mother's Letter to Her Son*. Through her emotive and direct writing style she was able to grab the attention of readers.

Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American writer, in his second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, cross-examines the female subjugation as well as that of the nature. Through the novel he wanted not only to represent the misfortunes suffered by Afghan women and the nature, but also to celebrate their strength and anticipation for regeneration amidst hardships. These accounts not only disclose the tests and trials of women's endurance under extreme circumstances but also reflect their close connection with the natural environment. The rampant destruction of the natural environment in a war-torn environment further exacerbates the plight of women.

Methodology

The methodology employed is descriptive qualitative analysis. This allows an examination of the association between women and nature, women and the existing social order and following the main data, we use the descriptive method that analyses certain contexts in the novels that substantiates the key arguments put forth. This paper emphasizes how Homeira Qaderi and Khaled Hosseini symbolically represent the position of woman and nature, how a parallel interconnection with nature as feminine is brought out from different points of view. The entire analysis is done focussing on ecofeminism as the parent theory. French egalitarianist Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "ecofeminism" in 1974. Ecofeminism is a radical theory and movement that combines feminism and political ecology. It inspects the connection between women and nature, and how patriarchal societies treat both.

Findings and Result

Homeira Qaderi's *Dancing in the Mosque: an Afghan Mother's letter to her Son* narrativises facts of the narrator's infancy, her adolescent years, wedding and eventual expatriation which are expressed in the form of letters written to her son. The child was forcibly detached from Homeira by his dad while still an infant, and the narrator's custody of her child revoked by the court. Women have limited rights in the war-torn country. Any exploitation they face is blamed on their existence and behaviour.

The influence of male authority and colonization develops as the central issue of Homeira's struggle. She is subjugated by people who have sovereignty and control over her life, from her grandma to her spouse. Those circumstances made Homeira understand gender inequality that exists and that she lives as a marginalized person.

When Homeira was in her teens, she was threatened by the tanks, jet-fighter attacks, and

invisible bullets muffling in the streets outside her house. Not only the people, even the environmental set up in Afghanistan was severely destroyed. According to her, Afghanistan is a treacherous country where the continuous military attacks keep her stuck inside the house. She calls it the land of invisible bullets, the land of a death foretold, and the land of dejected youth. Even after her marriage, her circumstance does not improve. She was denied by her husband's family because she decides to continue her education at an Iranian university and postpone her pregnancy. Homeira is labelled as a dry

tree since she cannot give birth to children like a tree that cannot produce fruit. A dry tree is useless and needs to be sawed off, means that Homeira is not a perfect wife since she cannot bear a child. Homeira can be substituted with another partner or be separated. In this case, Homeira and nature shared the same value because of their biological trait of similarities in reproduction and nurturing.

Homeira accepts that she is in charge of fighting for her civil rights as a member of the downgraded group in her own country. She wants to get freedom in higher education and attain gender equivalence in Afghanistan. To counterattack the patriarchal domination, Qaderi uses the symbol of nature to define Homeira's struggle to accomplish gender equivalence in her own country. The protagonist herself is an embodiment of the ecology of Afghanistan which fights against the oppression and renew itself.

In the memoir, there is a quote,

"I wished that just once, the phoenix could rise from the ashes of Herat and fly to Kabul and bring my mother on its wings." (Qaderi 123)

Phoenix is a mythological bird considered as an embodiment of nobility and powerfulness, which is even able to fly out from its ashes. Even though

Homeira dreamt of the phoenix her mother taught her to live as if caught in a spider's web.

My mother was like a spider trying to safeguard me within her web. But I was a wild, stubborn baby spider. I kept tearing her web apart to escape. I never tired of the struggle to get outside. I was always looking for a chance to sneak into our walled garden. (Qaderi 2). Here spiders web is a metaphorical embodiment of home. She was asked and taught to confine her dreams inside the margins of her home. Homeira's struggle for attaining gender equality in her own nation is portrayed in the memoir by using these symbols from nature, such as wings, phoenix, and spiders.

Hosseini's literary venture *Thousand Splendid Suns* is a portrait of a wounded civilization and the story of family and friendship, of an unforgiving time, an unlikely bond, presented from a feminine perspective. The author narrates the story of two Afghan women, under the double oppression of war and domestic violence and how they care for each other, face misfortunes together, and eventually attain the self-awakening they dreamt of.

In the novel, the two protagonists, Mariam and Laila suffer from subjugation and vehemence inflicted by a patriarchal society. Their confrontation and survival exposes their resistance to tyranny and the quest of liberty, revealing how a patriarchal society oppresses both women and natural resources. Both of which stems from the predisposition to anthropocentric and androcentric ideals. Although war was responsible for Laila's lose of her lover and family, she still sustains a desire in her heart for nature and the exquisiteness of life. Laila's fight is not only for survival, but also to protect the piece of nature in her heart. Whereas Mariam killing her husband is not only a rebellion against personal oppression, but also symbolises the wholeness in assigning traditional gender roles. This phase of

Mariam, exemplifies the quest for female self-realisation and liberty. Laila, on the other hand, recuperates her life, and her tale demonstrates the development from awakening and rising up against resistance. The difference in individual experiences and the manner in which characters perceive these differences discloses the impact of the social environment on fighting back. Laila says, "We want Kabul to be green again" (Hosseini 14).

These words represents Laila's hope for the future, that as long as humans stop destroying it, the nature itself will gradually mend with its own prevailing self-healing capability, a quality that these women characters too possess - resilience, stubbornness and persistence. It is her hope that all those troubled Afghan women will ultimately recuperate like the natural ecosystem and enlighten the whole Afghan society. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the development of the main characters, Mariam and Laila, can be associated with the cyclical changes of nature, and their existing circumstances and psychological deviations echo the close association between women and nature.

Interpretation and Discussion

Both the works depict the fact that in Afghanistan, living as a girl is difficult Homeira Qaderi comments in her memoir that "I knew more ways that led to hell than streets that led to my house." Afghanistan's ecological setup even became unsafe for women because of the exerting androcentrism. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* also the author depicts the dependence of the two protagonists on the natural atmosphere in their defiance and selections in life, representing a way of living in congruence with nature.

Conclusion

Both the novels *Dancing in the Mosque: An Afghan Mother's Letter to her Son* by Homeira Qaderi and *A*

Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini, depicts the plight of Afghan women and the natural environment parallelly. It exposes that both women and nature face analogous subjugation and mistreatment in a war torn, patriarchal society like Afghanistan. Eco-feminism offers a new perception, highlighting the need to primarily change anthropological conceptions and ideals to attain a pleasant cohabitation between human beings and nature, and between human beings themselves. And at the same time it reminds about the need for the consideration to be paid to the association between women and the environment, and the need to build a healthy human-nature interdependent society.

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THE BLENDING OF TECHNO-HUMAN CONDITIONS IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *GUN ISLAND*: AN ECO-CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract

This paper aims to discover the resistance and resilience that led to a revolution in Amitav Ghosh's novel The Gun Island. The concept of the Anthropocene addresses the connection between humans and nature, wherein humans exert dominance over the natural world. The focus of the research is on how human dominance causes environmental crises, as well as how human-centered laws and regulations cause harmful impacts on humans themselves. This study exhibits the similarities in the lives of climate refugees from the seventeenth century to contemporary days. It also explores the burden of animals and humans forced to leave their homes due to environmental disasters and their conflicts among traffickers using an Anthropocene approach. The findings reinforce the revolutionary transformation that prioritizes social and environmental justice in literary studies, as literature is a tool to create environmental consciousness.

Keywords: anthropocene, climate refugees, resistance, resilience, revolution.

Introduction

The Oxford Dictionary defines 'epoch' as a division of time either begun or set off due to significant changes and events. The timeline of the epoch includes the Paleozoic era (541 to 251 million years ago) which deals with ancient life. This era is known for the development of marine organisms. The Mesozoic era (252 to 66 million years ago) was an age of reptiles where crocodiles and dinosaurs ruled the atmosphere. The Cainozoic era is the age of mammals (the last 66 million years) further divided into Paleogene, Neogene, and Quaternary. The Holocene is an epoch placed under quaternary starts before 11700 years, it is the greatest age known for human civilization. The new great geological epoch developed by following the Holocene is the Anthropocene, a rival to nature that started around

1800 with the development of the Industrial Revolution.

The Anthropocene is a human-centered epoch that exhibits human domination over the entire biosphere. The Anthropocene refers to the geological era in which human interference has impacted the environment to a very large extent..

Dominant human behavior not only affects nature and other species on the earth; it also affects humans themselves. The novel *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh reflects the key elements of the Anthropocene. Throughout this novel the author explores the suffering of humans as well as animals due to climate change and natural disasters such as drought, flood, forest fire, use of fertilisers induce the soil salinity and changes in marine food chain leads to human as well as animal migration.

Method of Research

The qualitative research is carried out which focuses on the close reading of the texts such as Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019), Timothy Clark's *Ecocriticism on the Edge* (2022), and *The Techno-Human Condition* (2011) by Braden Allenby and Daniel Sarewitz.

Blending of Techno-Human condition in *Gun Island*

Braden R. Allenby and Daniel Sarewitz define the Anthropocene as a world in which the multiplicity of human activity affects the entire ecological system. The human world in the form of technological development disturbs the whole earth as there is a link between action and consequence. Allenby and Sarewitz in *The Techno-Human Condition* list three levels that outline the complex relationship between humans, technology, and environment. At the first level the technology is viewed as a simple tool, the second level focuses on its ethical and socio aspects to further the third level deals with meta- meta-meta-technological aspects.

The novel *Gun Island* blends with these three levels of techno-human condition in terms of migration as technology encourages the migration of human and non-human species at the initial stage. The second level deals with the socio-cultural and ethical aspects as the migrants don't live a peaceful life in the host nation due to bullying among the traffickers as dependency on technology multiplies. The novel portrays how technological tools like GPS, communication devices, and modern transportation facilitate human migration. The last level is based on the meta-technology, which delves into the broader social implications, where technology shapes societal responses to migration and environmental crises. Ghosh emphasises the interconnectedness between human and animal fates, advocating for multispecies

justice also by rebuilding the policies that protects rights and resolve conflicts among migrants in the host nation.

Complexity in level one Techno-Human condition deals with its technical aspects and the effectiveness and efficient performance of technology without any higher-level technical advancement, here level one of techno-human condition inter-relates with technology as it gives caution about natural disasters like storms and cyclones which saves the lives of people and helps in safe migration. "Starting in the late 1990s warning systems for storms had been put in place across the region so there was plenty of time to prepare, Millions of people were moved to safety in India and Bangladesh" (Ghosh 48). Whereas the seventeenth-century cyclone migrants faced lots of hardships and the survivors of the greatest natural disaster Bhola cyclone in Bangladesh also exposed the struggles of political turmoil that made the natives of East Pakistan migrate to India and other places without any awareness or consciousness of peaceful residence in the new environment. "On each outing, they saw horrific sights; corpses floating in the water, half eaten by animals; villages that had lost most of their inhabitants. The situation was aggravated by a steady flow of refugees from East Pakistan" (14).

Technology also helps in animal migration as it cautions Piya on Rani's breeding season as the GPS tracker is connected to Piya's cellphone so that she can track the dolphin's residence. "Rani, this said Piya was the name of an individual river dolphin, of species that she had been studying for most of her Professional life" (91).

Level two complexity includes the socio-cultural and ethical issues in the day-to-day usage of technologies in human society. The tension between security and individual freedom in the digital age is taken for granted. Here the novel *Gun Island* intertwines the struggles and sufferings of natives

and migrants as it attracted traffickers which increases the techno crime. "I can learn more on the Net than any of those teachers can teach me" (Ghosh 51). Similarly, the technology also promotes illegal transactions and fake advertisements that induce people to migrate. The sufferings of the migrants in the host nation are reflected in the novel through the characters of Tipu, Rafi, Kabir, and Bilal as these migrants become refugees. Tipu and Rafi traveled together to Venice but got separated while crossing over Turkey and Iran. Further, they struggle a lot with the traffickers and work as forced illegal migrant workers. Kabir and Bilal spent 3,50,000 to get a visa to Sharjah but they were cheated by Dalal. As they boarded the plane to Libya and realised that they had been kidnapped and flown to Tripoli. For nearly one and a half years they were tortured and beaten up by the kidnappers and further sold as a slave to other traffickers. These immigrants were overworked and were not given proper pay and food.

Plash a Bengali migrant is the son of a banker and the brother of a civil servant also the one who worked as a manager in a multinational company had a dream to pursue his studies in Finland University but reached Italy as he got selected in the University of Padova. He nearly spent a year learning Italian and struggled a lot to do his coursework. Yet he turned as a delivery boy in a pizza shop and also worked as a cleaner in a hotel who was once a manager in Bangladesh. "In this way, four years have gone by and I am still in a kind of Limbo- not just in terms of my status in Italy but also in regard to the other Bengalis who are here" (267).

The level three complexity is meta-technology which focuses on the need for holistic and integrated understanding of techno-human condition. The novel *Gun Island* blends with the level three complexity as the admiral does not react to political law as he doesn't follow the rules of his prime minister rather,

he acts on human law by thinking holistically and freeing the refugees from the traffickers to land their boat in Italy. Thus, in level three, techno condition shapes societal responses to migration and environmental crises. Ghosh emphasises the interconnectedness between human and animal fates, advocating for multispecies justice. This approach suggests that just as humans leverage technology to navigate and mitigate crises, there should be an ethical consideration of how these advancements impact non-human species. "Towards sunset, some twenty dolphins appeared suddenly, this sight of frolicking dolphins created buzz of excitement, the mood seemed to communicate itself to animals" (269)

Discussion and Conclusion

The Anthropocene is a human-dominated epoch in which humans colonised nature with scientific and technological advancement. Though humans govern nature and have the upper hand over all other species, the discoveries affect the whole ecology and alter nature's cyclic process further multiplying the sufferings of the well-developed social beings. This study focuses only on the Anthropocene which limits itself to the techno-human condition that entails the agony of inhabitants cum emigrants as a result of climate change and natural disasters. This novel can also be understood in other perspectives such as mythology, cultural studies, magical realism, and deep ecology. This novel has the elements of mythology as it gives insight into climate-induced migration through the mythical story of Gun Merchant, and incorporates the Bengali folklore thus exploring the cultural, social, and environmental crisis and human migration through symbolic and oral representation. Magical realism blends the real world with magical elements, this novel also has the elements of magical realism when the author connects the natural world with surrealist elements

with fantasy and dreams. Deep Ecology is an eco-centric approach in which all living creatures deserve respect and protection, this novel can be analysed under deep ecology as it creates eco-consciousness and awareness to the readers.

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AN ECOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH “THE WOODROSE” BY ABBURI CHAYA DEVI

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Abstract

Ikebana is the traditional Japanese art of flower arrangement, rooted in harmony, simplicity and mindfulness. It originated from Buddhist rituals where offerings of flowers were made at altars. Today it is celebrated all over the world for its ability to bring serenity and beauty into everyday life. Upon closer look, Ikebana extends to reality itself. With relationships, lifestyles, choices and individualities intertwining and situating themselves among others, life grows within its own ikebana. It compliments and conflicts. By bringing in the concept of ikebana into the short story “The Woodrose”, Abburi Chaya Devi underlines the profound and intrinsic relationship between nature and humanity. This paper takes an ecocritical approach to focus on the irony between the tranquillity advocated by ikebana and the disputing familial situation within the story and how it transcends into our immediate reality as well as into our minds. Changing lifestyles and generational gap become a catalyst, creating more internal conflicts in the minds of the characters, especially that of the protagonist, an old lady in the care of her son. This paper also seeks to understand and appreciate how natural or botanical analogies are used to reinstate the emotional and cognitive differences that shape the interpersonal relationships between the characters.

Keywords: ikebana, woodrose, generational gap, botanical analogies, urbanisation

Introduction

Abburi Chaya Devi, the 2005 Sahitya Academy Award winner, is known for her short stories originally written in Telugu. Through her stories, she offers deep insights into the nature of women's minds and portrays women in different roles like wife, mother, daughter and above all, an individual in her own right. She was concerned with women's journeys of self-exploration, and dreamt to see a world where women rose above all shackles of traditional customs and constraints, constantly trying to redefine a woman's identity in the new era, framed by newer social changes. Though not always in the mainstream spotlight, through nuanced and impactful literary approaches, she is a subtle yet a powerful voice in

feminist literature and activism in India, serving as a persistent reminder to women of their individuality, autonomy and rights in a patriarchal society. It is with this deep sensitivity and insight that she crafted one of her best stories, “The Woodrose”. Though her works are widely recognised for its feminist qualities, their brilliant eco-narratives are equally significant. “The Woodrose” serves as a compelling example of how nature is intricately woven into the narrative to illuminate human relationships embodying the principles of ecocriticism, a theoretical framework that “explores the intricate relationships between literature and the natural environment”(Tajane, et.al. 2162). Her other works like “Bonsai”, are equally striking demonstrations of her creative genius, as she skilfully

tailors in natural or botanical analogies to delve into the very fabric of human connections.

"The Woodrose", a first-person narrative told by an old woman, probes into her life as she moves into a city to live with her son and daughter-in-law which offers a very different eco-cultural experience. She feels restless and useless as her daughter-in-law never allows her inside the kitchen in the name of providing 'rest'. She is disturbed by the dissimilarity of the familial situation from what she had practically experienced her whole life. Her children adoring comics and planting useless decorative plants instead of useful vegetables exasperates her and gives her a kind of a cultural shock. Soon enough, she begins to develop some sort of affinity with the wood rose plant that her daughter-in-law had planted and previously thought was futile and pointless.

This is a crucial point in the story where nature and life blend together as the old woman begins to relate with the creeper that "clings and entwines all around" just like a loving mother.

Ecocriticism and Ecopsychology: Where Life and Nature Converge

It was in 1972 that a human ecologist named Joseph W. Meeker came up with the idea of "literary ecology" in his work *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, thereby connecting environmental studies and literature. Following Meeker, William Rueckert coined the term "ecocriticism", to find grounds upon which the two communities - the human and the natural- can coexist, cooperate and flourish in a biosphere. As a literary and cultural theory, ecocriticism expanded drastically in the 1990s by intersecting with other theories like postcolonialism and critical race studies. Today, ecocritics engage with ecofeminism, postcolonialism and even queer theories to address issues on gender, race and sexuality in relation to environment. Along with scrutinising the representation and

influence of nature in literary works, it also plays a vital role of raising awareness on pressing ecological issues, fostering a deeper understanding in the context of environmental challenges. This theory holds unprecedented significance in the current global scenario due to various reasons such as climatic crisis and environmental degradation. This growing urgency has heightened the need to understand how literature and culture shape our perceptions of nature and environmental responsibility. Ecopsychology a relatively new addition to literary studies, refers to the study of the relationship between humans and the natural world, examining how our connection to nature impacts our psychology and well-being. The term was made popular in Theodore Roszak's *The Voice of Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology*. "Although not a psychologist,

Roszack presented a clear and passionate call for the disparate spheres of psychology and environmental studies to come together in the service of environmental restoration." (Lertzman 396). "The Woodrose" with its pronounced psychological undercurrents, exemplifies an ideal case for a detailed exploration of the core principles of ecopsychology. Writers have always drawn inspiration from nature, finding its elements to be profound metaphors for human emotions. The bond between nature and human sentiment is so deeply interwoven that it becomes almost impossible to disentangle the two. Authors often use natural elements as reflections of their protagonist's emotions, with characters relating their struggles with the rhythms of the natural world. Consequently, the changing seasons, tall mountains, flowing rivers, or in this case a brittle flower of woodrose, become symbols of resilience and turmoil, highlighting a deep connection. Devi excels in this regard as she has continually showcased her mastery to harness the

elements of nature as profound vehicles for expressing complexities of human emotions.

Does Ikebana Manifest Itself in Indian Households?

The story starts with the old lady, unnamed throughout the story, portrayed as being stuck between modernity and generational gap. She would sit in the balcony every evening and watch the passers-by. She is denied entry to the kitchen and her daughter-in-law says “what can you do? Please go and rest” (Devi). She never thought old age would be so boring. Additionally, she is in the care of her son Gopalam, in a bustling city, leaving her feeling isolated and helpless. A very imperative point in the story is when Kamala, the daughter-in-law, introduces a new plant species to the old woman - Woodrose. The protagonist is taken aback at the futility of the plant as it does not possess any fragrance and cannot be used for puja or for anything as a matter of fact. The creeper soon spread on to the balcony and enveloped the grill completely. The lady was agitated as she no longer has a clear vision of the passers-by. One day, Kamala arranges the flowers into an ikebana, a Japanese flower arrangement technique where flowers, branches and other natural elements are assembled beautifully. The fresh roses and also the woodroses, that are not as attractive as the fresh ones are kept together in a vase. To this, Kamala gives a very interesting interpretation -“the woodrose stands for old age, the fresh roses symbolise youth.” (Devi). To this, the old woman replies “Why not call it mother-in-law and daughter-in-law?” (Devi). However, this incident left a lasting impression on her, igniting a deep sense of connection and fascination with the woodrose plant. The lady now spends her time “in the balcony eagerly watching for the woodroses instead of watching passers-by”(Devi). Until one day her son vehemently plucked out the creeper entirely, triggering a flood of existential questions in her mind.

But now what is ikebana? What is the significance of it? Ikebana is something that emphasises harmony, balance and simplicity. Something that promotes a sense of peace to its surroundings. With fresh roses standing for youth and woodroses signifying old age, being arranged together in a vase, it symbolically stands for a sense of harmony between the different generations. But does that hold true in their household? Then the answer could be a big no. The main character is pushed into a life of perpetual boredom, with nothing significant happening to bring her a tinge of joy. She is being shouted at and ignored by her son and daughter-in-law. We see little efforts at the ‘house’ to really make it a ‘home.’ Their disinterested interactions provide a rather dull background to their familial situation, very much contrary to the idea of ikebana.

There are enough reasons for the lady to identify herself with the woodrose plant. The woodrose is imprisoned in a vase to just observe the outer world, kept on the balcony, bound to grow on the wired mesh created by the daughter-in-law. This is compared to the situation of the prime character where she is allowed to do nothing but to live her life in the city cage called house and watch the world from the perspective she is allowed to. In the final paragraphs of the story, we see the protagonist pitying her own situation as she anticipates a similar fate as that of the woodrose plant that got cut off by her son. City life and its tantrums, and finally destruction of the plant by her son shatters all her dreams. The creeper entwined the entire balcony becoming a nuisance for the son; similarly a mother's love clings affectionately, which at old age, could be suffocating to their grownup children. The prime character of the story is not given a name, possibly because the author does not want to confine the tale to a single woman but to a plethora of struggling women and men of her age. “The old woman

represents all the elderly in a family stuck between modernity and generational gap” (Franklin, et.al 64).

Botanical Symbolisms and Generational Gap

Throughout the story, one can see how botanical symbols are used as analogies to illustrate the generational differences in opinions and lifestyles between the mother and her children. These analogies analyse the real depth of the generational gap depicted in the story with a very passive undertone. As soon as Kamala plants the woodrose, the mother judges her decision to grow something that has no particular use or even fragrance. It seemed a very stupid decision from Kamala's side for her. Kamala says “they have no fragrance, but they are beautiful to look at” (Devi). The mother comes up with useful alternatives like sangam flowers and sannajaji that are elegant and beneficial at the same time. She additionally thinks of ash gourds so that they can grow enough to even distribute to their neighbours and friends. The choice of planting an ash gourd instead of a decorative plant speaks volumes about the generational gap, particularly in terms of values and priorities.

Older generations often placed value on practical, sustainable living—focusing on what could nourish, provide, or serve a purpose. The ash gourd, as a plant that offers both sustenance and utility, symbolises this mindset. In contrast, today's younger generations often prioritise convenience, instant gratification, and aesthetics, sometimes at the expense of deeper, more enduring values. It is interesting how the protagonist thinks it is pointless to vocalise her internal suggestions, since she knows that they won't value her words any more than a “blade of grass”. “When I suggested that a few brinjals or lady's fingers should be grown, they planted useless cacti and crotons in the same place” (Chayadevi). Kamala and Gopalam think that

‘tamarind and chilli’ are bad for health and prefer less spicy food. Her children savouring tasteless food, their thick glasses, and their enjoyment of shallow, meaningless comics deeply trouble the core of the protagonist's being. As she watches them indulge in such inconsequential pleasures, she is confronted with the stark realisation of the widening generational gap. The contrast between her own values—rooted in deeper, more tangible experiences—and their seemingly hollow interests leaves her feeling disillusioned and disconnected. In her desperate attempt to reconcile with the changing times and understand her children's world, she struggles to bridge the gap between what she once held dear and what her children now find comfort in. This growing divide becomes a source of inner conflict, as she grapples with the loss of traditional values and the disorientation that comes with watching the world around her evolve in ways she can't fully embrace.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to highlight the ecocritical perspective of the short story, emphasising the deliberate selection of words that ignite a broad range of interpretations. But beneath all of that, this paper strives to bring to light the concept of ‘ecological empathy’ that prioritises the forging of meaningful associations with ‘more-than-human entities’ for the preservation and restoration of our ecology. Eco-empathy, today, is identified as a promising vehicle by which humans could potentially build relational connections with more-than-humans to bring the resulting knowledge and experience into research, practice and policy, playing a crucial role in promoting sustainability. In the story, the woman serves as a powerful embodiment of ecological empathy, as she deeply connects with the plant, seeing its life and death as intertwined with her own. Her bond with nature reflects a profound sense of

care and respect for the environment. In stark contrast, the son's act of plucking out the plant symbolises a disregard for that empathy, illustrating a detachment from the natural world. This dichotomy serves as a poignant commentary on the erosion of ecological sensitivity in contemporary society. As urbanisation accelerates and lifestyles become increasingly fast-paced, the intimate connection between humans and nature is often lost. The pressures of modern life, with its focus on convenience and consumption, tend to overshadow a deeper appreciation for the natural world. Empathy for the ecology, once ingrained in human consciousness, now struggles to find its place in a rapidly changing world. The concept of ecological empathy aligns best with the sixteenth SDG established by the UN: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. By fostering a deep emotional connection with the environment, ecological empathy can help build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies where natural resources are managed responsibly, ecosystems are protected, and everyone has a voice

in environmental governance. At the end of the day, it is empathy that can save this world.

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ROOTED IN REBELLION: EXPLORING ECO-SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIPS IN HAN KANG'S *THE VEGETARIAN*

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Abstract

*This paper attempts to explore the interconnected themes of human-nature relationships and eco-spirituality in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*. Through the character of Yeong-hye, the novel examines a radical rejection of societal norms and a quest for spiritual and ecological purity. Yeong-hye's decision to stop eating meat becomes a metaphor for her transformation from societal conformity to a deeper, more harmonious connection with nature. Her journey, which includes the rejection of consumption, violence, and patriarchal control, signals a profound shift in her understanding of the self and the natural world. This paper argues that *The Vegetarian* critiques human-centric systems and explores the potential for ecological consciousness in the face of societal structures that exploit both women and nature. Ultimately, the novel invites readers to reconsider the relationship between humanity and the environment, advocating for a return to a more holistic, nature-aligned existence.*

Keywords: *human-nature relationship, eco -spirituality, women and nature.*

Introduction

In 2024, Han Kang's three-part novel *The Vegetarian* was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, cementing its place in contemporary world literature. Originally published in Korean in 2007 as 채식주의자, the novel garnered international recognition when it won the re-imagined Man Booker International Prize in 2016. The narrative follows Yeong-hye Kim, a young, disillusioned housewife in contemporary South Korea, whose recurring nightmares of animal torture propel her to reject societal expectations. Her radical decision to refuse meat consumption spirals into a broader rebellion against gender roles, sexuality, and familial bonds, culminating in her complete rejection of human-made structures. Her actions provoke violent interventions from her family, and as her physical and psychological health deteriorates, she declares, that she was not an animal and did not

need to eat. She adds that all she needed was sunlight (511). By the end of the novel, Yeong-hye is confined to a psychiatric hospital, where her struggle to transcend societal constraints and embrace a more spiritual, nature-aligned existence reaches its poignant resolution.

This paper explores *The Vegetarian* through the intertwined frameworks of human-nature relationships, and eco-spirituality integrating theoretical perspectives to deepen the analysis of Yeong-hye's journey. Yeong-hye's rejection of societal norms especially her refusal to consume meat becomes symbolic of her quest for a purer, more authentic connection to the natural world. Her radical transformation critiques patriarchal control over the female body and the exploitation of nature, embodying ecofeminist principles that highlight the interconnection of gendered oppression and environmental degradation. Drawing from Eric

Cassell's theory of suffering, the novel explores suffering as a crisis of personal integrity. Cassell asserts that suffering encompasses not only the physical but also the psychological and spiritual realms, thus affecting the entire individual. Yeong-hye's physical and mental decline, as she detaches herself from the meat-eating practices of a patriarchal society, represents a profound disintegration of her identity. This disintegration reflects her struggle to free herself from the societal constructs that define her body and her existence.

In the context of human-nature relationships, *The Vegetarian* examines the cost of defying societal structures to seek a more spiritual, nature-aligned existence. Yeong-hye's journey reveals the complexities of human interaction with nature, as her rejection of a violent, materialistic society comes at a personal cost. Through eco-spirituality, the novel highlights the transformative potential of nature, showing how Yeong-hye's search for purity and transcendence ultimately leads her to challenge the boundaries between the self and the natural world. Thus, this paper argues that *The Vegetarian* provides a critical contribution to contemporary eco-narratives, offering a nuanced exploration of human, environmental, and gendered dynamics.

This analysis not only addresses Yeong-hye's individual transformation but also places her within the broader context of ecofeminist discourse, critiquing the intersections of patriarchy, environmental exploitation, and the quest for spiritual liberation. It situates *The Vegetarian* within existing literature on human-nature relationships, and eco-spirituality aiming to shed light on the complexities of the ecological and spiritual dimensions of human existence.

Human-Nature Relationships and Eco-Spirituality in *The Vegetarian*

In *The Vegetarian*, Han Kang explores the intricate relationship between humans and nature, focusing on the character of Yeong-hye. Through her rejection of societal expectations, particularly those surrounding food, Yeong-hye signals a deeper, more spiritual connection to nature. Her radical transformation from a submissive, domesticated wife to a defiant figure in tune with nature demonstrates her desire to break free from the human-made constructs that often distance individuals from the natural world. This section examines Yeong-hye's actions, especially her decision to stop eating meat and withdraw from a society that imposes rigid dietary and gendered norms that reflect a broader theme of human-nature relationships. It highlights her quest for harmony with the natural world. Throughout the novel, Han Kang intertwines the themes of eco-spirituality and human transformation. As Yeong-hye distances herself from societal expectations, she embraces a profound connection with nature, embarking on an eco-spiritual journey that transcends the physical realm. Her transformation becomes a rebellion not only against the societal systems that confine her but also a return to a more elemental, spiritual state rooted in nature.

Yeong-Hye's Initial Disconnect from Nature

At the beginning of *The Vegetarian*, Yeong-hye leads a conventional life defined by the societal expectations of a submissive wife, conforming to the rigid norms of Korean society. Her existence is dominated by routine, human-centric behaviours that prioritize survival within these societal frameworks, leaving little room for a deeper, more spiritual connection with the natural world. In this context, her relationship with nature remains distant and passive. As Yeong-hye reflects on her past, she reveals her unquestioning compliance with the traditional practice

of meat consumption, bringing out her initial detachment from any ethical or spiritual contemplation of nature. In her passive acceptance of meat-eating, she unknowingly participates in a human-centric system that commodifies and exploits the natural world, reducing nature to a mere resource for human consumption. Meat, in this context, symbolises a world where nature is seen not for its inherent value but as something to be controlled and consumed. Yeong-hye's passive compliance reflects an unconscious detachment from the natural world, where the morality of her actions and their broader consequences on the environment and living beings are never questioned. This disconnect from nature sets the stage for her later transformation, as she begins to challenge and ultimately break free from these societal constructs, seeking a more profound and spiritual connection with nature

The Rejection of Meat as a Sign of Returning to Nature

Yeong-hye's radical decision to stop eating meat marks a pivotal moment in *The Vegetarian*, signifying her rejection of societal norms and her desire for a deeper, more authentic connection with nature. This action is not just about dietary choice; it represents a profound break from the human-centric worldview that views nature as a commodity to be consumed and controlled. In choosing to no longer participate in meat consumption, Yeong-hye challenges the systems that objectify both nature and women, reducing them to mere resources for human use. Yeong-hye declares that she would neither eat meat nor wear bras

The protagonist's refusal to eat meat becomes a symbol of her rejection of a system that reduces both the natural world and women's bodies to objects of consumption. This moment marks a profound shift in her consciousness, drawing a direct line between her

own body and the natural world. By refusing to consume meat, Yeong-hye seeks liberation from the societal constructs that dictate her identity and behaviour, aiming instead for a more primal, nature-aligned existence that resists the violence imposed by human-centered systems. Yeong-hye's journey of abstaining from food altogether is encapsulated in the her belief that the less she ate, the more she felt.

This reflects her growing sense of connection to her body and, by extension, the natural world. As she ceases to consume meat, she not only rejects the violence embedded in consumerist practices but also begins to perceive herself as more attuned to her internal, organic nature. This abstention can be understood as a symbolic return to the earth, where consuming less and rejecting harmful practices leads to a more profound spiritual vitality. Yeong-hye's transformation represents a shift away from a materialistic worldview toward a deeper connection with nature, where the act of "not consuming" fosters an awakened awareness of the interconnectedness of all life.

The Dream Sequence: A Deepening Connection with Nature

The most significant moments of spiritual connection with nature occur when Yeong-hye experiences vivid dreams of becoming a tree. These dreams signal a profound shift in her consciousness and a desire to transcend human limitations and become one with nature. The dream sequence is pivotal in understanding Yeong-hye's growing connection to the natural world and her rejection of human-made societal structures. This is best seen in her recollection of her dream in which she felt rooted and an extension of a tree.

The dream sequence where Yeong-hye imagines herself as a tree marks the beginning of her spiritual transformation. In this moment, Yeong-hye seeks to

dissolve the boundaries between herself and nature, desiring to become something rooted and elemental, like the earth itself. The tree represents both a literal and symbolic link to nature, symbolising growth, strength, and connection to the earth. Yeong-hye's identification with the tree reflects her yearning to escape the limitations of human societal roles and return to a more pure, organic state of being: "I am not an animal anymore ... I can live without food ... All I need is sunlight" (511).

This statement underscores Yeong-hye's rejection of material, human-centered needs in favour of a more spiritual, nature-centered existence. By suggesting that she no longer requires food to survive and that sunlight alone will sustain her, Yeong-hye symbolically aligns herself with photosynthesis, the natural process that sustains plant life. This radical shift indicates her growing desire to return to a state of purity, to transcend human needs for sustenance, and to embrace the simplicity and sustainability of the natural world.

Yeong-hye's Alienation from Society and Nature's Liberation

Yeong-hye's transformation into a figure of resistance, turning away from both the expectations of human society and the violence of meat consumption, reflects a dual liberation for herself and for nature. As she becomes more estranged from human society, she simultaneously becomes more attuned to the rhythms of the natural world.

Yeong-hye's deep alienation from a society that perpetuates cycles of violence, not just against women but also against animals and the natural world. Her rejection of this violence signified through her refusal to consume animals, aligns with a profound desire to free herself from a destructive system. This alienation from society also reflects her deeper spiritual yearning to reconnect with nature,

where there is no need for domination, control, or violence.

Conclusion

This paper explored the interconnected themes of human-nature relationships and eco-spirituality in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*. Through the character of Yeong-hye, the novel examines a radical rejection of societal norms and a quest for spiritual and ecological purity. Yeong-hye's decision to stop eating meat becomes a metaphor for her transformation from societal conformity to a deeper, more harmonious connection with nature. Her journey, which includes the rejection of consumption, violence, and patriarchal control, signals a profound shift in her understanding of the self and the natural world. This paper argues that *The Vegetarian* critiques human-centric systems and explores the potential for ecological consciousness in the face of societal structures that exploit both women and nature. Yeong-hye's refusal to partake in societal norms, particularly those that perpetuate violence against nature and women paves the way for a more spiritual, nature-aligned existence. Ultimately, the novel invites readers to reconsider the complex relationship between humanity and the environment, advocating for a return to a more holistic, nature-centered existence where personal liberation is intertwined with ecological consciousness.

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APOCALYPTIC PLOTS IN EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL'S *STATION ELEVEN* AND *SEA OF TRANQUILITY*

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Abstract

Emily St. John Mandel's Station Eleven and Sea of Tranquility explore the disaster narratives by dwelling into social collapse, human resilience, and the profound emotional aftermath of catastrophic events. While Station Eleven focuses on the immediate and long-term consequences of a global pandemic, Sea of Tranquility takes the broader view, weaving disaster, examining humanity's enduring response to trauma and the ensuing existential uncertainty. Both these works emphasize the fragility of the human connections. Station Eleven constructs a disaster narrative through the Georgia Flu, which wreaked havoc. The novel explores the disintegration of infrastructure, communications and social systems, but its core focus remains on human survival and adaptation in a new apocalyptic world. Through the characters in the novel, Mandel illustrates how art and cultural memory become tools for healing and rebuilding after disaster. The Motto "Survival is Insufficient" encapsulates the central theme of the novel. In Sea of Tranquility, Mandel engages with disaster in a more philosophical and temporal manner using motifs of the pandemic, exile and the stimulation hypothesis to construct a layered narrative. As the novel unfolds across centuries, it highlights the recurring cycles of human suffering and social upheaval brought about by pandemics and existential crises. She redefines the narrative by shifting the focus from the spectacle of catastrophe to the quieter, more enduring aspects of the human experience.

Keywords: disaster, pandemic, apocalypse, collapse, catastrophic, crises, survival, social disruption, human experience.

Introduction

Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* and *Sea of Tranquility* explore disaster narratives by dwelling on social collapse, human resilience, and the profound emotional aftermath of catastrophic events. While *Station Eleven* focuses on the immediate and long-term consequences of a global pandemic, *Sea of Tranquility* takes a broader view, weaving disaster across the time and space to examine humanity's enduring response to trauma and the existential uncertainty.

Station Eleven constructs a disaster narrative through the Georgia Flu, which wipes out most of the

world's population and causes the collapse of modern society. The novel explores the disintegration of infrastructure, communications and social systems, but its core focus remains human survival stories. Through characters in the novel, Mandel illustrates how art and cultural memory become tools for healing and rebuilding after a disaster

In *Sea of Tranquility*, Mandel engages with disaster in a more philosophical and temporal level using the pandemic, exile and stimulation hypothesis to construct a layered narrative. The plot covers millennia of recurrent human misery, existential crises, and the disruption of society brought on by

pandemics. She restructures the narrative by shifting the focus from the spectacle of catastrophe to the quieter, more enduring aspects of the human experience, thereby revealing that the true impact of disaster lies not just in the loss of life or societal collapse but in the emotional, cultural, and existential questions it raises. This underscores the idea that disaster is not merely a destructive force, but also a catalyst for reflection, connection and transformation.

Disaster Narratives

Disaster narratives, as the name suggests, revolve around a disaster that could be natural or human-made. These narratives frequently emphasize universal tensions regarding memory, identity, and what it means to be human. By examining the lasting impacts of crises, they stimulate readers to reconsider life's vulnerabilities alongside its enduring potential for connection, hope, and adaptation. The works of Mandel also explore the human responses to the disasters such as survivor's desire to restart life in the new, post-disaster world. Her narratives can be seen as a profound meditation on what it means to live through a disaster such as pandemic. *Sea of Tranquility* offers a deep reflection on the experience of living through a disaster, serving as a reminder that often, unpredictable events shape our lives and that we create meaning through the choices we make.

Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* and *Sea of Tranquility* explore disaster narratives in ways that transcend traditional depictions of catastrophe, focusing instead on human resilience, memory, and the search for meaning in a fractured world. Through pandemics, societal collapse, and existential crises, Mandel examines how individuals and communities navigate the aftermath of disaster, revealing both the fragility of civilization and the enduring strength of the human spirit.

Station Eleven: Disaster as Collapse and Rebuilding

In *Station Eleven*, the Georgia Flu pandemic serves as the central disaster, wiping out 99% of the population and dismantling modern society within weeks. However, Mandel's narrative focuses on the emotional and psychological repercussions of such a collapse. The novel explores how survivors reconstruct their lives with the remnants of civilization, adapting to a world without infrastructure, electricity, or global connectivity. Art becomes a vessel for memory and healing, as seen in the Traveling Symphony, a group of performers who travel between settlements, staging Shakespearean plays and classical music. Their performances symbolize hope, continuity, and the enduring need for cultural expression.

Beyond the immediate devastation, *Station Eleven* examines how the past lingers in the minds of survivors. The novel suggests that disaster is not only about loss but also about what remains. Clark, one of the key characters, curates the Museum of Civilization, where he preserves relics of the pre-pandemic world with smartphones, passports, and newspapers that are transforming them into symbols of memory and reflection.

Similarly, Miranda, the first wife of Arthur Leander, creates *Dr. Eleven*, a graphic novel exploring themes of isolation, survival, and hope. Though Miranda does not survive, her work endures, embodying art's ability to transcend time, process trauma, and preserve the human experience. Mandel's portrayal of disaster underscores the resilience of humanity, the ability to adapt, form new connections, and seek meaning in a fractured world. Rather than dwelling on destruction, *Station Eleven* highlights the beauty and purpose that persist even in the wake of catastrophe.

Sea of Tranquility: Disaster as Cyclical and Philosophical

Sea of Tranquility novel spans centuries, weaving together stories from the early 20th century to the far future, where humanity has colonized the moon but remains haunted by recurring pandemics and temporal anomalies. As opposed to *Station Eleven* which concentrates on reconstruction following a calamity. Across centuries, the *Sea of Tranquility* leaps swiftly and often highlights how trauma reverberates across time and generations as it explores the cyclical and repeating nature of human suffering.

Mandel broadens the scope of the disaster narrative by engaging with pandemics, existential crises, and the concept of simulated reality. Characters like Olive Llewellyn, a novelist who writes about pandemics while living through one, reflect the dual role of art in disaster narratives: as a means of processing personal grief and as a bridge to collective memory. Olive's novel serves as both a mirror and a record of humanity's struggles, reminding readers that art and storytelling offer a way to preserve experiences, ensuring that the lessons of the past endure.

At the heart of *Sea of Tranquility* is Gaspéry-Jacques Roberts, whose journey as a time traveller confronts the metaphysical implications of disaster and existence itself. Gaspéry's investigation into temporal anomalies and the possibility that life is a simulation introduces a philosophical dimension to Mandel's exploration of disaster. If reality is artificial, do the experiences of suffering, trauma, and resilience still matter? Mandel argues that the emotional weight of human experiences remains authentic, regardless of their metaphysical context.

Pandemic's cyclical nature across periods highlights their universality by demonstrating how they affect not only the lives of those who are directly

affected but also historical memory and future generations. Gaspéry's encounters with individuals from different eras, many of whom face pandemics or personal crises, emphasize the shared nature of human suffering and the search for meaning. Even when faced with existential uncertainty, the characters in *Sea of Tranquility* persist, demonstrating that the essence of humanity lies in its ability to endure, connect, and remember. It still tells the deep ideas and resounding story about time and reality. This meta-narrative demonstrates how pandemics generate both individual and societal pain as well as how art may help people remember and make sense of such catastrophes.

Shared themes in Mandel's Disaster Narratives

Both novels underscore the idea that disaster is not merely a destructive force but also a catalyst for reflection, connection, and transformation. In *Station Eleven*, the focus is on the immediate fallout of catastrophe and how survivors preserve cultural memory to rebuild meaning in a fractured world. The *Traveling Symphony* and the *Museum of Civilization* exemplify how art and artifacts can anchor people to their past while inspiring hope for the future. The non-linear narrative in *Sea of Tranquility* allows it to explore the philosophical implications of disaster, showing that trauma and memory persist across centuries, linking people together through shared experiences of loss and resilience. The narrative raises profound questions about the nature of existence while reaffirming the enduring power of human emotions and connections; this is made possible by the use of the simulation hypothesis.

Resilience and Connections

Both novels highlight humanity's ability to adapt and preserve in the aftermath of a disaster. The novels demonstrate the enduring power of human

connection, creativity and hope. Mandel emphasizes in both narratives the value of interpersonal relationships as a source of strength. The characters in the novels persevere and adjust despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles through relationships, art, or memory.

Resilience is more than just surviving; it is about finding purpose and building relationships that go beyond loss, tragedy, and time. In the face of uncertainty, these stories serve as a powerful reminder of how mankind perseveres and flourish, finding beauty and meaning.

Conclusion

Station Eleven and *Sea of Tranquility* by Emily St. John Mandel analyze the complex nature of apocalyptic occurrences, emphasizing both the immediate repercussions of catastrophe and their long-term ramifications on human identity, memory, and connection. Although societal collapse serves as the backdrop for those novels, Mandel reimagines the disaster narrative by directing attention away from the spectacle of disaster and toward the more subdued, timeless facets of human existence. Since disasters are increasingly the cause of stress for both individuals and groups, these stories have a crucial function. Mandel shows that the real effects of a tragedy are found in the existential, cultural, and emotional issues it brings up, not only in the death toll or the breakdown of society. In *Station Eleven*, the worldwide pandemic that causes civilization to collapse highlights the importance of creativity, survival, and cultural preservation as coping mechanisms. The implications of time travel, memory, and the possible simulation of reality are explored in *Sea of Tranquility*, which leads to deep meditations on the meaning of existence in the face of tragedy.

Mandel's characters discover methods to persevere, hold onto significance, and establish

connections beyond time and location through art, narrative, and memory. Her creations demonstrate how, despite devastation, humanity's capacity for creativity, resiliency, and community maintain its existence on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level. The most important journey following a calamity is the one of rebuilding, introspection, and discovering meaning in the endless human experience, as Mandel's reworking of the disaster narrative eventually highlights.

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WINTER AND ECOLOGICAL FRAGILITY: EXPLORING THE HUMAN-NATURE INTERDEPENDENCE IN KIRAN MILLWOOD HARGRAVE'S *THE WAY PAST WINTER*

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Abstract

Kiran Millwood Hargrave's novel *The Way Past Winter* combines fantasy and climate fiction, utilizing the story of an external winter to illustrate ecological fragility and human reliance on nature. As ecological fiction, the novel explores the implication of environmental upheaval and demonstrates the impact of the imbalance of nature on human life. Hargrave's external winter is a powerful metaphor for ecological degradation and has striking parallels with real world climatic issues and its effects on ecosystems and demographics. This paper will examine the interdependence between the human and the natural world in the text.

Keywords: climate fiction, eternal winter, human dependence on nature sustainable, ecological fragility, ecosystem fantasy, ecology anthropogenic impact.

Introduction

The Way Past Winter by Kiran Millwood Hargrave is a novel set in a magical world. It narrates the story of three siblings – Mila, Oskar, and Sanna who live in a forest cursed by eternal winter. The story moves involves a mysterious stranger who appears at night with an army of men and in the aftermath of which visit Oskar goes missing. Mila, being the eldest, embarks on a journey to rescue him, bringing into this novel one of the classic tropes of fantasy, the quest.

Climatic fiction, sometimes known as cli-fi, examines the long-term effects of climate change on a region. Extreme temperature, wind patterns, rainfall, unnatural lengthening of seasons, increasing sea levels, receding mountain glaciers, ice melting more quickly than usual, changes in flower and plant blooming patterns are all examples of long-term

changes in the earth's climate that are referred to as climate change. The primary cause of the frequent occurrence of extreme weather events is often traced back to the industrial revolution, which also contributed to the planet's warming.

Once covered by glaciers, the United States currently has fewer glaciers and warmer temperatures. Every five years, the earth's temperature increases by a degree Fahrenheit. This change in temperature leads to the health hazards in humans, animals and plants. It has been proven that human activity, such as the production of greenhouse gases has significantly altered natural weather patterns leading to extreme temperatures that in turn cause droughts to last longer and tropical storms to intensify because of rising ocean temperatures, in turn accelerating the melting of snow. Sea level rise

and methane emissions also pose a major hazard to coastal communities. "In *The Way Past Winter*, Kiran writes "stories are just a different way of telling the truth" – and the truth is exactly what you'll find in her most poignant story yet" (Hargrave 2018).

The Way Past Winter follows Mila and her sisters' travel through the land of eternal winter, a climatic condition that can be associated with climate change: "It was a winter they would tell tales about. A winter that arrived so sudden and sharp it struck birds to branches, and caught the rivers in such a Frost their spray froze and scattered down like clouded" (Hargrave 3).

While climate change is mainly related to global warming extreme cold events are also common. The disruption of the natural atmosphere and ocean system causes significant changes in the weather, causing severe cold in some. Winters thus get long and intense. This has very adverse impacts on agriculture, infrastructure and health, leading to economic stress on resources and energy.

Such severe cold conditions seem to be the stuff of a dystopic fantastic world. C S Lewis creates just a world in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*: "It is winter in Narnia, and it has been forever so long... always winter, but never Christmas" (Lewis 18). The White Witch's reign becomes here as a symbol of never-ending winter in Narnia

In *The Way Past Winter*, the transition from eternal summer to winter highlights the effects of climate change on ecosystems, human life, and survival. Summer is characterized by high temperatures, extensive sunshine and seasonal rainfall. Eternal winter on the other hand is dominated by continuous snow, rough gusts, and thunderstorms. This intense shift upsets the ecosystem. prevents biological diversity and prevents human existence. This transition also leaves a psychological and emotional impact, as summer is usually a time of

renewal and hope, whilst the eternal winter symbolises stagnation, death, and imbalance.

They'd grown used to the pathetic exchanges that passed for conversation between their sister and the knife-sharpener from Stavgar. Oskar looked up from where he was finishing slicing Sanna's cabbage with his hunting knife. Its handle was intricately carved to look like roots twisted across it, and it had a thick blade, better suited to cutting rope and wood than vegetables. (Hargrave 7).

The novel foregrounds survival and resilience, the family and explores how through interactions with the outer world, people survive and stay strong in tough conditions. It also looks at how the characters deal with their environment. In their harsh world, the way the sister and knife-sharpener talk shows they are not close and their relationship is tense. Oskar's well-made hunting knife shows how they're good at using a limited resource they have and staying practical. It also shows their close tie to nature. The knife-sharpener hints at a world beyond theirs, but they do not talk much, which suggests their connections are weak.

The challenges posed by severe climate changes forces the villagers to make use of their limited resources for heating and survival: "The frost had come early, and it was biting, relentless, creeping into the corners of the house, making every step on the floor feel as if they were walking on ice. They had to keep the fire burning at all times to stave off the cold, but the wood was scarce" (Hargrave 139). This reflects the energy strain on natural resources that we see in the real world. Jack London in his work *To Build a Fire* states that, "The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that

unprotected tip, received the full force of it" (London 10).

The disappearance of Oskar with the mysterious Mage, who is connected to the eternal winter, echoes similar patterns in other fantasy novels such as Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's *The Brotherhood of the Conch*. The mage's actions in *The Way Past Winter* metaphorically reflect how human activities like deforestation or industrialization can disrupt the balance of ecosystems, leading to catastrophic environmental conditions. Mila's quest to rescue her brother mirrors humanity's struggle to restore ecological balance and survive in a world increasingly shaped by environmentalism. Emily St. John Mandel in her work *Station Eleven* points out "What was lost in the collapse: almost everything, almost everyone, but there is still such beauty" (Mandel 54).

The ability of art to create and maintain human with the human and non-human world can help in such conditions. A number of canonical texts have dealt with this.

In John Keats' *La Belle Dame sans Merci* "The sedge has wither'd from the lake, And no birds sing." (3-4), withered plants and the absence of birds reflect the emotional and physical devastation the heroic knight experiences after being seduced and abandoned by a mysterious girl; a dead

neighborhood reveals his desolation. Like *The Way Past Winter*, Keats' poem can also be considered an ecological fantasy that conjures up worrying images of environmental damage.

The Way Past Winter clearly presents the interdependence between nature and humanity. The novel uses non-stop winter as a symbol of ecological imbalance. While nature attempts to heal itself without human intervention the necessity of human care to maintain balance cannot be overstated. Hargrave's book uses fiction, specifically fantasy fiction, to create awareness of our dependence on nature and on the need to adopt sustainable practices.

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ECOLOGICAL DYSTOPIA AND THE PARADOX OF PROGRESS IN RAY BRADBURY'S "THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS"

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Abstract

The short story "There Will Come Soft Rains" written by Ray Bradbury hauntingly explores a post-apocalyptic world marked by ecological and economic disintegration. The story revolves around an automated house that carries on its functions despite the absence of human life in a world where a nuclear war has wiped out an entire society. The central paradox is underlined by the persistence of technology in the aftermath of human and ecological collapse. Technological developments that were supposed to improve human life eventually resulted in its annihilation, and what remains is a world where progress outlives its makers. The personification of the advanced home automation that continues to operate in a lifeless land enables one to think of it as an extension of human intellect and pride but at the same time, it acts as a metaphor elucidating the dangers and failures of progress that ignores ecological sustainability and in addition the ecological dystopia of the radioactive background illustrates the frail relationship between technological evolution and ecological health. This paper examines how the short story uses the very genre of science fiction to shed light on the dual nature of technological advancement and the potential ecological consequences of developments made without regard for environmental balance and sustainability. It urges the readers to aim towards sustainable development.

Keywords: ecological dystopia, technological development, sustainability.

Introduction

The softness of the morning breeze, the coolness of the waves that gently kiss the shore, the pastoral, rocky and fertile earth that lays the foundation of everything that grows above it, the warmth of the fire as it gracefully dances in the hearth. For the most part, the natural world provides living beings with a sense of safety and belonging that makes one feel at ease and at home. Human beings in general have taken great advantage of it imagining the world to be anthropocentric, draining nature and endangering its ecosystem by using them as mere resources for scientific and technological development and military conflict in pursuit of a better and "smart world". Like

any other case of oppression leading to rebellion, nature too strikes back in the form of cyclones, hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires and so on. The awareness - that the rebellion of nature will in time be too strong for the mortals to withstand if human actions in the name of advancements are not checked - exists, yet people continue to live in blissful ignorance. But for how long?

In an interview, the American author and screenwriter, Ray Bradbury, said that the most accurate way to describe him is as a magician rather than a science-fiction writer. His writings are filled with science and fantasies that portray a world saturated with subjects of fascination. His works are

known for their dystopian vision of the future, haunting depictions of human actions and their social and moral implications through poetic and descriptive language including literary devices like metaphors and personification. His short story "There Will Come Short Rains" is also the penultimate chapter of his novel *The Martian Chronicles*, 1950. Set in a post-apocalyptic world of 2026, the story accentuates the problematic relationship between human-made innovations and the natural world as well as its impact on humanity with the major character in the story being an automated house that goes about with its functions in the absence of human life as a result of the nuclear war.

Methodology

Ihab Hassan first used the term posthumanism in his paper "Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthuman Culture?" According to him, understanding posthumanism necessitates first realising that the mortal form, including mortal desire and all of its external expressions, may be undergoing significant change. We must realise that the five-hundred-year history of humanism may be coming to an end as it becomes a commodity that we are powerlessly forced to refer to as posthumanism (Hassan 843). The autonomy of man and the idea of a world where everything exists to cater for the needs of human beings is challenged. In general, posthumanism entails rejecting what is frequently referred to as human exceptionalism, which is the belief that our species is exceptional and that it is the highest form of evolution. It acknowledges that evolution is a force with "non-human agency" that will undoubtedly go past us into a posthuman, post-anthropocentric future of which we may only be a part of.

Joseph W. Meeker initially put forth the term literary ecology in 1972 in his work *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*. However,

ecocriticism as a term was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", where he denotes it as how "ecology and ecological concepts" are applied in analysing literature. In the book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, ecocriticism is defined by Cheryll Glotfelty as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). It helps one understand the role of biological themes, portrayal of nature and its impact on the characters. The term, Anthropocene, however, rejected by the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and the Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy (SQS) in March 2024 as a formal geological epoch, can still be used to underscore the impact human activities have on Earth concerning the ecosystem and climate, which are mostly detrimental.

Viewing the short story "There Will Come Short Rains" through the lens of these critical theories helps in unveiling the social and ecological concerns that are projected through it.

An Ecocritical and Posthuman Reading of the Text

The United States detonated two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 making the Second World War come to an end; a result of the Manhattan Project, which was one of the highest achievements in scientific innovation that simultaneously led to the death of hundreds of thousands of people. Only five years after World War II and with the Cold War still raging, Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Short Rains" came out in 1950.

The story's setting is Allendale, California, where on August 4, 2026, the main character, the house, stood alone amidst the ruins of the city. The setting is slowly revealed reveal a few lines into the narrative

and is essential in conveying to readers the tone, visual imagery, and sense of ecological dystopia that permeate the city. The only surviving house was this one. It was possible to see the radioactive glow emanating from the destroyed metropolis for miles at night. This suggests that the narrative takes place in the aftermath of a nuclear war that has destroyed the ecosystem and wiped out most of humanity (Bradbury 164-165). This indicates that the story is set in the aftermath of a nuclear war which has left its ecology in ruins and led to the decimation of human beings. The inside of the house, on the contrary, continues to do everything to provide a safe space for the family that is no longer around. This is clearly painted through the description of the house which states how nicely the house had maintained its peace up until this point. How cautiously it had asked, "Who goes there?" Can you tell me the password? and it had closed its windows and drawn shades "in an old-maidenly preoccupation with self-protection" that verged on "mechanical paranoia" after receiving no response from lonesome foxes and complaining cats (Bradbury 165). It continues to cook, clean and offer entertainment in the form of playing cards on the bridge table, music and reading out poetry. The obsession of the house, though it may seem very human, is highly mechanised and lacks compassion. This is evident when the house by recognizing its voice lets inside the dog which was once the family pet, and the only noticeable living creature in the story, but when the dog dies, the mechanical mice dispose of the corpse in a very indifferent manner. This ecological collapse and absence of human life along with the apathy of the technological world that is left behind gives the story a cynical and eerie atmosphere.

Ironically, the machines and forms present in the automated house closely resemble the natural world. The robot mice and mechanical snakes as well as the

entirety of the nursery during the children's hour when "The nursery walls glowed...The nursery floor was woven to resemble a crisp, cereal meadow" (Bradbury 166) also incorporates insects and animals and provides an entire sense of the natural world aiding the visual, sensory and olfactory systems taking direct inspiration from nature which shows a sense of interconnectedness and the need for coexistence. In the end, when nature inevitably takes over in the form of a fire and the house is set ablaze as the wind blows onto a branch that knocked the cleaning solvent onto the stove, the house tries to extinguish it with the help of another natural element, water. Though it puts up a good fight it had to eventually give in and accept defeat. However, at the very end of the story when just a single wall of the house remained, from within the wall a voice could be heard over the wreckage announcing the date of the next day.

This, rather than portraying the strength of technological advancements, invokes in the reader a sense of pity for it, which remains helplessly in a world where it is no longer needed.

The house and every inanimate, mechanical feature of it are personified from the very beginning of the story, as the "voice-clock sang" the time repeatedly as though it "were afraid that nobody would" wake up or when it announced the day's events, such as Mr. Featherstone's birthday or Tilita's wedding anniversary, and the fact that the insurance, water, gas, and light bills are due. Or, more specifically, when it cried out, "Fire!" and when it is stated that the house started to die (Bradbury 164,167). This is symbolic of how the fully automatic house, a marvel of human intellect and technological advancement, closely resembles and takes over the place of a human or living character in the story. From the onset, it establishes a posthuman world where humans are no longer the centre of things and

to the extent where they are no longer a part of it. The idea of human exceptionalism is broken down as initially technology and, in the end, nature, takes over. The only remnant of the McClellan family, the house's occupants, is the silhouette of the man, woman, and two kids—a girl and a boy—in paint and photographs, all involved in casual, everyday activities. The daily activities of the family as revealed through the functions of the house portray them to be like any other ordinary family that would live in a technologically developed world. This conveys that what happened to them is not unique and could happen to anyone when scientific advancements are made or used in ways that jeopardises the well-being of humans and nature.

The story and its title closely resonates with a poem called "There Will Come Soft Rains" written by Sara Teasdale which was published in 1918. The poem explains how nature and its beings will continue to exist even after human beings inevitably cease to exist as a consequence of their own actions. This is the poem that is read out in the short story by one of the voices in the house and is said to be the favourite of Mr McClellan, which is unsettlingly funny as it reflects the situation presented in the story. "Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree, / If mankind perished utterly;" (Bradbury 167).

The short story, thus, highly contradicts the anthropocentric ideology with which humans tend to look upon the world and encourage humans to take an all-encompassing approach to understanding the interconnectedness of nature and all its beings.

Conclusion

The ecocritical and posthuman analysis of the text uncovers technological progress and urbanisation without ecological and ethical considerations as a double-edged sword that will eventually lead to the self-destruction of human beings. It decentralises the

concept of humans as the dominant species in the world and encourages humans to control and regulate one's actions to minimise ecological harm as well as conflict between nations. Through the medium of an ecological dystopia that takes place in 2026, which is just a year away from the present, it serves as a warning of a possible near catastrophic future but also a hope that humanity has not yet reached the verge of self-annihilation, therefore there exists a chance to regain and maintain ecological and ethical balance.

The last seven Sustainable Development Goals as proposed by the United Nations that focus on sustainable cities, responsible consumption and production, the well-being of life on land and on water, maintaining peace and justice as well as the building of global partnerships is in alignment with the concept of trying to build a technologically and scientifically progressed world where the ecological equilibrium is intact.

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LAND, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY: A BIOREGIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON *KADAIKUTTY SINGAM*

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Abstract

Bioregionalism, a concept emphasizing sustainable living within the natural and cultural framework of a region, is vividly reflected. This paper explores how the Tamil film Kadaikutty Singam (2018), directed by Pandiraj aligns with bioregional theory by celebrating the intricate relationship between land, culture, and community. The protagonist, Gunasingam, epitomizes the pride and resilience of a farmer deeply connected to his agricultural roots, reinforcing the ecological and cultural significance of farming as a way of life. The film showcases traditional agrarian practices, local festivals, and familial bonds, highlighting the socio-cultural interdependence of rural Tamil Nadu. These elements resonate with the principles of bioregionalism, which advocate for ecological sustainability and the preservation of regional identity. The cinematography underscores the ecological diversity of Tamil Nadu, drawing attention to the natural landscapes that sustain the community. Additionally, the narrative critiques the encroachment of modernization, urging a return to sustainable practices and localized living. By intertwining themes of environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and community resilience, Kadaikutty Singam serves as a cinematic embodiment of bioregional ideals. This analysis underscores the film's relevance in promoting sustainable practices and reconnecting audiences with their ecological and cultural heritage.

Keywords: natural landscapes, culture heritage, community, sustainable ecology, bioregionalism

Introduction

In *Kadaikutty Singam* (2018), a Tamil-language film directed by Pandiraj, the depiction of rural life and agricultural practices is central to the narrative, highlighting the significance of land, culture, and community. Applying Allen's bioregionalism theory, which advocates for a holistic connection between human communities and their local ecologies, the film presents a compelling exploration of how the characters' lives are intricately tied to their bioregion. Bioregionalism emphasizes that the ecological, cultural, and social structures of a region are interdependent, and this perspective is mirrored in

the protagonist's journey, which reflects the interconnectedness of family, environment, and tradition.

The film's portrayal of the protagonist, a young man rooted in his agricultural heritage, emphasizes the role of land in shaping identity and community. As Allen suggests, bioregionalism promotes a sense of place that fosters sustainable living practices and nurtures local ecosystems. The film's setting, a village marked by its lush fields and traditional ways of life, invites viewers to reflect on the sustainability of such practices in the face of modern challenges. By embracing a bioregional lens, *Kadaikutty Singam*

transcends a simple family drama, offering a deeper commentary on the vital relationship between land, culture, and community in contemporary India.

Problem Statement

The film *Kadaikutty Singam* (2018) vividly portrays the interdependence between rural communities, agricultural practices, and cultural heritage, yet it also highlights the increasing pressures faced by traditional livelihoods in a rapidly modernizing world. This paper examines the film through the lens of bioregionalism, particularly Patricia Allen's theory that emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between human communities and their local ecologies (Allen, 1993). While the film celebrates the harmony of rural life and its ecological foundation, it also raises critical questions about the sustainability of such traditions amidst socio-economic and environmental challenges. The growing disconnect between urban and rural spheres, combined with industrialization's impact on agriculture, threatens the stability of the communities depicted. This study investigates how the film reflects these tensions and whether it provides insights into preserving cultural and ecological identities within the framework of bioregionalism, thus offering a valuable lens for understanding rural resilience in modern times.

Literature Review

The exploration of bioregionalism as a theoretical lens has gained significant traction in recent years, particularly in the fields of cultural studies, environmental humanities, and rural sociology. At its core, bioregionalism emphasizes the interdependence between human communities and their ecological surroundings, advocating for localized, sustainable living practices that harmonize with the natural world. Patricia Allen's seminal work, *Food for the Future: Conditions and Contradictions of Sustainability* (1993), serves as a foundational text in

this domain. Allen argues that the health of human societies is deeply tied to the ecological integrity of their regions, and that sustainable practices must be rooted in a profound understanding of local ecosystems. This theoretical framework provides a compelling lens through which to analyze films like *Kadaikutty Singam* (2018), which are steeped in depictions of agrarian life, cultural traditions, and familial ties.

Bioregionalism and Cultural Narratives

Bioregionalism's emphasis on place and identity has been widely explored in the context of cultural narratives. Scholars such as Thomashow (1998) and Berg and Dasmann (1977) have expanded on Allen's foundational ideas, highlighting how literature, film, and other cultural texts can serve as vehicles for bioregional thought. Berg and Dasmann, in particular, introduced the concept of "reinhabitation," which involves relearning how to live sustainably within the limits of a given ecosystem. This concept aligns closely with the narrative structure of *Kadaikutty Singam*, where the protagonist's commitment to farming and his ancestral land becomes a metaphor for ecological stewardship and cultural preservation.

The intersection of bioregionalism and Indian cinema has received limited but noteworthy attention. Scholars like M.S.S. Pandian (2015) and Rachel Dwyer (2006) have examined the ways in which Tamil cinema portrays rural life, often oscillating between romanticized and critical representations. Pandian's work underscores how Tamil films frequently foreground agrarian landscapes to explore themes of identity, tradition, and socio-economic transformation. These insights are invaluable for situating *Kadaikutty Singam* within a broader cinematic tradition that seeks to reconcile the tensions between modernity and tradition, a central theme in bioregional discourse.

Visual Representation of the Rural in Tamil Cinema

Tamil cinema has long engaged with rural narratives, often using the village as a microcosm to address broader socio-political and environmental issues. Films like *Paruthiveeran* (2007) and *Vetrivel* (2016) have similarly delved into the complexities of rural life, exploring themes of caste, family, and land ownership. According to Anand Pandian's *Crooked Stalks: Cultivating Virtue in South India* (2009), Tamil cinema frequently portrays the village as both a site of cultural authenticity and a space fraught with conflict, thus reflecting the dualities inherent in rural existence.

Kadaikutty Singam contributes to this tradition by presenting a holistic view of rural life that integrates familial, cultural, and ecological dimensions. The film's protagonist, Gunasingam, embodies the ideals of a farmer deeply connected to his land and community. Through his character, the film not only celebrates traditional agricultural practices but also critiques the encroachment of urbanization and industrialization on rural livelihoods. This dual focus aligns with bioregionalism's call to resist homogenizing forces and prioritize localized, context-specific solutions.

Thematic resonance with Bioregionalism

One of the key thematic resonances between *Kadaikutty Singam* and bioregionalism lies in the portrayal of land as a central character. The film's narrative revolves around the protagonist's efforts to sustain his family's agricultural heritage, despite mounting pressures from external forces. This aligns with Allen's (1993) argument that sustainable communities must be deeply rooted in their local environments, with an intimate understanding of the ecological and cultural dynamics at play.

Furthermore, the film's emphasis on community and familial bonds reflects bioregionalism's assertion

that human relationships are integral to ecological well-being. Scholars like Plumwood (2002) have argued that ecological sustainability requires not only environmental stewardship but also social cohesion and collective responsibility. In *Kadaikutty Singam*, these values are embodied through the protagonist's efforts to preserve his family's unity and their connection to the land, even as modernity threatens to erode traditional structures.

A Bioregional Perspective on Kadaikutty Singam (2018)

The Tamil film *Kadaikutty Singam* (2018), directed by Pandiraj, offers a vivid portrayal of rural life, familial ties, and the ecological significance of land. This discussion explores the film through the lens of bioregionalism, a theoretical framework that emphasizes the interconnectedness of communities, cultures, and their local ecosystems. By focusing on the protagonist's agricultural heritage and the challenges of modernity, the film becomes a rich site for examining themes of sustainability, tradition, and identity.

Bioregionalism: Theoretical Framework

Bioregionalism, as articulated by scholars like Patricia Allen (1993), Thomashow (1998), and Berg and Dasmann (1977), advocates for a harmonious relationship between human communities and their natural surroundings. At its core, bioregionalism promotes "reinhabitation," or the practice of living sustainably within the ecological limits of a specific region. This theory underscores the importance of understanding and preserving local ecosystems, traditions, and cultural identities. Allen's foundational text, *Food for the Future: Conditions and Contradictions of Sustainability*, argues that sustainable practices are deeply tied to a community's relationship with its environment, a

concept that resonates strongly with the themes of *Kadaikutty Singam*.

As already mentioned, Tamil cinema has long been a medium for exploring rural narratives, often using the village as a microcosm to address broader social, political, and environmental concerns. Scholars like M.S.S. Pandian (2015) and Rachel Dwyer (2006) have noted that Tamil films frequently portray rural life as a site of cultural authenticity and tradition, while also highlighting the conflicts arising from modernization and urbanization. Films such as *Paruthiveeran* (2007) and *Vetrivel* (2016) delve into similar themes, exploring the dynamics of caste, land ownership, and familial bonds.

Kadaikutty Singam builds on this tradition by presenting an idealized yet nuanced depiction of rural life. The protagonist, Gunasingam, is a farmer whose life revolves around his family and agricultural practices. The film's narrative intertwines his personal struggles with broader issues such as land disputes, environmental degradation, and the impact of industrialization on rural livelihoods. Through its focus on these themes, the film becomes a powerful commentary on the socio-ecological challenges faced by rural communities in contemporary India.

The Interconnection between Land, Culture, and Community

One of the central themes of *Kadaikutty Singam* is the interdependence of land, culture, and community. The film portrays the protagonist's deep connection to his ancestral land, which serves as both a source of livelihood and a symbol of cultural identity. This resonates with bioregionalism's emphasis on the importance of place-based identities and sustainable living practices. According to Berg and Dasmann (1977), a bioregion is not merely a geographical area but a cultural and ecological system that shapes the lives of its inhabitants.

In the film, Gunasingam's commitment to farming reflects a broader philosophy of ecological stewardship. His dedication to preserving traditional agricultural practices and his resistance to external pressures—such as urbanization and industrialization—highlight the challenges faced by rural communities in maintaining their way of life. This narrative aligns with Allen's (1993) argument that sustainable communities must prioritize local knowledge and practices to navigate the complexities of modernity.

Familial Bonds and Cohesion

The film places significant emphasis on familial relationships, which are depicted as the cornerstone of rural life. Gunasingam's efforts to unite his extended family and resolve internal conflicts underscore the importance of social cohesion in sustaining community well-being. This focus on family mirrors bioregionalism's assertion that human relationships are integral to ecological sustainability. Scholars like Plumwood (2002) have argued that fostering collective responsibility and social harmony is essential for addressing environmental challenges.

In *Kadaikutty Singam*, the family's unity is intricately tied to their connection with the land. The film portrays agricultural labor as a communal activity that strengthens familial bonds and fosters a sense of shared purpose. This depiction challenges the individualism often associated with urban lifestyles, highlighting the value of collective effort in sustaining both ecological and social systems.

Role of Women

While *Kadaikutty Singam* celebrates the contributions of women to rural life, it also reinforces traditional gender roles. Women are portrayed as caretakers and supporters, often relegated to the domestic sphere. This representation has sparked debate among critics, who argue that it fails to fully

acknowledge the agency and leadership of women in rural communities.

From a bioregional perspective, the empowerment of women is crucial for achieving ecological and social sustainability. As Allen (1993) and Plumwood (2002) have noted, gender equality is essential for fostering inclusive and resilient communities. Addressing these limitations in the film's portrayal of women would enhance its alignment with bioregional principles.

Challenges of Modernization

Kadaikutty Singam also highlights the tensions between tradition and modernity. The encroachment of industrialization and urbanization poses significant challenges to the sustainability of rural communities. The film critiques these forces, emphasizing the need to preserve traditional practices and resist the homogenizing effects of globalization.

This critique aligns with bioregionalism's call to resist external pressures that threaten the integrity of local ecosystems and cultures. Pezzoli (1997) has argued that bioregionalism provides a framework for addressing the socio-economic and environmental impacts of modernization by prioritizing localized solutions and community resilience. The film's narrative reflects these ideas, portraying Gunasingam's efforts to defend his land and community as a form of resistance against unsustainable development.

Conclusion

Kadaikutty Singam provides a rich narrative that bridges ecological, cultural, and social dimensions, making it a valuable text for exploring bioregional themes. Through its focus on land, culture, and community, the film highlights the importance of

sustainable practices, social cohesion, and localized solutions in addressing contemporary challenges. By applying bioregionalism as a theoretical framework, this discussion has underscored the film's relevance to broader debates about sustainability, tradition, and identity. However, addressing the film's limitations—such as its romanticization of rural life and its portrayal of gender roles—is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of its contributions to bioregional discourse. Ultimately, *Kadaikutty Singam* invites viewers to reflect on the intricate connections between land, culture, and community, offering valuable insights for both academic inquiry and real-world sustainability efforts.

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CLIMATE CRISIS: JOURNEY OF YUKI AND SAMI AND THEIR PLANETARY CONNECTION

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Abstract

"The ice is melting, but we have to cross"

-Eoin Colfer

Eoin Colfer is an Irish author of children books. Artemis Fowl and The Fowl Twins are the two important series through which he gained immense popularity. In 2015, along with Andrew Donkin and Giovanni Rigano he worked on an adult graphic novel Illegal (2017), the team behind Artemis Fowl graphic novels. Global (2023) is the second work of the team which talks about the pressing issues of climate change. This paper aims to focus on the effects of climate change, global warming which is dealt with in the above text. Global (2023) is a graphic novel which discusses climate crisis, children, and locations. This study explores the harsh realities of global warming in both the stories of Yuki and Sami. The paper employs qualitative methodology and follows a close reading of the text. This book talks about the ongoing climate crisis and how it affects children. This paper's aim is to showcase the effects of climate change and global warming as depicted in the graphic novel Global (2023). This paper explores the theme "One fragile world, an epic fight for survival".

Keywords: *global warming; climate crisis; survival; children.*

Introduction

The planetary crisis is the major issue which needs to be dealt with immediately. The world today is facing a climate emergency. The UN Climate Conference which was held at Baku, Azerbaijan on 11 November 2024 to 22 November 2024, in which nearly 200 countries came together to discuss the worsening impacts of climate change. In the 21st century cli-fi a new genre has emerged. This genre deals with themes related to climate change and its effects. *Global (2023)*, a graphic novel by Eoin Colfer is the story of two young people on different continents whose lives are catastrophically changed by the effects of climate change. All the climate change issues in this book are real and they are all

happening right now. *Global* depicts the serious impacts of the climate change issues. The story of Sami and Yuki has a common ground-global warming. In general, hotter temperatures, severe storms, rise in sea level, extinction of species, and melting of ice are considered to be a few indicators of global warming. In this graphic novel, the author emphasises two major effects. The effects are severe storms and the melting of arctic ice. In Sami's story, the author describes a severe storm and in Yuki, the author talks about melting of arctic ice and extinction of species. The influence of climate change has adverse effects on children. "Children who grow up in worst environment which is affected by climate change are both susceptible and prone to chronic

health conditions” (Nikola and Daniel 346). In general, incidents like severe storm, tsunami, wildfires disturb children more due to their physical and mental makeup. The impacts of climate change destabilise the world that the future generation will inherit. By 2050, the number of children exposed to extreme heat waves is expected to be eight times higher than in the 2000s. Furthermore, 1.7 times more children are about to experience extreme wildfires, and 1.3 times more will encounter severe droughts (*Frontline*). *Global* highlights the importance of how climate change affects children through the stories of Sami and Yuki. This paper deals with the effects of climate change and its impact on children.

Methodology

This paper employs qualitative methodology and follows a close reading of the text. This study adopts a thematic approach to analyse the effects of climate change on children in the novel *Global*.

Findings

This paper intends to address the climate issues notably global warming and its effects in the lives of children like Sami and Yuki. The climate change distress among children is underexplored, even though it is proven that climate change issues disproportionately affect children more than adults. As per the report of United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *The State of World's Children* (2024) mentions the children of 2050 will live in places that are far more exposed to climate risk. The findings discuss the impacts of global warming and how the planetary crisis threatens the wellbeing of children.

Climate Change in the Story of Sami and Yuki

Every year, humans release tonnes of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the Earth's

atmosphere. These gases trap energy from the sun, causing our climate to heat up. The intensity of heat has reached a dangerous level, drastically changing the environment around us. But children are more prone to it due to their physical and psychological makeup.

The story starts with Sami, a twelve-year-old boy who lives with his grandfather near the Indian Ocean. They experience sea level rise frequently. A small change in sea level affects the people living along the coastline very badly. The effects include destruction of homes, hunger, and migration to unknown lands. Climate crisis too poses a high risk to children's education. In coastal areas, children undergo a significant struggle because of rise in sea level. This is explained in the following lines: “It's happening again. Already. Quicker each time” (*Global* 1).

The rise in sea level is caused by the melting of glaciers. Due to climate change, there is a rise in temperature which leads to frequent storms. The health effects on children after a storm are continuous haunting thoughts about the disaster, nightmares, and sleeplessness. In the story of Sami, he lost his parents in the storm before three years, but the effects are still prevalent in Sami. Every storm reminds him of the past and it makes him anxious “A bad storm always makes me think of the last time I saw...” (37). In addition to that there is a sense of uncertainty in the people who experienced the storms. After storms they have to start their life again from scratch. Every time after the storm the debris should be cleared and they have to build their home again. This is the long-term challenge for them. The predicament of people is explained in the following lines “All we need is a little space afterwards. Somewhere to be” (39).

The melting of ice caps from the glacier causes sea level rise in the oceans. The rise in the ocean temperature affects the marine aquatic ecosystem

"Every season the fish are fewer" (*Global* 8). It indirectly hampers the livelihood of the people. As fishing is the primary source of living for coastal communities, it reduces their earnings and they find it difficult to maintain their family expenses like food, education, shelter, and healthcare. Along with that they face intergroup conflicts over basic amenities. "After natural disasters, children go through a lot of things that includes health problems, psychological distress, and disruption in schooling. Children are also more susceptible to indirect effects of climate change, such as food shortages, intergroup conflict, economic dislocation and migration" (Nikola and Daniel 345). In this novel too Sami is affected by the intergroup conflict: "Hey! That's our house! This came from the sea, like you. It's legal salvage. Hey! give it back! it belongs to us! We can't our real home is gone. It's mine. It's ours" (*Global* 5). The story of Sami and Yuki are intertwined in the sense that both are the victim of climate change crisis.

In the story of Yuki, the melting of glaciers contributes to permafrost thaws. A permafrost layer has several impacts on people and the environment. Organic matter like plants are frozen under the permafrost, and they begin to decompose when the ground thaws. It results in releasing carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere.

A huge frozen lake. It's beautiful. And it stinks. I know it smells funny boy. That's methane. Dead plants rot at the bottom of the lake, releasing methane. It comes up as bubbles and gets trapped and frozen into the ice. Look at it. It's amazing. There's a danger though. If the ice warms and melts then all that methane held there over years and years will be released all at once. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas trapping thirty-four times as much heat as carbon dioxide. There are lakes like this on the verge of melting all over the artic. Global warming strikes again (94-95).

The Arctic, which is made up of frozen sea, is warming faster than anywhere else on the planet (Hooke 51). The release of methane from permafrost thaws into the atmosphere accelerates the prevalent climate change crisis. Due to climate change, the coastal people experience intense and recurring storms which lead them to poverty and challenge their survival. Climate change exacerbates the frequency and intensity of storms "The storms are getting worse and they are happening more often" (*Global* 91). The shift in weather patterns increases the intensity, duration, and frequency of extreme weather events like floods, hurricanes, and tsunamis. The effects of climate change that are reflected here are due to the emission of greenhouse gases, because of that the ocean absorb heat which leads to warmer temperatures. The warming creates intense storms. The storms not only affect the properties but also affects the wellbeing of the children which is being expressed in the following lines "The winds have gone. Suddenly I feel so tired. I fall into grandpa's arms" (*Global* 38). After the storms, children, because of their immature physiological defence systems are more vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat, drought, and natural disasters.

To sum up, in the endnote of the novel the author concludes children are always more vulnerable than adults to climate and environmental shocks. For children like Sami and Yuki, the impacts of climate change make an already difficult situation worse. This situation pushes vulnerable children deeper into poverty.

Conclusion

Eoin Colfer's *Global* is more than a story of climate change, the events are happening in reality. The most vulnerable population is children. Children are the ones who are going to face the effects of climate change. High exposure to environmental stressors

like floods, storms, wildfires, and tsunami affects them both physically and psychologically. After all, science tells us that climate change is not just a global environmental phenomenon but also an ecological one. Human activity is the main cause of global heating. Additionally, melting of ice leading to cold freshwater flowing into the oceans changes deep water currents disrupting the global flow of ocean. Ocean currents redistribute heat around the planet and disturb the Earth's temperature and weather. There is a dire need to take measures to combat climate change which affects children more. Through this novel the author pin points the issues related to climate change and urges us to act immediately. On a personal level, an individual can take steps to reduce one's carbon footprint by eating less meat, recycling and reusing, and relying on solar plants for electricity.

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ECO-SPIRITUALITY TRACES IN PAULO COELHO'S *THE WITCH OF PORTOBELLO*

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Abstract

The paper focusses on the themes of eco-spirituality and witchcraft in Paulo Coelho's The Witch of Portobello. Eco-spirituality is a belief-system which connects nature with humans. The protagonist Athena, a witch in the modern world works hard to revive the Goddess, the Great Mother, of universe. The novel engages with the themes of Goddess-centred worship and in the process, attacks strict Christian rules which restrict the people from worshipping as they like. The paper highlights the ideas of eco-spirituality and the interconnection between human and nature.

Keywords: *eco-spirituality, great mother, pagan tradition, gipsy culture, feminism, christianity.*

Introduction

Eco-spirituality is a system of belief that connects human faith to the natural world. It encourages respect for the earth and care for all creatures irrespective of their utilitarian value and in this is closely aligned with Deep Ecology. According to the principles of eco-spirituality, human beings should care for the natural world and understand their responsibility towards it.

Paulo Coelho is a Brazilian author. *The Alchemist* and *Eleven Minutes* have sold more than 100 million copies worldwide and have been translated into 66 languages. Coelho's other significant works include *The Pilgrimage*, *Brida*, *Veronica Decides to Die*, *The Zahir* and *Aleph*. Coelho's works mainly focus on the quest for knowledge, on self-discovery and love. A strong current of spirituality runs through most of his works. This research paper focusses on the concepts of

eco-spirituality that can be found in *The Witch of Portobello*.

The Witch of Portobello by Paulo Coelho published in 2006, can be said to revolve around the idea of love for oneself and for others, with a strong eco-spiritual current running through it. Through its vignettes, the novel follows Athena, a young mysterious woman born to a gypsy in Romania and adopted by an educated family in Beirut. Living in London, she seeks mysterious powers in the universe through witchcraft. The novel projects strong female characters and has themes of love, spirituality, magic, witchcraft running through it. The image of the Great Mother Goddess is also prominent in the novel.

It was this same love that opened me up to my first encounter with the other when I was nineteen. Athena was the same age the first time she went into a trance while dancing. But that's the

only thing we had in common the age of our initiation. (Coelho 13)

Deidre O'Neill, known as Edda is the teacher of Athena. Both Edda and Athena are 21st century witches. Edda is, by profession, a doctor who combines traditional practices with modern practices to cure patients. Edda was 19 years old when she came into contact with the Divine Mother. In the same way Athena was also initiated into belief in the Great Mother when she was 19 years old.

It is to be noted that the reference to Great Mother is from the pagan and neo-pagan religions where nature is worshipped as Goddess.

From an early age Athena was guided by the Universal Spirit and knew how to connect with Mother Earth. She is often shown performing music and dance to liberate her soul in the universe and to connect with the supreme power of the world. She often speaks of connecting with the spirit that unites all creations:

Christ surround himself with beggars, prostitutes, tax-collectors and fishermen. I think what he meant by this was the divine spark is in every soul and is never extinguished. When I sit still, or when I'm feeling very agitated, I feel as if I were vibrating along with the whole universe. (Coelho 34)

Once Athena and Lukas became friends at the university, Lukas began to understand himself better and felt enlightened by Athena's talks and her presence. According to Athena's belief, God is in everyone irrespective of gender, community and race. The divine spark is present in every soul and all human beings are interconnected with the universe. This ideology forms the basis of the many religious and in this novel is linked with paganism and neo-paganism: "I am a vessel in which the divine energy

can make itself manifest. And that energy is asking me now to have a child, so that I can give it what my birth mother never gave me: protection and security" (Coelho 41).

Father Giancarlo Fontana who solemnizes the marriage Athena and Lukas also remarks that he felt the presence of divinity when Athena was present in the church. Athena's decision to get married is impelled by a desire to have a child and shower that baby with the love she herself did not receive from her biological mother.

Pavel Podbielski, the apartment owner of the house that Athena and her son rented after she divorces her first husband teaches her to dance and connect with the movements of the universe. While narrating the origin of dance and music and the way the ancestors connected with the rhythms of nature, he foregrounds that all processes are rhythmic and musical. He also points out how the ancestors used the movements and sounds of nature to worship the Great Goddess: "Once, someone told me that music had been created by God, and that rapid movement was necessary for people to get in touch with themselves" (92).

The novel reiterates that music had been created by God for all creations to understand themselves better. The movements and vibrations of music travel to the innermost beings of an individual and are echoed there. To remain in touch with this rhythm requires us to slow down and act with patience. This slowing down allows us to reach out to the non-human world and connect to creations that seem very different from us; it allows us to recognize and connect with the rhythm in all creation. Liliana, Athena's gypsy birth mother who lets the child go because she was ostracized by her community for conceiving a child out of wedlock, feels this connection when she allows herself to connect to her grief:

Unable to stop crying, I sat down on the ground and put my arms around the trunk of a tree. However, as soon as my tears and the blood from my wounds touched the trunk of the tree, a strange calm took hold of me. I seemed to hear a voice telling me not to worry, saying that my blood and my tears had purified the path of the child and lessened my suffering. Ever since then, whenever I despair, I remember that voice and feel calm again. (Coelho 135)

The Witch of Portobello also uses images from nature as symbols, thereby establishing a deeper connection between human emotions and the rhythms of the natural world. This can best be seen in the symbolic use of the storm:

'But you're tired', I go on, pretending not to have heard her remark. I can see the storm approaching. Like all storms, it brings destruction, but, at the same time, it soaks the fields, and the wisdom of the heavens falls with the rain. Like all storms, it will pass. The more violent it is, the more quickly it will pass. (Coelho 137)

The novel also overtly emphasizes these connections:

We don't possess the earth; the earth possesses us. We used to travel constantly, and everything around us was ours: the plants, the water, the landscapes through which our caravans passed. Our laws were nature's laws: the strong survived, and we, the weak, the eternal exiles, learned to hide our strength and to use it only when necessary. We don't believe that God made the universe. We believe that God is the universe and that

we are contained in Him, and He in us. (Coelho 141)

Liliana insists that God doesn't have gender and can be seen in the daily tasks of humans who perform them with love and joy. Understanding oneself is the key to feel the presence of Great Goddess. The Goddess is often compared to a woman who protects her family and takes care of her loved ones and gives her body. Coelho's novel makes explicit the connections between the female person, the Great Goddess and the natural world – all aspects that can be directly related to Deep Ecology and the Gaia Hypothesis:

After millennia of male domination, we are returning to the cult of the great mother. The Greeks called her Gaia, and according to the myth she was born out of chaos, the void that existed before the universe. With her came Eros, the God of love, and then she gave birth to the sea and the sky. (Coelho 178)

Conclusion

The Witch of Portobello can be considered an eco-spiritual text as it makes explicit the connections between the human body, especially the female body, the Great Goddess of the Goddess-centric tradition and the natural world. It follows, perhaps naturally, that this worldview would encourage a relationship with the natural world that would be eco-sensitive and ecocentric.

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THE SELF DISCOVERY OF ONE'S TRUE SELF WITH NATURE IN THE NOVEL *THE ONE YOU CANNOT HAVE* BY PREETI SHENOY

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Abstract

Preeti Shenoy is a prolific novelist who by her extreme interest in Psychoanalytic features has paved her own identity delete? and her characters and their attitude is what matters in the overall development of the novel. *The One You Cannot Have* (2012) by Preeti Shenoy is a contemporary romance novel that delves into the complexities of love, heartbreak, and self-discovery. The novel follows Tara, a young woman who struggles with the pain of unrequited love and her emotional journey of healing and personal growth. The story revolves around Tara, a woman who is deeply in love with Ayaan, a man who is emotionally unavailable to her. Despite their shared connection and intense feelings for each other, Ayaan is in love with someone else. This unrequited love becomes a source of deep pain and confusion for Tara. As Tara faces the heartache of loving someone who doesn't love her back, she finds herself at a crossroad in her life. Nature is not among the choices it is the one and only choice of man, Tara was in deep agony that she was rejected by her love and she wanted solace to be able to move forward in life and that happened to be nature for her. She found comfort in Ooty, a hill station, where she actually found herself too. She came to know the worth of her life and the worth of her identity. In short, Nature is portrayed as having a therapeutic effect upon mankind.

Keywords: nature, self-discovery, unrequited love, transcending effect.

Introduction

At the beginning of the novel, *The One You Cannot Have*, Tara is dealing with the emotional aftermath of her relationship with Ayaan, which has ended in disappointment and longing. She is unsure about how to move forward, grappling with the feeling of not being enough for the person she loves. As Tara seeks to heal from her heartbreak, she tries to distract herself by focusing on work, but she remains unable to let go of Ayaan and the memories they shared.

Throughout the novel, Tara wrestles with feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and the overwhelming desire to hold on to the hope that Ayaan might eventually come around. She finds herself caught between her heart's

desire and the reality of their situation—Ayaan is not available for a relationship, and Tara must learn to navigate this painful reality.

As Tara struggles with her emotions, she also confronts her own personal growth. She seeks solace in the beautiful hill station of Ooty, where she can reflect on her life, confront her feelings, and regain her sense of self-worth. This setting in Ooty serves as a metaphor for Tara's emotional journey—calm and peaceful on the outside, yet turbulent within.

As the story unfolds, Tara learns valuable lessons about love, self-acceptance, and the importance of moving on. She begins to understand that sometimes, the person you love may not be the

one who is meant for you, and letting go is a necessary step toward personal growth and finding true happiness. "Life never ceases to throw us googlies. It is how we handle them that makes all the difference. Sometimes you have to take control of it and, at other times, it is best to let go. And the wisest of persons is the one who knows which option to choose" (311).

Tara's journey is one of emotional healing, learning to love herself, and eventually opening her heart to the possibility of love with someone who truly values and understands her. Tara is grappling with heartbreak and confusion. Tara's time spent in Ooty allows her to reflect on her past, especially her unrequited love and the complexities of her emotions.

The calm and beauty of the hill station offer Tara the quiet space she needs to heal and introspect, providing a contrast to the noise and chaos of her life in the city.

The process of healing from emotional pain and heartbreak is another significant theme. Tara's path to healing involves confronting her emotions, letting go of her attachment to Ayaan, and finding peace with herself. The story emphasises that healing comes with time, self-reflection and the willingness to move on. The cool, tranquil environment of Ooty plays a symbolic role in Tara's emotional healing process as we are told that intimacy with nature can both heal us and teach us to be in harmony and at peace with ourselves and the world.

While the emotional tension of her love life is central to the plot, Ooty becomes a space where she can gain clarity and perspective. The scenic landscape mirrors Tara's journey of self-discovery, offering her an opportunity to find peace and closure regarding her past relationship. Nature on its own is a therapist as John Burroughs says, "I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order" (np).

Interpretation and Discussion

A central message in the book is that sometimes, the best thing you can do in a relationship is to let go. The novel shows how holding on to someone who isn't available emotionally can prevent personal happiness, and that letting go opens the door to new possibilities.

The novel also explores different types of relationships—romantic love, familial love, and friendship. Tara's relationships with her family and friends play an important role in her healing process, offering support and perspective during her emotional struggle.

In *The One You Cannot Have*, Ooty's setting plays an important role by providing a peaceful and beautiful environment that supports the themes of love, self-reflection, and healing. The setting becomes an integral part of Tara's journey, symbolizing the calm she seeks amidst the emotional turbulence in her life. Through Ooty's scenic landscape, Preeti Shenoy effectively uses nature as a backdrop for her characters' emotional growth and healing.

The One You Cannot Have is a heartfelt exploration of love, heartbreak, and self-discovery. Tara's emotional journey of learning to let go of unrequited love and embracing personal growth is the heart of the novel. Through her pain and healing, the story encourages readers to value themselves, understand that not all love stories are meant to be, and that true happiness comes from within. Preeti Shenoy's writing beautifully captures the nuances of relationships and emotional healing, making this novel a relatable and moving read for anyone who has experienced the complexities of love and loss.

Ooty also serves as a romantic backdrop in the story, enhancing the novel's emotional depth. The picturesque settings—like the misty hills, the lush gardens, and the romantic weather—add to the

sense of longing and love that permeates the book. The natural beauty of the place provides a visual and emotional context for the complex love story and the heartache Tara experiences. The shift from the bustling city life to the serene environment of Ooty also highlights the contrast between Tara's daily life and the inner turmoil she faces. Ooty provides her with a break from her urban existence, which has been filled with confusion, work pressures, and complicated relationships. This contrast emphasises the novel's theme of finding peace and clarity away from the noise and chaos of modern life.

Ooty is also tied to Tara's memories and past experiences. The place reminds her of her connection to her family and moments of happiness, giving her a chance to reconnect with who she truly is. "Instead, nature is the backdrop upon which therapeutic activities play out" (Sempik and Aldridge np). The natural environment allows Tara to confront her past emotions, enabling her to come to terms with her personal struggles.

Though Ooty features prominently in *The One You Cannot Have*, Preeti Shenoy's novels often use different settings that complement the emotional arcs of her characters. Nature and tranquil settings like Ooty are commonly used in Shenoy's work to provide space for her characters' introspection and personal

growth. The physical setting of serene places, like hill stations or coastal areas, often contrasts with the inner emotional journeys of the protagonists, adding layers of meaning to the narrative.

In *The One You Cannot Have*, Ooty as setting plays an important role by providing a peaceful and beautiful environment that supports the themes of love, self-reflection and healing. The setting becomes an integral part of Tara's journey, symbolising the calm she seeks amidst the emotional turbulence in her life. Through Ooty's scenic landscape, Preeti Shenoy effectively uses nature as a backdrop for her characters' emotional growth and healing.

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REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH THE LENS OF ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY IN THE WORK OF RAZA H. TEHSIN'S *STEED OF THE JUNGLE GOD: THRILLING EXPERIENCES IN THE WILD*

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Abstract

*Human-nature relationship is complex, diverse, and influenced by physical, socio-cultural and environmental histories. This results in co-relations, contradictions and contradictory interactions with nature. Human and non-human both are eminent parts of nature and are linked in an interconnected parallelism. Any imbalance in this parallelism can lead to a significant amount of corrosion in nature. Animals, as non-human beings, have been a significant part of human culture since ancient times, influencing customs, beliefs, religions, rituals, arts, and literature. In the book *Steed of the Jungle God: Thrilling experiences in the wild*. (2018), Raza H. Tehsin, a naturalist, has depicted the incidents of human encounters with wild creatures in the secluded wilderness which have been emphasised from a mystical, mythic and a superstitious point of vision, particularly the nocturnal creatures who are associated with uncanny imagination and fear of human mind. Tehsin explores local myths and beliefs about animals in the North-India region, Rajasthan, highlighting the worshipping, affinity and fear of non-human beings in the vicinity of woodlands. This paper explores the influence of animals on shaping Indian culture and social expressions, highlighting how these animal-based beliefs influence individuals' lives in the wilderness of Rajasthan where people live a life driven by the fear of the unknown.*

Keywords: *human-nature relationship, culture, environmental history, animals, myths and superstitions.*

Introduction

For I have learned to look on nature, not as in the hour of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes the still, sad music of humanity. (Wordsworth 90-93)

The depth of the relationship between human beings and nature has long been a topic for discussion. To William Wordsworth for example, nature served as mentor, a great companion and a living entity.

Since the beginning of the human existence nature has been considered as mother and a source of healing. This has led to the need for preserving and conserving the natural world. In addition to notable figures in India's lengthy conservation history,

such as Jim Corbet, Kailash Sankhala, and Salim Ali, one of the 21st-century naturalists who has dedicated his life to preserving wildlife is Raza H. Tehsin. His book *Steed of Jungle God Thrilling Experiences in the Wild* (2018) is based on the real-life experiences of his life during the phase when the author had spent in the dense forest of Dholi Ghati, Rajasthan. In his words, "the jungle was a home for me – not a savage wilderness but a green peaceful heaven – my first love, my centre of the universe" (Tehsin 1). In this book there are 20 short stories based on real incidents. These stories foreground the bonding between human and non-human. In these narratives, Tehsin has created a new aspect of human belief and

attitudes towards nature and developed a novel dimension of nature writing in the field of contemporary Indian English Literature. This paper aims to examine how these stories allow us to consider the ways in which cultural ideas in India alter our interaction with the natural world, with particular emphasis on how our attitudes and views about wild animals are influenced.

Raza H. Tehsin and his contributions in the field of conservation in India

During the 20th century India experienced numerous environmental movements primarily aimed at protecting forests and challenging existing policies that affected forests. In colonial India, the law regarding wildlife was very strict. The British government had strict rules and guidelines for hunting. After independence, lack of proper government regulations and scarcity of working members in the forest department led to a sharp drop in the population of wild animals. Poaching and commercial mass hunting had become popular at that time.

Tehsin spent a long time in the forest of Dholi Ghati, Rajasthan in 1961, located in the Aravalli Mountain range in North-Western India, as a supervisor of their family business of asbestos mining. Since his early ages Raza Tehsin used to accompany his father in the exploration in the core forest of Mewar region. As a young boy, venturing into nature had stimulated the urge to protect wildlife and later turned him into an activist and conservationist. Throughout his life his passion for wildlife and the urge to save nature had escalated. His persistent efforts have been instrumental in establishing wildlife sanctuaries like Phulwari ki Nal, Sajjangarh and Sita Mata in Rajasthan.

Phulwari ki Nal, established in 1983, spans 511.41 km in Kotra Tehsil, while Sajjangarh,

established in 1987, is the smallest sanctuary in Rajasthan. Sita Mata, established in 1979, covers 422.95 km in Dhariyawad Tehsil. Tehsin discovered various species in Southern Rajasthan, including rusty spotted cat, white-bellied Miniwit, Green Heron, Lesser Flamingo, three-toed Kingfisher, flying squirrel, mouse deer, white-eared bulbul, and more. Doves, partridges, quails, white hare husks, civets, foxes and jackals are also common in the forest of Dholi Ghati.

Depiction of Human-Nature relationship

As described in the book, Dholi Ghati forest life was challenging due to extreme atmospheric conditions, including hostile winters and monsoons; scorpions, venomous serpents and other creatures, posed significant challenges for survival and livelihood. Tehsin and his father frequently encountered wild nature, predators like panthers, leopards, and crocodiles, as well as strange, unexplainable events in the wilderness. It is evident that the author grew up in an environment that was closely surrounded by nature.

A significant element in the connection between the humans and nature in the book is the worshipping of nature. Since ancient times, humans have been worshipping the plants, animals, natural forces and elements as deities. They consider elements of nature, plants and animals as being connected with spiritual beings. This concept is defined by sociologists and anthropologists as the theory of Animism.

Tehsin has depicted an event in the story titled *A Cry in the Wilderness* in which, while surveying in the forest, the author and his team heard a child crying from a field 300m away after the twilight: "Meanwhile, the sun had gone down the horizon, and darkness had overcome the valley. After a hot day, the cool night breeze stimulated us. All this time, the cries of

the child could still be heard" (Tehsin 27). After investigating, they found no missing child but an owl mimicking the sound of a crying child. That was a distinct sound in the darkness of the valley. Tehsin states that "He had grasped the situation soon after we left. It was not a child but a great Indian horned owl mimicking a child's cry!" (Tehsin 28). The Great Indian Horned owl also known as the Indian Eagle Owl or Rock Eagle (*Bubo Bengalensis*) is found in the rocky forests and the semi-deserts in the Indian subcontinent. This species of owl has the unique ability to mimic other sounds, even human sounds.

A significant part of our cultural beliefs revolves around animals. In human imagination, mythology, and folklore, nocturnal animals like owls, bats, and wolves are associated with many superstitions that cast them in a negative light. For instance, while in Norse mythology owls are a sign of intelligence and the arrival of bad spirits, bats represent disaster and death and wolves are frequently portrayed as emblems of disorder. Closer home, in remote villages in Rajasthan, people often associate witchcraft with gloomy surroundings and lore of witches, demons, and evils. This environment fosters the development of myths and superstitions, leaving people haunted by the unknown: "Mysteries will persist as long as human life exists on earth" (Tehsin xxx).

Owls are connected with various cultural beliefs in Indian subcontinent. In some Indian cultures they are considered as the pious bird and as the steed of Goddess Laxmi, the deity of prosperity and wealth in Hindu mythology. In some other cultures, they are connected evil spirits, many Ogres and Ojhas, and sorcerers who use them to perform black magic and evil rituals.

Further explaining the incident author points out how these cultural beliefs are closely associated with the ways in which these creatures are treated: "He bowed his head and begged forgiveness from the

residing deity, who he thought, had, appeared in the form of an owl" (Tehsin 28). The anthropologist Tylor's theory points out that religions originated in early civilizations with humans worshipping spirits and supernatural entities, constructing cults with beliefs and ritual practices centred on spirits as agents.

In "Societies of Nature and the Nature of Society" (1992), Descola defines animism as "the belief that natural beings possess their own spiritual principles and that it is therefore possible for humans to establish with these entities personal relations of certain kind-relations of protection, seduction, hostility, alliance or exchange of services" (114); this reinforces the idea that every animal and living being has a soul and connected with spirit realm and supernatural beings.

Conclusion

In *Steed of the Jungle God: Thrilling experiences in the wild.*, it is evident that nature and human beings share an organic bond. Tehsin grew up in the wilderness, where worshiping natural elements is an important aspect of human-nature connection. Because of extensive devastation and human encroachment, the evergreen woodlands are becoming unrecognisable. There is a subtle but important conflict between humans and the environment. The significance of preserving the nature and the wildlife in human-nature relations has been prominently addressed by Tehsin.

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A PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN & ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP IN HUGH LOFTING'S *THE STORY OF DR. DOLITTLE*

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Abstract

*This article explores the intricate human-animal relationships in Hugh Lofting's *The Story of Dr. Dolittle* from postcolonial perspective. It analyses the novel's portrayal of empathy, communication and ethical treatment of animals within the context of colonial attitudes. This study aims to uncover the underlying messages regarding the interdependence of humans and animals. The analysis highlights how Lofting's narrative offers a vision of harmonious coexistence. This research paper intend to reflect upon the ethical complexities of human-animal interactions in a colonial setting.*

Keywords: *postcolonial perspective, colonial intervention, ecocriticism, communication.*

Introduction

The Story of Dr. Dolittle, first published in 1920, is celebrated for its artistic story of a doctor who can understand animals' language. The novel presents a profound insight into human-animal relationships within a colonial context. This research article examines these relationships through a postcolonial-ecocritical lens, highlighting the themes of empathy, communication, the bond between animals and human, intervention of humans and ethical treatment of animals.

Dr. Dolittle's ability to communicate with animals is the central technique used in the novel. Unlike other characters, he treats animals with profound compassion and understanding. The unique relationship of Dr. Dolittle and animals is clearly visible when Dr. Dolittle says, "Animals communicate in their own way, and we must learn to listen" (45). This statement imprints the novel's advocacy for empathy and communication in human-animal relationships. The doctor's empathy is further

highlighted in his interactions with the monkey Chee-Chee. When Chee-Chee confides in Dr. Dolittle about the hardships faced by his fellow monkeys, the doctor listens attentively and agreed to offer help, "I will do everything I can to assist you and your friends" (72). This moment illustrates Dr. Dolittle's commitment to understanding and addressing the needs of animals.

The ethical treatment of animals is the major theme in this novel. Dr. Dolittle's respect for animal life sharply contrasts with the exploitative attitudes of other characters. For example, when a hunter boasts about his animal trophies, Dr. Dolittle responds with annoyance that "Taking life for sport is a cruel and senseless act" (105). This reaction highlights the novel's critique of animal exploitation and its activism for ethical treatment. The novel also portrays animals as perceptive beings with their own personalities, emotions and desires. Lofting wrote, "Each animal has its own story, its own dreams, and its own sorrows" (58). These portrayal of incidents

humanizes the animals and challenges the traditional hierarchy which places humans above animals.

Dr. Dolittle's journey to Africa to cure the monkey epidemic is a significant point in the plot which underscores the interdependence between humans and animals. The doctor acknowledges this interdependence that, "Our well-being is intricately linked with the well-being of animals" (124). This statement reflects the novel's message that humans and animals are part of a larger ecological system and must coexist harmoniously. The successful resolution of the monkey epidemic further illustrates the unity of coexisting creatures in the universe. Dr. Dolittle's intervention not only saves the monkeys but also restores balance to the ecosystem. Lofting writes, "By healing the monkeys, Dr. Dolittle had also healed the forest" (139). This outcome emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and the environment.

From a postcolonial perspective, the novel's setting in Africa and the portrayal of Dr. Dolittle's journey can be analyzed for its colonial implications. Africa is depicted as an exotic and mysterious land, reflecting the colonial fascination when Lofting wrote, "The dense jungles and wild animals of Africa held an allure that Dr. Dolittle could not resist" (98). This portrayal aligns with colonial attitudes that fascinate and represent non-European lands and their residents. The novel also explores the characteristics of power dynamics in colonial relationships. Dr. Dolittle's role as a white saviour figure who step in to cure the monkeys' epidemic reflects the paternalistic attitudes of colonialism. Lofting describes Dr. Dolittle's arrival in Africa as, "The animals saw him as a savior, someone who could solve their problems and bring peace" (120). This depiction reinforces the notion of Western superiority and the presumed need for Western intervention in non-European contexts.

While Dr. Dolittle's actions are driven by empathy and a desire to help, the novel raises questions about the ethical implications of human intervention in a colonial context. The doctor's decision to interfere in

the monkey epidemic can be seen as a metaphor for colonial involvement in natural ecosystems. Hugh Lofting explores this complexity by presenting both the positive and negative consequences of such interventions. For example, *The Story of Dr. Dolittle* describes the disruption caused by Dr. Dolittle's arrival in Africa: "The presence of the white man disturbed the natural order of the jungle" (110). This disruption projects the potential harm of human actions, even when they are well-intentioned. However, the ultimate success of Dr. Dolittle's efforts advocates that thoughtful and compassionate intervention can lead to positive outcomes.

Conclusion

The Story of Dr. Dolittle offers a nuanced exploration of human-animal relationships within a colonial context, emphasizing empathy, communication, and ethical treatment. The portrayal of Dr. Dolittle's interactions with animals, the novel suggests for a more harmonious coexistence. It also highlights the interdependence of all living beings. By examining these themes through a postcolonial-ecocritical lens, the study can gain a deeper understanding of the novel's messages and their relevance to contemporary discussions on animal welfare and environmental ethics.

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ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE NOVELS OF ZADIE SMITH

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Abstract

*Zadie Smith stands as one of the most prominent voices in 21st century British literature reflecting multicultural Britain. Her novels examine the themes of cultural ethnicity and identity evident in her works, *White Teeth*, *NW* and *Swing Time*. She provides insightful reflections on the characters negotiating their identities amidst varying cultural landscapes illuminating the lives of the immigrants grappling from hybrid identities and their descendants who often oscillate between displacement and belonging and the nuanced perspectives on the tensions between assimilation cultural roots, hybrid identities and the resilience provided by reconciling multiple cultures. Her characters often struggle with cultural authenticity and exemplify the strength derived from hybrid backgrounds and negotiating multiple cultures with conflict. By giving voice to the immigrants, she portrays hybridity as the new multicultural norm, suggesting it as a strength despite prevalent injustices.*

Keywords: *cultural identity, identity clashes, assimilation and immigrants.*

Introduction

Literature as a reflection of society often delves into the psyche of characters who juggle their identities in the multi-cultural societies. Zadie Smith's protagonists' multicultural backgrounds which not only shapes their individual identities but also the perception of the world around them.

Zadie Smith is one of the most prominent voices in 21st century British literature reflecting multicultural Britain. Her novels intertwine complex narratives of race, identity, class and hybridity. In her works, she fictionalizes an intensive quest for authentic belonging, especially in multicultural societies. She also illuminates the lives of the immigrants, especially those grappling from hybrid identities and their

descendants who often oscillate between displacement and belonging.

Review of Literature

This review highlights the focus of identity in *White Teeth*, *NW* and *Swing Time*. These novels, illuminate the subtle exploration of identity, belonging and hybridity. *White Teeth* focuses on multiculturalism and identity formation while *On Beauty* portrays the negotiation of cultural identities in diasporic contexts. This study aims to bridge this gap by providing an integrated analysis of the expatriate condition as a transformative force in shaping identity and cultural hybridity in these three novels.

Methodology

This research adopts a close textual analysis as the primary means of inquiry. Through a close analysis of the characters, it is evident that particularly in *White Teeth*, *NW and Swing Time*, Zadie Smith depicts the tensions between assimilation that allows on to maintain cultural roots, development of hybrid identities and the resilience provided by reconciling multiple cultures. Each novel is dissected to unveil layers of meaning that articulate the lived realities of expatriates, the interplay of hybrid identities and the resilience provided by reconciling multiple cultures.

Results and Findings

Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality, highlighting that identities are multifaceted and stressing that different aspects of our identities intersect in complex ways. Homi Bhabha proposed the concept of 'third space' a hybrid space where different cultures meet, clash and reconcile. For individuals navigating multiple cultural spheres, third spaces can offer a reprieve; these spaces allow for the creation of new and hybrid identities that are drawn from multiple cultures without being bound to a single one. The navigation of multiple cultural spheres is a nuanced journey that requires adaptability, resilience and a deep understanding of one's multifaceted identity.

The novels of Smith, set in multicultural London, provide insightful reflections on the characters negotiating their identities amidst varying cultural landscapes. Her characters, especially those of immigrant backgrounds, frequently navigate a world in which they're supposed to conform to various sets of cultural expectations. *White Teeth* interweaves the lives of three families the English Joneses, the Bangladeshi Iqbals and the Jamaican Caribbean Chalfens. Through these families and their generations, the novel charts the oscillation between

following tradition and assimilating into society, the latter frequently invoking feelings of nostalgia and the latter beckoning with societal acceptance: "Irie Ambrosia Jones, whose first name is a patois word and simply means everything OK, cool, peaceful" (Smith, 64).

One of the most salient representations portrayed is the duality of identity if Irie Jones; Irene is the daughter of Archie, an Englishman and Clara who originates from Jamaica. Irie's name itself reflects her hybrid identity—Irie being a Jamaican term meaning OK. This duality becomes emblematic of her life's struggles and aspirations. Irie born and raised in England grapples with her biracial identity. Throughout the novel she oscillates between a yearning to fit into the dominant British culture and a deep-seated need to connect with her Jamaican roots: "What Irie really wants, is the look of the 'English Rose' and her feeling of being 'all wrong' propels her into an Afro hair" (Smith 268).

Her struggles with self-image, particularly her hair she perceives as too African and her teeth which aren't perfectly straight, can be interpreted as a metaphor for the much larger issues of race and cultural acceptance. These personal battles are not just superficial worries; they are reflective of the wider sociocultural pressures experienced by first-generation immigrants in multicultural societies: "Irie's struggle isn't only against her own self-hatred but against a more profound desire for cultural validation in a world that often erases us hybrid identities invisible." (Smith 268).

Irie stands out especially when considering the notion of double consciousness which is the internal conflict that marginalized or oppressed groups in society endures when: trying to identify their subordinate identity through the eyes of the dominant society. Irie personifies this struggle of identity: half

Jamaican, half British and her journey is one of reconciling these two sides of her identity.

Bhabha's concept of the third space foregrounds the idea that space is not law-bound to the duality of one or the other. Rather, it is a sensitive terrain that defines identities that are not unchanging but rather transient. Through characters like Irie Jones, it's offers an incredibly in-depth look into the immigrant experience in multicultural Britain, and while her journey is bumpy, it's also one toward resilience and self-discovery. It reminds us that identity is complex and the journey to self-acceptance is intertwined with the broader quest for cultural acknowledgment and understanding.

The amalgamation of cultures often marked by a blend of traditions and norms is a phenomenon characteristic of multicultural societies. The intersection of Jamaican and British cultures around the UK, one such example and the portrayal of Clara from *White Teeth* clarifies some of the ideologies a Jamaican diaspora in Britain. Clara's migration from Jamaica to England after a failed relationship reflects the allure of the mother country that many Jamaicans felt driven by the promise of opportunities and a better life. Clara finds herself navigating the chasms between her Jamaican upbringing and the British cultural milieu. However, the intersection of these cultures is not devoid of challenges.

There is an underlying tension in Smith's works stemming from racial prejudices, stereotypes, and the struggle for identity. People of Jamaican descent often grapple with the problem of being too Jamaican for the British and too British for the Jamaicans; this is encapsulated by Irie Jones's journey in *White Teeth*. At the same time the battle is not limited to outside and internally, the characters battle with self-doubt and questions of legitimacy that dreamers frequently experience, when they are always straddling multiple cultural identities. In trying to fit

into their adopted homeland, they are often made to feel as if they are betraying their roots, yet when they connect to their cultural legacy, because of the diasporic dilution, there is a feeling of disconnectedness.

This can result in feelings of inauthenticity or being trapped between two worlds, neither of which feels entirely like home.

On Beauty underscores another dimension struggle of generational gap where immigrant parents and their second-generation children often have disparate experiences and understandings of identity, further complicating the family's collective sense of belonging. In *NW*, Natalie and Leah, though geographically in London seem perpetually in search of a sense of belonging constantly navigate these borderlands, making their quest even more complicated and striving to find a balance between their community's expectations and their personal desires. This often results in them shifting cultural codes and to rediscover and reclaim parts of their identities.

Conclusion

To conclude, *Root* (1996) explains individuals of mixed heritage continuously navigate between two or more racial identities, each of which has its own cultural, historical and sociopolitical context. The struggle for belonging is multi-dimensional, rooted in both external societal pressures and internal self-reflections. Smith fictionalises the complexities of multicultural identities but it is about the shared human instinct to have a place in the world through its characters and novels. Through her characters', Smith fictionalises not just the challenges of multicultural identities but also the universality of the human quest for acceptance and belonging and her novels offers a profound exploration of the intricacies of multicultural identities, challenges and dilemmas of

navigating dual heritages in a world still grappling with issues of race and identity in contemporary society. Characters adjusting or altering their identities can be seen as a reflection of broader societal dynamics where individuals, especially from marginalized groups, often need to navigate and negotiate multiple identity spaces. It highlights the complexities of identity formation in multicultural settings, showing that identity is far from static and is continually shaped by external forces and internal decisions. Samad in *White Teeth* grapples with his Bangladeshi heritage and his present life in Britain. His journey exemplifies the broader struggles faced by immigrants attempting to bridge the gap between past and present, homeland and adopted land. Irie embodies the tensions faced by second-generation immigrants. Through Irie, Smith explores the complexities of trying to forge a cohesive identity amidst these competing influences. Irie Jones's quest to transcend racist stereotypes and her longing for a stable identity encapsulates her multicultural background to fit into a predominantly white society while grappling between Jamaican and the British culture. There are remnants of her internal struggles with her roots and her attempts to overcome or sometimes hide from the circumstances of upbringing to escape racial prejudices and her yearning for a stable identity that embodies her multicultural background. Keisha in *NW* is navigating between the pull of assimilation into British culture and maintaining

their Caribbean roots while striving to fit into British society showcases the multifaceted nature of identity. In *Swing Time*, the protagonist's biracial background underscores the intricacies of navigating multiple cultural spheres and reiterates the evolving nature of identity across immigrant generations. Thus all four novels shed light on the struggles highlighting the intricacies, the internal and external forces and vulnerabilities faced by immigrants that shape their identity in a world where they often feel like outsiders.

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ECOFEMINISM AND RESILIENCE: HUMAN-NATURE SYNERGY IN LITERATURE

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Abstract

*This study explores the dynamic interplay of ecofeminism, resilience, and human-nature relationships in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*. By employing the theoretical frameworks of ecofeminist criticism and postcolonial ecocriticism, the research investigates how ecological and cultural displacement intersect to shape the characters' identities and foster resilience. Divakaruni's mythological retelling emphasises eco-spirituality and the empowering role of nature in overcoming patriarchal constraints, while Lahiri's diasporic narratives delve into the struggles of cultural alienation and ecological detachment in urban and rural settings. Through a comparative analysis, this paper highlights the symbolic significance of natural landscapes in character development and emotional transformation. *The Forest of Enchantments* portrays the forest as a sanctuary and a site of resistance, reflecting ecofeminist ideals. Meanwhile, Lahiri's *The Lowland* presents the lowland as a microcosm of environmental degradation and socio-political upheaval, and *The Namesake* uses urban landscapes to explore the protagonist's fractured cultural identity and eventual reconciliation with his heritage. The study underscores the importance of environmental imagination in addressing contemporary challenges of ecological degradation and diasporic displacement. It emphasises the universal relevance of ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical perspectives in understanding resilience and identity in a globalised and environmentally strained world. This synthesis of mythological and diasporic narratives enriches literary traditions by foregrounding the interconnectedness of human and ecological resilience.*

Keywords: ecofeminism, environmental imagination, human-nature relationship, postcolonial ecocriticism, resilience.

Introduction

The intertwined crises of ecological disruption and cultural displacement are critical themes in contemporary literature, particularly within postcolonial and diasporic narratives. As global challenges like climate change and forced migration reshape lives, literature provides a lens to examine their impact on identity and resilience. These disruptions are often interconnected, as ecological degradation mirrors sociocultural marginalization,

reflecting shared vulnerabilities between natural and human systems (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010). Postcolonial and diasporic literature, through its storytelling, explores these synergies, emphasizing the role of human-nature relationships in fostering resilience.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* exemplify this exploration. Divakaruni reimagines Sita's story from the *Ramayana*, using the forest as a symbol of

ecofeminist empowerment, portraying nature as a sanctuary against patriarchal oppression (Shiva, 1988). Lahiri's works, conversely, delve into the fractured identities of diasporic individuals, with natural and urban landscapes serving as metaphors for cultural alienation and resilience (Mukherjee, 2014). Together, these narratives highlight how ecological and cultural displacements shape identity and resilience through human-nature interactions.

This study employs ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical frameworks to analyse these texts. Ecofeminism, as articulated by Shiva (1988) and Warren (2000), underscores the interconnected exploitation of women and nature, while postcolonial ecocriticism examines how cultural and ecological displacement intersect in shaping identities (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010). The forest in Divakaruni's work symbolises eco-spiritual empowerment, reflecting nature's dual role as a nurturing and resistant force. In Lahiri's *The Lowland*, the ecological degradation of the titular lowland mirrors characters' emotional and cultural upheavals, while urban alienation in *The Namesake* parallels the protagonist's struggle with hybridised identity.

The methodological approach integrates close textual analysis, thematic exploration, and comparative literary techniques, supported by secondary sources such as Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1988) and Mukherjee's *Postcolonial Environments* (2014). This interdisciplinary framework bridges mythological and diasporic contexts, highlighting the universal relevance of human-nature relationships in addressing contemporary crises of ecological and cultural displacement.

Analysis and Discussion

Ecofeminism and Mythical Resilience in *The Forest of Enchantments*

In *The Forest of Enchantments*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni explores ecofeminist ideals through the

character of Sita, emphasising the transformative synergy between women and nature. The forest symbolizes eco-spirituality, environmental imagination, and resilience:

- **Eco-Spirituality:** Sita's bond with the forest embodies the sacred connection between women and nature. The forest serves as her sanctuary, fostering spiritual growth and defiance against patriarchal systems, as highlighted by Shiva's ecofeminist principles (Shiva, 1988). This connection reflects how nature provides strength and resistance against sociopolitical oppression.
- **Environmental Imagination:** The forest represents both refuge and conflict, symbolising resistance to patriarchal dominance. Its vivid depiction mirrors Sita's emotional journey, reinforcing Warren's (2000) philosophy of interconnected ecological and feminine resilience.
- **Resilience Trajectories:** Sita's transformation demonstrates that resilience is dynamic and multifaceted. Her journey showcases how ecofeminist principles enable individuals to transcend societal constraints, reclaim agency, and redefine their identity (Berkes & Ross, 2013; Mukherjee, 2014).

Ecological and Cultural Displacement in *The Lowland*

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* intricately connects ecological degradation with cultural displacement, using the lowland as a metaphor for identity, resilience, and environmental loss:

- **Bioregionalism:** The transformation of the lowland reflects ecological exploitation and cultural fragmentation. Lahiri's portrayal aligns with bioregional theories that identity is deeply rooted in local ecological spaces (Mukherjee, 2014). The degradation of the lowland serves as

a microcosm for broader environmental and cultural losses.

- **Character Duality:** Udayan's revolutionary activism, tied to the lowland, contrasts with Subhash's adaptive resilience and diasporic introspection. Their divergent paths highlight the complex ways ecological and cultural displacements shape identity and resilience (Lahiri, 2013; Huggan & Tiffin, 2010).
- **Postcolonial Ecocriticism:** The lowland's degradation critiques colonial legacies and urban expansion, symbolizing the intertwined losses of ecological harmony and cultural identity. The narrative underscores the impact of modernity on both environment and culture (Mukherjee, 2014; Huggan & Tiffin, 2010).

Cultural Displacement and Identity in *The Namesake*

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri explores cultural displacement and identity through Gogol Ganguli's

journey, linking themes of diasporic resilience, ecolinguistics, and environmental imagination:

- **Diasporic Resilience:** Gogol's struggle with his Bengali heritage reflects cultural dissonance. His ultimate reconciliation with his name and roots symbolizes resilience and reattachment to cultural identity, paralleling ecological reattachment (Bhabha, 1994; Huggan & Tiffin, 2010).
- **Ecolinguistics:** Gogol's linguistic alienation mirrors his detachment from cultural "ecosystems." Lahiri illustrates how language shapes identity and engagement with cultural environments, connecting linguistic and ecological resilience (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001).
- **Environmental Imagination:** Urban landscapes reflect Gogol's fractured identity and his eventual reconciliation with his heritage. Lahiri demonstrates how spaces influence emotional and cultural resilience, aligning with Clark's (2011) concept of environmental imagination.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Resilience across Texts

Aspect	The Forest of Enchantments	The Lowland	The Namesake	Citations
Key Motif	Exile and ecological sanctuary	Environmental degradation and cultural displacement	Urban alienation and diasporic identity	Shiva (1988), Mukherjee (2014)
Environmental Symbolism	The forest as empowerment and resistance	The lowland as ecological and social loss	Urban landscapes reflecting fractured identity	Warren (2000), Mukherjee (2014)
Resilience Theme	Ecofeminist resilience through connection with nature	Resilience through memory and adaptation	Diasporic resilience through reconciliation	Lahiri (2003, 2013), Divakaruni (2019)
Authorial Perspective	Mythological ecofeminism	Postcolonial critique of environmental and political loss	Modern diasporic struggles with identity	Huggan & Tiffin (2010), Mukherjee (2014)

Framework Application	Ecofeminism: Women-nature symbiosis	Postcolonial ecocriticism: Environmental- cultural parallels	Ecological detachment and reattachment	Shiva (1988), Huggan & Tiffin (2010)
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The integrated findings from *The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Lowland*, and *The Namesake* highlight the interconnected themes of ecological and cultural displacement, resilience, and identity. In *The Forest of Enchantments*, Divakaruni emphasizes **ecofeminist resilience**, where nature empowers Sita to transcend patriarchal oppression (Shiva, 1988; Warren, 2000). Lahiri's *The Lowland* uses **ecological degradation** as a metaphor for cultural displacement, intertwining **bioregionalism** and **postcolonial ecocriticism** through the lowland's decline, mirroring Udayan and Subhash's emotional struggles (Mukherjee, 2014; Huggan & Tiffin, 2010). In *The Namesake*, Lahiri explores **cultural and linguistic alienation**, using urban landscapes to reflect Gogol's fractured identity and eventual resilience through cultural reattachment (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001; Clark, 2011). Collectively, these texts underscore the universal relevance of human-nature relationships in addressing global ecological and cultural crises, offering nuanced perspectives on resilience and identity in literature.

Results and Findings

The analysis examines how Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* and *The Namesake* address ecological and cultural displacement, resilience, and identity formation. The findings are summarized in tables and supported by graphical representations to highlight the shared and contrasting themes in these texts.

Table 2: Comparative Ecofeminist and Environmental Themes

Novel	Key Theme	Eco-Symbolism	Outcome of Resilience
<i>The Forest of Enchantments</i>	Ecofeminism	Forest	Sita's self-actualization
<i>The Lowland</i>	Environmental Loss	Lowland	Emotional reconciliation
<i>The Namesake</i>	Cultural Identity	Urban Landscapes	Rediscovery of heritage

This table highlights the central eco-symbolism and its role in resilience across the novels. In *The Forest of Enchantments*, the forest represents ecofeminist empowerment, allowing Sita to transcend patriarchal structures. In *The Lowland*, the degraded marshland mirrors political and personal conflicts, symbolizing the interconnected loss of ecology and identity. In *The Namesake*, urban landscapes reflect diasporic alienation and eventual cultural reattachment, demonstrating resilience through heritage rediscovery.

Table 3: Factors Influencing Resilience in Characters

Character	Cultural Displacement	Environmental Displacement	Resilience Factor	Outcome
Sita	Exile from Ayodhya	Connection to the forest	Ecofeminism	Empowerment
Udayan	Political identity loss	Lowland as a battleground	Bioregionalism	Loss and memory
Gogol	Diasporic alienation	Disconnection from roots	Cultural identity	Reconnection

This table demonstrates the interplay of cultural and environmental displacement and their influence on resilience. Sita's empowerment stems from

ecofeminist ideals, Udayan's disillusionment reflects bio-regionalist struggles tied to ecological degradation, and Gogol's journey highlights cultural reattachment through urban ecological spaces.

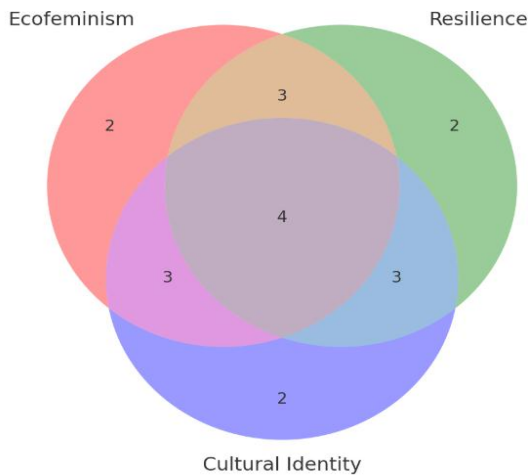


Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram of Ecofeminism and Human-Nature Dynamics

The Venn diagram illustrates the intersection of **ecofeminism**, **resilience**, and **cultural identity** across the three narratives, emphasizing their overlapping and interconnected themes with numerical values representing their significance in each text. The relationship between **ecofeminism and resilience** is prominently seen in *The Forest of Enchantments*, represented by a value of 8, where Sita's connection to the forest empowers her to overcome adversity and transcend patriarchal constraints. The link between **resilience and cultural identity** is explored in *The Namesake*, with a value of 10, as Gogol navigates extreme cultural alienation and reconciles his fractured diasporic identity through rediscovery of his heritage. In *The Lowland*, **ecofeminism and cultural identity** converge with a value of 7, as the lowland symbolizes ecological degradation and familial disconnection, intertwining environmental and cultural heritage.

At the central intersection, the diagram reflects the universal relevance of **human-nature relationships** (value = 9), showcasing their profound adaptability in shaping resilience and identity across diverse cultural and temporal contexts. These numerical values illustrate the intensity with which each theme interacts within and across the narratives, demonstrating how ecological and cultural displacement influence individual and collective experiences, as well as the multifaceted dimensions of resilience. This contextualization underscores the pivotal role of human-nature dynamics in addressing ecological and cultural challenges in literature

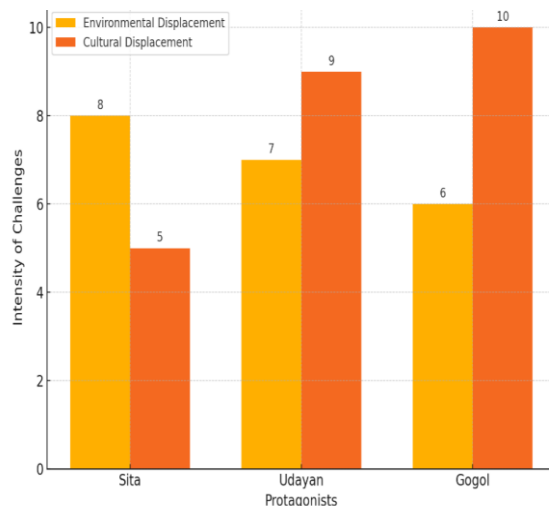


Figure 2: Comparative Representation of Environmental and Cultural Displacement

The bar chart compares the intensity of **environmental** and **cultural displacement** experienced by the protagonists in *The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Lowland*, and *The Namesake*. **Sita** faces high environmental displacement (value = 8) and moderate cultural displacement (value = 5), reflecting her ecofeminist resilience as the forest serves as both sanctuary and symbol of empowerment. **Udayan** endures high cultural displacement (value = 9) and moderate

environmental displacement (value = 7), as the degraded lowland mirrors his revolutionary ideals and personal losses, embodying bioregionalism and disillusionment. **Gogol**, in contrast, experiences extreme cultural displacement (value = 10) and moderate environmental detachment (value = 6), symbolizing his fractured diasporic identity and eventual reconciliation with his heritage. The chart highlights that **cultural displacement** is a dominant theme in Lahiri's works, while **environmental displacement** is central to Divakaruni's ecofeminist narrative. This contrast underscores the adaptability of resilience narratives in addressing diverse contexts of ecological and cultural displacement.

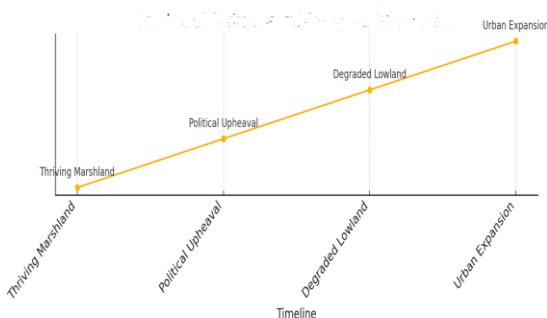


Figure 3: Timeline of Environmental Changes in The Lowland

The timeline traces the transformation of the lowland in *The Lowland*, illustrating its ecological and symbolic decline across three stages. In the **initial stage**, the lowland thrives as a biodiverse sanctuary, representing ecological harmony and sustaining local life. During the **middle stage**, the Naxalite insurgency transforms the lowland into a battleground, marking its ecological degradation and symbolic loss, paralleling the disillusionment of Udayan's revolutionary ideals. In the **final stage**, urban expansion erases the natural origins of the lowland, symbolizing cultural and emotional alienation as the space becomes unrecognizable.

This transformation reflects the intertwined themes of loss, displacement, and resilience in Lahiri's narrative, as the degradation of the lowland mirrors the characters' struggles with identity and belonging. The timeline underscores the profound connection between ecological decline and personal and cultural dislocation, emphasizing the novel's critique of modernity's impact on both environment and identity.

These findings reveal that resilience is shaped by the interplay of ecological and cultural displacement, as depicted through environmental symbolism in each narrative. Divakaruni's mythological ecofeminism highlights nature as a source of empowerment, while Lahiri's diasporic lens critiques modernity's impact on identity and ecology. Together, these narratives illustrate the universal relevance of human-nature relationships in addressing global issues of displacement, resilience, and identity formation.

Conclusion

This study has explored the dynamic interplay of ecofeminism, resilience, and cultural displacement in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* and *The Namesake*. The findings highlight the transformative role of ecofeminism in Divakaruni's narrative, where nature serves as a source of empowerment and self-actualization for the protagonist, Sita. In contrast, Lahiri's works underscore the ecological underpinnings of resilience, using environmental and cultural dislocation as metaphors for fragmented identities and emotional growth. Together, these texts demonstrate the significance of environmental imagination in fostering a nuanced understanding of cultural and ecological displacement, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human and natural systems. The implications of this study extend beyond the literary analysis of individual texts. It advocates

for integrating ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical perspectives into the broader study of literature, providing tools to examine the intersection of ecological and cultural displacement. By doing so, it highlights the importance of addressing global challenges such as environmental degradation and cultural alienation within literary discourse. Additionally, this research encourages further exploration of environmental narratives in diasporic and postcolonial contexts, demonstrating how literature reflects and critiques the complex relationships between humans and their environments. Future research could investigate the role of human-nature relationships in contemporary South Asian literature, broadening the scope to include diverse voices and perspectives. Expanding this study to encompass other diasporic and mythological works could reveal new insights into the universal themes of ecological resilience and cultural identity. Such comparative analyses would deepen our understanding of how literature engages with pressing ecological and cultural concerns in a rapidly changing world. This paper serves as a foundation for future inquiries into the profound connections between humans, nature, and resilience in literary narratives

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RIVER VAIGAI, A FOSTER MOTHER: AN ECOSPIRITUAL AND ECOFEMINIST APPROACH IN THE SELECT POEMS OF A.K. RAMANUJAN AND R. PARTHASARATHY

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Abstract

Water is a natural element that has been universally and religiously recognised as a purifying natural symbol. River Vaigai is one of the holiest and life-sustaining rivers in Tamil Nadu. This paper deals with the ecospiritual and ecofeminist aspects found in the poems of A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy composed on River Vaigai. The ecofeminist theory of Vandana Shiva, in which Nature takes the avatar of Goddess Kali is used here. Both the poems are analysed using an eco-critical lens.

Keywords: *ecocriticism, ecofeminism, ecospirituality, ecology, water*

Ecocriticism reveals the fundamental bond between humans and nature, and how humans should act in order to have a safe passage in this anthropocentric age. Ecopoetry has a number of distinguishing features, such as the representation of nature from a non-anthrocentric perspective, giving agency to the non-human world, foregrounding various kinds of inter-relationships between the human and the non-human world etc. This paper deals with the importance of the Vaigai river in the poetry of A. K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy. Vaigai nourishes the area between Varusanadu hills in Western Ghats to Palk Bay in Bay of Bengal in Tamil Nadu, India; it plays a very major role in the economy of the region and is also culturally very significant.

Dr. M. Manivannan, a medical practitioner says "The River Vaigai which originates from Megamalai has got its tributaries at every stage and it has significant history. The Pandya kings had utilised every drop of the river using it for drinking and irrigation" (Neeraj Yatra). It has been found that there were 153 spots of human settlements starting from Moolavaigai to Alagankulam where the river

converges with the Bay of Bengal. One of the settlements is Keezhadi which has been found to be 2300 years old according to carbon testing. The word Vaigai literally translates into 'keep your hands', depicting it as 'a river which brings water when one touches.' In the following poems "A River Once" and "A River" by R. Parthasarathy and A.K. Ramanujan respectively, River Vaigai has been viewed using concepts from ecospirituality and ecofeminism.

Hindu mythology tells us that the River Vaigai originated as a subsidiary of River Ganga to quench the thirst of people gathered in Madurai for the wedding celebration of Lord Sundareshwarar and Goddess Meenakshi. Lord Vishnu is said to have appeared in the River Vaigai in the form of fish (Matysavatara, the first incarnation of Lord Vishnu); this is usually cited as the reason why the ancient Pandya kingdom used the fish as their symbol.

Today, the Vaigai that flows through Madurai is bone dry within the city limits for most days in a year, but for centuries it had sustained life along its banks. Encroachment at its origin, release of sewage and lack of de-siltation over the years gradually led to the

water source turning into a trickle. The present degradation is a result of neglect over the past three decades. R. Sivakaumar, co-author of *Vaigai Thadam Thedi* points out that the river had always helped the city overcome any environmental or climate-related crisis adding that it.

In the poem "A River Once" by R. Parthasarathy, Vaigai is personified as a woman whose health has worsened. The reason for this collapse is the intervention of human beings in the flow of river by diverting the chemicals coming out of factories into it. Children were not taught that rivers are the source for water without which life becomes impossible. That is the reason for the unruly behaviour of the boys who ride paper boats in the river. The actual river has turned invisible long ago. The reference of the river as a pond is the symbolic representation of the stagnation of water, which holds no benefit for anyone.

With paper boats
boys tickle my ribs

and buffaloes have turned me to a pond (1-2)

While earlier, kingfishers and egrets filled their appetites on the banks of the river, it has now become a place for defecation.

This act of the river feeding the birds evokes images of a mother feeding her children, reinforcing the idea of the river as a source of nourishment

The poem reiterates that once the river had acted as source of inspiration for great men across the country; emperors and the poets spent their days on the banks of the river, received guidance and learnt life lessons. They slept in her arms and like a mother, the river fostered them.

Now, however, Vaigai says

I am become

a sewer now, none has any use for Vaikai,
river once of this sweet city. (10-12)

A.K. Ramanujan's "A River" begins by praising the city of Madurai. Poets have sung in praise of Madurai as a city of temples and poets; Vaigai is referred to only in terms of the floods it causes and not about the drought which hits the city when the river runs dry. A K Ramanujan presents to the readers this side of the river:

every summer

a river dries to a trickle

in the sand,

baring the sand ribs (5-8)

"The rusty bars" (10) refers to the dam which is built across the river. The dam finds no use during summer as the rivers are empty and their pitiable condition is exposed, that they are not maintained properly. The drainage system has is in need of repair and the bridge remains in patches. The poet uses two contrasting metaphors to compare the stones in the river-bed to animals. The wet ones appear like crocodiles sleeping and the dry ones like lounging water-buffaloes. Ramanujan's poem itself becomes a means of filling this lacuna.

The tone changes when describing the how people fear the rising levels of water during floods. The poem mentions two cows named Gopi and Brinda, and a pregnant woman, expected to deliver identical twin babies who have become its victims. The poem therefore describes the flood in terms of the human and the non-human persons who are affected by it.

Classical Tamil literature speaks of cyclones in the area nourished by Vaigai, but flooding of the kind mentioned in the poem is a comparatively recent occurrence. This is possibly because the path for the monsoon rainwaters to drain has been obstructed due to overpopulation, urbanisation and consequent issues.

Here, we can say that Nature takes an avatar of Kali, the goddess of transformation. Despite Kali's

origin in the battlefield, she has evolved into a full-fledged symbol of Mother Nature in her creative, nurturing and devouring aspects. She is the ultimate expression of nature, both destructive and benevolent. Kali acts as the Goddess of time and change. She is considered the energy inside the biotic components which is wild, empowered and all loving. This energy is deeply involved in the life/death/life cycle to keep the Earth growing and transforming,

Thus, Kali is unique in the way she is formless and absolute, and at the same time capricious in her ever-changing forms, just like the changing course of the River Vaigai (Shiva 56).

The “different coloured diapers” (48) mentioned at the end of the poem illustrates that mankind has become obsessed with modern and artificial items and they have become a part of their day-to-day activities. They assume that they become westernised when using the items that have newly been introduced into the market.

Thus “A River” can be read as a satire on the ruling communities in and around Madurai who speak about the river only when it floods or dries; by implication, the poem also calls for action to maintain the river at all times: “What should be done is action that would care, rejuvenate, maintain the river and prevent sewage flow into it. The river is not just for

beautification” (Rajan [https:// www. vaigairiver. org/team](https://www.vaigairiver.org/team)).

River Vaigai’s rehabilitation requires a comprehensive approach that includes communal and governmental actions. Bringing the river back to its former beauty would assure equitable access of water to future generations while also protecting the area’s ecological, cultural and spiritual entities. For long years, Vaigai has represented life, worship, and wealth.

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RUNNING THROUGH NATURE: EXPLORING THE HUMAN-NATURE BOND IN TOM ALTER'S *THE LONGEST RACE*

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Abstract

The relationship between nature and humans is an entrancing theme. Literature has for long explored various kinds of engagements between the human and non-human world. In sports this connect is mutual and reciprocal. Nature impacts and influences the dynamics of various sports and games. Players for their part use their reach and stardom to raise their voice for various issues related to the environment and ecology. Narratives based on sports, particularly running, explore the interplay between the runner and the environment he/she runs. Through this it delves into themes like overcoming challenges, finding balance and harmony and self-exploration. The Longest Race by Tom Alter vividly describes the journey of Bahadur, a young atheletic phenomenon. It charts his progression from the foothills of rural Rajpur to the Scottish Highlands and urban Delhi. This study explores the impact of the natural world on Bahadur, as he transforms from a free-spirited runner into a Pro athlete. It also analyses how the narration highlights the nature's role – as an emotional anchor and a catalyst for perseverance – in shaping Bahadur's body and spirit.

Keywords: *human-nature relationship, athletics, transformation, resilience.*

Introduction

Sports and nature have a deep connection with each other. Their collaboration is both complex and interdependent; the impact they have on each other is profound. Sports as an activity is influenced by its surrounding ecology. Various sports such as trekking, canoeing, surfing, golf, cricket and running are affected by its natural surroundings. Sports events mostly depend on the climatic conditions like, weather, humidity, temperature, moisture etc. Just as sports is influenced by its environment, it can also serve as a strong platform for ecological advocacy.

Many texts explore the convergence of human endeavours and the natural world. Throughout cultures and time periods the writers have been

drawn towards the physical, emotional and spiritual resilience of an athlete. To bring out these ideas nature has been used both as an integral part and a backdrop that shapes the common man into an star athlete. Richard Powers' *The Overstory*, Piers Torday's *The Last Wild*, Chard Harbach's *The Art of Fielding*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Tom Alter's *The Longest Race* efficiently blend the relationship between Humans and Nature.

Tom Alter is an Indian actor with American lineage. He grew up in Rajpur and Mussoorie which serve as a background to his novels. A recipient of the Padma Shri in 2008, he is and prominent figure in Hindi theatre and cinema circle. Being a sports journalist, he has extensively written for *Sportsweek*,

Outlook Cricket Talk and the *Sunday Observer*. His published works *The Longest Race*, *Rerun to Rialto* and *The Best in the World* can all be categorized as sports narratives.

The Longest Race is set in the small town of Rajpur near the scenic Himalayan mountains. It recounts the tale of Bahadur, a young running prodigy. It traces the transformation of Bahadur from a young runner to a renowned running sensation. This paper delves into a world where nature is not just a backdrop but a vital player in Bahadur's journey. The landscape is a key player in moulding the runner's physical endurance, mental resilience and personal growth. The narration travels from the serene Rajpur hills, the hustle of Lucknow, Delhi and to the magnificent Scottish Highlands. This paper will explore how these natural setting impacts the world of the runner to gain harmony in quest for athletic excellence.

Interpretation and Discussion

The narration begins with Bahadur lying face down exhausted on a steep gravel path, trying to rouse both his body and spirit. As he struggles between two choices – one of waking up and the other of giving up and going to sleep – his fingers touch the grass: “Only his fingers moved, reaching out for the grass at the edge of the path. Touching it, he felt an instant of relief as the green living feel of the grass awakened the senses in his fingertips.” (Alter viii). These lines set the tone to the connect that Bahadur feels to his natural surrounding throughout his journey as a runner.

The story is set in Rajpur, Dehradun where the mighty Himalayas rise. One mid-afternoon in the early month of March, a 12-year-old Bahadur wins a race at his school organised by his new PT Sir. From this moment he slowly discovers his passion and talent in running. For him running was not a ritual but a pure desire of joy. He starts to run from then on

during his favourite time “early, early morning” (Alter 9) forming an 8-km loop through his school, Rajpur bazaar, a route which has a steep climb. The onset of this Odessey is borne witness by two of his mentors: PT sir and the Chaiwala of that area.

As Bahadur's speed and distance increases, the route and he became old friends. “Those 8 km soon became old friends, and Bahadur instinctively knew each patch of gravel and grass at the edge of the road, each undulation of the slope, each pattern of shade under the drees, each home, each field...” (Alter 11) The bond he forms with this path plays a key role in shaping his awareness towards his surroundings. It also acts as a soothing partner whenever Bahadur tries to find solace during his professional challenges and conflicts.

Bahadur's athletic prowess gets noticed when he not only wins but creates a meet record, during the annual Dehradun short marathon of 16 km. As he runs through the fields and forests, he finds his pace. “The fields and forests and majestic building of the FRI welcomed him, and Bahadur felt at home. So that when he reached the gullies and canal-bank behind the IMA, and the shops and people, they were not a threat for him” (Alter 19). The route for the marathon reminds him of his special connect with nature prompting him to find harmony between his body and spirit. This event propels Bahadur into the world of profession sports changing him “from a boy into a young man, from a runner into a champion” (Alter 21).

Taking part in the competition opens new perspectives for Bahadur. He realizes that as much as he loves to run, the impulse to win triggered him. It was more of self-validation rather than mere quest for glory. Bahadur's record-breaking win puts him in the spotlight of the district officials. Soon he encounters conflicts regarding what he wants to do and what is expected of him to do. Bahadur liked to run barefoot,

which is strongly opposed by the officials. His morning runs are frowned upon. He is made to train each evening at the track in Doon School. Even though he resists wearing shoes, he trains on the track. For someone who is vividly connected with his environment, this doesn't give the satisfaction of his morning runs on the hillside because "...the monotony of the track did not challenge him, delight him at all" (Alter 26).

A 16-year-old Bahadur reaches Lucknow to participate in the Uttar Pradesh State Athletic Championships. It takes him some time to ease into the hectic pace of the city. There he grabs the attention of Greg Abberley – a famous coach from England – in search of young talent to train. Still running barefoot, he participates in the full marathon winning it with flying colours. "His timing was 2 hrs, 13 min and 23 sec; a national record by more than three minutes – a world-class timing." (Alter 37) This win once again puts him at crossroads. He struggles to choose between different options and decisions suggested to him. Two of which are: he can either keep on running various races or go with Abberley to Scotland to train under his tutelage.

Bahadur continues to train at home, while plans are made for him. With each passing day he faces new challenges and discovers his growing strength and abilities. Even when the climate turns cold, when the path is covered with snow, he never stops running. For him, running is a joy, a celebration of his connect with nature. Bahadur's progression as a runner and a person is both metaphorically and literally connected with the route he takes. In his early stage of training, he used to run an 8 km stretch which as he progressed turned into a 22 km trail honing his skill as a runner. "Bahadur ran stronger and stronger, and the Big Bend rejoiced with him. Every other day or two, he would run his old favourite route and it never lost its special charm. (Alter 41)

Every step was a symbol of his symmetry with the path he ran.

Bahadur is sent with Abberley to Scotland for training. When Abberley shares this announcement he explains, "I want you to come with me to England-to Scotland, which is my real home. I want you to run and train there...you will like Scotland. It is like your hills here, and your Big Bend and your Sal Forest. We drink a lot of tea!" (Alter 42). Abberley's words express the familiarity that Bahadur might experience in the natural beauty of Scotland, putting him at ease.

For Bahadur, Scotland is not different from Rajpur. He arrives at the end of winter and for the first time, starts wearing shoes. Even though the country is strange, the meadows, hills, the church bells remind him of home. The tranquillity around him helps to focus on the joy of running. Whenever Bahadur runs, he is often compared to a gazelle showing his free spiritedness. His running is compared with that of a bird's flight to depict his swiftness. As Abberley observes, "- the boy did not seem to be touching the ground; he was a bird flying low across the hills, a bird that had found its wings in a new and brave world" (Alter 51). Abberley's awe conveys Bahadur's sync with his natural surroundings.

Bahadur soon faces new setbacks. He secures a win and creates a new record during the 'Longest Day Marathon' at Edinburgh. The next day newspapers flash this as headlines with Bahadur – his IND visible, touching the feet of Abberley – causing both glory and uproar in India. This catches the attention of many people. Some of those being politicians and officials who want to take credit for Bahadur's success and fame. These people were also against Bahadur training in a foreign country. Bahadur's win at Edinburg ignites a controversy about the national pride being stolen by colonial power. To worsen the situation, the sports minister

and the party – with whose support Bahadur went to Scotland – lose the election, paving way for forcing him to return to India.

Running is not just a physical exercise. It is a celebration of the connect the runner feels with his surroundings. “It can be a way of connecting with yourself, clearing your mind and experiencing nature” (Lonely Goat). After returning from Scotland, Bahadur joins the Sports institute in Delhi. For someone running with the beat and rhythm of nature, the buildings and track of the institute is a hurdle to overcome. It neither challenges his skill nor provides him the pure pleasure of running. He is compelled to run for proving the vanity of his coach. “As Bahadur pressed for more speed, he lost the rhythm. The coach shouted louder and louder, but Bahadur, the harder he tried, ran slower and slower” (Alter 104). This results in his losing sync with his spirit. Here running becomes an activity for him, not the spiritual synchrony he usually feels.

Bahadur's trials do not stop with his struggle to adapt to his environment. He struggles to adjust to the new rules and techniques laid by the coach at the institute. Till then Bahadur was a free spirit. He ran to the sync of his spirit. When his spirit was happy, he ran like a bird in flight, like an unstoppable gazelle. His early mentors were in awe of his potential. But for the sports institute and the coach, he was a stepping stone for fame. They disregarded his spirit, “the barely controlled frustration, the sorrow, the first signs of anger, which filled Bahadur's eyes – the mirror of his soul – even as he tried to smile and do ‘namaste’ in response to the applause” (Alter 109). When an altercation occurs between him and his coach, regarding his relationship with another runner – Sharmila – he leaves the sports academy to train on his own.

Bahadur's departure results in a pandemonium. Coaches, media and the general public have their

own opinion and views to share. Bahadur's reply is to seek refuge with his friends: the steep crumpling paths, deep hills, dark and green forest, long-abandoned mining roads. He pushed himself to run harder and faster not with the innocent joy of a young boy but with an intimate and demanding joy, “a force, sensual and edgily erotic” (Alter 138). He participates in the Delhi marathon. While the officials try to stop him, Bahadur runs with the supports of the people. His final run is, “not the rhythmic glide of previous runs – the almost serene balance of body and head and spirit; no, that day his running was possessed, powerful almost a snarl. And it was faster stronger than ever before” (Alter 144). His last professional run showcases his anger against the system that tried to curb his individuality. In a little while he becomes a Chowikdar like his father. Six years later he has gained weight, adopted a parentless boy and has stopped running. When the boy is kidnapped and threatened, he runs again. This time it is not a journey to find harmony but to save a dear one's life. His body collapses on the slopes of the mountain resulting in the scenario discussed in the beginning of the analysis. But his spirit prevails. It recognises the presence of his mountains, his sky, his trees, his green grass, his familiar path with gravel which he was touching. When all is lost, his spirit finds harmony through its memory of the nature with which he had synced with.

Conclusion

The rapport between human beings and nature has been evolving over a millennia. It is multifaceted and collaborative. *The Longest Race* portrays the intrinsic connection between an athlete and his environment. Here nature is not a mere backdrop. It is the stimulating song of the spirit. It is a reckoning force. It is the power that influences the endurance, mental resilience and growth of Bahadur at every turn of his

journey as a runner. It advocates how sporting excellence emerges from both physical trainings and a symbiotic relationship with the landscape, climate and the surrounds the athletes take part.

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KUNJIMATHU: THE GREEN ADVOCATE OF AATHI IN SARAH JOSEPH'S *GIFT IN GREEN*

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Abstract

Its widely acknowledged that women and nature are both the creators and sustainers of life. However, both are often undervalued and overlooked. Ecofeminism emphasizes the interconnectedness between the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment, asserting that both are rooted in capitalist patriarchal systems that exploit and marginalize them. This paper aims to critically analyse Sarah Joseph's novel Gift in Green through the lens of ecofeminist theory. This novel explores the intricate relationship between women and nature highlighting the exploitation of women and nature by the patriarchal and capitalist systems respectively. Vandana Shiva critiques the Western ideology of development and its detrimental effects on women and nature in the Global South. She refers to this patriarchal, western concept of development as maldevelopment, highlighting that it prioritizes progress at the expense of the well-being of both human and non-human life, particularly those marginalized in society. This paper explores the character Kunjimathu, as both a defender and a voice for those marginalised by patriarchal society. She advocates ecological sustainability and gender equality. She echoes the novelist's message that unregulated development can harm the ecosystem. This paper argues that the progress and development promoted by capitalist patriarchy can have a profound impact on women, nature, and marginalized communities.

Keywords: ecofeminism, ecological consciousness, sustainability, development.

Introduction

Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that explores the interconnectedness between women and nature. It is both a theoretical framework and a social movement that applies feminist principles to ecological concerns, highlighting how the exploitation of women and nature are linked in the systems of power and domination.

Ecofeminism has the potential to see connections among various forms of oppression, such as those affecting women, marginalized and colonized peoples, animals, and nature (King13-14). It opposes the self-centred patriarchal framework

which denies to acknowledge the integrity and well-being of the whole world. It can be said that the main objective of ecofeminism is to shift focus away from the 'simple-minded selfishness of the patriarchy'. Vandana Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist blames the capitalist patriarchal model for the subjugation of women and the mastery of nature. In her book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Survival in India*, Vandana Shiva critiques the Western ideology of development and its detrimental effects on women and nature in the Global South. She refers to this patriarchal, western concept of development as maldevelopment, highlighting that it

prioritizes progress at the expense of the well-being of both human and non-human life, particularly those marginalized in society. She portrays women as 'Prakriti' - the living force that supports life (Shiva 38).

Sarah Joseph is an eminent Malayalam novelist and social activist, whose writing is often characterised by a deep sensitivity to the lives of women. Her novels focus on the oppressive social structures that control women's lives and how these intersect with societal and environmental exploitation. *Gift in Green* is an unconventional novel about the relationship between people and the land. Niyathi and Jha consider this novel as a warning: "It emphasizes the need to understand development not only as physical, but also as the well-being and happiness of people, the foresight needed for any activity concerning environment and the impact of invasion over nature and women" (106). This novel delineates on how the slow and massive destruction of the environment causes climatic changes which eventually brings in unimaginable consequences at the end. *Gift in Green* can be considered an apocalyptic novel that portrays an unprecedented environmental disaster, much like the one recently witnessed in Wayanad in 2024.

The novel is set in a fictional place named Aathi, a serene island of water bodies and mangroves. It is a marshland surrounded by backwaters, secluded from the rest of the world. The forest on the island stands nearly submerged in water. During high tide the salt water enters the island. "There was a ferry bank in the western part of Aathi, where the waterfront was deeper and broader... The world beyond the ferry bank was a different thing altogether... a culture of affluence altogether alien to the people of Aathi" (Joseph 41). Aathi is a self-sufficient space, making any contact with the outer world unnecessary.

In the course of the novel, we are given the origin of Aathi which is traced back to the Biblical Hagar. The land becomes a refuge for her and Hagar becomes the guardian of the waters of the space. Literally meaning 'original' or 'old', Aathi becomes a haven for people.

The trees here knew no taboo or untouchability. The birds parroted no religious bigotry. The trees, the birds, the fish, the earth, the water – all beckoned them: 'come, come... Their history made the children love the fish. They felt themselves to be one with the trees, the birds, the water, and the land. (44).

People live a simple and peaceful life in resonance with nature. They live in harmony with all creatures. People turn to Thampuran the sole deity for solace. People trusted Thampuran, who "belonged not only to the earth and the water but also to the fish in the water, the creatures on the earth and the birds of the air" (334).

Kumaran, who leaves Aathi in pursuit of greater opportunities, returns after thirty-six years under the guise of modernising the place. His return disrupts the peacefulness of the place, and despite his promise to turn Aathi into a paradise, he ultimately brings about the slow degradation of the ecosystem, destroying every species of the island.

Kunjimathu, is a young girl, who embraces Aathi as her breath. Having been betrayed and deserted by Kumaran, she does not break down. She is determined to remain single, embracing an eco-friendly lifestyle. She believes life is complete with what Aathi offers and wonders why Kumaran seeks a better life elsewhere:

Fish or mussel enough to meet one's daily needs. Add to this the two Pokkali harvests from the paddy fields every year that anyone could reap. It was quite sufficient to

live free from want. The rice they ate was of excellent quality. Everyone cultivated pumpkin, white gourd, spinach and beans for their own use. Every household had a cow, a buffalo, hens and ducks (Joseph 21).

Kunjimathu's profound affinity with nature sharply contrasts with Kumaran, whose detachment from the natural world highlights their differing perspectives. Kumaran harbours no bond with the land or water; he perceives them as mere lifeless entities. He wishes to leave this place for a better future. "Water-life? Kumaran despised water...Does it have any identity?...The thought of it makes me sick!" (21). Whereas for Kunjimathu, land and water are soulful entities. She believes that water knows everything and forgets nothing (21).

Kunjimathu's love for land and water leads her to single-handedly protest against Kumaran and his allies. She stood in the midst of the water, immersed from neck to feet. She decides to fast until death or unless Aathi is regained. Kunjimathu's identification with nature and her determination to save her land, not only enables her to retaliate against its exploiters but also inspires the women folk to carry on the mission (Paul 36).

The people of Aathi sell their lands to Kumaran due to poverty. But Kunjimathu is stern in retaining the land. She urges everyone to stay back: "Even if Kumaran offers lakhs of rupees and all of his gold, not a soul, not even a child, should leave Aathi" (338). Her affinity towards the land empowers everyone in Aathi to safeguard it. She becomes the consciousness of Aathi. Sarah Joseph reinstates that "to know the mind of a woman, he has to know first, the mind of the land". Kumaran initially exploits Kunjimathu before abandoning her, while he first

deserts the land by leaving Aathi, only to return later for further exploitation. In both cases, exploitation remains the ultimate goal. "Nature and women are turned into passive objects, to be used and exploited for the uncontrolled and uncontrollable desires of alienated man" (Shiva 6).

Nature and Kunjimathu both become the victim of Kumaran for whom nature is merely a resource to be exploited. Kunjimathu bears the exploitation of her own self, but retaliates when he harms nature. She rises against the capitalism that Kumaran stands for when the serenity of the place is at stake. Aathi retains its sanctity and purity until the arrival of modernity in the disguise of Kumaran. Sara Joseph ends the novel with a hope of revival. Kunjimathu emerges as an ecological saviour of Aathi. Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* gives a strong warning to all those who meddle with both women and Nature.

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