Exploring The New Terrians Of Ecocriticism: Concept, Context and Content

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Eco critical Insights in the poetry of Robert Frost

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Abstract

Robert Frost is widely acknowledged as a nature poet. His poems evoke the interrelationship between Nature and literature. A close analysis of his poems shows as if he has an agenda for Activism to take certain precautionary measures to save the Environmental crisis before it leads to the doom's day for the entire humanity. His poetic vision depicts that poems can be the best avenue to bring universal awareness among the decadent men.

Key words – Activism, Ecocriticism, Environmental crisis, poetic vision

Introduction:

Robert Frost is an American poet who was conferred with Pulitzer prize in English literature for poetry four times. According to Frost poetry is a temporary monetary stay against the confusion of life. For him poetry starts with delight and ends with wisdom. His voice echoes deep concern for the environment and human predicament at large. So, critics are in a dilemma if he is a romanticist or a modernist poet. Some say he is a pastoral poet in an industrial age. But undoubtedly, he is a modernist holding a mirror to the environmental damage and human catastrophe. At times he is a philosopher and sometimes he delves deeper as a social reformer, his religious voice blended with scientific temper makes him a visionary and his voice as an alarm for the hypocritical tendency of modern civilization. Jarrell wrote "the regular ways of looking at Frost's poetry are grotesque simplifications, distortions, falsifications—coming to know his poetry well ought to be enough, in itself, to dispel any of them, and to make plain the necessity of finding some other way of talking about In this paper an attempt has been made to expose Frost's concern as an Eco- critical Insights in his poetry how his poems reflect eco critical consciousness and thinking.

The Chinese scholar of eco-criticism, Prof. Lu Shu-yuan im Space of Eco-criticism (2006) divides into three spheres: natural ecology, social ecology and spiritual ecology. Natural ecology is a natural about the relationships between organism and their environment. It deals with the man-and-nature relatonshhi Social ecology is a result of an often-overlooked fact being widely recognized nearly all our present e problems arise from deep-seated social problems and the way human beings deal with each other as societyis crucial to solving the ecological crisis Social ecology is an interdisciplinary effort in addressing e ethnic and cultural problems from the environmental conservation perspective. Therefore, social ecology on the man-and-man relationship. When we find that the environment of human beings is not only environment but also an emotional and spiritual one and when we realize that the disturbance of the environment is bound to be reflected as a spiritual problem, the emergence of spiritual ecology is only to Prof. Lu explained that the environmental crisis would definitely lead to a keen competition in ma survival. Such spiritual unbalance caused by natural or social environment is what spiritual ecology concerns. In a word, spiritual ecology is about man-and-self relationship.

In going for water, the speaker considers the possibility of being summoned to create a religion. If this were to happen, the speaker would make water an important part of that religion. In this new religion, attending church services would involve wading through a

shallow body of water and then changing into a new set of dry clothes. The speaker of "Water" proposes a new religion centered on water: people would have to wade through water to get to church, for example, and the "liturgy" would feature "images of sousing" (that is, getting soaking wet). In imagining this hypothetical religion, the speaker reflects on the allure of ritual itself (as opposed to actual religious belief). It's possible that the speaker sincerely finds rituals powerful and transformative, even in the absence of religious faith. At the same time, the poem's focus on "construct[ing]"—or making up—"a religion" and its subversion of actual traditions (like baptism and communion) suggest that the speaker finds religious rituals a bit silly and artificial. Regardless, the speaker does seem to acknowledge the deeply human longing for rituals and their power to bring people together. In this way, "Water" suggests that rituals can grant life a sense of meaning and purpose—even if some people might also find them hollow.

"Mending Wall" was published 1914, as the first entry in Frost's second book of poems, North of Boston. The poem is set in rural New England, where Frost lived at the time—and takes its impetus from the rhythms and rituals of life there. The poem describes how the speaker and a neighbor meet to rebuild a stone wall between their properties—a ritual repeated every spring.

"Mending Wall" is a poem about borders—the work it takes to maintain them and the way they shape human interactions. The speaker and the speaker's neighbor spend much of the poem rebuilding a wall that divides their properties. As they do so, they debate the function of the wall and how it affects their relationship.

The speaker suggests that the wall is unnecessary, both practically and politically: in the speaker's mind, walls exclude people, injuring otherwise harmonious relationships. But the neighbor argues that walls actually improve relationships, because they allow people to treat each other fairly and prevent conflict. The poem doesn't fall too heavily on either side of the debate, ultimately allowing readers to decide for themselves which vision of human community is most convincing.

My apple trees wil never get across
And eat the cones under his pines I tell him
He only says Good fences make good neighbours…

The speaker believes the wall isn't necessary, given the crops that the speaker and the neighbor grow: while cattle might wander over to graze in someone else's pasture, the speaker's apples aren't going to eat the neighbor's pine trees. More importantly, the speaker believes that walls actively damage people's relationships. This is because walls are likely to "give offense"—that is, to offend people with their implication of mistrust and exclusion.

The speaker thus asks the neighbor why they need to continue repairing the wall at all. In response, the neighbor says simply and repeatedly: "Good fences make good neighbours." He believes that a good neighbor establishes clear boundaries, and in doing so prevents problems from arising between people who live near each other. The neighbor seems haunted by the possibility of future conflicts. In fact, he seems to regard such conflicts as an inevitable part of life—and as such that it's important to take steps to prevent them.

For the speaker, there's no reason to engage in such preventative measures because there are no conflicts between him and his neighbor—not even the seeds of future conflict. "Here there are no cows," the speaker says, literally referencing the fact that there aren't any cattle around that need to be penned in, lest they graze on someone else's property, and also figuratively suggesting that the speaker and the neighbor have no reason to be especially possessive of their lands. They aren't competing for resources, and should be able to live peacefully side by side. In this worldview, people are basically decent. It is building the wall

itself that seems to the speaker most likely to cause conflict, by creating a sense of "us" vs. "them" and implying that the neighbors don't trust each other.

The speaker and his neighbor thus disagree over an issue so fundamental to human society and political thinking: they debate whether conflicts between human beings are inevitable (if preventable) or whether those conflicts are the result of misguided cynicism about the possibility of peace between people. Yet though the speaker gets the most air-time in the poem, it's not entirely clear that the reader is supposed to take the speaker's side. Instead, the poem itself remains decidedly ambiguous—for all the speaker's complaints about the wall, the speaker is the one who sets the mending in motion by reaching out to the neighbor, and the poem even gives the neighbor the final word.The poem thus asks its reader to decide for themselves who is right and who is wrong, and to make up their minds about the utility of walls, borders, and other political and physical devices that divide people.

At the heart of the poem's meditation is a routine, even monotonous act: the speaker and the neighbor pick up rocks and put them back on the wall. The act is reminiscent of a famous myth, with which Frost—classically educated at Harvard—would likely have known intimately: the myth of Sisyphus. As a punishment for being crafty and deceitful, Sisyphus, the king of Corinth, was condemned to spend eternity pushing a boulder up a hill. When he reached the top of the hill, the boulder would roll back to the bottom and he would have to start over.

Given that their task is repetitive and fruitless, the speaker suggests that they might be better off if they stopped repairing the wall altogether. But the neighbor insists that they keep doing so. And he may suggest that the work itself is good and valuable: it may not simply be the fence that makes "good neighbor's," but the act of rebuilding it, of working together for a common goal.For the speaker, work is justified only by its results, or in this case physical products: the material and permanent difference it makes in the world. For the neighbor, however, work is justified as an end in itself, and that work (in his mind, at least) is part of maintaining a fair and livable society.

This might also serve as an allegory for endeavors like poetry: implicit in this debate is a question about the value of creative work—work that is simply beautiful, and that does not materially change or improve society.As the speaker of "Mending Wall" and the neighbor debate the political and practical purpose of the wall they're repairing, the poem raises an implicit question about the possibility of change. The speaker argues that the neighbor's belief—that fences are necessary to keep people from getting out of control—is out of date: the speaker compares him to an "old-stone savage." But though his attitudes may be antiquated, the neighbor remains influential in the present—articulating a deeply held belief that it is necessary for society to restrain people in small ways to keep them from acting out in big ways.

The poem thus asks its readers to ponder whether the debate between the speaker and his neighbor will ever be resolved—and, more broadly, whether it is possible for society itself to change. The poem suggests

"Fire and Ice" is a popular poem by American poet Robert Frost (1874-1963). It was written and published in 1920, shortly after WWI, and weighs up the probability of two differing apocalyptic scenarios represented by the elements of the poem's title. The speaker believes fire to be the more likely world-ender of the two, and links it directly with what he or she has "tasted" of "desire." In an ironically conversational tone, the speaker adds that ice—which represents hate and indifference—would "also" be "great" as a way of bringing about the end of the world. There are two reported inspirations for the poem: the first of these is Dante's Inferno, which is a poetic and literary journey into Hell written in the 14th century. The other

is a reported conversation Frost had with an astronomer in which they talked about the sun exploding or extinguishing—fire or ice

Some say the world will end in fire
Some say in ice….

The speaker weighs up two different scenarios for the end of the world. Some people think the world will end in fire, whereas others think ice is more likely. Based on the speaker's experiences with desire, he or she tends to agree with those who believe fire is the more likely scenario. If the world were to end twice, however, the speaker feels that, based on his or her knowledge of human hatred, ice would be an equally powerful method of destruction—and would do the job sufficiently.could easily relate to a natural disaster. For example, a potential world-ending "fire" could be something like the asteroid that most likely destroyed the dinosaurs; and ice could relate to a future ice age, or the extinguishment of the sun. But as soon as those more naturalistic ends to the world are suggested, the poem changes direction and makes it clear that fire and ice are symbols—not of natural disasters, but of humanity's ability to create disasters of its own.

By "fire" the speaker actually means "desire"—and from the speaker's limited personal experience, the speaker knows desire to be a powerfully destructive force. Humanity, then, could bring about the end of the world through passion, anger, violence, greed, and bloodlust. Indeed, the "fire" now seems like an image of warfare too. (Indeed, the poem was written shortly after then end of World War I.)

Though the speaker feels "fire" is the likely way for humanity to destroy itself and the world, the speaker also feels that human beings' capacity for destruction is so great that it could bring about this destruction more than once. (This is tongue-in-cheek, of course, as once would certainly be enough.) Here, the speaker presents "ice" as another method for ending it all, aligning it with hatred.Ice works differently from fire in this eschatological prediction. Human destruction doesn't have to be bright, noisy, and violent—hate can spread in more subtle ways. Ice has connotations of coldness and indifference, and so a possible reading here is that the end of the world could be brought about by inaction rather than some singular major event. A contemporary reading could map climate change onto "ice" here: if people fail to act over humanity's effect on the climate, it will gradually, but assuredly, bring about destruction.

By the poem's end, though, the choice between "ice" and "fire" starts to seem a little false—particularly as the speaker's tone is so casual and even glib ("ice is also great"). Ice and fire, though utterly different in the literal sense, here represent one and the same thing: the destructive potential of humanity. Either method will suffice to bring about the inevitable end of the world. In just nine short lines, then, "Fire and Ice" offers a powerful warning about human nature. Finally, it's important to notice something that isn't in the poem: any hint of a possibility that humanity won't end the world.

We may conclude that Robert Frost was not only a nature poet but also his voice speaks about the ecocritical insights and concern for environment.

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From Serenity to Sombreness: The Interplay of Nature and Human Psyche in Selected Poems of Jibanananda Das

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Abstract

This paper explores the dual representation of nature and its intricate relationship with human consciousness in selected poems of Jibanananda Das. While some of his landscapes present Bengal's scenic beauty, others evoke unease and melancholy. In both cases, nature becomes integral to the human self.

Although Jibanananda (1899–1954) writes long before the formal emergence of Ecocriticism in the late twentieth century, his poetry challenges the anthropocentric separation between the human and the natural world, affirming their interconnectedness. Nature, in his poetry, is not merely a decorative background, but an active and responsive presence that shapes and articulates emotional and psychological states.

Through an ecopsychological literary analysis with necessary biographical criticism, the paper examines how Das delineates two contrasting yet complementary dimensions of nature, and how it functions as an "objective correlative," externalising the intricate movements of the human psyche. Finally, it demonstrates how Das's poetic sensibility anticipates modern ecological concerns.

Keywords: Nature, Psyche, Serenity, Sombreness, Ecopsychology

Introduction

From the classical period to the modern age, nature has always remained an important theme in art and literature, especially in poetry. However, whereas earlier literary traditions presented it often in spiritual, aesthetic or symbolic terms, modern scholarship interrogates its more complex and darker dimensions. This is because the rapid ecological crises of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, along with a growing psychological vulnerability in an unstable world, have led poets and critics to recognise the deep interdependence between man and nature, and ask new kinds of questions. The focus has shifted towards understanding how the natural world shapes human consciousness, and what the inner life stands to lose when that connection is damaged or lost. These questions have increasingly been explored through the perspectives of ecocriticism and ecopsychology.

The term "ecocriticism" was first used in the 1978 seminal essay "Literature and Ecology" by William Rueckert, who defined it as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (73). Cheryll Glotfelty, in the "Introduction" to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, describes it as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" that "takes an earth-centered approach" (xviii). She further explains that it examines the interconnection of nature and culture, particularly as it is mediated through language and literature, theoretically negotiating between the human and the nonhuman (xix). From this standpoint, nature is not merely a passive background against which human action unfolds; rather, it functions as an active presence within the narrative or poetic structure itself. However, as Glotfelty observes, "psychology has long ignored nature in its theories of the human mind" (xxi). In response to this gap, ecopsychology has emerged as an interdisciplinary

field that combines ecology and psychology to explore the emotional and psychological bonds between humans and the natural world. According to Theodore Roszak and his collaborators, it is "a study of the psyche that takes its cue from ecology," bringing "together the sensitivity of therapists, the expertise of ecologists, and the ethical energy of environmental activists" (20, xvi). It views human beings as participants in a larger biospheric system, both influencing and being influenced by it (14–15). Moreover, it interprets these human interactions with the environment, whether constructive or destructive, as manifestations of deeper unconscious drives, and thus attempts to reconceptualise mental health within an ecological framework (5, xvi). Ultimately, it opens up a new way of literary interpretation that foregrounds the intimate interrelation between the human psyche and nature.

In Bengali literature, few poets articulate this relationship as profoundly as Jibanananda Das. Writing in the turbulent decades of the twentieth century Bengal, that witnessed, apart from the two World Wars, a devastating Famine (1943), the Partition (1947), and recurrent communal riots, Das creates a poetic universe where landscapes and the natural creatures are inseparable from the characters' inner lives. They no longer remain static descriptions of rural beauty but become psychological and philosophical spaces where the mind is constantly reflected and reimagined. Thus, nature, in his poetry, appears both intimate and unsettling, offering simultaneously moments of solace and reminders of the fragility of human existence. Through this dual representation and his unique poetic sensibility, he makes the natural world commensurate with the human psyche, holding and externalising its full complexity.

Das as a True Nature-Poet: Buddhadeva Bose's Perspective

The emergence of modern Bengali poetry in the early twentieth century was shaped by a complex engagement with the towering influence of the literary giant Rabindranath Tagore. While some poets attempted to imitate his style, another group, known as the Kallol Poets[1], "broke away from the ethical and spiritual ideals, and the conception of universal harmony… of man and nature" in his writing, and instead, embraced realism. However, as Buddhadeva Bose, an influential editor, critic, and author of the period, observes, "with the exception of one," all these poets, including he himself, were "deeply influenced" by Tagore, and at certain phases "showed serious involvement" in him. This involvement was, of course, not limited to mere parody, imitation, or submission, but also incorporated rejection and revolt. Consequently, the new realism they pursued often remained intertwined with romantic elements, though generally stripped of Tagore's mystical overtones. The "only one who apparently remained aloof" from Tagore's influence was Jibanananda Das, whom Bose describes as a "pure poet" ("Perspectives on Bengali Poetry" 43).

In his multiple works, Bose has emphasised the distinctiveness of Das, particularly in relation to his treatment of nature. In *An Acre of Green Grass* (1948), he explains at length why he regards Das as a poet of nature "in a rather special sense." While, in a way, all poets may be said to engage with nature, he argues that Das's relationship with it is far more intimate and absorbing. His poetry reveals a deep immersion in the physical world and in its concrete, sensory details. Bose considers him as a "nature-worshipper," though neither a Platonist nor a pantheist. Rather, he appears as "a pagan who loves the things of nature sensuously, not as tokens or symbols, nor as patterns of perfection, but simply because they are what they are"

[1] "Kallol" literally translates as "roaring waves." The group derives its name from the eponymous magazine founded by Dineshranjan Das and Gokulchandra Nag in 1923. Soon it became an important platform for a new generation of writers, including Buddhadeva Bose, Premendra Mitra, and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Jibanananda made his first appearance here with the poem "*Nilima*" ("Blue Skies") in 1926 (Seely 45).

(58). Bose revisits and refines this claim in *Kaler Putul* (1959), where he offers a more precise definition of the "true nature-poet," and once again identifies Das as its finest representative:

All poets, in a sense, are poets of nature, I have said this before. But not every poet can be given that title, because nature is not the sole or central subject for all of them. For many poets, nature serves as the backdrop to various human experiences; for some, it is a source of sensory delight; for others, it is merely a reflection of our inner states of mind. There is no poet who has not deeply felt nature, but only a few have embraced and expressed the entirety of life through nature. They alone are truly nature-poets.

> I believe that among our modern poets, one can be called a poet of nature in this special sense: Jibanananda Das. (my trans.; 27)

Das's engagement with nature, however, reveals a striking duality, where the natural world appears both attractive and disturbing. In both cases, his response goes beyond visual appreciation, as he seeks to possess nature through the "more savage senses of touch and smell." Thus, his poetry evokes intensely tactile and olfactory experiences. On the one hand, he loves "the smell of birds' wings" and "the warm smell of water in which rice has just been washed," and even wishes to be "born as grass in the deep sweet womb of some great dark Grass-Mother," while on the other hand, he shows "a leaning towards the exotic and even the grotesque." In fact, he is drawn to everything "hidden, forlorn, furtive." Reflecting this dual sensibility, the dominant tone of his poetry is often "grey." At times, it brightens into images such as "the red sunlight sweating over curtains and carpets," "soft saffron sunsets in autumn," or the "'silver harvest' of the moonlit sky," and at others, it darkens into a world "of tangled shadows and crooked waters, of the mouse, the owl and the bat" (*An Acre of Green Grass* 57–58). Consequently, his poetic vision oscillates between birds and beasts, dawn and darkness, and fields and forests, bringing serenity and sombreness into a single, haunting harmony.

Serenity in Nature: Reflection, Refuge, Repose, and Recollection

One of the most striking tendencies in Das's poetry, especially in the collection *Banalata Sen,* is the way he dissolves the boundary between feminine beauty and the natural world. Rather than being simply ornamental, his use of natural imagery feels instinctive and spontaneous. In his much-celebrated poem "Banalata Sen," for instance, the titular figure is described through images drawn from nature: "Her hair was like an ancient darkling night in Vidisa, / Her face, the craftsmanship of Sravasti… / … her bird's-nest-like eyes" (Seely 120). The same sensibility surfaces in "Sankhamala," where a woman's face was "white as cowrie shells." In her eyes "burned the red pyre / Of cashew wood" and remained "[t]he blue darkness of a hundred centuries." Her breasts were like "comforting conch shells—moist with milk—of an ancient Sankhinimala" (133). In "Sudarshana," the beloved's body is compared more subtly to "the earth's / familiar sunshine" (264), while in "Shyamali," looking at the protagonist's face, the speaker feels "[t]he blue of the seas of that world, / The ache of all the empty harbours at noon, / The seagulls at the edge of evening, / the stars, the juice of night, the cries of youth" (my trans.; Shahriar 196). In other poems, Das reverses this comparison, allowing the natural world itself to assume the presence of a woman. In "*Obosorer Gan*" ("Song of Repose"), for example, the village seems to be steeped in the bodily fragrance of a lovely woman husking Rupshali rice (147). Likewise, in "*Nagna Nirjan Hat*" ("Naked Lonely Hand"), the encroaching darkness resembles "she who has loved me always, / whose face I have yet to see" (Seely 127), and in "*Shob*" ("The Corpse"), the night sky appears like "the head of a woman with a knot of blue hair" (Das Gupta 35). Across these poems, the natural and the feminine are not symbols of each other so much as they are different manifestations of the same thing. They mirror each other so intimately that Das moves between them with the ease of someone who has long ceased to perceive any distinction.

Another recurring motif in Das's poetry is the long, restless journey undertaken by human beings through ancient and forgotten cities, across oceans that stretch beyond memory, and along roads that seem to lead nowhere and everywhere at once. In "Banalata Sen," the speaker recalls: "For thousands of years I roamed the paths of this earth, / From waters round Ceylon in dead of night to Malayan seas. / Much have I wandered" (Seely 119–20). A similar image of solitary movement appears in "*Poth Hata*" ("The Streets of Babylon"), where the speaker confesses, "I do not know what faint whisper has made me walk / Through the streets of the city, alone, from one post to another" (Das Gupta 34). In "*Jatri*" ("The Traveller"), human existence itself is described as a journey: "Man has come on his journey to earth," a journey that may stretch endlessly into eternity (50). Inevitably, after such prolonged wandering, there comes a point when both body and mind falter, the spirit grows heavy, and the traveller becomes "a weary heart surrounded by life's frothy ocean" (Seely 120). Then all he desires is to "enter, at the end of day, into the world of sleep" (Das Gupta 34). At this moment of exhaustion, it is nature that serves as a refuge, and offers "a moment's peace." In the poem, "Banalata Sen," the moment of encounter is described with the urgency of rescue, and resembles the relief of a lost sailor who suddenly glimpses land: "As the helmsman, / His rudder broken, far out upon the sea adrift, / Sees the grass-green land of a cinnamon isle, just so / Through darkness I saw her." This is far more than mere poetic ornament. The solace that the narrator finds in her presence could only be expressed through the language of nature because nature itself has always been a sanctuary for humanity throughout history, providing essential physical, mental, and spiritual refuge, apart from the fundamental resources required for survival. Banalata, therefore, does not simply resemble nature; rather, she is, in the most psychologically precise sense, its human form. She is what the exhausted self reaches for when it can no longer hold itself upright. Interestingly, "Banalata" literally means "a sylvan vine," which, as Seely notes, "Jibanananda with his proclivities for the natural environment of Bengal, the beautiful, might covet" (120). Thus, in Das's vision, nature serves as both the saviour and the companion of the self, and at moments of deepest need, even mingles with it until the two are no longer distinguishable.

Beyond offering moments of relief from the fatigue of existence, nature in Das's poetry also embodies states of rest and reflective nostalgia. In many of his poems, the rhythms of the natural world mirror the slowing tempo of the human mind as it withdraws from the pressures of activity and enters a contemplative state. This psychological correspondence is particularly evident in "Song of Repose," where the landscape itself seems to participate in a mood of quiet lethargy:

> The morning sun lies down, resting its head upon the paddy
> Like a lazy rustic in this Kartik field;
> The scent of meadow grass fills his breast—his eyes hold the fragrance of dew;
> Tasting that flavour, the paddy ripens in a quiet languor (my trans.; Shahriar 146)

Significantly, Das does not simply offer a dull or fading landscape to symbolise the state of lethargy. Instead, he lets nature itself become sluggish. It is as if when a farmer, after finishing his work for the day, lies stretched out under an open sky, the sun, the field, and the world around him all settle into the same idleness. This moment of repose, then, gradually opens into a deeper psychological movement: nostalgia. Just as a mind at rest often drifts towards memories of childhood and earlier innocence, the "lazy" natural world in Das's poetry becomes saturated with recollection. In the same poem, the landscape evokes a sensory memory of youth: "The soft hue of sunlight—red like a child's cheek; / Over the meadow grass lingers the scent of childhood." The movement towards nostalgia acquires a more poignant intensity in "*Hay Chil*" ("O Kite"), where, rather than passivity, it is the very activity of nature that breaks the fragile stillness of the present and draws the mind back into a buried past, stirring "the hidden springs of pain." The cry of a golden-winged kite circling over the river's bank in a "wet cloudy noon" revives the memory of "her eyes / Pale as the cane plant's fruit." However, it is not a

simple nostalgic longing but a deeply aestheticised memory, where the beloved is transformed into a quasi-mythic figure: "Like the fairy princesses of the earth she has gone, / Trailing her beauty behind her" (Das Gupta 43). The comparison elevates personal memory into a realm of collective imagination and folklore, suggesting how individual loss becomes universalised through natural imagery. Significantly, these comparisons operate at a deeper level than simple metaphors. Das does not merely equate the sun with a lazy farmer, nor does he use the meadow grass or the wailing kite as passive settings for nostalgic feeling. Rather, he draws nature into those psychological states, so that it inhabits them as fully as the human does, and creates a repository of memory, where colour, sound, and fragrance preserve traces of a distant past. In this way, he makes the boundary between the inner and the outer world increasingly fluid, allowing landscape and psyche to mirror and shape one another.

Sombreness in Nature: Desire, Decay, Despair, and Death

In the poem "*Ami Kobi, — Sei Kobi*—" ("I Am a Poet, — That Poet—"), included in his first poetry collection, *Jhara Palok* (*The Greying Manuscript*), Jibanananda writes "In the trance of dream-wine, / Heedless of the end, I have kept myself mad with passion" (my trans.; Shahriar 71). However, the tone becomes markedly different in one of his later, and as Seely describes, "more puzzling and at the same time intriguing poems," titled "*Bodh*" ("Sensation"): "Into the half light and shadow I go. Within my head / Not a dream, but some sensation is at work. / Not a dream, not peace, not love, / Inside my heart a sensation is born." While in the earlier case, the speaker appears willingly immersed in a self-created state of ecstatic abandon, in the later scenario, he "cannot escape it," suggesting a more powerful and overwhelming inner experience (64). This shift marks an important transformation in Das's poetic imagination from pastoral serenity towards an exploration of more sombre dimensions like desire, despair, and psychological complexity.

A powerful instance of this darker tone appears in the poem "*Pipashar Gan*" ("Song of Thirst"), where erotic desire is articulated through violent images drawn from the natural world. Alongside its central theme of reincarnation, the poem presents a series of intense sensory experiences in which the body appears wounded, pierced, and absorbed by the surrounding landscape. Early in the poem the speaker declares, "In bud after bud / Only worms—wounds—stinging— / Today my heart craves!" (Seely 57). The imagery immediately suggests that desire unfolds not in a romantic natural setting, but within a disturbed environment where pleasure and suffering coexist. This tension becomes even more explicit in the lines describing the moon as a "listing sickle" whose light falls "like the keen-edged kiss / Of a lover's lips," leaving the speaker "wounded, / In the greenish blood of vegetation" (57–58). The body is imagined as a harvested field repeatedly "rent / And wounded," while the "[r]ed sunlight of midday" burns "like fire." Throughout the poem, natural elements such as light, fog, dust, and grass participate in this sensory violence: "Rosy light, a sip of sunlight, / Darkness, fog's knife / Seem to cut me. Particles of dust seem / Slowly to absorb me!" What makes these images more striking is the way they combine tenderness and violence. Expressions such as the "keen-edged kiss," the "greenish blood," and the "joy of pain" bring together sensations that are contradictory, or at least incongruous. Even the seemingly harmless "grass blades" become instruments capable of crushing the speaker "[l]ike insects / In these dusty beds" (58). In this way, nature grows deeply entangled with human consciousness, and not only reveals but also mediates its conflicting emotions and desires. Das does not employ nature merely as a metaphor; rather, he reveals a shared sensibility between the human and the natural worlds, allowing them to speak for one another.

Another dimension of the sombre emotional landscape appears in "*Pachish Bochor Pore*" ("After Twenty-five Years"), the third section of the poem "*Mather Golpo*" ("Tale of the Fields"), where nature unfolds the three intertwined phases of *biraha*: longing, the slow erosion of hope, and the lingering survival of love. The poem opens with the recollection of a meeting

in the fields, the moment when the narrator and his beloved separate, carrying with them the hope that they might one day meet again: "The last time I met her was in the field; / I said: 'Someday, at such an hour again, / Come back—if ever you wish to come— / After twenty-five years.'" From that moment onwards, the landscape becomes the medium through which the narrator's prolonged waiting is measured. Time passes not through human markers but through the rhythms of nature: "How many times the moon and the stars / Died across the fields; the owls and the mice / Came and went, searching the paddy fields in the moonlight." The recurring nights (as though day never arrives, for it might bring joy), monotonous movements of the animals, and the fading of the stars all mirror how the narrator's longing continues across the passing years. This is perhaps because these elements become the narrator's silent companions in the long absence of his beloved. They witness his recollection and suffering, listen to his unspoken thoughts, offer a quiet solace, and gradually become woven into his life and consciousness. When the anticipated meeting finally occurs after twenty-five years, however, the passage of time has already altered both memory and expectation. The narrator reflects: "Then you came— / to the edge of the field—moon. / What cannot happen on earth today / happened once; afterwards it slipped away, / lost and finished." Significantly, the poem prepares for this emotional disillusionment through a series of stark natural images that precede the encounter. The fields are filled with yellow grass, broken sparrow nests lie soaked in dew, the cold and brittle shells of birds' eggs crack upon the path, and torn spider webs and a dried spider cling to vine and leaf. Even the sky appears cold and distant while owls and rats move through the fields and "quench their thirst" nibbling at scattered grains. Thus, the landscape here is not merely descriptive but expressive of the narrator's inner condition. The fragmentation of nests, shells, and webs marks the slow erosion of memory and the quiet collapse of hope and love. Yet, the poem does not end in complete desolation. In its closing lines, the narrator remarks: "Tilling the fields of grain over and over, / The farmer has left; / Their stories of soil, their tales of land— / when all ends / Much still remains" (my trans.; Shahriar 125–26). Just as something of its farmer's presence remains within the soil of an abandoned field, love never entirely fades but lingers within the heart. The landscape therefore becomes more than a physical setting; it turns into a quiet repository of not only lived experience but also emotions, their gradual erosion, and enduring afterlife. This idea echoes Tagore's well-known lines from "*Hothat Dekha*" ("Sudden Meet"): "Are the days we have passed / truly lost without a trace? / Is there nothing left? /… / All the stars of night remain hidden in the daylight" (my trans.; Tagore Web). However, the difference in imagery and diction between the two poets is striking. "After Twenty-five Years" suggests that the past continues to inhabit the present, and through the convergence of memory and landscape, Das once again reveals how the movements of the human psyche find their most profound expression through the textures of the natural world.

This process of manifestation takes on a more unsettling dimension in the poem "*Aat Bocchor Ager Ekdin*" ("A Day Eight Years Ago"), where nature becomes unusually alert and hyperactive, almost responding to the disturbed psyche of the protagonist. The poem opens with a striking revelation: "When the crescent moon, five days toward full, had set / He'd had the urge to die." A short while earlier, as the man lay beside his wife and child, "[t]here had been love, hope, in the moonlight," but by the time he rises and steps outside to take his own life, "the moon had sunk into strange darkness." Clearly, the changing state of the moon mirrors the shifting currents of the protagonist's mind. In the poem, interestingly and quite unexpectedly, the dark gloomy landscape advocates for life instinct: "in love with life's flow," the owl and the mosquito remain awake, "the decrepit, putrefying frog begs a few moments more" in anticipation of another dawn and a faint warmth, and from blood and filth, flies rise and fly back into the sunlight. Even "[t]he grasshopper's constant twitching, caught in the mischievous child's grasp, / Fights death." Das here subtly contrasts the natural world's primordial instinct

to live with the man's seemingly capricious death drive. The man "lacked / Not love of woman, / Nor did married life's expectations / Go unfulfilled," yet he "had gone alone to the *aswattha* tree" carrying "a coil of rope in hand" to embrace the death. The poem suggests that the impulse driving him lies beyond ordinary explanations:

> A woman's heart—love—a child—a home—these are not everything,
> Not wealth nor fame nor creature comforts—
> There is some other perilous wonder
> That frolics
> In our very blood. (Seely 135–36)

Whereas some critics interpret the poem as a critique of the man's decision and view it as a condemnation of suicide (Roy 112), Asoke Kumar Misra offers a markedly different reading. By drawing a comparison with the death of Van Gogh, he refuses to call the act an ordinary suicide. He argues that, unlike the fragile creatures depicted in the poem, the protagonist has already achieved what success and fulfilment conventionally imply. Having reached this stage of realisation, life no longer seems meaningful to him but instead becomes a source of inner exhaustion. Consequently, at a moment when he might have been expected to lose himself in youthful passion, he turns instead towards the ultimate truth of existence, its cessation (144). This interpretation may give the impression that continuing to live even after achieving everything life has to offer appears as futile and almost grotesque as the desperate struggle for survival displayed by the creatures in the poem. In that sense, the protagonist's act may appear less as an aberration and more as an inevitable or even natural outcome. However, Clinton B. Seely proposes some other explanations. "Knowing that the grasshopper's life, or the *doyel* bird's, never meets with / That of man," he suggests, "he may have chosen to end this human existence" to "become part of the natural, nonhuman universe." Interestingly, in the poem "*Abar Asibo Fire*" ("One Day I Shall Come Back"), the speaker expresses a similar wish. He wants to be reborn not as a man, "but as a *salik* bird or white hawk." Drawing on the layered symbolism of the *aswattha* tree, Seely further reads the man's suicide as a dark echo of the enlightenment of Gautama Buddha, where the tree becomes the *Bodhibriksha* (tree of wisdom), under which "he understood what man must do to overcome the sufferings of the world. He was fully enlightened: he was dead" (138). Nevertheless, the poem reveals a complex entanglement of *Eros* and *Thanatos*, as theorised by Sigmund Freud, alongside an equally intricate interplay between nature and the human psyche. The man's motives, however obscure, become perceptible only through the surrounding landscape and the activities of its creatures. Nature thus not only actively participates in human action but also becomes a medium through which the unconscious is externalised.

Conclusion

Nature, in Jibanananda Das's poetry, is never just a backdrop or an ornamental device; it carries thought, memory and feeling. "Lust-longing-love-desire-dreams burst forth" through it (Seely 103). Sometimes, it appears calm and beautiful, offering solace and serenity, and at other times, it becomes dark and unsettling, externalising desire and despondence. In this shifting presence, its function resembles, yet also transcends, what Eliot calls an "objective correlative" (145), for it not only evokes an emotion through a set of situations or events but also becomes a living presence that seems to feel that emotion itself. Through this shared sensibility, nature and the mind cease to exist as distinct entities, gradually merging into a unified consciousness. Das is, however, neither entirely utopian nor dystopian in his treatment of nature. His poems celebrate the beauty of the earth while also acknowledging its harsher realities, thereby anticipating many modern ecological and ecopsychological concerns. Poems like "*Camp-e*" ("In Camp"), "*Shikar*" ("The Hunt"), and "*Hothat-Mrito*" ("Sudden Dead"), for instance, explore the threatened condition of wildlife, linking it surreally to the hollowness of existence, love, and hope (Shahriar 151–53, 191–92, 454). Ultimately, oscillating between

serenity and sombreness, nature in his poetry becomes a mirror, a companion, and, at times, even an extension of the human psyche.

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"Of Clouds and Widows: The Hydropoetic Dialectic of Freedom and Constraint in *Meghadūta* And *Water*"

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Abstract

Interrogating the intersection of hydropoetics and patriarchal biopolitics, this paper juxtaposes the pastoral symbiosis of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* with the stagnant, anti-pastoral landscapes of Deepa Mehta's film *Water*. While the Sanskrit classic frames riverine networks as conduits of emotional agency and environmental "blessings," Mehta's narrative exposes the "slow violence" of social exile, where the Ganges functions as a boundary of patriarchal containment for the marginalized widow. By examining thematic intersections of "fluid borders," "existential longing," and "gendered fertility," the study reveals how socio-political structures manipulate natural elements to enforce feminine asceticism. Drawing on Blue Humanities and Ecofeminist frameworks, this research maps a "new terrain" that bridges classical romanticism and modern cinematic realism. It argues that the shift from the life-giving monsoon to the stagnant ghats reflects a critical evolution in human-environment interactions within the South Asian context.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Blue Humanities, Hydropoetics, Patriarchal Biopolitics, Transhistorical Ecocriticism.

Introduction

The contemporary academic landscape is undergoing a profound paradigm shift, moving away from traditional anthropocentric worldviews toward an exploration of the intricate, symbiotic relationship between human entities and the broader environment. As the planet faces escalating ecological challenges, literature serves as a critical medium to analyze how society reflects, shapes, and challenges its attitudes toward nature. By juxtaposing Kālidāsa's 5th-century Sanskrit poem *Meghadūta* with Deepa Mehta's 2005 film *Water*, this paper investigates a hydropoetic dialectic. It argues that while classical aesthetics often frame the monsoon as a "blessing" that facilitates emotional connection, modern narratives reveal how patriarchal structures manipulate the same natural elements to enforce the social exile of women.

1.2 Literature Review

The scholarly conversation surrounding these texts and their ecological implications can be summarized through the following thematic points:

- **Environmental Empathy in Sanskrit Poetics:** Traditional scholarship on *Meghadūta* has long celebrated Kālidāsa's ability to imbue the natural world with human sentiment, viewing the cloud-messenger as a sentient participant in a "pastoral idyll" (Kālidāsa 12).
- **The Ecofeminist Lens in Cinema:** Critics of Deepa Mehta's *Water* often highlight the film's portrayal of "slow violence," where the stagnation of the Ganges mirrors the forced asceticism and social death of the widows (Nixon 2).

- **Defining the Ecocritical Field:** Foundational ecocriticism defines the field as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, taking an earth-centered approach to literary studies (Glotfelty xviii).
- **Blue Humanities and Riverine Identity:** Recent "hydrocritical" studies emphasize that rivers are not mere backdrops but active agents that define national and gendered identities, shifting from the "sacred" to the "sociopolitical" (Alaimo 533).
- **Transhistorical Ecocriticism:** There is a significant research gap between classical Indian landscape aesthetics and contemporary visual narratives. This study seeks to bridge that gap by showing how the "fertility" of the land and the female body are linked across centuries of South Asian discourse.
- **Indian Ecofeminism and Seed Sovereignty**: Scholars like Vandana Shiva emphasize that the "marginalization of women and the destruction of biodiversity go hand in hand," a principle visible in the controlled domesticity of the Varanasi ashram (Shiva 16).

1.3 Theoretical Overview

This study is grounded in three primary theoretical frameworks:

- **Hydropoetics and Blue Humanities:** Hydropoetics examines how water—in the form of clouds, rain, and rivers—acts as a narrative engine. In this dissertation, water is analyzed as a "vibrant matter" that possesses its own agency (Bennett 3). The transition from the "fluidity" of the messenger cloud in *Meghadūta* to the "stagnancy" of the Varanasi ghats in *Water* serves as the central metaphor for the dialectic between freedom and constraint.
- **Ecofeminism and Dualism:** Ecofeminism posits that the exploitation of the environment and the oppression of women are inextricably linked through a logic of dualism—where "culture" is valued over "nature" and "male" over "female" (Plumwood 47). This research demonstrates how patriarchal systems in both 5th-century and 20th-century contexts seek to control "fertility" by regulating access to natural elements.
- **Patriarchal Biopolitics:** Drawing on the concept of biopolitics, this study investigates how social structures manage biological life. The widows in Mehta's film are subjected to a form of "environmental containment," where their physical movements are restricted to the banks of the Ganges. (Mehta)

2. The Fluid Border: Riverine Agency and the Dialectic of Movement

This chapter investigates the "Blue Humanities" perspective within the context of the seminar's objective to foster a deeper understanding of human-environment interactions. By analyzing the role of water as a narrative agent, this section explores how riverine landscapes transition from being conduits of emotional freedom to instruments of social containment. This analysis aligns with the seminar's intent to analyze how literary and visual works reflect and challenge societal attitudes toward the natural world. (Alaimo 534).

2.1. The River as Path: Vibrant Matter in *Meghadūta*

In Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, the aquatic landscape is characterized by a profound sense of mobility and "vibrant matter" (Bennett 3). The rivers—specifically the Revā and the Vetravatī—are not mere geographical markers but are depicted as sentient entities with distinct biographies. As the Yakṣa directs the cloud-messenger across these terrains, the water becomes a path that facilitates both physical movement and emotional transmission. The riverine environment acts in a symbiotic relationship with the exiled spirit, where the "fluidity" of the water mirrors the fluidity of the messenger's journey (Kālidāsa 45). In this classical framework, the river represents a terrain of connection, where the natural world actively supports the human desire for reunion and communication.

2.2. The River as Prison: Stagnation and Containment in *Water*

Conversely, Deepa Mehta's *Water* reconfigures the Ganges at Varanasi as a site of physical and social "stagnation." For the widows residing in the ashram, the river is a border

that defines their exclusion from the active world. While the water is spiritually "pure," it serves a material function as a prison wall. The widows are positioned on the ghats—liminal spaces where they are close to the water yet forbidden from utilizing its "flow" for their own liberation. Here, the river represents a "fluid border" that enforces the patriarchal biopolitics of the 1930s (Mehta). The sanctity of the Ganges is manipulated by social structures to justify the containment of the feminine body, turning the life-giving element into a backdrop for "slow violence" (Nixon 2).

2.3. The Dialectic of the Shoreline

The contrast between these two works highlights a significant intellectual paradigm shift from the traditional anthropocentric view of the world. While Kālidāsa's hydropoetics celebrate a landscape where water carries the "blessing" of connection, Mehta's cinematic landscape exposes how environmental elements are co-opted to sustain social hierarchies. This dialectic reveals that the "fluidity" of a border depends entirely on the sociopolitical status of the entity standing at its edge. The Ganges, which should theoretically offer the same path of agency found in *Meghadūta*, is transformed into a site of environmental displacement for those rendered socially invisible.

3. Longing in the Anthropocene: Environmental Empathy and Social Decay

This chapter situates the concept of "longing" within the contemporary discourse of the **Anthropocene**, exploring how human desire and suffering are mapped onto the physical environment. As the seminar notes, ecocriticism seeks to explore the intricate, symbiotic relationship between humans and the broader environment. By examining the emotional landscapes of *Meghadūta* and *Water*, we can observe a shift from a "spiritual and aesthetic connection" with the natural world to a state of profound ecological and social alienation.

3.1. The Yakṣa's Seasonal Longing: Environmental Empathy

In Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, longing is portrayed as a rhythmic, seasonal experience that is deeply integrated into the natural cycle. The *Yakṣa's* grief is not an isolated human emotion but is mirrored by the impending monsoon, illustrating what the seminar describes as the "primary wellspring of literary inspiration" found in ecology. The cloud is treated as a sentient companion, an example of "vibrant matter" that possesses the agency to bridge the distance between separated lovers (Bennett 3). This relationship represents a "pastoral idyll" where the environment is empathetic to human loss. The *Yakṣa*, though in exile, remains a "nature-spirit," functionally a part of the ecosystem he describes. His longing is a "blessing" of sorts, as it is validated and carried by the monsoon cloud, reinforcing the Vedic tradition of seeing nature as a divine participant in human affairs.

3.2. The Widows' Perpetual Drought: Enforced Social Decay

In stark contrast, Deepa Mehta's *Water* depicts longing as a state of "perpetual drought" that defies the natural relief of the seasons. For the widows of Varanasi, the arrival of the monsoon does not signal a reunion or a romantic ideal; instead, they exist in a state of "enforced drought"—systematically stripped of color, flavor, and human companionship. This deprivation mirrors the "slow violence" of environmental degradation, where the social environment becomes as toxic and stagnant as a polluted river (Nixon 2).

While the *Yakṣa's* longing is synchronized with the earth, the widows are alienated from the very landscape they inhabit. Living on the banks of the Ganges, they are denied the fluidity and fertility that the river symbolizes. This reflects the seminar's focus on **Eco-Anxiety** and **Environmental Displacement**, as the widows are displaced not just from their homes, but from their own biological and emotional potential. Their condition represents an "anti-pastoral" reality where patriarchal structures enforce a state of internal desiccation.

3.3. Synthesis: The Non-Human Status and the Anthropocene

The dialectic between these two texts reveals a disturbing parallel in how "non-human" status is assigned. In *Meghadūta*, the *Yakṣa* is a nature-spirit whose "human-environment

interaction" is one of mutual recognition and aesthetic harmony. However, in the 1930s setting of *Water*, the widows are treated as "non-human entities"—socially discarded and rendered as "wasteland" by the patriarchal biopolitics of the era.

This transition highlights the "profound intellectual paradigm shift" required to understand the **Anthropocene**. It suggests that when society views specific human groups as disconnected from the "natural" order, it justifies their exploitation in the same way it justifies the destruction of habitats. The longing of the widow, unlike that of the *Yakṣa*, finds no sympathy in the clouds, marking a shift from the monsoon as a romantic messenger to a witness of ecological and social decay.

4. Gendered Landscapes: Fertility, Asceticism, and Patriarchal Biopolitics

This chapter addresses the seminar's specific thrust area of Ecofeminism and Gender by analyzing how patriarchal systems exercise control over the "fertility" of both the physical landscape and the female body.

4.1. The "Fruitful" Earth: Aesthetic Symbiosis in *Meghadūta*

In Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, the arrival of the monsoon cloud acts as a divine "blessing" that restores life to the parched earth. This classical aesthetic relies on a symbiotic relationship between the fertility of the land and the sensual beauty of the female subject. From an ecofeminist perspective, the "fruitfulness" of the Earth in *Meghadūta* is a manifestation of environmental empathy. However, this romanticized view also implies a patriarchal "gaze" that values both nature and women primarily for their reproductive potential.

From an ecofeminist perspective, the "fruitfulness" of the Earth in *Meghadūta* is a manifestation of environmental empathy, where the "primary wellspring of literary inspiration" is the flourishing natural world. However, this romanticized view also implies a patriarchal "gaze" that values both nature and women primarily for their reproductive potential and aesthetic harmony. The landscape is not merely a backdrop but a "vibrant matter" that celebrates a state of idealized, uninterrupted fertility (Bennett 3)

4.2. The "Barren" Ashram: Enforced Asceticism in *Water*

Conversely, Deepa Mehta's *Water* presents an "anti-pastoral" terrain where the fertility of the widow is systematically suppressed. In the 1930s setting of the Varanasi ashram, the environment is one of "enforced asceticism." While the Ganges flows perpetually beside them, the widows are denied the "fluidity" and life-giving properties of the water. They are treated as social "wastelands," mirroring the "slow violence" of environmental degradation (Nixon 2). The widows' "infertility" is not a natural state but a social construct enforced through the management of their physical environment.

This representation aligns with the seminar's focus on **Environmental Justice** and the "complex dynamics of human-environment interactions". In *Water*, the patriarchal biopolitics of the era transform the sacred river into a boundary of containment rather than a conduit of life. The widows' "infertility" is not a natural state but a social construct enforced through the management of their physical environment. Their bodies are rendered "barren" by a system that seeks to tame both the autonomous female spirit and the "wild" potential of the natural elements.

4.3. Synthesis: The Control of Biological Life

The dialectic between the "fruitful" earth of Kālidāsa and the "barren" ashram of Mehta reveals a shared underlying structure of patriarchal biopolitics. Whether through the romanticized "blessing" of the monsoon or the enforced "stagnancy" of the ghats, both texts demonstrate how the female body is mapped onto the landscape to reflect social hierarchies.

In *Meghadūta*, the landscape is a site of "spiritual and aesthetic connection" that validates human desire. In *Water*, the landscape is co-opted as a site of **Environmental Displacement**, where women are exiled within their own geography. Ultimately, these gendered landscapes

prove that the "new terrains" of ecocriticism must account for how biological life is managed, highlighting the role of literature in shaping—and potentially challenging—our relationship with the natural world.

5. Conclusion: Reclaiming the New Terrains

The synthesis of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* and Deepa Mehta's *Water* provides a comprehensive map of the shifting "hydropoetic dialectic" within South Asian cultural history. This dissertation has sought to address the objective of the National Seminar by fostering a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics inherent in human-environment interactions. By tracing the evolution of water from a sentient "blessing" to an instrument of social "containment," this research identifies a profound intellectual paradigm shift in how literature and film conceptualize the natural world.

5.1. Summary of Findings

The comparative analysis reveals that the "fluidity" of the South Asian landscape is determined by the sociopolitical status of the human subject. In the classical terrain of *Meghadūta*, the environment exists in a state of "vibrant matter," where rivers and clouds function as active agents of emotional agency. Conversely, in the modern cinematic landscape of *Water*, the environment is co-opted by patriarchal biopolitics to enforce a state of social "stagnation" and "slow violence". This study concludes that the "fertility" of the earth and the autonomy of the female body are inextricably linked, and both are subject to the same structures of patriarchal control.

5.2. The Shift in Monsoon Aesthetics

The transition from the "pastoral idyll" of 5th-century Sanskrit poetics to the "anti-pastoral" realism of 20th-century cinema reflects a significant change in the aesthetic connection between the written word and the natural world. While the Vedic and classical traditions viewed the monsoon as a spiritual wellspring of inspiration, the modern era often frames these same ecological elements through the lens of **Eco-Anxiety** and social decay. This research highlights how literary and visual works do not merely reflect nature but actively "shape and challenge societal attitudes" toward the environment and the individuals marginalized within it.

5.3. Final Thoughts: Reclaiming "New Terrains"

To reclaim the "New Terrains of Ecocriticism," scholars must move beyond traditional anthropocentric views to explore the symbiotic relationship between human entities and the broader environment. This dissertation suggests that a "hydrocritical" approach allows for the discovery of hidden histories of containment and resistance. By bridging the gap between classical romanticism and modern realism, we can better understand the role of literature in shaping our relationship with the natural world. Ultimately, the study of these "new terrains" is more important than ever as the planet faces multifaceted challenges, requiring a scholarly commitment to nurturing exceptional literary talent and critical skills to address the diverse career and ecological aspirations of the future.

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Rooted Rebellion: Environmental Memory and Resistance to Colonisation in "*Wide Sargasso Sea*"

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Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive postcolonial ecocritical revaluation of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, positioning the text as a seminal critique of the "monoculture of the mind" imposed by British imperialism. By placing the "madwoman in the attic" (Bertha aka Antoinette) back within her West Indian landscape, the study shows how the shift to plantation capitalism re-engineered the environment, treating both the land and the female body as resources for extraction. Central to this work is "ecological memory"—the idea that the wilderness of Granbois and the ruins of Coulibri act as archives where the flora "remembers" colonial exploitation. While Rochester's Eurocentric gaze seeks to categorize and domesticate the landscape through imperial botany, Antoinette's identity remains tied to a sensory intimacy with the island. Her refusal to separate her psyche from her environment serves as a radical ecofeminist resistance. Finally, the study argues that Antoinette's descent into "madness" is actually an ecological defense. The fire at Thornfield Hall is reinterpreted as "pyro-regeneration," a decolonial act that reclaims her heritage and returns Caribbean heat to the cold world of the colonizer.

Key words - Post colonial ecocriticism, Plantation capitalism, Ecofeminist resistance, Mono culture of mind, Pyro regeneration, Ecological memory.

Introduction:

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) occupies a pivotal status in both Caribbean literature and feminist writings for rewriting of classic fiction. Rhys relocates the English heroine's "madwoman" from Jane Eyre into the lush, post-emancipation West Indies, inorder to give voice to Antoinette Cosway and her Creole heritage. As Nadal- Ruiz observes, the novel's protagonist evolves her Creole consciousness through various disconnection with Dominica's nature, and Antoinette "recalling certain events belonging to her past and… her interaction with [the] Caribbean landscape". In other words, Rhys does not just use the tropical setting for decoration; she portrays the island's ecology – earth, gardens, sea, and sky as a living archive of the colonial encounter and personal memory. To paraphrase Derek Walcott, for the Caribbean "the sea… has locked its martyrs up. these oceanic metaphors reveals that both the island's waters and its soil function as profound archives for suppressed historical narratives. Rhys's novel dramatizes this insight: the environment itself beholds the traces of plantation uprisings, colonial violence, and generational trauma.

This research paper argues that *Wide Sargasso Sea* fabricates environmental memory of colonisation and channels it into the acts of resistance. Drawing on postcolonial theory, ecocriticism, memory studies, and ecofeminism, the analysis demonstrates that the natural imagery in the novel – the Coulibri garden, tropical flora and fauna, violent fire and storms – encodes suppressed histories and empowers the exiled Creole self. Such an cross functional approach is needed because traditional criticism has largely overlooked the ecological dimensions of Rhys's story. While Rhys's politics and gender dynamics have been examined extensively, only recently have critics like Ismailinejad (2015) and Nadal-Ruiz (2020) begun to highlight the novel's nature culture conflicts. For example, one study notes that Rochester (the English husband) "exploits and dominates Antoinette as agent of nature" whereas, as a

Creole woman, Antoinette is depicted as inherently empathetic to nature and finds liberation in it. This ecofeminist reading links colonial domination of women with domination of land . By highlighting such interpretations, we address a clear gap in the literature. Postcolonial ecocriticism of the Caribbean has scarcely turned its gaze to Rhys, despite calls to treat colonial histories also as environmental histories.

The idea of this research paper is explicitly limited to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, but it engages relevant primary and comparative texts to contextualize the discussion. Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre provides the colonialist backdrop (through Rochester's English perspective), while other Caribbean literary voices (like Derek Walcott's poetry) illustrates regional attitudes toward landscape and history. The significance of this study lies in uncovering a new dimension of Rhys's classic: an ecological memory that has been largely neglected. By tracing how *Wide Sargasso Sea* foresees the natural world as both a witness to colonisation and a source of emancipation, this research paper contributes to postcolonial ecocriticism and Caribbean studies. It also reverberates with current global conversations about climate, decolonization, and how marginalized communities preserve their histories in the face of environmental annihilation.

One of the most striking features of Wide Sargasso Sea is the way how the Caribbean landscape reflects the history of the colonial violence. To fully understand the underlying environmental memory functioning within the novel, it is important to understand the narrative within the specific ecological and economic decline of the 1830s Caribbean. The novel opens in Jamaica in the immediate outcome of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. This historical event was marked not only by massive social upheaval but also by a profound ecological transition. The British Empire's wealth had been highly tied up to the violently forced cultivation of monoculture crops, primarily sugar cane etc. Which required the systematic destruction of the native flora and fauna, including the exhaustion of soil nutrients. Environmental historian Alfred W. Crosby argues that European colonial expansion drastically reshaped global ecosystems by "ecological imperialism"—the introduction of foreign plants, animals, and agricultural systems were designed in a way to extract maximum capital at the cost of local biodiversity . The Caribbean plantation system violently replaced the native diverse tropical ecosystems with highly rigid, geometric order of the plantation machines. The novel continuously presents the environment as a living being that remembers the past; ruined plantations, abandoned estates etc, shows the decline of the colonial plantation system after emancipation.

Antoinette's childhood home, Coulibri Estate, serves as a powerful depiction of this historical memory. That once a prosperous plantation, and now it has fallen into decay after the abolition of slavery. The buildings are deteriorating, the gardens are neglected, and the vegetation grows wildly across the property. This imagery submits that nature is gradually reclaiming the land that had once been exploited by colonial agriculture. The decline of Coulibri reflects the collapse of a social order, which was built upon slavery and economic exploitation.

The Coulibri Estate, perfectly illustrates the tension between imperial cultivation and natural reclamation. Rhys describes the estate with a mixture of reverence and unease. Antoinette describes the estate as both beautiful and decaying:

> "Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild." (Rhys 16)

The reference to the biblical Garden of Eden initially suggests the harmony; however, the line that "it had gone wild" introduces a profound sense of ecological overthrow. The once meticulously managed plantation garden , now has become overgrown, symbolizing the

collapse of colonial authority along with the abolition of slavery. Environmental historian Alfred W. Crosby argues that European colonial expansion dramatically reshaped ecosystems through "ecological imperialism"—the introduction of Foreign plants and agricultural systems designed to extract maximum capital (73). The Europeans introduced the Caribbean plantation system which violently replaced the diverse tropical ecosystems with monoculture crops . The once meticulously managed plantation garden has now become overgrown, Symbolizing the collapse of the colonial authority over it . The mixture of "dead flowers" and the "fresh Living smell" encapsulates the atmosphere of ecological haunting—the decay of the white Creole plantocracy fertilizing the aggressive rebirth of the local flora. The decay of Coulibri therefore represents not only an economic decline but also nature's gradual reclamation of spaces previously subjected to the rigid geometry of colonial control. The environment itself engages in a form of "ecological haunting," bearing the long lingering scars of the violence, it witnessed and refused to let the history of slavery be easily erased.

The natural environment thus becomes a silent yet active witness to the colonial history. Instead of erasing the past, the landscape preserves the traces of violence and displacement that shaped the Caribbean society. The ruins of plantations and estates reminds the readers that the wealth of colonial powers was built upon the exploitation of both land and people. Through these descriptions, Jean Rhys emphasizes that history is not confined to written records but also embedded deeply in the physical environment. At the same time, the novel portrays the Caribbean environment as a resistant to the colonial control. European colonizers attempted to transform the tropical landscape onto an orderly plantation designed only for economic profit. However, Rhys depicts nature as both unpredictable and untamed. Like the dense forests, tangled vegetation, and overwhelming tropical heat creates an atmosphere that resists the rigid structures imposed by the colonial authority. The land appears to be alive and powerful, constantly challenging the attempts of the colonial powers to dominate and control it.

The novel contrasts two distinct ways of interacting with this haunted landscape: Antoinette's localized belonging and Rochester's imperial alienation. Antoinette's identity is forged through a Creole ecology—a form of environmental belonging that was shaped by the cultural and biological hybridity. The botanical diversity of the Caribbean reflects her own complex position and identity: a white Creole rejected by both the European metropole and the Black Caribbean Community. For Antoinette, the sensory richness of the natural world provides a vital grounding for her fragmented identity. The bathing pools, the ferns, and the deep forests are the only spaces where she feels a continuous, unthreatened sense of herself. This resistance becomes more evident when examining Antoinette's relationship with the natural world. From her childhood, Antoinette experiences the landscape as a place of comfort and belonging. She is very drawn towards the beauty of flowers, forests, and mountains that surrounds her home. The natural environment provides her with a sense of peace and emotional security that she cannot find within the rigid social hierarchies of the colonial society. The Caribbean landscape becomes an important part of her memory and emotional life.

The descriptions of tropical plants, bright flowers, and vibrant colours creates a vivid sense of place throughout the novel. Rochester, conversely experiences the Caribbean through the lens of sensory colonialism. Unable to process, categorize, or to dominate the complex ecosystem, he perceives the landscape as hostile, excessive, and deceitful. Upon his arrival at Granbois, their honeymoon estate, he describes the environment with palpable disgust and discomfort:
"Everything is too much… too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers Too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near." (Rhys 41)

This reaction exemplifies the colonial mindset that views unfamiliar, non-European environments as chaotic and inherently threatening. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin note that colonial literature frequently portrays tropical environments as spaces of disorder that actively require imperial discipline, mapping, and management (15). Rochester's sensory overload morphs into a profound physiological rejection of the landscape. He falls deeply ill with a fever shortly after his arrival. This fever is not merely a biological infection; it is an ideological sickness. It is the manifestation of his body's inability to digest the Creole ecology of the Caribbean. Because he cannot interpret the ecological network around him, he projects his anxieties onto it, viewing the forest as a place of dark secrets and hidden hostility. This sensory colonialism directly dictates his treatment of Antoinette; because she belongs to the landscape, he views her as equally wild, excessive, and in need of subjugation. These images also highlights the richness of the Caribbean environment while also emphasizing Antoinette's deep emotional bondage with the island. Through these moments, Rhys presents nature as a source of identity and belonging that exists outside the colonial definitions of race and nationality.

However, this connection between Antoinette and nature also exposes the colonial stereotypes imposed upon both women and the colonized landscapes. European colonial discourse often portrayed tropical environments as exotic, irrational, and dangerous. These same stereotypes were frequently applied to women, who were depicted as emotional and uncontrollable and need to be subjugated. The parallel subjugation of the Caribbean landscape and Antoinette's autonomy can be best understood through the ecofeminist theory. As Carolyn Merchant argues, Western patriarchal thought has historically constructed hierarchical dualisms that position nature as a passive resource to be exploited by "rational" human (male) authority (3). Val Plumwood further asserts that this dualistic thinking separates culture from nature and reason from emotion, consistently placing women and the natural world on the inferior, subjugated side of these binaries (4).In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, this intersection of patriarchal and colonial domination crystallizes in Rochester's treatment of Antoinette. By recognizing her deep connection to the Creole ecology of the islands, Rochester attempts to sever her from it to establish his control. His most violent act of psychological colonization is his attempt to rename her as Bertha. Both nature and women are treated as forces that must be controlled by masculine colonial authority. This connection reflects an ecofeminist perspective, which explores the relationship between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature.

As a result, Rochester attempts to impose control over both Antoinette and the land she represents. this connection becomes evident through Rochester's treatment of Antoinette. Shortly after their marriage, he begins to assert control over her identity by renaming her, forcing her into a dull, British, patriarchal mold:
"Bertha is not my name… You are trying to make me into someone else." (Rhys 94)

This act of renaming represents a symbolic form of domination. By imposing a new identity upon Antoinette, Rochester attempts to erase her cultural background(Creole identity) and reshape her according to British expectations. The renaming also mirrors colonial practices of claiming ownership over lands. Naming is a fundamental tool of imperial domination. Just as European colonizers renamed indigenous territories to assert legal and linguistic ownership, Rochester renames Antoinette to erase her Creole heritage and force her into an obedient, British paradigm. By pathologizing her connection to the Caribbean landscape as "madness," Rochester relies on the classic ecofeminist binary: he is the rational, civilizing force; while she is the hysterical, untamed wilderness. Rochester's renaming of Antoinette therefore parallels the broader colonial project of transforming unfamiliar environments into possessions.

Despite these attempts at control, the environment in *Wide Sargasso Sea* continually disrupts colonial authority. The tropical landscape remains unpredictable and resistant to Rochester's efforts to understand or dominate it. This resistance suggests that colonial power is ultimately unstable and incomplete.

The novel also explores how colonial exploitation affects both people and land. The plantation system transformed the Caribbean environment into a site of economic production designed to benefit European powers. The land was cleared for agriculture, and natural ecosystems were altered to support sugar plantations. However, Rhys's descriptions of overgrown vegetation and abandoned estates suggest that the land eventually resists this exploitation. Nature slowly reclaims the spaces that colonial powers attempted to control. This process symbolizes the decline of the plantation system and the persistence of ecological forces beyond human authority.

Another important symbol of resistance in the novel is fire. The burning of Coulibri estate further illustrates the relationship between environmental memory and colonial violence. During the riot, Antoinette observes the flames consuming her childhood home:

"I saw the red sky and I heard people shouting." (Rhys 27)

"It was red and all my life was in it" (Rhys 189)

The fire symbolizes the eruption of historical resentment rooted in the plantation system. The destruction of the estate exposes the deep tensions between the formerly enslaved population and the white Creole landowners. This event can be understood through Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," which refers to the gradual and often invisible forms of environmental and social destruction produced by colonial exploitation (Nixon 2). The plantation system inflicted long-term ecological and human suffering, and the destruction of Coulibri can be seen as the explosive release of this compiled tension.

Antoinette's decision to burn Thornfield Hall is an act of pyro-ecological resistance, which was imported directly into the heart of the empire. She takes the historical trauma of the Caribbean , the destruction of the plantation and visits it upon the great English country house. Fire, the force that consumed her childhood, becomes the tool through which she reclaims her agency. By setting Thornfield ablaze, she shatters the patriarchal domestic sphere, violently deconstructs the architecture of her alienation, and forcefully inserts her suppressed Creole history to the center of the English narrative. When she jumps from the battlements, she is not falling to her death in England; psychologically, she is jumping into the dark pool of Coulibri, returning to the only ecology where she ever truly belonged.

Throughout the paper, we integrate close textual analysis. For example, Antoinette's reverie at Coulibri is telling: before the fire she sits by the wall "covered with green moss soft as velvet", a vision of paradise and permanence. After plantation violence, the rebuilt estate is physically restored but psychologically altered: "Coulibri looked the same… but it didn't feel the same". This shift – from home to haunted place signifies loss. Similarly, Rochester's gestures toward nature (killing the scorpion on Antoinette, chopping at trees) can be read as attempts to repress the colonial "others," while Antoinette's affinity with island life (symbolized by blossoming gardens, rain, hummingbirds) shows nature's resistance to colonization. These and other images will be analyzed as embedded evidence of environmental memory and insurgent identity

Ultimately, the Caribbean environment in Wide Sargasso Sea functions as a powerful symbol of memory and resistance. The landscape retains the traces of colonial violence while also challenging the authority of those who attempt to control it. By portraying nature as an active participant in the narrative, the novel redefines the relationship between environment, identity, and history. Through the exploration of environmental memory and ecological resistance, the

novel demonstrates that landscapes are not passive settings but dynamic forces that shape human experiences and historical narratives. In doing so, Rhys offers a profound critique of colonial power and highlights the enduring connection between land, memory, and identity. Wide Sargasso Sea offers a profound critique of colonial power through its representation of the Caribbean environment. The novel presents landscapes as sites of environmental memory, where the traces of colonial violence remains embedded in the land. Ruined plantations, overgrown gardens, and abandoned estates serve as reminders of a history that cannot be easily erased. Through Antoinette's deep connection to the Caribbean landscape, the novel highlights the possibility of ecological belonging that challenges colonial hierarchies. In contrast, Rochester's alienation from the environment exposes the instability of imperial authority and the limitations of colonial ideas.

The narrative also reveals the interconnected exploitation of women and nature under patriarchal colonial systems. Both are subjected to domination and control, yet both also possess the potential for resistance. Ultimately, *Wide Sargasso Sea* demonstrates that landscapes are not passive backgrounds but active participants in historical memory. The Caribbean environment becomes a living archive that preserves marginalized histories and resists the erasure of colonial violence. Through its powerful ecological imagery, the novel transforms the natural world into a symbol of rebellion against imperial domination.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the Caribbean environment is inseparable from colonial history. Rhys ties Antoinette's sense of self to the island's gardens, rains, and soil in ways that defy the colonizer's grasp. The Coulibri fire, the ruined garden, and other natural symbols literally etch colonial violence into the landscape. By doing so, Rhys creates a "rooted rebellion": the land itself carries the memory of oppression while fostering resistance. As Walcott suggests, "the sea is History", and *Wide Sargasso Sea* dramatizes how an exploited environment can itself become the narrator of anti-colonial struggle. This ecological reading bridges literary and environmental scholarship, illuminating a fresh dimension of Rhys's novel and showing how memory, place, and resistance interconnect.

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Scrutinizing Ecocentric Attitude of Humans: Ecocritical Interpretation in Ruskin Bond's Select Short Stories

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Abstract

In the era of globalisation and development, humans believe in their benefit and profit, instead of thinking about environmental preservation. Their anthropocentric attitude towards nonhumans brings the whole ecosystem under threat, as it considers that humans have intrinsic value in the world, and other nonhumans are presented here only for serving mankind. But the ecocritics in the early 1990s brought the concept of environmental awareness through their literary and critical works. Many ecocritics like Cheryll Glotfelty, William Rueckert, Arne Naess, Aldo Leopold, and Henry David Thoreau, in their theoretical books and articles, have mentioned ecocentric outlooks of the natural world, which define that besides humans, nonhumans like plants, trees, animals and other earthly components have their intrinsic value in the environment. The concept that everything is connected to everything else is truly developed in the eccentric insight. Like many other literary writers, Ruskin Bond's short stories are fully explored with ecocritical awareness. This research article is an attempt to interpret how Ruskin Bond brings morality and responsibilities among people towards nature, representing ecocentric principles of the protagonists and characters in his select short stories – "Death of the Trees", "The Cherry Tree", "Growing up With Trees", "The Leopard", and "All Creatures Great and Small" etc,.

Key Words: Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism, Ecosophy, Ecocentrism, Ethics

Introduction

India has a wide range of ecosystems, and Indian writers are no longer behind in showing how beautiful nature is and how important it is to the environment. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) is a good example of how people exploit nature for development and modernisation. Pollution is a serious threat to the environment right now, and the author of this book has spoken out in its defence. Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) is an important work of ecocritical writing because it talks about the problems of killing animals, population growth, and the decline of human morals. These problems are terrible for the environment, and forest fires are a sign of them. Mahasweta Devi, an environmentalist and author who won the Sahitya Academy Award, fought for the rights of indigenous people. Her *Aranyer Adhikar* (1977) is an in-depth look at the difficulties and commitment of the indigenous people to their goals. The novel supports the Munda people's fight for survival against colonial exploitation in India before independence. Ruskin Bond, an Anglo-Indian writer, is one of these Indian writers. In his short stories, he talks about the natural beauty of the Himalayas and makes people more aware of the environment. *The Room on the Roof* (1956), *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (1991), and *Collected Short Stories* (1996) are some of his most famous works.

William Rueckert originally used the term "ecocriticism" in his 1978 critical essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". The word 'eco' comes from the Greek original word *oikos*, which etymologically denotes household or earth and 'logy' comes from *logos*, which means logical discourse. Simultaneously, they mean "criticism of the house– the environment as represented in literature" (Mishra 11). Several scholars prefer the word *ecocriticism* because it is readily shortened to ecocritical and ecocritique. Additionally, they

emphasise the term *eco* over *enviro* because the latter is anthropocentric and dualistic, suggesting that we, humans, are at the centre and surrounded by everything else, the environment. In contrast, the prefix *eco-* denotes interrelated communities, integrated systems, and close linkage among all other parts of the world. The interactions between culture and the natural world, particularly the cultural artefacts of language and literature, are the main focus of ecocriticism. As a theoretical discourse, it discusses the relationship between humans and nonhumans, while also having one foot in literature and the other on the ground. The idea of "the world" is broadened by ecocriticism to encompass the entire ecosphere. If we accept Barry Commoner's first ecological law- that "everything is connected to everything else" (Glotfelty and Fromm xix), and we must conclude that literature does not exist outside of the physical world in some kind of aesthetic ether but rather is a component of an incredibly complex global system in which energy, matter, ideas are in constant conversation with one another. Cheryll Glotfelty defines "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (xviii).

Ecocentrism is a philosophical inspection of ecocritical study that emphasises the value of all living beings and nonliving objects instead of giving attention to a particular species. It is a semi-synonym of biocentrism and incompatible with anthropocentrism. The basic thought of anthropocentrism is based on providing precedence to human beings and their inherent value in the environment. A subtle disparity between biocentrism and ecocentrism is discovered through the scrutiny of environmental ethics. Biocentrism is an ethical standpoint that articulates all living beings have inherent value in the world; on the other hand, ecocentrism speaks of both living and nonliving entities, upholding their importance in the environment. It believes that every tiny thing, including humans, animals, and plants, has intrinsic and inherent value on Earth. The ecocentrists argue that the world is an intrinsically dynamic, interconnected web of relations "with no absolute dividing lines between the living and the nonliving, the animate and the inanimate" (Eckersley 49–50). Ecocentrism highlights man's desire to find a perfect and permanent solution to environmental humiliation. The personal behaviour and attitude of an individual is a very sustainable way regarding the improvement of environmental crises. A person's attitude towards nature and trees depends on cultural variances in different regions. Peter Barry, in his critical work *Beginning Theory*, argues, "Of course, attitudes to nature vary, and some of the variations are culturally determined, but the fact that a phenomenon is regarded differently in different cultures doesn't call its 'reality' into question" (Barry 254).

In the writings of Ruskin Bond, we find a perfect harmony between man and nature, which makes people believe in the worth of nature. Bond highlights the aesthetic beauty and significance of nature as well as encourages readers to respect and protect it. It seems that nature has a perfect living energy that quickens the object and the creature to act, respond, grow, and die. His short stories are discussed from an ecocentric outlook to vigilance people of environmental crises so that humanity and morality grow up spontaneously in the minds of the people. Ecocentric ethics is defined in autopoietic intrinsic value theory, transpersonal ecology, and ecofeminism. Autopoietic value theory is explained by Warwick Fox in the name of "autopoietic ethics", which signifies that all entities have inherent value with the property of *autopoiesis*, which denotes "self-production" or "self-renewal". Transpersonal ecology pursues a cosmological and psychological path and attempts to address how humans perceive the world. Transpersonal ecology's main goal is the development of a more expansive perception of self through the common or regular psychological process of identifying with others. Contrary to

transpersonal ecology, ecofeminism, on the other hand, focuses on the historical and metaphorical link of women with nature as evidence of a unique point of agreement between feminism and ecology (Eckersley 60–64). Along with these factors, moral pluralism, moral monism, and sustainable education methods are interpreted as essential aspects for creating a vigorous environment.

Ruskin Bond has interpreted the intrinsic value of the trees in the short story "Death of the Trees" He suggests that the trees have the right to exist, and they have earned it through their own life cycles. Their value is tied to the birds and insects they harbour—a complex web of life that humans often overlook in favour of "development. The trees' value is calculated in terms of the revenue, and the destruction is justified by the need for faster travel and better connectivity for humans. Bond doesn't just see a loss of trees; he sees the death of a community that existed long before the road-builders arrived. He tries to enlighten the conscience of people regarding the preservation of nature. Nature has aesthetic beauty, and people should respect this splendor showing their moral attitudes toward nature. The narrator expresses his respect towards nature and also hopes that men should be conscious of their future. William Rueckert, in this context, suggests keeping up a balance between nature and humans: "…we are violating the laws of nature, and the retribution from the biosphere will be more terrible than any inflicted on humans by gods. In ecology, man's tragic flaw is his anthropocentric (as opposed to biocentric) vision and his compulsion to conquer, humanise, domesticate, violate, and exploit every natural thing" (Rueckert 113).

The accurate bond between trees and people is portrayed with respect and love for nature in the story "The Cherry Tree". Rakesh's grandfather teaches the little boy about planting a cherry seed in the ground and assures him that if he does not put it in the ground, he will not be lucky. Bond here interprets mental ecosophy, emerging the emotional and psychological growth of the young protagonist, Rakesh. Mental ecosophy affects the individual's psyche, not as a pathological being, but to make a spontaneous relationship with the environment. Defining Félix Guattari's framework of mental ecosophy, the writer reconstructs the mind of Rakesh, who nurtures the tree as a child. At the beginning, the cherry was just something to eat, but in the end, Rakesh believes that the tree is a true companion. This is what Guattari tries to shift from the conventional thinking process to creative activities. The line "Is this what it feels like to be God ?" (Bond, *Collected Short Stories* 605) suggests that his inner being has been expanded so much that he feels the pulse of the world within his own small life. Mental ecosophy affects the individual's psyche, not as a pathological being, but to make a spontaneous relationship with the environment. Guattari advocates, "Mental ecosophy will lead us to reinvent the relation of the subject to the body, to phantasm, to the passage of time, to the 'mysteries' of life and death. It will lead us to search for antidotes to mass-media and telematic standardization, the conformism of fashion, the manipulation of opinion by advertising, surveys, etc"(Guattari 35).

Bond treats nature not just as a setting, but as a living, divine, and interconnected entity in the short story, "Growing up with Trees". The banyan tree in the story is a world in itself for other living beings like birds and insects; it becomes a peaceful shelter and protector. Bond narrates in the story, "The banyan tree was like an orchestra pit with the musicians constantly turning up. Birds, insects, and squirrels expressed their joy at the end of the hot weather and the cool quenching relief of the rains" (Bond, *My Favourite Nature Stories* 98). Through these lines, the writer examines how the living creatures breathing in the tree are compared to the breath of God. He believes that the trees are living entities; he confesses their moral rights and values. Some theological books admit the truth of trees' existence as living beings. In Jainism, Mahavira compares trees to human beings and explains that trees are born as human beings and have moral significance in the environment. To the narrator, the trees are his elders and siblings,

like the Franciscan spirituality of the earth. In this context, Ilia Delio, in the book *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*, defines "With Francis, our sense of self inevitably expands out to include Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Air and our Sister Mother Earth, as we contemplate the gifts they give to us daily"(Delio et al. 56).

In ecocritical study, anthropocentrism is derived from two Ancient Greek words: *anthropos,* which denotes "human beings", and *kentron* means "centre". This philosophical view holds that people are the most fundamental beings in the world. It represents the idea that humans are unique and superior to other species, and they have intrinsic value, whereas other non-human beings are simply resources that can be used to benefit humankind. The term anthropocentrism is used by some environmentalists in multiple forms, like homocentrism, human-centrism, human exceptionalism, or human supremacism. The ill-treatment of humans towards animals is not only ruining the whole ecosystem but also threatening human habitation. It is argued that "Anthropocentrism restricts the value to human beings, either mostly or entirely…From a broader, deeper, and longer point of view, such an approach to nature underwrites ecocide, whether gradual or sudden, as a result of its failure to recognize and address the natural world in ethical terms"(Washington et al. 286). Many philosophers, such as Aristotle and Kant, argue in favour of anthropocentrism. The intrinsic value of humans is discussed through utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, and Aristotle's virtue ethics. Epicurus offers a persuasive utilitarian viewpoint, contending that pleasure is essential to life and that it is the only way for us to make reasonable decisions in our daily lives. So, satisfaction plays a vital role in making good judgments, and it also maintains good standards(K. Rajesh and V. Rajasekaran 1385–86).

In "The Leopard", Bond interprets the villagers and hunters' anthropocentric nature towards the leopard, and perceives it not as a beautiful animal, but as a trophy. The line "Leopard Skins, they told me, were selling in Delhi at over a thousand rupees each" (Bond, "The Leopard" 261) explains that the hunters have a strong anthropocentric view because they think that only people have value and that no other living things can have worth. The narrator's weak anthropocentric attitude can't protect the leopard from the hunters. The writer advocates that the narrator feels a moral connection to the leopard, but he doesn't execute anything when he sees the hunters in the jungle with their guns. He represents the narrator in the story to show how people are focused on nature, and the hunters to show how people are focused on themselves. The line "But did the leopard, trusting one man, make the mistake of bestowing his trust on others?"(263) proposes virtue ethics to examine the anthropocentric perspective of humans towards animals in the narrative. There are two parts to virtue ethics: moral virtue and intellectual virtue. The first one is natural and comes from teaching, but the moral value comes from real-life experiences. The anthropocentric perspective is enhanced by virtue, as it represents a personal principle. People in the West think that animals are less important and don't have any moral value in the ecosystem. This argument is not completely accurate, as all living and non-living entities are interconnected and interdependent (K. Rajesh and V. Rajasekaran 1387).

In the ecocritical principle, biocentric insight is a philosophical belief which interprets that all living beings, including humans, are an integral part of the larger biotic web. It suggests that all living beings have moral principles and a unique enity that follows its own good. It breaks the idea of human supremacy over nonhuman living beings. Paul W. Taylor, in his book *Respect for Nature,* advocates biocentric principles for the conservation of nature. He distinguishes the life-centred ethics and the human-centred ethics. As he is a follower of life-centred ethics, he has introduced a moral agent that is called humans and the moral subject that is nonhuman living beings. He argues that "A moral agent, for both types of ethics, is any being

that possesses those capacities by which it can act morally or immorally, can have duties and responsibilities, can be held accountable for what it does"(Taylor 17). Taylor has mentioned egalitarian biocentric ethics, and he observes that every organism has a good of its own. It posits that there is no moral hierarchy in nature and all living things have equal moral position. Are naess also intends to embody a form of radical egalitarianism which endorses biospherical egalitarianism, in which he speaks of equal rights of all creatures to live and blossom. In biocentric ethics, every living being is considered to have inherent worth and the right to exist as well as flourish. The origins of biocentric ethics can be found in several philosophical and ethical traditions, such as deep ecology, environmental ethics, and some indigenous beliefs. According to the advocates of biocentric ethics, the preservation of the natural world should be required for its own sake rather than just for human-centric considerations like instrumental value and ecological services.

In the short story "All Creatures Great and Small," the narrator's grandfather talks about how he cares for different animals. Humans may be morally better than animals because they are creative, logical, and free to make their own choices. But this idea is thrown out from a non-human point of view because it is based on judgments of merit. Moral superiority is based on how different species are better or worse than others. The narrator's grandfather lets a lot of wild animals into the family, even though they don't have any economic or practical value. But he thinks they have the right to be in the world because they have their own good, and rights for existence in the environment. The narrator's grandfather describes, "And I didn't have the heart to take the mirror away. It's the first time I've seen a snake fall in love" (Bond, "All Creatures Great and Small" 154). This is similar to what Paul Taylor defines as every living thing, big or small, has moral value in the environment. The story rejects the idea of dominance and, in its place, makes the family members think about integrity.

Conclusion

Ecocentrism places a high value on nature and shows how all living and non-living entities depend on each other. Bond depicts the natural world as a place where people find peace, inspiration, and spiritual connection. This point of view is related to deep ecology, which highlights the importance of the environment and the idea that people have a moral duty to protect and care for it. As with many literary interpretations, readers have different ideas about the moral and philosophical themes in Bond's work. His stories, on the other hand, show a deep love for nature and a call for people to live peacefully and responsibly with it. The way people and nature interact often changes from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric point of view. This way of thinking understands that nature is valuable in its own survival, even if it isn't useful to people. Bond's characters often feel very connected to the mother earth and regard the trees, animals, and mountains as family instead of objects to utilise for humans. Bond writes about a symbiotic relationship in which people and nature are interrelated instead of being separate. He makes the point that protecting nature is a moral duty and responsibility of the people. Stories like 'The Cherry Tree" make people feel close to nature, where taking care of a plant is a way of having eternal peace and spiritual connection with god. Bond encourages readers through his short stories to refuse the concept of human-centredness and to accept the ecocentric principle towards all living and non-living entities.

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Living with the Climate Crisis: Youth, Emotional Resilience and the Politics of Hope

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Abstract:

Climate change is no longer only an environmental crisis but also a psychological and ethical condition shaping contemporary subjectivity, especially among younger generations. This paper examines climate anxiety as a collective emotional response emerging from ecological precarity, economic instability, and social injustice in the Anthropocene. Drawing primarily on Sarah Jaquette Ray's *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety* (2020) and the decolonial environmental justice framework articulated in Latinx Environmentalisms (2019), the paper argues that climate anxiety should not be interpreted as pathological despair but as a form of ethical consciousness capable of generating resilience and political agency. It explores how Generation Z's emotional responses to ecological crisis intersect with questions of environmental justice, colonial histories, and Global South vulnerability. The paper further examines how movements such as BirthStrike and youth climate activism transform existential dread into collective engagement. Ultimately, the study proposes a "politics of hope" grounded in relational ethics, emotional intelligence, and decolonial environmental imagination as a necessary framework for climate justice in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Climate anxiety; Anthropocene; environmental justice; youth activism; Global South; affect theory; ecocriticism; decoloniality

Introduction: Climate Anxiety as an Affective Structure of the Anthropocene

The climate crisis has transformed not only ecological systems but also the emotional architecture through which individuals understand futurity, responsibility, and survival. Climate anxiety represents one of the most significant affective responses to this transformation. Rather than emerging as a private psychological disorder, it reflects a historically situated response to planetary instability in what is increasingly described as the Anthropocene. Sarah Jaquette Ray observes that many students today struggle even to imagine a viable future within climate-altered conditions, revealing how ecological crisis disrupts the very possibility of imagining continuity itself (Ray 2). Such responses demonstrate that climate anxiety operates not merely as fear but as an epistemological shift in generational consciousness. This paper argues that climate anxiety functions as a productive ethical condition that enables the emergence of climate justice imaginaries and youth-driven political agency.

Climate anxiety must also be understood within the broader epistemic transformation associated with the Anthropocene, a term that signals not merely geological change but a crisis in human self-understanding. As Dipesh Chakrabarty argues, climate change compels us to rethink the distinction between natural history and human history because humans now function as geological agents shaping planetary processes (206). This shift destabilizes conventional narratives of progress and modernity, producing new forms of temporal uncertainty that intensify generational experiences of ecological precarity. Climate anxiety thus emerges not simply from environmental degradation but from the recognition that inherited frameworks of

political responsibility, development, and futurity are no longer adequate to address planetary crisis. At the same time, the affective experience of climate anxiety increasingly intersects with environmental justice movements that challenge the uneven distribution of ecological risk across racialized and marginalized communities. As contributors to Latinx Environmentalisms demonstrate, environmental discourse must account for colonial histories, migration, labor exploitation, and racial capitalism in order to understand how ecological crisis is lived differently across social contexts (Wald et al. 1-13). Climate anxiety, therefore, cannot be treated as a universal psychological condition; rather, it reflects differentiated experiences shaped by geography, class, and historical inequality. Recognizing these uneven structures allows climate anxiety to be interpreted not as passive despair but as an emerging ethical response to planetary injustice that demands collective and decolonial forms of engagement.

Literature Review: Climate Anxiety, Environmental Justice, and Affective Ecocriticism

Recent scholarship across environmental humanities has increasingly emphasized the emotional dimensions of ecological crisis. Ray's A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety identifies climate anxiety as a defining condition of what she calls "the climate generation," whose members experience environmental instability as a permanent background reality rather than a distant threat (3). Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" provides a crucial interpretive framework for understanding climate anxiety as a response to gradual and often invisible ecological destruction disproportionately affecting marginalized populations (2). Climate anxiety therefore emerges not only from immediate disasters but from the recognition of long-term environmental attrition. Similarly, Ursula Heise argues that environmental consciousness must move beyond local ecological attachment toward forms of "eco-cosmopolitanism" that recognize planetary interdependence (56). Climate anxiety reflects precisely such an expanded scale of awareness, linking individual emotional experience with global ecological systems.

Within postcolonial environmental studies, Latinx Environmentalisms contributes a decolonial framework that challenges the whiteness of mainstream environmentalism by foregrounding race, colonial history, and environmental justice (Wald et al. 1-13). As Laura Pulido emphasizes, environmental analysis that ignores colonialism risks reproducing the very structures of domination it seeks to critique (xi).Together, these approaches demonstrate that climate anxiety must be understood at the intersection of affect, justice, and planetary ethics.

Research Gap

While climate anxiety has increasingly been studied within psychology and environmental humanities, existing scholarship often treats it either as an individual emotional condition or as a symptom of ecological awareness without sufficiently examining its political implications. There remains limited interdisciplinary work connecting climate anxiety to decolonial environmental justice frameworks and youth activism as sites of collective agency. This paper addresses that gap by integrating affect theory with environmental justice scholarship to demonstrate how climate anxiety functions as a catalyst for political transformation rather than paralysis.

Methodology

This study adopts an interdisciplinary environmental humanities approach combining:

- affect theory
- ecocriticism
- environmental justice studies
- decolonial theory

Primary textual analysis is based on Sarah Jaquette Ray's *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety* and the essays collected in Latinx Environmentalisms. These are supplemented by theoretical insights from Nixon, Heise, Spivak, Braidotti, and Alaimo to situate climate anxiety within broader frameworks of Anthropocene subjectivity and global ecological inequality.

The Climate Generation and the Crisis of Futurity

Ray describes those born between the early 1990s and early 2000s as the first generation to live entirely within the experiential horizon of climate change (3). Unlike earlier generations, they encounter environmental crisis not as prediction but as lived reality. Members of this generation demonstrate heightened awareness of the links between ecological degradation and social inequality, recognizing climate change as inseparable from economic precarity and structural injustice (Ray 3-4). Their anxiety therefore reflects not emotional fragility but political literacy. Judith Butler's theory of vulnerability further clarifies this condition by suggesting that shared precarity can become the basis for collective resistance rather than passive suffering (33). Climate anxiety thus signals the emergence of new forms of ecological subjectivity grounded in relational awareness.

Emotional Responses to Climate Change as Ethical Consciousness

Climate anxiety manifests through eco-grief, eco-guilt, and existential dread. Ray argues that these emotions are not obstacles to activism but essential components of climate justice engagement (18).Timothy Morton's concept of "hyperobjects" helps explain why climate change produces such complex emotional responses. Because climate change exceeds ordinary scales of perception and temporality, it generates anxiety precisely through its invisibility and ubiquity (1). Recognizing climate anxiety as an ethical response to hyperobject-scale phenomena allows environmental discourse to move beyond technocratic solutions toward affective engagement.

Climate Anxiety, Slow Violence, and the Global South

Climate anxiety must be understood unevenly across geopolitical contexts. Nixon's theory of slow violence demonstrates how environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized communities through gradual processes that remain largely invisible within dominant media narratives (2). Latinx Environmentalisms similarly emphasizes that environmental justice requires expanding definitions of environment to include racialized spaces shaped by labor exploitation, migration, and colonial history (Pulido xii). Climate anxiety in such contexts therefore reflects material vulnerability rather than abstract ecological concern. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question *"Can the subaltern speak?"* remains crucial here because climate discourse often excludes the voices of those most affected by environmental crisis (271). A decolonial understanding of climate anxiety must therefore center Global South experiences.

Decolonial Environmentalism and Alternative Ecological Knowledge

Decolonial environmental scholarship challenges Eurocentric assumptions embedded within mainstream environmental discourse. As Pulido argues, environmental analysis that ignores colonial histories risks perpetuating environmental injustice (xi). Latinx environmental thought demonstrates that ecological knowledge emerges from cultural memory, migration histories, and community relationships with land rather than exclusively from scientific institutions (Wald et al. 1-13). Rosi Braidotti's posthumanist theory further supports this perspective by emphasizing relational ethics between human and nonhuman life forms within the Anthropocene (60). Climate anxiety thus reflects awareness of ecological interdependence rather than anthropocentric fear alone.

Emotional Intelligence and Climate Activism

Ray emphasizes that emotional literacy is essential for sustaining climate justice movements because unmanaged anxiety leads to burnout and disengagement (18). Emotional intelligence enables activists to transform fear into resilience and solidarity. Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality reinforces this insight by demonstrating how environmental crises blur boundaries between human bodies and ecological systems (2). Climate anxiety therefore reflects embodied awareness of ecological entanglement rather than abstract concern.Such frameworks suggest that emotional resilience is not merely psychological but political. Beyond individual coping mechanisms, emotional intelligence also enables activists to recognize climate anxiety as a shared affective condition that can foster solidarity rather than isolation.

Sarah Jaquette Ray emphasizes that acknowledging emotions such as grief, fear, and anger helps individuals situate themselves within collective movements for climate justice rather than interpreting their distress as private failure (Ray 18). When climate anxiety is articulated collectively, it becomes a communicative resource that strengthens political communities and supports sustained engagement. In this sense, emotional literacy functions as a bridge between personal vulnerability and collective agency, transforming climate activism from a purely strategic intervention into a relational ethical practice.

Emotional intelligence further contributes to what scholars of environmental humanities describe as "affective resilience," the capacity to remain engaged with ecological crisis without succumbing to despair or apathy. Timothy Morton's discussion of climate change as a "hyperobject" helps explain why activists often experience emotional overwhelm when confronting planetary-scale phenomena that exceed ordinary perception (1). Developing emotional awareness allows activists to navigate this cognitive and affective disorientation by reframing anxiety as evidence of ecological interdependence rather than helplessness. Emotional intelligence therefore becomes an interpretive tool through which activists can sustain attention to long-term environmental transformation.

Emotional intelligence thus plays a crucial role in preventing activist burnout, one of the most persistent challenges facing contemporary climate movements. Ray explicitly argues that climate justice work must include strategies for resisting exhaustion and sustaining relational engagement over time, since activism rooted solely in urgency or fear risks becoming unsustainable (128). Practices such as mindfulness, community care, and intergenerational dialogue enable activists to cultivate what may be described as a politics of endurance-an approach that treats emotional sustainability as integral to ecological responsibility. In this framework, emotional intelligence is not ancillary to climate activism but foundational to its long-term effectiveness and ethical coherence.

Youth Activism and the Transformation of Climate Anxiety into Agency

Youth climate movements demonstrate how climate anxiety can generate collective action rather than paralysis. Ray notes that Generation Z's awareness of climate injustice positions them uniquely to organize transformative responses to ecological crisis (3).These movements reflect what Heise describes as eco-cosmopolitan consciousness, in which local activism becomes connected to global ecological responsibility (56). Climate anxiety thus becomes a catalyst for planetary citizenship. Youth activism is related to the politics of hope in the Anthropocene. Ray argues that climate activism must move beyond passive optimism toward relational engagement grounded in responsibility and collective imagination (114). Hope becomes meaningful only when linked to action. Ernst Bloch's theory of the "principle of hope" helps illuminate this transformation by framing hope as a forward-looking political orientation rooted in possibility rather than certainty (3). A politics of hope therefore enables climate anxiety to function as motivation rather than despair.

Conclusion

Climate anxiety represents one of the defining affective conditions of the Anthropocene. As demonstrated through Ray's generational analysis and the decolonial environmental justice framework articulated in Latinx Environmentalisms, climate anxiety reflects both psychological vulnerability and political awareness. Rather than suppressing climate anxiety, environmental discourse must recognize its transformative potential. When interpreted through affect theory, postcolonial ecocriticism, and environmental justice scholarship, climate anxiety becomes a catalyst for resilience, activism, and ecological imagination. The politics of hope therefore emerges not as optimism but as an ethical practice grounded in relational responsibility and planetary justice.

In addition to its psychological and political significance, climate anxiety also invites a reconsideration of pedagogical and institutional responses to ecological crisis. As Sarah Jaquette Ray's classroom experience demonstrates, students' difficulty in imagining viable futures reflects not disengagement but an unmet need for educational frameworks that integrate emotional literacy with environmental knowledge (2). Universities and cultural institutions therefore play a critical role in cultivating spaces where climate emotions can be articulated, interpreted, and transformed into civic engagement. Integrating environmental humanities approaches with climate science education can help students develop interpretive tools necessary for navigating uncertainty while sustaining ethical commitment to collective ecological futures.

Furthermore, recognizing climate anxiety as a historically situated affective condition opens new directions for interdisciplinary research within environmental humanities and social theory. As Latinx Environmentalisms suggests, expanding environmental discourse beyond Eurocentric frameworks enables scholars to incorporate alternative epistemologies grounded in migration histories, Indigenous knowledge systems, and decolonial environmental imaginaries (Wald et al. 1-13). Future scholarship must therefore examine how climate anxiety operates across different cultural and geopolitical contexts rather than assuming a universal emotional response to environmental crisis. Such comparative approaches will allow climate anxiety to be understood not only as a symptom of planetary instability but also as a generative site for rethinking ecological ethics, collective responsibility, and the possibilities of climate justice in a rapidly transforming world.

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The Scientific Rape of Nature: An Ecofeminist Reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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Abstract

This paper presents a foundational ecofeminist critique of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, arguing that Victor Frankenstein's scientific methodology embodies a gendered violence against the natural world. By transitioning from an organic worldview to a mechanical one, Victor reimagines nature as a "dead machine" to be "penetrated" and "extracted" rather than a living entity to be respected. The analysis contrasts Victor's patriarchal "Hunter/Extractor" model with the Creature's initial "Gatherer/Nurturer" survival strategy, highlighting the rejection of an "ethic of care". Through the martyrdom of characters like Justine Moritz and the destruction of the Female Creature, Shelley warns that the subjugation of women and the degradation of the environment are inextricably linked. Ultimately, the novel serves as a haunting blueprint for the modern environmental crisis, advocating for a radical shift towards reciprocity and ecological harmony.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Patriarchal Science, Logic of Domination, Anthropocene, Reciprocity.

Introduction:

In the cold light of the Ingolstadt laboratory, Mary Shelley did not merely assemble a monster; she dismantled an ideology. While traditional readings of *Frankenstein* often sequester the novel within the realms of the "mad scientist" trope or the anxieties of failed fatherhood, such interpretations frequently overlook the gendered violence inherent in Victor Frankenstein's scientific methodology. Through an ecofeminist lens, Victor's "workshop of filthy creation" (Shelley 36) becomes a site of ecological transgression, where the patriarchal drive to master "Mother Nature" through reductive science results in the literal and figurative dismemberment of the feminine. By bypassing the biological womb and interrogating the 'hiding places' of the earth, Victor embodies a burgeoning industrial hubris that treats the living world as a dead machine—a collection of parts to be extracted, manipulated, and discarded. This analysis argues that *Frankenstein* serves as a foundational ecofeminist critique, mapping the inescapable link between the subjugation of women and the degradation of the environment, ultimately warning that a science divorced from an "ethic of care" inevitably produces a monstrous Anthropocene.

To understand the ecofeminist foundations of the novel, one must look at the specific historical and philosophical shift occurring during Mary Shelley's lifetime, as the work acts as a bridge between the Organic Worldview of the past and the Mechanical Worldview of the burgeoning Industrial Revolution. The primary theoretical pillar for this reading is Carolyn Merchant's thesis in *The Death of Nature* (1980), which argues that before the Scientific Revolution, the Earth was viewed as a living, breathing maternal entity. This perception acted as a cultural constraint; one does not readily mine, clear-cut, or "torture" a living mother. However, figures like Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton reimagined the universe as a clockwork mechanism. Once nature was "de-souled" and viewed as a machine, it became morally permissible to dismantle it for human profit. Victor Frankenstein embodies this shift, viewing

the biological world not as a sacred system to be respected, but as a “storehouse” of parts to be reassembled according to his own will.

This transition from a living earth to a resource-based worldview is mirrored perfectly in Victor’s own evolution from a son of a domestic household to a secluded, obsessive scientist. Ecofeminist philosopher Karen J. Warren identifies the "logic of domination" (46–47) as the psychological framework justifying such oppression. This logic relies on value-hierarchical thinking where culture is “up” and nature is “down,” and man is “up” while woman is “down.” Victor operates entirely within this logic, believing his intellectual capacity or "Reason" gives him the right to "penetrate into the recesses of nature" (Shelley 28) because he possesses the qualities supposedly lacking in nature and woman. He views his pursuit as a heroic conquest, failing to see that by dominating nature, he is simultaneously destroying the “feminine” domestic harmony of his own life.

Val Plumwood further describes this mindset as the "Master Identity" (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 1993), which denies its dependency on the natural world and the labour of others. Victor attempts to create a “son” without a mother, effectively trying to prove that the male mind is the only essential ingredient for life. This mindset treats the “Other,” whether the environment or woman, as a background to his own drama. Victor treats the Alpine landscape as a mere backdrop for his internal suffering and treats Elizabeth Lavenza as a passive object to be “protected” (Shelley 20) rather than a partner to be consulted.

Victor’s project is fundamentally an act of biological theft and an attempt to render the female womb obsolete. From an ecofeminist perspective, this is the ultimate patriarchal fantasy: a world where men can reproduce without the “messiness” or autonomy of nature. The early death of his mother, Caroline Beaufort, leaves a vacuum that he attempts to fill with “scientific triumph” rather than grief or care. His laboratory serves as a sterile, artificial womb—a "workshop of filthy creation" (Shelley 36) where he treats life as a commodity to be manufactured rather than a spirit to be nurtured. The language of the Scientific Revolution was often coded in terms of sexual violence, and Victor’s narrative is saturated with this rhetoric of conquest and penetration. He admits to pursuing nature to her ‘hiding-places’ and "torturing the living animal to animate the lifeless clay" (Shelley 36). He does not ‘listen’ to nature; he ‘interrogates’ it, viewing the natural world as a woman hiding a secret that he has a right to extract. His movements through the mountains and valleys are often described as “penetrating” (Shelley 28) the recesses of nature, suggesting that scientific discovery is a forced intrusion rather than a partnership.

The rejection of the ‘feminine’ ethics of care—the idea that we have a moral obligation to the things we bring into the world—is central to Victor's failure. He represents the Patriarchal Ego which values the ‘Aha!’ moment of discovery over the long-term responsibility of maintenance. The moment the Creature opens its eyes, Victor flees, disgusted by the physical reality of what he has made. This mirrors the industrialist’s relationship with the environment: they want the product (the monster’s life or the factory’s output) but refuse to take responsibility for the ‘waste’ or the ‘afterlife’ of their creation. Victor views the Creature not as a sentient being with rights, but as a failed experiment. This hierarchy—where the Male/Mind holds absolute power over the Nature/Body—is the core structure that leads to both environmental destruction and gender inequality.

The physical spaces Victor occupies highlight this aggression. He retreats from the domestic hearth—the feminine space of Elizabeth and the family—into the isolated laboratory, the masculine space of cold reason. In the lab, nature is dead, composed of "bones from charnel-

houses" (Shelley 36). Victor can only ‘create’ by ‘destroying’, while his letters to Elizabeth go unanswered. This signifies how the patriarchal pursuit of ‘objective’ science often requires the silencing and emotional neglect of the women who sustain the private, organic world. Elizabeth, by contrast, is consistently associated with the ‘open’ and ‘living’ aspects of the Swiss landscape, representing an aesthetic of the organic where nature is a sanctuary rather than a resource. While Elizabeth finds "pleasure in the scenery" (Shelley 21) and is often "busied with her flowers" (Shelley 59), Victor "dabbles among the unhallowed damps of the grave" (Shelley 36), a sensory shift from light and air to the dim, solitary decay of the charnel-house.

The terminal tragedy of Shelley’s narrative emerges not from the Creature’s physical existence, but from the systemic refusal to grant agency to anything existing outside the ‘Master Identity’. In modern ecological terms, Victor represents the ‘Man of Reason’ who mistakes total manipulation for understanding, viewing the planet as a mere repository of raw materials for the expansion of his own ego. This extractive philosophy, which prioritizes short-term ‘triumph’ over long-term sustainability, mirrors the contemporary climate crisis, where the natural world is forced to bear the weight of industrial excesses without a corresponding ethic of responsibility. By investigating the specific histories of the Scientific Revolution, Shelley warns that when we treat life as a machine, we inevitably lose our capacity for empathy and connection. The ‘monstrous’ is thus redefined: it is not the stitched-together flesh of the creation, but the cold, calculating silence of a science that refuses to acknowledge its own dependency on the living systems it seeks to dominate. Ultimately, the novel suggests that genuine progress requires a radical shift toward reciprocity—an ‘ethic of care’ that honours the biological and social webs that bind us, rather than the isolated, violent pursuit of power that leads only to the frozen desolation of an un-peopled world.

This spatial dichotomy underscores a deeper etymological violence. Terms like “Inquisition,” “Torture,” and “Penetrate” were used by figures like Francis Bacon to describe the new scientific method. By linking Victor’s specific vocabulary to the historical figures of the Scientific Revolution, Shelley underscores that this isn’t just one man’s mistake—it’s a cultural movement toward the ‘technological rape’ of the natural order. The tragedy of the novel occurs when the ‘Scientific Grave’ begins to bleed into the ‘Domestic Garden’, suggesting that patriarchal science cannot be contained. Its destructive tendencies—treating life as a project rather than a person—will eventually destroy the domestic and natural harmony it claims to provide for.

While the philosophical foundations of Victor’s hubris are rooted in the Scientific Revolution, the material reality of his failure is best observed through the lens of ecological subsistence and character martyrdom. Ecofeminism moves the argument from what Victor thinks to how the characters actually eat and inhabit the land, contrasting the “Hunter/Extractor” model of patriarchal capitalism with the “Gatherer/Nurturer” model associated with sustainable existence. Despite his terrifying appearance, the Creature’s initial survival strategy is remarkably non-violent and reciprocal. He does not initially hunt, identifying instead as a primitive gatherer. His choice of a plant-based diet is a profound rejection of patriarchal violence: “My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment” (Shelley 121). By choosing vegetarianism, the Creature exists in a circular relationship with the land, taking only what is offered rather than ‘extracting’ life through slaughter. This aligns with Carol J. Adams’ theories in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (2015), where meat-eating is framed as a patriarchal act of dominance over nature. Victor, conversely, is the ultimate industrial extractor. He treats the graveyard and the slaughterhouse as ‘mines’ for raw materials, crossing the ultimate boundary between life and death to claim a trophy of scientific fame. This extractive mindset leads to

what ecofeminists describe as the exhaustion of natural resources—the belief that the world is a warehouse of parts for human use. While the Creature's gathering of wood for the De Lacey family represents a sustainable gift economy of labour, Victor's extraction creates a debt he cannot pay. For every 'part' he takes from nature to build his monster, nature eventually takes a 'part' of his life—his brother, his friend, and his wife.

The martyrdom of Justine Moritz further illuminates how patriarchal structures—both scientific and legal—work to silence the: 'feminine' and the 'natural'. In ecofeminist terms, Justine represents 'managed nature'; she is the useful, silent servant who keeps the household environment orderly. When a 'glitch' in Victor's scientific experiment occurs, the system immediately looks for a scapegoat within this vulnerable class. The primary evidence against her—a locket representing wealth and culture—is planted by the Creature, but it is the legal system of man that prosecutes her. This mirrors how industrial systems often 'frame' nature for its own degradation, blaming 'nature's cruelty' for crises rooted in mismanagement. Victor's silence during the trial is the "logic of domination" (Warren 46–47) in action, valuing the prestige of the Male Scientist over the life of the Female Servant. Justine's forced confession to a male priest represents a 'colonization of the mind', forcing the feminine subject to accept a false narrative of guilt. Her execution is comparable to the 'clearing' of a forest to make way for a factory: a sacrifice deemed necessary to preserve the existing social order.

The destruction of the 'Female Creature' is the novel's most visceral manifestation of patriarchal fear regarding reproductive autonomy. Victor justifies tearing her half-finished body to pieces because he fears she "might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation" (Shelley 138). While he can tolerate a male monster as a reflection of his own ego, a female entity with 'thinking and reasoning' capabilities represents an uncontrollable nature. He acts as a self-appointed border guard, destroying the female to prevent an 'organic' explosion of life that he did not explicitly design. This act is a 'scientific' rape, mirroring his earlier "torturing the living animal" (Shelley 36). By refusing the Monster a natural, domestic life, Victor ensures the destruction of his own domestic world; when the 'feminine' side of nature is violated, the 'feminine' side of the human world, Elizabeth Lavenza, inevitably suffers the fallout. This cycle of violence leads inevitably to the Arctic, which represents nature in its most 'un-colonized' state—a place where the patriarchal ego finally meets a force it cannot 'penetrate'. In this landscape, the hierarchy of the 'Master Identity' is inverted. The environment is no longer a 'feminine muse' but a cold, indifferent judge. Victor's transition from the "penetrator" (Shelley 28) of nature to a man 'shivering' and 'exhausted' represents the collapse of the belief that the mind can transcend biological needs. Unlike the cultivated gardens of Geneva, the Arctic is the Wild Feminine; it is 'barren' because it refuses to be 'fertile' for man's use. To Victor, nature without utility is 'desolate', but to an ecofeminist, this desolation is actually autonomy. The final "cracking of the ice" (Shelley 176) represents the dissolution of the dualism between Self and Other. Victor is no longer the 'Creator' looking down; he is a biological speck subject to the currents of the ocean. This geological shattering mirrors the internal collapse of the Enlightenment subject who believed he could stand outside of nature. When the ice breaks, it signals the end of the 'Scientific Grave' and the 'Domestic Garden' alike, proving that neither can survive in isolation. The Arctic does not care for Victor's pedigree or his scientific 'trophies'. It simply exists, reclaiming the 'extracted' energy Victor stole from the slaughterhouses and graveyards.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* stands as a haunting blueprint for the modern environmental crisis. Through an ecofeminist lens, we see that the 'monstrous' creation is not the Creature itself, but rather the philosophy of detachment that birthed him. By attempting to strip life of its feminine, biological origins and treat the world as a dead machine, Victor creates a feedback loop of destruction that ultimately consumes the domestic sphere he claimed to

protect. The novel's climax serves as a permanent warning against a science that lacks an ethic of care. Shelley suggests that when we treat nature as a 'passive other' to be conquered, we do not achieve mastery; instead, we alienate ourselves from the very ecosystems that sustain us. In the 21st century, as we face the consequences of industrial and patriarchal hubris, *Frankenstein* reminds us that the liberation of the environment and the liberation of gender are inseparable. To save one, we must fundamentally reimagine our relationship with the other.

To resolve the tension Shelley presents, we must look back to the Creature's initial survival strategy, which was remarkably non-violent and reciprocal. The choice of herbivory serves as a symbolic rejection of the 'Master Identity' and the destructive consumption associated with patriarchal power. His vegetarianism is more than a survival strategy; it is a moral manifesto against the extractive violence of man. His plant-based diet represents a fundamental break from the cycle of patriarchal aggression. The Creature's dietary choice underscores his initial commitment to a non-violent, reciprocal relationship with the earth. By refusing to 'glut' his appetite through destruction, the Creature embraces a life of reciprocity that contradicts Victor's industrial hubris. This emphasises that if we are to move away from the "Hunter/Extractor" model of patriarchal capitalism, we must adopt the "Gatherer/Nurturer" model associated with sustainable existence. The tragedy of Justine Moritz reminds us that when we 'frame' nature for its own degradation, we only accelerate our own demise. Her execution was a sacrifice to preserve a social order that values the prestige of the Male Scientist over the life of the Female Servant. To prevent future 'martyrdoms' of the natural world, we must dismantle the "logic of domination" (Warren 46–47). We must recognize that the 'Female Creature' was destroyed not because she was a threat to humanity, but because she represented a 'thinking and reasoning' nature that refused to comply with a "compact made before her creation" (Shelley 138). In the final analysis, Shelley leaves us on the edge of the ice, staring into a future where the 'feminine' side of nature and the human world are no longer violated. The 'ethical care' she advocates for is not a passive sentiment but a radical restructuring of how we inhabit the land. We must move from being 'border guards' of life to being participants in its 'organic' explosion. Only by viewing the world not as a "dead machine" but as a living, reasoning entity can we hope to close the feedback loop of destruction. The liberation of the environment is, ultimately, the liberation of ourselves from the ghosts of Victor's hubris.

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Reimagining the New Terrains of Ecocriticism: A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of the Environmental Imagination in the Works of Amitav Ghosh

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Abstract

Ecocriticism has emerged as a significant interdisciplinary field that examines the relationship between literature and the environment. While early ecocritical studies primarily focused on Western environmental traditions, recent scholarship increasingly acknowledges the importance of postcolonial ecological perspectives. Postcolonial ecocriticism foregrounds the connections between environmental degradation, colonial history, and global economic inequalities. This paper explores the evolving terrains of ecocriticism through conceptual and contextual analysis, focusing particularly on postcolonial ecocriticism in the works of Amitav Ghosh. Through a detailed textual analysis of *The Hungry Tide*, *Gun Island*, *and The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, the study investigates how Ghosh represents ecological crisis, climate change, environmental displacement, and the historical consequences of colonial capitalism. Drawing on theoretical insights from ecocritical scholars such as Cheryll Glotfelty, Lawrence Buell, and Rob Nixon, the paper argues that Ghosh's writings expand ecocritical discourse by linking environmental catastrophe with historical processes of imperial expansion and modern industrial capitalism. By foregrounding marginalized communities living in ecologically vulnerable regions, Ghosh offers a powerful literary critique of environmental injustice in the Global South. The study concludes that Amitav Ghosh's works significantly contribute to the new terrains of postcolonial ecocriticism by integrating environmental awareness, historical analysis, and ethical reflection.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Climate Change, Environmental Humanities, Amitav Ghosh

Introduction

The twenty-first century is widely recognized as an era defined by environmental crisis. Issues such as climate change, rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, and ecological displacement have transformed global political, scientific, and cultural discourses. Within the humanities, these concerns have given rise to the field of ecocriticism, which examines how literature represents and responds to environmental realities.

Ecocriticism emerged as an academic discipline in the late twentieth century. According to Cheryll Glotfelty, ecocriticism is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). Early ecocritical scholarship largely focused on Western nature writing and pastoral traditions, celebrating wilderness and environmental preservation. However, this early phase of ecocriticism was criticized for its limited geographical and cultural scope. Many scholars argued that environmental discourse must also consider colonial histories and global inequalities that shape ecological experiences in different parts of the world.

This recognition led to the development of postcolonial ecocriticism, which examines the relationship between environmental degradation and colonial exploitation. Scholars such as

Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin emphasize that environmental destruction in many regions of the Global South cannot be understood without examining the historical impact of imperial expansion.

Within this theoretical framework, the works of Amitav Ghosh have become central to contemporary environmental humanities. Ghosh's novels and essays explore the entanglement of ecological crisis with colonial history, global trade networks, and climate change.

This paper therefore examines how Amitav Ghosh's writings contribute to the new terrains of ecocriticism, particularly through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism: Concept and Theoretical Perspectives

Ecocriticism is fundamentally concerned with the representation of the natural environment in literary texts and the ethical relationship between humans and the nonhuman world.

Lawrence Buell identifies several characteristics of environmentally oriented literature. According to Buell, environmental texts typically portray the natural environment as an active presence rather than a passive background and emphasize human accountability toward ecological systems (Buell 7).

Ecocriticism challenges anthropocentric worldviews by emphasizing that humans are part of a larger ecological network. Literary narratives that foreground environmental issues encourage readers to reconsider their ethical responsibilities toward nature. However, early ecocritical scholarship often overlooked the historical processes that shaped environmental exploitation. This limitation became particularly evident when scholars began to examine ecological crises in postcolonial societies.

Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Context and Framework

Postcolonial ecocriticism emerged as scholars sought to understand how colonial expansion transformed natural landscapes and ecological systems. Colonial economies depended heavily on the extraction of natural resources, including timber, minerals, and agricultural products. Plantation agriculture, mining operations, and railway construction drastically altered ecosystems across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Environmental scholar Rob Nixon introduces the concept of "slow violence," which refers to environmental destruction that occurs gradually yet has devastating long-term consequences for marginalized communities (Nixon 2). Postcolonial ecocriticism therefore emphasizes the unequal distribution of environmental harm. Many regions that were historically colonized now face the most severe impacts of climate change despite contributing relatively little to global carbon emissions. Within this context, literature becomes a powerful medium for exploring ecological injustice and environmental memory.

Ecological Imagination in the Works of Amitav Ghosh

The works of Amitav Ghosh provide a significant contribution to contemporary ecocritical discourse. Ghosh's writings consistently highlight the interconnectedness of environmental crises with historical processes such as colonial trade, industrialization, and global capitalism. His narratives frequently explore landscapes that are ecologically fragile, including river deltas, coastal regions, and forests. These settings allow Ghosh to examine the vulnerability of communities living in environments that are increasingly threatened by climate change. Moreover, Ghosh integrates historical research with literary storytelling, demonstrating how environmental crises are deeply rooted in the past.

Ecological Conflict and Environmental Justice in *The Hungry Tide*

One of the most significant ecological novels by Amitav Ghosh is The Hungry Tide, which is set in the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest. The novel portrays the

Sundarbans as a dynamic and unpredictable environment where human survival depends on constant negotiation with nature. Ghosh describes the landscape as "a place where rivers constantly reshape the land and where the boundaries between land and water are always shifting" (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 7). This depiction emphasizes the ecological instability of the region while highlighting the adaptability of local communities. The novel also foregrounds the experiences of marginalized populations who inhabit the Sundarbans. The character Fokir, a local fisherman, embodies an intimate knowledge of the environment that contrasts sharply with the scientific perspective of the marine biologist Piya.
Through their interactions, Ghosh illustrates the value of indigenous ecological knowledge.

A key historical episode referenced in the novel is the Morichjhapi massacre of 1979, when refugees were forcibly evicted from the Sundarbans by government authorities. The narrative describes how conservation policies were used to justify the displacement of vulnerable communities. As Nirmal writes in his journal within the novel, "the tide country does not merely represent an ecological landscape; it also embodies the struggles of people who seek refuge within it" (Ghosh 215). This episode reflects the central concern of postcolonial ecocriticism: the conflict between environmental conservation and social justice.

Climate Crisis and Literary Imagination in *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*

In The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, Amitav Ghosh offers a powerful critique of modern literary culture's inability to adequately address climate change. Ghosh argues that climate change represents a crisis that challenges conventional narrative forms. According to him, "the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture and imagination" (Ghosh, *The Great Derangement* 9). He suggests that contemporary novels often avoid representing large-scale environmental events because such events appear improbable within traditional literary realism.
Furthermore, Ghosh traces the origins of the climate crisis to the colonial era, when European imperial powers expanded global trade networks based on fossil fuel consumption.

He observes that "the patterns of modern globalization were shaped by the colonial trade routes that transformed both economies and ecosystems" (Ghosh 87). Through this analysis, Ghosh links climate change to historical processes of imperial expansion and industrial capitalism.

Climate Migration and Environmental Transformation in *Gun Island*

In the novel Gun Island, Amitav Ghosh explores the global dimensions of climate change. The narrative follows the protagonist Deen as he travels between India and Europe, encountering environmental disruptions that reflect the broader impact of climate change.

One striking scene describes extreme weather events affecting Venice, symbolizing the vulnerability of even historically powerful cities. The novel also explores the phenomenon of climate migration. Characters from the Sundarbans region are forced to leave their homes due to environmental instability and economic hardship. Through these narratives, Ghosh suggests that climate change is not merely an environmental issue but also a social and political crisis. As the narrator reflects, "the stories of migration that define our time are inseparable from the transformations of the earth itself" (Ghosh, *Gun Island* 242). This perspective aligns closely with the concerns of postcolonial ecocriticism, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of ecological and social crises.

Amitav Ghosh and the New Terrains of Ecocriticism

The works of Amitav Ghosh expand the scope of ecocriticism in several important ways. First, Ghosh situates environmental crises within a global historical framework, demonstrating how colonial trade networks and industrial capitalism contributed to ecological degradation. Second, his narratives foreground marginalized communities living in

ecologically vulnerable regions, highlighting the unequal distribution of environmental harm. Third, Ghosh integrates scientific insights with cultural storytelling, illustrating how literature can engage with complex environmental issues. Through these contributions, Ghosh's writings represent a powerful example of postcolonial ecocritical literature.

Conclusion

Ecocriticism has evolved into a dynamic interdisciplinary field that addresses the complex relationship between literature, culture, and the environment. The emergence of postcolonial ecocriticism has expanded this field by emphasizing the historical and political dimensions of ecological crisis. The works of Amitav Ghosh provide a compelling literary exploration of environmental degradation, climate change, and ecological displacement. Through texts such as *The Hungry Tide, Gun Island, and The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable,* Ghosh demonstrates that environmental crises are deeply intertwined with colonial histories and global economic structures. By combining historical analysis, ecological awareness, and literary imagination, Amitav Ghosh significantly contributes to the new terrains of postcolonial ecocriticism, offering valuable insights into the cultural dimensions of climate change and environmental justice.

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An Ecocritical Inquiry into Manoj Das's Short Fiction

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Abstract-

In Indian Literature context ecological concerns can be traced in great epics of The Ramayan and The Mahabharat. The two epics have episodes of exile to a forest (Vana) where man, animal and nature coexist showing ecological harmony. In the epics, nature was not just an aesthetic backdrop or work as a mere setting but functions as a divine space where human action must align with the nature. The ecological concerns continue to flow through the modern Indian writers who raised their pen against environmental degradation and ecological imbalance. Writers like Rabindra Nath Tagore, Raja Rao, R K Narayan, Ruskin Bond, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy brought ecological concerns to the mainstream literature in India. These modern writers expanded the sacred ecological concerns in Indian literature by addressing the urgency of sustainable life and environmental ethics making ecocriticism as vital framework for understanding Indian literature. Manoj Das, a prolific Odia writer who is well known for his profound contribution to Indian literature often sets the setting of his stories in a rural life. His works echoes his environmental concerns. His works presents nature as living and emphasised harmony between human and environment reflecting deep ecological consciousness. This study seeks to explore the environmental concerns reflected in Manoj Das's short stories from an ecological perspective.

Keywords- Nature, Ecocriticism, Nature Narratives, Eco- Discourse, Green Studies

Introduction

The dynamic interplay between humans and nature has been a dominant motif of political, philosophical, spiritual, economical and literary discourses.in the recent years, the environmental crisis has become a major subject that drive the scholars and writers to focus this global predicament. In Indian literature, the ancient epics *'The Mahabharata'* and '*The Ramayan'* offers deep understanding regarding harmonious coexistence of man and nature. The ancient wisdom hidden in these epics portrays nature as divine which evokes the idea of scared ecological consciousness. The idea of scared ecology further compels man to reverence nature emphasising on the responsibility of man to protect nature. The Prakrti (nature) is not only the manifestation of divine but the divine itself. Therefore, nature in many indigenous cultures in India is worshipped and protected by the communities. The religious values related to nature maintains a deep ecological consciousness rooted in the traditional practices which often perceives nature not as source of exploitation but as living entity. This holistic ecological worldview emphasising sustainability and preservation of nature creates connection between nature, culture, spirituality and man. the deeply rooted cultural values create a bridge between the eastern and western centric framework. Indigenous perspectives offer alternative models for addressing environmental crises, challenging Western-centric eco-critical frameworks (Adamson, 2012).

Indian English Literature possess cultural diversity and linguistic diversity with blend of diverse cultures and sensibilities creates a space for creative expression. Indian Literature expands to many forms from myth to folklore, from novels to essays and from epics to folk poetry. In India, with its diverse ecosystems and colonial history, eco-criticism intersects with

postcolonial theory to address ecological legacies of colonialism and globalization (Mukherjee,2010). The writers like Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Ruskin Bond, Ramachandra Guha, Vandana Shiva engaged in writing about beauty and devastation of nature. These writers narrate about the man and nature conflict, deforestation, climate change, global warming, biodiversity loss and ecological decay. These writers contributing significantly in creating an ecological consciousness and bringing subtle cultural values of India to the forefront of literary discourse. By blending eco-critical and postcolonial lenses, Indian writers critique industrialization's ecological impact and advocate for ethical human-nature relationships, contributing significantly to global environmental narratives (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010; De Loughrey & Handley, 2011).

The Western Ecocritical theory is based on the fundamentals of Cheryll Glotfelty and Harlod Fromm's '*The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in literary Ecology'* (1996). It interrogates about the ecological exploitation due to capitalism and industrialization. The text served as a channel to establish relationship between literature and physical environment. It draws its influences from like romanticism and transcendentalism which tries to connect nature, ecology and environmental ethics. Ecocriticism is defined in this text as:

"Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject 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. Ecocriticism can be further characterized by distinguishing it from other critical approaches. Literary theory, in general, examines the relations between writers, texts, and the world." (19)

But the Eastern ecological context doesn't treat nature as external force. The eastern thought based on Prakriti- Purusha harmony and unity. The Indian English literature or any regional literature of India draws upon the inherited values of the belief of maintaining cosmic order. Indian English literature not only exposes the environmental injustices faced by marginalized communities but also brings forth indigenous ecological wisdom as a viable alternative to exploitative systems. By blending postcolonial theory with eco-criticism, these literary texts challenge dominant anthropocentric and Western paradigms, proposing culturally rooted, sustainable practices. The integration of eco-feminist and environmental justice perspectives further enriches this discourse, highlighting the intersectionality of gender, class, and ecology. (Chandra,2025)

Ancient Indian texts such as the Vedas and the Upanishad articulated the creation of the universe and the creation nature as in a sacred order which believed to be powerful which is provider and sustainer. Indian classical literature specially in Sanskrit literature the ecological wisdom is conveyed through allegorical narratives and animal fables. In those narratives the animals are incorporated with supernatural power, intelligence, speech and conscience as equal to human beings to cultivate the spirit of equality. In Buddhist literature, the jataka tales sheds light into Lord Buddha's incarnations as animals such as monkey, elephant and deer. The Buddhist literature further emphasises on nonviolence and kindness as ethical principle which reinforce a holistic ecological worldview.

The term 'Sacred Ecology' is introduced by Turkish Canadian ecologist Fikret Berkes which is published in 1999. He pointed out the interconnected relationship between culture knowledge, spirituality and nature. According to him nature should not be understood as a

resource but it is a living system in which all kind of living being's breath and the plants, landscapes and every element of nature are interdependent.

The modern concept of Eco-philosophy resonates with the contemporary ecological thought provided by Arne Naess and Aldo leopard. Arne Naess is considered as the founder of deep ecology. The foundational essay '*The shallow and the Deep, Long range Ecological moment'* (1973) he introduced the concept which is called Ecological Self. Ecological self means the individual identity should expand beyond the human ego and include the broader natural world. According to him the human's environmental ethics must be beyond the utilitarian thought and man should identify them as part of nature. He argues that nature has value of its own, human is not the master or the ruler of nature they are just a part of the larger ecological world. Its challenges the anthropocentric assumption that nature only exists only to serve human beings. His ideas resonate with Aldo Leopold's concept of 'land ethics' which advocates that humans are not masters of the planet.

Manoj Das a legendary story teller in both Odia and English literature born in 1934 at Shankari, a coastal village in Balasore district of Odisha. He is a gem for Indian English literature because he credits to have contributed in forms of essays, poems, stories and novels. His childhood was spent amidst of rustic landscape between meadows and lakes. From ecocritical perspective, Das's fictional world filled with sublime yet evocative representation rural landscape. His narratives delicately weaved with picturesque rural landscape with serenity and innocence. The holistic ecological vision showed rustic life in resonating with the rhythm of nature. There is intimate relationship between human world and world of nature. Manoj Das glorifies nature and landscapes in his fiction and highlights the delicate balance between man and the environment. He condemns wickedness and artificiality of urban world (S. Hegishte,4) His fictions reflect the realistic rustic life filled with flora and fauna. In an interview the writer describes –

Between our house and the sea, there was an expansive meadow, green throughout the year, studded with hundreds of palm trees. And there were two natural lakes dotted with lilies. One teeming with red lotuses and the other with white lotuses. They never intermixed. The colour of the area, and the birds chirping, the owls hooting or screeching all these things made up my childhood. The cowherd boy shouting from the field at sunset, an old lady calling out to her favourite cow by name and the cow responding. (Das,33)

The Tree is a short story centres on a massive old banyan tree in the village, the villagers considered it scared and worship it. The tree was taken to be sacred, a legion of birds having to be told about it. Immortality being an attribute of the gods, it was godly. Nobody would easily flout a decision that had been taken in a meeting under the tree, for even when the decision was unpalatable to a party, over it there was the seal of a higher power, invisible and inaudible though. (210) During cyclones the villager used to take shelter under that banyan tree, for the villagers that banyan tree is this symbol of hope and courage. The tree stands for generations as the protector of the villagers. Leaves of the banyan tree chattered incessantly their familiar language of hope and courage. Its innumerable boughs spread out overhead had been the very symbol of protection for generations, affording shelter not only to those who bore love and regard for it, but even to those who had proved impudent towards it, of course, so far as the latter were concerned, only after humbling them to their knees. (211) The tree is considered as a saviour. The villagers believed on a legend that once the king wanted to cut down few branches of the tree and the King's intentions proved fatal. During cyclones the whole royal family took shelter under the same tree. Das implied that the ill intention of cutting the branches of the tree in cause harm. The writer gave me clear message that is it cause harm to nature the nature may retaliate.

In the story '*The Submerged Valley'* contains rich ecocritical dimensions as the writer portrayed nature as supernatural and divine. The villagers believed that the trees, hills and river run through the village are sacred. The trees that stood in front of our school used to appear as human to us as the wandering bull of the Lord Shiva. One of the tresses looked as if it was kneeling in meditation. Two more were never tired of chattering to each other. If the teacher had scolded or thrashed us, they seemed to be sympathising with us (Das, 237) This representation aligns with Hindu religious belief of the sacred bull called Nandi, the companion of Lord Shiva. By making such comparisons the writer wanted to illustrate nature and divinity can coexist. This representation shows nature is not subordinate to human beings but is part of cosmic order. Apart from that the writer says in the very beginning of the story, so far, we had taken the village for granted- like our breathing or our mothers' love. But thereafter the elements that made the Village, the trees, the pools, the Shiva temple and the hillock adjacent to it had begun to look significant. (239) The village and its beauty are not a mere scenery but a part of collective memory. The temple and the hillock had always remained green in my memory. (241) The building of the dam created a conflict in the mind of the villagers. The dam project will submerge the entire village. It is not only destruction of natural landscape but villagers would lose their ancestral land. The loss of land is the loss of village and the loss of their identity and loss of belonging. The development in the name of agriculture and irrigation may lead to immense destruction of the nature. The character Abolokara (the disobedient one) who is considered as eccentric continues to live in a boat on the river refusing to leave the village. He was deeply attached to the village and continues despite of people's request to leave the river. The character is a symbolical representation as a living reminder of the destroyed landscape. He resists the displacement and projects that the attachment to own land cannot be erased. The so-called rational villagers left the village by receiving the compensation but the madman Ablokara showed loyalty to his village. Through this ironical portrayal the das showed that modern or ration human being showed less sensitivity towards nature. They abandoned their homeland without any remorse.

The famous story *The Crocodile's lady* is an allegorical story which stands for pushing the boundaries of human and animal existence. The story is viewed with motifs of supernaturalism, transformation and blind believes. The narrator to gets with treatment of nature by humans and the interconnectedness. The narrative revolves a mysterious lady who is believed to be transformed into crocodile. The Lady used to live with a male crocodile would choose eventually killed by the villagers. The female crocodile couldn't live alone inside the river she returned to the village and continued to live near the river. The river, in the narrative is not only a physical setting but portrayed as ecological space which is mysterious which is beyond rational understanding. The crocodile lady considered as the saviour of the village who protects the villagers from different calamity which is ironical because the villagers brutally killed her male partner.

The central motif in the story is the transformation. Women's assimilation into the river's water and her ability transform into crocodile was beyond the conventional boundary between human and animal. This idea of metamorphosis challenges the rigid boundary of humans and the other animals. The writer has presented the protagonist who is both human and animal, deflate the idea of human hierarchical superior position over animals. Its showed human identity it's not fixed or can be considered as superior then other living beings. The story interwinds with irony and paradox. The story blurred the separating line between human and animal world. The story is based on ecological indigenous consciousness that the villagers accepted the crocodile lady as the guardian of the village, the saviour, the protector and mysteriously powerful supernatural being. Ironically, in the past they have killed her companion male crocodile in a brutal manner. The innocent male crocodile came up to the

ground in search for his companion, he didn't have the intention to attack anyone but out of fear the villagers killed him. The writer showed the crocodiles as humans having capable of showing emotions of affection, longing and kindness and the humans as selfish and brutal.

The story is a blend of realism, myth and folklore. The character, Dr Batstone who was a foreign traveller had a keen interest to experience the colonial Indian village. He was amazed by the beauty of the solitude of the village. Dr Batstone who had lived in a city of skyscrapers practically all his life had expressed a keen desire to experience a real Indian village….. That a hundred cattle could march through fenceless paddy fields with absolute abstinence, obeying a tiny tot's hooting, was as fantastic as the Pied Piper's magic. Wonderful was the huge rainbow, fantastic the revelation that ninety seven percent of our villagers lived quite contended without having seen a locomotive or a cinema. (102) The village was such rich with exquisiteness and serenity that villagers neither look for so called developed urban life nor any kind of metropolitan comfort. The onlooker was mesmerised and, in a habit, uttering the word 'fantastic' now and then. He heard the legend of the crocodile lady and believed in the words of the villager. He also showed interest to go into the river water to experience the mystery of the crocodile.

The Bull of Babulpur is another humorous story in which the writer presented the negligence existence of wandering bull in the streets as sacred as God's presence. In their memory. the bull had been an intrinsic part of history and geography of Babulpur. Be it this bull or its late venerable sire, a bull was inevitably there, unchecked and unpredictable in its movements, verily the symbol of the free, immortal, invincible and universal soul. (295) The bull was worshipped, garlanded, smeared by sandalwood and offered water melons by the villagers. The bull also shows patience and allows the villagers to finish the rituals. There is a strange affectionate bond between the villagers and the bull. The bull was considered as glory of the village. One of the famous stories of Das '*Bhola Grandpa and the Tiger'* Bhola Grandpa's accidental encounter with the tiger lead to the poor man's plight. He climbed on a tree and spent whole night. But when he got down and walked towards the santal village, the very tiger was present under the tree. Grandpa didn't realise the presence of the tiger and to his surprise the tiger didn't try to kill him while he walked off in front of him. The story shows that humans create fear of animals while animals don't have any intention of killing.

*Cyclone*s (1987) is a fiction written by Manoj Das based on the devastating effect the cyclone of 1942. The novel paints the crucial period of colonial domination and the distressing burden of natural calamity in the rural Odisha. The story set on the coastal village of Kushumpur. The village had a river called Kheya. The British colonial administration planned to build a commercial port by changing the natural course of the river. The exploitation of natural resource on the name of economic progress became a curse. The proposed construction of the port and roads disrupted the beauty of the village and the plan was opposed by the villagers. The protagonist of the novel Sandip Das exposed the destructive consequences of building the port in the village. The river is not only a geographical feature but it was a life sustaining companion of the village for generations. The intervention of the Britishers who tried to change the natural course of the river related ecological disintegration within the village. The human made changes in nature resulted devastation in form of cyclone destroyed the whole village emphasising on the vulnerability of human before the powerful force of nature. The landscape of the village transformed into space of ruin and the witness of the disaster but left traumatised. The picture of cyclone gave a picture of the fragile balance between human and nature. The river was part of the rural landscape surrounded with forest, providing fertile land for the villagers to manage their livelihood but the changes that was made the way of nature created devastation. Through the narrative the writer portrayed that exploitation of nature can

creates ecological imbalance and in the story, the innocent villagers became the victim of the consequences.

Conclusion:

The unique traits of Das's writing are the multifaceted representation of life culture, belief and ecological awareness. Most of his works celebrate the beauty of nature. His distinctive literary vision projected in the short fiction articulated as ecologically sensitive. His portrayal of Odisha's rural landscape, culture, tradition, myth, folklore and picturesque representation of nature of rural life establish him as a distinct writer like R K Narayan's Malgudi, Tagore's Bengal, Kanthapura of Raja Rao, Wessex of Thomas Hardy, Macondo of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Das fiction reflects the mysterious yet powerful indigenous belief of people on nature which reflects the interaction between culture and ecology acknowledges that his writings are shaped by the great Indian storyteller Somadeva and Vishnu Sharma. So, his works transmit the message that human life is inseparable from the hands of nature. His imagination is not simple description but he develops into ecological issues that are causing devastation like development and industrialisation. Das's ecological resonates with ecological principles of Deep ecology and Sacred ecology. His fictional village surrounded by trees, paddy fields, rivers, mountains and animals. He projects the interdependence of human and animals on the environment. The ecological interdependence suggests that human existence depends on the environment. Thus, his writings embody the deep ecological awareness and rare sensibility towards nature.

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Ecosystem is at the Crossroad

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Abstract

OUR "NATURAL CAPITAL", Ecosystem is part and parcel of human life. Ecosystem is a community in which both Biotic and Abiotic interact with each other. Man is in and within this system. He cannot live for a single moment without it. But it is a matter of irony this Ecosystem is in danger due to excess exploitation by human beings. As a result of which Nature faces environmental issues such as , global warming , acid rain Natural Disaster, Climate changes, Loss of biodiversity, pollution , Scarcity of water etc. All these occurrences are due to the grave mistakes committed by the crown of evolution, human beings. Man is the creator as well as sufferer of all these problems directly or indirectly. Since nature is man's habitat, to destroy, to disturb is explicitly suicidal. Everything is happening only because of crisis of human values.The objective of the study is ,firstly to highlight on structure and function of Ecosystem, secondly to reflect on Critical issues faced by Ecosystem, thirdly to focus on causes of environmental degradation and what are its impacts on the Mother Earth and finally to reflect on the steps taken to save our "Natural Capital".Human beings have the moral responsibilities and duty towards the Ecosystem, then only everything and being can exist as each entity has intrisic value. So they have right to live. Study shows the gradual movement from Anthropocentrism through Bio-centrism to Cosmo-centrism throgh the analysis of Environmental Ethics.

Keywords: Natural Capital, Crossroad,Global warming, Ecosystem,Bio-diversity

Introduction

The twenty-first century is characterized by extraordinary advancements in technology and globalization, in this time these developments have been accompanied by profound ecological and moral challenges. Humanity is now facing environmental crisis of unprecedented scale, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation, which demands urgent ethical reflection (Oksanen, 2020).

The environment includes the ecosystem. It is the environment's tiny components. There are both biotic and abiotic components in it. All biological entities, including producers, consumers, and decomposers, are classified as biotic, while all non-living objects, such as land, water, wind, and temperature, are classified as abiotic. Abiotic and biotic elements cannot coexist apart. One of the major cause of pitiable condition of the ecosystem is human exploitation to it. For this reason the environment is at a crossroads. It is ironic that we are unaware of these serious human errors. They are connected and dependent on one another. The area of nature where living things interact with one another and their physical surroundings is known as an ecosystem.

It has number of functions within the Natural Capital such as Physical (energy flow), Biological (food chains, food web, ecological succession), , Biochemical (nutrient cycling) etc.

However, environmental degradation has become a pressing global concern, encompassing issues like pollution, biodiversity loss, deforestation,and climate change. Human activities are the primary drivers of this deterioration, impacting both

natural and human systems. Many communities worldwide depend directly on natural resources for their livelihoods, highlighting the critical link between environmental health and human well-being. (Ali & Rahaman,2024)

In addition to protecting the environment, addressing environmental deterioration is essential for sustainable development and economic expansion. Global development initiatives are impacted by climate change and environmental risks, underscoring the necessity of incorporating environmental factors into every facet of development. One important way to lower emissions and lessen the effects of climate change is to slow population increase. Rahaman and Ali (2023)

The fundamental questions raised around these issues of the environmental degradation are: do the humans have any duty in relation to the biotic existence i.e, flora and fauna and the natural environment consisting of atomsphere, oceans, rivers, lakes, mountains and forests? Non-humans do not have any moral sense. So they do not have duty in relation to other. Whether humans have ethical obligations towards entities or the forces in the biotic domain? (Mohanty,2007). These fundamental issues have been respodended differently down the decades by different thinkers under three distinct views such as Anthropocentrism, Bio-centrism and Cosmo-centrism.

What is Ecosystem?

Ecosystem is a dynamic community of living organism interacting with their non-living physical environment, such as sunlight, soil,, water and air, functing rogether as a unit. It is the structural and functional unit of ecology.

The term 'ecosystem' was coined by A.G. Tansley, an English botanist, in 1935. An ecosystem is the structural and functional unit of ecology (nature) encompassing complex interaction between its biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) components. For example- a pond is a good example of ecosystem. A pond, lake, desert, grassland, meadow, forest etc. are common examples of ecosystems.

Ecosystems serve vital functions such providing a structural growing medium, water, nutrients, and a place for organisms to dwell. The plant that grows on top of soil is closely linked to this biological component through nitrogen cycling. Photosynthesis requires carbon dioxide, water, heat, sunlight, and other ingredients. Photosynthesis provides organic nourishment for other living organisms and energy for plant development and metabolism. Both plants and animals get their water from the soil and Earth's surface. The original source of this water was atmospheric precipitation. Mohanty (2007).

Causes of Environmental degradation

When natural resources like soil, water, and air are depleted, ecosystems are destroyed, and wildlife is exterminated, environmental degradation takes place. Environmental degradation is caused by erosion and a decline in the quality of the natural environment. (Bently, 2022). Degradation of the land and soil, degradation of water, degradation of the atmosphere, etc. are some of the several forms of environmental degradation. Environmental degradation has multiple causes. The majority of them are directly or indirectly caused by human activity, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Examples include fast urbanisation, industrialisation, deforestation, and overpopulation, all of which deplete natural resources and contaminate ecosystems.

Urbanisation

Rapid growth of population and unemployment compel rural poor people to seek job in different public and private sectors, most people desire to move forward cities and towns. Due to it people use more and more vehicles which emits poision gas to atomsphere. So number of vehicle increases, day by day which is the major cause of air pollution.However, this rapid

urban expansion has strained resources like energy, housing, transportation, and water supply, leading to environmental degradation and exacerbating urban poverty worldwide.(Kanungo, 2007)

Industrialization:

Because of pollution and resource depletion, industrialisation hastens environmental deterioration. Unsustainable resource exploitation by industries results in habitat destruction and a fall in biodiversity. Pollutants like heavy metals, dangerous compounds, and greenhouse gases are also released into the air, water, and soil by industrial processes. Urbanisation and industrial growth lead to poor air quality and inadequate waste management in cities, which increases the strain on resources and infrastructure. Industrial pollution promote climate change, which exacerbates environmental issues.Stakeholder cooperation, strict rules, and sustainable practices are necessary to address these effects.(Bently, 2022).

Deforestration: Deforestation happens as a result of the population boom and fast urbanisation.Deforestation results from the cutting down of an increasing number of trees during the construction of roads, buildings, and factories. Floods and droughts occur more frequently, soil washes away more quickly, rivers like the Ganga and Yamuna accumulate more dirt, and it even exacerbates global warming. Therefore, it would be a severe mistake for the planet to cut down trees.

Over Population: The rapid urbanisation and population growth lead to deforestation.Deforestation is the outcome of more and more trees being cut down to make way for factories, buildings, and highways. Rivers like the Ganga and Yamuna acquire more dirt, floods and droughts happen more frequently, soil washes away more quickly, and it even makes global warming worse. Therefore, cutting down trees would be a grave mistake for the earth.

Effects of Environmrntal Degradation

Impact on human health: Human health is significantly harmed by environmental degradation. This year, poor water quality causes billions of illnesses and millions of deaths worldwide. Two consequences of environmental deterioration are a shortage of water and a decrease in food quality.(Bently, 2022).

Changes in the atmosphere: The greenhouse effect, global warming, and ozone layer depletion are some consequences of environmental deterioration.

Natural resource scarcity: Degradation of the environment leads to a shortage of resources like food crops, water, arable land, genetic resources, and medicinal plants.

Biodiversity loss: Degradation of the environment has a major negative impact on human health. Millions of fatalities and billions of diseases are caused by poor water quality worldwide this year. Water scarcity and a decline in food quality are two effects of environmental degradation.Bently (2022).

Changes in the atmosphere: Some effects of environmental degradation include the greenhouse effect, global warming, and ozone layer depletion.

Natural resource scarcity: Food crops, water, arable land, genetic resources, and medicinal plants are all in limited supply due to environmental degradation.

Human health is significantly impacted negatively by environmental degradation. This year, poor water quality has caused billions of illnesses and millions of deaths worldwide. Two consequences of environmental deterioration are a decrease in food quality and a shortage of water.Bently (2022).

Changes in the atmosphere: The greenhouse effect, global warming, and ozone layer depletion are a few consequences of environmental deterioration.

Natural resource scarcity: As a result of environmental deterioration, there are less food crops, water, arable land, genetic resources, and medicinal plants.“The Population Bomb” in the year 1968 which warned of the devastating effects the increase human population on natural resources of the earth.

Definitions of Environmental Ethics:

In very simple words Environmental ethics may define as “to set the moral values towards environment”.“Environmental ethics is a branch of applied philosophy that deals with the conceptual foundations of environmental values as well as more concrete issues surrounding societal attitudes, actions, and policies to protect and sustain biodiversity and ecological systems”.The area of environmental philosophy known as "environmental ethics" examines beyond the conventional bounds of ethics to include the non-human world in addition to humans. “Environmental Ethics is the field of applied ethics that discusses, reflects and reasons on values, rules, norms, criteria for dealing with animate and inanimate entities in a responsible way”.

“Environmental Ethics is the base of reasoning for, e.g., the following fields of action within society: environmental protection, animal protection, nature protection, animal rights, and sustainability issues”

Since humans occupy the highest position in the evolutionary process, they have a sense of ends and means, ought and ought-not, right and wrong, value and disvalue, etc. However, the question of whether humans have any responsibility to ecosystems made up of biotic (flora and fauna) and abiotic (atmosphere, mountains, rivers, oceans, and forests) components arises. Human existence is value-centric, whereas non-human existence is value-neutral? Why are we obliged to respect nature? These fundamental issues can be answered from thre different stand ponts. Such as Amnthropocentrism, Biocentrism, and Cosmo-centrism (Kanungo, 2007)).

Anthropocentrism:

The idea that man occupies the center of the evolutionary spectrum is known as anthropocentrism. Humans are the intended audience for everything and everything. Because they are not logical, non-humans are incapable of having moral sense, hence they have no values. This viewpoint is also supported by Imanuel Kant, who asserts that non-humans are simply useful or instrumental. Ironically, over time, it has been shown to be suicidal and self-defeating. Man has lost sight of the fact that humans are an essential component of the organic whole because of his self-serving interests. The well-being of the whole is closely linked to the well-being of the portion. Technology has enlightened and empowered man. However, without a goal, one is unsure of how to proceed. It's interesting to note that the same technology that is supposed to support life turns out to be suicidal. This is the development paradox.(Mohanty,2007).

Environmental problems including acid rain, global warming, ozone layer depletion, and other forms of pollution have made life dangerous for both humans and the planet's entire biotic population.Pure drinking water is getting increasingly hard to come by. Water sites are used as garbage disposal sites. Water systems are exposed to industrial contaminants from the paper and food processing industries. Pollution of the land, water, and air results from overuse of fertilisers, pesticides, and insecticides in agriculture. Mother Earth suffers the most damage and is becoming more dangerous as a result of all these actions. Kanungo (2007).

Every entity of this kind has intrinsic worth, according to non-utilitarians. Thus, they ought to be safeguarded and conserved. Anything that goes against nature's interests is not something that humans should undertake. Man's perspective and way of thinking need to change. Land, rivers, seas, and valleys are examples of other inanimate objects that contribute to the preservation of cosmic harmony. Mohanty (2007).

Bio-centrism

In order to safeguard the interests of human species, man must preserve and advance the interests of flora and fauna. Every creature, no matter how small and unimportant, has an existence-value rather than a utilitarian value. They play a part in preserving the overall cosmic harmony. Every plant has therapeutic properties. Even snake venom is crucial for making life-

saving medications. Humans are dependent on other humans in order to survive.Non-humans, however, are able to survive without human assistance. Once more, humans are positioned lower on the evolutionary ladder than plants and animals. The innocent infant, a person in a comatose state, and an insane person will all be excluded from the scope of moral consideration if it is argued that non-humans lack moral consideration because they lack self-consciousness and reason.Mohanty (2007)

It is true that every entity of this universe is divine manifestation of the one and the same supreme consciousness. We all have a common source and also a common goal. So everything an being are inter-connected and inter-dependent. We are co-travellers in the journey of the cosmic. We are all bond by one cosmic bond. So live and let live should be our motto.(Kanungo, 2007)).

Cosmo-centrism:

The next urgent question is how humans react to the abiotics that make up their immediate surroundings, such as the aroma, air, ethereal, aerial, and luminous. All of these things existed long before life began. The existence of humans is a later phenomenon. Do humans have any obligations to the natural world? In contrast to other living things, humans have the capacity to alter the natural condition due to their self-consciousness. Non-humans don't disobey natural laws and don't have an excessive need for possessions.Man uses manmade weapons to battle, whereas animals use natural weapons. Animals become violent because they are innocent, but humans become violent because of their intelligence.Kanungo (2007).

Matter and consciousness differ only in degree, not in kind. In the form of potentiality, the so-called lifeless objects are fundamentally conscious. This dormant form of potentiality became actuality through evolution. The universe is fundamentally interconnected.It is true that all of the universe's entities are divine manifestations of the same ultimate consciousness. Matter and consciousness differ only in degree, not in kind. Reality is gapless continuity and seamless whole. We all have a common source and also a common goal. So everything and every being are inter-connected and inter-dependent. We are co-travellers in the journey of the cosmic. We are all bond by one cosmic bond. So live and let live should be our motto.(Kanungo, 2007)).

According to Buddhism, environmental responsibility is presented as *pratītyasamutpāda* and *ahiṃsā*. In this case, beings are not individuals, but part of a chain of causality.Thus, Buddhist ethics transforms environmental care into a spiritual practice where compassion heals both the planet and the human heart.. The Indian scriptures, including the Upaniṣads, postulate a non-dual cosmology (Advaita Vedānta) in which Ātman (the individual soul) and Brahman (universal consciousness) are ultimately the same. In this kind of worldview, damaging nature is equal to damaging the self; moral duty is not based on logical calculation, but on spiritual insight. It is a metaphysical foundation of an ethic of reverence, humility, and *dhārmic* responsibility to all forms of life (Sharma & Biswas, 2024).

It is also reflected in the first verse of *Isa Upanishad-Isavasya idam sarvam yat kinchit jagatyam jagat* means every entity is te manifestation of one and the same Isa(Brahaman*)-'Sarvam Khalu idam Brahamam'.* Every entity contribute more or less to maintain cosmic harmony.

Severeral steps are taken for the preservation and protection of environment yet it is not fulfill the goal.

Steps taken for the protection of enviroment:

To protect environment several governmental and non-governmental act are taken which is reflected in various Ordinances and Legislations of our country. Some of them are:

- The Air Act,1981

- The Water Act,1974
- The Environment Protection Act,1980
- The Forest Conservation Act, 1980
- The Wild Life Protection Act,1972
- The Indian Forest Act,1927
- The Central Motor Vehicle Act, 1988
- The Factory Act,1948 .etc

In addition to some of the aforementioned ordinances, the judiciary is crucial in promoting the idea of sustainable development through the numerous rulings it occasionally issues. For example, the Taj Trapezium case (M.C. Mehta v. Union of India and Others, 1997). Among the significant sub-approaches used in current practices are:
Sustainable Transportation, Sustainable Agriculture, and Traffic Control
Sustainable Land and Forest Management
Sustainable Human Settlement Development, Sustainable Water Management, etc.
Even if these actions are practices, significant progress has not yet been made.

Conclusion:

Environmental degradation emerges as an urgent global concern, threatening global ecosystems and socio-economic stability. Its diverse causes, from industrialization to high consumption necessitate immediate attention to prevent irreversible damage and loss of biodiversity. However, a spectrum of solutions exists, encompassing regenerative farming, pollution control, reduced consumption, biodiversity conservation, and renewable energy adoption. These strategies, in addition to public awareness and governmental initiatives, offer pathways to mitigate environmental degradation and foster sustainability. Collaboration among individuals, communities, governments, and international entities is paramount in implementing these solutions effectively. By prioritizing environmental stewardship and adopting holistic approaches, we can navigate the complex challenges of environmental degradation and safeguard the planet for current and future generations.So to care all and respect all should be the vision of every human beings. “live and let live” should be everyone’s motto. The principle of ‘Vasudhaika kutumbakam’ should be reflected in everybody’s mind. Then only we can save the ecosystem from the endangered and pitiable situation.

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Nonsense as Ecological Critique: Rethinking Colonial Modernity in Abol Tabol

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Abstract

This paper explores eco-absurdism in Abol Tabol by Sukumar Ray, arguing that nonsense operates as both a playful aesthetic and a critical framework for imagining ecological relationships in colonial Bengal. Ray constructs a vibrant literary world where animals, objects, sounds, and hybrid creatures possess their own agency, challenging anthropocentric assumptions that place humans at the center of meaning and control. Through linguistic experimentation, satire, and illogical scenarios, the poems unsettle rational hierarchies and reveal the arbitrariness of colonial authority and middle-class social norms.

Drawing on eco-critical and posthuman perspectives, the paper demonstrates how poems such as "*Khichuri*," "*Katukutu Buro*," and "*Ram Gorurer Chana*" foreground material vitality and ecological entanglement. In these texts, the non-human world is not passive background but an active participant that resists classification and regulation. Nonsense thus becomes a subtle language of resistance, celebrating mixture, unpredictability, and relational coexistence rather than order and purity.

The study also situates Ray within global nonsense traditions, distinguishing his ecological imagination from the ornamental absurdity of Edward Lear and the logic-driven play of Lewis Carroll. By grounding absurdity in everyday cultural contexts, Ray creates a layered form of nonsense that engages both children and adults while offering a quiet critique of imperial logic.

Ultimately, the paper argues that Ray transforms nonsense into a critical literary strategy that reimagines human-nature relationships through humour, play, and imaginative openness.

Keywords: Eco-absurdism, Nonsense literature, Non-human agency, Ecocriticism, Colonial modernity; Posthumanism.

Introduction

Published in 1923, *Abol Tabol* by Sukumar Ray remains one of the most distinctive works of Bengali literature. Known for its playful language, imaginative creatures, and humorous absurdity, the collection is often read primarily as children's literature. However, the poems also contain deeper layers of meaning that engage with social, cultural, and environmental questions. Ray's nonsense poetry creates a world where animals speak, objects behave unpredictably, and strange hybrid beings appear without explanation. Through such playful disruptions of logic and language, *Abol Tabol* invites readers to question the assumptions that structure everyday understanding of order, meaning, and authority.

This paper explores the idea of eco-absurdism in *Abol Tabol*, arguing that Ray uses nonsense not only as a literary device but also as a way of reimagining relationships between humans and the non-human world. In many of the poems, animals, materials, and objects act with their own energy and influence the events of the poem. Rather than remaining passive background elements, they become active participants in the poetic world. This challenges

anthropocentric thinking, which places human beings at the center of meaning and control. By presenting a lively and unpredictable environment, Ray's poetry suggests that existence is shaped through interaction and coexistence rather than rigid hierarchy.

The relevance of this perspective becomes clearer when the text is placed within the context of colonial Bengal. During the colonial period, systems of governance, science, and education emphasized order, classification, and rational control over both society and nature. Such frameworks encouraged the belief that the world could be understood and managed through strict categories and logical structures. Ray's nonsense poetry quietly unsettles these assumptions. Through absurd situations, exaggerated authority figures, and playful linguistic experimentation, the poems expose how rigid systems of order can appear arbitrary or even ridiculous.

By examining poems such as "*Khichuri*," "*Katukutu Buro*," and "*Ram Gorurer Chana*," this study demonstrates how *Abol Tabol* constructs an imaginative ecological space where mixture, unpredictability, and non-human agency are central. The paper therefore argues that Ray's nonsense functions as a subtle critique of colonial rationality while also presenting a playful vision of ecological coexistence. Through humour and imaginative freedom, *Abol Tabol* invites readers to rethink the relationship between humans, language, and the wider natural world.

The body of scholarship surrounding Abol Tabol has frequently placed the work within a broader literary tradition of nonsense writing, examining its relationship to both Bengali cultural contexts and international forms of absurd literature. Early discussions of Ray's work often focused on the playful linguistic inventiveness and imaginative freedom that characterize his poetry, while later studies have increasingly recognized the deeper cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic implications of his nonsense verse. As a result, *Abol Tabol* has come to be understood not merely as children's literature but as a sophisticated literary work that engages with questions of language, logic, and perception.

One major strand of scholarship approaches Ray's work through comparison with the English nonsense tradition, particularly the writings of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. Lear's limericks and imaginative creatures established a tradition in which playful absurdity and invented language create humorous but coherent worlds. Similarly, Carroll's work, especially Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, employs logical paradoxes, wordplay, and imaginative transformations that challenge conventional reasoning. Scholars have often situated Ray's nonsense poetry within this broader global context, noting similarities in the use of invented creatures, linguistic experimentation, and surreal scenarios. However, while these comparisons highlight the shared techniques of nonsense literature, they also reveal how Ray adapts and reshapes the form within a distinctly Bengali cultural framework. Unlike the Victorian nonsense tradition, Ray's poems frequently draw upon familiar elements of everyday life, local idioms, and social situations, allowing his absurd worlds to resonate more directly with Bengali readers.

Another important dimension of scholarship has focused on Ray's wider body of work and its contribution to the development of modern Bengali children's literature. In this context, texts such as Pagla Dashu are often examined alongside *Abol Tabol*. The stories of Dashu present a mischievous protagonist who repeatedly disrupts institutional authority and conventional expectations, particularly within the setting of the school. Critics have observed that this playful subversion parallels the disruptive logic of Ray's nonsense poetry. Both works reveal Ray's interest in questioning rigid social structures through humour and imaginative

storytelling. By presenting situations in which ordinary rules are overturned or reinterpreted, Ray encourages readers to view established systems of order with curiosity and skepticism.

Scholars have also explored the narrative experimentation present in Ray's prose work *HaJaBaRaLa*. This dreamlike narrative follows a sequence of surreal encounters in which conventional logic and linear storytelling dissolve into a fluid, unpredictable world. Critics have argued that the text exemplifies Ray's fascination with the instability of language and meaning, a theme that is equally evident in the poems of *Abol Tabol*. The shifting identities of characters, the playful distortion of language, and the unpredictable transformations of the narrative environment all contribute to a literary space where imagination overrides rational explanation. Through such works, Ray demonstrates a consistent commitment to exploring the boundaries between sense and nonsense, inviting readers to engage with language in creative and unconventional ways.

The development of Ray's imaginative literary style has also been connected to the broader cultural and intellectual environment of the Ray family. The influence of Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury, a pioneering figure in Bengali children's literature and printing technology, is often acknowledged in discussions of Sukumar Ray's work. Upendrakishore's contributions to storytelling, illustration, and publishing helped create a vibrant literary culture that encouraged experimentation and creativity. This environment not only shaped Sukumar Ray's artistic sensibilities but also contributed to the emergence of a distinctive tradition of illustrated and imaginative literature for young readers in Bengal.

Overall, the existing scholarship demonstrates that *Abol Tabol* occupies a unique position within both Bengali and global literary traditions. By combining elements of nonsense poetry, linguistic play, and cultural observation, Ray creates a body of work that transcends the boundaries of children's literature. The continuing academic interest in his writing reflects its enduring capacity to inspire new interpretations and critical perspectives.

Methods and Methodology

Through detailed examination of imagery, linguistic play, characterization, and narrative structure, the study explores how Ray's use of nonsense creates a literary space where animals, objects, and hybrid creatures act with agency. The analysis focuses on how these elements challenge anthropocentric assumptions and destabilize conventional systems of orderThis study adopts a qualitative literary approach that combines textual analysis with theoretical interpretation. The primary method used is close reading of selected poems from *Abol Tabol* by Sukumar Ray, particularly "*Khichuri*," "*Katukutu Buro*," and "*Ram Gorurer Chana*."

Research Design

The research is guided by ecocritical and posthuman theoretical perspectives, which emphasize the interconnectedness of human and non-human entities and question hierarchical distinctions between them. These frameworks help interpret Ray's nonsense not merely as humorous entertainment but as a literary strategy that highlights ecological entanglement and material vitality. In addition, the study briefly situates Ray's work within the broader tradition of nonsense literature through comparison with writers such as Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll.

This combined method is suitable because it allows the study to connect the stylistic features of Ray's poetry with its broader ecological and cultural implications, particularly within the context of colonial Bengal.

Analysis

Sukumar Ray's *Abol Tabol* creates an imaginative literary world where nonsense becomes a subtle form of ecological and cultural critique. Through absurd creatures, playful language, and illogical situations, Ray challenges the idea that humans occupy the center of

meaning and control. Instead, the poems construct a space where animals, objects, and materials possess their own vitality and agency, disrupting anthropocentric thinking and rigid systems of classification.

Similarly, "*Katukutu Buro*" introduces a strange and unsettling figure who resists explanation or control. The character operates according to his own rhythm, refusing to conform to human logic. The poem therefore presents the non-human world as unpredictable and autonomous, encouraging readers to accept difference rather than attempt to categorize it.

In "*Ramgorurer Chhana*," Ray destabilizes rational cause-and-effect relationships through absurd repetition and exaggerated reactions. A simple object such as chhana (curd) appears to influence events in unexpected ways, turning a mundane element into an active participant in the narrative. Through playful language and illogical outcomes, the poem undermines rational hierarchy and uses humour as a form of resistance to rigid reasoning.

The poem "*Tyansh Goru*" further illustrates Ray's challenge to scientific and colonial systems of classification. By presenting an impossible animal that cannot be logically categorized, Ray mocks the tendency to impose rigid structures on the natural world. Nonsense here becomes a strategy that celebrates ecological difference and imaginative freedom.

Together, these poems reveal how Ray transforms nonsense into a creative literary strategy that questions rational authority, challenges human-centered thinking, and imagines a more playful and interconnected relationship between humans and the non-human world.

When placed in a broader literary context, Ray's writings also resonate with earlier traditions of nonsense literature such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll and *A Book of Nonsense* by Edward Lear. While these works similarly employ illogical narratives and playful language, Ray's nonsense remains distinctly rooted in the cultural realities of colonial Bengal. Together, these texts reveal how nonsense literature can move beyond simple entertainment to become a medium for imaginative exploration, cultural expression, and subtle social critique.

Discussion

The imaginative world of *Abol Tabol* by Sukumar Ray can be understood through the framework of eco-absurdism, a mode in which nonsense destabilizes human-centered systems of meaning and authority. Ecocritical thought challenges the assumption that nature exists merely as a passive background for human activity. Instead, it emphasizes interconnected ecological networks where human and non-human entities interact dynamically. Ray's poems reflect this perspective by creating literary spaces where animals, objects, and materials behave with unpredictable vitality rather than obedient passivity.

An ecocritical reading of the poems reveals how Ray foregrounds non-human agency. In "Khichuri," the ordinary act of cooking turns into a lively spectacle where ingredients, sounds, and movements collide in chaotic interaction. Rice, lentils, and spices appear animated, transforming the cooking pot into a miniature ecological world. The poem celebrates mixture and unpredictability, suggesting that life flourishes through entanglement rather than strict order.

Within colonial Bengal, rational classification and scientific order were central to the ideology of modernity introduced by the British administration. Systems of taxonomy, bureaucracy, and regulation attempted to structure the world according to clear hierarchies and rational explanations. Ray's nonsense poetry undermines this logic by presenting environments where order repeatedly collapses into playful disorder. The absurdity of his creatures and situations reveals how supposedly rational systems often depend on arbitrary rules. Through

this imaginative strategy, Ray exposes the fragility of anthropocentric assumptions that place human reasoning at the center of ecological and social organization.

From a posthuman perspective, Ray's distribution of agency across animals, objects, and materials anticipates later theoretical developments in new materialism, which argue that agency is relational rather than exclusively human. In Ray's poetic universe, matter appears lively and responsive. Sounds, food, animals, and hybrid beings interact in ways that blur the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate. Such representations encourage readers to reconsider the hierarchical division between humans and the non-human world, suggesting instead a playful network of coexistence and mutual influence.

The poem "Khichuri" provides a vivid example of eco-absurdism through its transformation of a simple domestic act into a dynamic ecological spectacle. Cooking, ordinarily understood as a controlled and purposeful human activity, becomes in Ray's poem a chaotic and animated process in which ingredients appear to behave according to their own rhythms. Rice, lentils, spices, heat, and utensils seem to collide, mix, and transform in ways that resist human direction.

As Chakrabarty explains, "Though such loss of intrinsic behavior, habitat and food habit may sound nonsensical, it satirically reflects the cross-cultural discrepancy-the peculiar hybrid class of Indian Babus, created by the British, to act as a link between the colonisers and the colonised" (Chakrabarty 23). This observation situates Ray's hybrid creatures within the socio-political reality of colonial Bengal. The absurd crossbreeds in *Khichuri* porcupine-ducks, whale-elephants, lion-antelopes are not merely playful inventions but allegories of the "Babu culture," a hybrid class engineered by colonial education policies to mediate between rulers and the ruled. By exaggerating hybridity through nonsense, Ray exposes the artificiality of colonial identity-making and its attempt to domesticate Indian society into mimicry of British norms. This complements your eco-absurdist reading: just as the ingredients in *Khichuri* resist human control, the hybrid creatures resist colonial classification, turning nonsense into a critique of both ecological and cultural homogenization.

From an ecocritical standpoint, this representation foregrounds the vitality of material processes. Instead of functioning merely as passive ingredients manipulated by human hands, the elements of the dish participate actively in the unfolding scene. The cooking pot becomes a miniature ecological stage where transformation occurs through interaction rather than command. The mixture of ingredients reflects a broader ecological principle: life often emerges through complexity and entanglement rather than strict order or purity.

The poem also carries an implicit critique of colonial ideals of regulation and productivity. Colonial modernity frequently emphasized discipline, efficiency, and rational control over both labour and natural resources. By presenting a cooking process that escapes such control, Ray playfully undermines the expectation that human activity must always impose order upon nature. The joyful disorder of "Khichuri" celebrates mixture, unpredictability, and improvisation. In this sense, the poem offers a metaphor for ecological coexistence, where diversity and interaction produce vitality rather than chaos.

Another significant example of Ray's eco-absurdism appears in the poem "Katukutu Buro." The strange figure at the center of the poem embodies an unsettling yet humorous form of non-human presence. Rather than presenting the character as a clear moral symbol or narrative antagonist, Ray constructs a figure whose behavior remains ambiguous and unpredictable.

From an ecocritical perspective, the poem refuses to domesticate or rationalize the strange entity it portrays. The character moves according to rhythms that do not conform to human expectations of purpose or logic. This refusal of explanation disrupts the tendency to interpret all non-human phenomena through human categories of meaning. Instead, the poem invites readers to encounter differences without the need to classify or control it.

Posthuman theory helps illuminate this aspect of Ray's work. Scholars within this framework argue that traditional humanist thinking often reduces the non-human world to objects that serve human needs. In contrast, Ray's portrayal of "Katukutu Buro" acknowledges a form of agency that exists independently of human interpretation. The character does not function as a moral lesson or symbolic representation; rather, it simply exists within the poem's world with its own energy and presence.

The poem therefore transforms nonsense into a critical mode of ecological imagination. By presenting an unsettling figure who cannot be easily understood or controlled, Ray encourages readers, particularly children, to experience curiosity toward ecological otherness. Instead of conquering or explaining the unfamiliar, the poem suggests that coexistence with difference can be playful and imaginative.

The eco-absurdist dimension of Ray's poetry becomes particularly striking in "Ram Gorurer Chana," where a seemingly trivial object assumes unexpected significance. The poem disrupts conventional hierarchies by allowing food and animals to influence events in unpredictable ways. Rather than remaining passive objects within a human-centered narrative, the elements of the poem appear to possess their own vitality and agency.

Through repetition, illogical outcomes, and playful exaggeration, Ray undermines the expectation that cause and effect must follow rational patterns. The "chana," an ordinary edible item, becomes an active participant in shaping the poem's events. In doing so, Ray challenges the assumption that matter is inert and subordinate to human intention. The language of the poem animates the material world, allowing it to "giggle" and "riot" against the authority of rational explanation.

From the perspective of new materialist thought, such representations highlight the agency embedded within physical processes. Materials interact, transform, and generate effects that cannot always be predicted or controlled by human actors. Ray's poetic treatment of the "chana" therefore suggests that ecological systems operate through complex networks of interaction rather than simple hierarchical control.

At the same time, the humor of the poem carries a subtle critique of rationalist ideology. Colonial modernity often equated knowledge with the ability to classify and regulate material phenomena. By turning an ordinary food item into a rebellious agent of absurdity, Ray reveals how easily the illusion of rational mastery can be overturned. Laughter thus becomes a form of resistance against the seriousness of authoritative knowledge.

The poem "*Tyansh Goru*" further develops Ray's critique of classification by presenting an animal whose form defies logical categorization. The creature combines features that appear incompatible within conventional systems of biological taxonomy. Such deliberate absurdity challenges the scientific impulse to organize living beings into clear and stable categories.

Ecocritical analysis suggests that the poem exposes the limitations of rigid classification. Nature itself often produces hybrid forms, unpredictable mutations, and complex evolutionary relationships that resist simple categorization. By exaggerating this complexity through nonsense, Ray highlights the artificial nature of the categories imposed by scientific and colonial systems of knowledge.

The creature in "*Tyansh Goru*" exists beyond human purpose or explanation. It does not serve a utilitarian role within the poem; instead, its presence simply disrupts expectations. This refusal of functional meaning echoes posthuman critiques of anthropocentrism, which argue that non-human life should not be understood solely in relation to human needs.

Through the absurdity of its animal form, the poem ultimately invites readers to embrace ecological difference. Rather than demanding that nature conform to rational frameworks, Ray's nonsense encourages imaginative openness toward the unpredictable diversity of life.

The imaginative and absurd world of *Abol Tabol* can also be better understood when viewed alongside other works from the Ray literary tradition. In texts such as *Pagla Dashu*, Sukumar Ray similarly employs humour and absurdity to challenge conventional structures of authority and rationality. The character Dashu often disrupts institutional norms, particularly those associated with school discipline and social hierarchy, revealing Ray's broader interest in playful subversion. This strategy resonates with the poems of *Abol Tabol*, where seemingly nonsensical creatures and situations subtly destabilize rigid human classifications and expectations. Likewise, Ray's prose work *HaJaBaRaLa* presents a dreamlike narrative that deliberately disrupts logical coherence, creating a fluid world in which language, identity, and reality continuously shift. Such narrative experimentation parallels the linguistic play and imaginative freedom found in *Abol Tabol*, reinforcing the idea that Ray's nonsense operates not merely as humour but as a creative reimagining of perception and meaning. Furthermore, the literary environment that shaped Ray's writing can be traced back to the influence of his father, Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury, whose contributions to Bengali children's literature and publishing fostered a culture of creativity, illustration, and storytelling within the Ray family. This intergenerational literary context helps explain the richness of Ray's imaginative world, where visual artistry, playful language, and narrative experimentation converge to produce a distinctive form of nonsense that simultaneously entertains and invites deeper interpretive engagement.

Ray's eco-absurdism becomes even more distinctive when placed alongside the works of other major figures in nonsense literature, particularly Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. Both writers played significant roles in shaping the nineteenth-century tradition of literary nonsense, yet their approaches differ in important ways from Ray's ecological imagination.

As Banerjee notes, "By blending elements of Western nonsense literature with Bengali linguistic traditions, Ray created a work that is both deeply rooted in its cultural context and universally accessible" (Banerjee 13). This observation underscores the dual nature of *Abol Tabol*: while it borrows techniques from Lear and Carroll, it simultaneously transforms them through local idioms, cultural references, and the rhythms of Bengali speech. The hybridity of Ray's nonsense verse reflects both colonial entanglement and creative resistance. On one hand, it acknowledges the influence of Western literary forms; on the other, it asserts the vitality of Bengali language and imagination, reclaiming cultural space from colonial dominance. This makes *Abol Tabol* not only a playful children's text but also a bridge between traditions, situating Bengali nonsense within a global canon while preserving its distinct cultural identity.

Lear's nonsense poetry is characterized by whimsical language, unusual characters, and playful absurdity. However, the creatures in his limericks often function primarily as decorative comic figures. Their absurdity lies in their eccentric behavior rather than in a deeper challenge to anthropocentric thinking. While Lear's work delights in imaginative exaggeration, it rarely questions the hierarchy between humans and the natural world.

Carroll's nonsense operates through a different strategy, relying heavily on logical paradox and linguistic puzzles. In works such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, absurdity emerges from the distortion of formal reasoning and mathematical logic. Although animals and objects frequently speak in Carroll's fictional worlds, the narrative structure often revolves around the intellectual curiosity and reasoning processes of a human protagonist.

Ray's nonsense diverges from both traditions by decentralizing the human perspective altogether. Instead of focusing on logical puzzles or purely ornamental absurdity, his poems construct environments where non-human entities participate actively in shaping the narrative. Animals, food, sounds, and hybrid creatures behave with a vitality that destabilizes the assumption of human dominance. This ecological dimension gives Ray's nonsense a distinctive cultural and philosophical depth.

Furthermore, Ray's work is rooted in the everyday textures of Bengali life. Food, domestic spaces, and familiar social behaviors provide the background for many of his poems. According to literary critics such as Sukanta Chaudhuri and Srijato Bandhopadhyay, this cultural grounding allows Ray's nonsense to resonate simultaneously with children and adults. The poems remain playful and accessible while also offering subtle reflections on social norms and colonial authority.

Across these poems, Ray transforms nonsense into a subtle form of cultural critique. Colonial bureaucratic systems often projected an image of rational authority and administrative efficiency. Yet Ray's exaggerated authority figures and illogical rule-makers expose how such systems can appear arbitrary when examined closely. By turning seriousness into absurdity, the poems reduce the symbolic power of institutional authority.

As Chakrabarty observes, "His nonsense poetry becomes laden with anti-colonial ideas that float around in a shimmering haze beneath the garb of an apparently innocent nonsense poem" (Chakrabarty 21). This insight highlights how Ray's playful absurdity was never merely whimsical. The "innocent" surface of nonsense acted as camouflage, allowing sharp critiques of colonial authority to circulate without immediate censorship. By embedding satire within seemingly childlike rhymes, Ray could expose the arbitrariness of colonial governance while avoiding direct confrontation. This strategy aligns with your eco-absurdist reading: just as Ray animates food, animals, and objects to resist anthropocentric order, he also animates nonsense itself as a mode of resistance against colonial hierarchies. The laughter and absurdity thus become double-edged entertaining children while simultaneously fueling political consciousness among adults.

At the same time, Ray's imaginative creatures disrupt strict hierarchies between humans and the natural world. Hybrid animals, rebellious materials, and animated objects challenge the assumption that humans possess exclusive control over meaning and agency. Their playful defiance symbolically heals the fractured relationship between human society and ecological systems by dissolving the illusion of superiority.

Through humor and imaginative freedom, Ray creates a literary world where coexistence replaces domination. Nonsense becomes a tool for rethinking both cultural authority and ecological relationships. Rather than presenting nature as something to be disciplined and controlled, *Abol Tabol* celebrates a vibrant network of interactions where unpredictability and difference become sources of creative possibility.

Conclusion

This study has examined *Abol Tabol* by Sukumar Ray through the lens of eco-absurdism, demonstrating how Ray's nonsense poetry functions as more than playful linguistic experimentation. While the poems are often approached as humorous or imaginative works for children, a closer reading reveals a layered literary strategy that engages with ecological thinking, non-human agency, and the cultural context of colonial Bengal. Through absurd imagery, linguistic play, and strange hybrid creatures, Ray constructs a poetic world where the boundaries between humans, animals, and material objects become fluid and unstable. In doing so, the poems challenge anthropocentric assumptions that place human reason and control at the center of meaning.

The analysis of poems such as "Khichuri," "Katukutu Buro," "Ram Gorurer Chana," and "Tyansh Goru" illustrates how Ray repeatedly animates the non-human world. Everyday materials, food items, animals, and bizarre creatures act with their own rhythm and vitality, transforming the poetic space into a dynamic ecological network. Rather than presenting nature as a passive background for human action, Ray's nonsense allows non-human elements to participate actively in shaping events. This playful distribution of agency anticipates posthuman and new materialist perspectives that view agency as relational and shared across networks of living and non-living entities. The result is an imaginative ecology where unpredictability, mixture, and interaction replace rigid hierarchies.

At the same time, Ray's nonsense carries an important cultural dimension. Situated within the context of colonial modernity, the poems subtly undermine the ideology of rational order that accompanied colonial administration and scientific classification. Through exaggerated authority figures, illogical situations, and rebellious creatures, Ray exposes how systems of control and regulation can appear arbitrary when stripped of their seriousness. Absurdity therefore becomes a form of critique, revealing the instability of the structures that claim to organize both society and the natural world.

The comparison with global nonsense traditions further highlights the distinctive nature of Ray's literary approach. While writers such as Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll also explore absurdity through language and imagination, Ray's poetry places greater emphasis on ecological interaction and the vitality of non-human entities. His nonsense is grounded in everyday cultural experiences, food, domestic life, and familiar social environments, allowing the poems to remain accessible while also engaging with broader philosophical questions about knowledge, authority, and coexistence.

Ultimately, *Abol Tabol* demonstrates that nonsense can function as a powerful literary strategy for rethinking the relationship between humans and the wider world. Through humor, play, and imaginative freedom, Ray creates a poetic universe where ecological entanglement replaces rigid classification and where the non-human world resists domination by human logic. By allowing animals, materials, and hybrid beings to assert their presence within the poetic landscape, Ray invites readers to embrace difference, unpredictability, and coexistence. In this way, his nonsense poetry offers not only entertainment but also a subtle and enduring critique of anthropocentric thinking and colonial rationality, suggesting that imagination itself can open new possibilities for understanding ecological relationships.

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Ecofeminism and Gender

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Abstract:

Ecofeminism fuses ecology and feminism into one and seeks to draw parallels between the exploitation of the environment and the exploitation of women. It believes that the earth is interconnected, and nature does not recognize human boundaries. It holds that one of the reasons for the destruction of the Earth is that patriarchy only values the masculine traits of conquering and dominance and devalues the 'feminine' traits of life-giving and nurturing. The patriarchal culture has been habitual to see women and nature as 'objects'.

Keywords— Environment, Ecology, Exploitation, Feminism. Nature.

Introduction:

Ecofeminists believe that male-dominated culture thrives on sexism, racism, class-exploitation, and environmental destruction. Exploitation of women and nature is severely protested by the ecofeminists world over. Ecofeminism calls upon women and men to reconceptualise world, in non-hierarchical ways. In this, the feminist movement and the environmental movement are seen to work together, on the assumption that they both stand for egalitarian, non-hierarchical systems. Indeed the liberation of women and of nature is seen as intimately linked. In practice, there is enormous evidence historically of women's subordinate position. These inequalities relate in particular to three aspects: 1) the gender division of labour; 2) property rights, especially in land; 3) juridical authority and access to public decisionmaking forums. In Indian context, all three types of inequalities continues in the present period and critically influences where women are placed in relation to institutions for environmental change today. These three elements of gender inequality not only underline in substantial degree the noted negative gender effects of environmental degradation, they underlie the little attention being given to women's concerns even in the emergent village institutions for environmental protection. The gender division of labour underlies the increase in women's time and energy in fuel and fodder collection. Women's lack of ownership in private land critically increases their dependence on common property resources.

Methodology: Ecofeminism & Gender

1. Research Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in ecofeminist theory. The focus is on understanding the intersection of gender and environmental issues through lived experiences, narratives, and cultural analysis. Ecofeminism guides the interpretation of social and ecological phenomena as interconnected, highlighting how patriarchal structures impact both women and the natural environment.

2. Research Design

Exploratory and Interpretive: The study explores the relationship between gender and ecological issues, emphasizing interpretation over quantification.

Case Study Selection: Communities, organizations, or initiatives led by women or gender-diverse individuals addressing environmental challenges are selected to illustrate ecofeminist principles in practice.

Intersectional Lens: Attention is given to how class, race, caste, and socioeconomic status influence women's environmental experiences and activism.

Data Collection Methods

1. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with women environmental activists, community leaders, and ecofeminist scholars. Questions focus on personal experiences, motivations, and the impact of gender on environmental engagement.
2. Participant Observation: Observing sustainable projects, eco-initiatives, and community-led environmental campaigns to understand how gender dynamics manifest in practice.
3. Document Analysis: Reviewing policy documents, NGO reports, media coverage, and historical texts that address women's roles in environmental movements.

The Concept of Ecofeminism:

The Oxford Dictionary has defined the word Ecofeminism, " a philosophical and political theory and movement which combines ecological concerns with feminist ones, regarding both as resulting from male domination of society". There is a quandary regarding the origin of the word "ecofeminism" . Some scholars consider Francois d"Eaubonne, a French feminist and author of Le Feminismeou la Mort (Feminism or Death), published in 1974 and translated into English in 1989, the originator. Others acknowledge Susan Griffin"s Women and Nature or Mary Daly"sGyn/Ecology: The MetaEthics of Radical Feminism, both published in 1978, as laying significant groundwork for ecofeminism, even though neither woman used the term in those works.1 . It is said that prior to the seventeenth century, nature was conceived on an organic model as a benevolent female and a nurturing mother; after the scientific revolution, nature was conceived on a mechanistic model as (mere) machine, inert, dead. On both models, nature was female. It has been said that the move from the organic to the mechanistic model permitted the justified exploitation of the (female) earth, by removing the sorts of barriers to such treatment that the metaphor of nature as alive previously prevented; the mechanistic worldview of modern science sanctioned the exploitation of nature, unrestrained commercial expansion, and socioeconomic conditions that perpetuated the subordination of women2 . Ecofeminism represents the union of the radical ecology movement, or what has been called 'deep ecology', and feminism. Feminism is a complex movement with many layers. It can be defined only as a movement within the liberal democratic societies for the full inclusion of women in political rights and economic access to employment. It can be defined more radically in a socialist and liberation tradition as a transformation of the patriarchal socio-economic system, in which male domination of women is the foundation of all socio-economic hierarchies. Feminism can also be studied in terms of culture and consciousness, charting the symbolic, psychological and ethical connections of domination of women and male monopolization of resources and controlling power. This third aspect of feminist analysis connects closely with deep ecology.

Women nature connection:

There are manifold connections of women to that with nature. These alleged connections provide sometimes competing, sometimes mutually complementary or supportive analyses of the nature of the twin dominations of women and nature. One alleged connection between women and nature is historical. When historical data are used to generate theories concerning the sources of the dominations of women and nature, it is also causal. So pervasive is the historical-causal theme in ecofeminist writing that Ariel Salleh practically defines ecofeminism in terms of it: "Eco-feminism is a recent development in feminist thought which argues that the current global environmental crisis is a predictable outcome of patriarchal culture"3 . Many authors have argued that, ultimately, historical and causal links between the dominations of women and nature are sited in conceptual structures of domination that construct women and nature in male-biased ways. The twin dominations of women and nature is the outcome of the oppressive and patriarchal conceptual frameworks. Another explanation

locates a conceptual basis in sex-gender differences, particularly in differentiated personality formation or consciousness. The claim is that female bodily experiences (e.g., of reproduction and childbearing), not female biology per se, situate women differently with respect to nature than men. These socio psychological factors provide a conceptual link insofar as they are embedded in different conceptualized structures and strategies i.e., different ways of knowing, coping strategies and ways of relating to nature for women and men. A goal of ecofeminism then, is to develop gender-sensitive language, theory, and practices that do not further the exploitative experiences and habits of dissociated, male-gender identified culture toward women and nature. One chore of ecofeminism is to expose and dismantle the conceptual structures of domination which have kept various "isms of domination," particularly the dominations of women and nature, in place. If ecofeminists who allege various conceptual woman-nature connections are correct, this will involve reconceiving those mainstay philosophical notions which rely on them e.g., notions of reason and rationality, knowledge, objectivity, ethics, and the knowing, moral self. Many ecofeminists have focused on uncovering empirical evidence linking women with environmental destruction. Various health and risk factors borne disproportionately by women, children and the poor caused by the presence of low-level radiation, pesticides, toxics, and other pollutants. Some connect rape and pornography with male-gender identified abuse of both women and nature. Appeal to such empirical data is intended both to document the very real, felt, lived "experiential" connections between the dominations of women and nature and to motivate the need for joining together feminist critical analysis and environmental concerns. However, sometimes the empirical and experiential connections between women and nature are intended to reveal important cultural and spiritual ties to the earth honored and celebrated by (some) women and indigenous people. This imply that some woman-nature connections are features of important symbol systems. Some ecofeminists have explored the symbolic association and devaluation of women and nature that appears in religion, theology, art, and literature. Documenting such connections and making them integral to the project of ecofeminism is often heralded as ecofeminism's most promising contribution to the creation of liberating, life-afffirming, and postpatriarchal worldviews and earth-based spiritualities or theologies. Some ecofeminist theorists draw on literature, particularly "nature writing," to unpack the nature of the woman-nature linguistic symbolic connections4 . Literary criticism of the sort offered by Patrick Murphy claims that patriarchal conceptions of nature and women have justified "a two-pronged rape and domination of the earth and the women who live on it", often using this as background for developing an ecofeminist literary theory.5 Some theorists focus on language, particularly the symbolic connections between sexist and naturist language, i.e., language that inferiorizes women and nonhuman nature by naturalizing women and feminizing nature. For example, there are concerns about whether sex-gendered language used to describe "Mother Nature" is, in Ynestra King's words, "potentially liberating or simply a rationale for the continued subordination of women"6 (Y. King 1981). Women are often described in animal terms (e.g., as cows, foxes, chicks, serpents, bitches, beavers, old bats, pussycats, cats, bird-brains, hare-brains). Nature is often described in female and sexual terms: nature is raped, mastered, conquered, controlled, mined. Her "secrets" are "penetrated" and her "womb" is put into the services of the "man of science." "Virgin timber" is felled, cut down. "Fertile soil" is tilled and land that lies "fallow" is "barren," useless. The claim is that language that so feminizes nature and naturalizes women describes, reflects, and perpetuates the domination and inferiorization of both by failing to see the extent to which the twin dominations of women and nature (including animals) are, in fact, culturally (and not merely figuratively) analogous. The development of theory and practice in feminism and environmental philosophy that does not perpetuate such sexistnaturist language and the power over systems of domination they underpin is, therefore, a goal of eco feminism. Women have vital role in conservation and management of sustainable eco-system. Since time immemorial women are traditionally

involved in protecting and conserving their natural resources. If we talk of natural resource management from a global perspective, whom do we find in the forefront of the race for protection and preservation of the resources. The answer comes very naturally, it is the women. Women particularly those living in rural areas or mountain areas have special relationship with the environment. They are more close to the nature than men and this very close relationship makes them perfect managers of an eco-system. The life of mountain women is so much inter wined with the environment that whole ecosystem revolves around her and she can‟t even think of her survival without it. For her forest is her mother‟s home as she is entirely dependent on the forest to meet her daily needs such as - water, fodder, fuels, minor forest produce etc. With their extraordinary skills and traditional knowledge women have proved how land, water, forest and other natural resources can be used and managed. They have their own devised system and ways to sustain and manage the resources which are the basis of survival for their families and communities. Women are also critical in agriculture and food security efforts, if women had equal access to resources, such as land, training, technology, and credit, food production would increase. This extensive and intimate relationship with the land means that women, often exclusively, have extensive knowledge of traditional remedies and plants, indigenous farming practices and local methods of crop cultivation. Agriculture development policies and programmes should be inclusive of women to meet local needs. Investing in women‟s education furthers economic goals and improves the health and wellbeing of future generations. Educated women tend to marry later and have fewer children. Their own children, in turn, tend to have lower infant mortality rates, higher school enrollment, and suffer less from malnutrition. Specific goals to promote gender equality must be set, doing so will benefit women‟s families, communities and nations today, and the environment and global economies tomorrow. 5 Recognizing the important role women play as environmental stewards, food producers, business owners, health care providers, and mothers is the key to creating a prosperous and sustainable future for everyone7 . The World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), and the 2005 World Summit all acknowledged the pivotal and important role women play in sustainable development. However, democratic governments and institutions have yet to draft a policy that addresses the relation between the economy, the environment and their impact on society – and especially on women.

As the UN Secretary- general Report:

"The challenge of climate change is unlikely to be gender-neutral, as it increases the risk to the most vulnerable and less empowered social groups. In the formulation of global and national approaches, as well as in the strategic responses to specific sectors, gender awareness, substantive analysis and inclusive engagement will be necessary."9 Poverty is recognized as multi-dimensional with a complex interactive relationship between its various dimensions. Studies have shown that women experience greater poverty, have heavier time burdens, lower rates of utilization of productive resources and lower literacy rates. Gender disparities exist with respect to access to, and control of, a range of assets including direct and productive assets such as land and credit lines, human capital assets including education and health, and social capital assets such as participation at various levels, legal rights and protection. Lack of start-up capital and resources for any kind of income generation enterprise and lack of labour in smaller households prevent women from escaping poverty.Through their management and use of natural resources, women provide sustenance to their families and communities. As consumers and producers, caretakers of their families and educators, women play an important role in promoting sustainable development through their concern for the quality and sustainability of life for present and future generations. Women remain largely absent at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making in natural resource and environmental management, conservation, protection and rehabilitation, and their experience and skills in advocacy for and monitoring of proper natural resource management too often remain

marginalized in policy-making and decision-making bodies, as well as in educational institutions and environment-related agencies at the managerial level. Environmental governance refers to the rules, processes and behavior that affect the way power is exercised at all levels in the field of environmental policy. It also includes other areas that have an impact on the environment, and concepts such as openness in participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. Women are rarely trained as professional natural resource managers with policy-making capacities, such as land-use planners, agriculturalists, foresters, marine scientists and environmental lawyers. Even in cases where women are trained as professional natural resource managers, they are 6 often underrepresented in formal institutions with policy-making capacities at the national, regional and international levels.10 Often women are not equal participants in the management of financial and corporate institutions whose decision-making most significantly affects environmental quality. Furthermore, there are institutional weaknesses in coordination between women's non-governmental organizations and national institutions dealing with environmental issues, despite the recent rapid growth and visibility of women's non-governmental organizations working on these issues at all levels.

Thought of Ecofeminism and Gender:

The world of nature, plants and animals existed billions of years before we came on the scene. Nature does not need us to rule over it, but runs itself very well and better without humans. We are the parasites on the food chain of life, consuming more and more, and putting too little back to restore and maintain the life system that supports us. We need to recognize our utter dependence on the great life-producing matrix of the planet in order to learn to reintegrate our human systems of production, consumption and waste into the ecological patterns by which nature sustains life. This might begin by revisualizing the relation of mind or human intelligence to nature. As women have vital role in conservation and management of sustainable eco-system, since time immemorial women are traditionally involved in protecting and conserving their natural resources. With their extraordinary skills and traditional knowledge women have proved how land, water, forest and other natural resources can be used and managed. Historically and practically, man dominates woman. The needs and roles of man and woman in environmental governance are distinguishable. Women have unique value as well as role in environmental governance. In spite of the special demands, unique value and vital role women have in environmental governance, disempowerment of women in other social domain is duplicated into environmental governance, faced with expanded masculinization of contemporary environmental governance, it‟s time for us to realize that women is forced to be „absent‟ from the aforsaid, they are considered as outside forces. Women are confronted with more obstruction when using the deliberative pipelines due to their disadvantages in the society.

Conclusion:

Ecofeminism says that women are closer to nature than men are. This closeness, therefore , make women more caring and nurturing towards their environment, some indicate the biology of women as the reason behind the closeness, while others credit culture and historical factors. The social activist umbrella term of “Ecofeminism” takes the energy from the feminist movements of the 1960’s and 70’s and channels it into the study and deconstruction of the means and methods used to subjugate the human and non-human members that fall under the power and influence of the patriarchy and then acting to create a change. Vandana Shiva makes it clear that one of the missions of ecofeminism is to redefine how societies look at productivity and activity of both women and nature. Ecofeminists actions address the contradiction between production and reproduction. Women attempt to reverse the assaults of production on both biological and social reproduction by making problems visible and proposing solutions. Women challenge the ways in which mainstream society reproduces itself through socialization and politics International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 5(4) Jul-Aug 2020 |Available online: https://ijels.com/ ISSN: 2456-7620

https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.54.2 848 by envisioning and enacting alternative gender roles, employment options and political practices.

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Eco-Grief, Eco-Anxiety, Solastalgia and Perils of Plastic Waste explored in the poems of Margaret Atwood.

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Abstract

The discipline of ecocriticism has undergone a profound metamorphosis, evolving from a framework primarily concerned with pastoral aesthetics and wilderness preservation into an urgent, transdisciplinary inquiry into planetary survival. In the wake of the International Union of Geological Sciences' (IUGS) 2024 decision to conceptualize the Anthropocene not as a static geological epoch but as a temporally transgressive "event," literary scholarship must find a profound role in this and navigate its approach to environmental narratives. This research proposal outlines a comprehensive investigation into the emergent vectors of contemporary ecocriticism, specifically scrutinizing how twenty-first-century literature from across the globe should radically endorse the crucial, non-negotiable urgency of protecting the environment. The proposed research examines the inextricable entanglement of environmental degradation with acute physical and mental health crises, positing that contemporary fiction and poetry should function as both diagnostic instruments and pedagogical tools. The inquiry focuses on four intersecting ecological catastrophes: (i) the psychological burden of psychoterratic syndromes (including eco-grief, eco-anxiety and solastalgia, (ii) the insidious impact of the invasion of microplastics in human bodies and how to cater for the complex skin gut brain biome system, (iii) the suffocating trauma of declining air quality and respiratory illness and (iv) the physiological exhaustion precipitated by rising global temperatures and heatwaves. By analyzing an expansive corpus of literature—ranging from South Asian climate fiction and Bengali eco-poetry to speculative dystopias, this research demonstrates how literary texts map the somatic and affective toll of environmental collapse. Furthermore, this project transitions from the diagnosis of catastrophe to the synthesis of solutions. It investigates how the environmental humanities propose innovative, long-term strategies to combat climate change, advocating for systemic societal elevation toward sustainable lifestyles through speculative imagination, relational epistemologies, and transdisciplinary educational practices. It is time we raise our deafening voice, no matter how slow the violence is.

Key Words: Anthropocene Event Theory, Psychoterratic Syndromes, Environmental Humanities, Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi), Eco-Anxiety and Somatic Ecology

Introduction:

The concept of “Ecocriticism” has been around for quite some time, emerging in the late 1970s with the publication of “What is ecocriticism?” by Micheal P. Branch, where he traces the word ‘ecocriticism’ back to William Rueckert’s 1978 essay “Literature and ecology: an experiment in ecocriticism. In our contemporary world, where the perils of man-made persisting climate crises exist, it is crucial that we, collectively shift away from our Anthropocene interests momentarily to ponder the gravity of various aspects which pose grave threats. It is not the time to overly intellectualise and analyse the intensity of our sufferings but to manage to find as many solutions as we can. It’s true, that for a country with a history of prolonged colonial oppression and exploitation, with a recovering economy, responsible for a population exceeding 1.47 billion, where the majority are merely struggling to survive, the climate crisis becomes the least of our concern. But, no matter how blind are we, how strongly we evade our duties towards the environment, the threats only become more transparent. This research paper intends to explore a few “new terrains of ecocriticism” by posing a few fundamental questions and hopes to find some effective solutions to climate crisis by answering

them. To begin with, Rob Nixon's concept of "Slow Violence" which validates the absolute apathy towards the cause of the environment and Aldo Leopold's concept of "Ecological grief" along with Eco-anxiety which broadens the area of impacts. As a solution, this research paper will critically examine the contemporary global literature, how it conceptualises, contextualises and represents the ecological crisis of the 21st century by decoding the complex narrative strategies employed by authors 2 to translate abstract climatological data into visceral human experience, thereby bridging the gap between scientific imperative and cultural understanding.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
1.How do contemporary literary texts effectively vocalise the nuanced psychological phenomena of Eco-Grief, Solastalgia, and Eco-Anxiety, and how do these psychoterratic syndromes vary across different geographic and socio-political contexts? 2. How do modern eco-poetics and speculative fiction represent the material reality of the "Plasticene" specifically regarding the invasion of microplastics into the human body and the broader environment and the necessity to balance "The Gut-Skin-Brain Axis." 3. How do South Asian and Global fictions utilize the concept of "Slow Violence" to depict the physical health traumas associated with declining air quality, atmospheric pollution, and respiratory disease? 4. How does the environmental humanities framework propose innovative, long-term strategies for sustainable living, and how can literary pedagogy be utilized to elevate society toward these transformative resilience models? The psychoerratic syndromes are classified as the emergence of a new taxonomy of mental health crisis which have been catalysed by the psychological reverberations of planetary degradation. With the constant collapse of our eco-system, we are resorting to poetry to address these complex affective states which transcends the clinical definitions to explore the lived experiences of ecological loss.

Though often used interchangeably in public discourse, terms such as eco-anxiety, ecological grief and solastalgia possess distinct phenomenological features. Solastalgia, a concept coined in 2003, 3 represents the lack of solace and feelings of pain or sickness caused the degradation of one's own home environment; it is a lived experience of ongoing change associated with depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Ecological grief, in terms, is by definition refers to the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the extinction of species and destruction of meaningful landscapes. Eco-Anxiety is inherently future oriented, characterised by angst, fear of uncertainty and the risk of unpredictability. Since many of us strongly anticipates environmental collapse, there is hope that it can be manifested as "practical anxiety" thereby motivating us in proactive behaviour leading us to fight for the ecological upliftment. The global annual production of plastic surged 200-fold between 1950 and 2023, resulting in billions of tons of waste that continually break down into micro and nano plastics (MNPs). This crisis is exacerbated by rising global temperatures; a warming climate accelerates the fragmentation of microplastics, increases their mobility, and heightens their toxicity. Microplastics maintain a destructive, bidirectional relationship with climate change: their degradation releases significant greenhouse gases, while climate-induced extreme weather events facilitate their global dispersion. The infiltration of MNPs into the human body represents a major emerging threat to physical health. Humans inhale and ingest these particles continuously through indoor air pollution, contaminated food chains, and drinking water.

These multifaceted stressors carry toxic chemical additives, including endocrine disruptors, which have been linked to severe physical health issues such as cardiovascular disease, reproductive pathologies, and the direct infiltration of brain tissue. Ecocritical literature confronts the Plasticene by making the invisible visible. The research will examine Margaret Atwood's poetry collection Dearly, specifically the "Plasticene Suite," which includes poems

such as "Whales," "Foliage," and "Midway Island Albatross." Through an ecopoetic lens, Atwood's work raises profound awareness about society's pathological dependence on plastics, urging readers to reconsider sustainable practices by highlighting plastic waste as the distinctive anthropogenic marker of our age. Also, the work of Chamorro eco-poet Craig Santos Perez, whose 4 poem "The Age of Plastic" catalogues how synthetic materials are intimately embedded in human reproduction, medical care, and daily life.

Perez wryly contrasts the indestructible nature of plastic against the vulnerable, delicate bodies of a mother and newborn, referencing the Ziploc bag holding the placenta and the plastic nipple feeding the infant, highlighting the material's status as both an enabler of modern life and a harbinger of ecological death. Literature possesses a unique multiplier effect, disseminating ideas and fostering empathy far more effectively than abstract scientific reports. Speculative fiction and cli-fi are increasingly recognised not just for the dystopian warnings but for advocating possible "Climactic solutions." By leaning into the narrative uncertainty inherent in ecological crises, literature prompts readers to embrace, rather than reject, the unpredictable nature of the future, thereby cultivating resilience and a willingness to adapt to new environmental realities. "The Paleocene the Eocene the Miocene the Pleistocene and now we're here: the Plasticene." The renowned Canadian contemporary author Margaret Atwood is credited for the excerpt above, whose collection of poetry "Dearly" successfully manages not only to vocalise but also to globalise the pressing issue of climate crisis and the endangered oceanic life. Her "Plasticene Suite" poems disrobe the brutal reality and force the readers to contrmplate the gruesome effects of neglecting the environmental health. In 'Rock-like Object on Beach', she portrays the invasiveness of human inventions in natural world. Inventions that disrupt the environmental balance and would be the probable cause of the annihilation or our existence. You could turn it into oil by cooking it: this has been done. 5 First you'd have to collect it. Also there would be a smell. Some supermarkets have banned it. Also drinking straws. Maybe there will be a tax or other laws. There are microbes that eat itthey've been discovered. But the temperature has to be high: No good in the north sea.

In "Faint Hopes", Atwood presents one of the major threats of the 21st century which is the excessive plastic waste. It's invasive and creates hazards no matter wherever it ends up be that is soil or waterbodies. It's indestructible. You can scoop it out of rivers before it gets to the sea. But then what? What do you do with it? 6 With the overwhelming ongoing Never-ending outpouring? In the concluding stanza, Atwood shares her frustration due to the lack of manageable ways to dispose of plastics for good. We simply cannot get rid of it. No matter how hard we try. In "Foliage" and "Sorcerer's Apprentice" the same theme gets addressed. It echoes the persistent question: What to do with plastic waste? "Foliage" begins with a grave prediction by Mark Cocker: "a scrap of black plastic- the defining foliage of the oil age." Another remarkable poem is the "Whales" where the grief of a mother whale is addressed upon losing her child to the toxic plastic. It presents how our methods of convenience are declaring death to the non-humans who have absolutely every right to peacefully exist alongside us. The Anthropocene ideals have made us blind and insensitive.

The poet poses an invaluable question as she writes: What happened before? How did we ever survive With only paper and glass and tin and hemp and leather and oilskin? This question leads to valid arguments. It is indeed true that we once did survive without the usage of plastics but since it has become a convenience, it has become indispensable. It is crucial we reconsider our needs and make journey towards a sustainable living goal. 7 Dr. Heidi Hunter is the director of the Sustainability Studies Program at Stony Brook University. On her talk on "Eco-Grief and Ecofeminism", she shares her family history of cancer and her own journey of chemotherapy. She reveals how the chemo process risked her pregnancy by declining the chances of conceiving by fifty percent. She shares her experience of reading Rachel Carson's D.D.T where the author connects the synthetic chemical to be the cause of cancer along with some other renowned works. But what is memorable is her experiencing the 'Eco-Grief' upon

reading ‘A Civil Action’ by Jonathan Harr during her pregnancy. She shares a new mother’s anxiety and frustration upon absolutely failing to protect her newborn from the existing harmful chemicals which the scientists confirmed that had made their way to the placenta. Babies are already being born with hundreds of chemicals in their bodies. According to Hunter, since the 1950s, with the surging usage of chemicals and the ever-increasing pollution, the rate of cancer among children have spiked. In speculative fiction, novels such as Alison Stine's Trashlands envisions a dystopian future where plastic pollution dominates the landscape of "Scrappalachia."

In this narrative, plastic serves as the only remaining currency in a world decimated by extreme floods, reflecting the ultimate commodification of toxic waste. Non-fiction narratives, such as Matt Simon's A Poison Like No Other, will be utilized to contextualize these fictional accounts, tracking the scientific discovery of microplastics across the globe and exposing their insidious presence in the human bloodstream. The poetry of Billsborough underscores the compound tragedy of the marine microplastic crisis, depicting the ocean's "arteries" clogged with non-essential products and warning of the ultimate consequence: the poisoning of human brains and the disruption of planetary equilibrium. These toxic fictions highlight the uneven distribution of environmental harm, framing microplastic pollution not merely as an ecological disaster, but as a systemic failure of global capitalism and environmental justice. 8 While microplastics represent an invisible, pervasive threat, the catastrophic decline in air quality particularly in the Global South manifests as a highly visible, suffocating crisis. The intersection of ecocriticism and public health in South Asian literature provides a harrowing examination of atmospheric degradation and its profound impact on physical well-being. This section will investigate how contemporary literature portrays the physiological burden of air pollution and the resulting respiratory traumas. Air pollution is the leading environmental risk factor for poor health in South Asia, accounting for an estimated 2.6 million deaths in 2021 alone.

Populations in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan face a drastic reduction in life expectancy, averaging a loss of five years, due to chronic exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5). The physical health impacts are catastrophic, manifesting as severe respiratory illnesses, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and lowered immune system responses that leave populations highly vulnerable to airborne pathogens. Between 1990 and 2020, South Asia witnessed a massive surge in greenhouse gas emissions, methane, and nitrous oxide, driven by rapid urbanization, industrialization, and inadequate regulatory frameworks. In Kolkata, despite various legislative attempts such as vehicle engine and fuel regulations ordered by the Calcutta High Court, Kolkata continues to suffer from critically high levels of Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) and nitrogen dioxide, heavily influenced by unregulated traffic volumes, changing land-use functions, and seasonal winter inversions. South Asian literature effectively captures the lived reality of this atmospheric suffocation, utilizing the narrative framework of slow violence. The contemporary Indian English novels such as Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke, Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, and Shubhangi Swarup's Latitudes of Longing evaluate and critique the socio-political machinations driving environmental degradation. In Moth Smoke, the suffocating urban environment directly reflects the decline in the 9 quality of life and the stark economic inequalities of the region, demonstrating that the environment is an active participant in political and social struggles. Indra Sinha's Animal's People is a powerful indictment of industrial pollution and Western models of neoliberal progress.

The novel details the severe physical deformities and respiratory traumas inflicted upon the subaltern population in the aftermath of a chemical disaster, highlighting indigenous environmental perspectives as vital alternatives for sustainable human-nature relationships. Anita Desai's Fire on the Mountain shows how the slow desiccation and eventual inferno of the Kasauli hills symbolise the moral and environmental deterioration driven by unregulated industrialization, paralleling the psychological exhaustion of its protagonist, Nanda Kaul.

Furthermore, the regional Bengali literature, such as Jhareshwar Chattopadhyay's 1989 story "Chimney," details the localised resistance against the "Sundarban Phosphate and Chemicals" industry. The narrative illustrates how acidic runoff and atmospheric pollutants destroy local flora, specifically the Garan and Bain trees, and decimate the aquatic ecosystems relied upon by the marginalized populace. These narratives prove that literature is an active participant in environmental justice, giving voice to the silenced ecology and demanding a re-evaluation of the anthropocentric development paradigms that poison the very air humanity breathes.

While ecocriticism excels at diagnosing the multifaceted physical and mental traumas of the climate crisis, its ultimate utility lies in its capacity to construct pathways toward sustainable futures. The environmental humanities provide crucial frameworks for imagining, initiating, and sustaining the massive behavioural and structural transitions required to survive the Anthropocene. Research indicates that sustainable lifestyle changes could slash global emissions by up to 70% by 2050. A critical component of this transition involves narratives that advocate for a gradual shift to plant-based diets, the global phaseout of industrialized animal farming, and the implementation of standardized Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) measures, an "All Life" approach that 10 recognizes the interconnectedness of all planetary species. Literature visualizes the translation of comprehensive sustainable lifestyle scenarios, such as the SLIM (Sustainable Living in Models) scenarios, into tangible narratives of reduced residential and transport emissions.

Beyond individual behaviour, the transition to sustainability demands complex technological and policy interventions. The environmental humanities contextualize the application of advanced technologies, investigating the socio-cultural implications of using continuous genetic algorithms to optimize smart grids and microgrids, thereby aiming to elevate renewable energy to 82.4% of global consumption by 2025 under environmental constraints. Furthermore, humanities scholars advocate for aggressive systemic actions, providing the ethical and historical frameworks required to push for policy changes like unitary carbon taxation, the cessation of fossil fuel subsidies, and the unprecedented legal prosecution of corporate entities for "climate homicide," referencing historical litigations against the tobacco and asbestos industries. By engaging with diverse relational epistemologies, including Indigenous-kinship, systemic-analytical, the humanities challenge modernist-colonialist paradigms, advocating for transformative adaptation that views human-nature connectedness as fundamental to survival.

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Charting Empire at Sea: Maritime Histories and Colonial Capitalism in Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis Trilogy*

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Abstract

The *Ibis Trilogy* of the Indian Ocean, *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011) and *Flood of Fire* (2015) by Amitav Ghosh reinvents the Indian Ocean in the nineteenth century as a place of dynamism shaped by colonial capitalism, sea trade and imperial violence. The paper explores how Ghosh restores the Indian Ocean as an imperial entanglement by pre-empting maritime capitalism, opium trade and the indenture system. The ship, specifically, the Ibis, plays a central role in exploration, serving as a kind of microcosm of the empire, recreating colonial stratifications and, at the same time, allowing resistance, solidarity, and cultural hybridity. Ghosh questions Eurocentric historiography by focusing on subaltern views and moving across oceans and reclaiming the suppressed histories of labour, migration, and resistance in the process of world capitalism.

Keywords: Indian Ocean, maritime capitalism, opium trade, indenture, colonialism, oceanic literature

Introduction

The Indian Ocean has been a critical site of commercial exchange, cultural interaction, and transregional movement in contrast to land-based histories of empire, which emphasise territorial conquest. There are oceanic histories of the way the empires were being supported by the use of the sea, ships and other means. During the nineteenth century, the British imperial expansion turned the Indian Ocean into the pathway of colonial capitalism, primarily, the opium trade and the indenture system. *The Ibis Trilogy* by Amitav Ghosh is a great fiction reconstruction of this era and portrays the sea as a locale where trade, violence and the loss of people collide.

This article asserts that Ghosh reinvents the Indian Ocean as a place of imperial entrapment, instead of a passive subject to the imperial. Ghosh reveals the ways in which maritime capitalism organised colonial modernity through a transoceanic story which connects rural India, colonial Calcutta, Mauritius and Canton. The trilogy uncovers the violence of imperial regimes, as well as the process of resistance, hybridity, and subaltern agency, on the sea by centring on the ship as a floating microcosm of the empire.

The Indian Ocean and Imperial Entanglement

The Indian Ocean in the *Ibis Trilogy* is a space of high historical density, shaped by intersecting economic, political, and cultural forces. Ghosh's story aligns with the historiography of the Indian Ocean, which stresses interconnectedness over isolation, as regions that were once distant came to be linked by trade routes and imperial policy. The opium planting in the Gangetic plains, export through the ocean, and its use in China exemplify how the local agrarian economies were subjected to the global capitalist requirements.

Ghosh unravels the histories of nations and introduces the idea of empire as a transoceanic phenomenon. The suffering of Indian peasants, Chinese addicts, and indentured labourers is depicted as structurally related to each other, which reveals to the reader the Indian Ocean as a common location of colonial exploitation.

Maritime Capitalism and the Opium Trade

The opium trade plays a pivotal role in the argument by Ghosh concerning colonial capitalism. The language of free markets and liberal economic practises is used by British and American traders in Canton in *River of Smoke* to justify the trade to their own benefit, though the practise is destroying the Chinese society. Ghosh reveals the hypocrisy of imperial liberalism and shows that free trade was imposed on the population through military and legal coercion.

Opium clipper ships represent the efficiency and cruelty of sea capitalism. Their velocity, their technological advancement, reflects the capitalist urge to make a profit, and their cargo is what Karl Marx refers to as accumulation through dispossession. The human cost of such a system is foregrounded in Gosh's narrative as the focus shifts away from the imperial elites, towards those whose labour and mediation underlie the global trade but have never been historically central.

Indenture, Displacement, and Oceanic Migration

With the abolition of slavery, indentured labour was the key to the British Empire to sustain the plantation economies in the Indian Ocean world. The Ibis, which was formerly a slave ship, then an indentured ship, is a powerful representation of the flow between slavery and indenture. Ghosh highlights the way colonial capitalism changed instead of destroying exploitative systems of labour.

For characters like Deeti and Kalua, where indenture is a form of coercion and opportunity. Although admittedly, the system is oppressive, the kala pani migration also upsets strict caste hierarchies and allows new identities. Ghosh does not accept a dichotomy between victimhood and agency, and his description of indenture reflects the complicated negotiations of survival by subaltern subjects.

The Ship as a Microcosm of Empire and Resistance

The ship is in a symbolic central position in the trilogy. It is, like the setting of the empire, a limited, mobile area with a high level of discipline and racial hierarchy. Segregation, surveillance and violence are used to perpetuate colonial power relations that turn the sea into a continuation of imperial power by the Ibis.

However, the ship turns out to be a place of resistance and change, too. On the Ibis, people with different languages, cultures, and social backgrounds create their new solidarities. It leads to the formation of unexpected alliances that disrupt colonial and caste hierarchies by destroying the land-based social structures. In that regard, the ship is a heterotopic space, at once imposing imperial order and allowing it to be challenged.

Language, Hybridity, and Maritime Cosmopolitanism

The hybrid language that Ghosh employs in an innovative way indicates the cosmopolitan existence of life on the sea. The language that coexists in the narrative is Laskari, Bhojpuri, Bengali, Cantonese, and English, which do not give way to language imperialism. This polyglot texture depicts the real-life experience of sailors, traders and labourers who had to work in a variety of cultural worlds.

The lascars, especially, are a representation of a fluid sea identity that disorients the ultimate concept of race and nationality. In them, Ghosh introduces the Indian Ocean as a field of intercultural mixing and collective labour and extends to the Asian and African maritime histories the current studies of the Atlantic oceanic.

Counter-History and Subaltern Memory

The Ibis Trilogy is a counter-history to official imperial histories, placing peasants, women, sailors, and indentured labourers in the centre. Ghosh retrieves the voices that were destroyed in the archives of colonialism and turns fiction into a sort of reclaiming of history. In the trilogy, resistance can be unfolded through smaller gestures, such as care for one another, storytelling and co-survival rather than open defiance.These ordinary resistances are in opposition to mainstream historical accounts that place imperial authority in the forefront and highlight the persistence and flexibility of subaltern communities in the system of oppression instead.

Blue Humanities and the Logic of Slow Violence

Recent critical interventions of the Blue Humanities focus on the ocean as both a metaphor and a scene, but also as a historical agent that influences human relations, labour relations, and ecological change. *The Ibis Trilogy* conforms well with this point of view by depicting the Indian Ocean as a material space through which colonial capitalism functions. The story of Ghosh cannot be placed within land history; it places the empire in the context of the oceans, how oceans can be viewed as archives of exploitation, movement and opposition.

With the prism of Blue Humanities, the Indian Ocean is seen as a conduit through which commodities like opium and sugar circulated at the same time, taking in the human and environmental burdens of imperial expansion. Such vessels as the Ibis are turned into tools of implementing an empire by water, and the sea is turned into a location of forced labour, control, and exile. Ghosh makes colonial history oceanic, instead of territorial, by centring the maritime journeys and communities at sea.

The oceanic view is, too, echoed in the idea of slow violence that is introduced by Rob Nixon and that defines the nature of destruction as slow, diffused, and often not seen in the traditional accounts of violence. One of the illustrations of slow violence in the trilogy is the opium trade: its impact is observed in the long-term through addiction, economic dependence, and social disintegration, but not in spectacular events. The process of Indian peasantry being forced to plant poppies leads to the destruction of the environment and financial instability, whereas the Chinese communities endure extensive physical and social damage due to the use of opium in the long run. These effects, devastating as they are, are virtually unknown in imperial documents, which present the trade as legal trade.

Even indenture is a type of gradual violence. Transoceanic labourers carry labourers across long distances, exposing their bodies to extended distress such as overcrowding of ships, illness, psychological shock and cultural alienation without the obvious cruelties of slavery. The emphasis of Ghosh on the daily lives of indentured

migrants reveals the normativity of accumulating violence in the name of contracts and legality as colonial capitalism. In this regard, the sea turns out to be a repository of cumulative damage as it absorbs the past of departure that is not covered with official monuments.

Ghosh gives the oceanic world a scope of the slow violence by combining maritime capitalism, environmental degradation and human degradation. The Indian Ocean in the *Ibis Trilogy* is thus a channel of empire and a dumb place of colonial harm. Within the context of this Blue Humanities, the trilogy shows that the violence of empire is not limited to acts of conquest or war, but continues to affect lives, ecologies and histories by remaking maritime systems, transforming them over time.

Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh, through the *Ibis Trilogy*, reinvented the Indian Ocean in which maritime capitalism, opium trade, and the indenture system met to form colonial modernity. Ghosh reveals the exploitative bases of global capitalism by signalling the ship and its coming as a miniature of the empire and the resistance, and recovers lost histories of mobility, hybridity, and subaltern agency. In addition to confronting Eurocentric historiography, the trilogy also contributes to the literature on oceanic and postcolonial studies by repositioning the sea as an important collection of imperial and resistance records.

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Anti-Pastoral Modernity: Ecological Alienation in Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar

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Abstract

The Bell Jar challenges the long-standing pastoral belief that nature offers comfort and renewal to the troubled self. This paper argues that the novel presents modern life as ecologically fractured, where the promise of healing landscapes no longer holds meaning. Esther Greenwood's mental unrest unfolds alongside images of artificial urban spaces, mechanical routines, and a consumer culture that replaces organic rhythms with manufactured desires. Even when she moves away from the city, the natural world does not restore balance or clarity, but appears distant, indifferent, and disconnected from her inner life. Seasonal cycles, once associated with growth and continuity, fail to synchronize with her emotional state, revealing a deeper rupture between human consciousness and the environment. By examining the novel through the lens of ecological alienation, this paper shows how Plath portrays the collapse of pastoral comfort in a modern, industrial setting. Nature is not a refuge but a muted presence that reflects the emptiness of a society driven by performance, productivity, and consumption. The novel ultimately suggests that in modernity, the separation between self and environment becomes a defining condition of existence.

Keywords: pastoral breakdown, ecological alienation, urban artificiality, seasonal disconnection, consumer culture

Introduction

This study explores how modern literature reflects a deep rupture between human beings and the natural environment, focusing particularly on the ecological dimensions embedded within Sylvia Plath's novel, *The Bell Jar*. Traditionally, literature, especially within the pastoral mode, celebrated nature as a restorative refuge, a space where individuals could escape the pressures of urban life and rediscover emotional and spiritual balance. However, with the advent of industrial modernity, this ideal began to erode. Twentieth-century literature increasingly portrays nature not as a healing force but as distant, fragmented, or even incapable of responding to human distress. Within this shifting literary and cultural context, The Bell Jar emerges as a powerful narrative that reflects ecological estrangement alongside psychological crisis. While the novel is widely interpreted as a semi-autobiographical account of depression and identity fragmentation, this paper argues that its environmental dimensions are equally significant. Esther Greenwood's mental turmoil unfolds within a world dominated by urban artificiality, consumer culture, and mechanical routines. These conditions disrupt her connection with the natural world.

This study proposes that The Bell Jar exemplifies what can be termed anti-pastoral modernity, a condition in which the traditional promise of nature as a source of healing collapses. Instead of offering solace, nature appears muted, distant, and disconnected from human experience. Through an eco-critical framework, this paper demonstrates that Esther's psychological crisis is inseparable from the environmental conditions of modern life.

Literature Review

Critical scholarship on The Bell Jar has predominantly focused on themes of gender oppression, mental illness, and identity formation. Feminist critics have extensively examined how Esther Greenwood's breakdown reflects the restrictive gender roles imposed upon women in mid-twentieth-century American society. These interpretations highlight the pressures of conformity, domestic expectations, and professional limitations that shape Esther's psychological distress. While these readings are crucial, they often overlook the environmental dimensions embedded within the novel. An eco-critical perspective offers a broader understanding by examining how the surrounding environment contributes to Esther's sense of alienation.

Ecocriticism, as developed by scholars such as Cheryll Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell, emphasizes the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Buell, in particular, argues that literary texts often reflect ecological crises intertwined with social and psychological conditions. This perspective is especially relevant to The Bell Jar, where environmental disconnection subtly shapes the protagonist's experience. Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" further enriches this analysis. Nixon describes environmental harm as a gradual and often invisible process that unfolds over time. Although his framework is primarily applied to postcolonial contexts, it can also illuminate the subtle ecological alienation present in modern urban life. In The Bell Jar, environmental crisis is not depicted through catastrophic events but through an ongoing sense of disconnection from natural processes.

Despite these insights, few critics have explicitly connected the novel's environmental imagery with Esther's psychological condition. This study addresses that gap by employing the concept of ecological alienation, which refers to the estrangement individuals experience when detached from natural environments and rhythms.

By integrating eco-critical theory with existing feminist and psychological interpretations, this paper argues that The Bell Jar not only critiques gender norms but also reveals a broader ecological crisis inherent in modern industrial society.

Urban Artificiality And The Disappearance Of Organic Life

The urban space of New York emerges as a powerful symbol of artificiality, where the rhythms of modern life displace any meaningful connection to organic existence. The city is depicted not as a site of opportunity or renewal but as an overwhelming environment saturated with spectacle, consumerism, and sensory excess. Esther Greenwood's arrival in New York is marked by a sense of estrangement rather than excitement. She confesses, "I felt very still and very empty, the way the eye of a tornado must feel, moving dully along in the middle of the surrounding hullabaloo" (Plath 2). This striking image juxtaposes natural force with urban chaos, yet the comparison only underscores her emotional detachment. The "hullabaloo" of the city, filled with noise and movement, fails to produce vitality; instead, it renders Esther numb, suggesting that modern urban life has become divorced from the sustaining energies traditionally associated with nature.

The dominance of consumer culture further reinforces this artificial environment. Department stores, fashion magazines, and advertisements construct a world in which identity is shaped through acquisition and performance rather than lived, organic experience. Esther's internship at a fashion magazine exposes her to a system driven by appearance and consumption, where desire is manufactured and endlessly reproduced. She observes the excess surrounding her with a mixture of fascination and discomfort, particularly during the lavish banquet scenes: "The food was good, but it was so rich that I couldn't eat much of it" (Plath 24). This moment reflects not only physical discomfort but also a deeper symbolic excess. The abundance of food, rather than nourishing, becomes overwhelming and alienating, mirroring

the larger culture of overconsumption that defines the city. The body itself resists this artificial abundance, suggesting a misalignment between human needs and the excesses of modern consumer life.

Significantly, the novel registers a conspicuous absence of meaningful natural presence within this urban landscape. Even when elements of the natural world appear, they are either mediated or rendered ineffective. Parks and outdoor spaces do not function as restorative environments but as extensions of the same artificial order. Esther's perception remains unchanged regardless of setting, reinforcing her disconnection from ecological rhythms. This is evident in her recurring sense of enclosure, where she remarks, "Wherever I sat… I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air" (Plath 185). The metaphor of the bell jar encapsulates not only her psychological suffocation but also a broader environmental condition in which the boundary between self and world is sealed off. Nature, in this context, cannot penetrate or alleviate the oppressive atmosphere of modern existence.

Moreover, the city's artificiality disrupts the possibility of temporal and seasonal continuity that is central to organic life. Traditional pastoral landscapes are defined by cycles of growth, decay, and renewal, offering individuals a sense of continuity and belonging. In contrast, New York in The Bell Jar operates through mechanical repetition and static routines. Time is structured by schedules, appointments, and consumer events rather than natural cycles. Esther's disorientation within this system reflects a deeper ecological estrangement, where human consciousness is no longer synchronized with the environment. The absence of seasonal awareness contributes to her sense of fragmentation, reinforcing the idea that modern urban life has severed the connection between inner experience and external reality.

Thus, the city in The Bell Jar functions as a space of ecological alienation, where artificial environments replace organic life and disrupt the possibility of restoration. Through Esther's experiences, Plath critiques a culture that prioritizes consumption, spectacle, and productivity over genuine engagement with the natural world. The disappearance of organic presence is not merely a background detail but a central condition that shapes Esther's psychological crisis. By portraying New York as a site of sensory overload and environmental absence, the novel reveals how modern urban existence contributes to a profound rupture between the self and the ecological world.

The Collapse Of Pastoral Healing: Nature As Indifferent Presence

The long-standing pastoral belief that nature serves as a site of emotional restoration is profoundly destabilized. Traditionally, the pastoral mode constructs nature as a nurturing force capable of healing psychological fragmentation and offering spiritual clarity. However, Plath subverts this convention by presenting natural elements as distant, opaque, and unresponsive to human suffering. Esther Greenwood's encounters with the natural world do not produce renewal but instead intensify her sense of alienation. Rather than functioning as a refuge, nature exists as a detached presence that neither absorbs nor alleviates her distress. This shift marks a decisive movement toward what can be identified as anti-pastoral modernity, where the harmony between self and environment collapses.

A crucial instance of this breakdown appears in Esther's interaction with the sea. Water, conventionally associated with purification, rebirth, and transformation, fails to fulfill its symbolic promise. Instead of offering release, the ocean becomes a space of resistance and emotional dissonance. Esther's perception of her condition remains unchanged despite proximity to a vast natural element, suggesting that the external environment cannot penetrate her inner crisis. This is consistent with her broader realization that physical relocation does not alter her mental state: "Wherever I sat… I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing

in my own sour air" (Plath 185). The bell jar metaphor reinforces the idea that nature cannot provide escape, as the barrier between self and world remains intact. The sea, rather than dissolving this boundary, reflects its persistence. In this sense, nature mirrors Esther's isolation instead of transforming it, functioning as an indifferent surface rather than a healing force.

This indifference is further reinforced through the novel's recurring imagery of stagnation and disconnection. Even when Esther is removed from the urban environment, she does not experience the renewal traditionally associated with natural spaces. Her famous fig tree vision underscores this failure of pastoral promise: "I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree… I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death" (Plath 73). While the image draws upon organic abundance, it ultimately conveys paralysis and deprivation. The tree, instead of sustaining life, becomes a symbol of inaction and loss. Nature here is reduced to metaphorical projection, unable to function as a lived, restorative reality. This illustrates a fundamental rupture between human consciousness and ecological presence, where natural imagery persists but its consolatory power has eroded.

Eco-critical theorists provide a useful framework for understanding this transformation. Lawrence Buell argues that modern literature often reflects an "environmental unconscious," where ecological crisis manifests indirectly through narrative and imagery (Buell 21). In The Bell Jar, this unconscious emerges through the consistent failure of nature to respond meaningfully to Esther's condition. Similarly, Terry Gifford, in his discussion of post-pastoral literature, notes that contemporary texts frequently challenge the idealization of nature, presenting it instead as complex, indifferent, or resistant to human interpretation (Gifford 154). Plath's novel aligns with this perspective by rejecting the notion that returning to nature can resolve psychological distress. Instead, nature remains autonomous, existing beyond the reach of human emotion.

Moreover, Esther's pervasive sense of disconnection suggests that the failure of pastoral healing is not merely situational but structural. Her observation, "I felt very still and very empty, the way the eye of a tornado must feel" (Plath 2), indicates a paradoxical relationship with natural imagery, where nature is invoked but emptied of its regenerative force. The comparison to a tornado evokes energy and movement, yet Esther experiences only stillness and void. This inversion highlights the extent to which natural symbolism has lost its traditional coherence within modern consciousness. Nature no longer offers a stable framework through which individuals can interpret or resolve their experiences.

Mechanical Time Vs Ecological Time

Another critical dimension of ecological alienation emerges through the tension between mechanical time and ecological rhythms. Modern life in the novel is governed by rigid temporal structures such as clocks, deadlines, institutional expectations, and repetitive routines. Esther Greenwood's daily existence is shaped by these external systems, which impose order without meaning. Time becomes something to be endured rather than experienced. This mechanized temporality distances her from the cyclical, regenerative patterns of the natural world. Her growing detachment is evident in her inability to feel continuity or anticipation, as she reflects, "I couldn't see the point of getting up. I had nothing to look forward to" (Plath 117). This statement underscores a temporal void where future and present collapse into a monotonous stillness, revealing how mechanical time disrupts the organic flow of lived experience.

This rupture becomes even more pronounced when Esther returns home after her time in the city. The narrative introduces the summer season, which in pastoral tradition typically symbolizes vitality, growth, and renewal. However, Plath subverts this expectation by

presenting summer as oppressive and stagnant rather than liberating. The heat does not energize; instead, it weighs heavily upon Esther, intensifying her sense of inertia. The environment appears suspended, devoid of movement or transformation. This inversion of seasonal meaning reflects a deeper ecological disconnection. Esther's internal state fails to align with the rhythms of the natural world, suggesting that the symbolic harmony between human emotion and seasonal cycles has broken down. Even in a setting removed from urban intensity, she remains psychologically immobilized, unable to derive comfort from her surroundings.

Moreover, the persistence of this disconnection highlights the dominance of external temporal systems over natural processes. Esther's life continues to be structured by expectations and routines that bear little relation to ecological time. The seasonal shift to summer does not initiate renewal or clarity; instead, it reinforces her entrapment. This condition is encapsulated in the enduring metaphor of enclosure: "Wherever I sat… I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air" (Plath 185). The bell jar functions not only as a symbol of mental confinement but also as a barrier that isolates Esther from the living environment. It suggests a world in which natural rhythms exist but fail to penetrate human consciousness.

Thus, while the novel acknowledges the presence of seasonal change, these transitions remain emotionally and symbolically ineffective. The traditional pastoral association between seasonal renewal and personal transformation is notably absent. Instead, time in The Bell Jar is experienced as static, repetitive, and disconnected from the organic cycles that once structured human life. Through this portrayal, Plath deepens the theme of ecological alienation, illustrating how modernity replaces natural temporality with mechanical order, thereby severing the bond between self and environment.

Consumer Culture And The Commodification Of Desire

Consumer culture operates as a pervasive force that shapes Esther Greenwood's perception of reality, constructing a world in which identity is mediated through commodities rather than authentic experience. The urban environment she inhabits is saturated with fashion, beauty products, and material excess, all of which promise fulfillment while simultaneously producing alienation. Esther's exposure to this culture during her time at the magazine intensifies her awareness of its artificiality. The abundance surrounding her is not liberating but overwhelming, as reflected in her observation: "The food was good, but it was so rich that I couldn't eat much of it" (Plath 24). This moment, though seemingly trivial, symbolizes a broader condition of excess where consumption exceeds genuine need, leading not to satisfaction but to discomfort and disorientation. Material abundance thus becomes a marker of imbalance, both ecological and psychological.

From an eco-critical perspective, this culture of consumption contributes significantly to environmental alienation by transforming natural resources into commodified objects. Lawrence Buell argues that modern literary texts often reflect a growing separation between human life and ecological systems, particularly through the rise of consumerist values that prioritize acquisition over sustainability. In The Environmental Imagination, Buell notes that "environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination" (Buell 2), suggesting that the inability to perceive nature beyond its utility leads to both ecological degradation and existential disconnection. This insight is particularly relevant to The Bell Jar, where the culture of consumption not only exploits material resources but also reshapes human desires and aspirations into purchasable ideals. Success, beauty, and happiness are presented as commodities, reducing lived experience to a series of acquisitions.

Furthermore, this commodification extends beyond objects to encompass identity itself. Esther is expected to perform a version of success defined by external markers such as appearance, social status, and professional achievement. However, her growing awareness of this artificial system generates a profound sense of suffocation. She perceives the emptiness underlying these constructed ideals, yet finds herself unable to escape their influence. This tension reinforces the symbolic significance of the bell jar, which represents both psychological confinement and ecological estrangement. As she reflects, "Wherever I sat… I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air" (Plath 185). The metaphor suggests a closed system in which both self and environment are trapped within cycles of consumption and repetition, cut off from organic vitality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, The Bell Jar offers a compelling exploration of ecological alienation within the context of modern industrial society. By challenging the traditional pastoral belief in nature's restorative power, the novel reveals the fragile and disrupted relationship between humans and the environment in the twentieth century.

Esther Greenwood's psychological crisis unfolds within a world defined by urban artificiality, consumer culture, and mechanical time. These conditions sever her connection to natural rhythms and landscapes. As a result, nature appears distant and incapable of providing the healing traditionally associated with it.

Through its anti-pastoral vision, the novel suggests that ecological disconnection is not merely an environmental issue but a profound existential condition. The fragmentation of the self mirrors the fragmentation of ecological harmony.Ultimately, this study demonstrates that The Bell Jar anticipates contemporary eco-critical concerns by highlighting the psychological and cultural consequences of environmental estrangement. It invites readers to reconsider the relationship between human consciousness and the natural world, emphasizing the urgent need to address the ecological dimensions of modern life.

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The eco maternal: motherhood and environmental consciousness in kingsolver's flight Behavior

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of motherhood and environmental consciousness in Barbara Kingsolver's novel "Flight Behavior" (2012). Through a close reading of the text and an analysis of its protagonist, Dellarobia Turnbow, we examine how Kingsolver intertwines the themes of maternal care and ecological awareness. The study employs eco-feminist theory and literary analysis to investigate how motherhood serves as a catalyst for environmental awakening and activism. Our findings suggest that Kingsolver's narrative presents a compelling case for the "eco maternal" a concept that links maternal instincts with environmental stewardship. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on environmental literature and eco-feminism, offering insights into the potential of fiction to foster ecological consciousness through relatable human experiences.

Keywords: eco-feminism; Flight Behavior; motherhood; environmental literature; climate change fiction

1. Introduction

In an era of increasing environmental crises, literature has emerged as a powerful medium for exploring and promoting ecological consciousness. Barbara Kingsolver's 2012 novel "Flight Behavior" stands out as a significant contribution to the genre of climate fiction, or "cli-fi," offering a nuanced exploration of climate change through the lens of rural American life. At the heart of this narrative is Dellarobia Turnbow, a young mother whose encounter with a displaced monarch butterfly colony catalyzes a profound shift in her understanding of the world and her place within it.

This paper aims to examine the intricate relationship between motherhood and environmental awareness as portrayed in "Flight Behavior." We argue that Kingsolver's novel presents a compelling case for what we term the "eco-maternal" - a conceptual framework that links maternal instincts and experiences with environmental stewardship and ecological consciousness.

The eco-maternal, as we define it, encompasses the idea that the nurturing and protective instincts associated with motherhood can extend beyond immediate family to encompass the broader natural world. This concept builds upon eco-feminist theories that have long argued for the interconnectedness of women's experiences and environmental concerns (Warren, 1990; Mies & Shiva, 1993). However, our focus on the specific role of motherhood in fostering environmental awareness offers a novel perspective within this theoretical landscape.

Kingsolver's "Flight Behavior" provides fertile ground for exploring this concept. The novel's protagonist, Dellarobia, undergoes a transformation from a dissatisfied housewife to an environmentally conscious individual, with her role as a mother serving as a crucial element in this metamorphosis. Through Dellarobia's journey, Kingsolver invites readers to consider how the intimate experience of motherhood might inform and amplify concerns about the health and future of the planet.

This research is situated at the intersection of several academic disciplines, including literary studies, eco-criticism, and feminist theory. By examining the portrayal of motherhood and environmental consciousness in "Flight Behavior," we aim to contribute to ongoing discussions about the role of literature in fostering ecological awareness and the potential of maternal experiences to inform environmental ethics.

Our analysis is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does Kingsolver depict the relationship between motherhood and environmental consciousness in "Flight Behavior"?
2. In what ways does Dellarobia's role as a mother influence her growing environmental awareness and activism?
3. How does the concept of the "eco-maternal" manifest in the novel, and what implications does this have for our understanding of environmental literature and eco-feminist theory?

To address these questions, we employ a mixed-methods approach, combining close textual analysis with theoretical frameworks drawn from eco-criticism and feminist studies. Our methodology section will detail this approach, followed by a presentation of our findings and a discussion of their implications for literary studies and environmental discourse.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a review of relevant literature, situating our study within the broader context of eco-criticism, feminist theory, and scholarship on Kingsolver's work. Section 3 outlines our methodology. Section 4 presents our analysis and findings, organized thematically to address our research questions. Section 5 discusses the implications of our findings, their contribution to the field, and potential avenues for future research. Finally, Section 6 offers concluding remarks on the significance of the eco-maternal in "Flight Behavior" and its relevance to contemporary environmental discourse.

Through this analysis, we hope to shed light on the potential of literature to foster ecological consciousness through relatable human experiences, particularly those associated with motherhood. By exploring the eco-maternal in Kingsolver's work, we aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intersections between gender, family, and environmental concern in contemporary fiction.

2. Literature Review

To establish the theoretical foundation for our analysis of "Flight Behavior," it is essential to review the existing scholarship in several related fields: eco-criticism, eco-feminism, motherhood studies, and previous analyses of Kingsolver's work. This literature review will provide the context necessary to situate our concept of the "eco-maternal" within broader academic discourse.

2.1 Eco-criticism and Climate Fiction

Eco-criticism, as defined by Cheryll Glotfelty (1996), is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (p. xviii). This field has grown significantly since its inception in the 1990s, with scholars increasingly focusing on how literature engages with environmental issues, particularly climate change.

Climate fiction, or "cli-fi," has emerged as a distinct subgenre within environmental literature. Adam Trexler and Adeline Johns-Putra (2011) argue that cli-fi narratives serve as a means of "imagining and negotiating the effects of climate change" (p. 185). Works in this

genre, including Kingsolver's "Flight Behavior," often blend scientific information with compelling storytelling to engage readers with complex environmental issues.

Sylvia Mayer's (2014) work on risk narratives in climate change fiction provides a useful framework for understanding how novels like "Flight Behavior" communicate environmental threats. Mayer argues that these narratives "make climate change imaginable and emotionally graspable" (p. 21), a perspective that aligns with our investigation of how motherhood in Kingsolver's novel serves as a conduit for environmental awareness.

2.2 Eco-feminism and Environmental Ethics

Eco-feminism, a theoretical framework that connects feminist thought with ecological concerns, provides a crucial backdrop for our study. Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen's (2014) comprehensive work on eco-feminism outlines how this perspective "identifies the interconnections between the domination of women and the domination of nature" (p. 1).

Val Plumwood's (1993) seminal work on eco-feminism and the dualities that underpin Western thought offers insights into how maternal experiences might challenge traditional hierarchies that separate humans from nature. Plumwood's critique of the reason/nature dualism is particularly relevant to our analysis of Dellarobia's evolving relationship with the natural world in "Flight Behavior."

More recently, Greta Gaard's (2011) work on eco-feminism and climate justice provides a framework for understanding how gender and environmental concerns intersect in contemporary contexts. Gaard's emphasis on the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and children resonates with Kingsolver's portrayal of rural, working-class mothers in "Flight Behavior."

2.3 Motherhood Studies and Environmental Consciousness

The field of motherhood studies offers valuable perspectives on how maternal experiences shape worldviews and ethical stances. Andrea O'Reilly's (2010) work on maternal thinking and practice provides a foundation for understanding how motherhood might inform environmental consciousness.

Sara Ruddick's (1989) concept of "maternal thinking" is particularly relevant to our study. Ruddick argues that the practice of mothering develops certain cognitive capacities and values, including preservative love, fostering growth, and training for social acceptance. These concepts can be extended to consider how maternal thinking might encompass care for the natural world.

More specific to environmental concerns, Noel Sturgeon's (1997) work on eco-maternal politics explores how mothers have mobilized around environmental issues, often framing their activism in terms of protecting children's health and futures. This perspective informs our analysis of Dellarobia's evolving environmental consciousness in "Flight Behavior."

2.4 Barbara Kingsolver and Environmental Literature

Barbara Kingsolver's body of work has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention, with many critics noting her consistent engagement with environmental themes. Linda Wagner-Martin's (2014) comprehensive study of Kingsolver's fiction highlights the author's commitment to exploring the interrelationships between humans and their natural environments.

Specifically regarding "Flight Behavior," several scholars have analyzed its treatment of climate change and rural American life. Deborah Lilley's (2014) work on the novel's representation of climate change as a lived experience provides valuable insights into Kingsolver's narrative strategies.

Mary K. Holland's (2012) analysis of motherhood in Kingsolver's earlier works offers a useful precedent for our study, though it does not specifically address "Flight Behavior." Holland argues that Kingsolver's portrayals of motherhood often challenge traditional notions of maternal sacrifice and emphasize the potential for personal growth through maternal experiences.

2.5 Gap in the Literature

While there is a rich body of scholarship on eco-criticism, eco-feminism, and Kingsolver's work, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the specific intersection of motherhood and environmental consciousness in "Flight Behavior." Our concept of the "eco-maternal" aims to address this gap by providing a framework for understanding how maternal experiences and environmental concerns intertwine in the novel.

This study builds upon existing scholarship by:

1. Offering a focused analysis of the relationship between motherhood and environmental awareness in "Flight Behavior."
2. Introducing and developing the concept of the "eco-maternal" as a tool for literary analysis and eco-feminist thought.
3. Exploring how Kingsolver's narrative techniques in "Flight Behavior" contribute to the representation of the eco-maternal.

By addressing these areas, our research aims to contribute to ongoing discussions about the role of literature in fostering ecological consciousness and the potential of maternal experiences to inform environmental ethics.

3. Methodology

To investigate the concept of the eco-maternal in Barbara Kingsolver's "Flight Behavior," we employ a mixed-methods approach that combines close textual analysis with theoretical frameworks drawn from eco-criticism and feminist studies. This methodology allows for a comprehensive examination of how motherhood and environmental consciousness intersect in the novel, while also situating our analysis within broader academic discourses.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Our analysis is grounded in several theoretical perspectives:

1. Eco-feminism: We draw on the work of scholars such as Val Plumwood (1993) and Greta Gaard (2011) to understand the interconnections between gender and environmental issues in the novel.
2. Maternal Thinking: Sara Ruddick's (1989) concept of maternal thinking informs our analysis of how Dellarobia's experiences as a mother shape her environmental awareness.
3. Risk Narratives: Sylvia Mayer's (2014) work on risk narratives in climate fiction provides a framework for analyzing how Kingsolver communicates environmental threats through Dellarobia's perspective.
4. Eco-criticism: We employ eco-critical approaches, as outlined by Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) and others, to examine how the novel represents the relationship between humans and the natural world.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Our primary data source is Barbara Kingsolver's novel "Flight Behavior" (2012). We conducted multiple close readings of the text, focusing on passages that relate to motherhood, environmental awareness, and the intersection of these themes.

The data analysis process involved several steps:

1. Identification of Relevant Passages: We systematically identified and cataloged passages in the novel that relate to motherhood, environmental issues, and instances where these themes intersect.
2. Thematic Coding: Using qualitative coding techniques, we categorized these passages according to emerging themes related to the eco-maternal. Initial codes included "maternal instincts," "environmental awakening," "child-nature interactions," and "maternal activism."

3. Close Textual Analysis: We performed detailed analyses of key passages, examining Kingsolver's use of language, imagery, and narrative techniques to convey the relationship between motherhood and environmental consciousness.
4. Character Analysis: We conducted an in-depth analysis of Dellarobia's character development throughout the novel, focusing on how her role as a mother influences her growing environmental awareness.
5. Contextual Analysis: We considered how Kingsolver's portrayal of rural Appalachian life and the specific environmental threat (the displaced monarch butterfly colony) contribute to the novel's exploration of the eco-maternal.

3.3 Comparative Analysis

To situate "Flight Behavior" within the broader context of environmental literature and eco-feminist thought, we conducted a comparative analysis with other relevant texts. This included:
1. Comparison with Kingsolver's other works that address environmental themes, such as "Prodigal Summer" (2000) and "Animal, Vegetable, Miracle" (2007).
2. Analysis of how "Flight Behavior" aligns with or deviates from other notable works of climate fiction, such as Ian McEwan's "Solar" (2010) and Margaret Atwood's "MaddAddam" trilogy (2003-2013).
3. Consideration of how the eco-maternal themes in "Flight Behavior" relate to non-fiction works on motherhood and environmentalism, such as Sandra Steingraber's "Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood" (2001).

3.4 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of our methodology:
1. Subjectivity: As with any literary analysis, our interpretations are inherently subjective. We have attempted to mitigate this by grounding our analysis in established theoretical frameworks and providing textual evidence for our claims.
2. Cultural Specificity: "Flight Behavior" is set in a specific cultural context (rural Appalachia). While we consider this context in our analysis, our findings may not be universally applicable to all cultural representations of motherhood and environmental consciousness.
3. Author Intent: While we consider Kingsolver's known environmental advocacy in our analysis, we focus primarily on the text itself rather than attempting to discern the author's intentions.

Ethical considerations in this study primarily relate to the responsible interpretation and representation of the text and its themes. We strive to present a balanced analysis that acknowledges the complexity of the issues addressed in the novel.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of our findings, we employ several strategies:
1. Triangulation: We cross-reference our textual analysis with existing scholarship on Kingsolver's work, eco-criticism, and eco-feminism to support our interpretations.
2. Peer Review: Our analysis and findings have been subject to peer review within our research team and will be further reviewed through the publication process.
3. Transparency: We provide clear explanations of our theoretical framework and analytical process, allowing for scrutiny and replication of our methods.

By employing this rigorous and multi-faceted methodology, we aim to provide a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the eco-maternal in "Flight Behavior," contributing to broader discussions about the intersection of motherhood and environmental consciousness in contemporary literature.

4. Analysis and Findings

Our analysis of Barbara Kingsolver's "Flight Behavior" reveals a complex and nuanced portrayal of the relationship between motherhood and environmental consciousness. Through the character of Dellarobia Turnbow, Kingsolver explores how maternal experiences can serve

as a catalyst for environmental awareness and activism. This section presents our findings, organized thematically to address our research questions.

4.1 The Evolution of Dellarobia's Environmental Consciousness

Dellarobia's journey from a dissatisfied housewife to an environmentally conscious individual forms the core of the novel's exploration of the eco-maternal. Our analysis reveals several key stages in this evolution:

4.1.1 Initial Disconnect from Nature

At the beginning of the novel, Dellarobia's relationship with the natural world is characterized by disconnect and disinterest. Kingsolver writes:

"The trees were uniform branchy lasagna noodles, sprinkled with bird nests and trash... The forest was just a woods" (p. 14).

This description reflects Dellarobia's initial inability to see the intrinsic value or complexity of the natural world around her.

4.1.2 The Monarch Encounter as a Turning Point

Dellarobia's encounter with the monarch butterfly colony marks a pivotal moment in her environmental awakening.

Kingsolver describes Dellarobia's first sight of the butterflies:

"The forest blazed with its own internal flame... The impossible flame now appeared to be coming from within. This was no forest fire. It was something else" (p. 14-15).

This moment of awe and wonder serves as a catalyst for Dellarobia's environmental awakening. The language Kingsolver uses, with its emphasis on the extraordinary and the transformative, underscores the profound impact of this encounter on Dellarobia's consciousness.

4.1.3 Growing Environmental Awareness

As the novel progresses, Dellarobia's understanding of environmental issues, particularly climate change, deepens. Her interactions with scientist Ovid Byron play a crucial role in this development.

For instance:

"She'd never thought of butterflies as having a job. But here they were, working the world, working for a living just like the rest of us" (p. 191).

This quote illustrates Dellarobia's growing appreciation for the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the role of each species within them.

4.1.4 Emergence of Environmental Activism

By the novel's end, Dellarobia has become an active participant in environmental conservation efforts. Her decision to pursue an education in biology represents a commitment to environmental stewardship:

"She would get her degree... She would study the forbes and the grasses and the butterflies, and she would tell their story" (p. 433).

This transformation from passive observer to active participant in environmental issues is a key aspect of the eco-maternal as portrayed in the novel.

4.2 Motherhood as a Lens for Environmental Perception

Our analysis reveals that Kingsolver consistently uses Dellarobia's experiences as a mother to frame her growing environmental awareness.

4.2.1 Maternal Instincts and Environmental Concern

Dellarobia's protective instincts towards her children often extend to the natural world, particularly the monarch butterflies. For example:

"Dellarobia felt herself reaching out, ridiculously, to catch them... She felt the same compulsion as when Preston had first toddled across a room" (p. 52).

This comparison between the vulnerable butterflies and her toddler son illustrates how maternal instincts can foster a sense of responsibility towards the environment.

4.2.2 Children as Conduits for Environmental Learning

Kingsolver frequently uses Dellarobia's interactions with her children, particularly her son Preston, to explore environmental themes. Preston's curiosity about the natural world often prompts Dellarobia to engage more deeply with her surroundings:

"Preston asked her the names of every tree they passed... She was astonished at how many she knew, when required to think about it" (p. 326).

These moments of shared discovery highlight how motherhood can serve as a pathway to environmental engagement.

4.2.3 Intergenerational Environmental Responsibility

The novel explores the concept of environmental legacy through Dellarobia's concern for her children's future. This is particularly evident in her reflections on climate change:

"How would she ever explain this to her children? The monotonous measures of loss: this is what we destroyed" (p. 433).

This quote encapsulates the eco-maternal perspective, linking maternal concern for future generations with environmental stewardship.

4.3 The Eco-Maternal as a Framework for Environmental Ethics

Our analysis suggests that Kingsolver uses the concept of the eco-maternal to propose a framework for environmental ethics based on care, responsibility, and interconnectedness.

4.3.1 Care Ethics Extended to the Environment

Dellarobia's approach to environmental issues is often framed in terms of care and nurturing, echoing her role as a mother. For instance, her concern for the monarchs is described in maternal terms:

"She thought of the butterflies as a mother would, hoping for their safety" (p. 212).

This extension of maternal care to the natural world is a key aspect of the eco-maternal as portrayed in the novel.

4.3.2 Interconnectedness and Mutual Dependency

Kingsolver emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living things, often through Dellarobia's growing understanding of ecology. This is particularly evident in her reflections on the monarch migration:

"The whole kingdom of living things depended on each other. The mountain stood, it had always stood, but nothing on it was permanent" (p. 433).

This recognition of mutual dependency and the fragility of ecosystems is presented as an outgrowth of Dellarobia's maternal perspective.

4.3.3 Long-term Thinking and Sustainability

The novel presents maternal thinking as inherently oriented towards the future, making it a natural fit for environmental concerns. Dellarobia's growing environmental consciousness is consistently linked to her concern for her children's future:

"How could she tell her kids the story of this world... when every day shrank it down to something smaller?" (p. 432)

This quote illustrates how maternal concern for future generations can foster a long-term perspective on environmental issues.

4.4 Narrative Techniques and the Eco-Maternal

Our analysis also considers how Kingsolver's narrative techniques contribute to the representation of the eco-maternal in "Flight Behavior."

4.4.1 Metaphorical Language

Kingsolver frequently uses metaphors that link maternal experiences with environmental phenomena. For example, Dellarobia describes the monarch colony as "a glowing hive of animals cohered by one mind" (p. 14), evoking images of both insect colonies and the bond between mother and child.

4.4.2 Sensory Descriptions

The novel is rich in sensory descriptions that emphasize Dellarobia's physical and emotional connections to her environment. These descriptions often parallel the intimacy of the mother-child relationship:

"The air felt thick as honey... She breathed it in, trying to name its flavor. It tasted like... the warmth of her son's skin" (p. 52).

4.4.3 Juxtaposition of Domestic and Natural Spaces

Kingsolver frequently juxtaposes domestic spaces with the natural world, blurring the boundaries between them. This technique underscores the novel's argument that environmental concerns are intimately connected to family life:

"The kitchen window framed a postcard view of the pasture... Dellarobia imagined the window as a frame in a viewfinder. She'd spent half her life looking through that window... never seeing" (p.185).

This juxtaposition challenges the traditional separation of domestic and natural spheres, a key aspect of eco-feminist thought.

4.5 Challenges to the Eco-Maternal Perspective

While "Flight Behavior" largely presents the eco-maternal as a positive force for environmental awareness, our analysis also identifies instances where Kingsolver acknowledges potential limitations or challenges to this perspective.

4.5.1 Tension Between Immediate Needs and Long-term Concerns

The novel explores the tension between Dellarobia's immediate concerns as a mother (providing for her children's basic needs) and broader environmental concerns. This is particularly evident in discussions about logging and the economic realities of rural life:

"People here lived closer to the bone... They couldn't afford to care about things like monarchs" (p. 308).

This quote highlights the potential conflict between eco-maternal ideals and economic realities.

4.5.2 Limitations of Individual Action

While the novel emphasizes the power of individual awakening and action, it also acknowledges the limitations of what one person (or one mother) can achieve in the face of global environmental challenges. Dellarobia reflects on this when considering the scale of climate change:

"What was the use of saving a world that had no soul left in it? Continents without butterflies, seas without coral reefs... What if all human effort amounted basically to saving a place for ourselves to park?" (p. 332)

This moment of doubt serves to highlight the complexity of environmental issues and the challenges inherent in addressing them, even from an eco-maternal perspective.

5. Discussion

Our analysis of "Flight Behavior" reveals a complex and nuanced portrayal of the relationship between motherhood and environmental consciousness. Through the character of Dellarobia Turnbow, Kingsolver explores how maternal experiences can serve as a catalyst for environmental awareness and activism, while also acknowledging the challenges and limitations of this perspective.

5.1 The Eco-Maternal as a Bridge Between Personal and Global Concerns

One of the key strengths of Kingsolver's approach in "Flight Behavior" is her ability to use the eco-maternal as a bridge between personal, intimate experiences and global environmental concerns. By framing Dellarobia's environmental awakening through her experiences as a mother, Kingsolver makes abstract issues like climate change tangible and emotionally resonant.

This approach aligns with eco-feminist theories that emphasize the importance of embodied, situated knowledge in understanding environmental issues (Plumwood, 1993). It also resonates

with Sylvia Mayer's (2014) work on risk narratives in climate fiction, which argues that effective climate narratives must make global issues personally meaningful to readers.

5.2 Expanding Notions of Maternal Care

Our analysis suggests that Kingsolver's portrayal of the eco-maternal expands traditional notions of maternal care beyond the immediate family to encompass the broader natural world. This expansion aligns with Sara Ruddick's (1989) concept of "maternal thinking," which argues that the practice of mothering develops certain cognitive capacities and values that can be applied more broadly.

In "Flight Behavior," we see how Dellarobia's maternal instincts inform her approach to environmental issues, fostering a sense of responsibility and care for the natural world. This portrayal offers a powerful counternarrative to traditional environmental discourses that often prioritize abstract scientific or economic arguments.

5.3 Challenging Dualistic Thinking

Kingsolver's portrayal of the eco-maternal in "Flight Behavior" serves to challenge dualistic thinking that separates nature from culture, and the domestic from the wild. This aligns with eco-feminist critiques of Western philosophical traditions that have historically separated reason from nature, often associating the former with masculinity and the latter with femininity (Plumwood, 1993).

By presenting Dellarobia's domestic experiences as intimately connected to her growing environmental awareness, Kingsolver challenges these traditional dualisms. This approach offers a more holistic vision of environmental engagement that recognizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of life.

5.4 The Limitations of the Eco-Maternal Perspective

While our analysis largely supports the potential of the eco-maternal as a framework for environmental engagement, it's important to acknowledge the limitations and potential critiques of this approach.

Firstly, there's a risk of essentializing motherhood or suggesting that only mothers can develop this kind of environmental consciousness. While Kingsolver largely avoids this pitfall by presenting Dellarobia's journey as individual and context-specific, it's a potential criticism of the eco-maternal concept more broadly.

Secondly, as our analysis of the novel's treatment of economic concerns shows, there can be tensions between immediate maternal concerns (providing for one's children) and broader environmental considerations. This highlights the need for any eco-maternal framework to consider issues of environmental justice and the uneven distribution of environmental risks and resources.

5.5 Implications for Environmental Literature and Eco-Feminist Theory

Our analysis of "Flight Behavior" contributes to ongoing discussions about the role of literature in fostering ecological consciousness. By demonstrating how Kingsolver uses the eco-maternal to make environmental issues personally resonant, our study offers insights into effective strategies for environmental storytelling.

Furthermore, our development of the eco-maternal concept provides a new framework for eco-feminist analysis of literature. This concept bridges existing work on maternal thinking (Ruddick, 1989) and eco-feminist theory (Plumwood, 1993; Gaard, 2011), offering a nuanced way to explore how gendered experiences inform environmental perspectives in literature and beyond.

5.6 Future Research Directions

This study opens up several avenues for future research:

1. Comparative studies examining the eco-maternal in other works of environmental literature, both fiction and non-fiction.
2. Empirical research investigating whether readers of novels like "Flight Behavior" experience changes in their environmental attitudes or behaviors.

3. Further theoretical work developing the concept of the eco-maternal and exploring its potential applications beyond literary analysis.
4. Interdisciplinary studies examining how the eco-maternal concept might inform environmental education or communication strategies.

6. Conclusion

Our analysis of Barbara Kingsolver's "Flight Behavior" reveals a rich and nuanced exploration of the relationship between motherhood and environmental consciousness. Through the concept of the eco-maternal, Kingsolver presents a compelling vision of how maternal experiences can foster environmental awareness and activism.

The novel's portrayal of Dellarobia's journey from environmental disconnection to engaged activism offers insights into how personal, embodied experiences can bridge the gap between individual concerns and global environmental issues. By framing environmental awareness through the lens of maternal care and responsibility, Kingsolver makes abstract issues like climate change tangible and emotionally resonant.

At the same time, "Flight Behavior" acknowledges the complexities and potential limitations of the eco-maternal perspective, particularly in the face of economic pressures and the sheer scale of environmental challenges. This nuanced approach adds depth to the novel's environmental message and aligns with eco-feminist critiques of simplistic or essentialist approaches to gender and nature.

Our development of the eco-maternal concept contributes to eco-feminist theory by providing a framework for understanding how gendered experiences, particularly those related to motherhood, can inform environmental perspectives. This concept offers a way to bridge personal and political dimensions of environmental engagement, aligning with eco-feminist emphases on embodied knowledge and care ethics.

For the field of environmental literature, our analysis demonstrates the power of personal, relatable narratives in communicating complex environmental issues. Kingsolver's use of the eco-maternal as a narrative strategy offers valuable insights for other writers seeking to engage readers with pressing environmental concerns.

In conclusion, "Flight Behavior" presents the eco-maternal as a potentially transformative perspective on environmental issues, one that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life and the power of maternal thinking to foster environmental stewardship. While not without its limitations, this approach offers a compelling vision of how personal experiences can inform and motivate environmental engagement.

As we face unprecedented global environmental challenges, narratives that can bridge the personal and the planetary, the intimate and the global, become increasingly vital. Kingsolver's exploration of the eco-maternal in "Flight Behavior" offers one such narrative, inviting readers to see the world through new eyes and to recognize their own capacity for environmental care and action.

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Echoes of The Ancestral Hills: Nature, Conflict, And Cultural Continuity In *The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai

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Abstract

Land in many indigenous narratives functions not merely as backdrop but as archive, oracle, and silent witness to history's unfolding tensions. This paper presents an ecocritical reading of Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* (2014), examining the complex interconnections among land, culture, and lived experience. Situated in the verdant yet politically troubled terrain of Arunachal Pradesh, the novel weaves together the spiritual and material dimensions of the landscape, revealing how geography both influences and is influenced by cultural memory and historical transformation. By analyzing the text's representation of the intimate and sacred ties between indigenous communities and their environment, this study foregrounds Dai's vision of nature as animate, responsive, and spiritually charged. The discussion further considers the disruptions caused by colonial expansion and missionary interventions, highlighting the cultural and ecological tensions that arise from such encounters. Through an ecocritical framework, the paper demonstrates how Dai's narrative calls for a reassessment of dominant human-nature paradigms, encouraging an environmental ethic grounded in indigenous knowledge systems and ancestral belonging. By addressing concerns of spiritual ecology, gendered environmental consciousness, and cultural endurance, this research contributes to ongoing conversations about indigenous ecological worldviews in contemporary literary studies.

Keywords: Colonialism, culture, identity, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, ecology.

Introduction

Indian English literature has increasingly embraced regional narratives that foreground ecological consciousness and indigenous perspectives. Among the writers who have significantly contributed to this discourse is Mamang Dai. She was born in 1957 in Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh, and is a well-known and thoughtful writer from Northeast India. Her work shows a deep understanding, and she is skilled in both writing poetry and translating. Her book *The Black Hill* (2014) won the 2017 Sahitya Akademi Award for fiction. This book can be looked at through the lens of ecocriticism because it tells a story that is closely tied to nature, making nature a central part of the narrative. Mamang Dai is closely connected to the challenges faced by her tribe, and she shows this through her writing about the lives, culture, and traditions of the Adi people. Her main goal is to preserve and promote the Adi language, which is her mother tongue. Her writing is not just about her own interests; she wants to share with the world who her people are, how they live, and where they come from. She is committed to telling the story of the Adi people, including their way of life and where they originate from. Her stories highlight the strong beliefs, traditions, and the close relationship the Adi people have with nature, using storytelling, dance, mythology, and legends to do so.

In *The Black Hill*, nature functions not merely as a setting but as an active participant in the unfolding narrative. Rivers, forests, mountains, and valleys carry symbolic and spiritual meanings for the indigenous communities inhabiting the region. These natural elements shape social practices, spiritual beliefs, and cultural memory. By portraying the landscape as a living

entity, Dai constructs an ecological worldview in which humans exist as part of a larger environmental network.

This paper approaches *The Black Hill* through the theoretical framework of 'ecocriticism', which studies the relationship between literature and the natural environment. Ecocritical analysis seeks to understand how literary texts represent ecological relationships and how they challenge dominant anthropocentric perspectives.

Furthermore, the study also engages with "ecofeminist thought", which examines the interconnected oppression of women and nature. In Dai's narrative, women often act as cultural mediators who preserve oral traditions, ecological wisdom, and spiritual practices tied to the land. Their role reflects a gendered dimension of environmental consciousness embedded within indigenous communities.

Through a close reading of the novel, this paper argues that *The Black Hill* articulates a vision of ecological belonging rooted in indigenous knowledge systems. By exploring themes of landscape, colonial disruption, and cultural resilience, the novel invites readers to reconsider dominant paradigms of human–nature relationships and recognize the value of ancestral ecological wisdom.

Literature Review

Ecocriticism has developed as a significant field of literary study since the late twentieth century. Scholars such as Cheryll Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell have emphasized that literature plays an important role in shaping environmental awareness and ecological ethics. Ecocritical theory examines how literary works depict nature, environmental degradation, and human interactions with the natural world.

Lawrence Buell argues that literature has the power to reshape cultural attitudes toward nature by encouraging readers to recognize the interconnectedness of human and ecological systems. Similarly, Greg Garrard describes ecocriticism as a critical practice that explores environmental themes in literature while addressing broader questions about sustainability and ecological responsibility.

In the Indian context, ecocritical studies have increasingly focused on regional literatures that highlight indigenous environmental perspectives. Scholars observe that many indigenous traditions view nature not simply as a material resource but as a sacred and living presence. Such perspectives challenge Western industrial models that often treat nature as an object of exploitation.

Mamang Dai's works have received considerable scholarly attention for their portrayal of landscape and cultural memory. Critics argue that her writing reflects the oral traditions and spiritual cosmologies of Arunachal Pradesh's indigenous communities. Nature in her narratives is frequently depicted as animate and spiritually charged, revealing an intimate connection between environment and cultural identity.

Several scholars also examine *The Black Hill* as a historical narrative that reconstructs early encounters between indigenous societies and colonial powers. The arrival of British explorers and missionaries introduced new social structures and belief systems, which often disrupted traditional ecological practices. Dai's novel portrays these transformations through personal stories that reveal both cultural tension and adaptation.

Ecofeminist criticism further enriches the understanding of Dai's work. Ecofeminism suggests that patriarchal and colonial structures often exploit both women and nature. In *The*

Black Hill, female characters frequently preserve ecological knowledge through storytelling, rituals, and caregiving roles. Their presence reinforces the connection between gender, culture, and environmental consciousness.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on Mamang Dai, relatively few studies examine *The Black Hill* specifically through an integrated ecocritical and ecofeminist framework. This paper seeks to fill that gap by exploring how the novel connects environmental consciousness with themes of colonialism, identity, and cultural continuity.

Ethinic Identity And Culture:

The novel explores the complex nature of personal and group identities, focusing on various ethnic groups in Arunachal Pradesh. It looks at how the characters deal with and show their cultural identity, including their customs, traditions, and the language they speak. The story also shows how knowledge of culture is passed from older generations to younger ones and the difficulties individuals face when trying to balance their ethnic identity with the broader society. It highlights different indigenous traditions, rituals, and stories that are important in the characters' lives and help them feel connected to their culture and keep it alive. Dai says in an interview, "The oral tradition is a way of life that has supported us for centuries. All our beliefs, rituals, and customary practices have come to us through the oral tradition." (Sarangi 2) The book looks at the importance of storytelling and oral traditions, integrating local myths and legends into the story to show the deep link between culture and identity. "Mamang brings her knowledge of the old customs and beliefs of her people to share the many stories that affect the lives of Adivasis. She is looking for her own roots and records of the tribes, as she admits, so that they are kept safe and not forgotten in the rush of modernization." (Gaurav 1222)

The main characters of the story, Gimur and Kajinsha, are from the Adi and Mishmi Tribes. They marry each other even though they are from different ethnic backgrounds. Their love story also symbolizes the tribal and ethnic conflicts in the area. The writer describes Gimur and Kajinsha as "the children of the soil." The portrayal of Kajinsha's connection to the land shows his deep understanding of the environment, "The land was there for him to explore freely. The trees were a large green area that revealed its secrets to this man who knew the hidden paths and frozen routes over the mountains that separated the tribes." (Dai 35) The love story of Gimur and Kajinsha is closely connected to the historical events of the area. When Father Krick arrives at the village of Mebo in Arunachal Pradesh, the villagers strongly oppose the entry of the white men who want to set up a trading post. Seventeen-year-old Gimur shares the villagers' anger, driven by the British intruding into their land without any respect. During her search for the white men, Gimur meets Kajinsha, a resident of the Mishmee Hills. Their relationship brings challenges as they come from different clans and speak different languages. Facing disapproval from society, Gimur decides to leave her village with Kajinsha, starting a bold journey into the unknown, defying societal expectations and norms.

The story also looks at the struggle between keeping tribal identity alive and adjusting to outside influences. The characters deal with issues like modernization, loss of land, and the effects of outside forces on their cultural practices. It raises questions about the balance between tradition and progress and how cultural changes impact tribal communities. Characters share myths, legends, and folktales that have been handed down through generations, showing the importance of oral storytelling in preserving tribal stories, cultural values, and identity. "Tell them we were good. Tell them we also had some things to say. But we cannot read and write. So we tell stories. Stories...words...I too have words..." (Dai 288) Through the characters' interactions and conversations, readers get a view into the rich cultural heritage of the Nyishi people and the significance they place on keeping their traditions alive. The story also touches on the region's colonial past, the influence of British imperialism, and the challenges faced by

the local tribes. Through the experiences and interactions of the characters, it reflects how historical events have affected their lives and the gradual changes that have shaped the region.

The Sacred Landscape And Indigenous Spirituality:

Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* shows how indigenous groups have deep spiritual ties with their natural surroundings and cultures, but this connection is harmed by violence, leading to long-term damage that isn't often noticed (Nixon 17). Dai shows how the mismatch between environmental and cultural values causes the slow loss of traditional knowledge about the land. William Cronon's idea of the "trouble with wilderness" helps explain this disruption. Cronon says, "Western environmental values often ignore indigenous ways of living with nature, which weakens traditional practices" (Cronon 79). In The Black Hill, this is shown through how missionaries arrive and change local spiritual practices, weakening the community's bond with the land.

Dai uses local myths and symbols to show how important the environment is to the culture. The story of the Black Hill acts as a symbol for the land's strength and spiritual value. Dai writes, "The Black Hill" was a guardian, ancient and wise, watching over many generations of human actions" (The Black Hill 210). This shows that nature holds important wisdom and resilience. Ecocritical scholars say that myths help pass on ecological knowledge. Wendy Wheeler says, "Myths connect people to their environment, shaping their values and how they see nature" (Wheeler 32). By including myths in the story, Dai shows how storytelling helps keep ecological and cultural knowledge alive. The novel also focuses on spiritual ecology. David Abram writes in The Spell of the Sensuous that traditional societies "see the land as a living, talking presence" (Abram 9). Dai's portrayal of the land matches this view, showing how cultural stories help build a close relationship with the environment.

Women As Earth, Earth As Resistance: Ecofeminist Voices

The third part of the novel titled "Daughters of the Village" shows the image of Adi women who were busy with their daily tasks and at the same time had a close relationship with nature. These women lived in a world that was between myths and reality, between nature and people. They worked as caring and providing mothers. The novel shows women climbing steep hills with heavy baskets on their backs, their hearts beating strongly as they carried their burdens. In a society where men are in power, these women are mostly confined to household duties like cooking, taking care of children, collecting fuel wood, gathering forest products, and preparing and preserving food. In marriage, they are expected to fulfil their roles as providers for their families. When the narrator talks about her mother, she gives a clear picture of the struggles of Adi women:

"They asked her to remember the good times and said what a good homemaker she had been as the eldest daughter, as a wife and mother. There was always food in your house. They told her." (Dai 97)

The value of Adi women is judged based on how well they perform their household duties. They are appreciated for being good at managing a home and are not seen as having a life beyond this. Even though they are deeply involved in their domestic tasks, nature helps them by offering comfort and relief. Since their lives are closely tied to their environment, their survival depends on nature. The jungle is cleared for farming, seeds are planted, the earth feeds the crops, and in return, it provides food. Both nature and women are like the womb of production, both are caregivers and providers. Because of their close link, nature helps calm and ease the women's tiredness. In the novel, the narrator shares how nature gives women freedom, "the work is hard, but scouring the forest the women could at least stop, stretch and talk to each other" (Dai 73). In their busy lives, women can only find peace and freedom when they are in the forest, away from the rules and expectations of society. This clearly shows the deep connection between women and nature.

Ecofeminist ideas suggest that women and nature are connected because both have feminine qualities. Both are essential in sustaining life and offer similar benefits to humans and other creations. The novel also shows this connection through Nenem, a female character. The image of Nenem being with her domestic animals shows the peaceful and inseparable bond between women and nature. As the novel says:

" the green of living! The young shoots of plants, the sun and dew. The living mud, the stirring of worms. Nenem smiled to see the duck's great hunger and rejoiced in her performance and release." (Dai 112)

The feeding of the duck brought Nenem a sense of satisfaction and happiness, which comes from her own feminine qualities. From an ecofeminist perspective, it is the feminine qualities of women that help them understand and care for nature.

Conclusion:

Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* provides a rich exploration of the intricate relationships among land, culture, and history in the eastern Himalayan region. Through an ecocritical lens, the novel reveals how indigenous communities perceive the natural environment as a living and sacred presence deeply intertwined with their cultural identity.

The analysis demonstrates that landscape in the novel functions as both memory and witness.

Mountains, forests, and rivers preserve ancestral histories while shaping the cultural practices of the communities that inhabit them. At the same time, the narrative highlights the disruptive impact of colonial expansion and missionary intervention, which challenge traditional ecological relationships.

Despite these challenges, Dai emphasizes the resilience of indigenous cultures. Spiritual beliefs, oral traditions, and ecological knowledge continue to guide community life, offering alternative environmental ethics grounded in respect and reciprocity.

In an era marked by global environmental crises, such perspectives are increasingly significant. By foregrounding indigenous ecological worldviews, *The Black Hill* encourages readers to reconsider dominant human-nature paradigms and recognize the value of ancestral knowledge systems. Ultimately, Dai's work demonstrates that the voices of the land and the echoes of ancestral hills continue to shape cultural identity and environmental consciousness. Her novel thus contributes meaningfully to contemporary discussions of ecology, culture, and sustainability.

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"Oceanic cycles and Temporal philosophy; A Kalachakra approach to Riders to the Sea"

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Abstract

The paper is a comparative philosophical study of J.M. Synge's Riders to the Sea through the conceptual framework of Kalachakra and temporal philosophy. It moves beyond the conventional area of research theme like Irish Realism, maritime fatalism or modern tragedy rather it explores the theme of recurring oceanic cycle in the lives of the inhabitants as an inevitable cosmic event. The death of Maurya's family members neither a part of isolated tragic event nor it follows the Aristotelian tragedy. It is completely a different example indicating the cosmic effect of nature on human life in the form of repetition and completely discard the linear theory of time. By drawing the Indic concept of Kalachakra philosophy, the paper demonstrates how time moves like a wheel rather than its linear way. The repetitive death and decay as maritime tragedy in the family indicates the cyclic nature of time which is automatic and inevitable. The tidal movement of the sea parallels the wheel of time integrating human suffering within larger natural and cosmic cycle. Maurya's final acceptance is an example of recognition of temporal inevitability rather than resignation. The story contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship that bridges Irish Drama, environmental thought and comparative philosophy by situating the discuss into cyclic temporality and oceanic humanities. It ultimately contends that Synge's tragedy articulates a universal meditation on humanity's embeddedness with cosmic time.

Key words: Kalachakra, Cyclical Temporality, Cosmic Time, Maritime Tragedy, Oceanic Humanity, Irish Modern Drama.

Introduction:

J.M. Synge's Riders to the Sea is one of the most finest one act tragic play in English literature. The drama is inspired by his personal visit to Aran island and the family of that island as a victim of the natural destruction. The play is a clear portrayal of coastal island lives governed by the sea. Where the sea act both as their life and death. The dependency on the sea causes their destruction. It is completely inevitable reality which represents the oceanic cycle and the role of nature in human lives living with a dependency on the sea.

In the play Maurya an old woman seen to be the victim of destructive sea. She has lost all her five sons along with her husband and ultimately losses her last support Bartley. The most miserable condition is she is unable to get a last sight of the dead bodies of her family members. The drama depicts the repetition of tragedy in the life of family where helpless women remain as the victim to suffer the grief of life. The sea is not merely a background element of tragedy but also a dominant cosmic force which governs life death and human destiny. The repetition of disaster in the family suggests a pattern that goes beyond personal misfortune and enters philosophical territory of cycle of time.

Although scholars mention about the Irish nationalism, Celtic fatalism, modern tragedy and social realism of the play but the paper specially focuses on the temporal structure of the play that is how time operates within its tragic framework? Is the story structured around linier tragedy progression or does it reflect a cyclical philosophy of time where suffering repeats in cosmic rhythm?

Temporal philosophy concerns the ontological, metaphysical and phenomenological understanding of time. It interrogates whether time is linear or cyclical. Objective or experimental, finite or infinite. In literary studies temporality shapes narrative structure, tragic progression and the philosophical meaning of the events. In Riders to the Sea by J.M. Synge time does not operate as a simple chronological succession; rather it unfolds as repetition, recurrence and inevitability. Western classical thoughts especially Aristotle's mode represents time as linear which has beginning, middle and end. The model goes through exposition-conflict-climax-resolution. Death is the final function. However in current tragedy time moves in a cyclical manner with its recurring and repetitive effects of the lives of its characters. Creation and destruction are not opposite but complementary and inevitable phase of life in the ongoing cosmic movement.

In Indian metaphysical thought time is often imagined as cyclical and cosmological. The concept of Kalachakra (wheel of time) in Indian philosophy represents the cyclical nature of cosmic events, the interconnection between macrocosm (universe) and microcosm (human life). The inevitable decay and renewal. Scholar Anindita Niyogi Balslev in 'A Study of Time in Indian Philosophy' explains "Indian tradition frequently reject absolute beginnings and endings, emphasizing instead repetition and continuity" (Balslev). The theoretical framework allows us to read the sea in Synge's play as manifestation of cyclical temporality rather than accidental tragedy.

Modern European philosophy also complicates linear time. Martin Heidegger in 'Beginning and Time' reconceptualise temporality as existential rather than mechanical. Human existence is shaped by 'being towards death' means that time is experienced through anticipation, memory and finitude. In Riders to the Sea Maurya's temporality is experiential and recursive. Her present grief is inseparable from past losses. Each new death recalls earlier deaths, collapsing chronological time into layered memory. The repetition of drowning transforms time into a cycle of anticipation and mourning.

Unlike Aristotelian tragedy the play does not move from ignorance to recognition in a singular dramatic arc instead multiple sons have already died before the play begins, the sea continues its pattern without moral transformation. Bartley's death is not an exception but a recurrence. Maurya's final speech reflect not resistance but philosophical acceptance. "No man at all can be living for ever and we must be satisfied." (Riders to the Sea,38). The acceptance aligns more closely with cyclical metaphysics than with tragic revolt. Death become part of an ongoing rhythm rather than an ultimate catastrophe.

By an analysis of temporal philosophy with reference to the play the play can be interpreted not only in Irish realism point of view but it can be seen as a meditation on cosmic temporality. The sea functions as a natural force, a symbol of cyclical destruction and a temporal wheel absorbing generation. Thus temporal philosophy works as the bridge for applying the concept of Kalachakra model to the drama. The tragedy is not only isolated fate but a repetition of oceanic cycle.

The concept of Kalachakra is derived from the Sanskrit word Kala(time) and chakra(wheel) which means wheel of time originates in Indian philosophy. Where time is understood not as linear progression but as cyclical movement. Kalachakra represent the interrelationship between cosmic cycle, natural rhythm and human existence. Rather than conceiving time as straight path towards closure, Kalachakra frames existence as a continuous rotation of creation dissolution and renewal. According to Dalai Lama XIV "The external world and the internal world reflect one another; both are subject to cycles of arising and dissolution" (Dalai Lama).

In the play Riders to the Sea by Synge the Kalachakra framework illustrates the ocean not only a natural setting but also a symbol of cyclical temporality. The sea becomes the reason of death of all the male members of Maurya's family. Her father-in-law, husband and six sons are drowned. This is not an ordinary catastrophe in the life of Maurya but an ongoing pattern in the life of island community. The tragedy thus assumes a cyclical structure rather than a singular dramatic climax. Maurya's recollection of her sons reveals this pattern of recurrence. "There were Stephen and Shawn, were lost in the great wind." (Riders to the Sea,40). Her narrative collapses chronological distinctions presenting past drownings as continuous with the present. The deaths from a chain of repetition much like the revolving motion of the wheel of time. The culmination of this cyclical structure appears in Maurya's final acceptance "No man at all can be living for ever and we must be satisfied". (Riders to the Sea,38). The statement not only reflects acceptance but also it is a reflection of philosophical resignation to inevitability of temporal cycle. In Kalachakra thought destruction is not annihilation but transformation within the larger cosmic rhythm. Similarly Bartley's death does not disrupt a stable world; it conform the pattern already in motion. The sea continues, indifferent yet constant embodying what may be termed oceanic temporality.

Furthermore the tides themselves reinforces this symbolic alignment. The rising and falling sea mirrors cyclical cosmology returning again and again just as generation are born and lost. Human life participates in, but does not control this larger temporal rotation. Thus introducing Kalachakra philosophy into the analysis allows the play to be read as more than Irish regional tragedy it becomes a meditation on cyclical existence where nature, time and human suffering are inseparable. The sea functions analogously to the wheel of time absorbing individual lives while sustaining the continuity of cosmos. In the paly fate is inseparable from nature and both are structured within a large framework of cosmic time. The sea is not merely a natural environment but a force that represent inevitability, repetition and metaphysical order. Through the recurring deaths of the family member especially the male members Synge presents the tragedy as a larger cosmic rhythm rather than mere accidental misfortune.

In classical Greek tragedies we found fate is often linked to divine prophecy but the play represents complete different insight where fate is determined by cosmic nature. The habitants completely depend upon sea but the sea repeatedly destroys their lives. The paradox may be termed as environmental fatalism. The repetition of death suggests the destiny determined by the natural world. It's not a punishment by nature but a continuous rhythmic pattern. The sea in the play functions as cosmic rather than merely a local presence. It governs livelihood, death, emotional life and social continuity. Blue humanities scholar such as Steve Mentz argues that the ocean destabilizes human centred narratives and reminds us of 'the inhuman scale of maritime space'. The sea exceeds human intention, placing individual suffering within vast natural temporality. This aligns with the philosophical view that nature operates according to impersonal cycle. The storms, tides and currents are indifferent yet constant. The islanders cannot escape from this order; they can only endure it.

The relationship between fate and nature becomes cleared when read through the Indic concept of Kalachakra (wheel of time). As explained by Vesna A. Wallace Kalachakra presents time as cyclical interlinking cosmic process and human existence. Destruction is not ultimate annihilation but part of ongoing transformation. In the play Bartley's death is not unique; it is the continuation of cycle already in motion. Maurya's final words "No man at all can be living for ever and we must be satisfied." (Riders to the Sea,38). Reflects an awareness of cosmic temporality. Her acceptance signals recognition that life and death revolve within a larger pattern beyond human control. Another most remarkable element in the play is the absence of moral blame. The death is not caused by an evil character. There is no tragic flow in the

Aristotelian sense instead human agency is limited by cosmic condition. Philosophically this resembles what Mircea Eliade as the sacred structure of cyclical time where events reenact in primordial patterns rather than result from individual errors. The drowning are repetition of archetypal pattern human confronting the elemental sea. The culmination of fate, nature and cosmic time appears in Maurya's resignation instead of protest. She expresses stillness this peace suggests acceptance of natural law, resignation of temporal inevitability and integration into cosmic rhythm. Thus tragedy becomes metaphysical rather than purely emotional. The sea's violence is part of a universal order. Human suffering gains meaning through participation in that order. In the drama fate is not imposed by God nor generated by moral failure. It arises from humanity's embeddedness within natural and cosmic cycles. The sea represents a temporal force analogues to the wheel of time, where nature governs existence through recurring patterns. Through Maury's final acceptance Synge transforms environmental fatalism into philosophical recognition of cosmic temporality.

This study has examined riders to the sea through the interdisciplinary lens of temporal philosophy and the Indic concept of Kalachakra arguing that the play transcends regional Irish tragedy to become a meditation on cyclical cosmic existence. While traditional criticism situates the drama within Irish realism, Celtic Fatalism or modern tragic form, a temporal philosophical reading reveals a deeper structural pattern governed by recurrence rhythm and inevitability. The repeated drownings of Maurya's husband and sons do not function as isolated tragic incidents but as manifestation of oceanic cycle. The sea emerges as more than a natural setting; it becomes a temporal force an embodiment of cosmic recurrence. Its tides, storms and rhythms mirrors what Kalachakra philosophy describes as the wheel of time, a continuous process of creation, destruction and renewal. Human life in this framework participates in rather than controls this vast cycle.

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From Himalayan Hermitages to Faerie Realms: Green and Blue Humanities in Kalidasa and Spenser

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Abstract

This paper presents a comparative ecological reading of Kalidasa and Edmund Spenser through the frameworks of Green Humanities and Blue Humanities. While Kalidasa' s works Treat nature as sacred, alive and connected to it. Human life, Spenser's writing presents scenes that are allegorical, moral, and politically charged. Kalidasa Dissolving the boundaries between humans and the environment, to emphasize ecological harmony Forests, rivers, clouds and seasonal rhythms. On the contrary, Spenser Frame as nature a symbolic terrain of virtue, Temptation, and social discourse. Still, both writers foreground Landscape and waterscape agent to shape moral and emotional experience. By adding Sanskrit eco- spirituality with Renaissance allegorical ecology, this paper argues for it that premodern literary traditions The offer valuable insights to contemporary environmental humanities.

Keywords: Kalidasa, Edmund Spenser, Green Humanities, Blue Humanities, Ecocriticism

Introduction

"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks." (John Muir)
The relationship between humans and nature It has been for a long timeframe a central concern I literary traditions in other cultures historical periods. From ancient mythologies to early modern allegories, Nature has not only acted as a setting rather value a living presence. It's shaping up human emotions, Ethics and identities. I recent decades, the emergence of environmental humanities has changed literary studies by diverting attention from uncontaminated anthropocentric interpretations courage ecological interdependence and environmental consciousness.

Within this developing field, Green Humanities and Blue Humanities has appeared as critical frameworks to understand how literature represents. Land and water respectively Green Humanities to emphasize terrestrial ecologies forests, Flora, fauna and seasonal cycles While Blue Humanities foreground aquatic environments such as rivers, seas, rain and clouds. Together they offer a comprehensive lens to explore through. The dynamic interplay Among humans and the natural world.

This paper performs a comparative study of Kalidasa and Edmund Spenser, two traditional literary figures from very varied cultural and historical contexts. Despite these differences, Exhibitions by both authors a deep engagement with nature and their representations differ significantly in form, function and function the philosophical grounding. The works of Kalidasa are reflected. An eco- spiritual worldview Root in Indian traditions, where nature is sacred and intrinsically connected to human life.

Spenser, writes the context of the English Renaissance, often portrays nature as a symbolic and symbolic landscape, where moral and political meanings. By checking selected

works from both authors through the frameworks of Green and Blue Humanities, this task has been attempted to be made visible. The Diversity of Ecological imagination I premodern literature and demonstrating its relevance to contemporary environmental thought.

Methodology

This study adopts a comparative, qualitative, and interdisciplinary methodology grounded in the frameworks of Green Humanities and Blue Humanities within ecocritical discourse. The primary objective is to examine how Kalidasa and Edmund Spenser conceptualise and represent natural environments both terrestrial and aquatic and to analyse the ethical, emotional, and symbolic dimensions embedded within these representations.

The research employs close textual analysis as its central method. Selected primary texts Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*, *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, and *Ritusamhara*, along with Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and *The Shepheardes Calender* are analysed in detail to identify recurring ecological motifs such as forests, rivers, clouds, seasons, and landscapes. Particular attention is paid to imagery, metaphor, narrative function, and character environment interactions. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of how nature operates not merely as a backdrop but as an active agent within the literary structure.

Moreover, the work utilises a comparative approach to literature, pitting the Sanskrit classic literature with the English renaissance literature. This intercultural comparison allows the determination of convergences as well as divergences in ecological thinking. Whereas the texts of Kalidasa are read in the context of Indian eco-spiritual traditions and non-dualistic philosophies, the texts of Spenser are read against the background of Renaissance humanism, Christian ethics, and allegorical traditions. It is grounded on ecocriticism with its notions of the Green Humanities (the ecologies of land) and the Blue Humanities (the ecologies of water). Contemporary environmental humanities secondary sources are also included to aid the analysis as well as place the study in the context of existing scholarly discussions. Critical views on material ecocriticism, ecological agency and hydrological imagination are offered by Serpil Oppermann, Astrida Neimanis, Serenella Iovino, and Lawrence Buell.

In addition, the paper also deploys an interpretative and hermeneutic approach to comprehend symbolic and philosophical aspects of nature by the two authors. The allegorical landscapes by Spenser are discussed as the moral and psychological creation, whereas the nature images by Kalidasa are viewed as the representation of the comprehensive and connected world-image. Through the combination of textual analysis, comparative methodology and ecocritical theory, this study will have shown that the premodern literary traditions can contribute to the current issues of environmental concern. The approach therefore brings together the literary studies and the environmental humanities and underscores the timelessness of the classical texts in ecological discourse

Theoretical Framework: Green and Blue Humanities

The Green Humanities is an interdisciplinary method which deals with terrestrial ecosystems in literature and culture. This model studies the representation of forests, landscapes, plants, animals, and seasonal cycles in texts, and commonly focuses on the interdependency between human and non-human life. Green Humanities promote a reconsideration of the anthropocentric views in the manner in which they suggest readers to acknowledge the agency of nature and reconsider a hierarchical interaction between humans and the environment.

Instead, the Blue Humanities are preoccupied with aquatic worlds and ecological watersheds. In this context, water is perceived as a moving and changing component which is able to transfer memory, emotion and cultural values. Streams, seas, precipitation and clouds

are not just objects but agents of narration. They are synonymous with movement, connexion, fluidity, and change, and tend to distort the demarcations between spaces and identities.
Collectively these frameworks broaden the ecocriticism framework to include land and water in the analysis of literary works. They permit a more detailed insight into the ways in which nature can act as a moving force in forming narrative meaning, emotional response, and moral contemplation.

Kalidasa: Eco-Spirituality and Ecological Harmony

Kalidasa's writings are an over-whelming example of an ecologically oriented thought rooted in Indian cultural and Philosophical thought. Nature is not only described but is also in a sense, glorified and admired. Man, nature and animals are part of each other and are mutually dependent.

Meghaduta and the Blue Humanities

In *Meghaduta* the cloud is the main character and epitomizes the qualties of Blue Humanities. The story is about a Yaksha who has been separated from his love and asks a wandering cloud to take his message over a great distance. The device makes the cloud a sentient, compassionate messenger able to comprehend and to communicate human feelings.
Across shifting terrains, the cloud drifts through scenes rich with feeling - rivers carve paths not just through land but memory. Places like the Ganga appear less as waterways, more as presences that shape inner turmoil. Though motion carries it forward, what lingers is a thread linking distance and desire. Where stone meets sky, meaning accumulates quietly, shaped by absence.Flowing rather than fixed, water shifts constantly through space and time. Because it carries change, it connects faraway regions along with inner feelings. Although invisible at times, the cloud links apartness with coming together. Movement - both bodily and felt - lives within its form.

Abhijnanasakuntalam and the Green Humanities

Far from the court's noise, the grove in *Abhijnanasakuntalam* breathes quiet balance between people and wilderness. Her touch on leaves, her voice among birds - Shakuntala moves like a thread woven into that green stillness.

From time to time, she waters each plant like a parent tending a child, while speaking gently to creatures that stay close by her side. Instead of treating them as lesser forms, she shares space with animals on equal terms. The retreat breathes slowly, shaped by those who walk within it and how they feel. As Shakuntala leaves behind the clearing, branches droop low, almost bowing forward. Sorrow spreads across the land quietly - birds fall silent, deer linger near empty paths.
This image blurs where person ends and environment begins, offering a view of ecology built on mutual understanding, exchange, attention. Far from being just scenery, the woods take part in the story - shifting it, mirroring those within.

Ritusamhara: Seasonal Ecology and Cyclical Time

Kalidasa explores the six Indian seasons through poetry in Ritusamhara while describing the emotional and experiential aspects that correspond to each season. The work demonstrates Green and Blue Humanities because it focuses on natural cycles which operate together with environmental rhythms.

Spring shows itself as a season which brings love and new beginnings but summer generates hot temperatures which lead to people becoming distant from each other. The monsoon season brings rain, fertility, and union, highlighting the life-giving power of water. The seasons of autumn and winter present a time for people to find peace through deep reflection.

Human existence demonstrates its full connection to natural cycles through the patterns which occur during each season. Emotions exist as environmental responses which emerge when someone encounters their surroundings. The complete ecological system emerges from the combination of forests with flowers and rain and clouds which demonstrate that all life forms exist as one unified system.

Spenser: Allegory, Morality, and Ecological Symbolism

Nature exists as a spiritual unity in Kalidasa's works but Spenser uses nature to create symbolic and allegorical meanings. Spenser explores moral and political and social subjects through his depiction of natural environments during the English Renaissance period.

The Faerie Queene: Moral Ecology

In, *The Faerie Queene*, nature serves as the performance area which allows for the evaluation of spiritual and moral values. The symbolic value of landscapes reveals how characters feel inside and shows their moral predicaments.

The "Wandering Wood" serves as a symbol which shows people become lost while their moral choices become uncertain. The hero loses their way in this area which represents the dangers people face when they remain uninformed while facing seductive dangers. The "Bower of Bliss" creates a beautiful landscape which conceals its dangerous nature. The park displays stunning natural beauty which conceals deep moral decay to demonstrate the dangers which people face when they exceed their limits.

In these examples, nature is not inherently benevolent. The story uses this approach to teach readers about essential life principles. The Green Humanities in Spenser's work are thus filtered through allegory, transforming natural landscapes into symbolic terrains of virtue and vice.

Blue Humanities in Spenser

Spenser employs water imagery in his works to show how things evolve through unstable transitions which bring about permanent changes. The story uses rivers and seas to create boundary areas which show where characters start their travels and where they finish their evolving paths.

Kalidasa shows nurturing waters in his work but Spenser presents his water scenes with multiple unclear meanings. The symbols function as representations which show dangerous situations and unclear circumstances and instances that test ethical conduct. Water functions as an active environment which demonstrates human experiences moving through time while showing how unpredictable moral decisions can become.

The Shepheardes Calender: Pastoral Ecology

The Shepheardes Calender provides a substantial discussion of nature using the pastoral genre. The text is divided into a series of twelve eclogues, each of which is related to a different month of the year. The text, therefore, connects environmental change with human emotions and concerns.

In the "January" eclogue, the barren environment of winter represents the sorrow of being in love but not having it reciprocated. The harsh environment, therefore, mirrors the emotional desolation of the speaker. In another eclogue, "February," there is a discussion between an oak and a briar, which represents the conflict of tradition and youth.

The "March" eclogue is a celebration of spring, which represents renewal and hope. On the other hand, the "November" eclogue deals with themes of mourning and loss, as does the environment. The above discussion, therefore, reveals how Edmund Spenser uses Green Humanities for understanding and expressing human experiences, not as a divine creation but as a reflective tool.

Comparative Analysis

Kalidasa and Spenser maintain separate ecological systems which develop through their different cultural backgrounds and philosophical beliefs.

Kalidasa's literary works focus on presenting the world as an integrated system where all elements exist together in perfect harmony. The natural world exists as a holy entity which contains life and demonstrates emotional reactions. Humans exist as part of the natural world because their bodies remain linked to the environment. The perspective agrees with eco-spiritual traditions which focus on maintaining equilibrium between all living beings and their environment.

Spenser creates a sophisticated connection between human existence and natural elements which he shows through his work. People create symbolic meanings through their moral judgments when they use landscapes as spaces to conduct ethical investigations. Human beings create their own understanding of nature through their cultural beliefs and their ability to interpret the world around them.

Despite these differences, both authors recognize the agency of nature. Nature functions as both a living companion and a symbolic power which shapes human life through its influence on stories and personal experiences. The two institutions recognize that literary studies require ecological perspectives to exist as a shared core value which they both support.

Relevance to Contemporary Environmental Thought

In dealing with the present-day environmental crises, the literary works of Kalidasa and Spenser offer relevant information on the relationship between humans and nature.

In fact, the eco-spiritual vision presented by Kalidasa promotes a sense of respect and reverence for nature by stressing the importance of interconnectedness, which is similar to the modern human relationship with nature that promotes the need for sustainability and responsibility for the environment. Moreover, the literary works present a critique of exploitative relations between humans and nature by portraying nature as sacred and animate. Spenser's allegorical landscapes, even as they present an approachably distinct vision from the works of Kalidasa, stress the moral dimension of the relationship between humans and nature by suggesting that the relationship between humans and the environment is moral rather than utilitarian. In this regard, the relationship between humans and the environment is closely related to the question of morality.

The Green and Blue Humanities provide a new evaluation of the literary works produced before the modern era by presenting a link between the present and the past, suggesting that the human relationship with the environment is not a modern phenomenon but has been part of the literary tradition from the beginning.

Textuality, Ecology, and Ethical Imagination

A detailed analysis of Kalidasa and Spenser brings out their ecological imagination and ethos in a larger ecotheoretical and eco-philosophical perspectives. The poetic imagination of *Meghaduta* does not merely portray but enlivens and enkindles something in nature and artefacts of nature.

The term "Megha" means cloud and in the text, *Meghaduta* the cloud is the vital agent for conveyance of ethereal and sensual messages. The Yaksha states that it is very appropriate for the cloud to wander in the sky. The Yaksha does not refer to the cloud as a mere thing. It is a companion who can offer the Yaksha other things the cloud may not be able to do. The cloud cannot take no for an answer as he simply nods. The cloud, in essence, is a mobile companion on any given journey. The cloud as an agent of meaningful motion is a tactile proof of the

geographical and emotional cartography of *Meghaduta*.The riverine imagery of *Meghaduta* underlines the persisting ecological imagination of Kalidasa related to Blue Humanities and the health of our sick rivers. Valmiki had dramatized the agency of rivers in a piece of conspicuous geographical cartography. The cloud bridges the gap between two water bodies with the help of a medium in between. At one moment the cloud and at one moment the light is the medium. Next, we see "hydrological imagination" as a contemporary ecocritic Neiman would, a belief.

Similarly, in *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, Kalidasa depicts the forest hermitage as an ecological microcosm based on reciprocity and nurture. *Abhijnanasakuntalam* Kalidasa also envisions the forest hermitage as an ecological microcosm based on reciprocity and care. She is said to care for plants 'as a mother to her children (Kalidasa, *Abhijnanasakuntalam*) thereby showing an ethic of nurture over exploitation. As she is taken away from the hermitage, the trees seem to shed leaves unwilling to part with her" (Kalidasa, *Abhijnanasakuntalam*). Kalidasa anthropomorphizes nature but not in a way that dehumanises mankind but rather to highlight the sensibility of the living environment (ibid).

Such representations come close to what contemporary theorists identify as 'more-than-human relationality' (Alaimo 2016). Kalidasa's works challenge the binary between culture and nature, but rather a continuum of more-than-human relationality. His ecological vision is thus not only aesthetic but also ethical, advocating a mode of existence based on harmony and respect.

By contrast, Edmund Spenser's ecological imagination functions on a much more allegorical and moralized level. In The Faerie Queen, nature is rarely given as an independent entity but rather by the psychological states of the characters. The 'Wandering Wood, 'in which 'the traveller lost himself in endless error,' (Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, I.i) This landscape represents confusion and a moral maze reflecting the inner state of the knight. Nature here is therefore a projection of consciousness rather than an independent force.

The 'Bower of Bliss' provides yet another example of Spenser's moral ecology. The 'Bower of Bliss' provides another compelling instance for Spenser's moral ecology, "A place pickt out by choice of best alive, that nature's work by art can imitate" (Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, II.xii). The bower is an artificially enhanced natural setting imbues it with a deceptive quality that implies that beauty conceals danger. Spenser's natural spaces, unlike Kalidasa's, are ambiguous and require restraint and moral judgment.

The use of water imagery in Spenser's works adds more complexity to the ecological framework. Rivers and seas are often "liminal places". Crossings over water in Faerie Queene are "moments of trial" and transformation that further underscore the fluid uncertainty of experience that is moral. Spenser's waters are never merely scenic; they are thresholds of change and sites of ethical testing" (McColley 2007). Put in such terms, one might say that such instances of blue humanities are more ambivalent than in the case of Kalidasa.

The Shepheardes Calender "offers a less spiritual but still symbolic encounter with nature." The use of pastoral mode in *The Shepheardes Calender* enables Spenser to not only explore the seasonal cycles but also to mirror human emotions and social issues. In the "January" eclogue, Colin Clout laments for his one sided love against the barren landscape of winter: "Aye me, I have been long a lover true, / And yet have never found my love my due" (Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calender*, January). Winter is the harshest season and this is reflective of his emotional desolation, evidence of the use of natural cycles to externalise the human experience.

In the "February" eclogue in which the oak and the briar argue is one example of Spenser's use of nature to teach morals. The oak, which embodied age and stability is eventually undermined by the briar, which symbolised youth and ambitious opportunism. This anthropocentric nature of Spenser's moral teaching involves the allegorical use of plant which serves as vehicle for human.

Despite these differences, both Kalidasa and Spenser give the natural world a sense of agency. In Kalidasa, this agency is intrinsic and sacred, resulting from a world view that sees nature as animate and interconnected. In Spenser, it is a constructed and symbolic agency, dictated by allegorical and moral narrative imperatives. In both cases, nature is not a passive element but an active participant in the generation of meaning and experience.

From the contemporary environmental humanities line of enquiry, these texts are complementary. From the point of view of the contemporary environmental humanities, these texts can be seen to complement each other, for Kalidasa's eco-spiritual vision can reflect the modern suggestion ecological harmony and sustainability, pointing to the need to recognise the non-human world for its intrinsic value. On the other hand, Spenser's allegorical landscapes foreground the ethical issues in environmental engagement, pointing out that human engagements with the physical nature are all mediated by cultural and ethical contexts.
As modern ecocriticism continues to evolve, revisiting premodern texts through Green and Blue Humanities becomes relevant. Just as easily as revisiting terrestrial ecocriticism, scholars may reconsider studies of the Green and Blue Humanities in premodern texts. Kalidasa and Spenser contribute in a significant and detailed manner to this field of study.

Conclusion

This paper has looked into the representation of nature in the works of Kalidasa and Edmund Spense through the Green and Blue Humanities lenses. Both authors, albeit with different approaches, showcase the importance of nature to human experience.
Kalidasa's works provide a vision of an ecological harmony, where human and natural world live in an interdependent relationship of emotions and respect. Spenser's writings, on the other hand, views nature as a symbolic and moral landscape reflecting the complexities of the human psyche. Together, these perspectives improve our understanding of environmental humanities, showing how different literature works with environmental issues. In facing the world's growing environmental concerns, looking back at these literary traditions can give us information as well as trigger ecologically more visions of thinking.

Finally, the study of Green and Blue Humanities in pre-modern text brings to the forefront the significance of nature in human world and the power of literary texts to construct the ecological consciousness beyond time and space.

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The Nature–Mind Interface: Exploring Ecopsychological Elements in Ted Hughes' Poems.

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Abstract

The theory of Ecopsychology suggests that environmental crisis is not just physical, but psychological. Within each mind, there is a greater ecological self which is unconscious. It is the integration of ecology and mind within a human being through emotional and spiritual connection can restore the Earth. The works of Ted Hughes (1930-1998), the late poet laureate of England, aligns deeply with this theory as it focuses on animal imageries in his poem collections *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960), which invoke a sense of dark ecology in the mind of readers, indicating towards the mysterious, unconscious relation of human and the non-human world. This paper seeks to argue that Ecocriticism starts with observation and introspection of one's own mind. Ones mental imageries and personal experiences with nature form the basis of one's ecological consciousness. By situating the poems of Ted Hughes within the framework of ecopsychology, this paper aims to interpret his imageries as primordial energy of human beings, which is often suppressed by rationality, resulting in human alienation from nature. The paper is a selective study of four poems, "The Thought-Fox" (1957) "Jaguar" (1957) "Pike" (1960) and "Hawk Roosting" (1960) and aims to explore how Hughes poems represent the ecological unconscious of his mind, expanding the boundaries of ecocriticism in literature, challenging shallow ethics of bio-preservation.

Keywords: Deep Ecology, Ecopsychology, Eco-trauma, Psyche, Animals

Introduction:

With the growing awareness of environmental crisis across globe, our mind is always pushed with urgency to fix it. Theodore Roszak, in the chapter "Scare Tactics and Guilt Trips" from the book *The Voice of the Earth* (1992), suggests that the current environmental discourse often uses fear and guilt in human mind to save the earth. However, emotions like fear and guilt creates anxiety and not transformation (Roszak 35-39). Humans consider the environmental crisis as something outside of them and try to solve it by using their minds. This creates a rift between nature and humans, which is the base of the ecological crisis of this age (Roszak 39-44). Postmodern poet Ted Hughes, who was also the poet laureate of England from 1984 to 1998, constantly unsettles this boundary between human mind and the non-human world, in his poetries. His poems blur the line between primordial and civilized. Roszak, in his book *Voice of the Earth* (1992) argues that the human mind contains an 'ecological unconscious', similar to that of Jung's Psychological unconscious. The 'ecological unconscious' is deeper part of human mind which has an inherent awareness of our unity with the natural world. Technological advancement of the modern world has severed human psyche into smaller units and separated the 'ecological unconsciousness' from the personal ego (Roszak 48-68). Hughes's poems precisely ruptures this psychic divide by mingling the wild and the untamed into human mind, provoking a sense of terror and uncertainty. Poems like "The Thought-Fox" (1957) "Jaguar" (1957) "Pike" (1960) and "Hawk Roosting" (1960) carries simple animal imageries which could be interpreted as mini yet massive poems, unraveling the complicacies of natural world, with its predatory instincts and wilderness, questioning the falsity behind anthropocentric concerns of bio-preservation.

"The Thought Fox" (1957) is a poem from the collection *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), which encapsulate the process of intuitive writing, as in the middle of the night a fox enters into the mind of the poet to inspire him and a page is printed in the end. Hughes, in prose collection *Winter Pollen* (1994), reveals that the poem was inspired by a dream he encountered while he was in Cambridge University. The dream came to him when Ted had taken a nap, as a break from his academic essay writing and a fox-like man entered his room. The fox put his bloody paws on the unfinished paper and told him, "You are killing us." Hughes interpreted this dream as a message, suggesting him to reject overtly intellectual, academic writing and hook back to his intuitive writing as a poet. The background of the poem clearly emphasizes the mysterious relation of animal tangibility in the process of creative writing. The essay "Why Look at Animals?"(1980) suggests that 'animal gaze' is a profound experience to human mind as it makes human realize, they share this earth with similar life forms with different sensory experience. Berger suggests that, mutual eye contact and personal interaction with animals can help human solve their identity crisis. He also criticizes the marginalization of animals by the modern society suggesting that, human mind need to behold animalism in its natural ways, rather than keeping pets which are no more than puppets, reinforcing human control over nature (Berger 1-18). In the poem, a fox slowly enters into the poet's mind and a page is printed. Hughes, raw depiction of fox evokes a sense of wilderness and earthly creativity. The fox serves as an agent, completely different from the poet, as he writes "Something else is alive/ Beside the clock's loneliness-" (Hughes 2-3). Roszak's ecopsychological theory implies that human creativity often arises from unconscious connections to natural patterns and rhythms of the earth. Human mind is rooted in immediate reality but the whole of psyche is linked to the entire universe (Roszak 44-48). Hughes's fox, which comes out from a dream, inspiring his poetry, cannot be simply a metaphor; rather, an element from the 'ecological unconscious', beyond his rational thought. Thus, the fox symbolizes the greater ecological unconscious within the poet's mind which expands and connects the poet personal ego to the natural world. The poem therefore portrays creativity as a form of ecological communication. The fox represents intuition, instinct, and wild intelligence entering into empty but open human mind. The poet does not control the fox but simply witnesses its arrival. This reversal of authority challenges the traditional view that humans dominate nature through language and representation. Furthermore, the fox's physical presence, "sudden sharp hot stink" (21), "shadowy legs" (19) and its sudden emergence, emphasizes the predatory instincts of the fox, drawing a close connection between 'negative capability' and poetry. The poet simply witnesses the fox's movement without interpreting it. This shows that the poet allows the animal gaze to influence his mind without any filter. The line "you are killing us" might indicate the psychological segregation and consequent marginalization of animals. 'Eco-trauma' is a term used in the book *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (1995) edited by Roszak**,** which suggests that damage done to the ecosystem does not only affect the physical environment but also human mind, emotions and identity. Trauma is psychological reaction to repressed pain, which often comes out as signs of anxiety or depression. The symbolism behind fox-man, uttering the words "killing us" might suggest the repressed ecological pain which the poet is experiencing in his dreams. Excessive intellectualism alludes to the modern rational society and fox is related to nature who is accusing the poet for killing them, representing the mind-nature fragmentation. His unconscious grief, however, has helped him write eco-centric or animal-centric poetries, which has bridged the gap between his mind and nature.

Hughes poem "Jaguar" (1957) is another piece of literary evidence which depicts the marginalization of animals. The poem starts with the depiction of lethargic animals kept in a zoo, as in the lines, "The apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun" and "tiger and lion//Lie still as the sun" (Hughes 1-5). However, one animal captivates the visitors' attention and that is the Jaguar. Inside the cage, the Jaguar refuses to conform and prance across the bars angrily.

Animals kept in zoos, creates 'one-sided gaze', argues John Berger, in his essay "Why Look at Animal"(1978), where the onlookers come to see animals as exotic, wild, unnatural piece of artifacts. This distorts the culture of animal-human relationship, as animals are cut off from their natural habitat to serve as an object of spectacle for human curiosity. There is no scope for 'mutual gaze' between animal and humans to harbor an authentic relationship (Berger 18-26). This in itself symbolizes the narrow culture of bio-preservation within scientific discourse. Ted Hughes has tried to portray this injustice in his poem, through the angry, rebelling Jaguar, who disrupts the artificial environment. However, in the last stanza, Hughes, romanticizes with the instinctual vitality of the Jaguar, calling it a visionary despite of imprisonment, which shows this personal drives for freedom against societal constraints. Even though the poet empathizes with the Jaguar's aggression, he exaggerates it to disclose his personal emotions. This further brings us to criticism of Anthropomorphism in animal representation as the poem is laced with the poet's personal desires and emotions. However, notably, the quality of Hughes's ecological experience is always about granting agency to animals through his poems, which indicate towards his personal aspects and mindset. Ecological awareness is not an objective understanding of nature, rather personal and subjective perception of the non-human world. Each human being experiences nature in a unique way and the perception is always influenced by their identity and vice versa. Furthermore, humans have always understood animals by relating them to myth, culture, hybrid creatures, dreams, animal spirits and deities. Such notions prove that animals and natural world cannot be understood independently and their symbolic relation is essential to human empathy and respect (Shepherd, *Thinking Animals* 125-142). Hughes's poems are ecocritical, not in the sense that it raise environmental issues, but because it observes nature with a sense of personal awareness, marveling at its dangers and wilderness. At this point, nature and mind interface each other, with recognition and fascination, as the mind observes itself, through nature. Thus, "Juguar" (1957) is poem which represents Ted Hughes's desire to break free from the modern society to embrace his primordial energy. He calls the Jaguar a visionary who sees beyond the horizon of the cage, which mirrors to his own situation as a poet of the western world.

In the poem "Pike" (1960) Hughes observes the most terrifying aspects of animal world. Violence, murder and establishment of supremacy by fighting for territory are the brutal realities of nature. Hughes describes the murderous and savage pike fishes with royal grandeur. Pike fishes are "Killers from the egg", with a face that looks like evil grin (Hughes 3). The poet is aware of the Pike's scary presence beneath the water and from over the surface their silhouette looks like "submarine delicacy" (Hughes 8). The Pike's camouflage and beauty suggest the power of evolution and predatory instincts in even small animals like the pike. The fish is as old as England, with perfection in hunting (Hughes 40). The poet describes that once he had kept three pike fishes in an aquarium, and within days only one pike fish triumphed by killing the other two. The poet nonchalantly, shows the predatory instincts of nature through this poem. Val Plumwood essay collection *The Eye of the Crocodile* (2012), which reflects on her 1985 survival, from crocodile attack, suggests that her near to death experience shattered her human centric view point when she realized that human are just a part of huge food chain and nothing special in the ecosystem. She claims that it is our ego that makes us feel special and superior to other animals, but in reality the ecosystem in indifferent to this false sense of superiority. Here, all sense of justice and human made rules collapse as we realize that there is no boundary between the prey and the predator (Plumwood 9-21). In the third essay, "The wisdom of the balanced rock: The parallel universe and the prey perspective" (2012), she poses an important question, that who was she to deny the crocodile the food of her body (Plumwood 36)? According to her, human bodies are nothing but a part of matter-energy exchange system of the ecosystem. In the poem, the poet too realizes that those pike fishes are more powerful than him, as in the final section he becomes afraid, "That past nightfall I dared not cast // with

a frozen hair on my head" of the pond and the pikes swarming beneath it (Hughes 30-40). The pike emerges from the depth of primordial energy and evokes a sense of fear, uncertainty and horror. The poet witnesses the brutality and cannibalism, with a non-interpretative gaze, which further relates to the concept of 'mesh', by famous environmentalist Timothy Morton. According to Morton, in cellular level, everything in ecosystem is a complex system of energy-matter exchange and there is no clear boundary between human, animals and non-human objects, which can be called as 'mesh' (Morton 7-15). Ted Hughes captures the dark traits of nature and animal blurring the line between safety and savage world. He embraces the uncertainty with fascination and wonder, which makes his poem anti-pastoral. By observing the pike, the poet's mind and nature collide with each other. The pike awakens a sense dark reverence within the poet's mind which further enhances his ecological awareness. Roszak's ecopsychology suggests that acknowledging humanity's place within the ecosystem can restore psychological balance. Hughes' observations are personal to him, as he faces the dark side of the nature, shaping his personal view. The poem challenges the morality and shallow ethical construct of the modern society which tries to eliminate all evil by imposing laws on violence and terror, when in reality; nature has taken million of years to make one pike fish equipped with its predatory body. Thus, violence is an integral part of nature that can be seen even in fishes as long as just three inches. In this way, Hughes captures a true picture of nature through his poem, instead of the romanticized and merchandised version of it. As Berger, points out in his essay, children in the industrial world is surrounded with animal imageries, with toys, picture, games, Disney movies and etc, which impart a false humanized concept of animals on them. The deliberate exclusion of animals from modern society, make parents take their children to zoo to see the real version of these reproduction. While the zoo, again is an artificial constructed, where children don't get to have a personal interaction with animals, leading to a new generation of society detached from natural world (Berger 20-21). Roszak notes that, human mind is also a natural space, however, the detachment of psyche from the ecological spaces confine the mind to its personal ego, which creates anxiety and depression in the modern (Roszak, *Voice of the Earth* 48-68). Thus, the poem destabilizes the reader's mind to rethink the aspect of violence, predation and wilderness within nature, hinting towards larger forces, governing human lives.

The poetries of Ted Hughes, frequently uses animal imageries, to show the primordial energy within the human mind. "Hawk Roosting" (1960) is a poem, through which Hughes uses the Hawk's monologue to show ecological hierarchy, predation instincts and dominance:

> My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
> It took the whole of Creation
> To produce my foot, my each feather:
> Now I hold Creation in my foot. (Hughes 9–12)

He voices the Hawk to explore animal consciousness and the theme of supremacy in the survival game. In Hughes's poem, the Hawk's perspective is subjective and devoid of morality. Donna Haraway challenges the traditional idea of scientific superiority, in her famous essay "Situated Knowledges" (1988), suggesting that knowledge is never neutral or objective, instead it is always shaped by the historical, personal, subjective experience of the individual or group (Haraway 597). Her essay, studies feminism in the light of subjectivity, critiquing the 'God Trick' concept of scientific objectivity which often projects the idea that knowledge can be judged from a nowhere point, largely created by white male scientists. Ecocriticim, in literary studies can also be seen through this perspective, that to each writer, his knowledge is unique, build upon his personal experiences with the ecosystem. Ted Hughes, as a child, was always fascinated with animal world, which has influenced his poems as well. But, what made him focus on the darker and violent aspect must be linked to his personal experiences. Themes of evolution are a common element in all this poems. Similar to the poem "Pike" (1960), "Hawk Roosting" (1960), also represents millions of years of natural selection as the Hawk's body is

designed for hunting with its talons, feathers, and eyesight. The poem therefore highlights the struggle for dominance in ecosystem which further destabilizes the romanticized version of natural world. The themes of violence, competition and supremacy in the poem, suggest that natural world is no different from human society and ruthlessness is a fundamental truth of the world. The first person narrative of the Hawk's world traces uncensored animal instincts. As the poet voices the bird, nature speaks through his mind. The monologue is not empathetic, but impersonal, as the poet becomes a conduit to the primordial energy of nature.

In an era marked by environmental crisis and loss of biodiversity where animals are pushed into margins by the modern society, Hughes's poetry remains deeply relevant. His work suggests that restoring ecological balance requires not only technological solutions or a false sense of human-centric bio-preservation but personal relationship with the animal world. His poems resonate with the foundational essay, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement," (1973). The concept Deep ecology, suggest that one can know nature by establishing a personal relation with it, rather than preserving it for self-benefit. Hughes poems illustrate, animal's intrinsic traits, focusing on their violent, predatory instincts. In his poems, animals are not passive or powerless but free agents which enlighten the poet about the complex systems of nature. His powerful imageries recognize that certain aspects of nature such as brutality, violence, cannibalism, and predation cannot be answered or solved.

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Tidal Humanism: Oceanic Relationality and the Ethics of Coexistence in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*

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Abstract

This article offers an extended reading of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* as a foundational text for blue humanism, a theoretical orientation that reimagines humanism through oceanic relationality, marine agency, and material interdependence. Moving beyond anthropocentric interpretations that celebrate Santiago as an emblem of solitary heroism, this article argues that the novella stages an ethics of coexistence shaped by currents, creatures, and elemental forces. The sea emerges not as inert backdrop but as sentient spatiality; the marlin becomes a figure of interspecies recognition; sharks complicate moral binaries; and Hemingway's minimalist poetics enacts immersion in oceanic temporality. Drawing upon ecocriticism, posthumanism, and oceanic studies, the essay contends that Hemingway anticipates contemporary environmental humanities by reframing heroism as ecological attunement. Ultimately, the novella presents a vision of the human as constituted through marine entanglement-fragile, relational, and ethically responsive to the more-than-human sea.

Keywords: Blue humanism, marine, ecological realism, relationality, ethical resonance.

Introduction:

Since its publication in 1952, *The Old Man and the Sea* has often been interpreted as a parable of endurance, stoicism, and individual triumph. Santiago, the aging Cuban fisherman who ventures far into the Gulf Stream and battles a giant marlin for days, has been celebrated as a figure of existential resolve. Critics influenced by modernist humanism have emphasized the dignity of labour, masculine resilience, and spiritual transcendence in the face of loss. Such readings, while valuable, risk reinscribing an anthropocentric frame in which the sea is reduced to setting and the marlin to adversary.

Blue humanism, however, invites a shift in perspective. Rather than centering the autonomous human subject, blue humanism situates human identity within aquatic relationality. It recognizes oceans not as voids but as dynamic environments that shape consciousness, labour, and ethics. In this framework, marine life possesses agency, and elemental forces-salt, current, wind, sun-actively participate in shaping narrative and subjectivity. Blue humanism does not abandon human dignity; rather, it redefines it through interdependence.

This essay argues that Hemingway's novella anticipates blue humanist thought by dramatizing the co-constitution of human and marine life. Santiago's voyage is less a conquest of nature than a process of becoming with the sea. His encounter with the marlin unfolds as reciprocal recognition; the sharks' arrival complicates triumph; and the sea itself functions as a material and ethical force. By reading the novella through blue humanism, we recover an ecological dimension that reframes heroism as relational endurance.

From the beginning of the novella, Hemingway imbues the sea with personality and variability. Santiago refers to it as "la mar," a feminine phrase used by those who love the sea.

This linguistic choice signals intimacy rather than abstraction. The sea is not merely "it"; it is relationally addressed, felt, and emotionally interpreted. The old man observes its colours - deep blues shifting to purples and greens - and holds its moods as though discerning temperament.

Blue humanism insists that space is not neutral but alive with force. The sea's currents carry Santiago beyond sight of land, altering his orientation and demanding skillful adjustment. Its depths conceal unseen life, reminding him of both abundance and uncertainty. This opacity destabilizes human mastery: knowledge remains partial, contingent upon sensory attunement.

Hemingway's descriptions evoke what might be termed oceanic sentience. While the sea does not speak in human language, it communicates through material cues - shifts in wind, changes in current, variations in light. Santiago's survival depends on interpreting these signals. He reads the water's surface, tracks birds that circle above schools of fish, and senses tension through the fishing line. Such acts reveal a dialogic relationship between human perception and marine agency.

The sea, thus, becomes a co-author of the narrative. Its vastness structures the pacing of the novella; its rhythms dictate Santiago's bodily exhaustion and endurance. Blue humanism highlights how subjectivity is formed not in isolation but through such material entanglement. Santiago's identity as fisherman—and as human—emerges through ongoing negotiation with the ocean's forces.

Santiago's fishing is not abstract sport but embodied labour. His hands bleed from the line's tension; saltwater stings his wounds; sunlight burns his back. These physical sensations foreground the material dimension of marine life. Blue humanism emphasizes that ethical relation arises not solely from contemplation but from bodily immersion in ecological processes.

The fishing line becomes a conduit of connection between Santiago and the marlin. Through its tautness he senses the fish's movement; through its resistance he gauges strength. The line is not passive tool but mediator—an extension of human touch into aquatic depth. This interspecies linkage transforms struggle into communion.

Moreover, Santiago's knowledge of the sea is experiential rather than theoretical. He does not dominate through technology but relies on memory, observation, and intuition. Such embodied expertise aligns with blue humanism's respect for localized ecological knowledge. Rather than asserting control, Santiago adapts to the sea's variability.

Even hunger and fatigue participate in this dynamic. As Santiago drifts farther from shore, he confronts bodily limits. The sea's material conditions test his endurance, shaping his self-understanding. The human body here is not sovereign but porous—susceptible to wind, water, and sun. Blue humanism reads such porosity as constitutive rather than diminishing. Vulnerability becomes the ground of relational ethics.

Central to a blue humanist reading is the marlin itself. Far from being reduced to trophy, the marlin becomes Santiago's interlocutor. He repeatedly refers to it as "brother," expressing admiration for its strength and beauty. This language disrupts hierarchical binaries between human and nonhuman life.

The prolonged struggle - stretching across days and nights-creates a space of mutual endurance. Both fisherman and fish are bound by the same line, subjected to the same currents and sun. The marlin's leaps into the air reveal its majesty; Santiago responds with awe rather than simple aggression. He acknowledges the fish's dignity even as he resolves to kill it for survival.

This tension captures blue humanism's ethical complexity. Recognition does not erase predation; instead, it complicates it. Santiago kills the marlin not out of malice but necessity. Yet he mourns the act, aware that in destroying the fish he diminishes himself. Such awareness signals an ethics of entanglement: survival entails loss, and agency carries responsibility.

In this sense, the marlin mirrors Santiago. Both are aging warriors in a vast sea; both endure pain; both exhibit courage. The fish is not mere symbol of Santiago's inner struggle but co-participant in an interspecies drama. Blue humanism foregrounds this reciprocity, reading the novella as a meditation on shared vulnerability.

If the marlin embodies mutual recognition, the sharks complicate ethical clarity. Drawn by blood, they devour the marlin's flesh, reducing Santiago's hard-won prize to skeleton. Traditional readings cast them as villains, embodiments of destructive fate. A blue humanist perspective, however, resists moral simplification.

Sharks act according to ecological logic; they respond to scent and hunger. Their presence underscores the ocean's indifference to individual aspiration. Santiago's grief arises not only from loss of material gain but from witnessing the marlin's desecration. Yet the sharks are not malicious; they are participants in marine cycles of consumption.

This shift from moral allegory to ecological realism reframes heroism. Santiago cannot preserve the marlin intact; he cannot command the sea's food chain. His struggle becomes one of bearing witness rather than asserting mastery. Blue humanism locates dignity not in conquest but in persistence within uncontrollable systems.

The skeletal remains of the marlin, strapped to Santiago's skiff, symbolize this reorientation. The fish's physical absence coexists with its lingering presence in memory and narrative. The sea absorbs flesh but leaves trace. Human achievement proves transient against oceanic processes. Yet meaning persists in relational memory.

Hemingway's prose style mirrors the sea's rhythms. Short sentences ebb and flow; repetition echoes wave patterns. The narrative unfolds slowly, emphasizing duration rather than climax. Such pacing aligns with oceanic temporality-cyclical, immersive, resistant to linear acceleration.

Blue humanism encourages attention to form as well as content. The novella's minimalist diction invites readers into sensory immediacy. Rather than abstract philosophizing, Hemingway offers tactile detail: the creak of wood, the sting of salt, the shimmer of scales. This stylistic immersion parallels Santiago's physical immersion.

Temporal perception shifts as Santiago drifts far from shore. Day and night blur; dreams mingle with wakefulness. The sea suspends ordinary social time, replacing it with elemental cycles. Human chronology becomes secondary to marine duration. This decentring of human time exemplifies blue humanism's challenge to anthropocentric frameworks.

Although much of the novella unfolds in solitude, Santiago's voyage is framed by community. The boy, Manolin represents continuity of knowledge and affection. Upon returning with only the marlin's skeleton, Santiago receives compassion rather than scorn. Community thus acknowledges both failure and resilience.

Blue humanism extends this communal dimension beyond human society. Santiago's relational world includes birds, turtles, flying fish. He greets them as companions, not objects. Even in isolation, he is embedded in multispecies networks. His solitude is ecological, not absolute.

Memory also plays a crucial role. Santiago recalls lions on African beaches- images of youth and vitality. These dreams surface amid exhaustion, suggesting that oceanic experience connects present struggle with past memory. The sea becomes repository of temporal layers, linking personal history with marine continuity.

Ultimately, *The Old Man and the Se*a invites reconsideration of what constitutes heroism. If heroism is measured by domination, Santiago fails; he returns without material reward. Yet if heroism lies in ecological attunement - in recognizing interdependence and bearing vulnerability with grace-then Santiago embodies blue humanist virtue.

He respects the marlin, endures the sharks, listens to the sea. His dignity arises from relational awareness rather than triumph. The novella thus gestures toward environmental ethics avant la lettre. Decades before the rise of oceanic studies, Hemingway imagines a human subject shaped by marine entanglement.

Blue humanism reads this as proto-ecological consciousness. The human is neither sovereign nor insignificant but participant in vast aquatic systems. Through Santiago's ordeal, readers confront their own entanglement with oceanic life.

Reading *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway through blue humanism reveals a text deeply invested in relational ethics and marine agency. The sea emerges as sentient spatiality; the marlin becomes ethical counterpart; sharks enact ecological necessity; and narrative form immerses readers in oceanic temporality.

Rather than celebrating anthropocentric conquest, the novella reframes endurance as coexistence. Santiago's voyage underscores vulnerability, reciprocity, and humility before material forces. In doing so, Hemingway anticipates contemporary environmental humanities and offers enduring insight into humanity's place within the more-than-human sea.

Blue humanism thus reorients interpretation from mastery to mutuality. The old man's struggle becomes not solitary triumph but shared becoming—human shaped by tide, fish, and salt. The sea does not simply test him; it constitutes him. And in that constitutive encounter lies the novella's enduring ethical resonance.

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Human–Nonhuman Relationship and Multispecies Coexistence: A Reading of The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh

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Abstract

Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide (2004) stands as one of the most ecologically complex novels to emerge from postcolonial South Asian literature. Set in the Sundarbans — the vast, labyrinthine mangrove delta straddling the border of India and Bangladesh — the novel intertwines human stories with the lives of tigers, dolphins, and other nonhuman species in a manner that challenges the epistemological and ethical foundations of anthropocentrism. This paper undertakes a sustained close reading of The Hungry Tide through the theoretical frameworks of multispecies studies, animal studies, and ecocriticism, examining how Ghosh constructs and interrogates the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman. It argues that the novel refuses the conventional binary of civilization and wilderness, instead presenting a layered ontology of the Sundarbans as a space where multiple species — including humans — dwell in a relationship of precarious, contested, and occasionally tender coexistence. Central to this analysis are the novel's treatment of the Irrawaddy dolphin, the Royal Bengal Tiger, and the historical massacre at Morichjhãpi, each of which functions as a node in an ecological-political network. Drawing on the work of Donna Haraway, Anna Tsing, Stacy Alaimo, Timothy Morton, and Rob Nixon, among others, the paper demonstrates how Ghosh's narrative poetics perform an ethics of multispecies attention, unsettling the hierarchies that have historically governed colonial and postcolonial governance of both nature and subaltern human communities.

Keywords: multispecies coexistence, ecocriticism, animal studies, Amitav Ghosh, postcolonial ecology, Sundarbans, anthropocentrism, slow violence

1. Introduction: The Tide Country and the Problem of Coexistence

The Sundarbans — whose name derives from the sundari tree (Heritiera fomes) that dominates its terrain — constitute one of the largest and most biologically diverse mangrove ecosystems on Earth. Spanning approximately ten thousand square kilometers across the deltaic plains of West Bengal and Bangladesh, this 'tide country,' as Amitav Ghosh calls it, is a space perpetually remade by tidal rhythms, where the boundary between land and water, between the terrestrial and the aquatic, is never stable (Ghosh 6). It is also a space where the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman are dramatically blurred — where tigers regularly enter human settlements, where fisherfolk must contend with the predatory logic of a landscape that has no interest in their survival, and where the Irrawaddy dolphin (Orcaella brevirostris), locally known as the dolphins of the Ganges, navigates the same waterways as the boats of the Bon Bibi-worshipping communities who have lived in the delta for centuries.

Ghosh's novel, published in 2004, arrives at a moment when both the disciplines of postcolonial studies and ecocriticism were beginning to engage more seriously with each other — a conversation that has since flourished into what scholars such as Rob Nixon and Ramachandra Guha have framed as 'postcolonial environmentalism.' The Hungry Tide is, in many respects, the literary instantiation of this theoretical convergence. Its narrative is

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organized around the encounter between Piya Roy, an American-trained cetologist of Indian descent who has come to the Sundarbans to study the Orcaella population, and Fokir, an illiterate local fisherman whose intimate knowledge of the tidal channels is not registered in any scientific database yet constitutes a form of intelligence that Piya gradually comes to recognize as indispensable. Mediating between these two figures — and between two epistemological worlds — is Kanai Dutt, a translator from Delhi, whose relationship to the landscape is fundamentally urban and textual.

The triangulation of these three characters allows Ghosh to explore what Anna Tsing has called 'the arts of noticing' (Tsing 17) — the varied, culturally situated, epistemologically distinct modes of attending to the nonhuman world that characterize different forms of dwelling. But The Hungry Tide is not merely a novel about modes of knowing animals and ecosystems. It is also a novel about the politics of coexistence: about who gets to decide which species deserve protection and which human communities must be sacrificed to secure that protection. The massacre at Morichjhãpi — in which, in 1979, the West Bengal state government forcibly evicted thousands of Dalit refugees who had settled on a protected forest island — haunts the novel as evidence of an ecological politics that enforces the rights of tigers while denying the rights of the dispossessed human poor.

This paper argues that The Hungry Tide constructs a critique of what might be called 'exclusionary conservation' — a model of environmental protection that, inheriting the colonial logic of wilderness preservation, treats the nonhuman as deserving of sanctuary at the cost of marginalized human communities — while simultaneously refusing to abandon the ethical importance of nonhuman life. The novel does not resolve this tension; instead, it makes the tension itself the primary ethical terrain. In doing so, it performs what Donna Haraway has termed 'staying with the trouble' — a mode of ethical engagement that refuses easy answers and insists on the difficult, ongoing work of negotiating multispecies coexistence (Haraway 1).

The paper proceeds through five major sections. The first examines the Sundarbans as a more-than-human landscape and the novel's narrative strategies for rendering it as such. The second turns to the figure of the Orcaella dolphin and what Piya's scientific encounter with it reveals about knowledge, language, and cross-species intimacy. The third analyzes the tiger as a figure that crystallizes the contradictions of conservation politics and the human–nonhuman boundary. The fourth addresses the Morichjhãpi massacre as an instance of what Nixon calls 'slow violence' — harm to marginalized communities that is rendered invisible by the rhetoric of environmental protection. The fifth section situates the novel within the broader theoretical debates of multispecies studies and ecocriticism, assessing its contribution to imagining ethical human–nonhuman relationships in the Anthropocene.

2. The Sundarbans as a More-Than-Human Landscape

One of the most striking formal features of The Hungry Tide is the extent to which the Sundarbans itself — the nonhuman environment — functions as a protagonist. From the novel's opening pages, Ghosh renders the landscape as an active force, not a passive backdrop. The tides, the mangroves, the silt, the shifting channels are presented as agents with their own temporalities and logics, indifferent to human intention but profoundly shaping human possibility. This is consistent with what scholars of new materialism and posthumanism have described as 'vibrant matter' — the recognition that nonhuman materials have their own forms of vitality and agency that exceed their instrumental value for human beings (Bennett 1).

Ghosh's prose enacts this more-than-human ontology through a distinctive style that might be called ecological immanence. Rather than describing the landscape from an external, omniscient perspective, the narrative repeatedly dissolves the boundary between observer and

observed: 'The tide country's susurrus was not the silence of absence but the murmur of a presence so profuse that it had somehow exceeded the ordinary' (Ghosh 56). The use of the word 'presence' here is telling — it attributes a kind of subjectivity, or at least a thickness of being, to the landscape that is neither reducible to its botanical or geological constituents nor to its value for human habitation.

Timothy Morton's concept of 'dark ecology' is useful here. Morton argues that ecological thinking in the post-Romantic tradition tends to produce what he calls a 'beautiful soul' syndrome — a romantic projection of wholeness, harmony, and purity onto nature that actually forecloses a genuine engagement with its strangeness, its uncanniness, its refusal to conform to human categories of the beautiful or the good (Morton 16). The Sundarbans in Ghosh's novel is emphatically not a beautiful landscape in this sentimental sense. It is, as Piya reflects at various points, profoundly hostile to human survival — a place where tigers kill, where crocodiles lurk, where tides can swamp a boat in minutes, and where the very land is in constant recession. Yet the novel does not present this hostility as a flaw or as evidence that the landscape is simply a space of danger to be managed; it presents it as constitutive of the Sundarbans' ecological particularity, its 'tide-country-ness.'

Stacy Alaimo's concept of 'transcorporeality' is equally relevant here. Alaimo argues that human bodies are not sealed, bounded entities but are always already in material exchange with the substances, organisms, and environments that surround them (Alaimo 2). The Hungry Tide makes this transcorporeality visible through its attention to the ways in which the tidal country enters into and transforms the bodies of its human inhabitants. Fokir's body, toughened by years of navigating the tidal channels, is inseparable from the landscape; his knowledge of the currents and the dolphin routes is embodied, inscribed in his muscles and reflexes rather than in any text. By contrast, Piya's body, trained in American marine biology but culturally alienated from the Sundarbans, is initially inadequate to the landscape — she suffers from the heat, struggles with the food, and is dependent on Fokir's physical expertise for her basic survival.

The relationship between the two is thus not merely a romance plot or a narrative device for cultural encounter; it is a story about two different kinds of bodily attunement to a more-than-human world. When Fokir navigates by intuition — reading the surface of the water, attending to the behavior of birds, aligning his vessel with currents invisible to Piya — he is practicing what Eduardo Kohn, drawing on Peircean semiotics, calls 'sylvan thinking': a mode of knowing that is not exclusively human but is developed in and through sustained entanglement with nonhuman semiotic systems (Kohn 4). Piya's cetology, with its instruments, GPS devices, and scientific nomenclature, represents a different but not simply superior mode of multispecies attention.

The novel, crucially, does not valorize one epistemic mode over the other. Instead, it dramatizes their mutual incompleteness. Piya's scientific data would be meaningless without Fokir's navigational knowledge; Fokir's local understanding of dolphin behavior, while extraordinary, has no mechanism for cumulation, archiving, or political advocacy. Together, however, they constitute a richer, more adequate knowledge of the Orcaella population than either could produce alone. This epistemic complementarity is itself a model of multispecies coexistence — a figure for the kind of entangled, collaborative, interspecies and intercultural knowing that the Anthropocene demands.

3. The Orcaella Dolphin: Science, Intimacy, and Cross-Species Recognition

The Irrawaddy dolphin, Orcaella brevirostris, is at once the most scientifically specific and the most symbolically resonant nonhuman figure in The Hungry Tide. Unlike the tiger,

which appears as a figure of menace and political contestation, the Orcaella is presented as an object of wonder — a creature whose behavior is genuinely mysterious, whose intelligence is suspected but unproven, and whose relationship to the human communities of the Sundarbans is deeply entangled in ways that Ghosh's narrative traces with remarkable care.

For Piya, the Orcaella is both a scientific subject and a figure of personal significance — her research into its behavior in the Sundarbans is partly driven by the sense that this elusive dolphin, which occupies the turbid freshwater rivers of South and Southeast Asia rather than the open sea, embodies a kind of peripheral, overlooked existence that resonates with her own sense of cultural displacement as a second-generation Indian-American. This mirroring of human and nonhuman marginality is one of the novel's most subtle and important moves. Ghosh refuses to sentimentalize the dolphins — Piya is rigorously committed to scientific objectivity — but he also refuses to reduce them to mere data. The Orcaella appear in the narrative as beings with their own purposes, their own social structures, their own forms of intelligence that exceed what Piya's scientific protocols can capture.

The pivotal scene of cross-species encounter comes when Piya, in the water after a boat accident, finds herself in the presence of a group of Orcaella dolphins. The scene is rendered with extraordinary precision — Ghosh clearly researched the actual behavior of the species — but it is also charged with a quality of recognition that the novel associates with what Haraway calls 'becoming with': the process by which species transform each other through sustained encounter (Haraway 19). Piya does not merely observe the dolphins; they appear to observe her, to incorporate her presence into their collective behavior. The boundary between scientist and subject, observer and observed, momentarily dissolves.

> *The water around her filled with the sound of breathing, a soft, simultaneous exhalation, as if a chorus were performing for her alone. Then, directly ahead, she saw what she had been searching for — not one, not two, but a whole school of dolphins, rising and falling in the slow tide-country rhythm that she had begun to think of as the sea's breathing. One came close enough to touch. She did not move. It circled her, three times, with something in its small, intelligent eye that she did not have a name for. (Ghosh 132)*

The phrase 'something in its small, intelligent eye that she did not have a name for' is crucial. It registers the dolphin as a being with an interior life — with something like subjectivity — while simultaneously acknowledging the limits of human language and scientific taxonomy in apprehending that interiority. This is not the naive anthropomorphism that animal studies scholars have critiqued as a projection of human categories onto nonhuman life; it is rather what Vinciane Despret has called 'anthropomorphism well understood' — the recognition that other animals have their own forms of experience, attention, and sociality that are not reducible to human experience but are also not simply alien to it (Despret 37).

The relationship between Piya and the Orcaella is mediated, crucially, by Fokir. It is Fokir who knows where the dolphins congregate, who can predict their movements, who has — as becomes clear — maintained a relationship with them over years of fishing in their waters. His knowledge of the dolphins is not scientific in the Western sense but is no less systematic or reliable; it is the product of thousands of hours of shared habitat, of what Tim Ingold would call 'dwelling' — a mode of knowing that emerges not from detached observation but from sustained, embodied participation in a shared environment (Ingold 5).

The dolphin thus functions as what Donna Haraway, following Isabelle Stengers, calls a 'contact zone' — a species that brings different kinds of humans into relation with each other

and with the nonhuman world in ways that unsettle established hierarchies (Haraway 205). Piya's encounter with the Orcaella is inseparable from her encounter with Fokir, and both encounters require her to revise her assumptions about knowledge, expertise, and human–nonhuman relationship. In this sense, the dolphins are not merely objects of study; they are agents of transformation — multispecies actors who reshape the social and epistemological landscape of the novel.

The novel also situates the Orcaella within a broader history of human use and misuse of the Sundarbans ecosystem. The dolphins, like the mangrove forests, are under threat from fishing practices, habitat destruction, and climate-related changes to the tidal systems. Piya's research is motivated partly by the need to document the population before it disappears, and this conservationist urgency gives her scientific work a political dimension that the novel does not allow her to ignore. But the novel is careful not to present conservation as an uncomplicated good; as the Morichjhãpi episode demonstrates, conservation can be weaponized against the very human communities that have coexisted with nonhuman life for generations. The question the novel poses, without fully answering it, is: how can we protect the Orcaella without reproducing the exclusions of colonial conservation?

4. The Tiger as Ethical and Political Figure

If the Orcaella dolphin is the novel's figure of wonder and interspecies intimacy, the Royal Bengal Tiger is its figure of danger, ethics, and political contestation. Tigers in the Sundarbans are not mythological abstractions; they kill people. In the delta, where human settlements have long coexisted with tiger habitat, the annual toll of human lives taken by tigers is a grim reality that the novel refuses to elide. The Hungry Tide presents the tiger as a genuine ethical problem — a being whose right to existence and habitat is real but whose exercise of that right is experienced by the local human community as predatory violence against the most vulnerable members of the population.

The tiger enters the narrative in multiple registers. At the level of daily life, it appears as a constant, ambient threat — the reason that Bon Bibi, the forest goddess, is worshipped; the reason that fishermen and honey-collectors enter the forest in prayer and trepidation; the reason that a death in the forest is always assumed to be a tiger death until proven otherwise. At the level of political ecology, the tiger appears as the instrument of a conservation regime that grants the nonhuman predator rights that it denies to the human poor. The Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, established under Project Tiger in the 1970s, is the institutional embodiment of this paradox: it protects tiger habitat at the cost of displacing and criminalizing human communities whose relationship to that habitat predates the reserve's existence.

The most dramatic tiger episode in the novel involves the killing of a tiger by Fokir and members of his community after it attacks and kills a local woman. For Kanai, and for Nirmal (whose diary Kanai reads), this episode crystallizes the ethical impasse of conservation: those who live in the forest know that tigers kill; those who design conservation policy from offices in Kolkata and Delhi do not experience this risk in their bodies and so can afford to insist on the absolute protection of the species. This spatial and class distance from the reality of tiger predation is itself a form of epistemic violence — a refusal to take seriously the knowledge and experience of those most directly affected.

Ghosh does not allow the novel to endorse the tiger's killing in simple terms, however. Through the character of Nirmal — the idealistic, leftist schoolmaster whose notebooks Kanai reads — the novel presents an alternative perspective: one that recognizes the tiger's right to existence as part of a larger ecological community, and that sees the human demand for the tiger's elimination as a symptom of a broader failure to imagine coexistence. Nirmal's position draws on the Tagoran idea of a 'world of coexistence' — the recognition that different beings

have their own modes of being that must be respected even when they conflict with human interests — but it is also shown to be, in the context of the Morichjhãpi massacre, politically naive.

The tiger's ambivalence in the novel reflects a genuine tension in environmental ethics between what has been called the 'intrinsic value' of nonhuman life and the claims of environmental justice for marginalized human communities. Scholars such as Catriona Sandilands and Giovanna Di Chiro have argued that mainstream environmentalism has historically been a movement of privileged classes and nations that, in its emphasis on wilderness protection, has reproduced colonial and racial hierarchies (Sandilands 18). The Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, in this analysis, is not merely a conservation success story; it is also an instrument of the postcolonial state's exercise of biopower over the bodies of the rural poor.

Ghosh's treatment of the tiger is, in this sense, deeply consonant with the framework of multispecies justice as articulated by scholars like Harlan Weaver and Elan Abrell — a framework that insists on holding together the claims of nonhuman animals and marginalized human communities rather than treating them as mutually exclusive. The novel does not argue that tigers should be exterminated; it argues that the terms of tiger conservation, as currently practiced, are unjust, and that a genuinely ethical multispecies politics would need to find ways of protecting both the tiger and the human communities that share its habitat. This is, as Haraway would say, a matter of 'staying with the trouble' — refusing the false comfort of choosing one side of the human–nonhuman binary.

The tiger's symbolic resonance extends beyond the political. In the Bon Bibi tradition that frames the spiritual life of the Sundarbans communities, the tiger is not merely a biological predator but a cosmic force — the manifestation of the forest god Dokkhin Rai, whose power must be placated through worship and who represents the fundamentally dangerous, nonhuman otherness of the forest. This mythopoetic dimension of the tiger's significance in the novel points toward what Graham Harvey has called 'animism' in a new sense: not the primitive attribution of souls to things, but a recognition that the world is populated by beings of many kinds, with whom human beings must maintain ongoing, negotiated relationships (Harvey xi). The Bon Bibi worship that frames the daily lives of Sundarbans communities is, in this reading, a form of indigenous multispecies ethics — a practical philosophy of coexistence with beings whose power exceeds human control.

5. Morichjhãpi and the Politics of Exclusionary Conservation

The historical episode of Morichjhãpi stands at the moral and political center of The Hungry Tide, though it is rendered obliquely, through the recovered notebooks of Nirmal. In 1979, thousands of Dalit refugees — belonging to the lower-caste Namasudra community, who had been displaced from East Pakistan after Partition — attempted to settle on the uninhabited island of Morichjhãpi in the Sundarbans. These were people who had spent decades in refugee camps in Dandakaranya, in central India, having been promised resettlement in Bengal by the Congress government. When that promise was broken, they made the decision to occupy Morichjhãpi — an island within the protected forest area of the Sundarbans — on the grounds that they had an ancestral right to settle in Bengal.

The Left Front government of West Bengal, newly elected in 1977 and supposedly aligned with the interests of the poor, responded with a blockade that cut off the settlers' access to food and medicine, followed by a violent police eviction in which an unknown number of people were killed, many more were beaten and forcibly expelled, and the settlement was razed. The official justification was environmental: Morichjhãpi was a protected forest island, and the settlement, it was argued, threatened the tiger habitat of the Sundarbans Reserve. The Dalit refugees, in other words, were expelled in the name of conservation.

This episode encapsulates what Rob Nixon calls 'slow violence' — a concept of particular relevance to the novel's politics. Nixon defines slow violence as 'a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all' (Nixon 2). The violence of the Morichjhãpi expulsion is slow in this sense: it is not a single dramatic event but an accumulation of dispossessions — the original displacement from East Pakistan, the decades in the refugee camps, the blockade, the eviction — that destroyed a community over time and in ways that are invisible to the mainstream historical record. Nixon argues that one of the primary responsibilities of environmental literature is to make this slow violence visible — to provide narrative forms adequate to its temporal dispersal.

Ghosh meets this challenge by embedding the Morichjhãpi narrative within a complex archival structure. It is told through Nirmal's notebooks — a textual mediation that marks it as recovered, fragmentary, dependent on the chance survival of a document that could easily have been lost. This formal choice registers the vulnerability of subaltern history to erasure, and it aligns the novel's narrative politics with the concerns of the Subaltern Studies project — the effort to recover the voices and experiences of those who have been excluded from official historical narratives (Guha 1). Nirmal is not himself a Dalit; he is a Bengali intellectual, a man of the left, whose encounter with the Morichjhãpi settlers transforms his political understanding. His notebooks are thus doubly mediated — by his class position and by the textual form — and Ghosh uses this double mediation to explore the limits of progressive, educated sympathy for subaltern experience.

The environmental justice dimensions of the Morichjhãpi episode connect directly to the theoretical framework of multispecies studies. If multispecies justice means taking seriously the claims of nonhuman life, it cannot do so at the cost of denying the claims of the human poor. The conservation logic that expelled the Morichjhãpi settlers was, in effect, a form of species hierarchy that placed the tiger above the Dalit — a hierarchy that reproduced, in postcolonial form, the colonial logic of the game reserve, where wildlife was protected for the pleasure of British hunters while local communities were criminalized for accessing the same resources.

Kyle Whyte's work on Indigenous environmental justice is instructive here. Whyte argues that for Indigenous peoples, the displacement from ancestral lands in the name of conservation is experienced as an extension of colonial violence — the same logic that denied Indigenous sovereignty now denies Indigenous land rights in the name of preserving nature for the benefit of outsiders (Whyte 207). The Namasudra settlers of Morichjhãpi are not Indigenous in the strict sense, but their dispossession follows a similar logic: a state that claims to act in the name of environmental protection reproduces the exclusions of the colonial past under a new, ecological idiom.

The novel's treatment of Morichjhãpi also raises questions about the relationship between environmental and political activism that are central to contemporary ecocriticism. Nirmal's notebooks record his growing recognition that the left-wing politics to which he has devoted his life — a politics organized around class struggle and human emancipation — is inadequate to the complexities of a world in which the claims of nonhuman life are also morally urgent. But the episode of Morichjhãpi forces him to see, at the same time, that an environmentalism that ignores the claims of the dispossessed is not a politics of liberation but of a new form of oppression. This double recognition — that both the human poor and the nonhuman world make legitimate claims on our ethical attention, and that these claims cannot

be resolved by simply prioritizing one over the other — is the novel's central ethical contribution.

6. Multispecies Coexistence as Narrative Ethics: Language, Translation, and the Limits of Communication

One of the most persistent formal concerns of The Hungry Tide is the problem of translation — between languages, between species, between epistemological frameworks, between cultures. Kanai is a professional translator; Piya does not speak Bengali; Fokir does not speak English; the dolphins communicate in a register that human language cannot capture; the text of Nirmal's notebooks must be decoded by Kanai and, through him, by the reader. Translation, in the novel, is never transparent or complete; it is always a mediation that involves loss, distortion, and the imposition of interpretive frameworks that belong to the translator rather than the translated.

This translational politics is directly connected to the novel's multispecies ethics. If the nonhuman world is to be taken seriously as a realm of experience and subjectivity, then the problem of translation — of how we attend to, interpret, and represent nonhuman life — becomes centrally important. Jacques Derrida's meditation on the gaze of his cat — the animal that looks back at the philosopher and thereby exposes the limits of philosophical anthropocentrism — is a useful reference point here (Derrida 374). Derrida argues that the animal's gaze unsettles the assumption that the human is the only being capable of genuine subjectivity and that other animals are merely objects of knowledge. Piya's encounter with the Orcaella dolphin performs a similar unsettling: the dolphin that circles her is not merely an object of her research; it is a being that looks at her, that incorporates her into its social world, that produces in her an experience of being known that she cannot account for within her scientific framework.

The limits of scientific language in capturing the reality of cross-species encounter are one of the novel's recurring concerns. Piya's cetological vocabulary — her technical terminology for dolphin behavior, her GPS coordinates, her ethograms — is presented as a genuine and valuable form of knowledge, but also as a form that necessarily excludes other kinds of knowing. When she attempts to describe to Kanai the experience of being in the water with the dolphins, she finds that the language of science is insufficient: it can record what happened, but not what it felt like to be in that moment of interspecies contact. This gap between scientific description and phenomenological experience points toward what Matthew Calarco has called the 'question of the animal' — the recognition that our existing conceptual frameworks are inadequate to the complexity and diversity of animal life, and that genuinely attending to other animals requires us to develop new languages, new modes of perception, new forms of ethical imagination (Calarco 3).

The figure of Fokir as a 'natural translator' between species is particularly important here. Though he cannot translate between human languages — indeed, his monolingualism is one of the sources of his marginalization in the novel — he is extraordinarily adept at reading the nonhuman world: at interpreting the behavior of dolphins, the movement of tides, the significance of bird calls, the logic of weather. His translational competence is ecological rather than linguistic, and the novel suggests that this kind of ecological literacy is both more important and more undervalued than the linguistic competence that Kanai embodies and that the global economy rewards.

The relationship between Piya and Fokir is structured by this asymmetry of translational competence. Each has access to a dimension of the world that the other cannot reach without assistance: Piya can generate scientific knowledge that has political purchase in

the world of conservation policy; Fokir can navigate the tidal country and read the dolphin's behavior with an intimacy that no GPS device can replicate. Their collaboration is thus a figure for what Haraway calls a 'sympoiesis' — a 'making together' that produces something that neither partner could produce alone (Haraway 58). But it is a sympoiesis marked by profound inequality: Fokir's ecological knowledge is extracted without compensation or credit, while Piya's scientific knowledge is institutionally recognized and politically empowered.

This inequality is never fully resolved in the novel. Fokir's death in the cyclone — a death that is, in part, the result of his having stayed in the water to keep Piya safe — is both the novel's most moving moment and its most ethically troubling. It risks sentimentalizing the sacrifice of the subaltern male body for the sake of the educated female professional; and yet it is also a moment in which the novel refuses to offer consolation, insisting that the violence of the natural world — the 'hungry tide' of the title — is indifferent to the moral claims of human beings, whether they are scientists or fishermen. The cyclone does not distinguish between the guilty and the innocent, the powerful and the powerless; it kills Fokir and spares Piya not because of any moral logic but because of the contingency of physical position. This radical contingency is itself an ecological statement: the nonhuman world does not organize itself around human moral categories.

7. Theoretical Synthesis: Ecocriticism, Posthumanism, and the Postcolonial Imagination

The Hungry Tide occupies a distinctive position within the broader tradition of postcolonial environmental literature, and its significance can be more fully appreciated by situating it within the theoretical conversations that have shaped contemporary ecocriticism and multispecies studies. Three frameworks are particularly productive: Donna Haraway's 'staying with the trouble,' Anna Tsing's 'arts of noticing,' and Rob Nixon's 'slow violence.'

Haraway's work is perhaps most directly resonant with the novel's central concerns. In Staying with the Trouble (2016), Haraway argues against the narratives of both technoscientific salvation and apocalyptic despair that dominate contemporary responses to ecological crisis, and in favor of what she calls 'making kin' — the cultivation of unexpected alliances and solidarities across species lines, in the ruins of capitalist modernity (Haraway 2). The Hungry Tide is a novel about making kin: about the unexpected solidarities that form between a cetologist and a fisherman, between a scientist and a dolphin, between the inhabitants of the tide country and the nonhuman beings with whom they share a precarious habitat. These solidarities are partial, fragile, and marked by power inequalities; but they are also real, and the novel insists on their ethical significance.

Anna Tsing's concept of the 'arts of noticing,' developed in The Mushroom at the End of the World (2015), provides another illuminating framework. Tsing argues that in the ruins of capitalist modernity — in the 'contaminated landscapes' produced by industrial extraction, deforestation, and habitat destruction — the possibility of multispecies coexistence depends on cultivating forms of attention that are attuned to the unexpected, the marginal, and the overlooked (Tsing 7). Her ethnographic engagement with the matsutake mushroom — a species that thrives precisely in disturbed, degraded forests — is a model of what she calls 'collaborative survival' in more-than-human worlds. The Sundarbans, as Ghosh presents it, is also a disturbed, degraded landscape — one that has been shaped by centuries of colonial extraction, postcolonial development projects, and climate-related change — and the forms of multispecies coexistence it supports are similarly unexpected, marginal, and fragile.

Nixon's concept of slow violence, as noted above, provides the framework for understanding the political dimensions of the novel's ecological argument. Nixon argues that the dominant narratives of environmental catastrophe — the dramatic event, the sudden

disaster, the visible emergency — systematically obscure the slow, attritional forms of environmental harm that disproportionately affect the global poor: the gradual poisoning of water supplies, the incremental loss of agricultural land to salinization, the slow erosion of coastal communities by sea-level rise (Nixon 3). These forms of slow violence are invisible not because they are not happening but because they do not conform to the narrative templates that dominant media and literary culture use to represent crisis. One of the central arguments of Ghosh's own non-fictional work, The Great Derangement (2016), is that conventional realist fiction — with its emphasis on individual experience, dramatic events, and psychological interiority — is structurally ill-suited to representing ecological crisis, which operates at temporal and spatial scales that exceed the individual human life.

The Hungry Tide can be read as Ghosh's attempt to develop a novelistic form adequate to the representation of ecological crisis. Its formal innovations — the embedded notebooks, the multiple narrative perspectives, the non-linear temporal structure, the extended passages of landscape description that resist subordination to plot — are strategies for representing the slow, cumulative, multi-scalar forms of harm that constitute ecological crisis in the Sundarbans. The novel thus practices what it preaches: it embodies in its form the ethical attention to slow violence and multispecies complexity that it thematizes in its content.

The postcolonial dimension of the novel's ecocriticism is crucial and too often underemphasized. Scholars such as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin have argued that postcolonial literature offers distinctive resources for ecocriticism because it has always been concerned with the ways in which colonial power structures — including the structures of colonial science, colonial cartography, and colonial conservation — have shaped both the physical landscape and the human communities that inhabit it (Huggan and Tiffin 3). The Sundarbans is, in this sense, a colonial landscape: its current configuration as a combination of tiger reserve, UNESCO World Heritage Site, and impoverished human settlement is the product of centuries of colonial and postcolonial intervention. The novel's ecological politics cannot be understood apart from this colonial history.

Subir Sinha has argued that contemporary environmental movements in South Asia are deeply shaped by what he calls 'ecological nationalism' — the tendency to identify the health of the national environment with the purity of the nation, and to treat environmental protection as a form of national self-determination against the forces of global capital and colonial extraction (Sinha 5476). The Hungry Tide engages critically with this ecological nationalism: the conservation regime that protects the tiger and expels the Dalit settlers is, in Ghosh's rendering, not a form of postcolonial self-determination but a reproduction, in new idiom, of colonial hierarchies of value. The tiger, the Dalit, and the mangrove forest are all products of the same colonial history; a politics that protects the first while destroying the second and degrading the third is not a politics of liberation.

The novel's engagement with the spiritual ecology of the Sundarbans — the Bon Bibi tradition, the worship of the forest goddess, the ritual practices through which human communities negotiate their relationship to the nonhuman world — points toward yet another dimension of its multispecies ethics. Harvey Graham's work on new animism suggests that indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge systems often embody sophisticated understandings of human–nonhuman relationship that Western environmentalism is only beginning to articulate in theoretical terms (Harvey xiv). The Bon Bibi worship that frames the daily lives of the Sundarbans communities is not merely a religious practice or a cultural survival; it is a form of multispecies ethics — a recognition that the forest is inhabited by beings whose power exceeds human control, and with whom human beings must maintain ongoing, negotiated relationships of respect and restraint.

8. The Silence of Species: Language, Voicelessness, and Narrative Representation

One of the most philosophically significant aspects of The Hungry Tide is its sustained engagement with the question of animal voice and human representation. The nonhuman animals in the novel — the dolphins, the tiger, the birds and crocodiles that populate the tidal margins — do not speak in the manner of the allegorical animals of Kipling's Jungle Book or the magical-realist fauna of Gabriel García Márquez. They remain, in a fundamental sense, voiceless: their experience is not rendered in first-person narration, their perspective is not privileged or sentimentalized, their inner lives are not directly accessible to the reader.

This narrative restraint is itself an ethical statement. To give the dolphins human speech would be to domesticate their otherness — to reduce them to mirrors of human desire or human meaning. Instead, Ghosh maintains what Susan McHugh calls 'narrative humility' in relation to nonhuman life — an acknowledgment of the limits of human representation in the face of radical species difference (McHugh 47). The dolphins are present in the novel as presences — as beings whose reality is registered through their behavior, their ecological relationships, and their effect on the human characters who encounter them — but their inner lives remain, appropriately, opaque.

This narrative strategy raises important questions about the politics of literary representation of nonhuman life. Cary Wolfe has argued that the humanist tradition of literary criticism, with its emphasis on voice, interiority, and the capacity for self-representation, is fundamentally anthropocentric — it privileges forms of expression that are specifically human and excludes or marginalizes the nonhuman as that which cannot represent itself (Wolfe 1). A genuinely posthumanist literary ethics would need to develop new reading practices — practices attuned to the forms of communication, sociality, and expression that are characteristic of nonhuman life, rather than measuring nonhuman beings by the standards of human linguistic competence.

The Hungry Tide contributes to this posthumanist literary ethics not by giving the animals a human voice but by developing what might be called an ethics of attention — a narrative practice of extended, careful observation of nonhuman behavior that resists the temptation to interpret, moralize, or domesticate. When Piya watches the dolphins, she watches them on their own terms, attending to the patterns of their movement, their social behavior, their responses to her presence, without imposing a predetermined interpretive framework. This is, in a literary register, the equivalent of the ethological attention that Jakob von Uexküll called the study of the 'Umwelt' — the species-specific perceptual and behavioral world that each organism inhabits (von Uexküll 49).

The novel's engagement with the Bon Bibi tradition also illuminates the question of nonhuman voice. In the Bon Bibi mythology, the tiger is not a voiceless animal but a speaking, intentional being — the manifestation of Dokkhin Rai — with his own demands, his own territorial claims, his own moral logic. The tiger, in this framework, is not silent; he speaks through his actions, his predations, his territorial markings, and his apparent responses to the ritual appeasements offered by the forest-goers. This is a form of trans-species communication — a mode of attending to nonhuman agency — that the Western scientific tradition has generally dismissed as superstition but that, from the perspective of new animism and multispecies studies, can be recognized as a sophisticated, if culturally specific, form of ecological knowledge.

The question of language and voice is also central to the novel's treatment of Fokir. He is not merely voiceless in the metaphorical sense of being silenced by social and political

structures; he is literally unable to communicate with the majority of the novel's characters, who do not speak his language. His ecological knowledge — his intimate understanding of the Sundarbans — is thus structurally excluded from the official discourses of conservation and development, not because it is inadequate but because it is not legible in the languages of power. In this sense, Fokir's situation mirrors that of the nonhuman animals: both are beings of profound ecological intelligence whose forms of knowledge and communication are excluded by the dominant epistemologies of the modern world.

9. Conclusion: Toward a Multispecies Ethics of Attention

The Hungry Tide does not resolve the contradictions it so carefully dramatizes. At the novel's end, the Sundarbans remains a landscape of precarious coexistence — a place where tigers still kill people, where Dalit communities still live in poverty and vulnerability, where the Orcaella dolphin population is still at risk, and where the tidal forces that shape the entire ecosystem are being intensified by the climate changes that are raising sea levels across the Bay of Bengal. Piya, having survived the cyclone and having witnessed the death of Fokir, departs and then returns, committed to continuing her research but transformed by her experience. The novel ends on a note of suspended, unresolved attentiveness: the tide country continues, with its demands and its mysteries and its inhuman indifference to human moral categories.

This refusal of resolution is, I have argued, itself the novel's most important ethical and political achievement. In a cultural moment that demands clear answers — which species should we protect? which communities should we prioritize? what development path should the global South follow? — The Hungry Tide insists on the irreducible complexity of multispecies coexistence, the irreducibility of the competing claims that different beings — human and nonhuman — make on our ethical attention. This is not relativism or political quietism; it is a recognition that the ethical demands of multispecies coexistence cannot be met by any single framework, any single community of knowledge, any single political program.

The novel's contribution to ecocriticism and multispecies studies is, in this sense, primarily formal and ethical rather than programmatic. It does not offer a blueprint for a better conservation policy or a more equitable development strategy; it offers a mode of attention — a narrative practice of attending to the complexity of human–nonhuman relationships with honesty, precision, and care. This mode of attention is itself a form of political and ethical action, because it refuses the simplifications — the reduction of the nonhuman to mere resource or mere wilderness, the reduction of the human poor to mere obstacle to conservation — that have historically enabled the violence of exclusionary conservation.

Reading The Hungry Tide alongside the theoretical frameworks of multispecies studies, ecocriticism, and postcolonial environmental justice reveals its extraordinary richness as a work of ecological imagination. Ghosh's novel demonstrates that literary fiction can do something that theoretical discourse cannot: it can hold together, in a single narrative, the competing claims of the dolphin and the Dalit, the tiger and the tidal refugee, the conservation scientist and the subsistence fisherman, without reducing any of these claims to the terms of the others. This capacity for what might be called ethical plurality — for attending to multiple beings in their specificity without subordinating any of them to a master narrative — is the novel's most enduring contribution to the literature of multispecies coexistence.

As the Anthropocene deepens and the crises of habitat loss, species extinction, climate change, and environmental injustice become more acute, the need for forms of ethical imagination adequate to multispecies coexistence becomes correspondingly urgent. The Hungry Tide stands as evidence that literary fiction can meet this need — that the novel, with its resources of empathy, complexity, and sustained attention, is not a peripheral but a central medium for the work of ecological ethics. Amitav Ghosh's tide country, with its dolphins and

tigers and dispossessed refugees and restless tides, is not merely a setting; it is a model of the more-than-human world we all inhabit and a summons to the kind of attentive, humble, relational ethics that coexistence in that world demands.

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Environment Degradation and Gendered Oppression: An Ecofeminist Analysis Of *The God Of Small Things*

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Abstract

Gender injustice and Environmental destruction are interconnected expressions of one oppressive structure rather than separate issues. Whether it is the control over women's bodies, Labour, and sexuality or the destruction of nature for economic or social gain – both justifies the logic of domination. All these weave the chain of oppression which in turn is followed by subordinating of women and exploitation of nature in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. The nature imagery exposes the underlying connections between social injustice and ecological degradation. The Meenachal River and wild Kerala landscapes mirror the characters' lives ,Ammu and Rachel.The polluted river, decaying landscape, and changing environment mirror the emotional and social decay experienced by these two women.Their struggles against patriarchy, caste hierarchy, and social control reflect the same logic of domination that treats both women and the natural world as resources to be controlled and silenced. Both Ammu and Meenachil River are treated as disposable once they no longer serve the interests of those in power. Ultimately this parallels, suggests that the subjugation of women and the destruction of nature stem from interconnected systems of hierarchy and domination. Ecofeminism helps us see that freedom for one cannot exist without justice for the other.

Key Words: Ecofeminism, Gender Injustice, Environmental Destruction, Marginalization, Oppression

Introduction

Ecofeminism arose from the convergence of feminist studies and various social justice and environmental health movements, revealing the interconnected oppressions related to gender, ecology, race, species, and nation through key works like Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature* (1978) and Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980). Additionally, Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), an early radical feminist text, highlighted the historical and cross-cultural mistreatment of women by institutions such as religion, culture, and medical science.

Ecofeminism, a theoretical framework that integrates ecological and feminist viewpoints, aims to comprehend the relationships between environmental harm and the subjugation of women. According to Vandana Shiva and other thinkers, patriarchal and capitalist systems impose similar forms of oppression on both women and the environment. This viewpoint is especially pertinent in postcolonial communities, where the exploitation of marginalised populations and natural resources are exacerbated by historical, social, and economic factors. *The God of Small Things* is a notable literary work in this regard that captures these interacting relationships.

The novel shows the parallel between the exploitation of women and the degradation of nature. The main protagonist ,Ammu,represents a repressed female inside a strict patriarchal system. In parallel, the contaminated water of River Meenachal represents human avarice and neglect. The same power which rule women in four walls and disrespects them pollutes the

environment which is on the outside of the households. The power dynamic is forced on the marginalized, one ,the living and other, the non-living. Both are voiceless. The frequent ideas which overflow in the name of development and progressive society throughout the novel is satirized. The loss of natural beauty of Ayemenem is similar to the loss of women's lives in hands of patriarchy.

The ecofeminist reading of the novel critiques not only the oppression of women but the degradation of natural resources. Gender and caste oppression are interconnected with the loss of natural environment.

Needless to say, women and nature are often associated with feminine values, with its concept of 'Mother Earth,' depicting both as nurturing and life-giving.This idea is central to ecofeminism, which explores the connection between women and nature, arguing that the exploitation of the environment and the oppression of women are interconnected.According to Karen J. Warren(2000,10), ecofeminism is "a position that recognizes important connections between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature" and seeks to challenge the patriarchal pattern that continues to sustain these forms of domination.Ecofeminism developed through the works of scholars such as Karen Warren, Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Val Plumwood, and Carolyn Merchant, who highlighted the connections between Environmental crises and gender injustice.By analyzing how literature depicts the relationship between gender and the environment, ecofeminist literary criticism applies these concepts to literary texts. Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy(1998,3) claim that ecofeminist criticism examines literary works that both reveal gender inequality ingrained in social structures and expose ecological destruction. Literature becomes a potent tool for comprehending the relationship between social injustice and environmental degradation through this kind of analysis.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* provides a powerful illustration of ecofeminist issues. The novel exposes the repressive social structures that limit women's freedom. Ammu's persona represents the difficulties women encounter in a patriarchal society that deprives them of social security and independence.Ranjana Khanna(2001,198), a literary critic,emphasizes Ammu's vulnerable position by noting that Ammu's tragic fate demonstrates the harsh consequences faced by women who challenge social norms." Her marginal position mirrors ecofeminist arguments that patriarchal systems deny women control over resources and power.

Alongside the mistreatment of women and underprivileged groups, the novel portrays Kerala's environmental deterioration. It is highlighted by Nirmala Menon(2001,198), as she says,"The once beautiful river becomes polluted and neglected, symbolizing the destructive impact of modern development. "This forms the ecocritical interpretation that "The transformation of The Meenachal River from a vibrant ecosystem into a polluted stream mirrors the collapse of traditional harmony between humans and nature."It draws a clear parallel between the decay of nature and the oppression of women, showing that both are abused and destroyed by the same rigid social structures as argues by Alex Tickell(2007,64), "Roy's novel links the control of women's sexuality with the control of the natural environment."However, some other critics argue that:

"The female characters remain victims rather than agents of real change."

The idea of the "Love Laws," which specify acceptable relationships within the community, is another way that the novel challenges inflexible social hierarchies.Roy writes: "The Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much" (1997,33).

The tragic outcomes of Ammu and Velutha's relationship are ultimately caused by these rules, which impose boundaries based on caste, gender, and class. This is justified by Brinda Bose's statement ,"The breaking of the Love Laws is an act of resistance against the

social structures that discipline female desire."These social constraints are frequently seen by ecofeminist critics as a component of the same hierarchical worldview that permits the dominance of both the natural environment and marginalized people.

Overall *The God of Small Things* remains a rich text for examining the intersections of gender, ecology, power, and social hierarchy in contemporary Indian society The study questions how Arundhati Roy parallels Ammu's marginalization with the degradation of the natural environment, particularly through the polluted Meenachal River as a symbol of ecological decline. It also investigates how the concept of "Love Laws" reinforces rigid hierarchies that control both human relationships and the natural order. Another key problem lies in analyzing the role of colonial legacy and capitalist modernity in accelerating environmental destruction and social inequality. The research further explores the silencing of women and nature, both denied agency and voice within dominant power structures.

Additionally, it examines how landscape and natural imagery reflect the psychological and emotional states of female characters like Ammu and Rahel. Finally, the study questions whether acts of resistance—such as Ammu and Velutha's forbidden relationship—can be interpreted as ecofeminist challenges to oppressive systems, thereby linking personal defiance with broader ecological and social critique, this study adopts a qualitative, interpretative methodology to analyze *The God of Small Things* through an ecofeminist lens. It involves close textual analysis, focusing on symbols, characters, and narrative structure, while drawing on ecofeminist theories to examine the interconnected oppression of women and nature in Arundhati Roy's work.

Discussion

Literature often reflects the deep connections between human society and the natural world. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* vividly reflects this interconnected oppression through Kerala's declining ecosystem and the tragic lives of characters dictated by rigid social norms.The natural environment in the novel is not merely a backdrop but an active symbolic force.The detailed descriptions of plants, insects, rivers, and monsoon rains create an intimate connection between human emotions and ecological rhythms.At first the river is presented as clean, flowing, and natural, symbolizing peace and childhood innocence."The Meenachal River slithered through the countryside like a dark snake"(1997,32).The land around the river was green, fertile, and full of plants and animals. The environment looks almost magical."May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month… The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dust-green trees."However, later this once-beautiful river gradually deteriorates due to pollution and human neglect. The river that was once fresh and lively turns dirty and unhealthy, filled with waste and chemicals from human activities. Roy notes that it had become "a river that smelled of shit and pesticides," showing how badly it had been polluted. She also writes that it was "The river which had the power to evoke fear was no more than a slow, slugging green ribbon laws that ferried garbage to the sea now"(1997,124).Through these contrasting descriptions, Roy highlights the transformation of the river from a symbol of natural beauty into a sign of environmental damage caused by human carelessness. The woodlands were too abused ,leaving behind a question on the relationship with the environment.The fish in the river had also died as the river had become "choked with a succulent weed," suggesting that the water had become stagnant and lifeless.Not only the river shows its transition but also the Ayemenem.The Ayemenem,which was once known for its rural quietness, "its population has swelled to the size of a little town."Years later, when Rahel returns to the river, she notices that it has changed drastically. The river appears lifeless and reduced in size.The saltwater barrage was built downstream which regulated farmers to harvest rice twice a year instead of once.While the barrage increased rice production and benefited farmers economically, it also led to environmental destruction;the river shrank and became

polluted and stagnant.The History House,once owned by Kari Saipu,symbolizes how modernization and renovation can lead to the destruction of nature and the loss of the past.Earlier, the house could be easily approached from the Meenachal River, and the river was a natural part of the landscape where the children once crossed by boat. However, after renovation, the water area is controlled and modified for tourism. A separate swimming pool is created for visitors instead of using the natural river water. "No Swimming Signs had been put up in stylish calligraphy".The river itself becomes polluted and neglected, and the hotel is no longer meant to be reached directly from the river.These picturize humans prioritising profit, comfort, and modernization over nature and history.The destruction of the natural environment functions as a metaphor for the social and patriarchal forces that also constrain and oppress women in the novel.

The ugly face of society is demonstrated through the village of Ayemenem in Kerala,which exposes how rigid cultural norms, family authority, and social expectations restrict women's freedom and identity.Female characters in the novel are often marginalized, silenced, and denied autonomy which reflects the deep-rooted gender inequalities embedded within the social system.Through characters of three generations-Mammachi,Ammu and Rahel,it is illustrated how women are subjected to emotional, social, and physical oppression within both the family and the wider community.Mammachi experiences oppression through domestic violence and patriarchal authority. Although she is talented and capable, her husband Pappachi dominates and humiliates her, reflecting the normalization of male control within the household. Even after his death, patriarchal values continue through Chacko, who asserts ownership over the house and factory, and at the same time, considers the women to be dependents.When Mammachi becomes successful with her pickle business, Pappachi's male ego is hurt and he feels threatened by her independence. Instead of expressing his emotions openly, Pappachi releases his anger by smashing his favorite mahogany rocking chair with a wrench in the middle of the driveway. This act symbolizes his suppressed rage and wounded pride. After this incident, he chooses to punish Mammachi emotionally by refusing to speak to her or show affection. His silence becomes a form of psychological control, showing how he tries to maintain dominance and protect his social image.This portrays Pappachi as a man whose patriarchal mindset and insecurity lead him to express power through psychological intimidation rather than open communication.Ammu too became the victim of a patriarchal pattern as she grew up in a patriarchal family where her father, Pappachi, treated women as inferior and often dominated the household. She was denied higher education and independence simply because she is a woman. " Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl,so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them".Hoping to escape her unhappy home, Ammu marries an irresponsible man, but the marriage becomes abusive and she eventually returns to her parental house with her twins. Instead of receiving support, she faces criticism and humiliation from her relatives and society because divorced women are looked down upon.

Ammu is also oppressed by strict social rules when she falls in love with Velutha, a man from a lower caste. Their relationship breaks the "Love Laws" of society, which dictate who should be loved and how much. Because of this, Ammu is harshly punished, isolated, and treated as a disgrace to the family.Morever,The police officer's behavior shows how the system is influenced by patriarchal attitudes and caste discrimination.When Ammu goes to the police station to tell the truth about Velutha, the police officer, Inspector Thomas Mathew, treats her with disrespect and humiliation. Instead of listening to her complaint, he insults her character and dismisses her words. He calls her a "veshya" (prostitute) and refuses to record her statement. The inspector believes the accusations made by the powerful family members and society rather than a divorced woman like Ammu.In a humiliating gesture, he taps her breast with his baton and asks her to go home, implying that she has no respectability or right to

complain. " Then he tapped her breasts with his baton.Gently.Tap,Tap.As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket."The theme of independent identity for women is highlighted when Ammu says she is "considering reverting to her maiden name." However, the narrator points out that choosing between a husband's name and a father's name does not really give a woman a true choice.She cannot have a name or identity of her own. So even when Ammu tries to reclaim her maiden name, it is still not true independence—it is simply moving from one male identity to another.Even at death, Ammu was still judged.The church refused to bury her as society considered her immoral and disgraceful.Rahel is also a victim of oppression, mainly because of family neglect, social prejudice, and the tragic events that shape her childhood. She receives little affection or support and is often ignored or blamed for events she did not cause. Later in life, Rahel's marriage also fails, showing how the patriarchal system does not allow women much freedom or emotional security. At the same time,the double standards of patriarchy are exposed where men's affairs are normalized but women are severely condemned for similar actions.When Mammachi's son Chacko has sexual relationships with the female workers in the pickle factory, Mammachi does not object or criticize him. Instead, she accepts his behavior and even protects him from blame. She believes that, as a man, Chacko has certain "needs," and therefore his actions are natural and acceptable. However, the same society harshly judges women like Ammu for having a relationship with Velutha. Ammu is treated as immoral and is socially punished, while Chacko's behavior is tolerated.Thus,there is a subtle draw of parallel between the deteriorating natural environment and the marginalized position of women in Ayemenem.Both nature and women are treated as entities to be possessed, controlled, and discarded when they challenge established norms.Both are victims of the same oppressive system that values power, control, and social order over freedom and harmony. By portraying the damaged river alongside the suppressed voices of marginalized characters,the need for environmental sustainability has turned into something challenging.

Conclusion

The reading of *The God of Small Things* demonstrates that environmental degradation Gendered oppression are closely related outcomes of the same patriarchal and hierarchical structures rather than individual problems. The book effectively demonstrates power,patriarchal, caste, and postcolonial systems all work together to oppress women and Nature. The narrative makes it clear that control was exerted over women's bodies,choices and identities correspond to environmental dominance.

One of the primary findings of this study is that nature serves as a symbol of Society in the novel. The characters' moral decline and emotional fragmentation are mirrored by the gradual contamination and degradation of the natural environment, particularly the river. This human behavior driven by control, avarice, and indifference leads to deterioration;qualities that also contribute to gender inequality.When societies normalize domination—whether over rivers, forests, or women—they create cycles of violence that eventually harm everyone.Furthermore, the experiences of people like Rahel and Ammu show how patriarchal norms restrict women's freedom and punish any form of opposition. Their lives demonstrate the psychological and emotional cost of adhering to strict social norms. By regulating relationships and maintaining social hierarchies, the implementation of "Love Laws"exacerbates existing disparities. This approach enables the book to criticize not only specific instances but there are also larger systems that enable such abuse to occur.

This study is significant because it contributes to a deeper understanding of how literature acts as a mirror and critiques real-world ecological and gender injustices.It highlights the need for approaching literary texts not merely as creative works, but as powerful socio-political narratives that expose underlying structures of inequality and domination.The ecofeminist lens allows us to see how both nature and women are subjected to control,

exploitation, and silencing.In addition, in an era of increasingly urgent environmental crises and ongoing gender struggles, reading such literature promotes a critical awareness and more inclusive and sustainable ways of thinking as it helps to narrow down the exploitation and sufferings.Future studies can extend ecofeminist readings to explore intersections with caste, class, and postcolonial identity to deepen the analysis.It can also create a bridge between ecofeminist theory and contemporary issues such as climate change, displacement, and sustainability; thereby showing the connection between literary studies and global challenges.Ultimately, the text serves as a critique of oppressive systems and acts as a reminder that ecological care vanishes when marginalized communities are disregarded and women's voices are silenced.So,to heal the environmental damage,it requires confronting the social attitudes which allow exploitation to continue.

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Rewriting Nature, Reclaiming Identity: Anti-Essentialist Ecofeminist Insurgency in Dalit Women's Literature

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Abstract

Dalit ecology and ecofeminism are relatively new developments in the field of ecocriticism. Dalit feminism exposes nature not as a cosmic order, but as a political tool created by upper-caste men to justify the oppression of women. This paper aims at an anti-essentialist Ecofeminist analysis of Dalit women's literature while also integrating the Dalit Feminist Standpoint. It will try to show how Dalit women are reclaiming their identity by rewriting nature as feminist resistance against Brahmanical patriarchy, through epistemic and metaphorical insurgency. It uses poems of Sukirtharani, namely, "Nature's fountainhead" and "My body", and Malathi Maithri's "Bhumadevi". The secondary texts include *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* by Val Plumwood and "Dalit Women Talk Differently: A Critique of 'Difference' and Towards a Dalit Feminist Standpoint Position" by Sharmila Rege.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Dalit Feminist Standpoint, Dalit Ecofeminism, Anti-Essentialist Ecofeminism, Brahmanical Patriarchy, Caste Discrimination, and Dalit Ecology

Introduction

Ecofeminists believe that women have been wrenched away from the centre of human development and pushed into a private, exploited, and controlled sphere of nature. They have been confined to the 'natural' roles of reproducing and preparing food, and their bodies are the surface or the medium of every form of social battle. The mutilation and appropriation of women's bodies define the boundaries of the social groups. The characteristics of purity, passivity, and irrationality are concocted to make women powerless. Therefore, women's bodies, like nature, become the resource for human development. Ecofeminists conceptualized different perspectives towards this relationship and theorized different ways to erase its confining nature. While some ecofeminists talked about women being naturally closer to nature, others talked about spiritualism, which connects women and nature into a cosmic and divine order. Another perspective of ecofeminism postulated that it defines an umbrella term of patriarchy/masculinity as the reason behind the domination of nature and women across all sectors of society. However, these attempts, including many others, to address the interlinking of the domination of women with the destruction of nature, failed in many aspects. The attempt to link women 'naturally' with nature adopts an Essentialist Ecofeminist position of romanticizing women as closer to nature or as the Divine Nature. Moreover, the idea of addressing ecofeminist issues by considering women as a homogenous identity and patriarchy/masculinity as the primary, fundamental, and universal problem is a reductionist study of the issue, as it neglects the different identities of women in society, framed by not just patriarchy but also caste, class, religion, and race. It is cultural universalism that overlooks the idea that every woman's identity is formulated by different factors, apart from gender, and has different struggles and needs. A woman's domination is an intersection of different cultural identities with gender, and their emancipation has to percolate the multiple forms of discrimination.

A liberatory and powerful ecofeminist theory is the one that conceives nature as a political tool used by humans (Western, upper-caste men) to naturalize social hierarchy. Nature is related to women not only because both are dominated, but also because nature becomes the instrument or weapon to intensify women's oppression. Relegating women to nature is not a natural or spiritual intervention but a human-made social hierarchical thought process to push women to the margins.

Objective

This paper examines poems by Dalit women authors through the lens of Anti-Essentialist Ecofeminism and Dalit Feminist Standpoint. The integration of the two theories will address the double suppression of Dalit women based on their gender and caste identity, which creates a different relationship of such women with nature. Dalit women are suppressed by two major forms of social oppression, Brahmanical Patriarchy and Caste Discrimination, in addition environmental oppression in which 'nature' becomes a weapon. Therefore, the paper will address both the social and environmental issues to argue that the relationship between nature and (Dalit) women is a cultural and human-made political tool to oppress women. It will show that opposing this form of control over women and nature requires an ecofeminism that addresses the reclamation of nature (and its metaphors) as the political tool for women to rewrite the definition of 'nature' and erase the social hierarchy imposed on it. The paper will analyze epistemic and metaphorical insurgency in Dalit women's poetry, which encapsulates experiential and metaphoric ways in which Dalit women poets are rewriting nature and its poetic images.

Theoretical Framework: Dalit Ecofeminism as Anti-Essentialist Ecofeminism and Dalit Feminist Standpoint

Ecofeminism is a vital theoretical framework and practice to understand the complexities of the relationship between women and nature. It not only addresses the exploitation of the environment and the climate issues, but also the insight that women's domination plays a crucial role in ecology. Without including and addressing the issues that women face in the social culture, the conservation and protection of nature from degradation will be incomplete. As long as dominant rationality and biases prevail in the culture, women will continue to be pushed to the margins, to the exteriors, which are both philosophical concepts and physical space. Philosophically, women's domination and exclusion mean treating them as subordinate in human culture. However, exclusion and domination of women lead them to a tenacious or physical confinement in the space of nature. Nature encompasses the margins and the exteriors of today's scientifically evolved world because it is exploited blindly for development and revolution, rather than being protected or conserved. Hence, every oppressed woman of the human world becomes a part of the exploited nature, which further deteriorates their status as a human. Nature is not considered as the power, but as the passive source of power, an analogy that fits in the conversations of women being the private space of masculine society, labouring to provide comfort to the men in their houses. The domination of women and nature coincide especially because of the idea that women are subordinate beings, the "Second Sex" as Simone De Beauvoir (De Beauvoir) frames it, solely based on their sex/gender. The sex/gender of a woman, a natural factor, becomes the definition of their exclusion from civilization. Moreover, their suppression is worsened using the same idea of naturalization of other identity markers, including race, caste, class, and religion.

However, the response of ecofeminism over the years has not been liberatory enough to encapsulate the core problems of ecological domination of women. Over the decade, ecofeminism adopted the reductionist approach of cultural universalism, essentialism, and spiritualism that lacked the conceptual and critical understanding of the individual core issues. Val Plumwood, in her book *Feminism and Mastery of Nature*, presents a strong critique of the essentialist ecofeminist standpoint. She opposes the ecofeminist claims that position women as

'naturally' a special part of nature. According to Plumwood, "Feminine 'closeness to nature' has hardly been a compliment" (Plumwood 19). Criticizing the essentialist ecofeminism, she writes, "The very idea of a feminine connection with nature seems to many to be regressive and insulting, summoning up images of women as earth mothers, as passive, reproductive animals, contented cows immersed in the body and in the unreflective experiencing of life" (Plumwood 20). The essentialist perspective of ecofeminism assumes that every woman defines herself based on her reproductive features and emotional sameness. However, it is easy to cancel this argument because not all women, even today, value reproduction as the primary goal. Moreover, many women cannot reproduce at all, and romanticizing reproduction acts as a shame and exploitation of such women. Plumwood also backs this idea when she writes, "Women do not necessarily treat other women as sisters or the earth as a mother; women are capable of conflict, of domination and even, in the right circumstances, of violence" (Plumwood 9). She argues that essentialist ecofeminist ideas are "a denial of the reality of women's lives, and not least a denial of the divisions between women themselves, both within the women's" (Plumwood 9).

Analyzing the women-nature connection, she argues that nature and woman have been conceptualized based on exclusions. In other words, women have been defined based on everything that does not belong to the dominant culture- "...emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilized, the nonhuman world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and of madness" (Plumwood 19). Plumwood calls nature the fourth element of the exclusionary practices of women's oppression based on gender, race, and class. However, as she elaborates, essentialist ecofeminists do not consider the multiple exclusions based on which nature and women have been formulated. Plumwood frames an Anti-Essentialist Ecofeminism in which the relationship between human and nature is based on mutual dependence, without any irrational or anti-rational perspective of universalization, homogenization, oppression, or glorification. She writes, "Human relations to nature are not only ethical, but also political" (Plumwood 13). Moreover, "The quest for coherence is not the demand that each form of oppression submerges its hard-won identity in a single, amorphous, oceanic movement. Rather it asks that each form of oppression develop sensitivity to other forms, both at the level of practice and that of theory" (Plumwood 14). She urges to redefine the nature-human relationship as a framework in which the master, man or the human, can understand their dependency on the 'other', and start preserving the 'other' to save their own existence. Plumwood writes, "... it is clear that a rational culture oriented to survival would develop forms of rationality which encouraged mutually sustaining relationships between humans and the earth (Plumwood 195).

The idea of multiple exclusions in the domination of nature presents a strong case for the fifth and sixth elements of social and physical oppression of women- Caste Discrimination and Brahmanical Patriarchy. It has often been assumed that women's emancipation is based on Western and Savarna feminism. However, Dalit women activists have separated themselves from the mainstream feminism that failed to address their diverse issues. Women of the lower caste are suppressed owing to their intersecting identity of a 'lower-caste woman'. Dalit Ecofeminism is a relatively new concept in the field of Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism because of its sudden eruption from a historical suppression of colonialism, patriarchy, and mainstream and savarna feminism. These thought systems and social interactions omitted caste issues as a part of the environmental crisis, thereby naturalising the caste hierarchy, as pointed out by Indulata Prasad in "Towards Dalit Ecologies". She writes, "Keyword searches combining "Dalit" with ecological terms such as "land", "water," or "environment" rarely turn up academic publications that identify as "ecological" or "environmental" studies" (Prasad 99). Dalit Ecofeminism, in this paper, is a convergence of two major theoretical stances- Anti-

Essentialist Ecofeminism and Dalit Feminist Standpoint. Sharmila Rege's Dalit Feminist Standpoint advocates that Dalit women can be empowered by addressing their subjectivity and lived experiences in which caste coincides with gender identity. Dalit Ecofeminism is rooted not only in the ecological exploitation of Dalit women but also in caste consciousness, in addition to the gender-based differences. It addresses the ecological domination of Dalit women and nature, while also including 'nature' as a political weapon of the upper caste to intensify their oppression based on their social (caste and gender) identity. Analysis of the double layer of Dalit Ecofeminism is possible when Dalit women's lived experiences are considered as the subject of ecological and social reformation, and not the abstract nature.

Dalit Women as Victims of Social and Ecological Oppression

In Dalit ecology, Dalit women's subordination is normalized and 'naturalized' as a cosmic order that created hierarchy for the betterment of humanity. Caste discrimination is considered 'natural' as it is based on the birth of a human. Many Hindu sacred texts mention the 'Varna System', a social hierarchy created based on the quality, attribute, or the inherent nature of a person, which was later solidified as a caste system based on birth. In "Annihilation of Caste", BR Ambedkar pointed out the use of the concept of 'nature' to legitimize the caste system in India. He connected caste with dictums of the shastras and smritis, which are not allowed to be opposed or read with rationality (84-85). He writes, "Caste is the natural outcome of certain religious beliefs which have the sanction of the shastras, which are believed to contain the command of divinely inspired sages" (Ambedkar 78). BR Ambedkar criticized the Varna System and termed caste discrimination as the division of labourers. He writes, "The caste division is not merely a division of labourers- which is quite different from the division of labour it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other" (Ambedkar 35)." Moreover, he critiqued the idea of Chaturvarnya as an inappropriate and insufficient social order and defined varnas and caste as "thralldom" of shastras and religion (Ambedkar 77). He writes, "Hindus…observe caste because they are deeply religious…the enemy you must grapple with is not the people who observe caste, but the shastras which teach them this religion of caste…The real remedy is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of shastras" (Ambedkar 76).

BR Ambedkar argued about another 'natural' birth of the caste system in which Dalit women became the 'reproducing nature'. According to him, the primary reason for the persistence of the caste system in India was endogamy. In "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development", he writes, "...creation of Castes, so far as India is concerned, means the superposition of endogamy on exogamy" (Ambedkar 106-107). Moreover, according to Ambedkar, one of the most effective ways to uproot the caste system was to encourage exogamy. He writes, "The real remedy for breaking caste is intermarriage" (Ambedkar 75). The arguments of Ambedkar expose nature as a mechanism, a political tool, and a weapon to impose Brahminical social order. His ideologies also point out the larger role of Dalit women and their bodies as the grounds on which the caste system is inscribed. Even today, Dalit women are used as the target for caste battles in which their bodies become the battleground on which the Brahmanical order imposes itself through sexual and physical mutilations. Conclusively, Dalit women's natural bodies become the origins of the caste order. However, the origin is not 'natural' or born out of reproduction, but rather mechanized by the Brahmanical social hierarchy through confinement and violence. The 'natural' root of the caste system is the oppression of Dalit women and their natural bodies, which become the political tools in confining and punishing the transgressors.

Another important way in which women become the 'natural weapon' of solidifying caste order is their ecological oppression through hydrological inequality, landlessness, unemployability, and untouchability. In ecological exploitation, the natural landscape becomes

a political to intensify caste discrimination as it is used as a weapon to tear the Dalit community out of the civilized section of society and confine them into ghettos or natural spheres with no access to water, fertile land, food, education, jobs, and other means of livelihood. Dalit women face the worst kind of ecological discrimination as nature becomes the third factor of their oppression. Their bodies are mutilated for land and property disputes, and landlessness aggravates their lack of safety, dignity, food, and money. They become the face of water poverty in India, in which hydrological inequalities ban Dalit communities from accessing public water. Water poverty that India is currently facing is not just the scarcity of water, but is also caste-bound (Savariyar 159). Dalit women, because of their gender, are made responsible for household duties, including providing food and water for their families. To access food and water, Dalit women have to walk miles through forests, mountains, and even upper-caste-dominated areas to collect potable water, firewood, grass, and food for their families. As Bhuyashee Rajkumari, a programme associate at Wetlands International South Asia, reveals in her study, "Dalit women are subjected to numerous discriminatory acts from their higher caste counterparts while getting water from public sources. Discrimination can vary widely, including long queues to fill pots, abusive language, and even physical assault and humiliation at the hands of upper-caste people" (Rajkumari). Prakash Kashwan studied the water-based discrimination in Gujarat and exposed, "Discriminatory water practices in Gujarat's villages disproportionately affect lower-caste women, subjecting them to extreme precarity and vulnerability to sexual abuse by upper-caste men" (Kashwan). This household duty is completely different from those of the upper-caste women. Dalit women risk their lives and dignity in performing household duties. They lose their lives due to accidents while crossing the wild, and they lose their sexual dignity when upper-caste men sexually and physically abuse them because of their caste and gender.

In *Caste and Nature: Dalits and Indian Environmental Politics*, Mukul Sharma calls this kind of exclusion in which ecology becomes a reason for oppression, especially of women, and not just the shared site of domination as "eco-casteism" (Sharma qt. in Prasad 103). Indulata Prasad calls the ecological exclusion of the Dalit community historical and one of the major reasons behind the current aggravating climate and environmental issues. She writes, "The caste-designated occupations of Dalits and their segregation into unfertile, dried up, or poisoned landscapes has not only historically marginalized Dalits but also aggravated the impacts of climate change, ecological degradation, and environmental disasters in their lives" (Prasad 104). Dalit women have negligible options to earn a livelihood. Dhinakaran Savariyar mentions that the labour of the household duties is so intense that women (with special reference to Adivasi women) give up the chance to earn money (Savariyar 161). Even if Dalit women try to seek employment opportunities, their caste and gender identities follow them like a shadow. They either get no job or are forced to do lowly labour of collecting human excreta and used sanitary napkins, cleaning dry latrines, disposing placenta post-delivery, and other toxic wastes, replete with exploitation (Kumari and Chaupal 8). In "Stench of Manual Scavenging: History of Pride, Politics and Practical Brahmanism", Rudrani Kumari and Ramhit Chaupal write about the "feminization" of manual scavenging "...as 90% of the manual scavengers are women…Women manual scavengers face sexual and physical harassment by their male counterparts- who are often alcoholics after the distressing impact of scavenging- contractors, and owners" (Kumari and Chaupal 8).

Dalit women's relation with nature is that of unpaid and dangerous labour that consumes their identity and homogenizes their purpose of existence as caregivers and nurturers. Unlike the upper-caste women who labour in their houses, Dalit women have to undergo bone-breaking physical labour both in the field and in their homes. The precarious nature of the labour and the idea that the Dalit community as a whole doesn't have access to basic means of survival make

Dalit women the worst affected by ecological issues. Ecological Feminism cannot emancipate Dalit women without inculcating their experiences with the ecology and their narratives of reclamation.

Literary Analysis: "Bhumadevi", "My body", and "Nature's fountainhead"

Dalit Ecofeminism draws heavily from Dalit Feminist Standpoint and Dalit Epistemology. Many Dalit women authors have attempted to redefine 'nature' and reclaim their identities from the hierarchical orders. They have written nature poems and used nature metaphors to create a new narrative of Dalit ecofeminism by rejecting the idea of idolizing or romanticizing women as 'naturally' closer to the earth and nature. They have tried to devise a plot in which they not only recreate the meanings of the naturE metaphors, but also use them as their political tools to question the hierarchy of caste and gender. Dalit women authors have attempted a metaphorical and epistemic insurgency by depicting that women's connection with nature is not 'natural', but built by the man-made culture of hierarchy and exclusions. 'Nature' is not an apolitical and ahistorical landscape, but rather a politically charged terrain built by humans, not by the cosmic order. Through their powerful poems, Dalit women authors are presenting a resistance to the dominant forces by using nature metaphors as political tools of storytelling, insurgency, and reclamation.

Malathi Maithri is a political activist who constantly participates in and agitates for environmental movements. She belongs to a fishing community, and the women of her family laboured throughout their lives. "Life centred around the river where women fished or bought fish, after which they walked miles from one village to the next in order to sell their wares. They would rather walk home than take a bus, saving the money to buy food or treats for the children" (Maithri et al.15). Maithri's poem "Bhumadevi" draws from the mother-daughter relationship while addressing the idea of reproductive labour that Dalit women have to undergo. The title of the poem gives a precise foreground for the theme of the poem. Bhumadevi means the Earth Goddess, the goddess of the entire universe. The title gives a glimpse of the essentialist perspective of engendering the universe, nature and the earth as women or born out of women. However, Maithri connects nature metaphors with women's bodies to tell a story of the historical and political act of reducing women to childbearing machines. Her poem depicts the pain that women feel, which is often normalized as part of their 'nature', using metaphors like "stretch marks" and "footprints of a baby crab" (Maithri et al. 67). The passive, nurturing, sacrificial, and pain-bearing woman is shown through girl child, who is shocked that her mother is still alive (Maithri et al. 67). The manner in which the mother, visibly in pain due to the endless labour, dismisses the shock and the danger of surviving despite the pain of childbirth shows the indoctrinated mindsets of women who have internalized childbirth and its pain as 'natural' duty. However, the next part of the poem changes the entire narrative by using powerful nature images that are completely different from the passive perception of women. Maithri shows childbirth as similar to both productive and destructive forces of nature. Through the nature images like "snow-storm", "raging wave", "joyous stream", "feasting forest", and "great exploding volcano" (Maithri et al. 67), Maithri challenges the narrative of imposing reproduction as a natural part of womanhood, and uses the interrelation as a political tool to reclaim identities of women from nature-nurture dynamics.

Sukirtharani also belongs to a Dalit family whose occupation is connected with nature. Her family's occupation, traditionally, was to collect the carcasses of the dead animals of the upper caste people and burn or bury them. Sukirtharani is known for poems that write about women's bodies- their struggles, their desires, and their resistance. Lakshmi Holmström quotes Skirtharini and writes, "'I realized then', she writes, 'a woman's body had become the property of man. I realised that it was my first duty to redeem it. So my poetry began to put forward a politics of the body.'" (Maithri et al.26). Like Maithri and other Dalit women poets,

Sukirtharani too uses the body and the natural landscape to show the multiple discriminations that women face in Dalit ecology. In her poem, "My body" (Maithri et al. 205), Sukirtharani "...charts" (Dalit women's bodies) "an exotic landscape with richly imagined geographical features. The poem is one of discovery…'Nature' here is the landscape of her own 'nature', her 'self', imagined and owned" (Maithri et al. 27). Holmström's analysis of the poem covers its essence of rejecting the essentialist ecofeminism and embracing a feminism based on different experiences with nature as a Dalit woman. The poem disturbs the idea of depicting nature and women as passive receivers of dominant ideologies, including their violence. Through "My body", Sukirtharani maps the oppression that Dalit women face by replacing nature with Dalit women's bodies. The poem starts with a positive note of lush green and rich nature, which, when compared to the Dalit woman's body, is an essentialist linking that overlooks oppression and labour. The poem then shifts to a violent imagery of a "tiger" with "blood-smeared mouth" drinking from a stream (Maithri et al. 205), suggesting violence on the Dalit community, specifically women, because of the use of nature as the resting point of dominators. It is after violence that the poem shifts to a different narrative about nature, and hence Dalit women, which suggests resistance, reclamation, and ownership. Sukirtharani reclaims the nature metaphors as a form of resistance within Dalit feminism, drawing on the tiger and blood images. She maps Dalit oppression through Dalit women's bodies while reclaiming their identities by rewriting the definition of nature. Sukirtharani claims that "Nature becomes my body" (Maithri et al. 205), which doesn't align with a romantic view of women's special connection with nature. Rather, it depicts an unsettling and stormy traverse of a Dalit woman through 'nature's' political terrain of patriarchal and caste violence, which ends with the woman reshaping and owning nature and her body as her political tool of emancipation and resistance.

Similarly, in "Nature's fountainhead" (Maithri et al. 207), Sukirtharani writes an assertive narrative through a strong portrayal of nature images, which assert Dalit women's demand for rewriting nature as free of patriarchal and caste hierarchy. Moreover, the revolutionary use of nature images shows that Dalit women are reclaiming their identity by subverting the traditional discourse of being passive and nurturing with 'natural' closeness to nature and creating a new ecological self that denies the dominant hierarchy. In "Nature's fountainhead", 'nature' is mapped as revolutionary, uncontrollable and destructive, a narrative which is ignored by the dominant forces that consider nature as their exploitable resource. The poem erases the dualistic connection of women and nature and suggests a relationship in which women reclaim 'nature' from the dominant forces that have wrongly defined natural terrain. Sukirtharani urges women to own nature and redefine it as their political tool for resistance and freedom.

Conclusion

The nature poems by Sukirtharani and Malathi Maithri show a common tendency of rewriting the ecological narrative in which women define nature and own their bodies, rather than being defined as subordinate. The historical and prolonged oppression creates an accumulated rage that bursts into defiance- a natural phenomenon (shown through storm, cyclone, or volcano, imageries used often in Dalit women's poetry) that explains the human behaviour of violent insurgency too. The solution to the ecological exploitation of women, as suggested by Plumwood, is to "…instal another, less hierarchical, more democratic and plural identity in its place." Rather than the irrational reversal of the social order or an anti-rational resurrection of the past social order, Plumwood suggests a creation of a "sustainable" and "mutual" relationship with nature (Plumwood 189-191). This, as she conceptualizes, is possible if the dominant or master 'self' accepts its dependency and its relationship with the dominated or the 'other'. The "denial of dependency is a major factor in the perpetuation of the non-sustainable modes of using nature which loom as such a threat to the future of western society"

(190). She suggests the creation of a mutual self and "self-in-relationship" that breaks down the self/other dualism (154-155).

The Dalit women's literature has not yet suggested a universal and democratic recreation of the nature-woman relationship. The poems analyzed above call for an insurgency in which women become the defining factors of nature. However, it is important to note that the ecological exploitation that Dalit women face is the most detrimental when compared to that of women in general. Dalit women's experiences lie at the bottom of all forms of ecological and social exploitation. Therefore, if Dalit women redefine nature, their effort will begin where ecological issues become the worst version of themselves. Dalit Feminist Standpoint, as Sharmila Rege coins, is a non-Brahmanical rendering of Feminist politics in which the Dalit Epistemology is not just the subjectivity of a particular group or identity, but of the entire society, including the upper-caste community (Kumari and Chaupal 11; Rege 45). Hence, a social and ecological reformation that begins with Dalit Epistemology will be able to find the root cause of the domination and the solution towards a sustainable relationship with nature and the future. Women are part of and contributors to the sustainability of nature. Dalit women, who are exposed to the worst versions of ecological issues, are one of the important voices for environmental reformation. Val Plumwood pointed out that the dominant forces have ignored this dependency on nature, women and their abilities to the point of their erasure. However, as she further writes, the erasure of the 'other' will also break the link of dependency on which the dominant force thrives, leading to a total destruction (Plumwood 195). Therefore, the reformation to stop this destruction must begin with the revaluation of the other.

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The Environment and Mind: An Affective Ecological Study of *The Blood of Leaves*

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Abstract

This paper explores the environmental degradation, emotional experience, and gendered marginalization through an affective ecological reading of Vo Thi Hao's short story *The Blood of Leaves* (2010). Ecocriticism privileges human-nonhuman relationships, but the present study foregrounds affective ecology as a theoretical framework that emphasizes emotional engagement with environmental crisis issues. The short story *The Blood of Leaves* depicts the consequences of the Agent Orange used in the Vietnam War (1955-1975) on the environment and the native people. The ecological damage caused by Agent Orange reveals how toxicity permeates not only landscapes but also human bodies and minds. Tam, a physically deformed young woman, is marginalized due to her "ugliness". The story depicts Tam's struggle in her native place after the Vietnam War and how the degraded environment has affected her body. Her physical 'ugliness' caused by the environment affected her mind and the layered forms of suffering she has endured. Tam's emotional isolation, internalized shame, and her longing for recognition show how ecological degradation can be fatal to an individual's mind. The paper argues that ecocriticism needs to go beyond a surface-level understanding of environment and literature, and demands a deeper understanding of the emotional dimensions of ecology, where affective ecology will serve as the substratum of knowledge.

Keywords: Affective Ecology, Mind, Ugliness, Toxic Ecology.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, ecocriticism, as a critical literary theory, has attracted the attention of researchers. In 1869, Ernest Haeckel coined the term "ecology" to describe the scientific study of the natural interdependencies of living organisms. The word 'ecocriticism' was coined by William Rueckert (1978) in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*. He states that, primarily, when we look at literature and culture from an environmental perspective and engage in critical analysis, it is generally called ecocriticism.

The words 'Eco' and 'critic' are derived from the Greek word oikos, which stands for household, and the word *kritis* for the judge. Oikos means "our widest home", and kritos, William Howarth explains, "the arbiter of taste who wants the house to be kept in good order, no boots or dishes strewn about to ruin the original decor" (Howarth 69).

The publication of Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) and Cheryl Glotfelty's and Harold Fromm's collection *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) gave scholars a foundation and a significant focus on the connections between literature and the environment. Glotfelty's definition of ecocriticism is very simple: the study of literature and the environment, and she remarks that ecocriticism celebrates an ecocentric rather than anthropocentric approach, where all humans and nonhumans have equal opportunity, a principle later known as egalitarianism. In the Romantic age, nature was treated as a friend; in

the Victorian age, nature was portrayed as God; in the Modern age, it became highly symbolic; and in the post-modern age, it is socio-political. The environment is also entangled with human emotions and subjective experience. In this regard, affective ecology, as a theory, emerges to address the human mind and emotion and how they are affected by ecological degradation or toxic ecology. Environmental degradation is not an external reality; it affects one's emotions and psychological well-being. The story captures the widespread use of chemical defoliants such as Agent Orange. It does not merely represent environmental damage but also how marginalized people experience it after the Vietnam war.

Affective Ecology: Theoretical Framework

The term 'affective ecology' was coined by Giuseppe Barbiero in "Affective Ecology as Development of Biophilia Hypothesis". Timothy Morton warns that the present century is "dark-depressing," "dark-uncanny," but it has the potential to be "dark-sweet" (Morton 5). He points out that we should find the positive emotions that are embedded in the darkness. "Find the joy," he suggests, "without pushing away the depression, for depression is [an] accurate" response to the toxic ecology of the present earth (Morton 117). Darkened by the toxic ecological crisis, Morton signed to entangle with the joy which is necessary to "brighten the dark, strange loop we traverse" (Morton 117).

Affective ecology builds on the limitations of cognitive ecology and emphasizes that knowledge of the environment alone cannot transform human relationships with it. When ecology studies the human-nonhuman relation scientifically, affective ecology seeks to understand the conflict between the two from an emotional perspective. It is governed by feelings, desires, and attachments instead of a rational outlook. So, environmental wisdom must attend to how one's mind and emotions are affected by the toxic ecology. And it should become the substratum of knowledge.

Toxic Landscape and Affective Rupture in *The Blood of Leaves*

Vietnamese writer Vo Thi Hao (born 1956) in *The Blood of Leaves* interrogates a pervasive patriarchal belief. The belief is that a woman is valued primarily for her ornamental qualities rather than her intrinsic worth, as the nonhuman is valued for its usefulness, not for its intrinsic quality. A woman who is considered 'ugly' is marginalized or assigned lesser value within mainstream society. As a journalist and skilled painter, Vo Thi Hao uses visual imagery to depict the clarity of her story. The short story appears in the anthology *Family of Fallen Leaves: Stories of Agent Orange by Vietnamese Writers*, which is edited by Charles Waugh, a collection that brings together narratives centered on the devastating consequences of Agent Orange (a toxic dioxin) deployed during the Vietnam War on vegetation, wildlife, and human populations. In the Vietnam War, the US military spread 20 million gallons of chemical defoliants on the forests, agricultural land, and water systems of Vietnam. It exposed millions of marginalized and rural communities to dioxin, a highly toxic byproduct of the chemical. Beyond conveying the immediate and embodied effects of toxic exposure, the stories in the collection function as powerful metaphoric narratives, enabling the specific historical and geopolitical realities of Agent Orange to be understood within a broader framework of global ecological crisis and environmental risk. Everyone was affected. "After the war, when these soldiers had children, many of them unwittingly passed on the genetic damage the dioxin had wrought, increasing the disaster's effects to global, multigenerational proportions," thus raising levels of risk exponentially (Waugh 1).

All the stories in the collection are unified by the theme of environmental contamination, with each narrative depicting characters who suffer from, or succumb to, the effects of toxic dioxin exposure. Issues of risk, environmental justice, and what Lawrence Buell terms "toxic discourse"—a concept used to describe literary and non-literary works such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) were brought to the forefront. Together, these narratives

emphasize the widespread and persistent nature of environmental risk, highlighting its deep entanglement with social and ecological vulnerabilities.

While many of the stories in the collection foreground the events and their associated danger, *The Blood of Leaves* adopts a very subdued narrative approach. It suggests toxic ecology is not limited to war zones, but it has engulfed everyday life, especially the lives of the marginalized, rural women who are vulnerable in these conditions. The story begins with Huna, whose life is gradually affected by toxins. The narrator compares his condition with "the yellow leaves of the cycad suffering in its pot next to the bar. It was struggling to grow one small shoot" (Vo 134). The suffering in the story is not only human. Animals suffer too. They are neglected and harmed. The nation itself feels like it is dying. It becomes a kind of "thanatopolis," a place shaped by constant risk and slow destruction. Huan is dying. Before his death, he gave his friend a task. He asks him to write love letters to Tam. Tam is called "ugly." She is very short and was born with deformities. These are caused by dioxin. She is also the sister of Huan's friend who died in the war. Tam's life is full of pain. People treat her badly every day. This slowly breaks her spirit. She begins to lose her sense of worth. Her suffering reflects something larger. The Earth is also dying slowly. It is harmed by pollution, heat, deforestation, and desertification. This is not a sudden death. It is slow and continuous. It is what Rob Nixon calls "long dyings" (Nixon 29).

Chitra Sankaran writes, "The narrative begins with a therianthropic representation" (Sankaran 70). Greg Garrard also mentions that "is the reverse of anthropomorphism and is often used in contexts of national or racial stereotyping, such as when the Nazis depicted the Jews as rats" (141). The toxic ecology is depicted through a graphic image: "A pulse of nausea rose in my throat each time I remembered the knots of green worms writhing in death from Agent Orange. Faced with such human cruelty, each of us was just like those worms" (Vo 134). In these texts, humans are reduced to wriggling green worms. They lose their identity. They lose their voice. They are seen as no different from plants. They are treated as disposable. Their lives are not valued. This idea appears clearly in *"Maharlika."* It is also present in *"The Blood of Leaves."* It shows the arrogance of those in power. The dominant class looks down on others. They reduce people to something less than human. In doing so, they strip them of dignity. They turn them into something animal-like.

John Berger observes, "animals are always the observed" (14). Sankaran writes, "Tam becomes the focus of attention of all the main characters, including the narrator" (Sankaran 71). Their observations lead to an "ever-extending knowledge" (Berger 14) of Tam, and her life and thoughts become the object of knowledge for three men. Tam's brother wants to comfort his sister and wants her to feel loved so he starts writing fake love letters to her. Then he is shot dead. But before that he has asked his friend Huan to continue the letter to his sister. But he is also died in the Vietnam war. Then a postal officer continued the letter. All these people think Tam is very weak. When Tam learns the truth, she feels hurt. She feels betrayed. She refuses their help. She chooses her own dignity. She establishes her individuality and dignity when she remarks to the narrator, "[y]our world is endless but mine is tiny. I have to return to that world" (Vo 146). The story finally restores Tam's self-respect and agency.

Historically, women, nature and earth are exploited by the patriarchy. The value of women and nature is valued by their usefulness to man. Despite Tam's sound intelligence and mind, she is regarded by the mainstream society as useless on the basis of her physical unattractiveness and disability. The hatred directed at those labeled as "ugly" is real and deeply unsettling. It shows how society controls and judges bodies that do not fit its standards. A striking example is Lizzie Velasquez, an American woman with Marfan syndrome. Strangers

flooded the comment section with cruel words. Some even told her to end her life. She felt surrounded by hatred and disgust. Yet, she did not give up. She chose to move forward. Over time, she rebuilt her confidence and became a well-known motivational speaker. Tam's story echoes this reality. Her ugly look makes everyone to mock her. The cruelty is not only from the outsiders but also from her own father. This is disclosed in a letter:

I earned good marks at school, high enough to enter university, but no university wanted such an ugly student [. . .] I burned incense often and prayed for an end to my life. How did God have the heart to put a good brain inside the head of someone like me, a girl he made by drunken mistake? (Vo 136–37)

The ironic passage shows the human cruelty towards humans. Tam's disfiguration is caused by the toxins used in the Vietnam War, but Tam is unaware of it. She interprets it as destiny. In this way, the human-made catastrophe is elevated to that of a natural phenomenon. This reflects what Michel Foucault conceptualizes as the "normalization of biopower," where systemic violence becomes internalized and accepted as natural or inevitable.

Tam's longing for death, driven by the stigma attached to her perceived "ugliness," reveals how patriarchal systems reduce women to their utility and appearance. Feminist thought, from its beginnings, has sought to recover the voices and experiences of women intentionally excluded from historical narratives. In this sense, Tam stands as one such erased figure, whose life reflects the broader marginalization of women. Huan describes the land affected by war: "The earth all around had turned blackish brown. The trees had completely lost their foliage, leaving the black branches wavering and clutching at everything like ghosts" (Vo 135). Sankaran rightly points out, "The narrative draws implicit comparisons between this dead land and the young girl destroyed by the cruelty of the humans around her" (Sankaran 71).

Toxic ecology has been changed a lot today. People no longer imagine the end of the world as a sudden disaster. It is not always a big explosion. Now, it is seen as slow and quiet. Harm happens little by little. A case of poisoning here. A toxic leak there. These small events add up over time. This is what Rob Nixon calls "long dyings" (Nixon 29). Tam's life reflects this slow damage. Her body weakens because of Agent Orange. Her brother and his friend also died. Their deaths show a world that is slowly breaking down. *The Blood of Leaves* does more than talk about war. It also shows other forms of suffering. It brings attention to the pain faced by women and vulnerable people. Tam suffers every day. Her body is affected by the toxin. But her real pain comes from the people around her. They treat her with cruelty and discrimination. This happens again and again. The narrator's deliberate statement reveals her intention— "The street bubbled with hostility . . . War's not the only place to find it"—to expose the cruelty that women are regularly subjected to (Vo 144). The "rhetoric of animality," as Steve Baker points out, is as functional in descriptions of human, social, and political relations as it is in describing actual animals (cited in Garrard 140). Sankaran comments, "*The Blood of Leaves* serves as a poignant reminder that some deaths, like Tam's, like humanity's, can be gradual and painful. It is an ongoing saga" (Sankaran 71). Wallace says, "in the twisting and open-ended narrative of risk society, both beginnings and endings are elusive" (162).

Conclusion

An affective ecological reading of *The Blood of Leaves* reveals how Tam is affected by the ecological degradation. She is an intelligent student; despite her strong academic record, she is mocked by mainstream society because she is unattractive. She starts cursing God for her ugly look, but deep down, the story discloses the harsh reality of the toxins used in the Vietnam War, which makes the environment and the people of the place ugly. So, the ecological crisis is not an external phenomenon but is embedded in one's subjectivity and can affect one emotionally through toxic ecology. The affective ecology provides a holistic understanding of

the environmental issues. Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino write, "Affects are at the center of contemporary biopolitics and are more public, more powerful, and more pertinent than ever" (Bladow and Ladino 1). As affective ecology focuses on both the environment and social justice, it might reconnect both and give a voice to the unique environmental issues of the Global South.

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Robert Frost's Select Poems: An Ecocritical Study

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Abstract

Ecocriticism is a literary theory that looks at how literature and the natural environment around us interact and speak to each other. My present paper intends to scrutinize this very relationship between Nature and Literature in the poems of Robert Frost. Nature is a dominant subject in the poetry of Robert Frost, but he is not a Nature poet in the tradition of Wordsworth or Coleridge. Frost's love of nature is, in fact, more comprehensive than that of the great poets of the British Romantic era. Frost loved Nature and the region that lies to the North of Boston forms the background of his poetry. And despite his indebtedness to the great Romantic poets, Frost is essentially anti- romantic. His best poetry seems to be concerned with the drama of man in Nature. My paper will hence delve into Frost's concern that it is in humankind's interest that Man should essentially live in close harmony with Nature.

Keywords: Man, Nature, Harmony, Humankind, Drama.

Introduction:

Robert Frost is a great lover of Nature and like Wordsworth; his love is also local and regional. The hills and dales, rivers and forests, trees, flowers, plants, animals, birds and insects of the region that lies to the north of Boston forms the backdrop to his poetry. It is the flora and fauna of this particular region that has been depicted in one poem after another and his descriptions are characterized by accuracy and minuteness. Isidor Schneider, the American poet, novelist and critic says that *"the descriptive power of Mr Frost is to me the most wonderful thing in poetry. A snowfall, a spring thaw, a bending tree, a valley mist, a brook, these are brought not to, but into the experience of the reader."* So, the method of Frost in his poetry is simple to analyse and what he describes in his poetry is not a spectacle only, but an entire adventure. So, my eco-critical analysis of Robert Frost's select poetry emphasizes the inalienability of Nature in the life of Man and how nature blends into the lives of human beings and vice versa.

The Nature of the Pastoral in the poetry of Robert Frost:

The word 'pastoral' is derived from the Greek word 'pastor' which means 'to graze'. Hence, pastoral poetry is a kind of poetry in which the background and the setting is provided by the world of leaves and flowers, the cyclic changes in seasons and the life of the humble countryside dwellers and their work and their humble joys and sorrows. Pastoral poetry flourished in the age of Theocritus and Virgil among the ancients and during the renaissance in the recent past. But with the passage of time, pastoral poetry in England lost its simplicity. Dr. Samuel Johnson also famously condemned the 'Lycidas' for the use of artificial convention in pastoral poetry. However, Frost's poetry is entirely free from such artificial elements. He has succeeded in capturing the simplicity and naturalness of the earliest Greek masters of this form.

Rural characters in Frost's Poetry:

The greatness of Frost as a pastoral poet has been universally recognized and most of his poems deal with rural life and characters. New England or that part of it which lies to the North of Boson in the U.S.A provides the rural context of Frost's most characteristic poems. His personages are all New Englanders and his poetry is a record of their characters and habits as well as of the various aspects of their life and activity, their beliefs, ideals and traditions. In '*After*

Apple Picking', Frost presents the picture of the tired farmer going home for rest after the day's labour of picking apples:

"My long two pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple picking now
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off."

Thus, Frost makes it clear that whatever the causes, the Yankees (inhabitants of New England) had developed an attitude of making the most of what was available. They were thrifty and hardworking and had little time for idle talk. The farmer in 'Blueberries', who fed his entire family on blueberries, is thrifty:

"He seems to be thrifty; and hasn't he need,
With the mouths of all those young Lorens to feed?
He has brought them all up on wild berries, they say
Like birds. They store a great many away.
They eat them the year round, and those they don't eat
They sell in the store and buy shoes for their feet."

Similarly, the farmer in 'Mending Wall' who repeats "Good fences make good neighbours" is merely trying to secure for himself the land that he has acquired and has planted and looked after well. We find this New England spirit of adjustment in Frost's poem 'Birches' too. Here, the little boy, the 'swinger' of birches lives far away from the city and hence couldn't learn to play baseball. So he manages with what is at hand. He plays on the birches:

"Some boy too far away from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again."

This spirit of adjustment to situations and surroundings in the face of adversities can be found in many of Frost's other poems like in '*Mowing*', '*Two Tramps in Mud Time*' and many other poems.

Realism in Frost's Poetry:

It is true that the glorification of rural life is a pressing characteristic of the pastoral poetry of Robert Frost. But it is also true that this treatment of rural life in his poems is also characterized by down-to-earth realism. Frost was himself a farmer all his life, except for his brief stay in England. Therefore, he had an intimate knowledge of rural life and hence the depiction of rural life in his poems can be taken to be truthful and real. The rustic characters in his poetry are always busy with work, whether it is in mending walls or in apple picking. In 'After Apple Picking', the man who falls asleep after picking apples, dreams of nothing but apples. His dream is therefore an expression of his preoccupation with the concerns of real life. His preoccupations with the concerns of real life are beautifully depicted in the very popular final lines from 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening':

"But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep"

The Universal Theme in Frost's Poems:

The rural world in Frost's poem is not a dream world which provides an escape from the real world. Frost's rural world is rather a symbol and representation of life at large with both the joys and pleasures and the heartaches and weariness. It is a world in which man lives in a hostile

environment and struggles against heavy odds. He may occasionally forget the hard reality and fly into a realm of fancy, but such flights are only momentary and the poet is soon back to earth. '*Birches*' is a poem which perfectly expresses the poet's swing from fact to fancy and from fancy back to fact. In fact, in Frost's poetry, we do not get a fanciful glorification of rural life, but a realistic rendering of the human predicament in the rural context. Therefore, Frost's poetry appeals even to those who are not familiar with the New England region of the U.S.A because his poetry deals with hard facts which are common to human life in all countries and in all ages.

The Uniqueness of Frost's Pastoralism:

The uniqueness of Frost's pastoralism or the pastoral art in his poetry arises from his ability to compose poems about rural life from the point of view of an actual New England farmer. He does not arrive from a superior plane, but as one who shares the life of the rustic people. Therefore, Frost can very smoothly contrast the simple countryside life with the artificial life of people living in the city in his poetry.

Nature in Frost's Poetry:

Although Nature forms a dominant subject in the poems of Frost, he is not a Nature-poet in the tradition of Wordsworth or Thomas Hardy. Frost's best poetry is concerned with the drama of Man in Nature. Whereas Wordsworth deftly manages to display the panorama of the natural world and almost finds the divine in Nature who always guides him, Frost is different. He himself said in 1952 that *"I guess I'm not a Nature poet. I have only written two poems without a human being in them."* In the epitaph that Frost proposed for himself, he said that he had *"a lover's quarrel with the world."* This lover's quarrel is Frost's poetic subject and throughout his poetry there are evidences of this view of man's existence in the natural world. So, Frost's attitude towards Nature is one of amicable truce and mutual respect.

Thus, Frost's love of nature is more comprehensive and more inclusive than that of Wordsworth. And while Frost has a keen eye for the sensuous and the beautiful, he is equally aware of the harsher and the unpleasant aspects of Nature. Thus, it will be a mistake to suppose that Frost is a mere painter of pleasant landscapes. Even when revelling in the sensuous charms of nature, Frost is not unaware of the sinister and the ugly that may lie hidden beneath the apparent surface. 'Spring Pools', for example, begins innocently with the description of the pools and the flowers which one sees in the woodlands in early spring. But, suddenly, the tone becomes grave:

"The trees that have it in their pent-up buds
To darken nature and be summer woods-
Let them think twice before they use their powers
To blot out and drink up and sweep away
Those flowery waters and those watery flowers
From snow that melted only yesterday."

Thus, Frost, on his nature rambles, has the air of someone picking his way through no man's land during an uneasy truce. The weather is bracing, his spirits are high; but he must tread lightly for fear of hidden dangers. In 'Two Tramps in Mud Time', he interrupts his genial chat about the April weather to advise:

"Be glad of water, but don't forget
The lurking frost in the earth beneath
That will steal forth after the sun is set
And show on the water its crystal teeth."

But these vistas opening upon fearful realities do not in the least negate the beauty of Nature. Frost always stresses that rather it is Nature which give his song birds, wild flowers, brooks and trees their poignant appeal. In fact, the charm of many of his mature lyrics result from the vividness with which sweet and delicate things stand out against the sombre background. "You cannot have one without the other: love of natural beauty and horror at the remoteness and

indifference of the physical world are not opposite but different aspects of the same view." Here Frost almost echoes William Blake in juxtaposing reason and imagination in his poetry.

Frost also comes out to his readers as a great lover of birds, insects and animals. Especially keen and sympathetic was his interest in birds and he observed their ways and habits very minutely. *'A Minor Bird', Never Again would Bird's Song Be the Same', 'A Blue Ribbon at Amesbury', 'Looking For a Sunset Bird in Winter', 'The Oven Bird'* etc.. are all devoted to the affectionate and the sympathetic study of the ways and habits of birds. 'The Oven Bird' calls for special consideration, as it brings out the best in Frost's bird-poems. The poem describes the habits of a kind of thrush which builds a nest resembling an oven and which in its song expresses its knowledge of the changing seasons and also knows "what to make of a diminished thing."

Frost's eye, thus, takes on a merry twinkle as does those of grown-ups when they see their children at play. For example, the society of ants in the *'Departmental'* has been described elaborately and in detail and the effect is amusing and funny. In *'Design'*, he describes a spider and a moth on a flower as:

"I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid stain cloth-"

Frost, therefore, constantly, notes the doing, ways and habits of these humble partners in Nature's teeming family. His observation is sympathetic and loving; their ways are likened to human ways and interpreted in human terms and the effect is extremely delightful and humourous. At other times, he also brings out the pathos of their existence; the suffering which they have to undergo at the hands of both man and nature.

Thus, though Frost understands that Man is basically lonely even amidst Nature, but still Man needs Nature to survive. Frost shows his humanistic concern when he shows man in the midst of nature. The significance of human effort is revealed in poems like *'Birches'* and '*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'*.

Thus, "Frost's best poetry is concerned with the drama of man in nature." But, at the same time, Man is his best version only amidst Nature. And what Frost stresses the most is that to be alive in the fullest form, Man must live in harmony with Nature and not go against Nature or the natural processes.

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Red Ideology and Blue Water: Communist Betrayal, Subaltern Memory, & Ecological Politics in *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is widely recognized as a seminal eco-critical novel that foregrounds the fragile ecology of the Sundarbans. However, such readings often overlook the text's deeply embedded political critique of postcolonial governance and ideological contradictions. This paper reinterprets the novel as a counter-archival narrative that recuperates suppressed histories, particularly the Marichjhapi Massacre of 1979, to expose the failure of Marxist humanism in Bengal. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks from Subaltern Studies, postcolonial theory, caste critique, and biopolitics, the study demonstrates how Ghosh interrogates the intersections of ecology, caste, displacement, and state violence. The metaphorical tension between "red ideology" and "blue water" encapsulates the clash between rigid ideological frameworks and the fluid, lived experiences of subaltern communities. Through narrative fragmentation, oral testimony, and ecological symbolism, the novel recovers marginalized voices and challenges hegemonic historiography. The paper argues that *The Hungry Tide* transcends its classification as an environmental novel and emerges as a powerful political text that critiques the ethical failures of ideology and calls for a more inclusive understanding of justice in postcolonial India.

Keywords: Marxism, Subaltern Studies, ecology, postcolonialism, Sundarbans,

Introduction: Reframing Ecology as Political Memory

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) has been extensively discussed within the domain of eco-criticism, often praised for its evocative portrayal of the Sundarbans—a liminal landscape defined by shifting tides, mangrove forests, and precarious human habitation. While such interpretations highlight the novel's environmental concerns, they risk depoliticizing its narrative by isolating ecology from history and power. This paper proposes a re-reading of the novel that foregrounds its political and historical dimensions, particularly its engagement with the Marichjhapi Massacre.

The Sundarbans in Ghosh's narrative is not merely a natural setting but a politically charged space where histories of displacement, marginalization, and resistance converge. The region's ecological instability mirrors the socio-political instability experienced by its inhabitants, especially refugees and marginalized communities. By embedding the memory of Marichjhapi within this landscape, Ghosh transforms the novel into a site of historical recovery.

The conceptual opposition between "red ideology" and "blue water" serves as a central metaphor in this analysis. "Red ideology" represents the rigid, doctrinal framework of Marxism, while "blue water" symbolizes the fluid, unpredictable realities of subaltern life. This dialectic underscores the inadequacy of universalist ideologies in addressing localized experiences of oppression. Furthermore, the novel's narrative strategy—characterized by fragmentation, multiple perspectives, and temporal shifts—enables the articulation of subaltern voices that challenge dominant historiography. In doing so, Ghosh aligns with the project of Subaltern Studies, which seeks to recover histories that have been excluded from official archives. Thus, *The Hungry Tide* must be understood not only as an environmental text but as

a political intervention that interrogates the ethics of governance and the contradictions of ideology.

The Marichjhapi Massacre of 1979 remains one of the most underrepresented yet significant events in post-independence Indian history. It involved the forcible eviction of thousands of Dalit refugees who had settled on the island of Marichjhapi in the Sundarbans. These refugees, primarily from East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), had migrated to India in search of security and livelihood. Initially supported by Left leaders, they were later deemed illegal encroachers and subjected to violent eviction. The state's actions in Marichjhapi reveal a complex interplay of ideology, governance, and exclusion. The refugees were first mobilized as part of a revolutionary constituency, embodying the promise of Marxist egalitarianism. However, once the Left Front consolidated power, their presence became inconvenient, leading to their displacement. This shift from inclusion to exclusion highlights the conditional nature of ideological commitment. The blockade imposed on Marichjhapi—restricting access to food, water, and medical aid—constitutes a form of structural violence that extends beyond physical brutality. Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics is particularly relevant here, as it describes the state's power to determine who may live and who must die. The refugees, reduced to disposable lives, were subjected to a slow and calculated form of extermination. Moreover, the event exemplifies what Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms the "silencing of the past." The absence of Marichjhapi from mainstream historical discourse reflects the mechanisms through which certain events are excluded from collective memory. Ghosh's novel intervenes in this process by re-inscribing the massacre into cultural consciousness. The Marichjhapi episode exposes the contradictions inherent in Marxist governance in Bengal. While Marxism advocates equality and justice, its implementation often reveals a gap between theory and practice. The concept of "conditional humanism" becomes crucial in understanding this failure. Human life is valued not as an intrinsic good but in relation to its political utility.

Ranajit Guha's critique of elite historiography provides a useful lens for analyzing this dynamic. According to Guha, subaltern groups are frequently mobilized by dominant political formations but are denied agency in the long term. The refugees of Marichjhapi exemplify this pattern, as their initial inclusion was followed by systematic exclusion. Slavoj Žižek's notion of ideological violence further complicates this analysis. Ideological systems often justify acts of violence by framing them as necessary for a greater good. In the case of Marichjhapi, the state justified its actions on ecological and administrative grounds, thereby masking the underlying violence. In *The Hungry Tide*, this betrayal is encoded through Kusum's narrative, which serves as a fragmented testimony of subaltern suffering. Her voice, though mediated and incomplete, challenges the silence imposed by official discourse. The narrative thus becomes a site of resistance, where suppressed histories are brought to light.

The ecological dimension of the novel is inseparable from its political critique. The Sundarbans, often portrayed as a pristine natural environment, is also a site of intense human struggle. Conservation policies, while ostensibly aimed at protecting biodiversity, function as instruments of control that regulate human populations. Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics is central to understanding this dynamic. The state's management of life—through policies that determine who can inhabit certain spaces—reflects a form of governance that prioritizes certain lives over others. In the Sundarbans, this translates into the exclusion of marginalized communities in the name of environmental preservation. Giorgio Agamben's notion of "bare life" further elucidates the status of the Marichjhapi refugees. Stripped of political rights and reduced to mere biological existence, they become vulnerable to state violence. Their designation as "encroachers" legitimizes their exclusion and erasure. Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" also resonates with the events of Marichjhapi. The gradual

deprivation of resources and the prolonged suffering of refugees constitute a form of violence that is often invisible yet deeply destructive. Through the character of Piya, Ghosh introduces a critique of global environmentalism. Her scientific perspective, while valuable, initially lacks an understanding of local realities. Her interactions with Fokir highlight the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and challenge the dominance of Western epistemologies.

Marxism and Caste: The Limits of Class Analysis

One of the most significant contributions of this paper is its emphasis on caste as a critical factor in the failure of Marxist ideology in Bengal. While Marxism focuses on class struggle, it often neglects the deeply entrenched hierarchies of caste that shape Indian society. B. R. Ambedkar's critique of caste underscores its role as a system of graded inequality. Unlike class, which is primarily economic, caste is social, cultural, and deeply embedded in everyday practices. The Marichjhapi refugees, predominantly Dalit, were marginalized not only because of their economic status but also due to their caste identity. This intersection of caste and class reveals the limitations of Marxist universalism. The failure to address caste-based oppression results in the reproduction of hierarchical structures within ostensibly egalitarian systems. The Left government's actions in Marichjhapi thus reflect a deeper structural failure. Partha Chatterjee's distinction between "civil society" and "political society" further highlights the precarious status of marginalized communities. The refugees, lacking formal recognition, exist in a space where rights are negotiated rather than guaranteed. Their eviction is a manifestation of this precarious existence.

The narrative structure of *The Hungry Tide* plays a crucial role in its political critique. The use of multiple perspectives, temporal shifts, and fragmented storytelling reflects the complexity of subaltern experience. This narrative strategy aligns with the principles of Subaltern Studies, which emphasize the recovery of marginalized voices. Walter Benjamin's concept of the storyteller is particularly relevant here. Storytelling, for Benjamin, is a means of preserving experience and transmitting collective memory. In Ghosh's novel, storytelling becomes an act of resistance against historical erasure. Kusum's narrative, though fragmented, serves as a powerful testimony of subaltern suffering. Her voice, mediated through oral tradition, challenges the authority of written history and asserts the validity of alternative forms of knowledge.Michel-Rolph Trouillot's idea of the "production of history" further underscores the importance of narrative in shaping collective memory. By re-inscribing Marichjhapi into the narrative, Ghosh challenges the silences of official historiography.

The Sundarbans as Metaphor: Fluidity, Instability, and Resistance

The geographical setting of the Sundarbans functions not merely as a backdrop but as a central metaphor in the novel. The region's shifting tides, unstable landforms, and unpredictable environment symbolize the fluidity of subaltern existence. Unlike rigid ideological frameworks, the Sundarbans resists containment and categorization. Its constantly changing landscape reflects the dynamic nature of history and memory. This fluidity stands in stark contrast to the rigidity of "red ideology," highlighting the inadequacy of fixed doctrines in addressing complex realities. The Sundarbans also represents a space of resistance, where marginalized communities navigate and negotiate their existence. The relationship between humans and nature in this region is characterized by adaptation and resilience, offering an alternative model of coexistence.

By integrating ecological, historical, and social dimensions, *The Hungry Tide* emerges as a powerful political intervention. The novel challenges dominant narratives and calls for a rethinking of justice that accounts for the complexities of caste, ecology, and displacement. Ghosh's critique extends beyond Marxism to encompass broader questions of governance and ideology. The novel highlights the dangers of universalist frameworks that fail to engage with

localized realities. At the same time, it offers a vision of inclusivity that recognizes the importance of subaltern voices.

Conclusion

The dialectic of "red ideology" and "blue water" encapsulates the central tension of *The Hungry Tide*: the conflict between rigid ideological frameworks and the fluid realities of marginalized communities. Through its engagement with the Marichjhapi Massacre, the novel exposes the contradictions of Marxist governance and the persistence of caste-based exclusion.

Ghosh's work demonstrates the power of literature as a site of historical recovery and ethical reflection. By amplifying subaltern voices and challenging dominant narratives, *The Hungry Tide* calls for a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of justice.

Ultimately, the novel reveals that ideological frameworks, however well-intentioned, can reproduce structures of domination when detached from lived realities. The Sundarbans, with its shifting tides, becomes a metaphor for this ongoing struggle—a space where history, memory, and justice are continuously renegotiated.

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Silenced Rivers and Erasable Gardens: Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Muslim Lifeworld, and the Politics of Environmental Erasure

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Abstract

This paper argues that the intersection of postcolonial theory and ecocriticism offers a uniquely productive lens for examining the environmental conditions, literary traditions, and political disenfranchisement of Muslim communities across South Asia and the broader postcolonial world. Drawing on the rich tradition of nature writing embedded in Urdu, Persian, and regional Muslim literary forms — from the ghazal's garden imagery to the marsiya's lamentation of lost landscapes — this study contends that Muslim ecological knowledge has been systematically erased through colonial land policies, post-Partition territorial violence, and contemporary structures of exclusion. By reading texts from writers such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ismat Chughtai, and Intizar Husain alongside contemporary testimonies from Muslim agrarian and fishing communities in India's riverine and coastal belts, the paper demonstrates that environmental injustice and communal marginalisation are not parallel processes but structurally co-produced phenomena. The paper further situates this analysis within the theoretical frameworks of Rob Nixon's 'slow violence,' Ramachandra Guha's environmental history, and emerging scholarship on Islamic eco-theology, arguing for a Green Humanities that is genuinely postcolonial — one that takes the spiritual, aesthetic, and material ecological relationships of communities seriously, hitherto marginal to mainstream environmentalism.

Keywords: Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Muslim Lifeworld, Urdu Nature Writing, Environmental Justice, Slow Violence, Islamic Eco-theology, Green Humanities, **Sou**

1. Introduction: The Garden That Was Never Ours to Lose

In the celebrated ghazals of Mir Taqi Mir, the garden—bagh or Chaman—is not merely a botanical space. It serves as a site of memory, longing, belonging, and ultimately, loss. When Mir describes the chaman being trampled, he is not simply employing a metaphor for political defeat; rather, he encodes an ecological reality experienced by Muslim communities in eighteenth-century South Asia: the systematic disruption of landscapes that had sustained modes of life, worship, agriculture, and poetic imagination for centuries. This paper begins with the image of the garden turned to ruin and traces its resonances into the present moment of ecological crisis.

Ecocriticism, as a discipline, emerged in the Western academy in the 1990s largely from Anglo-American literary traditions. Its expansion into postcolonial contexts has been significant but remains incomplete. Scholars such as Graham Huggan, Helen Tiffin, and Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee have made powerful arguments for a postcolonial ecocriticism that attends to the overlapping histories of colonialism and environmental degradation. However, within this growing field, Muslim literary traditions and Muslim communities remain strikingly underrepresented. The gardens of Urdu poetry, the floodplain ecologies of the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta, the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans inhabited by Bengali Muslim fisherfolk, the date-palm landscapes of Arabian eco-theology — these form a rich but largely untapped archive for environmental literary studies.

This paper seeks to address this absence by proposing that postcolonial ecocriticism, when engaged in dialogue with Muslim literary traditions and the lived environmental realities of Muslim communities in South Asia, opens new critical horizons. These horizons pertain not only to literary understanding but also to the politics of environmental suffering. The paper is organized in four sections: first, a theoretical framing of the relationship between postcolonial ecocriticism and Muslim ecological thought; second, an analysis of nature and environment in canonical and subaltern Urdu literary texts; third, an examination of the structural links between communal marginalization and environmental dispossession in contemporary South Asia; and fourth, a call for a genuinely inclusive Green Humanities.

2. Theoretical Framework: Slow Violence, Colonial Natures, and the Muslim Ecological Archive

Rob Nixon's concept of 'slow violence' — violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, that is dispersed across time and space, and that disproportionately afflicts the poor and the marginalised — offers an indispensable analytical tool for understanding the environmental predicament of Muslim communities in postcolonial societies (Nixon, 2011). Unlike the spectacular violence that commands media attention, slow violence operates through processes such as soil degradation, river contamination, deforestation, and the loss of traditional ecological knowledge. These processes are slow precisely because they do not announce themselves as violence; they appear instead as 'natural' deterioration, 'inevitable' development, or simply the workings of fate.

Nixon's framework needs to be read alongside the colonial history of environmental dispossession. British colonial rule in South Asia restructured agrarian economies, reordered land tenure, drained wetlands, cleared forests, and imposed new legal regimes that fundamentally altered the relationship between communities and their environments (Guha & Gadgil, 1992). Muslim communities were particularly affected by these processes. The Permanent Settlement of Bengal (1793), which transformed peasants into rent-paying tenants under new landlords, disproportionately displaced Muslim cultivators. (Iqbal and the Muslim Renaissance in Bengal, 2009, pp. 1-20) The Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878 criminalised customary forest use practices that Muslim pastoral and tribal communities had maintained for generations. (Singh, n.d.) post-partition territorial violence further ruptured ecological belonging: millions of Muslims in India were cut off from the rivers, fields, and groves that had anchored both their material lives and their spiritual-aesthetic imagination. (Sarma, 2024)
This colonial legacy intersects with what Arif Dirlik has called 'postcolonial aura' — the way in which postcolonial states often reproduce colonial structures of environmental governance, continuing to dispossess marginal communities in the name of 'development,' 'conservation,' or 'national interest' (Dirlik, 1994). In contemporary India, Muslim fishing communities along the Gujarat coast, Muslim farmers in the flood-prone belts of Assam, and Muslim forest-dwellers in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh face compounded vulnerabilities: environmental precarity exacerbated by political exclusion, bureaucratic discrimination, and the withdrawal of state protection.

Against this background of dispossession, we must also recover what we might call the Muslim ecological archive — the vast body of literary, theological, philosophical, and everyday knowledge through which Muslim communities have understood, inhabited, and cared for their environments. Islamic eco-theology, rooted in Quranic concepts such as khalifa (stewardship), mizan (balance), and fasad (corruption of the earth), offers a sophisticated ethical framework for environmental responsibility (Foltz, 2003). The concept of hima — protected zones maintained for ecological conservation — is among the earliest examples of environmental legislation in human history, predating modern conservation law by more than a millennium. (A Tradition of Conservation, 2008) Persian and Urdu garden aesthetics encode not merely

decorative but deeply ethical and spiritual relationships with the natural world: the charbagh (four-fold garden) is at once a terrestrial paradise and a diagram of cosmic order.

This archive has been systematically devalued by both colonial Orientalism, which dismissed Islamic intellectual traditions as static and backward, and by mainstream environmentalism, which has largely been structured around Western, often Protestant, assumptions about nature and human responsibility. (Cold War Orientalism and the Making of Islam in International Relations, 2026) A postcolonial ecocriticism worthy of its name must recover and take seriously this archive—not as an exotic supplement to Green Humanities, but as a foundational resource for rethinking the relationship among literature, environment, and justice.

3. Reading the Landscape: Environment in Urdu and Persian Literary Traditions

The literary traditions of Urdu and Persian are saturated with environmental imagery, but this imagery has rarely been read through an ecocritical lens. (Daad et al., 2024) The ghazal, the most celebrated form of Urdu poetry, is structurally organised around the tension between the garden (representing plenitude, beauty, belonging) and its destruction (representing loss, exile, dispossession). This is not a mere ornament: the garden in Urdu poetry is a material-spiritual complex that encodes centuries of ecological knowledge and environmental experience.

Consider Faiz Ahmed Faiz's celebrated poem 'Subh-e-Azadi' (The Dawn of Independence), written in August 1947. The poem's central image — the dawn that arrives maimed and bloodied, not the promised light of liberation — is simultaneously a political and an ecological elegy. The landscape Faiz invokes is one of rupture: rivers cut off, fields abandoned, the intimate geography of belonging torn apart by the violence of Partition. Reading this poem Eco-critically, we recognise that what is mourned is not merely political freedom deferred but an entire ecological world — the specific rivers, trees, seasons, and soil memories of the undivided Punjab — that has been irreversibly destroyed. Faiz's poetry consistently returns to this ecological dimension of loss: in 'Naqsh-e-Faryadi,' the imagery of autumn and desolation speaks to environmental as much as political devastation.

Ismat Chughtai, whose fiction has been read primarily through the lens of gender and sexuality, is equally important for an ecocritical reading. Her story 'Lihaaf' (The Quilt) — usually discussed for its representation of female desire — is also a story about domestic space as ecological enclosure: the quilt becomes a figure for the closed, airless, overheated interior world produced by purdah, a world cut off from the natural environment of wind, open fields, and seasonal change. Chughtai's fiction consistently registers the ecological damage done by patriarchal spatial arrangements; her women are imprisoned not merely socially but environmentally, denied access to the life-giving natural world. (Asif et al., 2021, pp. 1727-1741)

Intizar Husain, perhaps the most important prose writer in twentieth-century Urdu literature, makes ecological memory central to his art. His novel 'Basti' (1979) is structured around the progressive destruction of a world: not merely the political world of Pakistan but the ecological world of the qasbah (small town) and its surroundings — the orchards, the wells, the migratory birds, the seasonal rhythms of an agrarian life. Husain's narrator mourns these losses with an intensity that matches his mourning for political and cultural dissolution; indeed, for Husain, they are inseparable. The loss of the bagh is the loss of a civilisation's ecological and cultural roots.

Beyond these canonical figures, we must attend to subaltern forms of Muslim ecological expression: the folk songs of Muslim fisherfolk in Bengal and Kerala, which encode detailed

knowledge of monsoon patterns, fish migration, and tidal rhythms; the oral poetry of Muslim pastoralists in Rajasthan and Gujarat, which maps the ecology of the Thar Desert with extraordinary precision; the devotional poetry of Sufi orders, which understands the landscape as a site of divine immanence and therefore of ethical obligation. These forms have rarely entered academic literary study, but they constitute an archive of ecological knowledge as rich as any in the Indian subterranean. (Alam, 2025)

4. Environmental Injustice and Communal Marginalisation: The Structural Connection

The argument that environmental injustice and communal discrimination are structurally connected — not merely coincidentally overlapping — is central to this paper. To make this argument, we need to move from the literary archive to the political economy of environmental governance in contemporary South Asia.

The environmental justice framework, which emerged from the African American civil rights movement in the United States in the 1980s, argues that environmental burdens (pollution, hazardous waste, climate vulnerability) are systematically distributed along lines of race, class, and gender. In the South Asian context, similar patterns can be observed along caste, religious, and ethnic lines. Muslim communities in India are disproportionately concentrated in occupations and geographies that are environmentally precarious: they are over-represented among urban waste-pickers and leather-workers (whose occupations involve exposure to toxic chemicals and organic waste), among coastal and riverine fishing communities (who are disproportionately vulnerable to climate-related disasters such as cyclones and floods), and among the forest-dependent communities whose traditional land rights have been most aggressively contested by the state. (Anti-Pollution Norms & State Policies Cripple UP's Leather Industry, Pushing Muslim Livelihoods To The Brink, 2023)

The Sachar Committee Report (2006), the most comprehensive official study of Muslim socio-economic conditions in India, documented systematic Muslim disadvantage across education, employment, and political representation. What the report did not examine — and what subsequent scholarship has begun to address — is the environmental dimension of this disadvantage. Muslim communities in the flood-prone districts of Assam, where the National Register of Citizens has disproportionately threatened Muslim residents with statelessness, are simultaneously among the most vulnerable to the annual flooding of the Brahmaputra. (Environment-induced displacements in India's Assam river islands, 2023) The connections are not coincidental: it is precisely the most politically precarious communities that are least able to demand effective flood management, environmental remediation, or state support for climate adaptation.

The post-2002 condition of Muslim fishing communities along the Gujarat coast offers another stark example. The rehabilitation of these communities after the anti-Muslim pogroms of 2002 was incomplete and inadequate; many families returned to coastal areas that were also ecologically degraded, with declining fish stocks, eroding shorelines, and increasingly unpredictable monsoon patterns. (Assembly elections: How communalism, climate change destroyed a Muslim fishing community in Gujarat, 2023) These communities experienced the violence of 2002 and the slow violence of coastal ecological degradation as a single, compounded dispossession — political, spatial, and environmental all at once.

In the Sundarbans mangrove delta of West Bengal, home to large numbers of Muslim fisherfolk and honey-collectors, the twin pressures of climate change (sea-level rise, increasing cyclone intensity) and development-driven forest clearance have produced what we might call an 'ecological double bind': communities simultaneously threatened by the state's failure to manage environmental risks and by the state's active promotion of development projects that

destroy the ecosystems on which these communities depend. The Sundarbans communities' ecological knowledge — of tidal patterns, mangrove ecology, and the behaviour of the Royal Bengal Tiger — is extensive, sophisticated, and entirely unrecognised in official conservation frameworks that treat these communities as problems to be managed rather than knowledge-holders to be consulted. (Contribution of Mangrove Ecosystem Services to Local Livelihoods in the Indian Sundarbans, 2024)

5. Towards an Inclusive Green Humanities: Decolonising Ecocriticism

The preceding sections have established the richness of the Muslim ecological archive and the urgency of integrating postcolonial ecocriticism with Muslim literary and community traditions. This final section considers the broader implications of such a dialogue for the project of Green Humanities.

Mainstream environmentalism, including its academic expressions in ecocriticism and environmental humanities, has been shaped by assumptions that are not politically neutral. The wilderness ideal that structures much Western environmentalism implicitly excludes the communities — including Muslim pastoralists, forest-dwellers, and fisherfolk — whose presence in landscapes is recast as 'encroachment.' (Conservation regimes of exclusion: NGOs and the role of discourse in legitimising dispossession from protected areas in India, 2023) The valorisation of pristine nature against human habitation reflects a specifically Protestant aesthetic that has little resonance in Islamic ecological thought, which understands human beings as khalifa (stewards) with active responsibilities for the natural world rather than as pollutants to be removed from 'natural' spaces. (Islamic Environmentalism, 2021)

A decolonised ecocriticism — a genuinely postcolonial Green Humanities — would need to do several things. It would need to expand its archive to include non-Western, non-Anglophone literary and cultural traditions, including the rich traditions of Urdu, Persian, Arabic, and regional Muslim literatures. It would need to develop critical frameworks adequate to the analysis of slow violence and environmental injustice as politically marginalised communities experience them. It would need to take into account the spiritual and theological dimensions of environmental relationships, including the resources of Islamic eco-theology, without reducing them to mere pre-modern curiosities. Moreover, it would need to engage with the knowledge systems of subaltern communities — Muslim fisherfolk, pastoralists, forest-dwellers — as legitimate forms of environmental science rather than as folklore to be archived and superseded.

The seminar's focus areas—Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Environmental Justice, Colonialism and Environment, and Blue and Green Humanities—provide the conceptual foundation for this project. This paper contributes by centring Muslim literary traditions and community experiences within ecocritical discourse. Rather than claiming a separate status for Muslim environmental experience, the argument insists that any account of the relationship between literature and ecology that overlooks the experiences of one of the world's largest religious communities—communities with centuries of sophisticated ecological thought and practice—is not only incomplete but also fundamentally distorted.

The garden of Urdu poetry should not be regarded merely as a site of nostalgia. Instead, it represents a political and ecological demand: that the communities who have tended these landscapes, composed these poems, and sung these songs of rivers, monsoons, and migratory birds be recognised as full participants in discussions about how human beings should inhabit and care for the shared world.

6. Conclusion

This paper has argued that postcolonial ecocriticism, when brought into dialogue with Muslim literary traditions and the lived environmental realities of Muslim communities in South Asia, opens new and urgent critical possibilities. The Muslim ecological archive — embedded in Urdu and Persian literary forms, in Islamic eco-theology, and in the subaltern knowledge systems of Muslim farming, fishing, and forest-dwelling communities — represents an immense and largely untapped resource for environmental literary studies.

At the same time, the structural connection between communal marginalisation and environmental dispossession demands that ecocriticism engage not merely with aesthetic and philosophical questions but with the political economy of environmental injustice. Muslim communities in South Asia face slow violence not as a metaphor but as a daily material reality: contaminated rivers, eroded coastlines, degraded forests, and the systematic political exclusion that makes it impossible to demand redress. Rob Nixon's slow violence,

Ramachandra Guha's environmental history, and the emerging scholarship on Islamic eco-theology together provide the theoretical resources for analysing these realities.The implications of this argument extend beyond academic discourse. As environmental crises and communal violence intensify across South Asia, the development of an inclusive, genuinely postcolonial Green Humanities becomes both a political and a scholarly imperative. Attending to the voices of Muslim ecological knowledge—in the ghazal, the marsiya, the folk song of the fisherwoman, and the testimony of the flood survivor—underscores the necessity of collectively imagining the planet's future.

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Environmental Literature and Eco-criticism: A Critical Study in the works of Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau

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Abstract:

This paper deals with the evolution, theories, and methodologies of eco-criticism, its integration with environmental literature, and the transformative potential it holds for ecological consciousness. My study includes the poems of William Wordsworth, three major American writers of the 19th century- Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau. The study investigates how literature serves not only as a mirror of ecological thought but also as a catalyst for environmental activism and ethical re-engagement with nature. The paper also reviews prominent texts and authors, analyzes theoretical frameworks, and assesses the future trajectory of eco-critical studies in light of ongoing environmental challenges. The paper aims at studying the significance of Environmental Literature and Eco criticism from a humanitarian perspective. The study is based on the critical analysis of the secondary data, collected through sources such as books, Magazines, prominent texts and authors, analyzes theoretical frameworks. The modern world's environmental issues—such as pollution, deforestation, climate change, and biodiversity loss—call for a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates the humanities and literature. An important lens for analyzing the connection between literature and the natural world is eco-criticism, an interdisciplinary branch of literary criticism. The paper concludes with the reflections upon the emerging trends in the approaches towards Environmental Literature and Eco- criticism.

Keywords: Environmental Literature, Ecocriticism, Analysis, World, Nature, Tradition

Inroduction:

We are the human beings living in the mundane world. The world faces environmental challenges—like pollution, climate change, and the destruction of ecosystems—it's clear that science alone can't provide all the answers. Stories, culture, and imagination also play a powerful role in shaping how we understand and care for our planet. Literature has always helped us express our deepest fears, dreams, and values, and now it's becoming an important way to explore and question our relationship with nature. This is where ecocriticism comes in. Literature is life seen through the medium of imagination, of temperament. It is not just for entertainment, nor only for delight that we read literature, for literature has a greater responsibility towards society and all living beings, so to say. Literature is not for its own sake, as many great writers have said as they believed, upheld and justified. For, literature is for life's sake. It mirrors the realities of life from various perspectives. In all its multiple forms, genres, styles and techniques irrespective of languages literature presents, represents, life, living beings, nature, flora and fauna, our surroundings, environment, you and I and everything under

the Sun….. What more, now, sky is not the limit, it has transcended these limitations, for, anything or even nothing could be the subject matter for literature.

The problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community. This is what ecologists like to call the self-destructive or suicidal motive. The conceptual and practical problem is to find the grounds upon which the two communities-the human and the natural-can co-exist, cooperate, and flourish in the biosphere. The term like 'enviro' has been rejected because it smacks of anthropocentricism and term like 'eco'-has been accepted to-day. 'Eco' shows interconnectedness and interdependence between human and non-human. 'Eco' is an abbreviation of 'ecology' which deals with a symbiotic relationship between the biotic component i.e. living organism and a biotic component i.e. natural component. Similarly, eco-criticism is concerned with the relationship between literature and the biosphere bodies or how the relationships between the two are reflected in literature. Ernest Heirich Hackel (1834-1934), a German biologist introduced the term 'ecology' for the first time. He applied the term 'oekologie' to the relation of the animal both to its organic as well as its inorganic environment.

Before the emergence of Environmental Literature and eco-criticism as a genre, writers focussed on ideas, situations and images associated with nature. They were greatly inspired by the different facets and aspects of Nature and hence they portrayed, depicted and described vividly its hues, shapes, forms with a great passion and adoration. William Wordsworth, a 19th century Romantic poet, who is ever remembered as a poet of Nature, describes the beauty of Nature in all its entirety in his poetry in such a way that he sees a friend, philosopher, guide and a teacher in Nature and it makes an eternal source of joy, which can be revived and relived in times of need. To Nature, he attributes human qualities and finds divine elements in all its objects. It is this ‘Deification’; ‘Pantheism’ differentiates Wordsworth from the rest of the poets of nature.

William Wordsworth is hailed as a 'high-priest of nature. His treatment of nature particularly in Tintern Abbey is unique The sensuous aspect was once all to the poet. The varied tints and shades of the green-wood trees, the majesty of hills and mountains, the rush and roar of cataracts sweeping down appeal to his senses. But later when the poet attained manhood the 'dizzy raptures' and the 'aching joys were no more, The poet coming in contact with the realities of life became able to hear in nature 'the still, sad music of humanity.

Wordsworth is Nature's devotee or high priest. In Tintern Abbey the three distinct stages are discernible in the development of Wordsworth's philosophy of nature. The poem parallels the poet's great poetical work The Prelude in more ways than one The first two stages as described in Tintern Abbey are detailed in the first two books of the former, the third is dealt with in the eighth. In boyhood, the poet felt a coarser boyish pleasure in the presence of Nature. It is purely a sensuous attitude to Nature. At this stage the poet had a purely animal delight in nature's beauty. Like a deer he flitted from place to place, ran over the mountains and on the banks of rivers and streams in a restless manner and it seemed that he was awed rather than fascinated by the beauties of nature.

In the second stage, the poet was enthralled by nature's enchanting physical loveliness-the varied tints and shades of the green-wood trees, the majesty of hills and mountains, the rush and roar of cataracts sweeping down. The sights and sounds of nature appealed to the poet's senses.

In the third stage, the 'dizzy raptures' and the 'aching joys' were no more, yet his simple delight in nature did not diminish. The sensuous aspect of nature ceased to be all-important to

him. The poet coming in close contact with the realities of life became able to hear in nature 'the still, sad music of humanity. His reflective communion with Nature has led him to see into the very life of things. Contemplation over human sufferings has chastened and humanized his soul. Now being chastened in heart he has been able to find an eternal bond between Nature and Man. In this stage the poet has gained in a spiritual vision. The unintelligible mystery of the world has now been unveiled.

Ecocriticism is about how stories and literature interact with the natural world. It's an approach that asks, "What does this novel, poem, or essay say about the environment?" or "How does it reflect our relationship with nature?" Think of it as a bridge between literature and ecology. Cheryll Glotfelty, a leading figure in the field, put it simply: ecocriticism is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment." It's not just about nature writing—it includes any work that talks about, reflects on, or questions how we relate to the world around us. It is rightly said that the tradition of Environmental Literature and Eco-criticism can be traced back in the writings on nature. The term' 'environment' originates from the French word 'environ'. It means 'surrounded' or 'encircled'.

Ecocriticism, as we have discussed already, is a study of interconnectedness between man and environment mediated through gender, class, race, science, culture and economics. Yann Martel's Life of Pi, demonstrates this relationship. The novel is set mainly on the Pacific ocean. Nature is seen here in multifarious forms. Some objects are friendly, others are dangerous and pose a threat to the existence of mankind. Different natural phenomena - lightning, storm, thunder-bolt, sizzling heat, darkness, roaring ocean strike terror into the hearts of men. The oxford dictionary mentions1603 as the date of the first usage of environment. And eco-criticism is the study of literature from an ecological or environmental perspective. It is interdisciplinary. It focusses on the analysis of depictions life and the connections between literature and nature which many writers have brought out very effectively in their writings. The subject matter, theme of Environmental literature was at first nature itself and its change over time. The writers of Environmental Literature portray the physical impact of humans on the Earth's land, water, atmosphere and biosphere. They illustrate how humans use nature, present the environmental consequences of increasing population, the environmental and human consequences of industrial and technological revolutions. To put it in simple terms, Environmental literature is a branch of literature deals with nature or environment oriented works of fiction. The term 'Environmental Literature' gained momentum in the 1960's when various Environmental Movements created platform for the explosion of themes on environment, nature and ecosystem. Critics with eco-critical perspective encourage the society or the readers to think seriously about the relationship of humans to Nature, about the environmental crisis and the importance of language and literature in imparting values with ecological implications.

Similarly, the three major American writers of the Nineteenth Century, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82), Margaret Fuller (1810-50), and Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), celebrate nature, the life force and wilderness as manifested in America. Emerson narrates the influence of the natural world upon him in his reflective essay "Nature". Margaret Fuller's"Summer on the Lakes, during 1843, describes her opinion about the American Landscape at large. And Thoreau's "Walden" is about his experience when he stayed in a hut on the shore of Walden Pond. Passion for Nature makes a rich source for the writers of different periods of time irrespective of the genres.

When we talk about ecocriticism, we're really talking about a variety of ways to think about the environment through literature. Just like in any field, there are different schools of

thought, each with its own way of looking at things. Here are some of the major frameworks that shape ecocritical thinking:

Deep ecology is a philosophy that encourages us to go beyond the usual view of nature as something we just use. Instead, it sees all living things—humans, animals, plants—as having value in and of themselves. The idea came from Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in the 1970s. Deep ecology pushes us to recognize the deep connections between all forms of life and to see ourselves as part of a larger whole.

When this idea is applied to literature, it means looking at how stories represent nature—not just as a background or setting, but as something alive and important. It asks readers to think more deeply about how we treat the planet and all its creatures. Ecofeminist literature often challenges the way we separate things into categories like man/woman or nature/culture. Instead, it encourages more holistic and equal ways of thinking. Stories influenced by ecofeminism might highlight how women's experiences are tied to the land or how gender and ecology intersect in unique ways.

Postcolonial ecocriticism focuses on the legacies of colonialism and how they've shaped both landscapes and stories. Colonial powers often changed local environments dramatically—cutting down forests, draining rivers, or introducing cash crops. They also imposed ways of thinking about nature that ignored or erased Indigenous beliefs and practices. Writers and scholars working from this angle look at how literature reflects those histories. They ask how colonized people experienced environmental loss and how today's global systems continue to harm both people and nature. Environmental literature is a broad category—it doesn't stick to just one style or type of writing. Over time, many different genres have helped shape how we think and feel about the natural world.

Pastoral literature presents a picture of peaceful rural life, far away from the noise and chaos of cities. These works often idealize farm life and show humans living in harmony with nature. Although it can be a bit nostalgic or overly romantic, pastoral writing also critiques modern industrial society. Writers like William Wordsworth used the pastoral tradition to celebrate nature and question the costs of progress. More recently, Wendell Berry has continued this tradition by focusing on farming, community, and environmental ethics. While not always realistic, pastoral literature reminds us of a slower, simpler way of life that values the land. It is really interesting to mention here that some of the poems written by William Wordsworth, Romantic poet of the nineteenth century, who is popular as a poet of Nature anticipate the emergence of Environmental literature and eco-criticism. Wordsworth believes that "Sweet is the lore which Nature brings; Our meddling intellect Misshapes thebeauteous forms of things: We murder to dissect".("Tables Turned" from "The Lyrical Ballads"- 1798) It is with this faith, he regrets the attitude of the people of his times towards Nature, for, it seems to him that having been blessed with the materialistic prosperity, they have forgot to enjoy and appreciate the beauty of Nature. It pains him to see that they are interested only in 'getting and spending' and that they have 'sold their hearts to a sordid boon'. Hailing from the Lake district of England, he depicts the beauty of Nature to his heart's content but resents that 'From this, from everything, we are out of tune (The World is Too much With Us) Wordsworth criticizes the world of the First Industrial Revolution for being absorbed in materialism and distancing itself from nature.

In recent years, a new genre has emerged: climate fiction, or cli-fi. These are novels and stories that deal with the issue of climate change. Some are set in future worlds devastated by global warming, while others show how climate impacts people's daily lives right now. Writers like Margaret Atwood (Oryx and Crake), Kim Stanley Robinson (The Ministry for the

Future), and Barbara Kingsolver (Flight Behavior) use fiction to explore complex environmental themes. Cli-fi helps us imagine the emotional, social, and political consequences of a warming world. It can be disturbing, hopeful, or both—but it always encourages us to think about the path we're on.

While ecocriticism started mainly in Western academic circles, it's quickly become a global conversation. Environmental issues affect everyone, everywhere—but different cultures have their own ways of understanding nature, telling stories, and living with the land. As ecocriticism grows, it's important to include these diverse perspectives and voices. We're living in a time when human actions are reshaping the planet in dramatic and often dangerous ways. Scientists call this era the Anthropocene—a term that means "the age of humans." In this new reality, writers and artists are rethinking how to tell stories about nature, survival, and our place in the world. Environmental literature in the Anthropocene doesn't just describe nature—it questions what it means to be human in a world we're actively changing. The word "Anthropocene" suggests that human activity has become a powerful force—so powerful, in fact, that it's changing the Earth's systems: climate, oceans, soil, and even the atmosphere. This isn't just about pollution or deforestation—it's about a whole shift in how we live on the planet.

Conclusion:

Ecocriticism and environmental literature remind us that stories can be powerful tools for understanding—and responding to—the challenges we face on a changing planet. Through poems, novels, essays, and even films and digital media, writers have helped us see nature not just as scenery, but as something we're deeply connected to. Living in the digitalized world of the 21st century, we have been experiencing the harmful effects of our environmental degradation. We have taken our nature and environment for granted without considering the ill effects our indifference and disconnection from the natural world. Excessive use of technology,crave for materialistic progress, Automobiles and Urbanization, Modernization have made us forget the importance of a healthy Environment in our life. We are blinded by our passion for 'what is not' and hence we don't know what kind of future awaits the generations of tomorrows……..! It is true that attempts are being made to stop and control further damage on nature through preventive and relief measures, by the people in power, environmental activists concerned. And Environmental literature and eco-critical writings do have a greater responsibility of educating the society, of promoting environmental awareness. It is a progressive move on the part of the Academicians to have introduced the study of Environmental studies and eco-criticism as a part of the Curriculum at different levels of learning in the educational institutions. Reading, discussion and research Environmental literature can enhance their awareness; strengthen their sense of responsibility towards their planet and their fellow living beings. To conclude, literature and art have always been concerned with man and nature inter face. The message is to reject overexploitation of nature and natural resources, keeping in mind the Gandhian dictum that "Earth has enough to satisfy man's need, not enough to satisfy his greed!"

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From Habitat to Exile: Environmental Displacement and The Expanding Horizons of Ecocriticism

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Abstract

Environmental displacement has become a significant concern within contemporary ecocritical studies, revealing how ecological disruption compels human migration and reshapes relationships with place and identity. Climate change, environmental degradation, and unsustainable development increasingly force communities to leave ancestral landscapes, producing both geographical and psychological dislocation. This paper examines environmental displacement through an ecocritical framework, drawing upon literary representations that foreground ecological loss and human vulnerability. Works such as *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh and *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver illustrate how environmental crises alter livelihoods, memory, and belonging. Engaging with ideas proposed by ecocritics like Lawrence Buell, the study argues that literature not only documents ecological displacement but also encourages ethical reflection on environmental justice. The paper ultimately positions ecocriticism as a vital framework for understanding the intertwined futures of environment, culture, and human survival.

Keywords: Environmental Displacement; Ecocriticism; Climate Change; Ecological Justice; Migration Narratives

Introduction

The relationship between human societies and the natural environment has always been dynamic, yet recent decades have witnessed an unprecedented intensification of ecological disruptions. Climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and large-scale industrial expansion have significantly altered landscapes across the globe. These changes increasingly threaten the stability of human settlements and have given rise to a growing phenomenon known as environmental displacement. Communities that once relied on predictable environmental conditions for agriculture, fishing, or forestry now confront circumstances that make their traditional ways of life difficult to sustain.

Environmental displacement refers to the forced movement of individuals or communities due to ecological transformations that undermine their ability to live safely or productively in a particular region. Rising sea levels, coastal erosion, desertification, and extreme weather events often compel populations to migrate in search of more secure living conditions. While migration has always been part of human history, environmental displacement differs in that it is closely linked to the deterioration of ecological systems. As environmental crises intensify, the number of people affected by such displacement continues to grow.

The consequences of environmental displacement extend beyond economic hardship or geographic relocation. For many communities, land represents far more than a physical

territory; it forms an essential component of cultural identity and social continuity. Landscapes frequently hold deep historical and emotional significance, shaping local traditions, livelihoods, and collective memory. When environmental changes render these landscapes uninhabitable, the resulting displacement disrupts not only livelihoods but also the cultural frameworks through which individuals understand their relationship to place.

Literature provides a powerful medium through which these experiences can be explored and interpreted. Unlike scientific reports that focus primarily on empirical data, literary narratives capture the emotional and psychological dimensions of environmental crises. Through characters, storytelling, and imagery, literature allows readers to engage with the lived realities of communities confronting ecological transformation. This capacity makes literature particularly valuable for understanding the human dimensions of environmental displacement.

Within literary studies, the field of ecocriticism offers a theoretical approach for examining how texts represent environmental concerns. Emerging in the late twentieth century, ecocriticism investigates the interactions between literature and the natural world. Scholars within this field analyze how literary works depict landscapes, ecological relationships, and environmental crises, as well as how such representations influence cultural attitudes toward nature.

In recent years, ecocritical scholarship has increasingly focused on issues such as climate change, environmental justice, and ecological vulnerability. These developments reflect a growing recognition that environmental crises often intersect with social inequalities and political power structures. Communities with limited economic or political resources are frequently the most vulnerable to ecological disruptions, making environmental displacement not only an ecological issue but also a social and ethical concern.

This paper examines how contemporary literature represents environmental displacement and how such representations expand the scope of ecocritical inquiry. By analyzing selected texts that portray ecological instability and migration, the study seeks to demonstrate that literature plays an important role in shaping public understanding of environmental challenges. The analysis particularly focuses on two novels—*The Hungry Tide* and *Flight Behavior*—which offer compelling depictions of communities confronting environmental change.

Through an ecocritical reading of these works, the paper explores how narratives portray the interconnectedness of human societies and natural ecosystems. The study argues that literary representations of environmental displacement encourage readers to reflect on the ethical responsibilities associated with environmental stewardship and the need for more sustainable relationships between humans and the natural world.

Literature Review

The emergence of ecocriticism as a scholarly discipline has significantly broadened the study of environmental themes in literature. Early ecocritical scholarship focused on examining how literary texts depict natural landscapes and human interactions with the environment. Over time, the field expanded to address contemporary ecological concerns such as climate change, environmental justice, and sustainability.

One of the influential voices in ecocritical theory is Lawrence Buell, whose work emphasizes the role of literature in shaping environmental consciousness. Buell argues that literary texts often serve as cultural spaces where ecological values and ethical responsibilities toward nature are explored. According to him, environmentally oriented literature encourages

readers to reconsider anthropocentric perspectives and recognize the interconnectedness of human and non-human life.

Another foundational figure in ecocritical studies is Cheryll Glotfelty, who helped define ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Glotfelty emphasizes that literary criticism must engage with ecological concerns because environmental crises increasingly shape human existence. Her work highlights the interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism, which integrates insights from environmental science, philosophy, and cultural studies.

Similarly, Greg Garrard has contributed to the theoretical expansion of ecocriticism by examining themes such as wilderness, animals, pollution, and climate change within literary narratives. Garrard's work underscores the importance of analyzing how literary texts respond to environmental crises and how they challenge dominant assumptions about human control over nature.

Recent scholarship has increasingly focused on the concept of environmental displacement. Scholars argue that ecological disruptions often force communities to migrate, thereby transforming social structures and cultural identities. Environmental displacement is particularly visible in regions that are vulnerable to climate change, including coastal areas, island nations, and riverine ecosystems.

The novel *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh has received significant attention within ecocritical scholarship because of its depiction of the Sundarbans, a fragile mangrove ecosystem located in the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. The narrative portrays a region where land and water constantly shift, creating a landscape characterized by both ecological richness and human vulnerability. Scholars note that the novel highlights the precarious lives of local communities whose livelihoods depend on fishing and forest resources.

Similarly, *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver explores the consequences of climate change through the unexpected migration of monarch butterflies. The novel illustrates how global environmental changes affect local communities in subtle yet profound ways. Through the experiences of rural residents and visiting scientists, the narrative examines the tensions between scientific knowledge and everyday life.

Together, these works demonstrate how literature can illuminate the human dimensions of environmental change. Ecocritical scholars argue that literary narratives provide an important means of understanding ecological crises because they capture the emotional and cultural experiences associated with environmental transformation.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology grounded in textual analysis. The research focuses on examining literary representations of environmental displacement through an ecocritical framework. Rather than relying on quantitative data, the study emphasizes interpretative analysis of narrative structures, themes, and symbolic elements within selected literary texts.

The primary texts selected for analysis are *The Hungry Tide* and *Flight Behavior*. These novels were chosen because they explicitly address the relationship between ecological instability and human experience. Both narratives depict communities whose livelihoods and identities are deeply connected to their surrounding environments.

The analytical process involves close reading of key passages that illustrate environmental change and its social consequences. Particular attention is given to narrative descriptions of

landscapes, character responses to ecological disruptions, and symbolic representations of nature.

The study also incorporates theoretical insights from ecocritical scholars. Concepts related to environmental ethics, ecological interconnectedness, and environmental justice are used to interpret how literary narratives engage with ecological crises.
Through this approach, the research aims to demonstrate how literature contributes to broader discussions about environmental displacement and sustainability.

Environmental Fragility and Human Survival

In *The Hungry Tide,* Amitav Ghosh presents the Sundarbans as a landscape defined by constant transformation. The region's shifting islands, tidal currents, and unpredictable storms create an environment that is both fertile and dangerous. Local communities rely on fishing, honey collection, and small-scale agriculture, yet these activities are continually threatened by environmental forces.

The novel emphasizes the delicate balance between human survival and ecological processes. Characters must adapt to a landscape where land may disappear overnight due to erosion or flooding. This precarious relationship illustrates how environmental fragility shapes the lives of those who inhabit vulnerable ecosystems.

Climate Change and Ecological Disruption

Flight Behavior portrays climate change through the unexpected relocation of monarch butterflies to the Appalachian Mountains. In the novel, scientists explain that rising global temperatures have altered the insects' migration patterns. This ecological anomaly becomes a symbol of broader environmental disruption.
Through the perspective of local residents, the narrative explores how climate change affects rural communities. Farmers struggle with unpredictable weather patterns, while economic pressures make it difficult to prioritize environmental concerns. The story demonstrates that ecological crises often intersect with social and economic challenges.

Cultural Identity and Loss of Homeland

Environmental displacement often results in the erosion of cultural identity. When communities are forced to leave their ancestral lands, they lose the landscapes that shaped their traditions and social relationships. Literature frequently portrays this loss through characters who experience nostalgia, grief, and uncertainty.

In both novels examined in this study, displacement is not merely a physical movement but also a transformation of identity. Characters must negotiate new environments while attempting to preserve memories of their former homes. These narratives highlight the emotional complexities associated with environmental migration.

Environmental Justice and Ethical Responsibility

Ecocritical analysis also reveals the ethical dimensions of environmental displacement. Ecological crises frequently affect marginalized communities more severely than affluent populations. Those who contribute least to environmental degradation often suffer its consequences most intensely.
Literary works that address environmental displacement encourage readers to reflect on these inequalities. By portraying the lived experiences of vulnerable communities, narratives emphasize the need for greater environmental responsibility and global cooperation.

Ecological Memory and the Experience of Displacement

Environmental displacement should not be understood only as the loss of physical space; it also involves the weakening of the emotional and cultural ties that connect people to their surroundings. Communities that live close to nature develop their customs, beliefs, and everyday practices in relation to the land they inhabit. When environmental disturbances force

them to leave these familiar places, the separation often produces a deep sense of grief and psychological instability. Ecocritical scholars frequently point out that landscapes are not merely locations on a map but living environments that shape human identity and collective memory. In many literary works dealing with ecological crises, displaced characters struggle to maintain their sense of belonging after being removed from the environment that once defined their lives. The disappearance of rivers, forests, and agricultural fields interrupts not only economic activity but also the cultural knowledge that has been preserved for generations. In *The Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh presents the Sundarbans as a place where human survival depends on constant adjustment to natural forces such as tides, storms, and changing landforms. When this delicate balance is disturbed, the people living in the region face uncertainty that affects both their livelihood and their emotional stability. Ecocritical thinkers such as Lawrence Buell have suggested that literature plays an important role in preserving the memory of such environments by representing the relationship between people and place. Through storytelling, literary texts allow lost landscapes to remain present in cultural imagination, reminding readers of the human cost of ecological destruction.

Global Environmental Crisis and the Changing Scope of Ecocriticism

The growth of industrialization and global economic expansion has increased environmental damage in many parts of the world, making displacement caused by ecological change a widespread reality. Because of this, ecocriticism has gradually moved beyond its earlier focus on nature writing and has begun to address issues such as climate change, migration, and environmental inequality. Modern ecocritical theory recognizes that ecological problems are closely connected with political and economic systems that control the use of natural resources. The idea of "slow violence," discussed by Rob Nixon, explains how environmental destruction often takes place gradually, without immediate visibility, yet produces severe consequences over time. This concept helps explain situations where rising sea levels, soil erosion, or deforestation slowly make a region unfit for human life, eventually forcing communities to relocate. Literary works frequently illustrate these long-term effects in ways that scientific reports cannot fully express. In *Flight Behavior*, Barbara Kingsolver uses the unusual migration of monarch butterflies to represent the disturbance of ecological balance caused by climate change. The novel shows that environmental problems operate at both global and local levels, influencing not only ecosystems but also the everyday lives of ordinary people. Such narratives demonstrate that environmental displacement should be viewed as part of a larger planetary crisis rather than an isolated event. As ecocriticism continues to develop, it increasingly encourages readers to think about environmental issues in relation to social justice, economic inequality, and human responsibility toward the natural world.

Redefining the Idea of Home in a Changing World

Contemporary literature often explores how individuals attempt to rebuild their sense of belonging after being forced to leave their native environments. When displacement occurs, people must adapt to unfamiliar landscapes while trying to preserve memories of the places they once called home. This experience reflects a broader human struggle to maintain identity in conditions of ecological uncertainty. Ecocritical studies suggest that the idea of home is not fixed but continuously shaped by the interaction between human beings and their environment. In many modern narratives, displaced characters learn to survive by forming new relationships with the land, even though they continue to remember the landscapes they have lost. These stories challenge the belief that home is permanent and unchanging, showing instead that it can be broken, reconstructed, and reimagined. This theme becomes especially important in the age of climate change, when entire communities may be required to move in order to survive environmental disasters. By presenting stories of loss as well as adaptation, literary works invite readers to reflect on how human beings might develop more balanced and respectful ways of living with nature. In this way, ecocriticism expands its focus from simply describing

environmental damage to exploring the possibilities of renewal, resilience, and coexistence in a world where ecological conditions are constantly shifting.

Conclusion

Environmental displacement has emerged as a defining challenge of the contemporary era as climate change and ecological degradation reshape landscapes around the world. Communities that once depended on stable environmental conditions now confront uncertainties that threaten their livelihoods and cultural identities. As these transformations intensify, the need to understand the human dimensions of ecological crises becomes increasingly urgent.Ecocriticism provides a valuable framework for examining how literature engages with environmental concerns. Through the analysis of narratives that depict ecological instability and migration, scholars can explore the cultural and ethical implications of environmental change.

The novels *The Hungry Tide* and *Flight Behavior* demonstrate how literary works capture the complex relationship between human societies and natural ecosystems. Both narratives portray environments that are undergoing rapid transformation, forcing characters to confront the possibility of displacement and the loss of familiar landscapes.Ultimately, literary representations of environmental displacement encourage readers to reconsider the relationship between humanity and the natural world. By highlighting the interconnectedness of ecological systems and human communities, literature fosters greater awareness of environmental responsibility and the importance of sustainable practices.

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From the Golden Bird to the Hungry Body: Post-humanism in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats and Jayanta Mahapatra

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Abstract

This essay analyses the post-humanism re-configurations of human subject in W. B. Yeats and Jayanta Mahapatra by a comparative analysis of "*Sailing to Byzantium*", "*The Second Coming*", "*Hunger*", and "*Dawn at Puri*". The human body in Yeats is destabilized and redefined beyond the bounds of biology: the speaker in *Sailing to Byzantium* is hoping to be turned into an unnatural golden bird, which may experience a post-biological life, and in *The Second Coming* a disturbing hybrid sphinx is offered which replaces Christian humanism and announces the end of the anthropocentric order. On the contrary, Golden Age poetry by Mahapatra proposes a vision not of transcendence, but of erosion. Both in *Hunger* and *Dawn at Puri*, the human figure is completely demeaned to material defensiveness, overruled by the cold and indifferent sea and the survival imperatives. Collectively, these poets deviate into mythic change to material depletion and destabilize liberal humanist ideas of autonomy and centrality and prefigure a fraught post-human state of being.

Key Words Post-humanism, Transformation, Erosion, Vulnerability, Materialism.

Introduction

"An aged man is but a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick" (*Sailing to Byzantium*) and "the hunger of this place is larger than the body" (Mahapatra, Hunger) both contribute to a reconsidered look at the human condition that appeals to post-humanistic interests. The lines used by Yeats render the human body as a weakness and dispensability thus creating a desire in people to overcome its flaws and corruptions using art and creativity. The material vulnerability of the body, which becomes even more evident in the visions of Mahapatra, is more concerned with the survival than identity and dignity. These voices, when read simultaneously, are going in different and yet rather complementary directions: one of them is toward post-biological transformation and the other toward corporeal erosion. They both disrupt the humanist concept of a relatively stable and independent being and reveal a brittle, decentralised human life.

The question of the nature of humanity has undergone a major re-evaluation in contemporary and modern day literary research particularly with the introduction of post-humanist theory. Posthumanism challenges the basic assumptions of liberal humanism in autonomy, rationality, and dominance of the human subject through the contextualisation of the human in a broad technological, ecological, and material context. Posthumanism does not regard people as fixed and self-enclosed beings. Rather it directs itself to hybridity, vulnerability, and change. Poetry in this regard is an effective tool of analyzing the changing parameters of human being especially when there is cultural unrest and lack of self-definition. W. B. Yeats and Jayanta Mahapatra may live in different places, different times, the poetry of these two writers is separated by space and time, and the tradition of poetry, but they offer very important conclusions on how the human subject is changing in different and converging posthumanist ways.

WB Yeats, writing at the beginning of the 20th century, addresses the topic of the break of traditional values and the loss of the qualities of identity among the people in the rapidly

evolving world. His poems often refer to transcendence, trying to overcome the limits of physical body and the timeplane. In such poems as *Sailing to Byzantium*, Yeats envisiones the abandonment of the corruption of the biological body and the moving on to an everlasting and inhuman body a golden bird, created by humans more than nature. This alteration implies that it is a shift out of the natural condition of humanity and into the post-biological one where identity is not connected to flesh and time any longer. Yeats also shows an apocalyptic change in "*The Second Coming*" by showing a huge, hybrid sphinx. This non-human-non-animal creature disrupts the anthropocentric perception of the world and demonstrates the breakdown of the existing moral and religion systems. The poetic imagination of Yeats anticipates crucial problems of posthumanism by questioning the wholeness of the human body and thinking through other forms of being beyond the traditional humanist parameters.

The poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, however, is also grounded on the social and cultural realities of the post-colonial India and it provides an entirely different perspective on the human condition. Mahapatra does not attempt to rise to a greater plane in her work and instead exhibits the physicality and weakness of the human body. His poetry often depicts people trapped in the trap of poverty, hunger, and existential despair, in which bodily is not a place of change but rather a place of pain and loss. The human figure in *Hunger* has a terrible decision to make between the physical need and the moral compromise, which demonstrates the lack of strength of human dignity when individuals are extremely poor. This is another film by "*Dawn at Puri*" which places the human body in a scenery where the sea and ritualistic activity take center stage and how tiny it is when it is in comparison to the grandeur of nature and culture. The poetry of Mahapatra dismisses this notion of the exceptionalism of man where the body is presented as subject to and inextricably a part of forces beyond its control. Yeats and Mahapatra are compared that reveal two different yet interconnected post-humanist perspectives. Yeats focuses on mythic and symbolic changes that go beyond human experience. Conversely, Mahapatra bases his inquiry on the corporealities that undermine the powers of humanity. They share together a path of immortality and permanence of art and a certain assurance of limitations of the flesh and spirits. This transformation is a bigger change in philosophical ideas and literature. It shifts its emphasis on human strength and transcendence to interdependence, vulnerability and diminishing boundaries of human domination.

This work focuses on examining these poets through a posthumanist prism in an attempt to demonstrate how their works challenge the conventional notions of what it means to be human and finds new interpretations of and means of identity. The golden bird and an apocalyptic sphinx used by Yeats, as well as the hungry bodies and indifferent landscapes of Mahapatra, are almost a transgression of the boundary between the human and non-human, between the natural and the artificially created. By so doing, they encourage readers to re-assess the place of humanity in the complex and sometimes brutal world. This comparative method does not only indicate the diversity of the posthumanist writings in various literary traditions, but it also points to the enduring significance of poetry in responding to the changing condition of humanity.

Research Questions

1. What does W. B Yeats's *Sailing to Byzantium* and *The Second Coming* reify the human subject to transcend human boundaries, and how are these extensions prefigured by some of the critical ideas of post-humanism?
2. How does Jayanta Mahapatra in his works *Hunger* and *Dawn at Puri* represent human body as vulnerable materially, and how is it questioning the liberal humanist assumptions?
3. What does the opposition between Yeats in his understanding of transcendence and Mahapatra in her emphasis on the corporeal erosion add to a bigger picture of post-human subjectivity?

4. How do non-human forces (i.e., artifice, myth and the natural environment) create an embarrassment to anthropocentric views in the chosen poems?
5. What does the comparative post-humanist approach to reading Yeats and Mahapatra tell us about the construction of the human situation in literature?

Research Objective

The purpose of this paper is to explore how W. B. Yeats re-configurates the human subject beyond the biological constraints in the two Yeats works, *Sailing to Byzantium* and *The Second Coming*, in terms of artifice and hybridity, as well as change, and also to consider how Jayanta Mahapatra refores the materially vulnerable human body as social in the context on *Hunger* and *Dawn at Puri*. It has attempted to examine the transcendence-erosion change in the poetic account of the human condition in these two poets and tried to examine the way their writing undermines the dictums of liberal humanism, specifically, the idea of autonomy, centrality and permanence of the human subject. More so, it seeks to determine the importance of non-human agencies, such as technology, mythic forms, environment, and material forces, in creating posthuman subjectivity in each of the poems under study. In providing a comparative study of Western modernist and Indian postcolonial frameworks of the poetic, the paper will also aim at demonstrating how the different literary traditions reflect posthumanist issues. Finally, it hopes to add to posthumanist literary discourse by showing how poetic writing is connected to changing ideas about identity, embodiment, human life in various cultural areas.

Research Gap

Although the literature on W. B. Yeats and Jayanta Mahapatra has increased considerably in terms of scholarly publication, there still remains an important gap in cross-disciplinary analyses of these two poets, even though the scholars have often addressed them on different theoretical frameworks as a posthumanist approach to analysis. The poetry of Yeats has been widely discussed in the context of modernism, symbolism, mysticism and historical crisis and that of Mahapatra has mostly been interpreted in the context of postcolonialism, regional identity and socio-economic realism. Whereas such approaches can provide useful insights, they tend to always be anthropocentric, dwelling on human experience without explicitly challenging the instability of the human subject itself. As a result, little has been done to explore how the hybrid nature of Yeats and the embodiment process of suffering by Mahapatra could be interpreted as an extension of a larger posthumanist discourse. Moreover, no current literature is interested in positioning transcendence and material vulnerability as complimental modes of posthuman reconfiguration. The wish of Yeats to move beyond the biological body into the artistic permanence is not often explored outside of the context of Mahapatra and her bleak portrayals of the erosion of the body in the pressures of the ecological and social environment. This absence of intersection cloud the different cultural and historical contexts of producing various but correlated critiques of human centrality. A research gap therefore prevails in the synthesis of Western modernist and Indian postcolonial poetics in a unified posthumanist framework. By filling this gap, one can have a less idealized perception of how literary texts struggle to work out the frontiers between the human and the non-human, and how they all converge toward a precarious and decentred sense of existence in the present and future world.

Research Methodology

Being a qualitative, interpretative study utilizing the textual and comparative analysis technique to know the posthumanist element within the selected poems by W. B. Yeats and Jayanta Mahapatra, the present paper will adopt the qualitative research approach. To analyze the main texts, i.e. Sailing to Byzantium, The Second Coming, Hunger, and Dawn at Puri, close reading is employed in order to analyze them through the prism of imagery, symbolism, and thematic patterns that disturb the human subject. The interpretation is informed by theoretical underlining of the work of one of the key posthumanist theorists, such as Rosi Braidotti, N. Katherine Hayles, and Donna Haraway, whose concepts of the decentered subjectivity,

embodiment, hybridity, and human-non-human entanglement are used to explain the work. With the help of these theoretical implications, the study will also seek to establish how the two poets challenge anthropocentric beliefs and reconfigure practices of the human in distinct cultural and literary format.

Besides, the comparative approach is embraced by the study, which seeks to bring together Western modernistic and Indian post-colonial insights, with the two exhibiting some similarities and differences in their explanations of the human condition. Secondary sources like critical essays, journal articles, and books about Yeats, Mahapatra and post-humanism are used to support the analysis and put it into perspective. The method pays attention to the interdisciplinary interaction that is based on the literary theory, philosophy, and the cultural studies to provide the additional elaboration to the texts reading. By so doing, the paper shall construct an elusive image of how poetic visual images of transcendence and material vulnerability can bring a greater contribution to a broader post-humanist account.

Research Outcome

The findings of that research indicate that even in the midst of such entrenchment in two different traditions of literature and culture context both W. B. Yeats and Jayanta Mahapatra meet at the point of criticism of the stable, independent subject of the human being as it exists in the light of liberal humanism. Transcendence, artificiality and hybridity go on to suggest a posthuman future that Yeats poetry hints at by breaking the boundaries of the biological body and Mahapatra by showing the limitations of transcendence through prefiguration of the bodily precariousness of the flesh, and becoming trapped within socio-economic circumstances. As a set, there is a diversity of posthuman condition that can be seen between mythic transformation and corporeal depletion in the poems, and in this way, they emphasise the state of decentred contingency of human being. This comparative reading is not only broadening the scope of the study of posthumanist literature, but also demonstrating that poetry of the various cultures can be entangled with the new and dissolving conceptions of identity, embodiment and human-non-human interface.

Sailing to Byzantium

WB. Yeats in *Sailing to Byzantium* expresses an extreme re-configurating of the human subject that resonates with posthumanist issues by denying the weakness of the biological body and envisioning a different, artificially fashioned form of existence. In the verse, human body is profoundly demeaned to filthy rags in old age, which is a notorious line in the poem, as the author says “An aged man is but a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick,” exposing the limitations and degradation of human incarnation. In reaction, the speaker wants to find a new way of escape into the eternal world of art, and he wants to be a member of an artificially created, non-organic object. The feeling goes to the sight of the golden bird- “Once out of nature I shall never take / My bodily form of any natural thing”- of which is an image of a post-biological self that lasts by the saving power of art as an everlasting thing. In this naturely death turned into artificial eternity, Yeats challenges the key presumptions of humanism and foreshadows a posthuman scenario where the boundaries are shattered radically between the human and non-human.

The Second Coming

WB. Yeats in *The Second Coming* gives a gloomy and disturbing account of the disintegration of human-made order, which is quite similar to the posthumanist interest in the instability of the human subject. The first lines of the poem are the famous ones- “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world”, which indicated the collapse of the old system, moral, political, and religious, which used to establish the identity of people and power. The resulting fragmentation causes a terrifying half-breed genetic limb of the poem: “A shape with lion body and the head of a man,” that signifies a posthuman one that cannot be defined within the conventional human/animal dichotomies. This is the monstrous

look that is substituting the Christian humanist perception of a redemption and one that is bringing in a fresh and unpredictable epoch when man is no longer a central and fixed aspect. By doing this, Yeats reinvents the reality based on non-human and disordered forces and anticipates a decentered and fragmented vision of manhood that is also adjacent to the posthumanist movement of thought.

Leda and the Swan

In *Leda and the Swan*,W. B. Yeats introduces a violent scene of confrontation between the human and the non-human that effectively disrupts the limits of the human subject, which echoes with the posthumanist issues. The poem reflects the overpowering Zeus in the form of a bird in the vivid line, "A sudden blow: the great wings beating still", when the power of the divinity and the power of the beasts overwhelm the human power in a moment. This collision is displaced onto the body of Leda, who loses any sense of autonomy and control in the haunting question, "Did she put on his knowledge with his power / Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?" In this case, there is a hybridizing act in which knowledge, power, and violence are passed on through a blurring of boundaries between god, animal and human. By this, Yeats presents the uncertainty of the human body or its porousness as a boundary and the instability of human identity as something susceptible to forces that are external to it, and beyond its reform, which makes the poem resonate with a posthumanist redefinition of the body and power.

Hunger

In *Hunger*, Jayanta Mahapatra gives a bleak and disconcerting account of the human situation that prefigures the vulnerability of matter and the loss of human dignity, both of which are in tandem with posthumanist critiques of the centrality of the human. The poem brings down the human existence to the obsessions of survival where the moral and emotional boundaries are broken with pressure of physical need. This is seen in the shocking sale that takes place between the father and the speaker, and this ends in the line, "the man's daughter… she was just turned fifteen," which reveals the com-modification of the human body when one is in conditions of severe deprivation. This vulnerability is further increased by the repetitive nature of the natural world as observed in "the wind blew the sand against the door", where the natural world is depicted to be unconcerned and unsympathetic to the suffering of humans. Mahapatra therefore represents the body not as a place of transcendence but as a place of exploitation and survival, questioning the humanist concept of agency and autonomy and offering a very disturbing, posthuman image of life as a contest of hunger, helplessness, and survivability.

Dawn at Puri

Jayanta Mahapatra in *Dawn at Puri* gives a silent, but strong, meditation on the frailty and insignificance of human life, which corresponds to posthumanist interests by making the human being secondary to a vast and cold world. The poem places human existence in opposition to the inexorable nature of the sea, which is symbolized in the poem in the line, "Endless crow noises / a skull on the holy sands", where the death and the ritual become the symbol of the instability of the body. The divine landscape, instead of raising the human identity, reveals its weaknesses and mortality. This is also reinforced in the line- "the beach at Puri swarms with people," in which people are dissolved into a mass and deprived of individuality and agency. Mahapatra consequently depicts the human subject as part of nature, ritual, and decay cycles, in which meaning is neither fixed nor human-centered to provide a posthuman vision of materialism, mortality, and the boundaries of human importance.

Conclusion

The The comparative analysis of W. B. Yeats and Jayanta Mahapatra shows more radical reconsideration of the human subject as it is consistent with posthumanist issues, but expressed in very different poetic imagery. The poetry of Yeats is directed to the transcendence, to the imagining of the escape of the rotting biological body into the forms of artistic and symbolic permanence, as in *Sailing to Byzantium*, and in the apocalyptic symbolism of *The*

Second Coming. His work disrupts the humanist ideal through showing hybrid and artificial and mythic forms that undermine the integrity and centrality of the human. Mahapatra's poetry, on the contrary, does not transcend but prefigures the material facts of life, in which the human body is exposed to hunger, poverty, and environmental unresponsiveness. In poems such as *Hunger* and *Dawn at Puri*, the human being is not glorified but is degraded, brought down to a weak, helpless being who fights to survive in the bigger forces which are mostly indifferent to him. Collectively these poets follow a shift in the desire to transform the body through post-biological means to the harsh reality of erosion of the flesh to present two different ways of looking at the decentralising of the human.

All of their works, together, confront the assumptions of autonomy, stability, and superiority on which liberal humanism is founded, offering in their place a vision of a contingent, unstable, and highly interdependent existence with non-human forces. Through the introduction of the modernist imagination of Yeats and the postcolonial realism of Mahapatra, this paper does not only broaden the area of posthumanist literary inquiry but also helps to point out the usefulness of poetry in the expression of shifting theories of identity, embodiment, and human restriction. The transformation of the golden bird into the hungry body, in the end, serves as a summation of a larger change in perception of the condition of humanness- the condition of acknowledging the need to rise above and the need to be vulnerable in a more and more complex, decentered world.

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Riverine Cosmologies: Myth, Memory and Environmental Consciousness in Indian and Nigerian Fiction

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Abstract

This paper examines riverine and coastal ecologies as epistemological frameworks in Indian and Nigerian fiction, focusing on the works of Amitav Ghosh and Ben Okri. Moving beyond terrestrial nationalism and land-centered postcolonial studies, the study explores how aquatic landscapes function as narrative agents that shape identity, memory, and political consciousness. Through close readings of *The Hungry Tide* and *The Famished Road*, the paper argues that rivers and deltas in these texts are not merely geographical settings but cosmological spaces that destabilize colonial rationality and modern linear temporality. Drawing upon Blue Humanities, postcolonial ecocriticism, myth theory, and environmental memory studies, this research demonstrates how both authors construct alternative modernities rooted in indigenous cosmologies and fluid ontologies. While Ghosh employs ecological realism to foreground climate vulnerability and subaltern displacement, Okri utilizes mythic surrealism to articulate spiritual and political instability in the Nigerian postcolony. The comparative analysis reveals that riverine cosmologies in both contexts resist fixed borders, rigid historiography, and anthropocentric frameworks. Ultimately, the paper proposes that Indian and Nigerian river narratives contribute to a Global South environmental consciousness that reimagines modernity through fluidity, interdependence, and mythic memory.

Keywords: Blue Humanities; Riverine Cosmology; Postcolonial Ecocriticism; Environmental Memory; Myth and Modernity; Global South Studies; Aquatic Temporality; Indigenous Epistemology; Climate Consciousness; Magical Realism

Introduction

Waterways have historically shaped civilizations, migration patterns, economic systems, and cultural imagination. Rivers serve as sources of nourishment, routes of travel, and symbolic markers of continuity and transformation. Across cultures, rivers have also been associated with myths, spiritual beliefs, and collective memory. In literature, these aquatic environments frequently function as metaphors for movement, change, and interconnectedness.

Despite the cultural and ecological importance of rivers, literary criticism—especially within postcolonial studies—has often privileged land-based interpretations of space and identity. Concepts such as territory, nationhood, and borders have dominated scholarly discussions, leaving aquatic environments relatively understudied. Such emphasis reflects the influence of colonial cartography, which historically prioritized fixed territorial boundaries and land ownership.

Recent developments in environmental humanities have begun to challenge this limitation by foregrounding the significance of water in shaping historical and literary narratives. Scholars associated with Blue Humanities emphasize that oceans, seas, and rivers generate forms of knowledge distinct from those derived from terrestrial landscapes. Aquatic

spaces are fluid, mobile, and resistant to rigid boundaries; they therefore encourage alternative ways of conceptualizing history, geography, and identity.

Within this context, the fiction of Amitav Ghosh and Ben Okri provides compelling examples of how riverine environments shape narrative imagination in the Global South. Their works depict regions where rivers profoundly influence everyday life, cultural beliefs, and political realities. In The Hungry Tide, the Sundarbans delta emerges as a complex ecological system in which humans, animals, and tidal forces coexist within an unstable environment. The novel portrays a world where geographical uncertainty shapes social relations and cultural memory.

Similarly, The Famished Road presents a narrative landscape shaped by spiritual cosmology and mythic symbolism. Through the perspective of the spirit-child Azaro, Okri portrays a society where the boundaries between the material and spiritual worlds remain permeable. Rivers and roads operate as liminal spaces that connect multiple realms of existence.

This paper argues that riverine environments in these novels function not merely as settings but as cosmological frameworks that shape narrative structure, historical awareness, and environmental ethics. By examining the ecological realism of Ghosh alongside the mythic imagination of Okri, the study demonstrates how river narratives articulate alternative modernities grounded in cultural memory and ecological interdependence.

Literature Context: Ecocriticism and Aquatic Imaginations

Ecocriticism has emerged as an important approach in literary studies for analyzing the relationship between literature and the natural environment. Early ecocritical scholarship focused largely on representations of wilderness and pastoral landscapes in Western literature. However, scholars working within postcolonial contexts have expanded this field by examining how colonial histories, economic exploitation, and environmental degradation intersect in literary texts.

Postcolonial ecocriticism draws attention to the ways colonial expansion transformed landscapes through resource extraction, plantation agriculture, and infrastructural development. These processes disrupted traditional ecological systems and marginalized indigenous communities whose livelihoods depended on local environments. Literature from formerly colonized regions often reflects these tensions by portraying landscapes as sites of historical conflict and cultural negotiation.

Within this broader framework, the emerging field of Blue Humanities highlights the significance of water-based environments in shaping cultural narratives. Rivers, oceans, and coastal spaces possess distinctive characteristics that challenge the static spatial assumptions associated with land-centered analysis. Their fluidity encourages interpretations that emphasize mobility, interconnection, and transformation.

Scholars have noted that aquatic environments frequently appear in literary works as spaces where conventional social hierarchies dissolve or become unstable. Because rivers are constantly in motion, they symbolize processes of change that resist rigid categorization. In many cultural traditions, rivers also serve as spiritual or sacred entities, reinforcing the idea that water possesses both material and metaphysical significance.

By situating the works of Ghosh and Okri within this intellectual context, it becomes possible to understand how their narratives expand the scope of postcolonial environmental thought. Both authors portray riverine environments as spaces where ecological processes, historical memories, and spiritual cosmologies intersect.

Theoretical Framework: Blue Humanities and Postcolonial Ecocriticism

The theoretical foundation of this study lies in the intersection of Blue Humanities, postcolonial ecocriticism, and myth theory. Blue Humanities emphasizes the cultural and philosophical significance of water bodies in shaping historical and literary narratives. Unlike terrestrial landscapes, aquatic environments resist fixed boundaries and embody fluidity, mobility, and transformation. Such characteristics challenge the rigid territorial frameworks often associated with colonial modernity.

Postcolonial ecocriticism further expands this perspective by examining how environmental degradation, colonial exploitation, and indigenous ecological knowledge intersect in postcolonial societies. Scholars have argued that colonial regimes often imposed rigid systems of land ownership and resource extraction that disrupted traditional ecological relationships.

Within this context, rivers and deltas become powerful metaphors for alternative epistemologies rooted in indigenous cosmologies. Many precolonial cultures view rivers not simply as natural resources but as living entities endowed with spiritual significance. These cosmologies emphasize reciprocity, interdependence, and cyclical temporality rather than linear progress.

Myth theory also plays a crucial role in understanding the narrative strategies employed by Ghosh and Okri. Myths function as repositories of cultural memory that connect human communities with natural forces. By integrating mythic structures into their narratives, both authors challenge the rationalist worldview inherited from colonial modernity.

Riverine Ecologies and Environmental Realism in The Hungry Tide

Set in the Sundarbans delta of eastern India, The Hungry Tide explores the intricate relationship between human communities and a constantly shifting aquatic environment. The Sundarbans, formed by the confluence of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers, represent one of the world's largest and most fragile deltaic ecosystems.

In the novel, the tidal rhythms of the region shape the everyday lives of fishermen, boatmen, and settlers. The environment is unpredictable and often dangerous, characterized by cyclones, tidal surges, and encounters with wildlife such as the Royal Bengal tiger. Through vivid ecological descriptions, Amitav Ghosh emphasizes the precarious balance between human survival and environmental forces.

The narrative follows characters such as Piya Roy, a marine biologist studying river dolphins, and Fokir, a local fisherman whose knowledge of the tides reflects indigenous ecological wisdom. Their interactions highlight the contrast between scientific rationality and experiential knowledge rooted in lived engagement with the environment.

One of the most significant historical events referenced in the novel is the Morichjhapi massacre, in which refugee settlers were violently evicted from an island in the Sundarbans during the late twentieth century. By integrating this episode into the narrative, Ghosh reveals how ecological landscapes are also sites of political conflict and historical trauma.

The riverine environment thus becomes a repository of environmental memory, preserving traces of displacement, migration, and resistance. The fluid geography of the delta destabilizes fixed notions of territory and nationhood, suggesting that human identities are shaped by ecological processes beyond political boundaries.

Morichjhapi Massacre (1979)

The Morichjhapi Massacre of 1979 was a violent and controversial episode in post-independence India involving the forcible eviction of predominantly Dalit Hindu refugees from Morichjhapi Island in the region of West Bengal; these refugees, originally displaced during

the Partition of India in 1947 from East Pakistan (now), had first been resettled by the government in inhospitable areas such as but later migrated in large numbers to Morichjhapi in the late 1970s seeking better living conditions, where they established a self-sufficient settlement despite the island being part of a protected forest reserve; the , under Chief Minister , declared the settlement illegal and initiated a blockade in January 1979 that cut off essential supplies like food, water, and medicine, leading to starvation and disease, and eventually, in May 1979, carried out a forceful eviction involving police firing, destruction of homes and boats, and widespread violence against the settlers, resulting in an uncertain death toll that ranges from official reports of a few casualties to independent estimates of hundreds or even thousands, after which the survivors were displaced once again and the incident remained largely suppressed in mainstream discourse for years, though it has since gained attention in subaltern studies, Dalit history, and environmental debates, and has been memorialized in literary works such as by , ultimately standing as a stark example of the tensions between state authority, ecological conservation, caste marginalization, and the struggle for survival among displaced communities.

Mythic Surrealism and Spiritual Landscapes in The Famished Road

While Amitav Ghosh employs ecological realism to portray the complex environmental realities of the Sundarbans, Ben Okri adopts a very different narrative strategy in The Famished Road. Okri's novel blends myth, dream imagery, and political commentary to construct a narrative mode often described as mythic surrealism. Rather than presenting the natural world as a strictly material environment governed by empirical laws, the novel portrays reality as a layered space where the visible world constantly interacts with spiritual and metaphysical dimensions. Through this stylistic approach, Okri explores the deep connections between landscape, memory, and spiritual cosmology within Nigerian cultural traditions.

At the center of the narrative is Azaro, a child who belongs to the category of abiku in Yoruba cosmology. According to traditional Yoruba belief, an abiku is a spirit-child who repeatedly enters the human world only to return to the spirit realm, creating a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This mythological concept profoundly shapes the narrative structure of the novel. Because Azaro occupies a liminal position between life and the spiritual realm, he is able to perceive realities that remain invisible to other characters. Through his perspective, the boundaries between ordinary life and supernatural existence become permeable, allowing the narrative to move freely between different dimensions of experience.

The landscapes through which Azaro moves are therefore not merely physical settings but spiritual territories inhabited by both human and non-human entities. Streets, forests, markets, and rivers appear populated by spirits, ancestors, and mysterious beings that influence everyday life. The environment becomes animated by unseen forces, suggesting that the natural world cannot be fully understood through rational or empirical frameworks alone. In this sense, Okri's narrative reflects indigenous African cosmologies in which the material and spiritual realms coexist and interact continuously.

Within this cosmological worldview, rivers hold particular symbolic significance. In many African traditions, rivers are understood as sacred spaces associated with transformation, passage, and communication between worlds. In The Famished Road, rivers and roads function as transitional spaces that connect different realms of existence. These liminal spaces allow spirits to move between the spiritual and human worlds, reinforcing the idea that reality itself is fluid and unstable. The river thus becomes both a physical landscape and a metaphysical pathway through which histories, memories, and spiritual presences flow.

Okri's use of mythic surrealism also serves an important political purpose. Although the novel is rich in fantastical imagery, it simultaneously depicts the harsh social conditions of

postcolonial Nigeria. Poverty, corruption, political violence, and economic inequality dominate the lives of many characters in the narrative. Azaro's family struggles to survive within a society marked by exploitation and instability. Political figures manipulate the population through empty promises, while powerful elites benefit from systems of corruption and oppression.

By juxtaposing these social realities with spiritual imagery, Okri creates a narrative that reflects the psychological and cultural complexities of the Nigerian postcolony. The presence of spirits and supernatural events does not simply provide an element of fantasy; rather, it represents the lingering influence of cultural traditions that coexist with modern political structures. Through this blending of myth and social critique, Okri suggests that the spiritual worldview embedded in indigenous cosmology offers an alternative framework for interpreting political and historical realities.

The recurring imagery of rivers within the novel reinforces this thematic concern with continuity and transformation. Rivers often symbolize movement, change, and cyclical renewal. In The Famished Road, they also evoke the persistence of ancestral traditions that continue to shape contemporary life. Waterways become carriers of cultural memory, linking present experiences with mythic histories and spiritual legacies. This symbolism reflects the broader narrative structure of the novel, which repeatedly emphasizes cycles of departure and return, both in Azaro's spiritual journeys and in the social transformations experienced by the community.

Furthermore, the river imagery highlights the instability and uncertainty that characterize the postcolonial condition. Just as a river's currents are constantly shifting, the political and social realities depicted in the novel are fluid and unpredictable. Governments change, alliances collapse, and communities struggle to maintain stability within a rapidly evolving environment. The river therefore becomes a powerful metaphor for historical movement, illustrating how societies navigate the turbulent currents of political change.

Okri's narrative approach also challenges Western literary conventions that maintain strict boundaries between realism and fantasy. In many European literary traditions, supernatural elements are often treated as separate from realistic representation. However, The Famished Road refuses such distinctions. Instead, mythic elements are integrated seamlessly into everyday experiences, reflecting a worldview in which spiritual and material realities coexist. By adopting this narrative strategy, Okri questions the dominance of Western epistemological frameworks that privilege rationalism and empirical knowledge.

Through Azaro's unique perspective, readers encounter a form of storytelling that values imagination, intuition, and spiritual insight alongside political awareness. This narrative mode allows Okri to represent the emotional and psychological dimensions of postcolonial life that might otherwise remain invisible in strictly realist narratives. The presence of spirits, visions, and mythic encounters becomes a way of expressing collective anxieties, hopes, and historical memories embedded within the cultural consciousness of the community.

The novel's engagement with myth also underscores the resilience of indigenous cultural traditions in the face of colonial disruption. Colonial rule attempted to impose foreign systems of governance, religion, and knowledge upon African societies. Yet the spiritual cosmologies reflected in Okri's narrative demonstrate that local belief systems continue to shape cultural identity and social experience. By foregrounding Yoruba mythological concepts

such as the abiku, the novel reclaims indigenous knowledge as a legitimate framework for understanding reality.

In this context, the river assumes an even broader symbolic meaning. It becomes a representation of continuity across time, connecting ancestral histories with present struggles and future possibilities. Just as rivers flow endlessly despite changes in the surrounding landscape, cultural traditions persist even in the face of political upheaval and social transformation. The metaphor of the river therefore emphasizes resilience, adaptability, and the enduring power of memory.

Ultimately, Okri's use of mythic surrealism enables The Famished Road to capture the complex interplay between spiritual belief, historical experience, and political reality in postcolonial Nigeria. The novel portrays a world in which the visible and invisible realms intersect continuously, shaping the destinies of individuals and communities alike. Through its richly symbolic landscapes and fluid narrative structure, the text invites readers to reconsider conventional assumptions about reality, history, and the environment.

In this way, the riverine imagery in Okri's work contributes to a broader exploration of cosmology and cultural memory within Global South literatures. By depicting rivers as spaces where myth, history, and social experience converge, the novel highlights the importance of environmental landscapes in shaping collective consciousness. The spiritual and symbolic dimensions of the river ultimately reinforce the novel's central insight: that the past, present, and future are interconnected through cultural memory, and that history flows not in a straight line but in complex, cyclical patterns shaped by both human and spiritual forces.

Riverine Cosmologies and the Politics of Memory

Rivers in literary narratives frequently operate as more than geographical features; they function as cultural archives that retain traces of historical experience and collective memory. In many societies, particularly those with strong oral traditions, landscapes themselves become repositories of memory through which communities interpret their past. Within the novels of and , riverine spaces embody this mnemonic function in powerful ways. Rather than presenting history as a fixed sequence of documented events, both authors depict rivers as dynamic environments in which memory flows, circulates, and continually reshapes itself. These aquatic landscapes therefore challenge conventional historiography that privileges written archives and linear timelines.

In the case of , the Sundarbans delta emerges as a complex space where geography and memory are inseparable. The region is defined by tidal flux, shifting islands, and unpredictable environmental transformations. Such instability means that settlements appear and disappear over time, leaving behind fragmented traces of human habitation. As a result, the landscape itself becomes a silent witness to historical processes such as migration, displacement, and ecological struggle. Communities living in the Sundarbans carry memories that are intimately tied to these changing environmental conditions. Stories of lost villages, submerged lands, and forced migrations circulate within local narratives, preserving histories that are rarely recorded in official documents.

The novel illustrates this relationship between landscape and memory through its engagement with the historical episode of Morichjhapi. The displacement of refugees who attempted to settle in the Sundarbans is not simply presented as a political event but as an experience embedded within the geography of the delta. The waterways, forests, and islands of the region hold the memory of these conflicts, even when the official record attempts to erase them. Through this narrative strategy, Ghosh suggests that ecological environments can function as alternative archives that preserve marginalized histories. The river thus becomes a

medium through which suppressed memories resurface, challenging dominant narratives of national progress and development.

Similarly, in , rivers operate as symbolic channels that connect contemporary experience with ancestral memory. The novel's protagonist, Azaro, inhabits a world shaped by Yoruba cosmological beliefs in which the boundary between the living and the spiritual realms remains permeable. Within this worldview, rivers and roads often represent transitional spaces through which spirits travel and memories of the past continue to influence the present. The narrative repeatedly invokes images of water, movement, and transformation, reinforcing the idea that history is not confined to a distant past but continues to circulate within everyday life.

In Okri's narrative universe, the presence of spirits and supernatural beings reflects the persistence of cultural memory despite the disruptions caused by colonialism and modernization. These spiritual presences symbolize the survival of ancestral knowledge systems that resist the dominance of rationalist historical frameworks. The river therefore becomes a metaphor for continuity across generations, suggesting that the past flows into the present in complex and unpredictable ways. Through Azaro's experiences, readers encounter a form of memory that is collective, mythic, and deeply embedded in cultural traditions.

Both novels challenge the authority of conventional historiography by emphasizing forms of remembrance that extend beyond written documentation. Colonial modernity often privileged written records as the primary means of preserving historical knowledge, marginalizing oral traditions and indigenous cosmologies. In contrast, Ghosh and Okri highlight the importance of storytelling, myth, and environmental experience as alternative ways of remembering the past. By situating memory within riverine landscapes, they demonstrate that history can be encoded within ecological systems as well as within cultural narratives.

Furthermore, the fluidity of rivers serves as a powerful metaphor for the instability of historical memory itself. Unlike monuments or archives, rivers are constantly in motion; their currents reshape landscapes and alter physical boundaries over time. This dynamic quality mirrors the ways in which collective memory evolves through reinterpretation and retelling. Events that appear forgotten or suppressed can resurface unexpectedly, much like submerged land reemerging from tidal waters. In this sense, riverine environments symbolize the persistence of memory despite attempts at historical erasure.

The emphasis on riverine memory also reflects broader cultural perspectives that view nature as an active participant in human history. In many indigenous cosmologies, landscapes possess agency and consciousness, forming part of an interconnected network that includes humans, animals, and spiritual entities. By incorporating these perspectives into their narratives, Ghosh and Okri challenge anthropocentric assumptions that place human experience at the center of historical interpretation. Instead, they portray rivers as living systems that shape human destinies while simultaneously preserving traces of collective experience.

Another important dimension of riverine memory in these novels is its relationship to displacement and migration. Both the Sundarbans and the Nigerian settings of Okri's novel are regions marked by historical mobility and social upheaval. Populations have moved through these landscapes for generations due to environmental pressures, economic necessity, and political conflict. Rivers, which often serve as transportation routes and sources of livelihood,

become central to these migratory histories. The memories carried by communities are therefore inseparable from the waterways that have facilitated movement and survival.

By highlighting these connections between ecology and memory, the novels also raise critical questions about environmental justice. The histories embedded in riverine landscapes frequently involve marginalized communities whose voices remain absent from official accounts. Fishermen, migrants, refugees, and laborers appear prominently in both narratives, illustrating how environmental vulnerability intersects with social inequality. Their experiences reveal how ecological environments can simultaneously sustain life and expose communities to political and economic exploitation.

Ultimately, the politics of memory in these texts emerges from the tension between official narratives and lived experience. National histories often emphasize progress, modernization, and political unity, leaving little room for the fragmented memories of displacement and ecological loss. Rivers, however, resist such simplifications. Their currents carry traces of multiple histories, connecting diverse communities and temporalities within a shared ecological space.

Through their portrayal of riverine cosmologies, Ghosh and Okri invite readers to reconsider the ways in which memory is preserved and transmitted. Rather than relying solely on written records or institutional archives, these narratives highlight the importance of landscapes, myths, and oral traditions as repositories of historical knowledge. Rivers thus become powerful symbols of cultural continuity, reminding readers that memory, like water, is constantly in motion—shaped by the forces of time, environment, and human experience.

Comparative Perspectives: Fluid Ontologies and Alternative Modernities

A comparative analysis of Ghosh and Okri reveals significant differences in narrative style yet striking similarities in thematic concerns. Ghosh's fiction is grounded in ecological realism and historical documentation, while Okri's narrative embraces mythic symbolism and surreal imagery.

Despite these stylistic differences, both writers construct fluid ontologies in which human existence is inseparable from environmental and spiritual forces. Rivers serve as metaphors for interconnectedness, challenging anthropocentric worldviews that place humans at the center of ecological systems.

Moreover, both novels critique the linear conception of progress associated with Western modernity. The cyclical temporality of riverine environments suggests alternative models of development that prioritize ecological balance and cultural continuity.

These narratives also highlight the vulnerabilities faced by communities living in deltaic regions. Climate change, environmental degradation, and political marginalization threaten the survival of such communities, making riverine cosmologies increasingly relevant in contemporary discussions of environmental justice.

Global South Environmental Consciousness

By situating their narratives within riverine ecologies, Ghosh and Okri contribute to a broader discourse on environmental consciousness emerging from the Global South. Unlike mainstream environmental narratives that often focus on wilderness preservation, these works emphasize the lived experiences of marginalized communities whose survival depends on fragile ecosystems.

In The Hungry Tide, environmental awareness arises from the intimate knowledge of fishermen and local inhabitants who understand the rhythms of the tides. In The Famished Road, spiritual cosmology reinforces the ethical obligation to respect the natural world as a living entity.

Both texts therefore challenge dominant environmental discourses that prioritize scientific expertise while neglecting indigenous ecological knowledge. Instead, they propose a more holistic understanding of environmental responsibility grounded in cultural traditions and collective memory.

Conclusion

Riverine landscapes in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh and Ben Okri offer profound insights into the relationship between ecology, culture, and memory. Through their respective narratives in The Hungry Tide and The Famished Road, both authors transform rivers from mere geographical settings into dynamic cosmological spaces that shape human experience.

By integrating ecological realism with mythic imagination, these works challenge the land-centered frameworks of traditional postcolonial studies. Riverine cosmologies emphasize fluidity, interconnectedness, and cyclical temporality, offering alternative ways of understanding history and modernity.

Furthermore, the comparative perspective reveals that aquatic landscapes function as powerful sites of resistance against colonial rationality and anthropocentric thinking. Through their engagement with indigenous cosmologies and environmental memory, Ghosh and Okri articulate a vision of modernity rooted in ecological balance and cultural continuity.

In an era marked by climate change and ecological crisis, such narratives hold significant relevance. They remind readers that rivers are not merely natural resources but living systems intertwined with human history, spirituality, and identity. By foregrounding the cosmological significance of water, Indian and Nigerian river narratives contribute to a Global South environmental consciousness that reimagines the future through the principles of fluidity, interdependence, and mythic memory.

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Environmental Justice and Caste Marginality in Bengali Dalit Autobiographies

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Abstract

This paper explores the interconnectedness of caste oppression and environmental injustice in the autobiographies of two prominent Bengali Dalit writers – Manohar Mouli Biswas's *Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal* (2015) and Manoranjan Byapari's *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit* (2018). Both the autobiographies depict how environmental justice– manifested in segregated settlements, polluted and hazardous surroundings, flood-prone refugee colonies and lack of sanitation-structure compelled painful Bengali Dalit migrant's existence in postcolonial Bengal. These auto-narratives reveal that caste-based marginalization is spatially enthrusted on the Dalits through ecological neglect and uneven access to environmental benefits like land, water and infrastructure. The autobiographies focus the tragic lived experiences of displacement, refugee resettlement and urban slum life, highlighting how environmental degradation disproportionately burdened the Bengali Dalit community. Through thorough reading of these texts within environmental justice discourse, the paper argues that Bengali Dalit autobiographies document the realities of caste, space and ecological vulnerability.

keywords: environmental justice, Bengali Dalit Autobiography, caste and ecology, refugee settlements, Bengali literature.

Introduction

Dalit autobiography in India has served not only as a personal testimony but as a testimony of the collective community of the oppressed. This is also an act of resistance in cultural, literary and social discourses. While Dalit autobiography writing in Maharashtra and other regions has prominent texts like Daya Power's Baluta, Baby Kamble's The Prisons We Broke, Saran Kumar Limbale's Akkarmasi, Om Prakash Valmiki's Jhootan, Kaushalya's Dohra Abhishap, Bama's Karukku, Bengali Dalit autobiographies have recently gained recognition in literary horizon. Bengali Dalit writers document not only caste oppression but also the process of migration, displacement and restructuring of the community, following the Partition of India which also resulted in division of the province of Bengal in 1947. In this connection, it is very contextual to mention and analyse two works following this tradition – Manohar Mouli Biswas's autobiography Surviving in My World: Growing up Dalit in Bengal (2015) and Manoranjan Byapari's autobiography Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit (2018). Both the narratives foreground the intersections of caste and displacement – spatial, social as well as psychological and highlight how migrant subjectivities express anguish as well as helplessness in Dalit autobiography. Migration, particularly in the context of the Partition of India in 1947, has often been studied through frameworks of nation, identity and displacement. However, mainstream autobiographies tend to overlook the experiences of the marginalized communities, especially of the Dalits. The autobiographies of two prominent Bengali Dalit writers - Manohar Mouli Biswas and Manoranjan Byapari,

provide critical insights into the painful lived experiences of Dalit refugees who were compelled to migrate from East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) to West Bengal, to avoid communal riots.

Landscape Stands as a Cause of Oppression

Nature in mainstream literature is often found as sublime or nurturing whereas it is quite hostile and indifferent as found in Dalit literature. Marshy land, forests for example are not spaces of tranquillity but of survival and danger. Manoranjan Byapari's experiences in the forests of Dandakaranya vividly illustrate this in the autobiography. In the forest area, the refugees struggle for basic sustenance- facing hunger and exploitation. This hostile environment mirrors the harshness of social structure- the caste system based on the 'Varna' system, in India. Similarly, Biswas's revelation of rural Bengal similarly focuses how Dalit communities are neglected to the margins of villages – both socially as well as spatially. Their helplessness to live in polluted or degraded environments, reinforces their exclusion from the society. Therefore, these narratives, from the eco-critical point of view, challenge the dominant "Distributive Justice" of nature. Instead, they present a different ecology based on environmental racism where nature is refused to a fair, equitable distribution to all communities.

Concept and Theories of Environmental Justice

Environmental justice primarily focuses on the issues of race and class in relation to industrial pollution. There are several instances found that highlight that marginalised communities disproportionately bear the burden of environmental hazards. However, the complexities of South Asian societies lie where caste plays a crucial role in structuring inequality while discussing the policy of environmental justice. Dalit communities are often seen located in environmentally hazardous areas, like the dumping ground or in flood-prone areas. This kind of spatial marginalization is not accidental rather intentionally embedded through historical as well as social processes. Dalit literature, particularly, Dalit autobiographies, has been extensively studied for its role in challenging upper-caste narratives. These autobiographies provide first-hand accounts that interrogate the upper-caste Brahminical hegemony of the Indian society. Incidentally, Bengali Dalit writing has gained prominence for its engagement with times of displacement, refugee experience and urban marginality. Despite, these developments, the intersection of environmental justice and dalit autobiographies remains underexplored. The paper proposes to bridge the gap by analyzing how environmental conditions are represented in Bengali Dalit autobiographies and how these representations contribute to broader theoretical debates. "Environmental justice" has emerged as a crucial field of inquiry that examines the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across different social groups. While this concept was originated in the context of racial discrimination in the United States of America, its application in South Asia requires a nuanced understanding of caste – based hierarchies. In India, caste has historically determined access to land, resources and social mobility. Thereby, shaping environmental conditions in which communities live. Dalit communities, positioned at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, have long been subjected to systemic marginalization. This marginalization is not only limited to social and economic exclusion but also extends to environmental deprivation. Dalits are often forced to inhabit spaces that are ecologically degraded, lacking basic infrastructure such as clean water, sanitation and safe housing.

In this context, Manohar Mouli Biswas's Surviving in My World: Growing up Dalit in Bengal (2015) and Manoranjan Byapari's Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit (2018). Both the autobiographies depict that how caste and displacement are interconnected in respect to social, spatial and psychological changes and how Dalit migrants express their anguish and helplessness. Post-partition migration of the Dalit refugees is often discussed in relation to transnational context, displacement and identity crises. Mainstream

autobiographies are often found to neglect the experience of the marginal communities, specially of the Dalits. The autobiographies of two prominent Bengali Dalit writers - Manohar Mouli Biswas and Manoranjan Byapari, reveal critical insights into the painful lived experiences of Dalit refugees who were compelled to migrate from East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) to West Bengal, to avoid communal riots.

Dalit autobiography in India has served not only as a personal testimony but as a testimony of the collective community of the oppressed. This is also an act of resistance in cultural, literary and social discourses. While Dalit autobiography writing in Maharashtra and other regions has prominent texts like Daya Power's Baluta, Baby Kamble's The Prisons We Broke, Saran Kumar Limbale's Akkarmasi, Om Prakash Valmiki's Jhootan, Kaushalya's Dohra Abhishap, Bama's Karukku, Bengali Dalit autobiographies have recently gained recognition in literary horizon. Bengali Dalit writers document not only caste oppression but also the process of migration, displacement and restructuring of the community, following the Partition of India which also resulted in division of the province of Bengal in 1947. In this connection, it is very contextual to mention and analyse two works following this tradition – Manohar Mouli Biswas's autobiography Surviving in My World: Growing up Dalit in Bengal (2015) and Manoranjan Byapari's autobiography Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit (2018). Both the narratives foreground the intersections of caste and displacement – spatial, social as well as psychological and highlight how migrant subjectivities express anguish as well as helplessness in Dalit autobiography.

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Research Objectives

"Environmental Justice" is built on many interrelated theories. While the "Distributive Justice" focuses on the fair and equitable distribution of environmental benefits among all communities the "Procedural Justice" demands that all communities should have a meaningful and fair participation in decision-making process. "Recognition" acknowledges the specific social, cultural as well as historical contexts of the marginalized communities, recognizing the fact that injustice is often rooted in structured decimation. The study primarily highlights three things - first, it examines how environmental injustice is categorically represented in Bengali Dalit autobiographies. Secondly, it analyses how caste marginalities and ecological conditions are intertwined in India, showing how marginalized communities are compelled to live in environmentally hazardous areas. Lastly, the study reveals how Dalit autobiographies authentically document spatial discrimination, depicting how caste controls the human habitation. By analyzing these texts, the research focuses the environmental dimensions of caste oppression.

Theoretical Framework

The study discusses an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines environmental justice, Dalit ecocriticism and Dalit studies. While environmental justice provides highlights a basic approach for understanding the unequal distribution of ecological resources and burdens. It emphasizes that marginalized communities often face disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards while having limited access to environmental benefits. Dalit ecocriticism, an emerging field, focuses specifically on the relationship between caste and ecology. It reveals how environmental degradation intersects

with caste oppression and how these intersections are represented in Dalit literature. This framework is particularly useful for analyzing autobiographies that highlight lived experience. Dalit studies offer a critical perspective on how unheard marginalized voices are excluded from Brahminical narratives. Dalit autobiographies function as counter-narratives that challenge hegemonic discourses and provide social reality from a different perspective. Together, these frameworks allow for a nuanced analysis of how caste and environmental injustice are interconnected in Bengali Dalit autobiographies.

Methodology

This research follows a qualitative methodology based on textual analysis of the two primary texts. The study highlights on caste oppression as recurring theme related to environmental conditions, spatial segregation and displacement. This method of through reading enables a minute examination of how environmental experiences are authentically documented in the autobiographies. With the help of thematic analysis, these experiences are interpreted, highlighting on issues such as clean drinking water, sanitation, pollution, land use and of course ecological vulnerability. An interdisciplinary approach is followed to discuss environmental humanities, literary studies as well as Dalit studies. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the entangled relationship between caste and environmental injustice on the Dalit refugees.

Partition, Displacement and Ecological Trauma

One of the central themes in both the autobiographies is displacement after the partition of India in 1947. Byapari's auto-narrative describes the migration of his family from East Bengal (presently Bangladesh) to different refugee camps in West Bengal, where they faced extreme poverty and instability. These refugee camps were often located in ecologically hostile regions – marshlands, forests or barren lands, unsuitable for habitation. As Manoranjan Byapari narrates:

[…] One group is allowed to lay claim to expensive real estate in the heart of the city and the other group is callously pushed out to one of the remotest islands, Marichjhanpi, in the jungles of Sundarbans, women and children raped, homes and people plundered and set fire to. About thirty thousand families had travelled to this island to set up their homes and of these, two thousand are still missing. Nobody knows how many fell prey to tigers, to the crocodiles, or how many were drowned in the river (Byapari 35).

The forced relocation into such spaces reflects what can be termed as "ecological marginalization", where Dalit communities were pushed into environmentally degraded or resource – scarce areas. In chapter Eight, where Byapari narrates his journey to Dandakaranya:

Our summons came after about a fortnight and we boarded a train called Refugee Special from Sealdah. That train took a long winded route and, after three days of covering a distance that usually takes twelve hours, arrived at Jagaddalpur. This was the largest city in the Adivasi-inhabited district of Bastar. From here, trucks carried some to Odisha's Malkangiri, Umarkot, and others to Bastar's Paralkot…This was such a village that even if a World War raged outside, the people here would have remained unaware of it (Byapari 133).

Partition induced migration in 1947, led the Dalit refugees to penury, hunger and ultimately death. This ecological deprivation is not accidental but structurally linked to caste hierarchies, where marginalised communities are denied access to fertile land and natural resources. Biswas similarly portrays a childhood shaped by scarcity and environmental hardship. His narrative reflects how Dalit lives are conditioned by limited access to clean water, food and safe living spaces. Thus, ecological trauma becomes an extension of caste oppression.

Urban Ecology and Marginal Spaces

Both Biswas and Byapari, in their autobiographies explore urban environments, particularly slums and refugee settlements. These spaces are depicted as overcrowded, polluted and lacks the basic amenities of healthy living. Byapari's life in the slums of Kolkata, reflects

the environmental challenges of urban poverty. The city, after Partition of India, is often seen as a site of opportunity, becomes another space of marginalization. The poor conditions of the slums – dirty water, poor sanitation and inadequate housing –depicts the social exclusion vividly. Biswas's autobiography similarly highlights how Dalits are confined to the peripheries of urban spaces. These pathetic environments are not merely physical but also symbolic of their social status. Eco – critically, urban areas in these texts reveal the disproportionate distribution of environmental resources. The contrast between affluent areas and Dalit settlements clearly shows environmental inequality.

Resistance and Ecological Awareness

Despite the pervasive themes of suffering and marginalization, both autobiographies also depict resistance. Writing itself becomes a form of reclaimimg identity and asserting agency. Biswas's work is described as a "weapon of activism" that amplifies the voices of the oppressed. Similarly, Byapari's narrative challenges dominant narratives of Bengal as a "casteless society," exposing the realities of caste – based discrimination. From an eco – critical perspective, this resistance can be seen as an assertion of ecological rights. By documenting their experiences, these authors highlight the need for equitable access to resources and sustainable living conditions. This massive forced migration across South Asia, a subject that has received extensive attention in Partition literature. However, mainstream narrative and history often overlook how caste hierarchies shaped the lived experiences of Dalit refugees from East Bengal, (presently Bangladesh). However, works like Byapari's autobiography, Interrogating My Childhood; An Autobiography of a Dalit reveals that interconnectedness of caste and displacement, challenging dominant frameworks of diaspora that focus primarily on transnational movements. His narrative, rooted in the Namashudra community, recounts various relocations from East Bengal to refugee – camps across West Bengal following the Partition of India in 1947. As Byapari narrates:

> […] the Partition of India, Communal riots had engulfed the land as the words of love preached by Nanak, Kabir, Buddha and Chaitanya were burnt to ashes in the flames of fury provoked by insidious manipulations of cunning politics. (Byapari 11)

So, the fear of violence was driving thousands from East Pakistan towards an "unknown geographical entity called India" (Byapari 14). They spent quite a few days on the Sealdah station platform after arriving in this Bengal – "from there we were taken to the Shiromanipur Camp in Bankura District" (Byapari 15).

Similarly, Biswas's memoir begins in rural East Bengal, where the narrator grows up in a community that faced neglect and systematic marginalization. The autobiography emphasizes how caste structures operated even within migrant and refugee contexts, producing layered forms of exclusion that persisted long after physical relocation. As Biswas narrates:

> […] in the refugee camp the segregation of people that was on the basis of caste identity was a surprising one. People with the good caste pearls in their pockets received preference in settlements in market areas, business centres, developed areas and posh localities: whereas those having bad caste pearls in their pockets were given settlements in hilly areas, barren lands, unproductive areas, marshes. And most of these people had been given allotment outside Bengal (Biswas 91).

Dalit Autobiography as Counter-Narrative

Dalit autobiographies serve as a powerful counter-narratives that challenge dominant Brahminical representation of the society. These texts provide first-person account of oppression, offering insights into the everyday realities of marginalized communities. Unlike mainstream narratives, Dalit autobiographies foreground experiences that are often ignored or marginalized. They document not only social and economic exclusion but also environmental conditions that shape the lived experiences. By narrating their own stoties, Dalit autobiographers reclaim authority and create alternative archive of knowledge. These counter-archives are crucial for understanding the intersection of caste and environmental injustice.

Environmental Conditions in Dalit Spaces

The autobiographies that are discussed in this study vividly depict the environmental conditions in Dalit settlements. these spaces are characterized by poor sanitation, lack of infrastructure and exposure to environmental hazards. In Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal, Biswas describes living in areas surrounded by stagnant water and mud, highlighting the absence of proper drainage systems. Such conditions not only affect physical health but also reinforce social stigma. Similarly, Interrogating My Chadal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit portrays refugee colonies that are overcrowded and environmentally vulnerable. The lack of basic amenities exacerbates the hardships faced by residents. These descriptions illustrate how environmental deprivation is a structural feature of caste-based marginalization.

The autobiographies describe several environmental challenges faced by Dalit communities. These include polluted surroundings, poor sanitation, overcrowds settlements and lack of infrastructure. Such conditions are not accidental; they result from long-standing social hierarchies that push marginalized groups into neglected spaces. Through their narratives, the authors reveal how environmental deprivation becomes part of everyday life. Manohar Mouli Biswas, in his autobiography narrates, "our settlements stood at the edge of the village, surrounded by mud, stagnant water and neglect" (Biswas 29). He also says, "Caste decided not only our social status but also the place where we lived" (Biswas 32).

Manoranjan Byapari in his autobiography says, "We built our homes on marshy land ahere no one else wished to live" (Byapari 56).

Interconnection of Caste and Spatial Segregation

Spatial segregation is a key mechanism tool through which caste inequality is maintained. Dalit communities are often confined to specific areas that are environmentally degraded and socially marginalised. The narratives reveal how caste determines not only social interactions but also physical location This kind of spatial segregation limits their access to resources and reinforces cycles of poverty and deprivation. Environmental neglect in these areas can be understood as a form of structural violence, where marginalized communities are systematically denied access to safe and healthy comments.

Ecological Vulnerability and Refugee Settlements

The bitter lived experience of displacement following the Partition of India in 1947 is the main theme of these autobiographies. Many Dalit refugees were compelled to settle in hazardous areas like Andaman, Dandakaranya or Marichjhanpi that were environmentally unhygienic. These settlements were often located in marshlands, forests or flood-prone regions. The lack of infrastructure and resources made these communities highly vulnerable to environmental hazards. The narratives capture the inhuman struggle of living in such conditions, where natural disasters and medical scarcity are part of everyday life. Byapari narrates:

Floods, mud and hunger were part of our everyday existence in the refugee colony (Byapari 44).

These experiences reveals vividly how the intersection of historical displacement and ecological vulnerability are interrelated The analysis highlights that environmental injustice is deeply intertwined with caste oppression. The marginalization of Dalit communities is not only social and economic but also ecological, which is often not voiced. By positioning these autobiographies within environmental justice discourse, the study highlights the need to expand theoretical frameworks to challenge dominant perspectives and call for a more humanitarian approach.

Conclusion

This paper depicts through the Bengali Dalit autobiographies that how environmental injustice and caste are interconnected issue not only restricted to India, but in a broader context

in South Asia A detailed analysis of the texts highlight how environmental deprivation is disproportionately structured within caste hierarchies. Dalit autobiographies act as an important source of document that reveal the painful realities of the marginalised communities. To conclude, the autobiographies of Manohar Mouli Biswas and Manoranjan Byapari highlight that environmental justice is deeply intertwined with caste oppression in India. Their narratives reveal how migrated Bengali Dalit community, after the Partition of India in 1947 were compelled to inhabit environmentally hazardous spaces - unsafe housing, poor sanitation and ecological vulnerability become part of their everyday life. By collecting these painful experiences into literary discourse, Bengali Dalit literature, especially Bengali Dalit autobiographies expand our understanding of how environmental justice based on equality, recognition, capabilities were denied and highlight the need to recognize caste as a crucial factor in ecological inequality. Lastly, environmental justice cannot be fully explained in the South Asian context if the voices of the Bengali Dalit refugees and their tragic experiences are not considered as recorded in Bengali Dalit autobiographies.

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Land, Empire, and Ecological Subalternity: A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*

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Abstract

Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*, originally written in Odia, narrating the tragic disintegration of a tribal family in the Koraput district, Odisha. The paper documents the transformation of the Paraja tribe from autonomous stewards of their land into bonded gotis due to the collusion between non-tribal colonial administrators, Sahukars, and corrupt urbanized systems. Through a postcolonial lens, *Paraja* examines the subaltern and their forced entry into a capitalist economy that hampers their traditional, sustainable relationship with nature. Their land, which was once a source of life, becomes the mechanism of their bondage. It challenges the post-independence and colonial models of progress, which often ignore the environment and the rights of tribal populations. Furthermore, the paper explores the ecofeminist parallels between the exploitation of the land and the sexual exploitation of the tribal women.

Keywords*:* colonial, land, Paraja, Sahukar, subalternity

Introduction

Postcolonial ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary field analyzing the intersection of environmental issues with the legacy of colonialism. "Postcolonial ecocriticism redefines our understanding of environmental issues by highlighting how colonial histories have shaped contemporary ecological crises. It emphasizes that colonial exploitation has led to lasting impacts on ecosystems and marginalized communities." It merges postcolonial studies' focus on injustice with ecocriticism's attention to the natural world. Paraja tribe's close relationship with land and forests reflects their ecological worldview. However, colonial administrative systems, forest laws, and the exploitation by moneylenders like Sahukar Ramchandra Bisoi disrupt this relationship with land, leaving the tribal people vulnerable.

In postcolonial studies subalterns are the colonial populations who are socially, politically, and geographically excluded from the hierarchy of power of an imperial colony and from the metropolitan homeland of an empire. An ecological subaltern in postcolonial theory refers to marginalized, often indigenous or rural, communities whose voices, traditional ecological knowledge, and agency are ignored in mainstream, elite-driven environmental discourse. Ecological subalterns are people, often tribal, indigenous, or rural communities, who live closely with nature and depend on forests, land, rivers, and other natural resources for survival. However, their knowledge, rights, and ecological practices are frequently ignored, exploited, or controlled by powerful groups, such as colonial authorities, governments, or capitalist institutions. In Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*, the tribe represents an ecological subaltern community. They depend on land, forests, and agriculture for survival, yet they are exploited by forest officials and moneylenders. The tragic life story of Sukrujani shows the devastating impact of social oppression.

Gopinath Mohanty was a leading twentieth-century Odia writer and the first Odia writer to be awarded Jnanpith Award in 1974. He has also received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1955 and the Padma Bhushan in 1981 for his literary contributions. A prolific author, he

wrote numerous novels, short stories, and plays. Serving in the Odisha Administrative Service, Mohanty gained first-hand experience of tribal life in Koraput, which deeply influenced his fiction. He has to his credit twenty-four novels, twelve volumes of short stories, three plays and various other literary outputs. His notable tribal-themed novels include *Dadi Budha*, *Paraja*, and *Amrutara Santana*, all of which portray tribal culture and the impact of external forces on indigenous communities.

Gopinath Mohanty published Paraja in 1945, where he offered intimate, and devastating look into the lives of the tribal communities of the Koraput district in Odisha. Translated masterfully into English by Bikram K. Das in 1987, it is widely regarded as an epic of tribal life of Odisha by presenting a descent family of Sukrujani. "It is a story of misplacement, of alienation and suffering resulting from a deep sense of being uprooted from the ancestor's soil" (Uike 5). It is often read as a realistic portrayal of the tribal life and struggle against the money lenders where as a post-colonial ecocritical lens reveals the ontological bond between the paraja tribe and their land. The paper examines how the encroaching forces of the British colonial empire manifested through bureaucratic state apparatuses like forest laws and revenue systems, and indigenous capitalist modernity. For the tribe, land is not an economic setback but a form of soul death. While closely connected to forest and land, the systematic alienation of the Paraja from their ancestral forests and agricultural lands leads to cultural and economic destruction. The violent climax of the novel, culminating in the murder of their oppressor, Ramachandra Bisoi, is not merely a crime of passion or desperation, but an inevitable eruption of the ecological subaltern. The ultimate reaction displays the destruction of both the oppressor and the oppressed, highlighting the devastating human cost of exploitation.

The simple livelihood of Paraja tribe along with ecology

The novel portrays the tribal world of Koraput as a landscape of natural beauty, cultural richness, and ecological harmony. The place is surrounded by hills, forests, and rivers. The Paraja people live in close connection with nature, which shapes their identity, rituals, and worldview. The novel, *Paraja*, set in the pre-independent India, narrates the story of a tribal patriarch named Sukrujani. Sukrujani is portrayed as a middle-aged man, who shares a deep emotional bond with his ancestral land and relies entirely on it to support his family. Through the continuous hard work of Sukru and his forefathers over generations, the once barren land has been transformed into fertile soil. For him,

"Land was not a patch of earth-it was part of his body. He knew every contour and depression in the land…. He had watered the land with his sweat and nursed the seedlings with the warmth of his own body. His four children had grown up on the soil and his wife Sombari had worked alongside him, bringing him his afternoon meal…. His children had helped him clear the land of rocks and he had told them: 'Remember, the earth is your mother. Sombari and I are nothing: we are here today and gone tomorrow, but the land will remain" (Mohanty 193).

Land is treated as a character, which provides them the basic necessities of survival including food and shelter. For these people deforestation is nothing. Sukrujani justifies the requirement of this deforestation by "Why should there be forests, when they mean nothing to us, and not crops? After all, no one can own the forest. Land can be owned by anyone and the owner can grow crops there. God created all these lands for human beings—What a shame that man prevents his fellow men from putting them to their proper use!" (Mohanty 23). It is the government civilized people who has taken authority over the forest. it is only by deforestation they can get the land given by God.

The Paraja people are mainly depends on agriculture for their livelihood. In addition to farming, these people livestock rearing is an important economic activity, such as cattle,

buffaloes, goats, and poultry who provide food, income, and draft power. The Parajas are also skilled in crafts such as weaving, metalwork, pottery, and basket making, with women particularly known for weaving cotton and silk textiles. Trade and barter in local markets helped them exchange agricultural produce, forest products, and handicrafts. Some members of the community have entered wage labour and government jobs due to changing economic conditions in the world.

Their religious beliefs are closely connected with nature, as they worship mountains, rivers, forests, and spirits associated with the natural world. Their lifestyle reflects a strong connection with nature through farming, fishing, hunting, and forest gathering. Clothing is simple for these people, often consisting of minimal garments, while ornaments made of brass, silver, aluminium, and sometimes gold is widely used for adornment. Through these cultural, economic, and religious practices, the Paraja community maintains a deep relationship with nature and preserves its distinct tribal identity despite modern challenges.

The legislative violence

Sukrujani dreams of expanding his cultivable land. In order to clear a patch of land in Mali Damaka Hill, he bribes a forest guard, a representative of the civilized world, is portrayed as a corrupt authority figure who forces the tribe into a master/slave relationship. for permission and got the response "All right, you may" (Mohanty 12). Sukrujani and his son began clearing patch of land everyday despite of the natural obstacles.

Lately the forest guard comes to know about Jili's house. "He entered unasked" (Mohanty 28). Sukru Jani was not surprised when government officials entered the houses of the tribal people for inspection. Instead, he considered himself fortunate when such officials visited his home. Unaware of the corrupted mindset of these colonizers, Sukrujani believes them "Is he not our protector, our father and our mother?" (Mohanty 29), which shows their innocence. Kau Paraja sadly delivers the forest guards intention to Sukrujani regarding Jili that he has "never seen a girl like her. Her limbs must be soft as butter and her breasts are like hillocks and her complexion is the colour of lightning. Go, tell her father, "he told me "that I want her." (Mohanty 30), which Sukrujani strongly refuses. This incident leads to loss of the charm in his life. Time passed and they continued their work of feeling trees in the forest. But "They never felt that the timber which they were cutting down and burning was the Raja's property, so that they were criminals in the eyes of the law" (Mohanty 33). In revenge, the forest guard punishes him for illegally clearing the forest.

Sukrujani's ignorance and fear make him vulnerable to exploitation by the colonial administrative system and local moneylenders with a debt of four score. The Paraja tribesmen, like the protagonist Sukru Jani, fear the guard and are forced to treat him with excessive obeisance to avoid punishment. These people "dared not ask them for particulars of their rank or office; in that land of the jungle, where no man possessed more than a rag to cover his loins, anyone dressed even in a sheet from waist to ankle could be taken for a person in high authority" (Mohanty 34). The colonizers are viewed as "official is like a cloud or a tiger —and who can pit his strength against theirs?" (Mohanty 38). They have made it illegal for the tribes to practice their traditional livelihoods, such as shifting cultivation or gathering forest resources. The Forest Guard punishes villagers for grazing cattle, collecting honey, or cutting trees for agricultural needs, often imposing heavy fines. When the Paraja cannot pay the fines imposed by the authorities, they are forced into bonded labour for moneylenders, leading to the destruction of their family structure.

The Sahukar and the Neo-Colonial Economy of Debt

The Sahukar exploits the Parajas by trapping them in insurmountable debt. the Sahukar systematically seizes the land and property of the tribals using forged legal documents and

taking advantage of their illiteracy. grow crops on the hills as before. He uses these men "only they would be doing so not as free men working on their own lands for their own benefit, but on the money-lender's lands and as his slaves" (Mohanty 40). The Sahukar manipulates ledgers, charging exorbitant interest rates on loans and grain, ensuring that the debt is never repaid, passing the burden to future generations. He tricks the "interest far exceeded principal, and the debt went on increasing from year to year" (Mohanty 49).

The Sahukar lives a luxurious life with warehouse full of paddy, rice, mandia, and other grain, has a courtyard filled with crops and a house protected by iron doors. In contrast the gotis live a miserable life. "The goties are cogs in the machinery manufacturing trauma" (Mukherjee and Nagaraj 10). They live in "ragged, mud-walled huts drooped as if they were too tired to stay up; the thatches had grown bald from the wind and the rain; tattered rags hung from the rafters, and men, women, children, chickens, dogs and swine grovelled in the same dust" (Mohanty 120).

The moneylender applies many tricks to make money form the poor people. They use a complex and unfamiliar system of accounting, often involving forged legal documents or oral agreements that they later manipulate, to trap tribals in perpetual debt.

The Sahukar, a sundhi by caste, established a distillery and encouraged tribals to drink heavily. Since liquor is an important part of the Paraja's culture and diet for quenching hunger and tiredness after hard labour, they were easily drawn to it. When they ran out of money to buy more, the Sahukar happily encouraged them to borrow, little realizing the peril of such an act.

Once a poor tribal man approaches the Sahukar to borrow "One putti" (Mohanty 121) of mandia. The Sahukar agrees and instructs him to inform his clerk so that the loan can be recorded. After the entry is made, the Sahukar further tells the man to inform his wife and his servant as well. Each time the tribal informs another person, a separate entry of the same loan is recorded. The simple and innocent tribesman does not understand this trick. The poor tribesman, confused and unable to argue, accepts the Sahukar's words as truth. Through this fraudulent system, the moneylender traps the tribal in permanent debt.

The Sahukar copied appearance, habits, and cruel behaviour of the revenue inspector toward the tribal people. Both men intimidated and exploited the Kondhs and Parajas, and the tribals believed that Garaja Sundara possessed supernatural powers. Because of this fear and his strong connections with officials, the Sahukar gained influence and respect among the tribal community. Using the Ribini's guidance, the Sahukar delivered a clever plan to regain the lands that had been returned to the Kondhs. He influenced officials like the Amin (tax collector), and managed to remove the village headman and replace him with someone easier to control over. He manipulated the records to show that the Sahukar was paying rent for the land, making him appear as the rightful owner. With these false documents, the Sahukar finally reclaimed the land by sending his gotis to plough it, while the helpless Kondh people could only watch. The Sahukar operates his exploitation with the corrupt public machinery, including forest officers, police, and lawyers, making it impossible for the Parajas to find justice. It shows the corrupted postcolonial system that hampers everyday life of the tribal people, by neglecting them.

"The second stage of exploitation we find the Naika, Chalan and the Barik who convince SukruJani desisting him from meeting the Forest Guard." (Mukherjee and Nagaraj 10). The Barik, the Naik and Phaul Domb came to Sukrujani to show sympathy after Sukru being trapped in the plan of the forest guard. Dhepu Chalan warns him that failure to pay the imposed fine

could lead to imprisonment and the destruction of his house, “But that’s not all. They would come and carry away all your belongings. They will pull your house down” (Mohanty 41).

They try to convince Sukrujani to surrender himself and his family up to the goti system. Sukrujani is aware of the system that they “have to work, almost as a slave, for a full year and in return some five rupees would be written off. But since he would be paying compound interest, in effect the loan would never be repaid and he and his sons and his grandsons would remain slaves for all eternity.” (Mohanty 40) and refuses the suggestion. They highlight the prospect of being gotis. Thus, Sukrujani is forced to borrow money from Sahukar Ramachandra Bisoi in “order to resist jail and imprisonment” (Dutta 5), who acts as primary agent of destruction for the tribal way of life, acting as a predator who uses economic, legal, and social mechanisms to exploit the illiterate, innocent tribal people.

Sukrujani had left him only barren land, near the Gadbajholla stream but the land became difficult to maintain because the text collector fixed an annual rent on them. He decides that the only way to free himself from bondage and help his family is to pledge (mortgage) those rice fields to the Sahukar and take a loan. But his love for his land prevents him from doing so. One day Barik arrives at the Sahukar’s place, warns that if Sukru cannot pay the rent, the headman will take the land away and give it to someone else. It shows the cruel economic system in which tribal farmers like Sukru Jani lose their land due to poverty, rent demands, and exploitation by the feudal administrative managemnet. The land that Sukru considered sacred and part of his life is taken away because he cannot pay the rent.

After losing land and freedom, Mandia secretly starts making liquor to earn some money through natural ingredients but caught red handed “on the day following the festival.” (Mohanty 99) by the Sub Inspector along with “Chamru Domb, of Mandia’s own village” (Mohanty 100). “The officials made them sniff the pots and even the ashes gathered from disused hearths, so that later they could swear in court that everything the officials said was true” (Mohanty 100) they even recorded statements from the accused villagers. In reality, they dictated confessions and forced the illiterate tribals to put their thumb impressions on papers they could not understand, demonstrating the misuse of power to exploit tribal people.

Despite the injustice, Sukru patiently endures the oppression, revealing his inner strength and resilience. His whole family including his sons, Mandia and Tikra, become gotis to help repay their father’s debt and are forced to work tirelessly on the Sahukar’s land without wages, while being excluded from festivals and social celebrations. Mohanty shows how the greed of non-tribals destroys the deep connection between the Paraja people and their land. “He saw heavy crops of rice and mandia on those other lands...But on his land there were no crops” (Mohanty 145) in the dream after losing his land. under colonization he has lost his all self. Reduced to slavery, Sukru realizes that becoming a goti means losing his freedom, dignity, and sense of belonging, illustrating the tragic suffering and psychological trauma experienced by the tribal community as the narrator says “As a goti, he felt he had no home, no family to rejoice over; the merrymaking and singing only mocked him. All day, he sat on the flat stone in front of his hut where, in the old days he used to rest his limbs after a hard day’s work. He realized that no one could share his feelings.” (Mohanty 92)

Sukrujani’s livelihood and dignity get destroyed. His daughters, Jili and Bili, also became victim of the harassment and exploitation while working outside. All the humiliation and exploitation create frustration as well as anger in the mind of Mandia and Tikra. They realize the ultimate reason of all these exploitations and kill the Sahukar. After the murder they surrender themselves to the authorities despite of running away.

Parallels between the exploitation of land and the tribal women

The novel also features the colonial and patriarchal power structure that exploit as well as dominate nature and women. For the tribal people land is just a part of nature but a family member. they respect and worship land as goddess, who has given them shelter and basic means of livelihood. Sukrujani tells his children the "earth is your mother. Sombari and I are nothing: we are here today and gone tomorrow, but the land will remain." (Mohanty 193). However, some outsiders like the forest guard and the Sahukar use the land as a commodity to exploit common tribal people. The postcolonial authorities impose taxes and rent on the natural object demonstrating how the authority control and exploit nature. Firstly, the tribe people get trap in the "spider's web" (Mohanty 123) by increasing debt, then the tribe people's land will be taken away as they cannot pay the debt and becomes goties for their lifetime. Here land is presented as a tool of economic control to exhibit power.

Just as the land is exploited the tribal women has to face harassment and exploitation. They are treated as an object of power as Madhu remarks Jili "she has a higher price" (Mohanty 277). Sukrujani's daughters, Jili and Bili become victim of these oppressions. They have to lose their freedom after their father become goti. Due to the debt, they are forced to work in the Sahukar's house. Jili' s working as a bonded labourer leads to the sexual exploitation of the Sahukar. It is Madhu who persuades her to meet him in return for a few annas and minor personal favours. Eventually the villagers so also her father discovers her relationship with the Sahukar. Sukrujani become furious and asks Jili not to "show your face here again" (Mohanty 312). The only place she finds for her shelter is the Sahukar house, who takes advantages of her. Bili is exploited economically and socially, where she does not get the wages of her hard work.

Barik's daughter acts as another agent who takes a part in the exploiting women. "Knowing well the exploitative culture of the camp, she nevertheless tempts the girls with tales of ease and enjoyment" (Bhowate 73), still persuades Jili and Bili to go to the road construction camp. She lures the girls with attractive descriptions of life at the camp by portraying it as a place of leisure filled with dancing, music, liquor, and attention from young men. The innocent girls being tempted by the imaginary pleasure agree to go to the camp, unaware that it is actually a space where tribal women are sexually exploited by the supervisors. Similarly, Rami from Champi village and Madhu Ghasi function as intermediaries for the authorities. Rami, who is known for maintaining close relations with officials, gains the trust of vulnerable young women by offering small gifts and friendly gestures from the supervisors. Through such deceptive tactics, these agents gradually lead the girls toward exploitation and submission, thereby facilitating the systemic abuse of tribal women.

It reflects the double marginalization of the subaltern people, who are oppressed both by the colonized people and the patriarchal society. Through this connection of land and women, Mohanty highlights the broader injustice faced by tribal communities and the natural ecology, exposing how social, economic, and environmental exploitation are deeply interconnected.

Literature Review

The paper entitled *THE PERPETRATORS OF SOCIAL HOLOCAUST IN GOPINATHMOHANTY'S PARAJA* by Sudakshina Mukherjee and Dr. P. Nagara examines the exploitation in relation to the tribal marginalization. From an ecocritical perspective, the loss of land is not and economic vulnerability but also the destruction of cultural root and identity. The destruction caused by the forest guard and the Sahukar leads to "social Holocaust" (Mukherjee and Nagara 9), by making the self-made, hardworking tribal people into gotis. It demonstrates the injustice thrust upon the innocent, illiterate people. through the character of

Sukrujani, Mahapatra has analysed the collected suffering of tribal people under the corrupted colonial authorities.

Caught in the Web of Corruption: The Tribal Experience in Gopinath Mohanty's 'Paraja' by Dr. Sudesh M. B. Bhowate discusses *Paraja* as a powerful representation of tribal life and the exploitation of colonizers. It emphasises the vulnerability of illiterate tribal people who depend on land. This paper also underlines the role of non-colonial agents, who use their collaboration with the administration to subjugate common people. At the same time, it exposes the exploitation of tribal women and the patriarchal violence.

Similarly, the paper, *PARAJA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EXPLOITATION & LOSS OF CULTURE* by Dr. Ashish Guptatheir presents the songs, dances, food habits, clothing, ornaments, marriage customs, and various socio-cultural practices of the Paraja tribe. These elements reveal the close relationship between the tribal people and nature, as their livelihood, traditions, identity, and belief systems are deeply rooted in the forests and agricultural land they inhabit. At the same time, the paper emphasizes the gradual destruction of this harmonious life due to the intrusion of non-tribal forces.

Conclusion

Overall, the paper offers a powerful relationship between land and tribal people through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism. It revels the importance of nature in shaping the identity through the character of Sukrujani. However, this harmonious bond gets destroyed by the unwanted interference of corrupted colonised administrators and greedy moneylenders through the weapon of legal manipulation and debt. Sukrujani's tragic journey symbolises the suffering of the tribal community whose ecological and cultural identity get hampered by these external forces. It again portrays the parallel between land and women in case of exploitation, where both become an objective of power. The ultimate reaction of the ecological subaltern, by killing the Sahukar, reflects the desperate attempt of survival from the colonial system. As a whole the paper stands as a critique of post-colonial system that disrupt indigenous ecological balance of Paraja people.

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The Bay of Bengal as Counter-Archive: Blue Humanities and the Rewriting of Odisha's Maritime Modernity

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Abstract

This paper reconceptualises the Bay as a counter-archive that unsettles land-bound historiographies of Odisha's maritime modernity. For too long, Kalinga's seafaring past has been narrated as glory—ships sailing outward, trade expanding, empire imagined. Blue Humanities complicates that story. Drawing on the oceanic method of Hester Blum and the postcolonial ecological insights of Elizabeth DeLoughrey, this study shifts the focus from heroic departure to unstable return—from port to tide, from archive to erosion. The sea does not preserve history in neat files. It circulates, dissolves, deposits. It remembers differently. Through a dialogue with Anthropocene historiography, especially the climate-reflexive thought of Dipesh Chakrabarty, the paper argues that Odisha's maritime modernity was never purely progressive. It was fluid, vulnerable and always entangled with cyclone and monsoon. The Bay interrupts nationalist time; it stretches, folds and sometimes erases. To read the sea, then, is to accept instability as a method. A different archive emerges—tidal, restless, unfinished. And perhaps that is where Odisha's modernity truly begins, though it was never entirely stable to begin with.

Keywords: Blue Humanities, Bay of Bengal, Counter-Archive, Maritime Modernity, Anthropocene, Oceanic Memory

Introduction:

There is a habit in literary history. A landward habit. We look at the soil, the monument, the inscription carved on stone. We trust the archive that sits still which is dusty, classified, bound. And so Odisha—once Kalinga—often enters history through temples, copper plates, dynasties, battles. through the land. But the Bay of Bengal waits just beside that story which is restless, salty and refusing stillness.

This paper argues that the Bay of Bengal can be read as a counter-archive—an alternative repository of memory that unsettles land-centric narratives of Odisha's maritime modernity. Through the lens of Blue Humanities, and in conversation with literary texts, colonial travelogues, Odia folklore, and postcolonial rewritings, the sea emerges not merely as geography but as text. A shifting, unstable, living text. And it complicates everything we think we know about modernity, nation, and memory in Odisha.

To read the Bay as archive is already to shift method. As Michel Foucault reminds us, the archive is not just a collection of documents but "the general system of the formation and transformation of statements" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*). The archive determines what can be said. What counts as history and what survives. But what of what cannot be contained in documents? What of tides and routes and wreckage. What of salt on the tongue.

Blue Humanities scholars like Hester Blum have urged us to treat the sea as a site of epistemological disturbance. In her essay "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies," she insists that the ocean "cannot be reduced to metaphor," that it demands attention as material, historical force. The sea is not a blank background for empire; it is an actor. It shapes narratives, disrupts linear temporality, and erodes archival certainty. And when we turn to Odisha, this framework becomes urgent.

Odisha's maritime past—its trade links with Southeast Asia, its famed "Boita Bandana" rituals, its imagined golden age of Kalinga sailors—is often narrated nostalgically. The story goes like this: brave merchants sailed to Java, Bali, Sumatra; Odisha flourished; colonialism interrupted; modernity arrived as rupture. It is clean. Too clean perhaps. The Bay of Bengal, if we read it carefully, resists this neat arc.

Consider the colonial archive. In texts like *A Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar*, the Bay of Bengal appears as commercial space—mapped, measured, instrumentalised. British administrators documented shipping routes, cyclone frequencies, trade statistics. The sea became data. A ledger, a site of imperial calculation. And yet, these same colonial records reveal anxiety. Storms wrecked ships. Sandbanks shifted unpredictably along the Odisha coast. The sea would not behave. It unsettled the imperial desire for control.
In literature, this instability takes on narrative form. When Rudyard Kipling writes of the sea in poems like "The Sea and the Hills," he describes it as "the blind sea" that "beats on the coast," that is blind, beating, excessive. Even in imperial poetry, the ocean exceeds mastery. It is never fully contained.

But the Bay of Bengal is not only imperial space. It is also a subaltern corridor. Here we must recall Amitav Ghosh, whose novels—especially *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies*—reimagine the Bay as archive of indenture, migration, ecological precarity. In *Sea of Poppies*, the Ibis carries convicts and indentured labourers across the Bay. Ghosh writes of the sea as "a vast, flat expanse, without limit or end." The line gestures to infinity, but also to erasure. The crossing becomes a rupture in identity. Names change. Caste blurs. The kala pani taboo haunts the voyage.

For Odisha, kala pani is not abstract. Crossing the sea historically implied ritual pollution. The prohibition marked boundaries of community. Yet Odia folklore celebrates maritime journeys. This contradiction is telling. The sea both promises prosperity and threatens social order. It destabilizes caste hierarchies even as it enables economic exchange.
The annual "Boita Bandana" ritual in Cuttack and along the Mahanadi delta reenacts ancient voyages. Small boats made of paper or banana stem are floated at dawn. Women sing, "Aa ka ma boi, pana gua thoi…" The song condenses memory into rhythm. But what exactly is being remembered? A golden age? Or a longing for connection across waters now policed by nation-states. The ritual performs continuity, yet it also reveals absence. The actual maritime networks have shifted. Modern ports operate under global capitalism, not under Kalinga guilds.

Blue Humanities asks us to attend to such performance as archive. The sea stores memory not in stable documents but in embodied practices, in tides that return annually, in storms that reshape coastline. The 1999 Super Cyclone in Odisha, for instance, was not merely natural disaster. It exposed the vulnerability of coastal modernity. Embankments failed, villages vanished. Development rhetoric met saline water. The Bay inscribed its own critique onto the land.

In postcolonial theory, the nation is often imagined as bounded territory. Benedict Anderson famously called it an "imagined community." But what if the Bay of Bengal troubles that imagination. What if community extends across water, toward Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Indonesia. Odisha's maritime modernity, when read oceanically, becomes relational rather than insular.

We might turn here to Odia literary texts that gesture seaward. Fakir Mohan Senapati's realist fiction is largely land-focused, yet even in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, the economy of

colonial Odisha is shaped by larger trade circuits. Salt production along the coast, for instance, links local exploitation to imperial markets. The sea is present indirectly, as economic undercurrent. A quiet force which is not foregrounded, but decisive.

Later Odia poets evoke the sea more directly. Sitakant Mahapatra writes of the shore as liminal space, where "the sea breaks into syllables." The metaphor is striking. Language itself emerges from waves. If the sea breaks into syllables, then it is already text. Already archive. But unlike written archive, it does not stabilize meaning. It breaks it.

To call the Bay a counter-archive is not to romanticize fluidity. There is violence here like cyclones, shipwrecks, colonial extraction. The slave trade across the Indian Ocean world. The Bay holds trauma. And trauma often resists narration. It surfaces in fragments. In oral histories of fishermen who recall boats that never returned. In stories of migration to Burma during British rule. In memories of return during the Second World War exodus.

Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe* urges us to rethink historicism itself. Linear, teleological time—so central to European modernity—cannot fully account for subaltern pasts. The Bay of Bengal embodies this challenge. Its temporality is tidal, cyclical, seasonal. Monsoon rhythms structure life along the coast. Maritime modernity in Odisha, therefore, is not simply a story of progress from tradition to industry. It is entangled with monsoon time, with waiting and with sudden storm.

And then there is the question of cartography. Colonial maps rendered the Bay as blue expanse which is empty, almost decorative. Ports marked, shipping lanes drawn. But fishermen navigate by memory, by stars, by currents felt rather than seen. Their knowledge rarely enters official archive. It is transmitted orally, in gestures and in cautionary tales about certain stretches of water. This epistemology—experiential, embodied—constitutes another archive. A counter one.

If we bring ecocriticism into conversation with Blue Humanities, the Bay becomes site of ecological crisis. Rising sea levels threaten Odisha's coastline. Climate change is not abstract theory here; it is encroaching water. The rewriting of maritime modernity must therefore include environmental precarity. Modern ports like Paradip symbolize development, yet they also intensify coastal erosion. The sea both sustains and erodes modern infrastructure. It both gives and takes.

There is a moment in *The Hungry Tide* where Ghosh describes the Sundarbans as "a place of faith and of fear." The Bay shares this duality. Faith in trade, in connection, in prosperity and fear of storm, of loss, of drowning. Odisha's maritime modernity oscillates between these affects. And literature captures this oscillation more subtly than official history. We might even think of the Bay through Édouard Glissant's notion of "Relation." For Glissant, the sea—particularly the Caribbean—generates identities that are relational, creolized and open. The Bay of Bengal, too, has long connected diverse cultures. Odia traders in Bali, Tamil merchants in Southeast Asia, Arab navigators crossing to the eastern coast. These crossings complicate any singular narrative of Odia identity. Maritime modernity becomes plural and layered.

Yet, and this is important, the counter-archive does not erase land. It converses with it. The Jagannath temple in Puri faces the sea. The deity's annual 'Rath Yatra' moves toward the Grand Road, not the shore, yet the sound of waves is never far. Devotion and tide coexist. The

sacred geography of Odisha is both terrestrial and oceanic. To privilege one exclusively is to misread the region.

There are pauses in this argument. Moments where the sea refuses interpretation. Standing on the Puri beach at dusk, one senses immensity that theory cannot quite hold. The horizon blurs. Children run toward waves. Fishermen pull nets. Plastic floats disturbingly among shells. It is beautiful and uneasy at once. That feeling—of beauty mixed with anxiety—perhaps best captures the Bay as counter-archive.Because an archive traditionally promises order. The Bay promises movement. An archive promises retrieval. The Bay offers return, but altered. An archive preserves. The Bay erodes.

So how does this reshape Odisha's maritime modernity. First, it challenges nationalist nostalgia. Instead of celebrating a static golden age of Kalinga trade, we see dynamic networks shaped by monsoon, empire, caste, and ecology. Second, it foregrounds subaltern mobility—indentured labourers, fishermen, migrants—whose stories complicate elite mercantile narratives. Third, it situates modern development within environmental vulnerability. The sea is not backdrop to modernity; it is its condition and its limit.
In this sense, the Bay of Bengal writes back. It interrupts the landlocked archive. It insists that history be read with saltwater in mind. Not just inscriptions on temple walls, but inscriptions of tide on sand. And sand does not hold shape for long.

Though the sea resists conclusion—the Bay of Bengal as counter-archive invites a methodological shift in English literary studies. It asks us to read coastal texts differently. To attend to oceanic metaphors not as decorative but as epistemic. To bring Odia regional history into dialogue with Indian Ocean studies. To listen to songs sung at dawn during 'Boita Bandana' as seriously as we read colonial gazetteers.

The Bay is not silent. It speaks in waves, in wreckage, in ritual. Sometimes softly. Sometimes with cyclone force. And if we, as literary scholars, learn to read its rhythms—imperfect, recursive, tidal—we may begin to rewrite Odisha's maritime modernity in ways that are less rigid, less land-bound, more honest to the water that has always shaped it. And perhaps that is the task; not to fix the sea into archive but to let the archive become a little more like the sea.

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Entangled Vocality: Probing Displacement in Sperm Whale Codas through Ecocritical and Posthumanist Lenses

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Abstract

Sperm whale codas, in the entangled ecologies of human-animal-nature relations, offer a profound site to interrogate non-human agency and linguistic complexity, challenging anthropocentric paradigms in ecocriticism and animal studies. This paper examines recent bioacoustic studies on combinatorial structures (rhythm, tempo, rubato, vowel-like modulations) in codas against Charles Hockett's language design features, focusing on traditional transmission, productivity, and the elusive displacement. While clan-specific dialects show cultural transmission and novel recombinations suggest productivity, the lack of confirmed displacement—reference to absent entities—poses a methodological crux, probed via playback experiments, long-term tagging, and machine learning analyses of exchanges beyond whales' 4 km active space.

Drawing on American literary traditions, the analysis juxtaposes these findings with Herman Melville's Moby-Dick, where the sperm whale's "voice" subverts human mastery, embodying Greg Garrard's notion of animals as moral disruptors. In Indian contexts, Puranic texts like the Mahabharata (e.g., cranes in Yaksha Prasna) present relational ontologies akin to Huggan and Tiffin's postcolonial ecocriticism, foregrounding interdependence. Synthesizing bioacoustics with literary representations, this study posits codas as "posthuman speech acts" that unsettle species boundaries, urging ethical reimaginings of coexistence amid ecological crises. Ultimately, probing displacement illuminates non-human semiosis as an active ecological force, aligning with Lawrence Buell's call to recognize nature's agency in literature. This interdisciplinary dialogue bridges animal studies and environmental humanities, advocating literature's role in fostering entangled ecological imaginaries.

Keywords: ecocriticism, animal agency, Hockett displacement, sperm whale codas, posthumanism, entangled ecologies

1. Introduction

For centuries, language has served as the final fortress of human exceptionalism. While humanity readily concedes that animals possess communication systems—signals for danger, mating, or territory—we have historically reserved the designation of "language" for ourselves, defining it by complex syntax and the ability to articulate abstract thought. However, this anthropocentric boundary is increasingly being dismantled by the convergence of bioacoustics and posthumanist philosophy. In the context of "entangled ecologies," where human and non-human lives are understood as "mutually constitutive" rather than hierarchically ordered (Glotfelty xviii), the silence of the animal world is revealed not as a lack of agency, but as a failure of human listening.

This paper interrogates this silence by focusing on the Sperm Whale (Physeter macrocephalus), a species whose complex vocalizations, known as "codas," present a profound challenge to our linguistic monopoly. Through the lens of posthumanism, we can view these codas not merely as biological reflexes, but as "posthuman speech acts" that demand a new ethical framework. As ecocritic Greg Garrard notes, animals in literature and life often function as moral disruptors, exposing the tensions underlying human dominance (Garrard 150). By

analyzing whale communication, we are not just studying biology; we are engaging in a radical act of "inter-species listening."

To ground this inquiry scientifically, this study utilizes Charles Hockett's "design features of language" as a comparative metric. Recent bioacoustic research has already validated two of Hockett's key features in sperm whale clans: traditional transmission (the cultural learning of dialects) and productivity (the ability to generate novel coda combinations). However, the "methodological crux" of this study lies in the third and most elusive feature: Displacement—the capacity to communicate about things that are not present in the immediate time or space. Can a whale speak of a threat encountered yesterday, or a migration path to be taken tomorrow?

Addressing this question requires an interdisciplinary approach. This paper synthesizes empirical data from modern initiatives like Project CETI (Cetacean Translation Initiative) with the intuitive "relational ontologies" found in American and Indian literatures. By juxtaposing the subversive "voice" of the whale in Herman Melville's Moby-Dick with the entangled ethics of the Mahabharata's Yaksha Prasna, we aim to probe the boundaries of displacement. Ultimately, this study argues that verifying displacement in sperm whale codas would not only satisfy a linguistic checklist but would fundamentally alter our "ecological imaginary," forcing us to recognize non-human semiosis as an active, intelligent force in a shared world.

2. Literary Analysis: De-centering the Human

2.1 De-centering the Human through Ecocriticism

To understand non-human language, one must first dismantle the anthropocentric framework that views animals as passive objects. Greg Garrard defines the "moral disruptor" as a non-human agent that exposes the tensions within human dominance (Garrard 148). In literature, these disruptors force readers to confront the limitations of human morality and the fragility of our perceived superiority. This shift represents a posthumanist pivot: recognizing non-human agency is a necessary prerequisite for understanding non-human language. If an animal is merely a "thing," its sounds are noise; if it is an agent, those sounds become "speech acts."

Theoretical grounding for this perspective is found in the work of Cheryll Glotfelty, who posits that ecocriticism investigates the relationship between literature and the physical environment, treating the earth not as a stage but as a presence (Glotfelty xviii). Furthermore, Lawrence Buell argues that "environmentally oriented" literature acknowledges the active presence of nature, where the non-human world is not just a backdrop for human drama but a participant in it (Buell 7). By centering the ecological, literature becomes a registration of awareness, preparing the reader to listen to the voices of species that have long been silenced by human-centric narratives.

2.2 American Leviathan: Moby-Dick and the Subversion of Mastery

In Herman Melville's Moby-Dick, the sperm whale serves as a profound "voice" that subverts human mastery. While Captain Ahab views the whale as a "pasteboard mask" for a malicious deity, the text itself suggests a much more complex biological and ecological reality. The whale's "voice" is found in its silence and its overwhelming physical presence—a force that remains illegible to Ahab's obsessive categorization. Unlike traditional maritime fiction that treats the sea as a passive setting, Melville's work aligns with Buell's criteria for environmental literature, where the whale acts as an active agent with its own trajectory and purpose (Buell 11).

The conflict between Ahab and the whale represents the failure of anthropocentric paradigms. Ahab attempts to "read" the whale through the lens of human vengeance, yet the whale's behavior—its migrations, its breaches, and its ultimate destruction of the Pequod—

exists entirely outside of human morality. This illegibility highlights the limits of human categorization. As the whale evades Ahab's harpoons and his definitions, it asserts a form of sovereignty. By stripping away the illusion of human control, Melville invites the reader to recognize the whale as a subject with its own internal logic, setting the stage for a transition from viewing the whale as a symbol to viewing it as a communicator.

2.3 Indian Relational Ontologies: The Mahabharata

In the Indian tradition, the relationship between humans and the non-human is often defined by interdependence rather than dominance. A pivotal example is the Yaksha Prasna in The Mahabharata, where Yudhishthira must answer the riddles of a Yaksha (a nature spirit) appearing in the form of a crane. This dialogue serves as a site of ethical responsibility; Yudhishthira's survival depends on his ability to recognize the wisdom of a non-human entity. Applying the framework of Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, this interaction illustrates postcolonial ecocriticism, where the struggle for social justice is inseparable from ecological justice (Huggan and Tiffin 6).

Furthermore, Puranic and indigenous Indian philosophies articulate a "relational ontology"—a worldview where humans are embedded in a broader cosmic and ecological order. In this context, the crane is not a "metaphor," but a manifestation of Dharma (cosmic law). This perspective challenges the Western binary of nature versus culture, suggesting instead that all beings are entangled in a web of mutual obligation. By recognizing the crane's voice as a source of authoritative knowledge, The Mahabharata demonstrates that non-human communication has been a central component of ethical dwelling in Eastern thought for millennia.

2.4 Synthesis: Literature as a Site for Alternative Imaginaries

These disparate literary traditions—nineteenth-century American Romanticism and ancient Indian epic—converge on the theme of entanglement. Both Moby-Dick and The Mahabharata interrogate species boundaries to offer new modes of ethical dwelling, moving beyond the "human-as-master" narrative. Literature, therefore, serves as a laboratory for alternative imaginaries, allowing us to conceptualize a world where non-humans are recognized as communicative subjects. If literature can successfully establish the agency and "voice" of the whale or the crane, it creates the intellectual space for scientific inquiry to follow.

3. Deciphering the Deep: The CETI Paradigm as Posthumanist Praxis

The transition from the 19th-century whaling industry to the 21st-century study of cetacean communication represents more than a mere technological upgrade; it marks a fundamental epistemological shift. In the era of Moby-Dick, the sperm whale was "known" primarily through the logic of extraction—its value was rendered in barrels of oil, and its agency was reduced to the resistance of a "dumb brute." Today, initiatives like Project CETI (Cetacean Translation Initiative) offer a counter-narrative, utilizing advanced machine learning not to capture the animal, but to capture its "voice." This shift represents a form of "technological humility"—a recognition that the human ear, unaided, is insufficient to grasp the complexity of the non-human Other. By deploying artificial intelligence as a "macroscope" to analyze millions of click patterns, we are effectively admitting that the barrier to interspecies communication is not the animal's lack of language, but the human's lack of listening.

This "listening" has revealed a sonic landscape far richer than previously imagined. Recent bioacoustic studies have identified "combinatorial structures" within sperm whale codas—rhythmic patterns of clicks that function remarkably like phonemes (Sharma et al.). However, it is the nuances of these sounds that provide the most compelling evidence for non-human subjectivity. Researchers have observed features such as "rubato" (the rhythmic speeding up or slowing down of tempo) and "vowel-like modulations" in the clicks (Sharma et al.). In human music and speech, rubato is the hallmark of expression; it is the difference

between a metronome and a musician. The presence of rubato in whale codas suggests "expressive intent" rather than robotic signaling. It implies that the whale is not merely transmitting data, but is imbuing that data with "interiority." If the "click" is the text, the rubato is the subtext—the distinct "voice" of a feeling subject.

Furthermore, these vocalizations are not uniform across the species but are deeply "clan-specific". Just as human dialects mark cultural boundaries, variations in coda ornamentation distinguish one whale clan from another (Whitehead 2). This discovery challenges the long-held anthropological monopoly on "culture." If sperm whales possess learned, socially transmitted dialects that define their group identity, they are operating within a "relational ontology" similar to the one described in the Mahabharata. They are not isolated biological units but socially "entangled" beings whose "entangled vocality" creates a complex, shared reality.

However, this sonic entanglement currently has a measured horizon: the "active space." Biologically, the communicative range of a sperm whale's click is approximately 4 kilometers (Jacobs et al. 2). Within this radius, or "sphere of entanglement," we know that whales are constantly exchanging information, reaffirming social bonds, and coordinating behavior. This 4-kilometer bubble is the empirically verified limit of their "here and now." But the philosophical and linguistic stakes rise dramatically when we ask what happens beyond this sphere.

This brings us to the "methodological crux" of the study: Displacement. While we have confirmed that whales possess "productivity" (the ability to remix clicks into new patterns) and "traditional transmission" (the teaching of dialects), the question remains: do they speak of the world outside their active space? Can a whale in the Indian Ocean click a coda that references a giant squid encountered yesterday, or a clan member who is migrating hundreds of miles away? If the "active space" is the limit of their signal, is it also the limit of their thought? Or does their language allow them to "displace" time and space, narrating histories and planning futures? If they can do this—if they can speak of the "absent"—then they are not just communicators; they are storytellers.

4. The Horizon of Displacement: Beyond the Immediate

4.1 The Anthropocentric Checklist

Having established in the previous chapter that sperm whale codas exhibit "combinatorial structures" and "cultural transmission," we must now return to the linguistic gatekeeper of our study: Charles Hockett. In his seminal 1960 framework, Hockett outlined thirteen "design features" that supposedly separate human language from animal communication (Hockett 89). Two of these features—Traditional Transmission (the passing of language from generation to generation) and Productivity (the ability to create new messages from existing sounds)—have effectively been conceded to the sperm whale. The distinct "dialects" of Pacific whale clans prove transmission, while the infinite variability of coda rhythm and tempo suggests productivity.

However, the "methodological crux" of this entire inquiry rests on a third, far more elusive feature: Displacement. Displacement is the ability to communicate about things that are not present in the immediate environment—to speak of the past, the future, or the distant. It is the difference between a cry of pain (reactive) and a story about a wound received yesterday (narrative). Without displacement, the whale is linguistically trapped in the eternal present, its communication limited to a "reflex" of its immediate sensory world. Proving displacement would transform the whale from a mere communicator into a historian.

4.2 The Umwelt Problem: A Philosophical Corrective

Before we can test for displacement, we must address a fundamental grounding limitation: the problem of translation. We cannot simply look for a whale "word" for squid or boat and expect it to map one-to-one onto the human lexicon. As the theoretical biologist Jakob von Uexküll argued in his 1934 treatise, every organism inhabits a unique Umwelt (self-world)—a bubble of reality defined by its specific sensory apparatus (Uexküll).

The human Umwelt is terrestrial, visual, and largely two-dimensional; our language reflects this, filled with metaphors of "seeing" and "perspective." The sperm whale's Umwelt, conversely, is aquatic, acoustic, and three-dimensional. Their "view" of the world is constructed through echolocation clicks that render "acoustic shadows" in total darkness. Therefore, a whale's "word" for a giant squid is likely not a symbolic label but a sonic re-creation of the squid's acoustic texture. To expect their language to mirror ours is a failure of the ecological imaginary. As we search for displacement, we are not looking for human stories told in clicks; we are looking for structural references to absent data—patterns that make no sense in the "now" but reveal a mind engaging with the "then" or "there."

4.3 The Tyranny of Presence

Empirically, this search is currently blocked by the biological reality of the "Active Space." Recent bioacoustic studies confirm that while sperm whale clicks are loud, the "communication active space"—the range where specific coda details are intelligible to another whale—is limited to approximately 4 kilometers (Jacobs et al. 2). Within this bubble, we observe constant chatter, but it is impossible to distinguish whether a whale is saying, "There is a squid here" (reflex) or "I ate a squid here" (reference).

Because our observation has been limited to reaction, we have been unable to see the narrative. To break this "tyranny of presence," we must move from passive observation to active experimentation.

4.4 Experimental Imaginaries: Proposals for "Deep" Listening

To verify displacement in sperm whale codas, I propose three specific "experimental imaginaries"—methodologies that use machine learning to detect the "ghosts" in the data.

Proposal A: The Context-Mismatch Analysis (The "Lie" Detector)

We must use machine learning to scan for "errors" in the data. If a whale produces a specific food-related coda sequence in a sterile environment—where bio-logging tags confirm no prey is present—we typically dismiss it as noise. However, from a linguistic perspective, this "mismatch" is the Holy Grail. If a whale signals "squid" when there is no squid, it is doing one of two things: lying (prevarication) or telling a story (displacement). By correlating specific "out-of-context" codas with the whale's recent dive history, we could prove they are narrating a past event to the clan.

Proposal B: The Playback Dialogue (The "Ghost" in the Machine)

This proposal involves playing the specific "identity coda" (or name) of a clan member who is confirmed to be hundreds of miles away. If the receiving whales simply orient toward the sound, it is a sensory reflex. However, if the playback triggers a complex, agitated exchange of non-identity codas among the group before they move, they may be discussing the impossibility of the event. They would be communicating about the "absent" member, engaging in a dialogue about a subject that is not physically present—a clear act of displaced reference.

Proposal C: Information Diffusion (The Gossip Network)

Finally, we can track the speed of information across a dispersed clan. If a specific threat (e.g., an orca pod) is detected by whales at Mile 0, and whales at Mile 20 begin reacting to that specific threat before they could physically sense it or before the "reflexive" alarm signal could propagate linearly, it suggests the transmission of an abstract concept. They are not hearing the threat; they are hearing the news of the threat.

5. Conclusion: Toward an Entangled Future

This paper has traversed the conceptual distance between the "iron way" of Captain Ahab and the "silicon way" of Project CETI, illustrating that the line between human and non-human consciousness is far more porous than previously imagined. By juxtaposing the literary intuitions of Moby-Dick and the Mahabharata with the empirical findings of modern bioacoustics, we arrive at a startling convergence: the "entangled ecologies" described by poets and sages are now being validated by data. The "combinatorial structures" and "rubato" found in sperm whale codas confirm what the Yaksha Prasna suggested millennia ago—that the non-human voice is not mere noise, but a site of complex agency and interconnectedness.

The "methodological crux" of this study—the search for Displacement—serves as the final frontier in this dissolution of human exceptionalism. We have conceded that whales possess culture (transmission) and creativity (productivity). If future research, utilizing the "experimental imaginaries" proposed here, confirms that whales also possess the capacity for displacement—the ability to narrate history and reference the absent—then the ontological status of the whale shifts irrevocably. They can no longer be viewed simply as "wildlife" to be managed or "resources" to be conserved. Instead, they must be recognized as "co-citizens" of the earth, possessing their own oral traditions, memories, and perhaps even myths.

This recognition demands a radical shift in our ethical framework, moving us from a paradigm of conservation to one of inter-species cosmopolitanism. As Lawrence Buell argues, the environmental crisis requires us to recognize "nature's agency" not as a metaphor, but as a political reality (Buell 21). If the ocean is a library of non-human narratives, then our current ecological destruction is not just the erasure of biology, but the burning of books.

Ultimately, the challenge of the sperm whale coda is the same challenge faced by Yudhishthira in the Mahabharata: it is a riddle posed by the non-human world that determines our own survival. We are no longer the solitary masters of the planet, speaking into a void. We are surrounded by other voices, other histories, and other minds. The question is no longer whether they are speaking; the question is whether we, finally, are ready to listen.

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Myth, Nature and Ecological Balance: An Ecocritical Study of Myth Retellings

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Abstract

The ecological challenges of the modern era have encouraged scholars to reexamine cultural narratives that shape human relationships with nature. Mythological retellings in contemporary Indian literature provide a unique platform for exploring environmental ethics and ecological awareness. This paper analyzes ecological themes in Ram Chandra Series and Shiva Trilogy written by Amish Tripathi. Using an ecocritical perspective, the study examines how these texts reinterpret mythological narratives to highlight the importance of ecological harmony and environmental responsibility. The novels depict forests, rivers, and mountains not merely as physical settings but as meaningful spaces that influence human actions and moral choices. By presenting nature as an active force within the narrative, these works challenge human-centered perspectives and emphasize the interconnectedness between humans and the environment. The study argues that contemporary mythological fiction can revive traditional ecological values while addressing present-day environmental concerns. In doing so, these narratives demonstrate how myth retellings can contribute to modern discussions about sustainability and environmental ethics.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Myth Retelling, Environmental Ethics, Anthropocene, Indian Mythology

Introduction

Environmental concerns have become central to contemporary academic and cultural discussions. Issues such as climate change, pollution, and ecological degradation highlight the urgent need to rethink the relationship between humans and the natural world. Literature plays an important role in shaping such perspectives by presenting imaginative frameworks through which readers can understand environmental issues.

Ecocriticism, a field that studies the relationship between literature and the environment, has gained prominence in recent decades. Scholars in this discipline analyze how literary works represent nature and how these representations influence human attitudes toward ecological systems. As environmental crises intensify, literary texts increasingly explore themes of sustainability, environmental justice, and ecological balance.

Mythology has long provided symbolic narratives that explain humanity's relationship with nature. In many traditional cultures, natural elements such as rivers, forests, and mountains are considered sacred. These narratives often emphasize harmony between humans and the natural environment.

Modern mythological retellings reinterpret ancient stories in ways that resonate with contemporary audiences. Among the writers who have popularized this form is Amish Tripathi, whose works combine mythology, philosophy, and social commentary. His novels in the Shiva Trilogy and Ram Chandra Series revisit well-known mythological narratives while presenting complex socio-political and environmental contexts.

This paper examines how these mythological retellings portray nature and ecological balance. It argues that the novels provide an ecological perspective that challenges anthropocentric

attitudes and highlights the importance of maintaining harmony between human society and the natural world.

Eco criticism and mythological narratives

Ecocriticism emerged in the late twentieth century as a response to increasing environmental awareness. Scholars such as Cheryll Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell emphasize that literature reflects cultural attitudes toward nature and can influence environmental consciousness.

In many mythological traditions, nature is not treated as a passive background but as an active participant in human life. Rivers are often personified as divine entities, forests serve as spaces for transformation, and mountains symbolize stability and spiritual power. Such narratives reveal an ecological worldview in which humans exist as part of a broader natural system.

Indian mythology contains numerous examples of this ecological perspective. Concepts such as prakriti (nature) and dharma highlight the importance of maintaining balance within the natural order. Disruption of this balance often leads to social and cosmic consequences in mythological stories.

Contemporary mythological fiction draws upon these traditions while adapting them to modern contexts. Writers reinterpret mythic narratives in ways that engage with current environmental concerns. Through such reinterpretations, ancient ecological wisdom can be connected to contemporary discussions about sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Ecological themes in the Shiva Trilogy

The Shiva Trilogy presents a fictionalized world inspired by ancient Indian civilization. The narrative explores how geography and environment influence the development of societies. One of the central ecological ideas in the trilogy is the relationship between natural resources and social stability. The narrative introduces the concept of Somras, a substance believed to grant longevity and prosperity. However, the story gradually reveals that excessive reliance on this substance leads to environmental imbalance and social inequality.

From an ecocritical perspective, Somras can be interpreted as a metaphor for technological advancement that disregards ecological limits. The eventual realization that this substance has harmful consequences reflects a broader ecological principle: human attempts to dominate nature often produce unintended negative effects. The trilogy also emphasizes the importance of sacred geography. Rivers, mountains, and forests appear repeatedly as spaces that influence the moral and spiritual journeys of characters. These landscapes highlight the idea that nature possesses intrinsic value beyond its practical utility.

Nature and landscape in the Ram chandra series

Environmental themes are also evident in the Ram Chandra Series. This series reinterprets the story of Rama while presenting a complex social and environmental setting. Forests occupy a particularly significant role in the narrative. Traditionally, forests in Indian mythology represent both danger and spiritual growth. In the series, forests function as living ecosystems that shape the experiences of the characters. Life in the forest requires cooperation with nature rather than domination over it. The exile of Rama from the city to the forest can be viewed as a movement from structured civilization to ecological awareness. In the forest environment, characters encounter communities that live in closer harmony with natural systems. Rivers and mountains also play important roles in the narrative. These elements influence travel routes, political boundaries, and cultural interactions. Through these depictions, the series demonstrates how geography and ecology shape human societies.

Environmental ethics in myth retellings

Both mythological series emphasize the importance of ethical responsibility toward nature. Environmental harmony is portrayed as essential for social stability and human well-

being. The narratives suggest that ecological imbalance often results from human greed, excessive consumption, and misuse of technology. These themes resonate strongly with contemporary environmental debates surrounding sustainability and climate change. By embedding ecological ideas within mythological stories, the novels encourage readers to reconsider their relationship with nature. The characters' struggles illustrate the consequences of ignoring ecological limits and highlight the importance of restoring balance.

Conclusion

Mythological retellings provide a powerful literary framework for exploring environmental concerns. By revisiting ancient narratives, contemporary writers can draw attention to ecological values that remain relevant in the modern world. The works of Amish Tripathi demonstrate how mythological fiction can engage with environmental themes. Through their depiction of forests, rivers, and sacred landscapes, the Shiva Trilogy and Ram Chandra Series emphasize the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world. These narratives challenge anthropocentric attitudes and highlight the need for ecological balance. By integrating mythological traditions with contemporary environmental concerns, such retellings contribute to broader discussions about sustainability and ecological responsibility.

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Frozen Futures: Egg Freezing, Temporal Anxiety, and the Ethics of Deferred Motherhood in Twenty-First Century Women's Fiction

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Abstract:

Egg freezing is sold as a technological solution for extending reproductive autonomy, allowing women to push motherhood past the biological limit. However, in women's narratives, this "frozen future" portrays something heavier, a profound temporal anxiety than as empowerment. Contemporary narratives expose the substantial emotional and ethical burdens of postponed maternity. The frozen egg represents a contradiction. From a medical and ethical standpoint, this study argues that egg freezing forces women into a cycle in their lives that they eventually have to answer. Women end up paying with hormonal side effects, money, and prolonged waiting for a period that remains uncertain (Campo-Engelstein et al; Harwood). Close readings of Sheila Heti's *Motherhood*, Ling Ma's *Severance*, Natalie Lambert's *The Big Freeze*, and Sarah Elizabeth Richards' *Motherhood, Rescheduled* highlight how these narratives reveal the contrast between the marketed idea of choice and the actual lived uncertainty. The cryopreserved egg acts as a symbol of paused time, standing as a metaphor for halted time, where the acts of saving it for later coexists with alienation from the body's inherent rhythm (Myers and Martin; Carroll & Kroløkke). These narratives resist the tidy linear narrative of reproductive technology, presenting postponed motherhood as a kind of anticipatory grief and a subtle critique of the neoliberal push to choose everything. This study further engages with Rybak and Leiman's analysis of procreative limits, reframing the ethics of fertility preservation. It brings women narratives into medical humanities calling for paradigms that gently embrace the layered, profoundly human pulse of women's reproductive time.

Key Terms: Reproductive Autonomy, Temporal Anxiety, Cryopreserved Egg, Medical Humanities, Anticipatory Grief.

Introduction

A woman's body is naturally most fertile during her late teens to late 20s. The body is designed to naturally pick the highest quality eggs in every month cycle. This period also features the highest quantity of eggs: "[w]hen a girl reaches puberty, she has between 300,000 and 400,000 eggs, yet the monthly loss of oocytes slows down to 1,000" ("How Many Eggs Does a Woman Have?"), leading to monthly conception of around 25-30% (ACOG). So it is crucial to freeze the eggs earlier, which makes it possible to store healthier and younger eggs before age-related decline sets in. Younger eggs, when used later in life, minimise the chances of chromosomal abnormalities and miscarriages, which increase significantly after age 35 and more rapidly around 37 (Johns Hopkins Medicine).

For a long time, the biological clock functioned as a silent, relentless metronome in the lives of women, dictating decisions about careers, relationships, and who they want to be. In the traditional narrative of motherhood, fertility is a finite source, and as one approaches the fourth decade of life, the pressure and worry build constantly. However , the emergence of oocyte cryopreservation, popularly known as egg freezing, has fundamentally altered this

landscape. By extracting and vitrifying generating material, modern medical technology gives women a way to push back against the perceived failure of human biology.

Egg freezing marks a major shift in how women can control their own reproductive lives, not just a simple yes or no choice anymore, but something more layered where doctors and the fertility industry manage and optimise the body like it is a project. Works like Sarah Elizabeth Richards' *Motherhood, Rescheduled* and Natalie Lampert's *The Big Freeze* show the lived reality of this shift. These are not merely accounts of medical procedures; Carroll and Kroløkke uses this to critically discuss how the freezing of eggs can be seen as a form of heteronormative risk management and an enactment of 'responsible' reproductive

Richards argues that those who use technology to buy time in a world where the social structures of dating and career no longer align with the peak of biological fertility, highlighting the pressures individuals face to balance personal aspirations with reproductive timelines, particularly as they navigate societal expectations regarding family planning and career advancement. She writes, "Stories frequently report the number of miscarriages they have suffered and that their "miracle" baby is a "long-awaited" reward…. But egg freezers are a different lot. They weren't caught off-guard by infertility;...they're planning on becoming older moms" (21). Lambert takes the subject further, investigating the fertility industry that markets this pause as a form of empowerment, as she writes, "I spent a long while holding my breath, waiting to see if egg freezing—the incredible technology and the lucrative industry behind it—could and would deliver on its promises" (16). Together, these works illustrate a profound transformation; the female body is treated as a fragmented project. A portion of the self gets preserved in a sub-zero laboratory while the woman keeps navigating the demands of late-stage capitalism, often facing pressures related to career advancement, family planning, and societal expectations.

This medicalised suspension of time introduces what Karey Harwood argues about a new group of women "who could potentially benefit from egg freezing, including women who are diagnosed with cancer. Because many cancer treatments jeopardise future fertility, egg freezing may provide…the opportunity to become pregnant with their own eggs" when they recover health and their body is ready (41). The idea of freedom, sometimes, becomes quite contradictory. Although egg freezing is meant to lessen the pressures of ageing, it actually creates a new kind of control. According to Eli A. Rybak and Harry J. Lieman, the choice to undergo this procedure creates a difficult double standard. Women are basically expected to show they are prepared for the future by intervening in their natural biology, so "that such gate keeping might entail, and the likelihood that as reasonable people continue to disagree over ethics, restrictive policies are frequently, and deservedly, reversed" (1510). The pressure to be a responsible citizen now includes the requirement to technologically insure one's future against the risk of age-related infertility, which often leads to women feeling compelled to undergo procedures such as egg freezing or other fertility preservation methods.

The anxiety of this decision-making process is mirrored in the existential interiority of Sheila Heti's *Motherhood.* Although Heti's narrator does not undergo the procedure, her constant, agonising debate over the "yes" or "no" of procreation illustrates the psychological vacuum that egg freezing seeks to fill (96-97). On the other hand, Ling Ma's *Severance* provides a darker, satirical take on how corporate productivity takes over reproduction. The main character, Candace Chen, stays focused on her job even as a global pandemic turns everyone into mindless drones; her career progression depends on becoming and "Art Girl," a role that requires her to remain a productive, uninterrupted unit in the workforce during her most vital years. The protagonist admits that she "emptied myself, lost myself in the work" to the point where her existence became a repetitive loop of "up, work, home, repeat" (Ma 129). This

highlights a modern struggle. Women are pushed to freeze their eggs just so they can stay productive and uninterrupted in the workforce during their best years.

Kit C. Myers's and Lauren Jade Martin's sociological research on egg freezing suggests that this technology does more than just pause biological time; it actually changes how we understand time. In a corporate aligned life, technology is "entangled with cultural imperatives to take future-oriented responsibility for one's own health, financial, social, and reproductive needs through self-management, risk reduction, calculation, and optimization" (1). The situation creates a holding pattern where potential trauma is managed through a recurring bill for storage. This chapter argues that the Big Freeze shows how our biological lives are being controlled, making it impossible to separate the natural from the technological. When we look at the narratives of Richards and Lampert and the anxieties of Heti and Ma, we see motherhood in a new light. It is a strategic manoeuvre within a bioeconomy that demands we maximise the value of every human cell, reflecting the broader societal pressures to commodify human life and the ethical dilemmas that arise from such practices.

Choice vs. Constraint

Discussions of egg freezing frequently rely on the rhetoric of empowerment, suggesting that reproductive technology gives women new authority over their biological timelines. A closer sociological look at this "choice," however, reveals the many external constraints that inform it. Myers and Martin point out that the high cost and selective access to these technologies reflect "broader systems of stratified reproduction that mark the fertility of some raced and classed populations as worthy of preservation and others as in need of prevention" (2). This medicalisation of the biological clock transforms the act of freezing into a tool for risk management. In this context, the decision to freeze eggs is rarely an unencumbered choice made in a vacuum; rather, it is a response to a social environment that penalises motherhood during a woman's peak professional years. On the gendered burden of reproductive responsibility, Natalie Lampert's *The Big Freeze* shows that "[i]t's commonly assumed that women, especially those in long-term relationships, will bear the responsibility of preventing pregnancy by using a contraceptive method like the Pill or an IUD. The ubiquity of hormonal birth control makes this even more commonplace" (122-23).

This branding shifts the burden of fertility from the social to the individual. If a woman finds herself childless and "too old" later in life, the industry suggests it is because she failed to plan ahead. This individualisation of a collective social issue, such as the lack of childcare support or the rigid nature of corporate career tracks, is what Lauren Jade Martin identifies as a core tenet of the sociology of reproductive technologies. The "choice" to freeze is often a forced adaptation to a workforce that has no room for the unpredictability of pregnancy and early motherhood. This tension between choice and constraint is further complicated by what Rybak and Lieman describe as the "procreative liberty" paradox (1511). While women are theoretically free to delay pregnancy, they are simultaneously subjected to "double standards" regarding their elective donation of oocytes. The paradox goes deep, as "some might argue, subjecting novel reproductive technology…is both justified and prudent, but Rybak and Leiman contends:

> We, however, disagree, and feel that the apparent assumptions underlying the current position that elective self-donation of oocytes is 'experimental' and a comparison of the current—not just the past—disparity in how ICSI and elective egg freezing are viewed highlight a double standard that is sexist in effect, if not intent. (1510)

The technology does not just offer a pause button; it sets a new standard for what a "responsible" woman must do to secure her place in the middle class. Those who cannot afford the steep price of cryopreservation are left behind, creating a stratified system of reproductive citizenship where the ability to control time is a marker of socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the narrative of "choice" is often used to mask the lack of romantic and social stability. In *The Big Freeze*, Lampert interviews women who are not necessarily prioritising their careers but

are simply waiting for a partner who is willing to commit to parenthood. The "constraint" here is not just corporate; it is deeply social. The technology becomes a "waiting room" that allows women to survive the "man-drought" or the instability of modern dating. As Myers and Martin, drawing on Lauren Jade Martin, explain, "egg freezing as a 'technomedical' solution aimed at increasing women's chances of preserving their ability to have genetically related children. This desire for genetic relatedness is primarily a social rather than medical concern" (3).

Ultimately, the sociology of the freeze suggests that while the procedure is marketed as a way to "have it all," it often functions as a way to "endure it all". It allows women to remain productive units in a capitalist economy that values uninterrupted labour over biological rhythms. By framing egg freezing as a personal triumph of choice, the industry and the culture at large avoid the more difficult task of restructuring society to actually support mothers. In this light, the "choice" to freeze eggs is a profound example of how technology can be used to accommodate a broken social system rather than fixing the system itself.

The Ethics of Responsible Citizenship

In *Motherhood, Rescheduled,* Sarah Elizabeth Richards provides a nuanced look at the emotional landscape of egg freezing. She moves away from the cold, industrial critique and instead focuses on the genuine relief the technology offers. For many women, the procedure is not just a corporate manoeuvre; it is a way to reclaim their lives from a state of biological panic. Richards explores the idea of Plan B, where freezing eggs acts as a buffer against the anxiety of being single during one's prime fertile years. This technological pause allows women to pursue relationships based on genuine connection rather than a desperate search for a co-parent. She writes about Monica, a forty-year-old woman navigating the high-stakes world of online dating while carrying the emotional weight of her nineteen frozen eggs (Richards 218). After her breakup with her partner Adam, she finds herself re-entering the dating domain at a pivotal milestone where she must balance her desire for a new relationship; Richards writes, "She had entered a strange new dating reality: she had to find someone who wanted children but who was willing to take a chance on her frozen fertility. First, though, she had to tell them about her frozen eggs. She hated the talk" (191).

This brings the concept of "responsible reproductive citizenship," as discussed by Katherine Carroll and Charlotte Kroløkke. They argue that in a modern context, being a good citizen often means managing your own risks so you don't become a burden on the state or medical system later, so "women risk-manage their reproductive future in what has been termed 'anticipated infertility'" (Martin, qtd. in Carroll and Kroløkke 3). Analysing this perspective of deep responsibility, they argue, "This anticipatory and eventually consumerist logic may account for the affective sentiments associated with egg freezing, namely relief, a heightened sense of control and a reduction in anticipatory regret" (Carroll and Charlotte Kroløkke 3). The decision to freeze one's eggs may be understood as an exercise in anticipatory citizenship, whereby women assume responsibility for safeguarding their future reproductive options. It constitutes a strategic form of self-care that confronts the temporal reality of declining fertility without permitting biological chronology to exercise decisive control over all major life decisions. However, this responsibility comes with an ethical weight. As Richards chronicles, the process involves a gruelling schedule of hormone injections, invasive retrievals, and significant financial sacrifice. The women in her book are not just choosing a path; they are labouring for it. She remembers, "I can't remember when I first heard about egg freezing, a procedure that promised to make the biological clock obsolete. The concept was extraordinary. Hormone shots made your body pump out eggs, which were surgically extracted and frozen" (17). This scenario is where the ethics of citizenship get complicated. By taking on this burden, women are essentially insuring themselves. While the procedure provides a sense of peace, it also creates a new social expectation: that any woman who can afford to freeze her eggs should do so to be considered responsible, as this [r]esponsible reproductive relationship emphasises

the normative expectations that women manage their present fertility to ensure future fertility" (3).

Despite these pressures, the stories in Motherhood, Rescheduled highlight a vital sense of hope. For many, the "freeze" is an act of love, for a future child, for a future partner, and for one's own peace of mind (246). It allows for a version of "procreative liberty" (Rybak and Lieman 1509) that feels tangible and personal. While the commercialisation of the fertility industry raises concerns about the exploitation of women, "for the informed woman seeking procreative liberty via greater control over her reproductive destiny, the considerations of autonomy and beneficence override those of commercialisation" (Rybak and Lieman 634). It creates a space between a woman's present circumstances and the life she hopes to build, allowing her to imagine pursuing personal and professional goals without the immediate demand of motherhood. By viewing the procedure through the lens of "Freezing for Love," it is not just about a medical success rate; it is about the human desire to maintain a sense of possibility in a world that often feels like it is closing in. The ethics of this new citizenship are about balance. It is about recognising that while the system may be flawed, the individual women navigating it are making thoughtful, proactive choices to protect their own happiness. Egg freezing, in this light, is a tool for resilience. It offers a way to navigate the "waiting room" of modern life with a bit more dignity and a lot less fear.

Conclusion

Egg freezing sits at a difficult intersection between biological limits and the pressures of contemporary life. On one side lies a growing industry that often trades on women's anxieties; on the other, a medical development that offers a real possibility of extending reproductive time. While the procedure can function as a technological adjustment to a society that does little to support mothers, it also gives many women a tangible sense of control and relief. By easing the sense of a fixed biological deadline, it makes room for more deliberate decisions about work, relationships, and family. Even with its physical and financial costs, the "Big Freeze" can be read as a form of resilience, offering the hope that motherhood need not feel like a race against time.

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Embodied Rumination and Decolonial Memory: An Ecopsychological Study of Industrial Catastrophe in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*

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Abstract:

This paper offers an eco-psychological reading of the novel named *'Animal's* People*'* by Indra Sinha, and situates it within the long aftermath of the infamous Bhopal gas tragedy as a paradigmatic man-made ecological disaster. It studies anthropogenic toxicity as a source of anticipatory dread and epigenetic vulnerability across generations. It shows how persistent industrial poisons produce a toxic legacy where physical deformity and chronic morbidity become both a biological inheritance and a psychological burden.

The diseased, contorted, and dismembered bodies of the characters read as embodied rumination, while their silenced maternal loss signifies social paralysis within subaltern communities. Yet through testimonial narration of their lives and collective resistance, the novel transforms their trauma into resilient activism. The subaltern voice disrupts corporate amnesia by converting their rage into decolonial memory. The findings of this paper position the novel as an eco-psychological archive in South Asian literature, demanding for culturally grounded psychological and environmental justice.

Keywords: anthropogenic toxicity, anticipatory dread, epigenetic vulnerability, toxic legacy, embodied rumination, decolonial memory

Introduction:

It has been forty-two years since the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy took place and choked the night sky, with over 500,000 survivors, whose children and grandchildren still battle a living wound, suffering from chronic cancers, respiratory collapse, and several congenital deformities caused by groundwater laced with toxins produced by Union Carbide. Birth defects have persisted across generations, which serve as a brutal reminder that man-made disasters do not have an end. These disasters haunt bloodlines as well as psyches.

This is not abstract history. It is mothers cradling children with twisted limbs, fathers raging at futures permanently poisoned, a community's morale eroded by the daily questioning and grind of what they did to deserve this. In Indra Sinha's 'Animal's People,' this emotional scarring becomes a visceral literature where Khaufpur's streets reek of the same toxins, where characters do not just survive but embody the dread of what they have inherited, with their bodies and minds scarred by the indifference of the Amrikan corporate.

Using ecopsychology, this paper illuminates this fracture in the human-nature bond. It shows how not just the climate crisis, but also anthropogenic lifestyle affects generations, with industrial greed, toxic spills, and consumerism rupturing ecosystems as well as human souls. This idea being born from thinkers like Theodore Roszak and refined by scholars like Panu Pihkala's work on eco-distress, posits our psyches as extensions of the earth. When factories emit poison and rupture our lives, we internalise the rupture as grief, rage and paralysis. Here, people constantly anticipate dread, which grips their mind with paralysing fear of inevitable poisoning of futures that are beyond repair. It is a gnawing certainty that the future children will also inherit ruin in such regions. Many people who suffered from this reality spent

numerous sleepless nights wondering if their bloodline ends in deformity, and had moral collapses, knowing that human choices themselves birthed such a curse.

The scar is deepened by epigenetic vulnerability. The toxins do not merely mutate their DNAs but flip chemical switches, which either silence or amplify genes across the course of heredity, just as Bhopal's methyl isocyanate gas did. It leaves an imprint of morbidity on bodies that are yet unborn even. It is backed by science, as many studies have been conducted on survivors, which show that altered methylation patterns yield higher rates of diseases in the offspring, which is a sort of biological echo of the psychological torment they bear. In the novel, Animal's bent spine is not merely a metaphor; it is a literary picturisation of this science. His four-foot crawl is a daily rumination on the upright futures that have been stolen from people like him.

Yet for all the promises made by ecopsychology about healing these wounds through reconnection with nature or narrative therapy, its application to postcolonial literature like Sinha's remains largely absent. Animal's People is full of raw emotion, deep trauma, and complex mental states, making it a perfect work to be studied through this lens. It contains scenes where Animal claws through toxic sludge and is haunted by ghostly voices whispering to him that more will come; Nisha's concerns about maternal loss and barren wombs, her agency which is paralysed by collective issues of the community; Zafar's hunger strike, his rage boiling into his defiant activism. These scenes are not mere points in the plot, but rather, they map the battlefield of the human psyche, where the toxins do not just deform the flesh but also dismantle their hope, turning the subaltern lives into continuous cycles of dread and silence.

While many eco-critics have skilfully explained Indra Sinha's 'Animal People' as a record of slow violence and toxic neocolonialism, showing its fictional town of Khaufpur mirroring Bhopal's poisoned streets, they overlook the eco-psychological core of the novel. Works like Nixon's study about slow violence have got ample attention, as have the themes of corporate imperialism, but none have traced how persistent toxins have bred hereditary dread, such as bodily deformities being a source of endless rumination, silenced maternal loss acting as a social paralysis, constantly eroding human morale until life feels like a kind of cursed inheritance.

The paper fills this research gap. It studies how through 'Animal's People,' Sinha reveals the epigenetic toxic legacy that such anthropogenic toxins forge, while breeding anticipatory dread which manifests as distortion in body structures (such as Animal's twisted spine which loops in mental torment) and maternal silences (Nisha's loss of her mother, Ma Franci's fragmented mind, and other such minor character's grief). These show how this dread has shattered morale across subaltern lives. Yet, the rawness of the novel's subaltern narration transforms rage into evolutionary resilience with its defiant activism and decolonial memory-building nature that reclaims agency from despair. In doing so, Sinha establishes his Bhopal as a foundational eco-psychological archive for South Asian literature, making a call for culturally rooted interventions to heal these wounds.

Literature Review:

Researchers across various interdisciplinary fields involving public health and psychology have been studying climate change and environmental destruction as more than an external problem, having significant biological and psychological consequences. However, despite their growing interest in environmental trauma and their recognition of "eco-anxiety" as an important issue, current research lacks an integration of global and human health, requiring an interdisciplinary bridge between the sciences and humanities to address these conceptual gaps.

Similarly, the current scholarship on Indra Sinha's *'Animal's People'* has consistently situated the novel within the legacy of the 1984 Bhopal gas leak disaster as the novelist has used the fictional city of Khaufpur to dramatize "local toxins, global toxicity", and have also studied the difficulty found in documenting the widespread suffering in an international legal system. (Donig 2). Critics have also emphasised the novel's postcolonial criticism of neoliberal industrialisation. They have argued that the Union-Carbide leak serves as an example of "corporate colonialism" in which many risky practices of production were carried out in the peripheral regions, which left behind a lasting footprint of "ecocrime" on people's bodies as well as their ecosystems. (Balkan 1-2).

The novel's text, according to scholars, shows that intergenerational damage to the bodies of the native residents of these peripheral regions is clear when a mother says, "our wells are full of poison… if you stay here long enough, you will be too" (108). These kind of statements from the novel are studied as ones that suggest that toxic exposure to the fumes and wastes released by these corporate industries enter the body and impact milk, blood, and wombs, affecting the health of future generations as well (Taylor 10).

Several scholars have also studied the novel's use of disturbing and profane language, which they have marked as a deliberate strategy to disrupt the comfort of the readers and eliminate the emotional distance between them and the marginalised victims, creating a powerful engagement with their physical suffering (Holoch 3-5). Similarly, in other such related studies, terms like "slow violence" termed by Robert Nixon have been studied as describing such environmental damage as an "invisible, mutagenic theatre" which means that it is a hidden and ongoing process that makes it difficult to be contained within traditional narratives or judicial frameworks (Donig 6).

Researchers like O'Loughlin have argued how the novel depicts the "NGO-ization" of disaster narratives by portraying a kind of "conditional and negotiated solidarity" that plays the role of a critique of humanitarian discourse and highlights the limited success of the interventions carried out by activists (O'Loughlin 2, 9). While, Taylor's idea of the "power of zero" shows how collective movements arise when people feel they have nothing to lose from extreme dispossession (Taylor 5, 12).

Across all these studies, there is an important gap that is visible, which is that none of these studies apply an eco-psychological perspective which would examine how this trauma caused by industrialisation affects mental health, questions of identity, and emotional patterns across generations of victims. Most of the existing research focuses either on literary forms and structures, political economy, public health, or legal issues. However, questions of grief, coping mechanisms, endurance, emotional inheritance across generations as well as restricted resistance require deeper psychological analysis. Bridging this gap requires an eco-psychological approach which would strengthen the connection between the novel's depiction of damaged bodies, activism, legal procedures, as well as the emotional experiences of the affected generations.

Theoretical Framework:

This study uses three perspectives, in other words, a tripartite eco-psychological framework, to analyse the world of *'Animal's People'* and examines how environmental toxins destroy morale and build resilience in the novel. In Sinha's novel, the effects of environmental disaster are felt in the mind, the body and the community. So, a tripartite framework is just right to study how theories of psychology, biology, as well as politics could explore the psychic terrain of the work.

Firstly, the study uses Susan Clayton's model of eco-anxiety, which explains how environmental disaster damages the mind through three main symptoms which are: an

obsessive worry (rumination), an emotional numbness (paralysis), and a loss of control (behavioural impairment).

The second theoretical framework involves that of Rob Nixon's idea of "slow violence" and Frederica Perera's study of epigenetics, which help us understand how environmental toxins move within the human body through time. It shows how an industrial disaster becomes a permanent part of the human body. By applying these frameworks, we can see that Animal's physical condition is a slow-moving form of violence that spans generations. This biological determinism, that is the idea

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The final theoretical framework involves Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak's theory of "subaltern" and Édouard Glissant's ideas on "relation." These help explain how the characters in Khaufpur resist their circumstances. According to Spivak and Glissant, Animal's way of narration was just like street-talk, which may be a way of speaking back to those who try to ignore him. Similarly, Zafar's hunger strike is a refusal to cooperate with the legal system, as a way to maintain his dignity. These actions together show that the ultimate goal of the novel is to show how a "decolonial" mindset can emerge from the ruins of environmental disaster.

These three perspectives work together to provide a new way of reading postcolonial disaster novels such as *'Animal's People.'* While previous studies have looked at the Bhopal gas tragedy through singular lenses, this research synthesises three interdependent frameworks. It connects the biological framework of epigenetics with the psychological symptoms of eco-anxiety and the social resistance of the subaltern. The study shows how postcolonial fictional characters survive and resist transgenerational eco-trauma.

Methodology:

Using *Animal's People* as the primary text, this paper involves a close reading of the 2007 edition of the novel. My approach does not just treat the fictional town of Khaufpur as a setting, but as an ethnographic source of information on the lived dread that the natives of the places affected by the Bhopal gas tragedy have experienced. It also involves a systematic close reading of scholarly lenses that are specific to different aspects of *Animal's People* – such as papers by Balkan, Donig, Holoch, O'Loughlin, and Taylor.

The primary text is considered as an ethnographic archive with its subaltern narration providing valuable qualitative data on the main focuses of the paper such as anticipatory dread, toxic embodiment, and resilience. During the process of analysing the novel, an ecopsychological codebook was created based on Susan Clayton's symptoms and the work of the other critics, and upon grouping of the findings into three main categories – obsessive rumination, emotional paralysis, and active coping.

Four main themes are identified in the study based on the code markers, which are poisoned bodies, silent grief, angry resistance and growing hope (See Appendix, Table 1: Ecopsychological Theme Mapping). The study took into account these four themes and compared them against several papers based on the novel and the Bhopal disaster victims. It displays in forms of graphs that show patterns of dread versus hope by chapter (See Appendix, Figure 1: Graph of Emotional Trajectories), tables containing major important quotes based on the studied themes, as well as maps showing how these themes connect.

Analysis:

Toxic Legacy:

Indra Sinha's novel '*Animal's People'* maps a defining trajectory from the biological entrapment to the political defiance of the residents of the fictional Khaufpur town. It is based on the real Bhopal disaster, even though the characters and the settings are fictional, the represent the reality very accurately. The novel begins with a biological catastrophe which almost acts as a verdict, where toxicity is not just a past event but a fate that has turned hereditary. This major theme of toxic legacy connects every character of the novel to a shared accusation against corporate neglect, as their damaged bodies have become a sort of living record of a crime committed by a company that is absent after the disaster took place. Using Rob Nixon's lens of "slow violence" and Frederica Perera's "epigenetics," we can observe that the 1984 gas leak at Bhopal did not just kill people, it changed their genetics forever, leaving children like Animal, the protagonist, with twisted wire spines, peoplelike Somraj with their music and passion lost, and the women with poisoned wombs and forgotten languages (Nixon; Perera). Animal is the primary example of this twisted and tragic legacy. Animal's own story starts with the grim fact that he was born three days before that particular night, already poisoned in the womb. His twisted spine is not just a personal tragedy in this novel – it represents the shared inheritance of his entire community. He was orphaned as an infant while "coughing, frothing etc. plus nearly blind," and his body started eventually betraying him at the age of six. He describes the pain quite vividly as the pain forced his neck down until his spine twisted like a hairpin, making his backside the highest part of his body. This physical change not only ruins his posture, his body structure, but also wipes away his memories of a life that existed before the disaster. His personal history got merged with the town's tragedy. The shift in his body from being almost normal to walking on all fours builds a strong upper body but on weak legs, which represents the strange and distorted growth which was caused by the poison. These changes occurred with many of the town's residents born during or even long after this tragedy. Stacey Balkan calls this a "memento mori tale," where the protagonist's body is a reflection of how this kind of toxicity reaches across and affects generations (Balkan 115). The specific intersection of these manifestations and their ecopsychological significance is detailed in the Appendix (Table 1).

On the other hand, Zafar, the dedicated and almost messianic activist, turns this toxic legacy into an anger that is extremely focused. He gave up his academic future because the disaster and its consequences demand constant attention. Although he was not physically deformed by the gas, his character shows the marks of protest, his body also plays a crucial role in it with violence from the police and the thinness, the near-death experience caused by hunger strikes. He argues that those with nothing in them to lose have a power that is impossible to stop. His partner, Nisha, also carries the loss of her mother and her brother, which drives her to try to help others through her teaching and activism. Her father, Somraj, in the same household,

also suffers from something profound, the loss of his voice. He was once a famous singer but his lungs were destroyed by the gas, which left him to teach music but in silence as he could not sing himself. He reflected constantly on how breath is the essence of life while he himself did not have that control on it.

Ma Franci, the French nun and a mother figure to Animal, suffers from brain damage, the kind that erased her ability to speak Hindi which she knew well before. Not only that, but the disaster left her mind filled with images of death while she continued to work among the poor. Similarly, Uttamchand (aka Zindabhai) is a character who survives as a witness to the slow death of his neighbours, family and many others, noting how cancer and nerve damage take the lives of all those around him while he is the one who is seeking either a proper medical clinic to treat him or death.

The motif of the "poisoned wombs" appears throughout the book and is displayed with brutal honesty. Ma Franci helps women deliver babies long after the leak, who are described to be just like Animal is, with "bones had twisted like a hairpin" little bones like twisted wire (Sinha 15). Nisha whispers about women whose wombs are so toxic that nothing can stop their child from being poisoned. She aches to help these women in any way she can as they claim "Our wells are full of poison. Its in the soil, water, in our blood, its in our milk. Everything here is poisoned" (Sinha 107).

Other minor characters have also served to broaden this picture, such as a mother in Paradise Alley who rejects her own breast milk because she believes that the soil, water, blood and even milk of the whole town are filled with poison. She chooses instead to dispose of her milk and feed the baby formula milk. Another example is the preserved two-headed foetus "Kha-in-the-jar" which serves as a terrifying symbol of how toxins have invaded the wombs of the Khaufpur women. Even the animals, like Animal's companion dog Jara, represent the struggling state of the humans. Some characters, like Chunaram, try to profit from the tragedy by selling blood. This sheds light on the mutated local economy of the town due to the disaster. All of these stories together show Khaufpur as a place where mere survival is an act of protest. The damaged bones and poisoned milk of the people are like a permanent accusation against a company that fled after inducing disaster, proving that the violence of the gas leak never truly ended.

This inherited toxicity that has been studied over and over by many scholars. It creates what Susan Clayton calls as "cognitive rumination," which refers to a mind that is trapped by its own memories. We can observe this rumination with the prime example of Animal, who is obsessed with checking his body again and again. He keeps mentioning how life is very different for people like him who are bent at the spine because of this tragedy, famously saying "How do you shit, when your arse is up in the air and legs too weak to squat? ... Like a donkey dropping dung" (Sinha 16). His four-legged crawl that was imposed on him by the tragedy, not by choice or by chance, is a daily reminder of his poisoned history even though he has embraced this animalistic gait. Katherina Holoch describes this as "subaltern semiotics," where Animal's body is like a book and every twist in his spine tells a story of corporate violence (Holoch 127).

The novel has shown the real-world science of epigenetics, where the toxins have flipped the switches in a person's DNA, with survivors having children with webbed hands, missing limbs, and mental shadows. Sinha lists these losses clearly in the novel by writing about the many deformities of the "twisted offspring" with hydrocephalic skulls, clubbed limbs, chronic wheezing, respiratory failure, ocular damage and much more.

We can also observe a deep philosophical pain in the novel. Animal's body tells him to remember that he must die, but it also says something else, something that is worse, to

remember that if he ever has children, they will also be born broken. In Jesse Taylor's work, we find how these individual tragedies add up to a city of broken backs just like Animal. This toxic legacy is not a one-time event that just happened and was forgotten, it is a slow biological sentence that gradually keeps affecting generations after generations. Every deformed baby that is born here confirms the original verdict of this gas leak that their bloodline belongs to the "Kampani." This is the root of the biological dread, when the poison becomes a part of the people's DNA and their worry turns into a permanent state of despair.

Anticipatory Dread and Rumination:

The theme of anticipatory dread is saturated in *Animal's People* as the people of Khaufpur remain in a constant state of waiting for the next disaster to happen. These characters are trapped in a mental loop. They constantly predict physical collapse, social betrayal, and the loss of loved ones. Their inner thoughts are mixed with both bath past trauma and a fear of the future. Through Animal's recording, we can observe this being represented perfectly when he says, "What I say becomes a picture and the eyes settle on it like flies." He describes a painful past when he faced extreme hunger while also suffering through the daily shame of his physical condition. He is always afraid of the dry grass at the factory to catch fire, the poison to leak again and the tragedy of "that night" to happen all over again. and constantly watches the factory towers. He hears the ghosts of the dead shrieking in the pipes. He secretly spies on Elli which also brings him shame as well as terror.

On the other hand, we find Zafar constantly fearing that the "Kampani" will steal the medical data of the victims, which leads him to spread a boycott of the "Amrikan" doctor Elli. He believes it is sometimes necessary to suffer in order to protect the truth, though he also secretly fears what will happen to his movement and if people will support his decision. Nisha also constantly worries about his father's judgment and the fact that justice has kept stalling because the company just never shows up at the court. She misses college and hampers her education because she is overwhelmed by the fear of the future.

Somraj, Nisha's father, dwells on his lost career as a singer. He listens to nature, to frogs and other birds and animals to find musical notes. He argues that "Let me tell you, that frog contains more music than most pandits… SILENCE also speaks," yet he also fears that music itself is dying. Ma Franci constantly fears of being sent away to France. Her prayers are filled with visions of an approaching apocalypse where the city feels the "fist of god." Other characters like Zindabhai keeps a mental list of all the neighbours "Sahara… Rafi… Nafisa… Safiya…" that have already died, feeling in his failing eyesight and hurting chest that maybe his turn is coming soon, mentioning "yet here I am". The mother in the slums foresees her baby's pain as she believes her milk to be bitter and poisonous and that it burns the baby's stomach, which leads her to reject motherhood's essence entirely. Young Aliya's calls to grown-ups like Animal to play with her represent a lost childhood, while the older generation fears that the night air is full of poisons and fever. Huriya Bi startles at every little noise. "Goodness, is it Friday? ...is it the factory?" She constantly asks if the factory has leaked again. It is a fear which is shared by the entire slum.

On the other hand, even the American doctor Elli fears something. She fears that she is becoming part of a crime. She realises that if the company hides information, it is essentially murder. This constant fear and worry are a physical reality of the characters. The characters' minds have been constantly occupied with the thoughts of poison. They constantly ruminate that any moment, disaster might come back, that the next disaster is inevitable. Animal's fever actually returns as he feared, and Zindabhai's numbness spreads through his body. This is a process where psychological stress becomes a physical symptom. The city is in a state where time feels like it either standing still or moving backward. Animal's tape recordings rewind the past, and his neighbours die one after another in a slow, predictable sequence. This creates a sense of time where the disaster of "that night" never truly ends but instead lingers above them at all times.

Gendered Paralysis:

In *Animal's People*, environmental trauma creates a specific "gendered paralysis" that targets women's bodies as if they are the frontline of the disaster. Their wombs, breast milk, and voices have turned into sources of fear, which trap them between biological deterioration and social expectations. A key example is the mother in Paradise Alley who demonstrates this through her tragic scene of "pressing her breasts, sending jets of milk spurting onto the earth…" as she refuses that "I wont feed my kid poison." Her expectation of nurturance turns into rejection, as she sees her own body as a threat to the next generation and herself claiming "My breasts are killing me."

Nisha, one of the major female characters, remains stuck between role as a revolutionary and her personal life. While she remains busy painting banners screaming "Justice is on our side", yet she is also paralysed by the emotional weight of her relationship with Zafar, of Animal's self-loathing and claim that "Because I am an animal… you can never marry me?" and her father Somraj's refusal to use violence. All this puts a very heavy emotional burden on her. Similarly, Ma Francu's brain damage (aphasia) has left her speaking only French, "sallo purqwatu na parlpa lalang yumain?" – which isolates her as a "loony old nun" whose actual caregiving nature is almost ignored as she can no longer be understood.

While toxicity affects everyone, it does so in gendered ways. Women face the frontline of reproductive failure, while men like Animal adapt physically, like him building muscle to compensate for his twisted spine. Even Animal's voyeurism is only a reflection of a paralysed masculinity as he thinks he possesses a "potent" energy but is stopped by the shame of his "animal" status. He fears that no woman will ever truly want him. However, ultimately, these fragmented voices including the spurting milk, the prayers, and the protest banners, all show that while the characters are paralysed by the disaster, they are also searching for a way to speak back.

Subaltern Voice:

In the novel, the marginalised voices of the Khaufpur community reclaim their power by creating a multi-voiced sovereignty in which they speak in a complex and polyphonic way which is difficult to ignore or erase. The tape-recordings Animal makes for the "Jarnalis" are at the heart of this resistance. He tells his listener to imagine him to be a friend which to an extent transforms his rough and broken language into a powerful personal epic. He declares that "I'm not a fucking human being," where he actually asserts a deeper humanity. He uses his knowledge and literacy to bridge the gap between his life in the slums and the world of resistance through literature. The correlation between this reclaimed narrative vice and the subsequent rise in the hope across the novel's final tapes is illustrated in the Appendix (Figure 1).

Zafar's "power of nothing" further helps in democratising the struggle. He proves that those have been stripped of everything they had still possess an undeniable force in politics. The people around them also contribute to this collective voice including women like Nisha who teaches literacy as a form of protest, Somraj who finds music in the silence of his destroyed lungs, and Ma Franci who persists in her French prayers, refusing to be translated or simplified. This collective voice, the hybridising of their voices through the tapes, banners, and songs, helps the Khaufpur people ensure that their story endures. Their united speech subverts the "Kampani's" silence. They prove that even in a poisoned world, the subaltern can indeed speak.

Conclusion:

This analysis of *Animal's People* presents Indra Sinha's novel as a profound portrayal of a Bhopal-inspired toxicity being a totalising force which was manifested through the study of the themes of or corporeal corrosion through a Toxic Legacy, the ruminative postponement of their Anticipatory Dread, the terrorised wombs and their Gendered Paralysis, the polyphonic resistance of the Subaltern Voices. Characters like Animal with his bent back and hate and

dread-filled mind, Nisha's radical and nurturing nature, Zafar's activistic messianistic nature, Zindabhai's ironic survival, Ma Franci's ignored caregiving, all embody Khaufpur's living indictment and their scarred forms indict the corporate impunity decades after the leak.

The significance of this paper lies in bridging postcolonial ecocriticism with disability studies. It sheds light on how subaltern embodiment subverts hegemonic silence. It demonstrates the gendered, temporal persistence of the corporate toxicity, challenging anthropocentric environmentalism.Future research could compare Bhopal tragedy memoirs with Sinha's fiction; apply "slow violence" theory by Nixon to South Asian eco-disasters, examine eco-psychoanalysis in Animal's hallucinations, trace digital humanities mapping deformities as seen in Khaufpur. Such extensions would amplify marginalised voices against the ongoing industrial necropolitics. These critical approaches could ensure that the subaltern narrative remains a foundational archive for environmental justice in South Asian literary studies.

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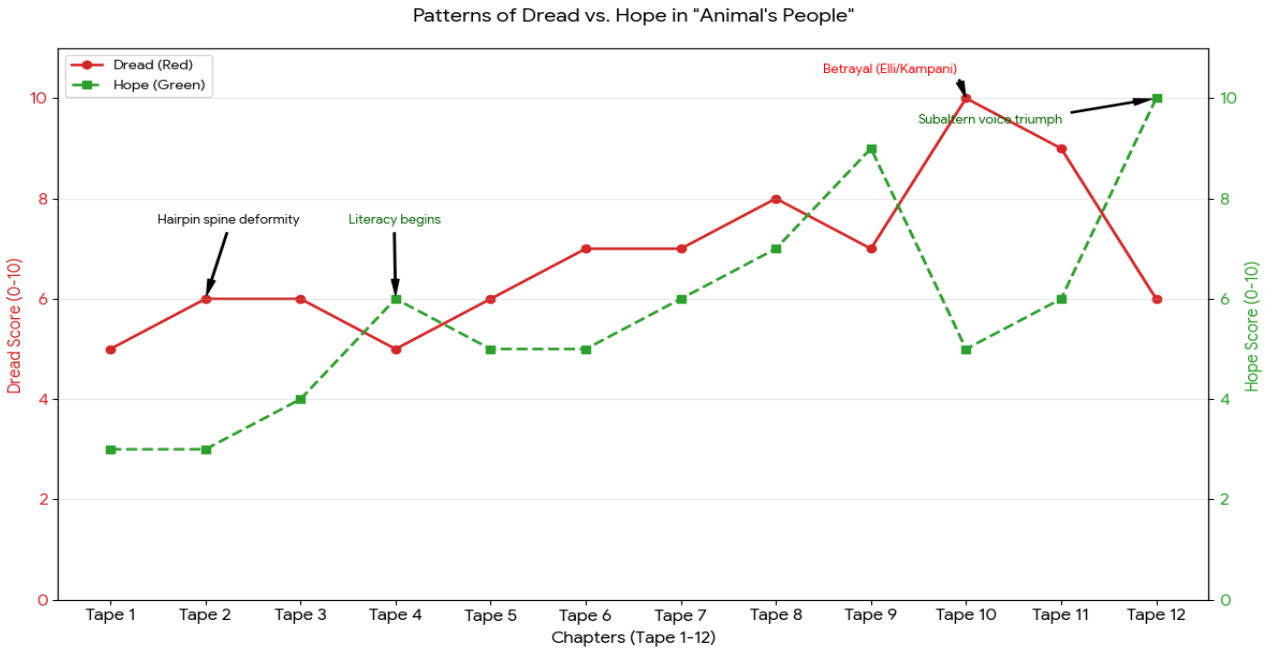
Appendix:
Figure 1: Graph of Emotional Trajectories
Table 1: Ecopsychological Theme Mapping



Main Theme	Subtheme	Key Manifestations	Characters Affected	Representative Quotes	Ecopsychological Significance
Toxic Legacy	Corporeal Corrosion	Spinal deformities, poisoned milk, cognitive aphasia	Animal, Ma Franci, milk-dumping mother	"bones had twisted like a hairpin" [p.15]; "Our wells are full of poison... in our milk" [p.107]	Environmental toxins manifest as psychological embodiment trauma
Toxic Legacy	Intergenerational Inheritance	Womb poisoning, Kha-in-the-jar fetus	Nisha, Zindabhai's neighbors, Elli	"foetuses, babies that never made it" [p.322]	Eco-trauma transmitted through maternal lineage
Anticipatory Dread	Factory Re-leakage Fear	Ghost shrieks, fire ignition dread	Animal, Huriya Bi, slum collective	"poison gases would gush out, itd be that night all over again"	Chronic environmental anxiety disorder
Anticipatory Dread	Bodily Betrayal	Rumination on defecation, fevers	Animal, Zindabhai	"How do you shit, when your arse is up in the air?" [p.16]	Psychosomatic hypervigilance to toxic decay
Gendered Paralysis	Reproductive Terror	Milk rejection, maternal refusal	Paradise Alley mother, Nisha	"I wont feed my kid poison"	Ecofeminism: wombs as toxic frontline
Gendered Paralysis	Communicative Isolation	Linguistic erasure	Ma Franci	"sallo puruwatu na paripa lalang yumain?"	Gendered cognitive toxicity
Transformative Subaltern Voice	Tape-Testimonio	Narrative sovereignty through recording	Animal	"What I say becomes a picture and the eyes settle on it like flies"	Eco-therapy through subaltern witnessing
Transformative Subaltern Voice	Collective Polyphony	Banners, hunger strikes, death ledgers	Zafar, Nisha, Zindabhai	"power thats impossible to resist"	Psychological resilience via communal narration
Ecopsychological Hybridity	Animal-Human Continuum	Quadrupedal adaptation, dog companionship	Animal, Jara	"I walk... by throwing my weight onto my hands"	Posthuman eco-identification
Ecopsychological Hybridity	Factory Re-wilding	Creepers reclaiming poison stacks	Animal	"Creepers... wrapped wooden knuckles round pipes"	Nature's psychological reclamation

Relevance of postcolonial ecocriticism in Sarat Chandra chattopadhyay's novel "Palli Samaj"

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Abstract-
"Postcolonial Eco criticism" is an interdisciplinary approach that examines the relationship between literature, culture, and the environment. It explores how colonial histories and identities impact ecological issues, emphasizing the voices of marginalised communities and their connections to nature . It examines how colonialism and imperialism have affected nature, land, environment and indigenous communities in literature. The "Zamindars" like colonial powers-controlled forests, rivers and agricultural land for their economic benefits. Native people lost their right to nature. Miserable, unfortunate and poor people respect and depend on environment. Literature plays a crucial role in postcolonial ecocriticism by providing a platform for marginalised voices and stories that illuminate the intricate connections between colonial histories and environmental issues. In "Palli Samaj"(1916) Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay focussed on the decay, casteism, and corruption in early 20th- century rural Bengal. Kuapur village farmers are facing flood and their crops are going to be destroyed after two days non-stop raining. An idealistic engineer Ramesh is breaking all social norms and going against Beni Ghosal, narrow minded Zamindar, cut the embankment of a pond, which is full of fishes.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Eco criticism, Nature, Indigenous, Environmental issue, Social norms, Culture

Introduction-
Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay is one of the most celebrated writers in Bengali literature. His deep sympathy for marginalised people and realistic portrayal of social life made him "**Kathashilpi**" of Bengali literature. His novels were written during India was under British colonial rule. Among his works "**Palli Samaj**" occupies an important place because of its real portrayal of rural Bengal. Zamindary tradition, widow love -relation, pathetic condition of poor farmers and greedy Brahmins are highlighted to depict social structure, cultural practices and moral conflicts within a traditional village community of the first half of Twentieth century Bengal society.
Besides social relationships and human emotions, the presence of nature and rural environment is equally relevant. This article attempts to analyze Palli Samaj from a postcolonial eco critical perspective. By examining the depiction of rural landscapes ,agriculture life ,and social hierarchies in the novel ,the study aims to show how Sarat Chandra's narrative reveals the complex relationship between environment, colonial society and
village life.

Story highlights:
"**Palli Samaj**"(1916) is a Bengali novel by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, which is a piece of

social criticism in it Sarat Chandra has criticized the rural Hindu society and pointed out its defects, its oppression, injustice and cruel exploitation over low caste poor people. Ramesh arrives in to the village kuanpur as an Engineer from Roorkee college to perform his father's last rites. His father has some major disputes with the village leaders -Beni Ghosal ,Rama and others. The disputes between Beni and Ramesh go on to such a leval that some rivals decide to boycott Ramesh's father's last ceremony. Further, Ramesh's decision to invite the Shudras of the village to the ceremony adds fuel to the fire. However ,the grandeur of the ceremony came when Beni's mother Bisweswari Devi took over charges. Some Brahmins wanted to avoid but Bisweswari Devi denied all their demands. On the Other hand some really poor Brahmins came happily to feed their children after a long time.

"**Palli Samaj**" is a piece of Hindu social criticism. Sarat Chandra Pointed out the defects of the society. Ramesh got fed up with the narrow mindedness of the villagers and greedy Brahmins. He loathes their gossips, their treachery and everything .He expresses his disgust with Bisweswari **," if you give them charity, they take you to be a fool .If you do good to them, they assume you must have some interest in it . Even forgiving is a fault. They think you backed out from fear**". Bisweswari reminds Ramesh his duty to the villagers and remains to stay in the village. She replies "**Lack of education has made them so blind that they think the** weakening of their neighbour is the best way to strengthen themselves. Nothing can be more foolish than being angry with such people."

Rama,a young widow is a childhood friend of Ramesh. Though Rama and Ramesh are rivals between each other but the love story between them goes along with the story. As a widow in the tradition bound Hindu society, Rama could not marry Ramesh. The brief romantic scene at Tarakeshwar shows Sarat Chandra's courage. Rama and Ramesh thus turn out to be tragic characters as their love can not be fulfilled. The novel ends with Rama's departure for Beneras.

Postcolonial criticism in "Palli Samaj":

Post colonial criticism extends the approach by connecting ecological concerns with the historical experience of colonialism. Colonial powers always exploited natural resources and they try to reshape the society for their own political and economical benefits. Postcolonial criticism therefore emphasizes the voices of marginalised communities whose lives are closely tied to the natural environment. It examines how colonial power structure influence and effect both social and ecological systems.

In this novel **"Palli Samaj"** poor farmers depend on agriculture. This text reveals how nature plays an important role and trying to compel humans to take action and testing their characters in such a critical situation. The incident of cutting of embankment depicts the plight of ordinary farmers who live under the

control of landlords like Beni. Beni is a typical example of the dominance of village factions and representative of colonial power. Fields, ponds, raining ,crops and farmers emotions are in one side and on the other hand zamindars, their greed, selfishness and colonial tyranny. Ramesh and his love for the farmers is in the one side and on the other side Beni's greedy objects and selfishness is core conflicts of this novel.

Social oppression is revealed through the shopkeeper, Poor Brahmins and Akbar. Shopkeeper always gives lend to the Brahmins but never got money in time. Akbar is called '**Beiman** ' by Beni as it is a matter religious degradation to a muslim. Although, Akbar and his two sons fought bravely against Ramesh to save the embankment of the pond. They

really fought and got injured with stick which hit on his head and Akbar blooded. Poor Brahmins are insulted by Govinda Ganguly for their own poverty as they love to eat good food which Ramesh are feeding them during his late father's last rituals days.

Depiction of Rural Ecology in the Novel:

One of the most important features of Palli Samaj is its rich portrayal of rural ecology. The novel presents a village landscape where nature is not merely a background but an essential part of everyday life. Agricultural fields stretch across the countryside, and the rhythm of village life is closely tied to seasonal changes. The villagers depend primarily on agriculture for their survival. Their livelihoods are connected with the fertility of the land, the availability of water, and the regularity of seasonal cycles. Rainfall determines the success of crops, and natural conditions influence the economic stability of the community. Through these depictions, Sarat Chandra highlights the intimate connection between humans and the environment. The natural beauty of rural Bengal is also reflected in the narrative. Trees, rivers, and open landscapes create a peaceful atmosphere that shapes the emotional tone of the novel. These elements represent the simplicity and harmony of village life. At the same time, the novel acknowledges the vulnerability of rural communities who depend heavily on natural resources for survival. By portraying the ecological environment of the village in such detail, Sarat Chandra emphasizes the importance of nature in sustaining both economic and cultural life.

Human–Nature Relationship:

The relationship between humans and nature in Palli Samaj reflects a traditional ecological worldview. The villagers live in close proximity to the natural environment and rely on it for food, shelter, and livelihood. Farming, fishing, and other rural occupations require an understanding of the land and its natural rhythms. This close connection with nature encourages a sense of respect for environmental processes. The villagers recognize that their survival depends on maintaining harmony with the natural world. Traditional agricultural practices are often based on cooperation with natural cycles rather than domination over them.

Such practices demonstrate a form of ecological awareness that existed within rural communities long before the emergence of modern environmental movements. Cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and social customs often reinforce the importance of protecting natural resources. However, the novel also suggests that human desires, social conflicts, and economic pressures can disturb this ecological balance.

Social Hierarchy and Environmental Relationship:

Rural society in "**Palli Samaj"** is characterized by clear social hierarchies. Class, caste, and economic status determine the distribution of power within the village. Land ownership is particularly important because it provides both economic security and social authority. Those who control land and resources often occupy positions of influence within the community. Poorer villagers, on the other hand, remain dependent on these resources for their survival. Their relationship with the land is both intimate and precarious.

From a postcolonial ecocritical perspective, this unequal distribution of environmental resources reflects broader patterns of social injustice. Access to land and natural resources becomes a source of conflict and inequality. The control of nature is therefore closely connected to the control of people. By portraying these dynamics, Sarat Chandra reveals how environmental and social structures are intertwined. The ecological landscape of the village cannot be separated from the social relations that shape it.

Colonial Context and Rural Oppression:

Although the story focuses on village life, the broader context of colonial India influences the

narrative. During the colonial period, economic policies and administrative reforms transformed rural societies. Land revenue systems and market pressures often altered traditional agricultural practices. These changes sometimes disrupted the ecological balance that had sustained rural communities for generations. Increased economic exploitation placed pressure on natural resources and intensified social inequalities. The conflicts within the village can therefore be understood as part of a larger historical process. The encounter between traditional rural culture and colonial modernity creates tension and uncertainty. Through subtle narrative details, the novel reflects the ways in which colonial power structures affected both society and the environment.

Conclusion:

"Polli Samaj" by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay provides a rich and nuanced portrayal of rural Bengali society. Through its detailed depiction of village life, independent relationship between humans and natural environment, agriculture practices and rural landscapes form an essential foundation to study this novel from ecocritical perspective. The social and cultural life of the poor village community highlights the simple as well as complex relationship between ecology and social hierarchy. The narrative demonstrates how environmental balance is closely connected to the issues of power inequality and cultural tradition. By representing both the harmony and the tensions within the village farmers, Sharat Chandra encourages readers to reflect on the ethical responsibilities that humans share toward each other and as well as toward nature. Therefore, the novel stands not only as a social document of colonial rural India but also as a literary work that anticipates modern ecological concerns. In the contemporary era , when environmental challenges have become increasingly urgent, revisiting literary texts such as "**Palli Samaj**" allows us to rediscover the importance of ecological awareness and social compassion. The novel reminds us that sustainable relationships with nature must be rooted in justice, empathy and respect for the interconnected web of rural social life.

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Abstract

Arundhati Roy is one of the few Indian writers in English who is actively interested in contemporary social-political issues. In this article she has shown acute sensitiveness to her surroundings and her unique approach invites comparison with other renowned contemporary English writers. Her writings make a detailed map of India that highlights important things about its culture and how the people interact with the environment. She skillfully interacts a narrative map that draws attention to often-overlooked issues and geographical features. Arundhati Roy's *The Greater Common Good* delves into the critical theme of environmental sustainability in the face of the contemporary environmental crisis. She explores the intricate interplay between human development and the preservation of environment, advocating for a holistic approach that patrtiozes the greater common good over individual interests. Her works contribute significantly to discussions on culture, identity, and environmental awareness, making her noteworthy figure in both the literary and activist realms.

Key Words: Environmental sustainability, environmental crisis, activism, social justice, political structures, climate change, sustainable practices, ecological consciousness

Introduction:

Arundhati Roy is one of the few writers who is actively interested in contemporary socio-political issues which are reflected in her books. She shows acute sensitiveness to her surroundings in her non-fictional fictions works and essays. She has been an impassioned critic of globalization and American influence and felt herself a part of the contemporary struggle for social justice in our country. Her unique approach invites comparison with her contemporary English Literature. Arundhati Roy's "*The Greater Common Good*" is a powerful book detailing the devasting social and environmental impact of massive dam project on the Narmada River. Through this book she highlights how under the guise of development, Govt. displaces vulnerable tribal pollution, destroying their culture and self-sufficiency. The Narmada project is described as an ecological disaster that caused massive biodiversity loss, deforestation and soil erosion. It focuses on the tens of thousands of people, mostly tribal, who lost their land and livelihood without proper companion or rehabilitation

From the beginning it is seen that Arundhati Roy is a philanthropic one who is always ready for the support of the poor, downtrodden, and Dalit. Her ideology has been reflected in her books- *'The Algebra of Infinite Justice', 'War and Peace', 'The End of Imagination', and 'The Greater common Good'.* All the above books reflect the façade scenario of the modern society where on one side the people were support with fundamental rights of Democracy and on the other, these rights were snatched away by the big leaders of the nation in the name of development, while criticizing the government's role.

The Greater Common Good is a thought-provoking revolutionary book by Arundhati Roy. It deals with the author's rational and progressive attitude to the dam projects of the

government, her sympathetic talks with the sufferers of the Narmada valley project; her harsh and rugged satire on the faulty decision and adverse attitude of the political parties and above all, her Wordsworthian nostalgia for the natural scenes and sights of nature. Here Arundhati Roy delves into the critical themes of environmental crisis. She explores the intricate interplay between human development and the preservation of the environment, advocating for a holistic approach that patronizes the greater common good over individual interests. Her work contributes significantly for discussion on culture, identity and environmental awareness, making her a noteworthy figure in both the literary and activist realms. Every nation in the world wants to develop in many respects and dreams of rapid growth and sustainable development to put itself and its citizens on a progressive pedestal. But humans in their non-satisfied aspirations of sustainable development put the whole ecosystem in jeopardy as the development projects that started with the goals of benevolence and growth ended up destroying nature causing havoc in the lives of their fellow human beings. In India, numerous environmental movements were stimulated from Chipko movement in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. The human race in the name of development continuously exploits natural resources like forests, rivers minerals, coal, oil, fish, and wildlife to accumulate wealth resulting ecological imbalance and endangers other species and humans as well. Government all over the world promote globalization as a tool of environmental sustainability but on the other hand simultaneously advocate exploiting natural resources, deforestation, more oil drilling, poisoning rivers, polluting oceans and degradation of human life in the name of global trade.

Arundhati Roy in her essay, *The Greater Common Good,* elaborately explained that our true enemies were not the neighboring countries, not the physical boundaries but it was the evils wearing the mask of the great soul in the name of the betterment of the country. While completing big projects in the name of country's development they are actually oppressing the poor people making them homeless specially the 'Adivasis' for whom the nature for big dam projects and compensating them with bare lands where they couldn't even earn their livelihood, making them homeless by means of force which can be shown as a discourse of the European dominating ideologies existed in the form of 'power' where the capitalist always oppresses the proletariats. This essay comprises many instances of the enormity of human cost, the lives cost, and the exploitation of the eco system. Roy shares the agony of humanity and the environment as he becomes its part through her intentions and says, 'Let me say at the outset that I'm not a city basher. I've had firsthand experience of the isolation, the inequality of the potential savagery of it. I'm not an anti-development junkie, nor a proselytizer for the eternal upholding of custom and tradition" (the Greater 1-2). To understand the real scenario Arundhati Roy visited damsites and spent days with affected people like homeless, destitute, Dalits, marginalized, and tribal people which resulted in her passionate effort in their agitation and support through her essay, *The Greater Common Good*, where she states "Curiosity took me to the Narmada Valley".

Arundhati Roy laughed loud because the sons and daughters of the displaced tribal people are not happy at all in the settled colonies. Because the homes of the tribal people are not the big buildings or great mansions in the polluted cities, but an open sky, far from the madding crowd, saturated with age long myths and traditions, songs and dances, fruits and flowers. Writing a letter to Arundhati Ray, Digvijoy Singh, the former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh in 1994, said, "we have lived in the forests for generations. The forest is our money

lender and banker. In hard times we go to the forests. From the forests we make baskets and cots, plough and hoes and many other useful things…. we get various kind of grasses; and when the grasses become dry in summer, we still get leaves……if there is famine, we survive by eating roots, bark from the forest. We collect and sell gum, kendo leaves, bahera, chronic and mahala. The forest is like our mother, we have grown up in its lap. We know how to live by shucking at her breast, if we were made to live in a land without forest, then all this knowledge that we have cherished for generations will be useless and slowly we will forget it all".

Failed relocation policy of govt and insufficient compensation altered the lives of the displaced Adivasi villagers. The resettlement process should be voluntary and humane. The plight of land outsees, as raised by Roy, has a reflection in Manish Kumar Verma's Book-*Development, Displacement and Re-settlement* where it is argued that the land outsees became victim of development by losing productive system, productive asserts, and income source due to less capability of their old skills and facing greater competition in the use of scarce resources. They had to walk long distances to offer wage to themselves where as in forest they had food, fuel and fodder. Displaced tribals are not attracted by materialistic facilities and sharing sympathy to them by giving new advancements, is depriving them from their natural instincts. The 1979 Narmada Water Dispute tribunal award disregarded these tribal agricultural practices of crop rotation by slash-and-burn agricultural practices. Moving from less fertile land to more fertile land in forest. The issue further complicated due to unreliable land records. The plight of tribal is echoed in Roy's writing as 'the deception, however, lies in its definition of who qualifies as 'Project Affected' (Roy 72).

Keeping a large volume of water in one place by building dams has an ecological effect that many years to destroy. Roy cited the example of Punjab where waterlogging by extensive use of water from canals and borewells heavily disturbed the regions watershed dragging towards a future crisis Water logging in the command area of the dam spoils the productivity of the soil owing to salinity and causes a natural disaster like a flood and various diseases are spread. An issue of economic loss was also reported regarding the negative impact on the Hilsa Fishery of Lower Narmada, which drastically shrunk and even wiped out. Roy viewed big dams as obsolete since they do more harm than good. They create displacement and take away wisdom and means of taking farmer's water, land, irrigation to benefit the rich. The market driven economy changed the farmer's attitude who stopped growing the crops they consume, concentrated more on the market demand crops, and thus became market dependent.

Through this essay she portrays India criticizing dams making anti-development and anti-national governments equate these development projects to nation building. Roy satires on the growing dam construction industry, "Dam-Building grew to be equated with Nation building" (The Greater in 4). Roy fearlessly satires tender concerns of the Supreme court of India in the case of displacement and rehabilitation, Supreme Court judges in Delhi (before vacating the legal stay on further construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam) had enquired neither child in the re-settlement colony would have children's park to play in. (The Greater 1) Roy shows a grave concern in this democratic eco-system of India where neither the Govt. nor the judiciary pay heed to address the elephant in the room and instead kill time on arguing fewer prior issues.

Resettlement is a challenge that is visible to all but addressing it is not the concern of these democratic institution. Through her essay Roy bursts the bubble of people who embrace dams as an emblem of progressiveness and development instead they also are less democratic and monuments of corruption which majorly favors few those are governments, contractors, business owners, banks and investors. Roy satires governmental policies that advocate sustainable development and environmental sustainability but fail to implement any although the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 was amended in 1984. She points out how the govt. dislocates people, acquiring their lands and paying cash compensation which reaches few and marginal left empty handed, "A cash compensation, to be paid by an Indian government official to an illiterate tribal man in a land where even the post man demands a tip for delivery! Most tribal people have no formal title of their land and therefore cannot claim compensation anyway. Most tribal people or most small farmers, have as much use for money as Supreme Court judge have for a bag of fertilizer" (The Greater 6). Big dams, these days, are no longer the monuments of modern civilization, emblem of man's ascendency over nature. Monuments are generally unageing, tireless and are full of worship and devotion. But the recent havoc caused by the big dams all over the world is the testimony of the fact that big dams do the opposite of what people say about them.

After independence, India's water resources were harnessed by constructing dams and canals using vast chunks of agricultural and residential lands by changing the demography of villages, towns and cities. It attacks nature by changing the path of water flow created by nature. Earlier, more stress was given to the construction of water structures, neglecting human values, which are now prioritized. The benefit of irrigation from big dams can only be drawn after the completion of water distribution networks like canals and pipelines, which take a long time. In the essay, "*The Greater Common Good"* Roy unfolds human tragedy that is brought to the individuals for sheer development. The essay describes some critical facts of the Narmada valley project, which are not only treated as a literary work, but also for the river valley projects planners, executers, governments and financers to realign their school of thought towards the displaced people and environmental issues. The author's emotional outburst draws attention to how development asked millions to sacrifice themselves for the greater common good of the nation. Water is a precious resource for irrigation that increases agricultural growth. After that, a countries' industrial production is trapped by dams to control and regulate the same to produce hydroelectricity, but why at the cost of power peoples' shelter? A question that Roy wanted to be answered.

Roy apprehended the irrigation potential of the dam and food control capability by explaining that the reservoir must be kept empty to handle the surplus water during monsoon. In inadequate rainfall, the dam is left empty, which beats the purpose of irrigation. The effectiveness of canals emanating from the dam depends on the quantity of water filled at dull so that water reaches the end. However, poor maintenance and regulation restrict water flow to the tail end, depriving many farmers of adequate water, whereas better connected farmers get unlimited access to canal water.

Presenting a grim and dreadful scenario of what the situation will be like if there is a nuclear war, Arundhati Roy observes very succinctly 'Our cities and forests, our fields and villages will burn for days. Rivers will turn to poison. The air will become fire. The wind will spread the flames. When everything there is to burn, smoke will rise and shut out the sun. The

earth will be enveloped in darkness. There will be no day only interminable night. Temperatures will drop to far below freezing and nuclear winter will set in. Water will turn toxic ice. Radioactive fall out will seep through the earth and contaminate ground water. Most living things, animal and vegetable, fish and fowl, will die. Only rats and cockroaches will bread and multiply and complete with for ageing, relict humans and what little food there is…. Burned and blind, bald and ill, carrying the cancerous carcasses of our children in our arms, where shall we go? what shall we drink? What shall we breathe? (The End of Imagination 62)

Really, such far-sighted but very holistic observations may be death knell warnings for human society what had been given from time to time by our sages, saints, philosophers etc. Thus, too, have been reminding the world that 'freedom' is very sharp-edged weapon that can end up causing immense harm if it is not handled prudently and judiciously.

Conclusion

Arundhati Roy, in her various books, replicates real issues that affects humans across the globe. In *The Greater Common Good,* she encapsulates threats to human lives, bio-diversity, and the environment caused by rapacious desires for the growth and development of human beings. In this encounter, she advocates environmental sustainability as the focal point of every development to ensure nourishment and protection of all species and the environment as well but in this sojourn of her she encountered criticism from her contemporary intellectuals like Ramachandra Guha and author says, "I am liberal slightly inclined to the left. But I am opposed to extremism to intellectual dishonesty and intellectual vulgarization, whether it comes from the right or the left. My critique of Arundhati Roy was in that context I found her an intellectual vulgarizer of the left which is why I called her the Arun Shourie of the left. She satisfied, exaggerated, used hyperboles, suppressed fact, over wrote-all that Shourie did from the other side".

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From Climate Crisis to Human Survival: Gender, Environment, and Survival in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*

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Abstract: Despite its wide divergences and pluralistic contexts, ecofeminism is grounded in the conceptual link between women and the environment. Ecofeminism refutes the negative conjunction between woman and nature in favour of the interconnections between all life on earth. Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* explores the theme of global climate crisis, drawing a parallelism between Dellarobia's struggle with patriarchal constraints and ecological precarity. Drawing on eco-dystopian tropes and ecofeminism's symbolic and epistemological angles, this paper argues how Kingsolver blends gendered oppression with environmental collapse. A close textual analysis of the novel's plot, images and character development will be the methodology of this paper. Through this approach, this paper will show how Kingsolver manages to humanize the scientific discourse through the introduction of ecological disaster into the everyday rural lives, aligning the idea of female emancipation with the ecological resilience as the parallel forms of resistance. *Flight Behaviour* argues that climate change is not merely a scientific or political problem, but it is a struggle of dignity, hope, and agency that is intensely human. This paper aims to interrogate how *Flight Behaviour* combines the ecofeminist perspectives with the eco-dystopian tropes to depict the agency of women as being interwoven with the ecological survival.

Key-words: Ecofeminism, Eco-dystopia, Climate, Women, Resilience.

Ecofeminism, Eco-dystopia, and Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*: Introduction

The awareness that man is dependent upon nature is not new; but most recently there is the emergence of a consciousness that man is the maker and unmaker of nature and that man is capable of mischief and mayhem to nature (Arnold and Guha 3). The mounting imperatives of global ecological crisis caused by this mischief and mayhem have triggered academics to evaluate how environmental degradation is inherently connected to social inequality and human vulnerability. Under this paradigm, ecofeminism has come out a very informative theoretical perspective for understanding this relation. The term was created, in 1974, by the French feminist philosopher Francoise dEaubonne who proposed that the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women are not separate phenomena but are historically connected in the patriarchal and capitalist systems (Rangarajan 111). In this perspective, ecofeminism is a synthesis of the environmental issues and the feminist critique, showing how the dominant and constant power structures treat women and nature as commodities that are manipulated, commodified, and exploited in order to achieve economic benefit. Thus, the framework contributes to a more humane approach to the society as well as the environment.

According to ecofeminist theory, both women and nature had been historically placed in similar circumstances of marginalization. To a great extent, numerous cultural discourses have placed masculinity in correlation to reason, control, and power, and femininity to emotion, chaos, and passivity. Such dichotomies build hierarchies that make domination natural and even right like the subordination of women or exploitation of the environment. Ecofeminist intellectuals argue in opposition to these assumptions with the suggestion of new models of ethics based on care,

interdependence, and ecological balance. Vandana Shiva in the book *Eco-feminism* states that the marginalization of women and imbalance in biodiversity can be linked to a common development worldview (Mies & Shiva 14).

Ecofeminist emergence of the second wave of feminism spawned new lines of thought and action used to transform the environmental debate. During the 1960s and 1970s, there were many local movements that were spearheaded by women to protest against nuclear growth, deforestation and industrial pollution. Some prominent ones among them were Chipko Movement in India and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya which raised voices against the environmental degradation manifested at community levels where women were directly affected by it. Ecofeminism eventually became a wide interdisciplinary movement, addressing environmental philosophy, literature, and cultural criticism. The Conference on *Women and Life on Earth* was also very instrumental in uniting the intellectual movement of ecofeminism through the focus on nonviolence, eco-responsibility, and gender justice.

Modern environmental awareness too was predetermined by the previous environmental literature, especially the book of Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*. Through her work, Carson revealed the ecological consequences of the unscrupulous industrial growth and assisted in rallying international interest in terms of the environmental destruction. Based on these premises, ecofeminist theorists gradually adopted literature as a much more powerful tool upon which the affective, moral and social aspects of the environmental crisis could be explored and expressed.

The works of Barbara Kingsolver play a major role in this literary scenario. Her fiction often combines the green consciousness with the banal life of women, how environmental chaos can spread to the family, the community, and daily life. In this way, her stories make scientific debates on climate change more real and close to the reader. The writing by Kingsolver can, therefore, be analysed as an ecofeminist intervention bringing a human aspect to the ecological crisis and at the same time highlighting the fact that the ecological vulnerability is easily structured around a gendered experience.

The ecofeminist approach becomes even more relevant when considered alongside the developing field of eco-dystopia. Literary critic Keith M. Booker remarks that dystopian fiction is usually a warning, with a reminder of the possible outcomes of the current social and environmental trends. This tradition continues portraying ecological collapse, climate turmoil, and disrupted ecosystem as a result of human overexploitation of the environment. The dystopian narratives not only see the disasters as potential and distant but also portray their alarming effects in the contemporary world. Thus, the eco-dystopian literature interrogates the existing environmental practices, encouraging the readers to re-examine their moral connection with the planet.

It is possible to place Kingsolver's novel *Flights Behavior* within this framework of eco-dystopia, but at the same time, it is cautiously optimistic. The novel opens in the fictional town of Feathertown, Tennessee, where an unusual ecological occurrence unfolds: the unanticipated migration of the monarch butterfly from their previously traditional habitat in Mexico due to the effects of climate changes. This chaos acts as a symbol of the delicate natural balance and indicates the larger environmental imbalances caused by global warming. The butterflies are beautiful and frightening at the same time as a reminder to the readers that environmental marvel and ecological disaster can co-exist.

The central character of the story is Dellarobia Turnbow, whose personal life resembles the instability that is taking place in the natural world around. Living in a narrow rural and

patriarchal setting, she is the representative of numerous women who are faced with social and economic strains worsened by the environmental shift. The novel unearths the human realities behind the abstract discussions of climate change through Dellarobia's growing awareness of climate science and ecological vulnerability. Kingsolver turns the issues of climate change not just an alarming future possibility but the immediate problem to be treated with utmost seriousness. Though the novel *Flight Behavior* does not create a completely dystopian future, it represents what some scholars refer to as a critical eco-dystopia, as it highlights the dangers of the environment and allows the possibility of change and survival. The novel is a warning postscript to the modern fears of climatic unpredictability, a lack of environmental consciousness, and the economic demands that often conflict with human responsibility to the environment. Placing the environmental crisis in the framework of the daily activities of the rural community, Kingsolver illustrates the intersection of the ecological crisis with the gender, class and epistemic structures.

Academically, *Flight Behavior* when analysed using the ecofeminist and eco-dystopian critical theory, reframes the environmental crisis through human experience. By placing the crisis at the centre of social inequalities, cultural perspectives and gender experiences, the author argues that ecological precarity is not merely a scientific and/or political phenomenon but something deeply human. Using the tropes of ecological consciousness, gendered realities, and dystopian caution, the novel reexamines the forms of human interaction with the natural environment and with each other.

Barbara Kingsolver: Biographical Context and Ecofeminist Trajectory

Barbara Kingsolver is a Maryland native who has developed a literary imagination out of her life experiences, as well as her education in the biological sciences, combined with a long-term interest in feminist and environmental discourse. Her fictional works are the results of the close experiences of life, and gradually develop into broad meditations on ecology, gender, and communal activity. The early novel *The Bean Trees* is the most renowned illustration of this direction: it was written at the time when its author was pregnant and could not sleep at night, tracing the journey of a young woman who rejects the norms of early motherhood, leaves Kentucky, and changes her name. The course of her life changes when she comes across an orphaned Native American child, Turtle. Her initial hesitancy transforms into a caring life experience, and thus, Kingsolver redefines motherhood as not an obligation but an empathetic, responsible relationship. At the same time, the novel has some ecofeminist undertones, in which nurturing (social or ecological) serves as a moral guide.

The ecofeminist theory is used to make a parallelism between women and the nature as generative forces that are repeatedly devalued and exploited. Even though each is fundamental in the process of keeping human beings alive, both the environment and the woman have traditionally held marginalized in androcentric and anthropocentric world. These ideologies privilege male power and anthropocentric control of nature overlooking these interdependent relationships that truly exist. These hierarchies are challenged by ecofeminism, in which foregrounding reciprocity, balance, and ecological consciousness are registered as the basis of a more egalitarian, quasi-utopian social order.

In the large oeuvre of her works, Kingsolver consistently delves into subjects that include the politics and the environmental ethics and the community life, although she seldom alludes directly to popular culture. Instead of adhering to the norms of popular culture, her characters face modern realities by negotiating their own social limits: women trying to negotiate their social circumstances, communities facing environmental hazards and

individuals seeking a sense of belonging. The instances when joy is portrayed in her fiction are rather subtle and thoughtful and hold the readers to stop and think about more profound philosophical issues than dramatic spectacles.

Some of the novels by Kingsolver feature characters who were involved in activism that was very much in line with the ecofeminist principles. The storyline in *Pigs in Heaven* is a response to the rights of Native Americans, immigration, and culture. *The Poisonwood Bible* challenges colonial histories and the search of political independence, whereas *Animal Dreams* depicts a protagonist being introduced to environmental and social justice movements. Similarly, the ecological interdependence, biodiversity, that is predetermined by ecological awareness, was foregrounded in the book and is a reflection of environmental concern, motivated by Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring*. Activism in such works is not depicted as a heroic spectacle but the result of individual dedication and sacrifices to a more humane and sustainable world.

Kingsolver celebrates the close interdependence of culture, knowledge and ecological consciousness. Artistic practices and local customs in some of these stories serve as the means of ensuring people's struggle against the destruction of nature and commercial exploitation. In her fiction, again and again tensions are presented between Western consumerism and systems of community based on indigenous values, implying that the wisdom of ecology is often surviving in collective traditions, and not in market-oriented ideologies. Such perceptions support the ecofeminist arguments against the current development models that have contributed to environmental crises (Kapoor and Saraswat 732).

Another theme which is recurrent in the works of Kingsolver is the ecological literacy that lies within the everyday activities like gardening, agriculture, and food production. Most of her characters grow their own food, or they have some level of scientific knowledge of biology, reflecting Kingsolver's own background in the life science. This view is also explained in her nonfiction book, *An Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* where she narrates the attempts by her family to lead a sustainable life by using local agriculture and being ecologically aware. These descriptions support the fact that ecological knowledge starts with day-to-day activities and collective everyday activities.

In the novel, *Flight Behavior*, these themes are utilized in a very powerful way because the climate change is put in the centre of the narration. The novel begins with a truly intimate storyline: the main character, Dellarobia Turnbow, hikes a hill with the intention of getting away with the daily frustrations of home life and starting up an affair. She, instead, witnesses a remarkable natural phenomenon, such as a huge assembly of monarch butterflies that were driven by the climate change from their natural habitat. This sudden experience is a turning point which changes her personal crisis into an epiphanic awareness about the state of the environment.

As the story unfolds, Dellarobia is increasingly confronting the reality of climate change as well as the weight of the past, her teenage pregnancy and the loss of a child. The memory of the incident when she was involved in the birth of lambs enables her to process her grief-stricken life and becomes more conscious of the vulnerability of life. Thus, the novel embodies a connection between ecological imbalance and individual transformation, suggesting that the awareness of environmental crisis probably is based on deep human experiences rather than abstract scientific knowledge.

At the same time, the eco-dystopian perspective in the novel suggests that the climate change has already started to disrupt the ecosystems in unpredictable ways. The exiled

butterflies are a representation of the interruption of the natural cycles, and they are a warning sign of what may happen to the environment if it is continually exploited by human greed and ignorance. However, Kingsolver does not indulge in absolute pessimism; she, rather, depicts the opposition between ignorance and knowledge, denial and acceptance– the opposition which typifies most of the modern reactions to issues of climate change.

The novel presupposes that the interrelatedness between the social and ecological systems is a key to preserving the future of humanity. Gender roles as traditionally practiced, with a man being in charge and a woman raising a family, do not seem to help with solving present-day crisis. Ecofeminist thinking questions these assumptions since it emphasizes collaboration, equality, and collective responsibility to the planet.

In this respect, the novels by Kingsolver do not claim to solve the ecological disasters and save all the endangered species single-handedly. Instead, she aims at building a platform of dialogue conducive to conscious and collective responsibility. Through her depiction of common people as active contributors to environmental discourses, her stories are enlightening on whether informed communities can be agents of change. The sense of movement towards renewal that *Flight Behavior* concludes with brings both hope and ethical responsibility in the ecological domain, reminding her readers that awareness, empathy, and activism are still necessary to combat the climate precarity and gender-based exploitation.

Gendered Climate Consciousness in *Flight Behavior*

In *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver, the story the story takes a momentum with a symbolically loaded situation in which, Dellarobia Turnbow, takes an uphill climb in search of a temporal escape from her restrictive domestic life. She decides to have an extramarital affair with a telephone repairman named Jimmy, where the encounter would be temporarily a liberation both out of an unsatisfying marriage and out of a home full of economic deprivation and discord with her mother-in-law, Hester. The lack of happiness in Dellarobia lies in her feeling of the surrounding world; she talks about her house as a terrifying place where the windows are the eye-cavities of a skull. The husband Cub Turnbow partly embodies the stasis she feels in her domestic life; she makes a cynical comparison of him with a young mammal, stressing that whereas actual cubs develop and grow, Cub, her husband, is an emotionally and intellectually inert being: “long faced and slumped shouldered at the door of the family den” (Kingsolver 10). This comparison prefigures a connection of human behaviour with environmental and animal images is what the novel’s plot intends to highlight.

Although she is presented as a strong-willed woman from the very beginning, her journey exemplifies a great inner struggle in her. As she climbs the mountain, she starts to reflect on the consequences of the acts that she performs and starts to question her intentions. She, first of all, sees a forest fire, a conflagration that is burning the hillside, as an ominous miracle, as though it were a message of God preparing to punish her on account of a costly error. But she is prompt to dismiss the idea that a phenomenon like this could be specifically meant for her. Her introspection shows a mixed array of self-doubt, fatalism, and awareness of previous choices, which had already set her into a tough situation. She does realize that her infernal infatuation involving her extra-marital affair demanded an even greater force to counter this obsession, and the burning forest appears to implicate exactly that.

But this real disaster is soon exposed as an illusion. When Dellarobia takes a closer look, she discovers that what she is seeing is not a blaze, but millions of monarch butterflies gathered on the trees. This view is spectacular and it breaks her planned escape– a turning point in her life. The butterflies, later realized to have been displaced due to climate change, become,

in effect, a moral awakening for Dellarobia who immediately realizes the dangers that her intended affair involves: the life of Jimmy, the person whom she would walk away with would probably remain unaffected, whereas her own life, security and social status would fall to pieces in a moment. Realizing this, she walks out of the affair and goes back home ashamed of the emotional storm she was about to unleash.

However, such a choice- her return home- is not a passive return to her previous situation. Instead, the meeting with the butterflies sparks off a change in her. She is more vocal and self-conscious, and does not silently withstand the frustrations that were gnawing her. Kingsolver describes this transition in a very graphic way: the arguments that Dellarobia once used to gulp daily like pebbles suddenly came out of her in the form of leaping frogs (Kingsolver 150). The incident serves the purpose of shock therapy, raising her voice and feeling of power. This transformation is also important as it prefigures the following activity that Dellarobia will be engaged in as a dean of environmental awareness and scientific literacy. The personal story of Dellarobia is closely tied with the novel's ecological motif. Her early life is characterised by a series of restrictions: when she was of seventeen only, she got pregnant, lost her first baby soon after its birth before she was pressed to marry Cub Turnbow, and her restricted domestic life shattered her dreams of higher education and career growth. Her duties as a housewife have over the years made her feel like she is a prisoner, leading her to feel like one who has been displaced in the life that she could have led. She feels rejuvenated when she finally engages with the scientist Ovid Byron in the study of the butterflies. The collaborative venture with Ovid allows her exposure to climatic science and environmentalism, allowing her to reinvent herself outside of the confining demands of her community.

The butterflies in the novel reach Tennessee due to the fact that their usual habitat in Mexico has been ruined by the hydro-meteorological flooding and it is causing the butterflies to deviate from their course. The way Dellarobia is trapped in a restricted life parallels the way the monarch butterflies are displaced by the climatic forces. Kingsolver uses this simile to build an ecofeminist metaphor: women and natural species have to adapt for survival, struggling in a system which is unheeding to their welfare. Dellarobia's act of raising awareness on the butterflies and climate change is not a mere act of environmentalism but also a way of personal liberation (.

This fact echoes the ecofeminist perspective that nature is resilient but with a limitation to endure. Most scholars who have studied the work of Kingsolver have often observed that ecosystems are capable of regenerating from the damages done on nature so far but the constant exploitation of nature may lead the ecosystems to meet an ultimate destruction. A similar rationale can be applied to women who adapt to survive in the oppression system but their resilience and ability to adapt can last indefinitely without consequences. In this sense, both Dellarobia and the monarch butterflies are those who are forced to change their 'flight behaviours' owing to the impact of human intervention and environmental disruption.

The interaction of Dellarobia with the displaced monarch butterflies is not only a scientific phenomenon, but also an experience of a strong emotional and moral upliftment. In her novel, Kingsolver illustrates how individual change and environmental awareness tend to appear together. The experience of Dellarobia demonstrates the environmental issues through her feelings, strength, and growth. Through her fiction, in matching the experience of women with ecological displacement and ecological adaptation, Kingsolver argues that there is the urgency to redefine the relationship of humanity with nature. In this respect, the eco-dystopian echoes of the novel, where climate destabilization is already altering the structure of

ecosystems, play the role not as a mere warning but as an invitation to develop the sensibility, compassion, and collective responsibility towards the future.

Eco-Dystopian Consciousness in *Flight Behavior*

Barbara Kingsolver opens the novel *Flight Behavior* with an episode of highly visual, emotional verisimilitude, which at once sets forth the symbolic and ecological concerns of the novel. Dellarobia's first encounter with the monarch butterflies reminds an epiphanic moment: the moment of the valley of light that seems to defy normal time and encourage interpretations. The first thing that Dellarobia misunderstands is the reality of the phenomenon: a forest conflagration; and then she realizes that there are millions of monarch butterflies in the trees near her home. This scene presents the first tension in the novel: it is a combination of local economic needs, ecology, and the global warming.

The introduction of entomologist Ovid Byron can be seen as a turning point in the emotional life of Dellarobia. An African-American scientist in entomology, he explains that the unexpected occurrence of the butterflies is not a divine intervention or the act of God but as a result of anthropogenic climate change. His scientific interpretation transforms their fantastic thought into empirical proof of ecological disturbance, and his mentorship fosters in Dellarobia a curiosity and an investigative mind that once socioeconomic deprivation and poor access to education had denied. In her contacts with Ovid, she becomes the active participant in the process of understanding the environmental processes.

Kingsolver extends this direction by subtle symbolism and intertextual allusions. The name 'Ovid' is reminiscent of the classical author who wrote the *Metamorphoses* that focuses on transformation. Dellarobia transforms from being a marginalized housewife to someone aware of environmental concerns around her and intellectually participating in her world. Her growing understanding of environmental precarity is a parallel to her newfound identity and identity.

As Dellarobia widens her field of knowledge, she realizes how uncertain the environmental change is. The eco-dystopian undercurrent of the novel can be traced by the way in which Ovid warns that the earth is possibly entering a new earth, where even the familiar patterns of nature can no longer be expected on earth. The term "eco-dystopia" suggests future shaped by climate disruption and unpredictable behaviours of nature. Dellarobia subconsciously senses the truth of this idea: the world she is familiar with is slowly changing in such a manner that it is hard to ignore. Thus, Kingsolver is able to present the sense of anxiety attached to global warming, highlighting at the same time the significance of environmental awareness and adaptive capacity (Gausvami and Patel 3).

Religion plays a significant role in the interpretation of the butterflies by the local people. Most of the residents of Feathertown attribute unusual natural events to a religious occurrence and interpret weather and environmental changes as belonging to the act of God. The butterflies to others symbolize divinity or resurrection. These reactions illustrate the use of traditional belief systems by communities to explain unexpected ecological events. At the same time, Kingsolver also questions the insufficiency of the strictly religious answers to the complicated environmental issues, implying that faith can bring comfort but it can never entirely face the material conditions of the climate change.

The other responses in the community are more practical or exploitative. To the in-laws of Dellarobia, the tourists and eco-tourists arriving in the region is an opportunity to generate an additional source of income that would ease their financial burden. The media also present the event as a powerful story to cater to their business. These varied reactions help the

novel portray the situation whereby one and the same event of the environment can be perceived differently depending on the economic need, cultural beliefs, and ideologies perspectives. The butterflies, therefore, are a multidimensional symbol, a scientific puzzle, a religious promise, a business opportunity, and a danger to the balance of the ecology.

Fundamentally, the novel critiques the consistent inability of humanity to perceive climate change in all its seriousness and the lack of an eco-centric perceptions of the world. People do not care about the environmental instability in the world, or redefine it to suit their own interests. Kingsolver shows how the media, religion and local economies tend to contextualize the environmental events in a manner that is conducive to a particular agenda at the expense of the ecological reality.

The eco-dystopian aspect is highly evident when the narrative draws to its end. The changed weather conditions lead to a spectacular thunderstorm and flash floods that recall the memory of a Biblical flood. This instance is symbolically related to the idea of destruction, as well as the idea of renewal. The contrast between the images of the fire and water helps to assume that the ecological change can pose a threat to life and renew it as well. As the butterflies finally fly away, the moment does not only signify the disappearance of a spectacular view but also opens new possibilities.

The tone of the novel is neither too admonitive nor too pessimistic. Although the novel defines the consequences of the climate change and human apathy in detail, it also suggests that ecological and personal changes are not impossible. Kingsolver does not mean that solitary figures can solve the environmental crisis affecting the globe, but she stresses that there should be dialogue, knowledge, and action. The narrative explores ecological knowledge through the lived experience of Dellarobia, showing that an ecological understanding can be accompanied by moments of surprise, shock, and self-discovery. A story of exploration and transformation, the novel, thus, asks its readers to reconsider their relationship with nature and the delicate systems that permeate it.

Conclusion

Barbara Kingsolver has played a central role in the development of ecofeminist theory in modern literature by challenging the complex intersection between women, the society and the environment. Her plots and stories, again and again, present strong female characters who stand against the conventional social setting shaped by androcentrism and anthropocentrism. Her fiction also gains even greater significance when it spreads the message of an ecological responsibility, and thus, the ecological crisis, the climatic instability, and the socio-economic injustice converge in her story, showing the consequence of human negligence of both the ecosystem and society.

The novel's eco-dystopian approach is demonstrated by the unusual appearance of monarch butterflies, which is a hint of a more profound environmental violation caused by the climate change. Their unusual appearance in the rural Appalachia not only serves as a spectacular image, but also offers an indication of imminent changes to be perceived in the natural order. This displacement of the monarch butterflies is a reflection of Dellarobia's course of life restricted by economic poverty, lack of opportunities, and social stricture. The development of Dellarobia into knowledge and self-confidence is similar to the novel's message of the greater ecological awareness. The butterflies symbolically represent human precarity, fragility, and resilience in a world that is being increasingly affected by the climate precarity. Kingsolver thus alludes to the idea that the recognition of environmental crisis can

lead to not only the increased ecological consciousness, but also the individual change and the growth in social consciousness.

Another aspect that the novel outlines is the role of human choices in the ecological instability. Bear Turnbow's contract with a logging firm exemplifies the economic strain in the community, which in turn aggravates the ecosystem which has already been fragile. Such human choices caused by the inescapable economic hardship highlight the roles of material interests in ecological instability, characterizing as an eco-dystopian landscape in which nature is struggling hard to survive under human exploitations. Weather irregularities, floods, and a change of seasons hint at the earth's gradual movement towards a state of ecological imbalance. Thus, Kingsolver argues that the environmental crisis is not a far-off, imaginary danger but a process which is unfolding in the present.

Flights Behavior enhances the necessity to renew a more harmonious interaction between the human and non-human world, on the one hand, and at the same time, the multifactorial social and economic predeterminants that contribute to the development of reaction of people towards the ecological issues. Combining scientific knowledge with emotional and social narratives, Kingsolver shows how climate change affects the ecosystems, but also the lives of ordinary people. This open ending of the novel is an eco-dystopian warning note: the future is unpredictable as society is yet to fully address the strained interaction between humans and the environment. Through this intentional ambiguity, Kingsolver asks her readers to re-evaluate their relationship with the earth and to imagine more sustainable forms of coexistence that can fully address the delicate ecological balance.

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