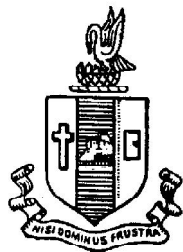


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# **LITERARY EXPLORER**

**An Annual Publication of Critical Studies in  
English Language and Literature**

*A Peer Reviewed and Refereed Journal*



**Department of English  
Bishop Heber College (Autonomous)**  
(Nationally Reaccredited with 'A' Grade by NAAC with a CGPA  
of 3.58 on 4 Point Scale)  
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TIRUCHIRAPPALLI - 620 017

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*About the Journal . . . . .*

**Literary Explorer (ISSN 0973 0524)** is an annual literary journal, published by the Department of English, Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli, TN, S. India. It looks forward to publishing quality work by teachers and research scholars who are motivated to write well-researched articles, book reviews and also interviews with renowned writers. Articles submitted for publication are reviewed and selected by a panel of experts in the field of English Language and Literature.

The writing should adhere to the 8th Edition MLA Handbook specifications, and should be between 1500 and 2500 words. It must be original and should not have been previously published in any other magazine or journal.

Articles for publication in **Literary Explorer**, November 2023 should reach the Editor by the end of May 2023.

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## Editorial Note:

Warm Greetings from the Department of English, Bishop Heber College!

The mission of the journal, *To Serve and Be Served* is realized this year in the form of quality research papers that were cherry picked from presentations at two conferences held this year namely, *Environmental Imagination and Greening of Literary Studies* and *Professionalism in ELT: Concepts, Applications and Implications*. The Staff and Students of the Department are rather excited that we are bringing out the speech of **Prof. Scott Slovic**, an internationally acclaimed eco-critical scholar, yet a humble and amiable friend to us; we record our profuse thanks to him. We also thank the Plenary Speaker **Prof. Françoise Besson**, Professor Emerita, Université Toulouse -Jean Jaurès, France and to **Dr. Khadija Al Balushi**, Senior Specialist Ministry of Higher Education, Sultanate of Oman.

As always care was taken to select articles based on the research utilitarian value of research insights about which Dr. K. Shanthi, the Organizing Secretary of the conference will detail in her editorial. On behalf of the Editorial Board and the Advisory Board I thank her deeply for gladly accepting to be the Editor of the issue when the mantle fell on her. Mr. J. Edwin Moses deserves our sincere thanks for shouldering the arduous task of sifting, pruning and proofreading along with Dr. Shanthi without a bit of cringing all through these six months from the time the conferences got over.

We record our deep indebtedness at this juncture to our learned members of the Advisory Committee who are a source of counsel and inspiration. My thanks are due also to the concerted efforts of the Editorial Team but for whose counsel the work would not be done in time.

Please send your feedback to [litexplorer66@gmail.com](mailto:litexplorer66@gmail.com).

**S. Sobana**  
**Editor-in-Chief**

**Editorial**  
**Preface & Perspectives –**

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to be otherwise.” Aldo Leopold

Nature, the pastoral conventions, environmental thinking and ecological consciousness as literary and cultural constructs have stayed with us for more than two millennia in the collective imagination of the communities far and wide, in the ancient and the contemporary patterns of life, thinking, thoughts and most importantly recorded in oral and written forms in literatures of the West and the East. ‘*Tinai* Literature’ of the *Sangam* age, the modern ‘*Tinai* Studies’ of Dr. Nirmal Selvamony, the numerous folk tales and the vegetations myths of the indigenous communities of the East, all keep abreast with the West with a long history of such conventions infused in their way of life from the medieval 316 c. to the post-postmodern times are adequate testaments of the nature consciousness as an internalized phenomenon in cultures and communities. Aristotle’s principle of Arcadia as classroom, Theocritus’ pastoral ‘Idylls’, Sidney’s ‘Arcadia’, Cervantes’s ‘Don Quixote’, Shakespeare’s pastoral romance, Dante, Giovanni, Boccaccio’s eclogues in Latin, Spenser’s eclogues in English, Milton’s sylvan scenes on epic scale, Romantics’ clarion call of ‘Return to Nature Movement’, to the ‘Preservationists’, the ‘Conservationists’ Movements, the English Green Studies and the American ecocriticism, are a few to state as landmark evolutions. Further down the line, Leo Marx’s inquiry on the ecological crises has transformed the past pastoral convention to ‘post-pastoral’, ‘neo-pastoral’, ‘urban-pastoral’, ‘gay-pastoral’, ‘pro-environmentalism’ which are rather radical conceptions of how one needs to resolve the present day environmental crises unlike the romanticists who showered encomiums on nature in the past.

It was providential that the Covid-19 pandemic world could see yet another International Conference on “Environmental Imagination and Greening of Literary Studies” hosted by the PG and Research Department of English, Bishop Heber College, Trichy on 27 & 28 July 2022 to identify the lacuna or problems in man’s approach to the environment from the literary perspective and to highlight the fact that Environmental justice will become a major cause for all the national groups. The conference accentuated the need for Environmentalism to play a major role not only in economy and politics but also in literature to produce “green” literature and to resolve to go green in talk, walk and write “green”.

I am highly indebted to the Keynote Speaker **Prof. Scott Slovic**, University Distinguished Professor of Environmental Humanities at the University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho, the USA, one of the seminal minds in Environmental thinking, a doyen of Ecocriticism, the 1st elected **President of ASLE**, for passing on the quintessence of his address amidst all his assignments to be published in this journal. I record my profuse thanks to **Prof. Françoise Besson**, Professor Emerita, Université Toulouse -Jean Jaurès, France, the Plenary Session speaker for readily passing on her extensively researched article for the gain of scholars. My thanks are due to **Prof. Nirmal Selvamony**, Formerly, Professor of English, Madras Christian College, Chennai and Professor & Head of the Department of English(Rtd) and Dean, School of Social Sciences, Central University of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvarur, **Prof. D.E. Benet**, Co-ordinator of IQAC and Associate Professor of English, National College, Trichy and **Dr. Joyce Onoromhenre Agofure**, Lecturer, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, for their enormous insights on environmental imagination and greening of literary studies which proved to be an impetus for scholars and academicians to come out with their best ecocritically sound research

papers which find place in this Journal “*Literary Explorer*”. I am thankful to **Dr. Karthika V.K.**, Assitant Professor, National Insitute of Technology, Trichy for sharing her ideas on Language Teaching Learning and the role of Teachers. Readers may also find a handful of contributors who have written articles on areas other than ecoliterature like ELT which are worth mentioning.

As the Editor of this special issue journal ‘**Literary Explorer**’ published by the Department of English, Bishop Heber College, I express my deep sense of gratitude to our Patron and Chairman, **Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Chandrasekaran**, Bishop of Trichy-Thanjavur Diocese and Chairman & Secretary, General Body, Bishop Heber College, **Dr. Paul Dhayabaran**, Principal, **Prof. V. Alagappa Moses**, Vice Principal (Aided), **Dr. J.G.R. Sathiasaelan**, Vice Principal (SF), **Dr. G. Gnanaraj**, Bursar, **Dr. S. Sobana**, Dean of Arts and Head, Department of English, **Dr. Suresh Frederick**, Dean of Research & Development, UG Head, Department of English, **Dr. C. Dhanabal**, Dean of Training and Placement, Coordinator, Shift-II, Department of English for their tremendous support in this endeavour.

I record my sincere thanks to **Dr. Sobana, Head, Department of English** for having bestowed her motivation, guidance and goodwill in all spheres of our activities and in the publication of this special issue with a major focus on Ecocriticism. I record my heartfelt thanks to **Mr. J. Edwin Moses**, Assistant Professor of English for the constant support he extended in every venture towards the accomplishment of this project. My special thanks are due to **Mr. J. Milton Ananya, Dr. A. Geethanjali**, Assistant professors of English and **Ms. Ressay Anugraha**, Research Scholar for working out the logistics in culling out the best articles for the publication in

this journal. I thank all the teaching fraternity of the Department of English for their goodwill gestures at various stages.

I appreciate the Professors and the Scholars from various Universities/ Colleges for their research papers which find place in this Special Issue. All of these show the positive signs of change in the academia fulfilling the intention of the Conference that “Teaching and studying literature without reference to the natural conditions of the world and the basic ecological principles that underlie all life seems increasingly shortsighted, incongruous” (Glen A. Love). Save nature and save the only living planet, the Earth.

**Dr. K. Shanthi**  
**Editor of the Issue**

## **Acknowledgements**

This issue of *Literary Explorer* wouldn't have been such a joy to publish if these people hadn't consistently supported this endeavour. The Faculty of Department of English owe much to:

Dr. Paul Dhayabaran, our honourable Principal of this esteemed institution for extending support and encouragement that enabled us to carry out this project. The timely provision of Financial aid from the Management helped us to bring out the journal on time. We record our heartfelt thanks to our Principal and the Management.

Our thanks and indebtedness are due very specially to Dr. Joseph Dorairaj, Dr. Joseph Albert, Dr. R. Roopkumar Balasingh, Dr. U. Sumathy and Dr. Subathini Ramesh for readily accepting to serve as Advisors on the Editorial Board of the journal. Their fund of experience and expertise are sure to help the department and the journal alike take bold strides in research.

The Editor of the issue, Associate Editor and Editorial Committee members who are our Faculty, deserve special appreciation and thanks for their help in meticulous proofreading and their invaluable advice in typesetting and bookmaking which made it possible to finish the work in time. We have always appreciated the oneness we cherish in working together.

I also thank and appreciate UV Printers, Tiruchirappalli for their enormous contribution in designing the book into a pleasing form.

**S. Sobana**  
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**In Medias Res: Complacency, Vigilance, and the Practice of the Medical-Environmental Humanities during the Ongoing COVID Pandemic**

**Prof. Scott Slovic**

University Distinguished Professor of Environmental Humanities  
Department of English  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, Idaho, United States

Congratulations to Bishop Heber College for organizing this conference; I can see there is a lot of hard work in organizing such a conference which is simultaneously virtual and in-person. Thanks to the wonders of Zoom, I am sitting in the state of Oregon in the United States but I was able to lecture in China a few hours ago and now I'm "in" Southern India.

I would like to stay within my allotted time and give you a brief presentation about some of my current research. During the many years that I've been doing Ecocriticism and interdisciplinary Environmental Humanities Research, I've done a lot of different types of studies. Some of them, as Dr. Sobana was explaining earlier, focused on analyzing specific literary texts from an environmental point of view, and I don't do so much of that anymore. I've also done a lot of historical summaries and analyses of the tradition of Ecocriticism, the historical development of the field in the United States and internationally. So I'm very well aware of Professor Nirmal Selvamony's work on *Tinai* as well as different traditional approaches in countries like India, particularly Tamil Nadu, Australia, Japan and China, various regions of Europe, and other parts of the world like Africa and Latin America.

I've employed a variety of approaches in my own work, but one of the consistent threads throughout my research over the years has been the interdisciplinary aspect of my projects. Even when I was still a PhD student, I found myself interested in the social science of psychology, the way the human mind works. I was fascinated by this

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and wanted to develop my knowledge further with regard to how the mind becomes aware of the natural world and also how we lose awareness, how our awareness rises and falls. I was particularly interested from the very beginning of my professional work in ecological literary studies, or what we've come to call ecocriticism; and my own work has often emphasized the psychology of environmental literature and the psychology of environmental communication. The talk that I'm going to give to you now is basically in that vein, taking certain psychological ideas and trying to apply them to the way human beings respond to certain types of textual prompts.

So, my title is *In Medias Res*. That's Latin for "in the middle of things." I first learned this concept in relation to literary texts that start in the middle of a story. "In medias res" refers to a story that begins in the middle rather than obviously at the beginning; that, to me, it seems like an appropriate way to identify the fact that we continue to be in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, no longer at the beginning of this experience and certainly not at the end. Despite the fact that many people around the world are behaving as if a pandemic occurred in the past, as if we are now beyond the pandemic, I don't believe that to be true. In fact, I think we should continue to try to learn from the COVID pandemic as much as we can because we may need these lessons in order to help us survive not only the pandemic itself but the ongoing environmental crisis, the global environmental crisis that we have brought upon ourselves. So, I'm interested in what I call in my title "complacency and vigilance." Why is it that we've become so complacent during the ongoing pandemic? One year ago, in May 2021 when I was serving as a Fulbright Scholar at Cappadocia University in central Turkey, I gave several lectures by zoom while I was in Turkey, and no one was in the room with me. I was alone and using the virtual technology of Zoom to speak to people in Turkey and in various other countries. My final lecture in Turkey was in person, but everybody was wearing a mask and we were trying to keep socially distant from each other. That was only one year ago. In fact, the lecture was in a large lecture hall like the

one that some of you are in at Bishop Heber College, but there were only about a dozen people in that entire Hall. They didn't allow more people because they wanted the attendees to be socially distant from each other. We were very vigilant and concerned about exposure to the contagious virus. But now we've entered a period of apparent complacency, so I find myself wondering how literature might be able to push us beyond complacency and toward an ongoing, necessary feeling of vigilance toward the pandemic and also possibly toward other threats, such as the threats we face due to environmental degradation.

During this talk, I'll also say a few words about the practice of medical-environmental humanities research, which started in a formal way about two years ago. A few of my colleagues from India—Professor Swarnalatha Rangarajan and Professor Vidya Sarveswaran—and I began a project to bring together the Medical Humanities and the Environmental Humanities. We found that the British publisher Bloomsbury Academic wanted us to produce a large book called *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Medical-Environmental Humanities*. This book (published in the fall of 2022) contains 30 articles focusing on many different aspects of the interconnection between human health and environmental concern or environmental protection, including physical health and injuries of various kinds such as exposure to dangerous viruses and the environmental implications of these human health experiences; and in addition to physical health, several chapters in the book address mental health, such as the use of contact with nature as a way of overcoming depression. There are chapters on eco-despair memoir, the idea of overcoming grief and despair of various kinds by way of contact with nature. Other essays look at how physical displacement, such as living in exile, might cause psychological trauma; that's an intertwining of a human health situation and a relationship to the natural world. Another of the major themes in this book is our relationship to viruses and also our relationship to other species, which sometimes leads to the spillover/transfer of viruses—what's called the zoonotic transfer of viruses from one species to another.

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The premise of my talk today is that the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and yet the pandemic seems to have drifted away from most of the news headlines in the United States; we hear a lot about the economic crisis, about the war in Eastern Europe. We hear about new diseases such as Monkey Pox which are becoming dangerously prevalent in the US and in certain other countries, but I believe we should still try to learn from the pandemic that we have been experiencing for the past few years and not simply ignore it; and try to go back to our pre-pandemic lives. The pandemic we're experiencing is a very profound experience; it has disrupted our daily lives and our professional lives in really dramatic and significant ways that can teach us, I believe. The pandemic has not finished, as the average number of cases reported is nearly 20,000 cases per day in India in the past week, and in the United States there have been a 130,000 new cases of COVID announced each day during the past several days, specifically the new BA.5 variant. So, I'm quite unhappy that there's a complacency that seems to be taking place in the United States at this time, when we should remain vigilant, and it seems to me that we can learn something about the fluctuation of attention between complacency and vigilance in our various societies with regard to COVID.

In the environmental context, we also experience inappropriate complacency toward phenomena such as global climate change, the sixth mega-extinction, microplastics in the ocean, and the rampant spread of toxicity, such as dioxin spread as a result of industry; there are many important dimensions to the ongoing ecological crisis around the world, and we have a strange and dangerous level of complacency in our societies. There are many ways of explaining this, such human attention, our basic inability to pay attention to so many desperate situations at the same time. But I do think there are certain overarching crises that require us to pay more attention. Otherwise, it's very likely that our species is going to suffer considerably in the coming years. So, I would like to know why we've become so complacent during the ongoing epidemic and what we can learn from this experience of complacency about trying to stimulate and maintain appropriate

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vigilance. In my hometown, Eugene, Oregon, we hosted the World Track and Field Championships last week, and almost nobody in the large stadium filled with athletes and spectators was wearing a mask except my brother and I and a few others. My brother is a physician, a surgeon. The two of us sat in our seats and watched the splendid athletic performances wearing masks, but most people, like the man that I took a picture of here under the scoreboard, were not wearing masks. And in fact, on the screen here, on the giant scoreboard is one of the Indian participants in the meet, a well-known Indian javelin thrower named Neeraj Chopra; there were a lot of Indians competing and a lot of maskless spectators who seem to feel as if there was little danger of catching COVID, but I don't feel that's the case.

From the very beginning of the pandemic, environmental humanities scholars like me have been trying to use our expertise, or whatever knowledge we happen to have in Environmental Humanities, to try to understand the pandemic. In June of 2020 the Swedish website called *Bifrost* or <https://bifrostonline.org/> orchestrated a cluster of 12 new articles responding to the pandemic from the environmental humanities perspective. Many of the contributors were interested in what we could learn about our coexistence with other species such as the animals from which we likely received COVID (could be bats or could be pangolins). So those of us in the environmental humanities are looking at the pandemic and asking, what can we learn from the pandemic about our interactions with other species?

Another scholar, David Pellow from the University of California, Santa Barbara, wrote a short article about what we could learn about environmental justice during the pandemic, particularly the plight of people in prisons who are not able to achieve social distance because they lived in close proximity to each other and are exposed to this very dangerous virus. He wrote specifically about prisons in the United States. The centerpiece of that collection for *Bifrost* was an open letter to colleagues working in the field of the environmental humanities. It was actually drafted by the ecofeminist scholar Greta Gaard, but scholars from around the world signed it. The letter particularly highlighted two special aspects of what we had learned already in the

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2020 from the pandemic. One thing we learned was that we could manage to accomplish our work as environmental humanities scholars (and scholars in other fields) without so much air travel. I have loved my own earlier visits to many countries around the world, including India, but one of the great revelations for me during the pandemic has been the ability to use Zoom and other platforms as we are right now in order to present ideas and engage with colleagues and teach classes. We can actually limit a lot of our use of jet fuel, thanks to the existing technologies.

This open letter from the *Bifrost* collection suggests that the enforced constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed to us how much we can still accomplish without elective travel for physical meetings; another idea from this letter is that we can learn from the pandemic, how closely our lives are entangled with, with the lives of other species and that we might actually use this moment to be more mindful of these relationships and both appropriate and the inappropriate treatment of various other species. One aspect of this is becoming more mindful about our diet and making ecological choices in what we choose to eat or not eat. These ideas about our engagement with other species and our use of fossil fuel to travel were particularly highlighted in the Open Letter in the *Bifrost* collection.

My own essay for *Bifrost* was based on various psychological aspects of the pandemic experience:

Scott Slovic “COVID World, COVID Mind: Toward a New Consciousness” (<https://bifrostonline.org/>, June 2020)

Building upon Paul Ehrlich and Robert Ornstein, *New World, New Mind: Toward a Conscious Evolution* (1989).

Four key ideas: 1) a growing sense of universal vulnerability; 2) a heightened awareness of the human mind’s insensitivity to exponential change; 3) a growing awareness that our interactions with the animal world have genuine

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consequences for human beings; and 4) an appreciation of what it means to put on the socio-cultural brakes.

The first point that I made in my work is that there was a growing sense of universal vulnerability early in the pandemic. Before the pandemic, we knew that certain human communities that were particularly vulnerable, at risk due to environmental justice situations, due to phenomena such as climate change. This included people living near seacoasts, living on islands, who were especially in jeopardy and vulnerable because of where they live and sometimes because of their socio-economic situation. But during the pandemic, especially in the early months of the pandemic, all of us felt nervous about our safety. All of us felt much more vulnerable than before, even those of us who were relatively secure in a socio-economic sense. I view that as a good thing—we all had a taste of vulnerability, or what scholars in the humanities call precarity, and we began to realize that precarity has the potential to affect all of us, not only certain communities. Another idea we became more aware of is the human mind's insensitivity to exponential change. This includes the idea that extinctions occur naturally at a low level, but in recent decades, the rate of extinction in the nonhuman world has risen to a completely different level. We are in the middle now of what's called the sixth mega-extinction, with a rapid disappearance of many species around the world. It started slowly and then it increased exponentially to a point where it's sort of a runaway train, out of control. Global climate change is very much like this as well, beginning with gradual upward blips of global warming and slightly erratic climate patterns until now our temperatures are really getting out of control all around the world.

Every year these days seems to be hotter than any previous year. The polar ice is melting, which is changing the jet streams in the oceans and affecting weather patterns, resulting in tremendous perturbations or disturbances, a kind of chaos in weather systems, such as droughts and mega-storms which are increasingly becoming out of control. But it all happens so slowly that we hardly are aware of it until it's out of control. The pandemic, also, started slowly with

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only a few cases and then through social contact and the spread of disease, many other people got sick. We all had this rather direct and vivid experience of exponential change during the pandemic that we can learn from and apply to various other aspects of our lives. A few other points that came to me, early in the pandemic and that I wrote about in this article, which I called “COVID World, COVID Mind: Toward a New Consciousness,” were that our interactions with the animal world, with other species, have genuine consequences for human beings through the zoonotic spillover of disease; and also, we learned what it means to put on the socio-cultural brakes, to actually stop our lives during lockdowns and try to survive after changing society in dramatic ways. The idea that we might be able to change certain basic aspects of our lifestyles, which we most of us have never had an opportunity to experiment with before the pandemic, is very profound and could potentially inspire us to use the pandemic experience to make other changes that could help us out of our ecological predicament.

Also fundamental to certain aspects of the research I’m going to describe in a moment is Rob Nixon’s idea from his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) about the slowness and imperceptibility of violent, destructive phenomena, ranging from pandemics to climate change. This is something that many of us were aware of prior to Nixon’s book, but Nixon’s term “slow violence” is very poignant and poetic and eloquent, and it’s a good way of describing violence that occurs gradually and out of sight. He says “We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (*Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor* 2). This highlights the fact that destructive phenomena in the world are not always visible or perceptible in any way, that often they occur slowly far away and in ways that the human senses and even the human mind strain to perceive. This seems relevant to the imperceptibility of the COVID-19 virus; we can’t see it anywhere around us, so we have a tendency to feel that the virus is not there. If we can’t perceive

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it and, and yet it's circulating around us. It's there, and if we're not careful, we are at risk. Likewise we are at risk, all of us around the world, because of what we're doing through various types of environmental degradation, including chief among them, I would say, global climate change.

So, I'm interested in the idea that pandemic literature and climate literature might inspire positive or pro-social thinking among readers. I understand the feeling of "precarity" as a potentially positive state of mind. By exposing people to literature and film, and other forms of cultural expression related to pandemics and related to climate change, we might help to stimulate a feeling of precarity, a sense of vulnerability, that I view as a potentially helpful state of mind. Most people might think we want to avoid the feeling of precarity; we want to feel secure and safe, not precarious, but I believe precarity is a form of mindfulness and that we want to increase our sense of precarity so that we live more carefully, more mindfully. This might lead us to take care in our lifestyles to use natural resources carefully, to preserve water, to protect other species and habitats. Such mindfulness could inspire us not to use fossil fuels in a mindless, enthusiastic way. We actually know intellectually that fossil fuels are leading to the destruction of the environment and could very well lead, and I'm not exaggerating, to the extinction of the human species due to the increasing uninhabitability of the planet. If we continue in this direction we're going in with fossil fuels and other types of mindless resource use and degradation of the environment, this is going to be a very hard planet for most species to live on, certainly for species like ourselves.

So, I wonder how all people including those in the Global North, who have hitherto lived rather secure and calm and complacent lives, might develop a salutary or a healthy sense of precarity, a new mindfulness, or what I sometimes call a 'full stomach' sense of ecoprecarity. You may be familiar with Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martínez Alier's work on full stomach environmentalism of the Global North and empty belly environmentalism of the Global South, the developing world. The Global South has historically had a sense of

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precarity, precarity in relation to the environment and precarity in their own human lives. But I think one of the goals of exposure to pandemic and climate literature and culture is what I've called here a full stomach or a Global North sense of ecoprecarity. This is because many of us in the Global North use resources in a mindless and destructive way.

Also related to this research is the psychology of insensitivity toward information and how we might overcome it. In 2015, I compiled a book with my father, a Psychology Professor; the book is called *Numbers and Nerves: Information, Emotion and Meaning in a World of Data*. We discuss Psychological Phenomena such as psychic numbing; the fact that we are quickly overwhelmed by numbers any number larger than one leads to a kind of numbness or insensitivity in the human brain. Even people who are good at mathematics feel this; they're more sensitive to the individual than they are to the group. The human mind has a tragic insensitivity to large-scale phenomena. I'll say that again, the human mind has a tragic insensitivity to large-scale phenomena, whether we're talking about humanitarian crises or ecological phenomena. As soon as a phenomenon becomes large, in other words becomes significant, our minds are less interested. We pay less attention to the big and important phenomena than we do to individual cases. Another aspect of this psychology, which my father, and I called "the arithmetic of compassion," is pseudoinefficacy. We tend to feel we can't make any difference when we think about major crises in the world. For instance, if a number of people are in danger and we can't help everyone, we are less inclined to make any effort to help anyone. The same thing is true in an environmental context; if the problem seems big, we fear that we can't make a difference, so we don't even want to bother trying. This is called pseudoinefficacy because, in reality, we do have the ability to make a difference, maybe a small difference, but if all of us work together, we can make a real difference. We can really change society and we can change our collective impacts on the planet. So, the feeling of inefficacy is false. It is a pseudo feeling rather than a real feeling. There are various

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other psychological phenomena that I'm not going to go into now but we discuss them in the book and in the website that we've created out of this book, which can be viewed at [www.arithmeticofcompassion.org](http://www.arithmeticofcompassion.org).

In recent months, I've been working with a team of colleagues to develop new empirical ecocritical projects to understand how the psychology of representing precarity or precarity representation actually works. And in particular, locally, I'm working with my father and with a colleague named David Markowitz, who is a communication studies scholar. We're interested in studying psychological concepts such as emotional contagion, the idea that if you represent emotion such as a feeling of precarity in a text that has a contagious effect on audiences who are exposed to that text. This is an idea that psychologists have developed. There's also the notion of mortality salience; stories about mortality, about susceptibility to very dangerous things that could kill someone, are particularly salient or powerful. And so, what I really like to do is expand certain theories of emotional contagion, focusing on the spread of emotion through story, or what might be called "narrative contagion," the spreading of healthy feelings of precarity by way of exposure to narrative. This is the kind of work that colleagues in the field of ecocriticism would refer to as empirical ecocriticism: designing a social science-like research projects, where we identify textual prompts and then we come up with experimental questionnaires and find a way to pass these out (usually through the internet) to numerous experimental subjects. And then we gather data on how these subjects respond to our questionnaires after they have been prompted by certain kinds of textual prompts, such as passages from literature. So basically, empirical ecocriticism uses empirical approaches combining social scientific and humanistic methodologies to refine and test common claims about textual influence and impact. And these empirical approaches include conducting interviews using focus groups, using surveys, or doing controlled experiments.

What I'm on with David Markowitz is to develop experiments that use survey questionnaires that essentially boil down to asking, How does reading a pandemic-related textual prompt change people's sense

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of personal vulnerability? I'm in the process of developing textual prompts from some of the pandemic novels I've been reading since the beginning of COVID-19. I've written some articles about Peter Heller's 2011 novel called *The Dog Stars* as a more traditional environmental humanities scholar, analyzing the content of the work, but now I'm trying to do an empirical study that exposes people (experimental subjects) to passages from the story like the one where the narrator has to kill his wife who's sick with a deadly influenza virus. She's too sick to survive; she's in terrible discomfort, terrible pain, and she asks her husband to suffocate her with a pillow. It's a wrenching, terrible, painful passage. I'm wondering whether reading literary texts that tell this kind of story will help readers to intensify their sense of vigilance toward the pandemic and perhaps also "infect" them with a sense of vigilance toward other vulnerabilities that they might have in the world, such as vulnerability to global climate change. So again, the concept behind this new research is that reading literary texts or other kinds of texts (such as journalism) spreads important feelings among audiences. I think spreading such feelings of vulnerability or precarity through literature occurs especially because of notions of the way human beings tend to feel empathy. There is a strong tendency among readers to identify with and feel empathy toward fictional characters, whether human or non-human. Suzanne Keen's notions from *Empathy and the Novel* suggest that there might be a strong ability for fictional narratives or first-person narratives in general to transfer important feelings to readers.

I'm almost finished here and ready for some Q & A. I'm interested in articulating to audiences that there is an existential threat to human survival as a result of the kind of planet that we have produced through our technological behaviors, particularly the rampant burning of fossil fuels. Sarah E. McFarland's 2021 book titled *Ecocollapse Fiction and Cultures of Human Extinction* argues that we must learn to reject the impulse of human exceptionalism that she says pervades western thought in particular. Many cultural texts, including quite a few films and literary texts in the genre of cli fi, subscribe to this idea that humans will somehow survive, regardless of how severely we

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damage the planet. We humans are exceptional, this work suggests; we are different; we are not prone to extinction like other species. But there are certain examples of literary fiction such as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and the work that my own current study is based on, Peter Heller's novel *The Dog Stars*, that actually show humans experiencing true existential peril of the possibility of the likelihood of extinction.

McFarland's work and, I would say, some of my own recent work is built upon this notion that actually we can't think of ourselves as being different from other species. We must recognize our own extreme vulnerability to mortality and potentially, on a larger scale, to extinction. Recognizing this will lead possibly to a sense of positive precarity that may allow us to slowly switch directions for our societies. I wonder if certain kinds of stories might help to produce this positive feeling of precarity. Nothing else seems to be working, and we need to do something if we're going to survive the predicament that we're in right now. So, my guiding question is whether we can use certain concepts from psychology (psychic numbing, emotional contagion and mortality salience) and the environmental humanities (ecoprecarity, apprehension, and non-exceptionalism) to understand how narratives might spur a healthy sense of mindfulness and urgent caution in readers (experimental subjects), helping them to become more sensitive to the difficult-to-perceive and difficult-to-understand processes of slow violence. This is the sort of project that I'm working on.

*\* An earlier version of this talk was delivered as a Keynote Address in the Virtual International Conference on Environmental Imagination and Greening of Literary Studies organized by the Department of English, Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli, India on 27-28 July 2022.*

## **Perceive the Colors of the World and Be Aware of A Bond! The Colors of Conscience**

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Why are we moved by the beautiful colors of a butterfly? Just because it is beautiful? Or for some deeper reason? Is the perception of beauty just admiration, or the perception of a bond between our own life and the ephemeral life of a butterfly whose beautiful colors draw our attention to what is essential? Sensing the world helps to understand the meaning of our relationship with it: to listen to its music, to the birds' songs, the murmur of the water and the rustle of leaves in the wind, and to see the colors of the world as cairns guiding us on the way to conscience. But there is also the "intolerable beauty" (Chris Jordan) of the colors generated by destruction, by human activities, and seeing the colors of destruction may also lead us to realize that we can have an active role to stop shedding tears of sorrow in front of the destruction of our world and to shed tears of emotion in front of natural beauty and make those tears be active water to restore the deserts we have created.

### **The green color to avoid seeing the last creature?**

Writers and film makers have often imagined the collapse of our world and a last man trying to survive. Mohsin Hamid writes in *The Last White Man* : "In order to have futures that do not cling monstrously to nostalgia for the past, we must imagine our futures—or rather, we must permit our imaginations, futures to play with."<sup>1</sup> Mohsin Hamid imagines a society where gradually white people would see their skins turn brown and would discover what it is to become part of a minority and to be the victim of violence. The change of skin color generates a reflection on the concept of race and of the fundamental bond existing between all humans. They are all united

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by a same color, brown, after that change, but the change is just a way of making them realize that they are linked and they were already linked before that. The device of magic realism shows a radical change bringing about a questioning: should a uniform color be the only solution to make humans realize that they are all linked and to make racism and racial conflicts disappear? The radical change is meant to shake readers and to urge them to question themselves, exactly as Orwell did when he wrote *1984*, (which he had first called *The Last Man in Europe*) or Mary Shelley when she wrote *The Last Man* in 1823 or Margaret Atwood in her dystopia, *Oryx and Crake*, translated into French as *Le dernier homme*. These novels, all speaking about “the last man,” using the fantastic, science fiction or magic realism, to speak about a threatening reality, warn readers that changes are necessary if we want mankind to live on, but not any changes. Other writers use the same idea of a last creature or element to speak about the threats on the nonhuman world (when they speak about climate change generating so many disasters throughout the world, about species extinctions, etc...). James Thurber used this notion of a “last” element in his book *The Last Flower. A Parable in Pictures*. The text evokes the end of all culture, a vanishing of all life after “Love had passed from the Earth.” In front of a general yielding to nothingness, it is a dying flower that saves mankind. From the moment when a man and a girl bring the flower to life again, a bee comes back, then a humming bird, then “there were two flowers and then a great many.” Love comes back, and with love, children and dogs come back. The small flower has shown them the way to life, in which art is as important as handicraft, as it brings about imagination, dreams and joy and thus allows life to come back. Like Jean Giono in *The Man who Planted Trees*, the author suggests to look and pay attention, to take care. Like Giono’s shepherd planting one corn after the other to recreate a forest and bring water and life again, a couple taking care of “the last flower” makes the difference. Yet Thurber’s tale is less positive than Giono’s insofar as the narrative is circular and always returns to possible total destruction, if humans do not draw lessons from past experiences. Could simply observation change

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things and reverse the general movement? A fragile vegetal and a couple's awareness make the difference in the story. The small flower makes us aware of the weight of the vegetal world, the weight of green.

The colors of flowers help us to feel a sense of our connection with the world. The green color, which symbolizes nature and life, is seen as a shifting from shadow to light, according to Manlio Brusatin, "[...] Being the true color of nature, it simply explains the appearance of the two principles ruling every hue: shadow (blue) and light (yellow)" (Brusatin 21-22). This mingling of shadow and light leads us to a questioning. The colors of the world are beautiful but their beauty is not always a positive beauty. By showing the ambivalence of ugliness and danger hidden in beauty, some photographs want to lead people to be aware of a threat: the beauty of the world is changing side and the false beauty of plastic bottles or of oil or mine extraction replaces the colors of flowers and wild mountains. Their art becomes action and a baton passed to us all so that we should be aware of a bond: a bond with organic earth and all its natural beauty, but also a bond with mankind destroying that original beauty; and we are all part of it.

Colors help us to understand biodiversity. When scientific writers show the abundance of colors in nature, it may be to let readers be aware of biodiversity. Alfred Russel Wallace, in *Tropical Nature and Other Essays*, organizes a great part of his book around colors, and the word appears in the titles of many chapters: Wallace sees the trace of natural selection in colors.

Colors also speak about rescuing fights. Jean Giono with his book *The man who planted trees*, Wangari Maathai, who made the fable a reality by creating the *Greenbelt Movement* and, with hundreds of women in Kenya planted trees and thus brought life again into the desert; Sebastião Salgado, who, with his wife Lélia Deluiz Wanick, turned the brown devastated world into green, or Pedro Fajardo, a farmer and lawyer from the Amazon, defending indigenous populations and the environment against the oil company Chevron in the Texaco-Chevron case, and so many others, are changing the world.<sup>2</sup> The blue oil covering a hand, with blue oil covering the earth in the background,

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is a striking picture to introduce an article about Pedro Farjado's action.<sup>3</sup> The awareness of possible changes if there is action, can stem from the face to face between the brown destroyed forest that Sebastião Salgado found one day in his living place and the green picture of the reconstituted forest which, thanks to his action and his wife's, brought life again to the area. Colors convey the reality of change and this also appears in the way artists evoke those fighters of the planet. Colors convey the change in Frederic Back's film adaptation of Jean Giono's *The Man who Planted Trees*. Whereas the beginning of the film shows a colorless world, the end is full of colors in a series of impressionistic frames, once the shepherd has restored the place by planting one acorn after the other, thus, making life come back.<sup>4</sup> The book evoking 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai's life<sup>5</sup> shows from the cover illustration a world full of colors; and on a photo of the Greenbelt Movement, published by Facebook, she is with Roz Slovic,<sup>6</sup> another woman working all her life to repair the world and who, in 2020, was awarded the first *Roz Slovic Justice Award*, named after her to pay a tribute to her tireless action, locally and globally. Together here, while watering a tree in memory of Roz and Paul Slovic's son, Daniel, they celebrate life and make life overcome all deserts.<sup>7</sup> All those pictures, revealing the colors of the world, also

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ep-a.org/trend/en/brazilian-couple-plants-over-2-million-trees-to-restore-a-destroyed-forest> (accessed 7 December 2022).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/de-cause-a-effets-le-magazine-de-l-environnement/l-avocat-pablo-fajardo-seul-face-au-geant-petrolier-america-in-7731453> (accessed 9 December 2022).

<sup>3</sup> <https://archive.org/details/TheManWhoPlantedTrees19871> (accessed 7 December 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Franck Prévot and Aurélie Fronty, *Wangari Maathai la femme qui plante*, Voisins-le-Bretonneux: Rue du monde, 2011

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC2zihqs9w> (accessed 7 December 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Here's what the *Greenbelt Movement* published on their Facebook account: "Over the weekend, Roz Slovic and her colleagues paid Green Belt Movement (GBM) a courtesy call. She had the opportunity to see and water a tree she and her husband Paul Slovic, alongside Professor Wangari Maathai planted 15 years ago at the GBM office in memory of Daniel Slovic (Roz and Paul's son)." (<https://www.facebook.com/greenbeltmovement/posts/over-the-weekend-roz-slovic-and-her-colleagues-paid-green-belt-movement-gbm-a-co/10152304185887185/>) (accessed 7 December 2022).

bring to the fore the strength of action, replacing a brown world devastated by greed or climate change into a green world where life comes back.

Colors as a questioning: the rainbow-colored landscapes of destruction

The colors of the world are beautiful but their beauty is not always a positive beauty. By showing the ambivalence of ugliness and danger hidden in beauty, some photographs want to lead people to be aware of a threat: the beauty of the world is changing side and the false beauty of plastic bottles or of oil or mine extraction replaces the colors of flowers and wild mountains. Their art becomes action and a baton passed to us all so that we should be aware of a bond: a bond with organic earth and all its natural beauty, but also a bond with mankind destroying that original beauty; and we are all part of it.

The beauty of colors is double. It often expresses life but it can also convey the threat on our world and all its inhabitants. Looking at wonderful sunsets or meadows speckled with hundreds of many-colored flowers can make tears or emotion surge in our eyes because those colors are the inscription of absolute beauty in nature. But colors are beautiful whatever the context and this is what nature writers and artists underline to make us aware of an "intolerable beauty" (Chris

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Jordan) that is no longer a sign of wonder but a sign of destruction. Kathleen Dean Moore, while she was part of the landscape of the marsh, while being within the landscape, underlines that double meaning of colors, which leads us to question our place in the world:

**In the pink dusk**, I ram my kayak through the tule beds. [...] As soon as he [a sapsucker] lands, he scrambles behind the spat but **I** catch a glimpse of **a brilliant red head and a splash of white** on its wings. **He is beautiful. And, it confuses me to say, so was the forest fire.**

I have a photograph that a wildland firefighter took in just this place. There in the foreground is a **green** bank—horsetails and corn lilies, as I remember—and the flowing creek. Every splash and riffle **glows orange against the blue**. Behind the creek are a wave of **purple** lupine and then the **green** pines. **The colors themselves are on fire** in the **purple** storm-light of the smoke. The fire floods into the trees from behind. **Orange** flames swirl into **blue** eddies and, on the **terrible dancing waves of creation and destruction**, billow into **red** flames (K. Dean Moore, *Holdfast*, 142, underlining mine)

Placing the beauty of the colors of nature and the colors of the fire destroying the forest side by side questions us. A photo by Sebastião Salgado confirms Kathleen Dean Moore's words. It is entitled "Kuwait: A Desert on Fire";<sup>1</sup> a fireman is wrapped in what seems to be a bright cloud of sparks, facing the fire. The photo of that man alone in that hellish atmosphere is terrifying and at the same time beautiful. The caption informs us that he is protected from the extreme heat of the flames by the spraying of chemicals. The photographer shows us a beautiful face to face between the huge flame on the one hand and the cloud of chemicals surrounding the man on the other hand: protected from a danger by another danger, he seems alone in a hell on Earth. We can see those "terrible dancing waves of creation and destruction" evoked by Kathleen Dean Moore speaking about another photo of a fire fighter facing the fire. Being aware of that threatening

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beauty is perhaps a first step to try to fight that “intolerable beauty.” Some scientists found solutions in the use of some trees, like cypresses that could stop the fire. Once again, the green color to fight destruction. The first weapon against wildfires is conscience.

Kathleen Dean Moore’s confusion to assert “so was the forest fire” and then to show the riot of colors in the wildfire, participates of a same intention as the photographs by Louis Helbig in *Beautiful Destruction* and those by Chris Jordan’s *Intolerable Beauty* and all those who insist on a new threatening coloring of the world. Colors can reflect the modern threatening metamorphosis of the world

Kev Reynolds, a contemporary English traveller, mountaineer and author of mountain guide-books and travel books, tells about a Pyrenean area that, when he first visited it and walked in it, was a real garden of Eden with flowers everywhere. Nature is transformed as if in a magical metamorphosis: “Day by day the valley was being transformed by nature” (Reynolds 2013, 20). When he comes back there, there is another kind of change: “[...] A once-sacred meadowland was scarred with dry mud and the imprints of wheels, not animals. Dwarf rhododendrons had been desecrated, and rainbow swirls of oil coloured puddles in the track” (Reynolds 2013, 21-22). The colors of the flowers he had described previously are replaced by the artificial colors of refuse and by the false rainbow, polluting mountain water. The sacredness of nature is scarred, irremediably wounded by “the ‘Urban motorised man’,” he writes, quoting Fernando Barrientos Fernandez. The strong words used by the mountaineer are meant to urge the reader to become aware of the destruction of mountain areas by the construction of roads meant to bring more tourists.

The rainbow coloring of oil evoked in Kev Reynolds’s text can be seen on Louis Helbig’s photo “Rainbow Lava;”<sup>2</sup> this is just the physical reflection of light in oil, and the transformation of that physical reality into a beautiful picture showing a land in movement, paradoxically denounces the metamorphosis. When looking at Helbig’s pictures and at the telescoping of their aesthetic beauty and of a terrible issue, we can ask ourselves questions about what we see. Is this picture an

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image of beauty or an image of danger and horror? How can it be that such beautiful representations disturb us and instead of provoking admiration in front of the subject, appear as beautiful visions of horror? Louis Helbig wants viewers to think by themselves. The mechanism of paradox, the clash between an aesthetically beautiful image and a devastated landscape, disturb us and thus question us. When we look at a beautiful mountain landscape, a field of flowers or a butterfly, we feel a sense of wonder. In the case of Louis Helbig's aerial views of oil sands, even if we see beautiful pictures, wonder is impossible because that beauty is associated with artificial devastation. In an interview, Louis Helbig said:

So you have this landscape that is all sort of situated in a broad swath of boreal forest with the Athabasca River running north, more or less due north, through the entire thing and then on both sides there is this incredibly large surreal, beautiful destroyed landscape. I guess, in a way, it was a kind of emotional response. We were stunned by it. After, I don't know, maybe a half an hour or something of flying around, I blurted out on the intercom, Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness* (sic)

It is probably that “emotional response” in front of devastation changed into beauty, an “emotional response” associating the “beautiful destruction” of Canadian landscapes with Conrad's novel about colonization in Africa, that makes viewers aware of the horror of that beauty. “The horror! The horror!” as Kurtz, the colonizer stealing ivory from Africa said. The beauty of Conrad's novel denouncing colonization and the beauty of Louis Helbig's photographs showing the exploitation of oil and tar sands in Canada both show the strength of art. But is the fact of showing a reality aestheticized by an artist's point of view a denunciation? Photographers tell stories—Sebastião Salgado uses the word “stories” to speak about his photographs. And Helbig says: “[...] I did not expect to see these incredibly beautiful, massive, massive man-made lakes of brown toxic water with bits of

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oil floating hither and thither, being pushed around by the wind” (ibid.). The surprise comes from the telescoping of beauty and toxicity; beauty stems from destruction. The telescoping between the horror of the facts and the beauty of the representation is meant to develop people’s capacity to think by themselves, to develop their imagination and through it, their awareness.

Imagination, conscience, feelings and emotions are on the same level. The sense of beauty in front of devastation necessarily arouses something in viewers’ minds, a feeling that has something to do with the conscience of a belonging. The beauty of horror raises questions, arouses the imagination, and it is the addition of all those elements that creates awareness. The journalist interviewing Louis Helbig quotes Sebastião Salgado, and his photographs of gold miners in the Amazon; a debate had started, people saying: “Well, they’re beautiful and you made it look so beautiful and it’s a horrible hell hole, right?” and Salgado said, “well you know maybe through the aesthetic, people can still achieve a kind of reflective politicalness, right?” (ibid.). The answer explains the double response to that kind of photograph, the beauty of which is in fact meant to accuse and to make people aware of the issues which the aesthetic representation throws light on.

Unlike Helbig taking photos from a plane, Salgado’s photographs are taken from the ground. He often walks and has direct contact with the ground from where he seizes scenes, portraits or landscapes. Lelia Wanick Salgado said that in 1984, “the urgency of current events led Sebastião to travel for fifteen months in Africa to photograph that huge tragedy—famine—which fell on the Sahel. The essential thing was then to bear witness to the disappearance of the human being.”<sup>1</sup> Salgado’s black and white photographs are poignant and extraordinarily beautiful. Simple tragedies are perhaps exposed with more poignancy in black and white. “Kalema camp, west of Tigray. Ethiopia. 1985” (also called “During the terrible famine in Sahel, Ethiopia, 1985 “)<sup>2</sup> gives a strange impression. Around an old tree placed nearly at the centre of the picture, with another tree in the background, lots of people are sitting, looking sad and exhausted. Yet sunbeams shine

through the tree branches to throw a nearly supernatural or magic light onto those men, women and children. It is as if they were in a magic forest and yet their sad appearance goes against the impression of magic aroused by the sunbeams crossing the tree foliage. There is something nearly mystical in this beautiful representation of the hardest reality. The beauty of some other photographs comes from the depths of people's eyes and the beauty of their faces. All those men and women have sad eyes turned towards the photographer. In the eyes of all those people waiting in a clinic in Ade, Chad, or in the sad and angry eyes of the "refugee from Eritrea, carrying his dying son, [who] arrives at Wad Sherifai camp. Sudan. 1985,"<sup>3</sup> there is the same exhausted sadness. No despair, no fear, only exhaustion and some impossibility to understand. While fixing those gazes in pictures, the strength of which goes on haunting all those who have seen them, Salgado wants to be a witness and show the rest of the world, comfortably settled in their habits, another reality, the same reality in fact, as the quiet comfortably settled viewers are also partly responsible for the horror of that famine. Can they realize that the steaks they are eating have some incidence on the lives of those people with those deep eyes ? As Scott Slovic said in his lecture presented at the virtual international conference, *Environmental Imagination and Greening of Literary Studies*, "In Medias Res: Complacency, Vigilance, and the Practice of the Medical-Environmental Humanities during the Ongoing COVID Pandemic,"<sup>4</sup> these pictures and texts should suggest to every individual to change his/her diet. It can seem a tiny gesture, but multiplied by thousands, it can make the difference.

A beautiful picture of the progressing desert in Mali," Lake Faguibine dried up with the drought and invasion of the desert. Mali. 1985,"<sup>5</sup> is particularly poignant. The caption speaks about the dried-up lake, the picture shows the desert, with small stunted trees

<sup>1</sup> Lelia Wanick Salgado, *La main de l'homme*, 396, translation mine.  
<sup>2</sup> Sebastião Salgado, <https://www.gualeni.com/Africa-Sebastiao-Salgado.html>, accessed 7 December 2022.

desperately trying to survive, like the human population. And nearly

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at the centre of our field of vision, in the foreground, we can see the frail figure of a child, walking. The child is in connection with the trees, as frail as them, he can even be mistaken for one of the trees at first sight; and like them, he wants to live. His noble gait, his walking step show that, in spite of the natural disaster, he is still standing, he is still advancing, he is still living. The French title of the book, *Sahel, l'homme en détresse*, and its Spanish and English titles, *Sahel-El fin del camino* and *Sahel, The End of the Road*, seem hopeless. And yet there is hope in the tragical beauty of those pictures, hope in the dignity of those who try to live on in spite of the fact that they have nothing to eat, that lakes are dried up. There is hope in the beauty of the picture showing a fragile child alone on a lake changed into a desert, in front of poor trees also trying to survive, a child who walks on with determination, who walks towards the limit of the picture, a fictitious limit masking the reality of the invisible path in the desert, which has no end.

For years, travelling in all the countries of the world, the Brazilian photographer fixed images of tragedies and showed them through beautiful pictures. As with Louis Helbig, or Yann Artus-Bertrand or many photographers showing us the wounds of the Earth and its beauty, those pictures do not show us a hopeless world, but a world in which tragedy and beauty are always side by side as if tragedy could never erase the human beauty of a walking child or of a family standing in the desert; as if the insistence on beauty was necessary to make the whole world aware of a distorted world and that each of us contributes to that distortion. Salgado's black and white photos highlight the poignancy of the scenes.

Those traveller photographers, by showing the movements of the world, its natural beauty but also the strange, disturbing beauty generated by its devastation, hold out a beautiful question mark to us. Do we enjoy those pictures? Do we enjoy the black and white picture of a child walking in the desert? We enjoy the beauty of the picture and we also enjoy the beauty of the silent fight visible in the child's step. Do we enjoy the colors of the sunset on extracted tar sands as

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deeply as a sunset in the Himalayas or on the Ocean? Can we see a difference? Of course, all viewers can see the difference as they can see the questions contained in that strange beauty. That beauty unveiled by the connection between the photographer's eyes and the silence of the starving family in the desert; the connection between the photographer's eyes and the movement of the plane or his steps, the sunlight and man's industrial destruction, contains a questioning in its very existence. When he shows workers' gestures, Salgado sometimes connects beauty and the terror we can feel in front of the extreme danger threatening workers.

Beauty is not always beautiful. Beauty can be fatal. Beauty can deceive those who are taken in by its appearance and it can kill them. This is shown either with a riot of colors or in black and white pictures. Louis Helbig and Sebastião Salgado and other photographers throughout the world show those questionings in their beautiful representations of horror; because they trust us, because they know that we are going to feel the bond with all those people facing danger or famine. Yet awareness can be so heavy to bear sometimes that artists want to show more clearly that there is hope. Could awareness be active if it was hopeless? Sebastião Salgado, who showed all the devastation he met in his travels around the world, decided to show the simple beauty of nature in *Genesis*, a book that is the result of thirty journeys throughout the world: "So many times I've photographed stories that show the degradation of the planet. I had one idea to go and photograph the factories that were polluting, and to see all the deposits of garbage. But, in the end, I thought the only way to give us an incentive, to bring hope, is to show the pictures of the pristine planet—to see the innocence."<sup>1</sup> Salgado realized that spending sadness and fear is perhaps not the best way to awareness but it may rather generate dejection and despair and prevent any action. So he simply showed the beauty of nature, in black and white again. Where black, white and grey highlight the poignancy of tragedies, black and white photos also show the beauty of the light and shapes of the world. Photographer Robert Franck said: "Black and white are the colors of photography. According to me, they symbolise the alternatives

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of hope and despair which mankind undergoes forever.”<sup>2</sup> When deciding to show the beauty of the world, Salgado meets what Kathleen Dean Moore said in a recent lecture she gave in the French Pyrenees: “Our work as writers is to open people’s hearts without breaking them. It’s our duty to show today’s challenges in such a way that people should not be paralyzed;”<sup>3</sup> or “numbed,” as Paul Slovic explains in many articles and books:

Most people are caring and will exert great effort to rescue “the one” whose needy plight comes to their attention. These same good people, however, often become numbly indifferent to the plight of “the one” who is “one of many” in a much greater problem. Why does this occur? The answer to this question will help us answer a related question: Why do good people ignore mass murder and genocide?<sup>1</sup>

For decades Paul Slovic has thought about the reasons that can make people numbed in front of the distress of big numbers of people. In the book he edited with his son Scott, *Number and Nerves*,<sup>1</sup> the two authors say in the introduction that the “desensitization or numbing occurs when we contemplate numerical information about cancer clusters, casualties of war, environmental change, and a host of other phenomena that crowd the

<sup>1</sup> Sebastião Salgado, <https://www.icp.org/exhibitions/sebastião-salgado-genesis>, accessed February 28, 2018. (Salgado, *La main de l’homme*, 336-337).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Franck, <https://independent-photo.com/fr/news/photography-quotes/> (accessed 8 December 2022, translation mine).

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Dean Moore, lecture and interview, Laruns, France, 18 June 2022, <https://ecrirelanature.com/fr/actualites/kathleen-dean-moore-sisyphes-la-meduse-le-pygargue-et-le-climat> (accessed 8 December 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Paul Slovic. ““If I look at the mass I will never act”: Psychic numbing and genocide “, in *Judgment and Decision Making*, Vol. 2,

No. 2, April 2007, pp. 79–95, <https://journal.sjdm.org/jdm7303a.pdf> (accessed 7 December 2022). Paul Slovic notes that his title “is taken from a statement by Mother Teresa.” Also blogs on psychic numbing can be read on the website “arithmetic of compassion”: <https://www.arithmeticofcompassion.org/blog?category=Psychic%20Numbing> (accessed 7 December 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Scott Slovic and Paul Slovic (ed.), *Number and Nerves: Information, Emotion, and Meaning in a World of Data*, Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015.

headlines of today’s news publications” (Slovic Scott and Paul Slovic, 2015, 7). But if numbers have a numbing effect on people, on the contrary, visual pictures can arouse their emotions. The cover of the book is a cropped version of a photo by Kenneth Helphand, “888,246 Red Ceramic Poppies in the Tower of London Moat Representing Commonwealth Soldiers Who Died in World War I.” The choice of a photo which is a burst of color, the red color of poppies, the red color of blood, flowers standing for all the soldiers who died during the first World War, brings a strong emotion into the viewer. Number brings about numbing but when it is changed into a symbolical burst of colors, emotions are aroused. Emotions are also aroused by texts. As Scott Slovic said in his lecture presented at the virtual conference, *Environmental Imagination and Greening of Literary Studies*, images, narratives (storytelling), personalized stories can lead us to be aware of an emotional bond. “Emotional contagion”, “narrative contagion”: the spreading of words to respond to the spreading of fear, and the spreading of the colored words of imagination to fight the spreading of the blank uniform words of the global political and media systems. Beautiful beauty to counterbalance “intolerable beauty,” that “intolerable beauty” shown by Chris Jordan through photos showing the terrible beauty that pollution and destruction generate. Emmanuelle Emmel explains his aim: the artist shows pictures of gigantic heaps of garbage generated by western consumerism:

Every day in the USA, 40 million plastic cups are used for hot drinks. 984 100 litres of gasoline are burnt every minute

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by car engines. 9 960 advertising leaflets are delivered every three second in the letter boxes of he country. The artist Chris Jordan defines the practices generating such quantities as ‘unconscious behaviors’. The idea is that, by living in society, we take part in a process of unbridled consumerism about which we don’t really think. To buy a coffee in the street on our way to work, to use plastic bags to go shopping, are as many everyday life trivial little gestures; but when they are repeated by all human beings, they give these huge numbers. Yet can our brain really perceive the immensity and the terrible meaning of those numbers?<sup>20</sup>

When we see his photos, our eyes first perceive a beautiful gathering of shining colors, before realizing that it is a huge quantity of plastic bottles. This is still more striking in “Cans Seurat”, a reworking of French painter Georges Seurat, *Un dimanche après-midi à la Grande-Jatte*, an oil painting made in 1884 and kept at the Art Institute of Chicago. The famous painting represents the nineteenth-century French society enjoying leisures on the banks of the river Seine. Seurat decomposes light in tiny dots of colors to build his peaceful scene. Jordan takes up the technique of decomposition but instead of dots of colors made of pigments, he uses dots of colors made of objects from our material consumerist society: cans. He thus placed the cans in an order allowing him to reconstitute Seurat’s painting. He used 106 000 aluminium cans, which is the quantity drunk every 30 seconds in the USA. And he called his montage “An American Self-Portrait: Cans Seurat,”<sup>21</sup> The French painting reconstituted in aluminium cans of various colors, becomes a self-portrait of modern America, a self-portrait of our industrialized societies. Chris Jordan plays on colors to reveal the change: the colors of past painting are replaced by the colors of unbridled consumerism and when seen from afar, we are deceived and mistake it for a beautiful painting. But in fact this is only the result of our unawareness, of our consumerism that distorts art, that distorts colors while showing them.

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Representations of natural beauty and of “intolerable beauty,” of Seurat’s peaceful banks of a French river where people just look at the landscape, and of false Seurat’s vision reproduced by Jordan’s methodical organization of thousands of cans, are both necessary. It is necessary to see the suffering of a part of the world, the bleeding Earth wounded by our society in which consumption is the keyword. But the simple beauty of mountains, of a blooming flower and of a bird singing in an old tree reminds us that our Earth is this simple, wonderful beauty and that all the scars devastating it, however beautiful in their air representations, threaten all life on it. The beauty of horror and the beauty of wonder are both necessary to show us what we have to do; to go on wondering at extraordinary natural landscapes or at a mere blade of grass with an insect on it, to wonder in order to have the strength to fight against a devastated world. Those who represent beauty in the sunlight as in scars and holes show us the way to heal a wounded and yet wonderful Earth.

Elizabeth Awalt proposed an exhibition constituted of as many works of art as there had been victims of covid 19, to pay homage to them and also to make people aware of our vulnerability: “Marking Lives COVID-19: A Community Art Memorial & Exhibition” In the article about that aesthetic homage published on the website of “The Arithmetic of compassion”, Scott Slovic writes that “visitors to the exhibition (and readers of the catalog) experience this process of registering the “staggering” numbers of cases and deaths by appreciating how gestures of pigment metaphorically represent human beings. The emotional equation between marks and lives is inexact, but patterns of color do inspire a psychological response beyond the vacuum of feeling left by such numbers as 270,000 or 614,291 or 802,969 [...].”<sup>2</sup>

Patterns of colors are used to honor victims of a pandemic. Covid struck human minds because of the rapidity of its spreading, because of the global lockdowns that followed, because of the fear campaigns accompanying the pandemic, and the same could be done for all diseases spreading because of human activities, like cancers spreading

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because of pollution. “The lives of individual COVID victims matter”, yes. All lives matter.

Colors strike us more than numbers; colors can’t deceive us, which numbers can do. We can believe facts, we can believe what we see, and this is perhaps why colors are so

Cans Seurat, 2007, <https://>

[www.boumbang.com/chris-jordan/](http://www.boumbang.com/chris-jordan/)

<sup>2</sup> Scott Slovic. “Marking Lives COVID-19 Exhibition Catalog Now Available: Recording Private and Collective Responses to the Pandemic”,

<https://www.arithmeticofcompassion.org/blog/2021/12/29/marking-lives-covid-19-exhibition-catalog-now-available-recording-private-and-collective-responses-to-the-pandemic>

**(Accessed 8 December 2022).**

important to make us aware, whereas numbers can make us close our eyes.<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Awalt’s work and all artists’ work to pay homage to the victims of covid 19 are striking because beauty is used to make people remember death. This mosaic of colors representing a virus or simply abstract shapes, should help us remember all forms of spreadings due to our human activities: diseases, wildfires or floods are all distorted rewritings of the colors of the world due to our behaviors.

### **Looking at Beauty to Realize our Carnal Relationship with Nature**

For N. Scott Momaday, the aesthetic dimension of the perception of the world is fundamental. He thinks that the landscape can only be perceived as such if man is conscious of its aesthetic dimension; for Native Americans, the landscape is an element like earth, water, air and fire, which means that they consider the landscape as both aesthetic and vital (Momaday 1997, 31). This explains the link between the perception of the beauty of the world and its preservation. To see its beauty is to feel its life, because the perception

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of beauty makes us aware of an organic bond with nature. This is what appears in the prologue of his novel *House Made of Dawn*:

Dypaloh. That was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting. There were many **colours** on the hills, and the plain was **bright** with **different coloured** clays and sands. **Red** and **blue** and **spotted** horses grazed in the plain, and there was a **dark** wilderness on the mountains beyond. The land was still and strong. It was **beautiful** all around. (Momaday 1968, 1, underlining mine)

That beautiful landscape painting is directly borrowed from the Navajo myth of Creation. The colors of the world are the colors of creation making the world our house, a house that is a beginning, every day is a creation since it is a “house made of dawn.” Immemorial time and organic everyday time are reunited in the colors of the landscape and its nonhuman creatures, horses. In several interviews and texts, N. Scott Momaday evokes the necessity of preserving the planet and shows his own ecological conscience. he insists on the link between the aesthetic perception of the world and its preservation:

But I still believe that aesthetic principle holds: western man doesn't really perceive the world as beautiful. He perceives it, rather, as useful. And to be exploited for its economic value. And I think that's wrong. I believe that unless we change our view, we will simply destroy the earth. We will destroy its beauty, and that will be a very shameful thing. (Momaday in Woodard, 69)

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Slovic's studies, “Human Tragedies: The More Who Die, The Less We Care”, [https://www.ted.com/talks/paul\\_slovic\\_human\\_tragedies\\_the\\_more\\_who\\_die\\_the\\_less\\_we\\_care](https://www.ted.com/talks/paul_slovic_human_tragedies_the_more_who_die_the_less_we_care) (accessed 8 December 2022).

Momaday sees a clear link between humans' aesthetic awareness and will to preserve the world.

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The photographs also showing us the beauty of the world and its scars, try to convince us of the emergency of its preservation. Wade Davis, in his introduction to Art Wolfe's *Hymn to the Earth*, evokes the impact a photograph can have on changing people's way of thinking. It was an "earthrise" photographed on Christmas Eve 1968 by Bill Anders, one of the American astronauts of Apollo 8, condensing "all the imagination and conscience of mankind."<sup>1</sup> Imagination and conscience reunited thanks to a photograph.

This underlines the role of art on our consciences. Sometimes artists show the beauty of the earth through its colors to make us realize the absolute necessity of preserving our human and nonhuman family.

Barry Lopez who, in *Arctic Dreams*, mixed his own experience as a traveller in the Arctic and the numerous travel and exploration books he had read, evokes the carnal relationship with nature through the awareness of its absolute beauty; here is what he says when he has the impression to pass the line leading him to the Far North:

I had a clarity of mind that made the map in my lap seem both wondrous and strange in its approximations. I looked west into Mokka Fiord, to a chain of lakes between two whitish gypsum domes. Beyond was the patterned ground of the mesic tundra. The **browns** and **blacks** and **whites** were so rich I could feel them. The beauty here is a beauty you feel in your flesh. You feel it physically and that is why it is sometimes terrifying to approach. Other beauty takes only the heart, or the mind. (Lopez 2001, 404, underlining mine)

The perception of the beauty of the world is carnal. The landscape is a visual philosophy of the perception of alterity and nature. The landscape is perceived sensually in a synesthetic relationship, he "feels" the colors musically united through the alliteration and the ternary rhythm. If we observe his text closely, we can see that there is a kind of mathematics of words leading the reader to perceive the

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physical relationship with beauty. It is the colors that lead him to that carnal bond with the landscape: “The browns and blacks and whites were so rich I could feel them.” They lead him to this “beauty you feel in your flesh.” Even if “browns and whites and blacks” are not bright colors, they are the colors of that landscape that the traveller feels in his flesh. They are the colors of the earth. When remembering this text and a photo of Barry Lopez, clad in black, helplessly standing in front of his burnt forest and workshop in Oregon, where his writings had burnt, just a few months before his death, we can mentally superimpose the beautiful colored Arctic landscape he “felt in [his] flesh” and that black image of his burnt world, burnt because of climate change. He also felt that burnt black landscape in his flesh. And his apparently helpless presence in front of his burnt forest and workshop and writings, all linked in destruction, becomes, through the photograph and his texts reunited, a silent shout to ask the world to be aware.

### Conclusion

Works of art question us. The works by Harold Slovic,<sup>1</sup> his use of colors and shapes, the mingling of sculpture, writing, painting, elements borrowed from the earth, question us. He drew viewers’ attention on the threats on our planet, with *Threnody for Remembered Earth* (2013) showing us the Earth shedding a black tear, surrounded with its beauty, both dismembered and having the share of a star. The colors and shapes of Harold Slovic’s works of art are questions to us and suggestions to act. One of them might sound like a hopeful vision. *Towards the Green Line*, which has been chosen as the cover illustration for his book of poems and tribute to him, gives an impression of light and colors. The painting is divided into two parts and shows sorts of orange and grey clouds in the upper part, and brown and black shapes below with just a small spot of blue; in the middle, there is a green horizontal line. This looks like a landscape and a sunset except that the sun is distorted and divided into two orange clouds and the shapes of nature are disquieting while the sea is just a tiny spot. Yet the green line and the title “Towards” appear as hope in the green color both dividing the picture and appearing as a horizon line

towards which we should go.

We could end with a sentence by Nick Neely in *Alta California*, while California was burning last Summer, because of climate change, like many other places in the world: “Something like melancholy filled me, but wonder is the antidote, and movement is the path to it” (Neely 13). The multiple devastations in the world, all wildfires more and more numerous every Summer, pollution, the spreading of diseases, all that should fill us with melancholy, as Nick Neely felt while walking alone along the coast of California. Yet he is right; if melancholy and sadness are normal feelings when we feel alone and helpless, we should never forget that “wonder is the antidote.” The colors of the world allow us to experience that wonder and to be determined to preserve it. “Movement is the path to it” and it’s the path to change. Colors are always there to remind us of our bond with the Earth and with one another. Colors are there to awaken our consciences.

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## Re-Greening the De-Greening Literary Imagination

**Prof. Nirmal Selvamony**  
Central University of Tamil Nadu, India

The prologue to the exposition of greening could well be a stanza from Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" (1681):

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,  
Withdraws into its happiness;  
The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find,  
Yet it creates, transcending these,  
Far other worlds, and other seas;  
Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

This stanza tells us that imagination could create other worlds and other seas, probably even utopias, by annihilating the real world and reducing it to a green thought. In this creation the mind finds its own happiness. What the stanza does not say is the possibility of poets imagining utopias made possible by industrialism which annihilates or destroys the real world and reduces it to mere green thoughts. The mind believes that it finds happiness from imaginatively creating destructive industrialist utopias. But is not the mind deluding itself because what it considers happiness is not really happiness? Marvell's stanza could not have said what it did not say because it was composed about 60 years before the Industrial Revolution that destroyed the world he had known.

One of the popular misconceptions about imagination is that it is a useless, and probably even dangerous mental faculty. Useless because it is the opposite of practicality. Dangerous because it is wielded by people like the poets Plato wanted to banish from his utopian republic; like the artists and writers who are punished or effectively ignored today even in democracies, let alone autocracies. But artists and literary critics have told us how vital imagination is for poetry and other forms

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of art. Philosophers have shown how imagination is inseparable from action, even practical everyday action. In fact, imagination transgresses the boundary between the real and the not-yet-real.

I would like to remind ourselves that imagination is not enough; even that of canonical poets. Imagination may not be beneficial if it is not green enough. If so, when does imagination become adequately green? The focus of this essay is not on imagination as such but on how it ought to green what it touches.

If Marvell's persona did not deny the existence of the greenness of the real world, he did wish to annihilate that world and create an imaginary, mental green world which in his opinion was superior to real greenery. So, if greenness was a thought to the Marvellian persona, to modern ecocritics it is objective entity such as the vegetation, or agriculture, or even persons. Greenness is also the environment, and those who hold such a view fall into two groups: reformist greens and radical greens. While the former believe in addressing environmental issues without challenging the existing social order, the latter do call for structural change of society for optimally functional environment (Dobson 4; Sessions xi-xii; Selvamony, 2012, 175-176) and there could be those who combine these two approaches also. Even structural change may not be enough without a clear vision of the future one envisages. In relation to the future what we need is not so much greenness as greening.

A striking example of greening appeared as a report in a leading national daily newspaper in 2007 (Selvamony 2012). Titled, "Greening a Village", it described briefly the tree-planting efforts of one Mr. A. S. Velusamy, a retired headmaster of a village known as celakkariccal near Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu. The reporter said: "Young saplings are spoken to in encouragement, and a tree that has burst forth with flowers is patted affectionately. Only when he sees a wilting tree is Velusamy shaken." Velusamy is supposed to have asked the journalist, 'Will you not feel bad if your young one is ready to leave the world?' and added, 'Trees love human contact, .... When you look fondly at a tree, it nods; when you touch it, it is thrilled! What can get more satisfying?' (Selvamony 2012, 174).

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The verb “to green” in the title of the narrative under discussion could mean “to increase the number of trees (in the village) by planting them.” But the narrative is not just about planting trees and increasing tree cover; it is about a kind of relationship between Mr Velusamy and the trees. What kind of relationship? He speaks to the tree, looks at her fondly, touches and pats her, and he is shaken, and feels bad when she is about to die. On her part, the tree loves being touched and spoken to; thrilled in his presence, and nods. The relationship is not one-sided but mutual. How do we describe this relationship? Here, the tree is certainly not an object manipulated by Velusamy. His attitude is neither that of a reformist nor of a radical nor of a reformist-radical because to environmentalists of all hues, the tree could be just a part of the environment, whereas to Velusamy, the tree that greens his village is another agent like himself.

If the tree is a child, as in Velusamy’s imagination, the relation between the human and the tree is kinship. Kinship is not an idea; nor is it an object. It is a kind of communitarian practice in a particular place-time involving members who seek a harmonious relationship with each other. If one member were only an idea or an object to the other, their relationship is not likely to be harmonious. Each should love the other. As love is based on selflessness and the ultimate values, happiness, reverence, and ethicalness (*tolkāppiyam* III. 3. 1), it is sacred too. So, greening amounts to restoring a harmonious interrelationship.

If so, can I say the tree is a kind of “Thou” described by Martin Buber in his book, *I and Thou*, which has unparaphrasable prose that overwhelmed me when I first read him in the 1970s. He postulates two fundamental kinds of relationship between oneself and the world – the I-It and I-Thou. If the world were to be represented in terms of a tree, either it could be an object, an It or a Thou with which one is bound up in mutual relation. The Thouhood of the tree does not erase the qualities of its objecthood but presents them all in a single whole. As a Thou, the tree “is no impression, no play of my imagination...” (Buber 14), it is quite real.

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Interestingly, the encounter Buber describes is between him and a tree, the latter is neither reduced to the level of an object, nor to a mere “green thought” as in Marvell’s “The Garden,” which would be mere play of Buber’s imagination. Nor can we describe this encounter as a sort of kin relation we find in the Velusamy narrative. Though Buber would regard the tree as a “Thou,” he is not sure if it possesses consciousness. Nor can he vouch for a soul in the tree. The tree is no spirit being either. Probably, under the influence of Christian theology, Buber’s tree is no kin to him like how it is to Velusamy. So, from a *tiGai* perspective, the imaginative poetic prose of Buber is green though not green enough because the relation between him and the tree is not kinship though it is an I-Thou one.

Contrast the tree-Buber relationship with the tree-Velusamy relationship. Consider Velusamy’s question when he finds a wilting tree, “Will you not feel bad if your young one is ready to leave the world?” If the tree is your young one, your child, she is a member of your family. Though Velusamy lives in an industrialist society built on the graveyard of *tiGai*, his relationship to the tree is the characteristic relationship of the latter. His idea of greening his village is nothing but the restoration of the kin relation among the members of the *tiGai* home. Such relation has to be restored because the state and the industrialist societies have degraded the original kin relationship. To us greenness is an object and environment because our scientific worldview legitimizes only such an interrelationship. It is this objective relationship and the worldview that legitimizes it which made industrialism possible in the first place and ushered in the Anthropocene, fouled our relationship with the other members of our home, and warped our literary imagination. Our imagination does not green anymore because it cannot restore the original, primordial kin relation among members of the *tiGai* home.

Green imagination works more like a food coupon in a conference. A certain kind of coupon is food coupon not because the coupon itself is food, but because the coupon helps get food. To change the metaphor, greenness is the fruit of the tree of imagination.

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Effectively, green imagination is not a kind of imagination that is green but one that greens what it imagines. So, greenness is not an object as in the case of our idea of environment, but praxis, a process.

Greening, shall I say, is restoring greenness to the degreened world, a world in which humans and beings other than humans stand not so much in a kin relation as in an anarchic one. A critical form of this anarchic relation consists in the disruption of the most fundamental basis of this relation, namely, place-time. While this basis was taken for granted in both the kinds of Buberian interrelation (both I-It, and I-Thou), the postmodern literary imagination attempts to anarchize the interrelation by eliminating its place-time basis. Consider the following piece composed by a contemporary Tamil writer, Erode Tamilanban when he visited the library of the University of Texas at Austin, in the USA in 1996:

“*āc̣iṅ nūlakamum puranānūrrut tāyum*”

*iṅnum irukkīratu eṅakkuḷ*  
*tekcāc veyil;*

*iṅnum irukkīratu eṅakkuḷ*  
*nācā ēvukaṇaikaḷ*

5 *cīri viṅṅil kiḷampum taruṇaṅkaḷ.*

*eṅiṅnum*  
*eṅṅaiyē pakkam pakkamāy*  
*purrattik koṅṅirukkīratu*  
*āc̣iṅ palkalaikkaḷaka nūlakam.*

10 *puttakak kātalaṅ*  
*pollācci kaṅēcaṅ*  
*kaṅiṅi valaikkūḷ pōy*  
*eṅṅaiṅ piṅṅittu vantapōtu*  
*eṅakkuḷ piṅṅipattatu*

15 *evvaḷavu maḱiḷcci.*

- 20 *āl nāṅ*  
*ampai aṅuppinēṅ*  
*puranāṅṅūrrut tāy purappaṭṭu vantāl*  
 “etarkku eṅṅai alaittay?” eṅṅāl.  
 “kaṅiṅi vālvu piṭṭittirukkiratā?”  
*kēṭṭēṅ.*
- “ettanai āṅṭukaḷ paṅai ōlaiyil paṭuttiruntēṅ,  
 ettanai āṅṭukaḷ kālkaḷ kaṭukka niṅṅiruntēṅ kākita vīṭikaḷil;
- 25 *pātukāppāṅa kaṅiṅi vīṭṭil*  
*pattiramāy irukkireṅ,*  
*taṭṭiṅāḷ pōtum,*  
*caṭṭeṅṅu*  
*katavu tirantu varak kāttirukkireṅ” eṅṅaval italkaḷil*  
*viṅṅāṅam pōṭṭiruntatu melliya puṅṅakaik kōṭu.*
- 30 *muṅṅūrup pūmalarum mūvaṭṭiṭ poykai kaikuvukkāka*  
*eṅṅival paṭṭatum*  
*eṭuttuk koṭuttatu*  
*muṅṅūru nūḷkaḷai.*
- 35 “inta vāmaṅa vākaṅamēri  
 vayyakattai  
 eppōtu valamvaruvārkaḷ eṅṅ tamil makkaḷ?”
- 40 *eṭṭaiya purattāṅaik kūppiṭṭuk kēṭṭēṅ*  
 “vicuva rūpaṅkaḷait tiyāṅikkumpōtu”  
*eṅṅu conṅāṅ.*  
*viruṭṭeṅṅu eḷuntēṅ.*

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Here is my translation of this piece into English:

“Austin Library and the Mother of *pu\_, anâl, û\_, u*”

- 1 Even now within me  
burns the Texas sun;  
even now within me  
remain those moments
- 5 when skyward NASA rockets roar and soar.  
But still  
does the library of Austin University  
turn me page after page.
- 10 When the book lover  
PollachiGanesan  
into the computer net went,  
held me and brought me,  
within me was caught...  
what great joy!
- 15 I, the person,  
sent the arrow  
and out came the mother of *pu\_ anâlû\_ u*asking,  
“Why did you call me?”  
“Do you like computer life?” I queried.
- 20 “For how many years have I been lying down  
on Palmyra leaves!  
For how many years have I been standing  
with aching feet  
In paper streets!

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- 25 In secure computer home  
safe am I.  
A single tap will do;  
ready am I to come out  
opening the door in a jiffy”
- 30 said she  
on whose lips  
had science sketched lines of soft smile.
- For the three-line Haiku tank  
in which blooms three hundred flowers
- 35 when my fingers touched it,  
it took out and gave me  
three hundred volumes.
- “Boarding this dwarf-vehicle  
when will my Tamil people  
40 go around the world?”
- I asked the bard of Ettaiyapuram.  
“When they contemplate  
the cosmic forms,”  
he answered.
- 45 Briskly I got up.

(Translated by NirmalSelvamony [27 Newton Street, Pawtucket, RI, 17 June, 2022])

No one, I hope, will contest the fact that this piece is a product of the writer’s imagination. But has imagination performed its function of greening adequately? There are so many things about this piece that cry out for critical attention. But I will confine the discussion to only one aspect—the idea of a computer home. The mother of *pu\_anâlû\_u* tells the speaker-persona that she is safe and secure in her computer home. As we know, if at all there is such a thing as a

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computer home, it could not be real one, but only a digital or a hyperreal one which has no place-time basis. Like the idea of the home, that of travel is also a digitalized one. The speaker-persona vicariously yearns for the digitalized travel his Tamil people are deprived of. The computer, to the speaker-persona, is a “dwarf-vehicle” which could transport the Tamil people to distant lands. Despite the reduction of actual travel to mental travel and the *tiGai* mother to a digitalized mother, Tamilanban’s piece also promotes fervently, what I would call, “the industrialist utopia,” which seems to be high on the agenda of modern Tamil literary imagination. Strangely, Tamilanban’s mother of *pu\_anâlû\_u* also seems to endorse destructive industrialism by rejecting her *tiGai* home, which in her opinion, is not as secure and safe as its digital counterpart provided by the computer, the highest achievement of industrialism and the Anthropocene. The digitalized home of the semiotic mother is made possible through the elimination of place-time (the very *mutal* or primary reality), the very foundation of the real *tiGai* home of the real mother of *pu\_anâlû\_u*.

As I have shown elsewhere, *mutal* or place-time is transcendental and immanent at the same time and in this respect it is sacred or divine. Therefore, recovering the mother’s place-time based real and local home is, in a way, resacralizing her home. As sacralization is not amenable to modern science, it is dismissed as anti-scientific praxis. Remaining silent about sacralization of the *tiGai* home, Tamilanban’s composition says that modern science has brought a simile on the lips of the digitized mother of *pu\_anâlû\_u* (lines 28-29), suggesting the mother’s approval of the scientific reduction of her psychosomatic and communitarian being to a digital being. Such reduction was possible only in an industrialist society. Therefore, recovering her true nature in a *tiGai* home amounts to emancipating her from the clutches of industrialism.

In the celebration of industrialism and modern science and technology, the verse, “*âtiInûlakamum*” is not alone. It has more than one predecessor who has also imagined the industrialist utopia. Consider the following excerpted lines of the song, “*pâratatçcam*” of cuppiramaGiyapârati (1882-1921) written in 1919:

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They that utter the name of pârâtam,  
Slay the dread of poverty and win the woeful foe.

...

Stanza 3

Mines we will dig, gold and other things extract;  
in all eight directions travel and these we'll sell  
to bring back all that we'd like to have.

...

Stanza 7

A device we'll make to hear in kâñci  
the discourses of the poets of kâci town  
and we shall to the heroes of Rajput gift  
refined gold from karunâmakam.

...

Stanza 9

Weapons we'll make, good paper we'll make;  
Set up we will factories and schools.  
Cease we'll not, nor drowsily nod;  
speak out the truths and make great things.

...

Stanza 11

Magic we'll learn, and techniques learn;  
scan the skies, and the fishes of the sea;  
the moon we'll explore to know it well,  
and the science of cleaning up  
the streets and alleys master we will.

(Translated by the author)

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We may recall that several modern scientific inventions had already seen the light of day during pârati's lifetime. It is no surprise that he dreamt of innovative and enterprising Indians who would take full advantage of industrialism, and gave poetic expression to his waking dream. His nationalism, in these lines, is more an economic one than an ethical one. For example, he wanted the country to invest in mining, one of the worst forms of degradation of *nilamaka* (Earth Woman, *pu\_anâlû\_\_u365*: 10), in order to accumulate more increase national wealth.

But I will focus only on pârati's dream for the radio for India. When he wrote, in 1919 "Make a device to hear in kâñci/The discourses of the poets of kâci town/" either he knew already about the invention of radio in 1895, and wished that Indians would make good use of it for efficient circulation of knowledge or he was not aware of the invention at all and, therefore, thought that he was writing poetic science fiction because the first ever radio broadcast was made in India only in 1923, two years after he passed away.

Evidently, pârati's song (not unlike those of his contemporary successors) is a vigorous advertisement for industrialism, which commenced in 1760 with the Industrial Revolution. But I do not know if the Tamil poets were aware of the radical criticism of industrialism that emerged from the latter's birthplace (Great Britain) itself. When Robert Burns saw the fire and smoke from Carron Iron Works (of Scotland), the following verse titled, "At Carron Ironworks" (1784) wrung itself out of the poet's heart. In standard English it reads:

We came not here to view your works  
In hopes to be more wise,  
But only, lest we go to Hell,  
It may be no surprise.  
But when we knocked at your door  
The porter could not permit us:  
So may, should we to Hell's gates come,  
Your fellow Satan serve us.

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In 1789, William Blake, in his poem, “Chimney Sweeper,” lamented the condition of child labour on which industrialism thrived:

When my mother died I was very young,  
And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
Could scarcely cry “ ‘weep! ‘weep! ‘weep! ‘weep!”  
So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Luddites protested against industrialism, and they were outlawed in Britain. Defending the Luddites, Lord Byron (1788-1824) insisted in 1812, in his maiden speech in the House of Lords, that the Luddites were, I quote, “only reacting due to circumstances of the most unparalleled distress.” Had Byron lived to witness the first World War, which relied greatly on industrialism, his anxiety over modern technology would have only doubled. The large-scale, and faster production of war machinery including weapons, chemicals, aircraft, clothing, and the construction of infrastructures like railways, ports and bridges for housing were all possible only due to industrialization. Even after living through the worst ever large-scale destruction caused by the first world war (1914-18), pârati glorified industrialization in his song he wrote a year after the war.

Eighteen years after pârati passed away, W. H. Auden (1907-73) moved to the US from England, and he was persuaded to respond (in 1939) to the American variety of industrialism with his well-known piece, “The Unknown Citizen.” His persona makes it clear that the industrialist utopia will offer all conveniences of modern life only for a price – the loss of freedom and happiness.

Auden’s composition does not mention computer because the latter became a commercial product only in the 1980s, more than forty years after the publication of “The Unknown Citizen.” Had it become a modern convenience in the 30s, we could have reasonably expected it to have found mention in this verse. But simply because it was not mentioned, it does not mean that what applies to the other modern conveniences do not to the computer, which is also a product of industrialism. What is significant about Auden’s verse is that it is a

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satire on the modern scientific method, which reduces a human to statistical quantities that are unfortunately inadequate to deal with values like happiness and freedom. The poet would have never imagined that some seventy odd years later, happiness would also not escape the ordeal of getting forced into the procrustean bed of the scientific method only to beget annually a *World Happiness Report*. It is this scientific method which validates and makes possible the modern conveniences – all products of industrialism. It is ironical that these products at once yield pleasure and deprive the unknown citizens of their happiness. More ironical is Tamilanban's attribution of the digitized mother's contentment (evident in the smile on her lips) to modern science (lines 28-29). The cruellest irony is the attribution of the discontentment and unhappiness of the mother of *pu\_anâlu\_u* to the absence of computer technology some 3000 years ago, which necessitated poetic description of this persona only in palm leaf.

Happiness is not the explicit theme of pârti's song we discussed, but as it projects a nationalist utopia in relation to wealth, and as all utopias are supposed to bring happiness to the people who will inhabit it, we might presume that pârti's utopia is also expected to be a happy one. Given the high probability of the utopian industrialist Indian being no different from the Audenesque Unknown Citizen, it may not be possible to aver that these personae (including Tamilanban's), who are comfortable with industrialist conveniences which jeopardize kin relation among the members of one's home, are happy after all!

The industrialist utopian verses we considered so far are undoubtedly products of the creative imagination. But these verses also show that the greenness of imagination does not depend on either the intensity of the imagination or the fame of the authors. Rather, it does on the greening potential of the composition. "To what extent does the literary imagination of a composition (that emerges from an industrialist society) contribute to either the problematization or the mending of the broken home of such a society?" The Anthropocene and the Great Acceleration and all the critiques of industrialism have made it very clear to us that neither pârti's industrialism nor Tamilanban's dwarf-vehicle can transport us to the *tiGai*home we

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long for not only because industrialism and the computer are not green enough, but also because the literary imagination (which produced these pieces) is not green enough. Such imagination is probably guilty of breach of the (unsigned) contract that binds the poet and her/his readers. To be green enough, literary imagination ought to resacralize the anarchized and desacralized *tiGai* and restore the reverence due to all life. Resacralization is a part of redeeming reality from dominance, and anarchization with a view to re-green it. This is probably why Watson Solomon exhorts in his “Corona Quarantine”

“The broken oikos must become a fane  
And nature will heal herself by and by.

...

With imagination and poetic skill  
Our thoughts must towards divinity tend...”

The literary imagination that fashioned the industrialist utopia glorifying modern science and technology in “*pâratatçcam*” is as de-greening or anarchizing as the one that produced “*âctiInûlakamum*.” Both de-greened reality by reducing it to electric signals. If the former glorified the reduction of reality to analog electric signals, the latter did the reduction of reality (in this case, a mother) to digitized signals. As *tiGai* home is no more what it is when it is converted into equivalent electric signals (analog or digital) because the signalized organisms (humans and beings other than humans) that constitute it are dehomed (Selvamony 2021) from their real or pre-signalised home that is based on place-time, which is the most fundamental reality (*mutal*) of *tiGai*. When literary imagination does not re-green, it ought to critique de-greening as does Auden’s “The Unknown Citizen,” which challenges reduction of a human to statistical data and modern gadgetry.

By way of concluding this exposition of greening the *tiGai* home, let me attempt to re-green the mother of *pu\_anâlû\_u* and redeem her from anarchization, which includes reduction in all its forms – semiotization or signalization in the following epilogue:

*puranānūrrut tāy\**

(Nirmal Selvamony)

- puranānūrrut tāyyāṅ tullāl?*  
*uravu urupperum narrūṅ cirril*  
*puratul lālā? akattul lālā?*  
*kuramakal vativatu kuriñcik kuṭilō?*  
 5 *uruvil lāta paraveli tāṅō?*
- “ēṭṭil tālil cirraippatēṅ nīvīṅ*  
*vēṭaikoḷ kaṇiṅieṅ vīṭaṅ reṅakku;*  
*eṭṭaiya purattāṅ eṅṅaip piṅikkum*  
 10 *veṭṭave liyilō verummanat teṅṅilō*  
*eṅrum aṭaṅkēṅ; eṅkulaṅ nāṅeṅa*  
*viṅavuti yāyiṅ niṅakkitu kūruvaṅ:*  
*nilamutal tiṅaikkūṭi illeṅ kaḷamē.*  
*illaram iṅyūm iṅpamē kaṅṭu*  
 15 *tīramum neṅcil īramum niṅaintu*  
*nallavai kūra ūravai ērum*  
*vīranar rāyarāi iṅrum uḷamē.”*  
*eṅṅamāy maṅattil eḷuntuma raivarō?*  
*eṅṅāy olirntanai pavarō kaṅiṅiyil?—avarē*  
 20 *tiṅṅiya uḷlamum meyyum uṭaiyōr,*  
*tōṅṅruvar akattilum purattilum, eṅrumiv*  
*vunṅmaiyaik kaṅṭu uṅarntiṭu meyyē.*

(\*See Note for the text in Tamil script)

A free verse translation of this song follows:

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MOTHER OF *pu\_anâIû\_u*

(NirmalSelvamony)

- 1 Where lives the mother  
of *pu\_anâIû\_u*?  
Is she outside or inside  
the firm-post little house
- 5 where kinship forms?  
Where does the hill woman dwell—  
*inku\_iñci* hut  
or in formless outer space?
- 10 “Never am I imprisoned  
in leaf-book and paper;  
nor is the computer,  
your vain addiction,  
my home.  
Never will I be confined
- 15 to the open plain,  
to a mere thought,  
to which he -  
*theemmayapuram man*  
binds me.
- 20 If you ask, “Where do you dwell?”  
to you this will I tell:  
My stage is the home  
of the family  
of place-based *tiGai*.
- 25 As brave good mothers  
we live even now

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- finding happiness only in home;  
with a heart of valor and love  
we ascend the assembly  
30 to justice defend.
- Do they, in the mind,  
as thought appear and disappear?  
Are they the ones  
that glow and die  
35 as light in a computer?  
Strong mind and body  
they have;  
they arise  
inside and outside  
40 the home.  
See this reality  
and realize the truth.

Whether the literary imagination that fashioned this epilogue has really advanced the cause of re-greening our broken home or not is a question I leave you with. Even if it has not, hopefully, it problematizes our urgent task of re-greening the literary imagination.

### NOTE

புறநானூற்றுத் தாய்  
(தீர்மல் செல்வமணி)

- புறநா னூற்றுத் தாயாண்டுள்ளாள்?  
உறவு உருப்பெறும் நற்றூண் சிற்றில்  
புறத்துள் ளாளா? அகத்துள் ளாளா?  
குறமகள் வதிவது குறிஞ்சிக் குடிலோ?  
5 உருவில் லாத பரவெளி தானோ?

- ஏட்டில் தாளில் சிறைப்பேன், நீவண்  
வேடைகொள் கணினியெண் வீடன் றெனக்கு;  
எட்டைய புரத்தான் என்னைப் பிணிக்கும்  
வெட்டவெளியிலோ வெறும்மனக் கருத்துளோ
- 10 என்றும் அடங்கேன்; எங்குளன் நானென  
வினவுதி யாயிய் நினக்கிது கூறுவன்:  
நிலமுதல் திணைக்குடி இல்லென் களமே.  
இல்லறம் ஈயும் இன்பமே கண்டு  
தீரமும் நெஞ்சில் ஈரமும் நிறைந்து
- 15 நல்லவை கூற உஈரவை ஏறும்  
வீரநற் நாயராய் இன்றும் உளமே.  
எண்ணமாய் மனத்தில் எழுந்தும றைவரோ?  
எண்ணாய் ஒளிர்ந்தனை பவரோ கணினியில்? - அவரே
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## Teachers as Professional Practitioners through Action Research

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### **Abstract:**

In action research, classroom teachers act as practitioner researchers doing research based on practice, altering the paradigm of contemporary educational reform. Through a systematic and planned approach to increasing student learning, action research positions teachers as learners and contributes to changing their practice. This qualitative study investigates the perceptions of Omani EFL teachers regarding action research. The goal of the study is to determine how English teachers perceive classroom action research and its effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Semi structured interviews with EFL teachers were used to collect the data. 22 EFL teachers participated in the interviews out of whom were 18 English teachers and 4 Senior English teachers from 4 governmental (public) schools in Oman. The findings revealed that participants hold a wide range of views about action research; while the majority of them believe on the importance of action research in improving teaching and learning, others seem to have some misconceptions related to action research where they think that action research should be done by researchers not classroom teachers. The study generally indicates that action research is an effective tool for EFL teachers' professional development and encourages them to do critical self-reflection. The findings suggest that action research need to be activated at schools to subsidise EFL teachers' learning and growth and to contribute to upgrading teaching and learning at schools.

**Keywords:** Action research, EFL teachers, Professional development, Teachers' perceptions.

**1. Introduction**

Several authors have advocated that teachers should reflect on their own teaching in light of the theoretical and practical knowledge they have gleaned through experience, teacher development programs and professional reading, and to consider the aims and values of various traditions (Farrell, 2008 cited in Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015). In order to accomplish this goal, action research (hereafter AR) is one of the most commonly referred methods. An action research process is seen as a practical way of checking the outcomes of one's work in order to determine whether they were achieved as desired. AR is usually done by practitioners and involves thinking and reflecting about one's own work, thus it is a self-reflective process (Yigit & Bagceci, 2017; Peters, 2004). In other words, AR provides opportunities for classroom teachers to self-assess their practice and make timely instructional decisions based on their students' outcomes (Herlina et al., 2018). However, in many EFL situations, teachers play a passive role in their practice such as those related to curriculum design and development, assessment procedures and other activities like participating in doing research (Troudi & Riley, 1996). These issues are mostly left to "experts" or "researchers" in the field (Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015). Oman is of no exception from the EFL context, as research has shown that EFL teachers in Oman are voiceless; they are in a passive role regarding any educational policies and lots of issues related to their own practice such as curriculum design or evaluation, assessment policies and practices...etc (Al Balushi, 2017).

As regards action research, many EFL teachers in Oman rarely engage in research unless they are encouraged to do so by teacher educators (Borg, 2009 in Wyatt, 2011). In fact, action research is only part of formal structured in-service teacher training programmes. It is not part of the school activities teachers are expected to do. Even if teachers are encouraged to do action research by their teacher educators, the main obstacles distracting teachers in Oman from doing action research as previous studies indicated are overload of work, lack of courage and lack of time (Wyatt, 2011). Therefore, many studies in Oman recommended that action research should be given

more attention in Oman by activating it in Omani schools and encouraging EFL teachers to carry out action research to contribute to their professional learning and growth (Al-Balushi, 2012; AL Balushi, 2017). Given this, this research project endeavored to explore Omani EFL teachers' views about classroom action research, its role and importance in teacher learning and development, and in developing the quality of teaching and learning at schools in Oman. Therefore, the following overarching research questions guided the whole part of this study:

1. What are Omani EFL teachers' perceptions about action research?
2. What are their perceptions of the effects of action research on teaching and learning in their context?

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Action Research*

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1990, p. 5) action research is “trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and ... increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching, and learning.” Dehghan and Sahragard (2015) described it as an efficient way that enhances the teaching and learning practices and helps classroom teachers to overcome their problems. From a similar perspective, Kostoulas and Lammerer (2015) explained action research as a teacher driven activity that aims to find out what works best in their classrooms, so that they might improve their practice and ultimately make learning more effective for the benefit of their students. However, some literature focused on the systematic and reflective nature of doing this type of research in comparison to other types. For example, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009, p. 142) emphasized that action researchers engage in “systematic and intentional inquiry” while Stenhouse (1985) referred to action research as a “systematic, self-critical enquiry” (cited in Manfra, 2019). In other words, action researchers collect and analyze data relating to an issue or issue(s) of practice through a cycle of inquiry and reflection. Swinglehurst, Russell,

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and Greenhalgh (2008) states that through studying complex social situations in educational settings where the focus is on concurrent [inquiry] into practice (generation of knowledge) and action to improve the situation (e.g. designing a new curriculum or learning activity), action research has gained great popularity (p. 385). This self-directed approach requires the teacher to ask essential questions, gather the data and necessary information needed to answer the questions, and then analyze and interpret the results (McVicker, 2009, p. 22). It further encourages them to participate in self-directed exploration and self-evaluation using critical and reflective thinking to improve their current practices (Elder & Paul, 2007).

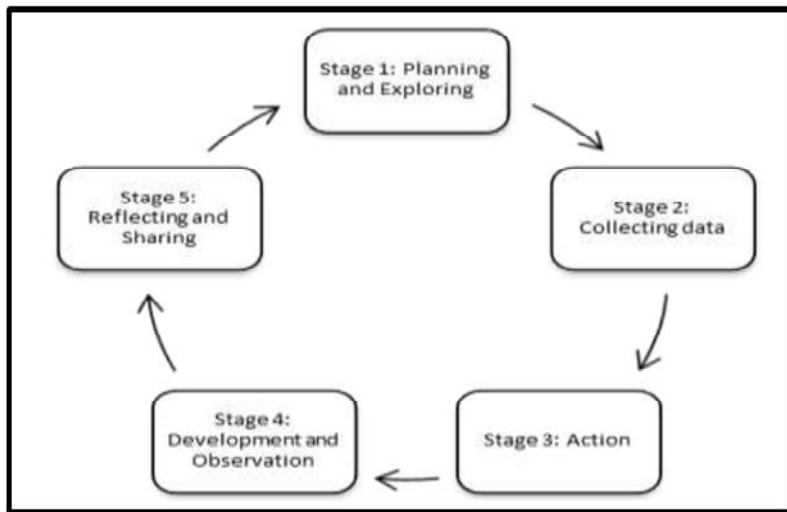
An essential element of action research is reflection, which serves as a way to know about oneself in research and practice as well as to understand oneself more deeply in teaching (Hong & Lawrence, 2011).

By continually reflecting on their practices, in-service teachers acquire the skills to problematize their successful practices and question their daily routines for teaching. These types of reflections are essential in helping teachers formulate action plans with the aim of finding answers to the questions they have, observing carefully, drawing conclusions from their observations, and enhancing their practice by facilitating personal changes in their teaching practices (Shakir-Costa & Haddad, 2009 in Chow et al., 2015). This means that teachers who participate in action research become more competent as they implement systematic reflection: they make modifications to their knowledge base by reflecting on their practice and refining it (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). In addition, conducting action research serves to empower practitioners to effect both practical and critical social change in their school and community (Vaughan & Burnaford, 2015; Zeichner, 2001). AR focuses on empowering teachers to influence changes in their practice, and to improve students' outcomes (Mills, 2017).

A systematic approach is used to conduct action research. Educators follow a systematic process to address the challenges they face in their own context: schools and classrooms, suggest suitable approaches to solve these challenges, observe and analyze the

outcomes, and enact changes in practice, while sharing the results with others in order to improve education (Chow et al., 2015). The literature provides several action research cycles/processes. Yigit (2016) developed a new one as could be seen in Figure (1) below.

Figure 1. Action Research Cycle (Yigit,



The steps of the above cycle are briefly explained below:

Stage 1: The problem is specified, the goal is set, and the necessary tools are used to carry out the AR.

Stage 2: A literature review and data collection about the issue is carried out.

Stage 3: Several techniques are used to solve the problem and a proposal/ plan is drawn up to kick off initiated action/s.

Stage 4: Observations regarding the problem are made again after determining things that are missing and revising the action plan.

Stage 5: Action research results are reflected upon by teachers and shared with colleagues and/or shareholders. Yigit's (2016) action research cycle informed the current study through the five stages followed in it; these stages were explained to English teachers and Senior English teachers (the participants of the current study) during the semi-structured interviews to describe what the researcher meant by action research as explained in the literature.

## **2.2. Teachers' views about Action Research**

There has been a wealth of literature and research studies on second and foreign language acquisition and learning over the past few decades. However, the gap between theory and practice in the profession is still a matter that needs to be resolved. Rose (2002) criticized that there is a 'widening gulf between researchers and classroom practitioners', and research often fails to focus on the actual classroom practices of teachers (Cited in Kutlay, 2013: 188). Research is considered to be theory-based as opposed to teaching that is practice-based. Hargraves (1996) stressed that such a gap stems from teachers' beliefs that research should be done by researchers not teachers because research has a theory-filled nature so it does not appeal to teachers. Yet, action research is one type of research that is directly related to teachers and their classroom practice. This is because action research is conducted by practitioners in their own context as a way of improving their own practice and promoting their professional development (Wallace, 1998). So, the current study investigates EFL teachers' views about action research as a way of bridging the gap between theory and practice in the field, and to dig into EFL teachers views about action research, and its benefits if applied by teachers.

There has been a vast amount of research studies done locally and internationally in this regard and work in this area has produced mixed findings. While some studies showed that teachers' have negative views about research generally and action research in particular others showed that teachers' have positive perceptions about the importance of action research to teachers' classroom practices. For example, Dehghan and Sahragard (2015) explored the views of

EFL teachers in Iran about the implementation of action research in their classrooms. The study participants were 89 English teachers who answered items on a questionnaire that collected their views about action research. Three participants were also interviewed in-depth to complement the questionnaire data. The study findings indicated that teachers considered action research as a type of research for which professional researchers are responsible, not teachers. Similar findings were reported in another study done in Turkey by Kutlay (2013). This study used surveys and interviews to investigate 52 English instructors' views and their engagement in research at a Turkish public university. According to the study results, teachers' views of research were influenced by scientific concepts such as hypothesis testing, collecting a large quantity of data, analyzing data statistically, being an objective researcher, and low levels of engagement with research from the part of teachers themselves.

On the other hand, some studies showed that teachers hold positive views about action research despite the difficulties they face. For example, in Australia, Peters (2004) examined the beliefs and experiences of ten teachers from one school who participated in action research projects throughout a year. The results of this study demonstrated that action research engaged these teachers in some form of transformation of their thinking and practice, despite the challenges they faced; this confirmed that action research plays an essential role in improving teaching and learning, and in reforming education. The study concluded that in order for teacher research to succeed as an important component of further professional development (PD) for teachers, it is imperative to examine the assumptions that shape these expectations, as well as to take steps to measure the conditions which will make it possible to meet those expectations.

In general, doing action research can help teachers grow in their professional knowledge and skills, report stronger collaboration with colleagues to make their teaching more effective, revise their curriculum in response to students' needs, develop a more open-minded attitude towards research and experience an innovative school culture that is

conducive to teacher-research (Chow et al., 2015). However, teachers' negative perceptions of research play a key role in a lack of a teacher-as-researcher culture in many countries (ibid). This is because many teachers see research generally and action research in a particular as something complex that only academics at universities can do beyond a number of other challenges that hinder teachers from doing action research.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

A qualitative methodology was followed in this study to collect data through using semi-structured interviews. The aim behind using a qualitative methodology is that such methodologies are especially appropriate to study teachers' beliefs, to provide an in depth understanding of a phenomenon being investigated (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, it has been used to explore the study participants' views about classroom action research and its effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Thus, to know participants' perceptions of the investigated topic. The qualitative methodology therefore helped the researcher to dig deeply in participants views of action research and their views about the effects of AR on teaching and learning at schools.

#### **3.2. Research Participants**

The researcher contacted 4 public schools in Oman to grant their permission to take part in the study. The 4 schools have been selected because they are the closest to the researchers home town. The 4 Senior English teachers from the 4 schools agreed to take part in the study, and from the same schools 18 English teachers also gave their consent to participate in the study. Therefore, the study participants were 22 in total out of whom were 18 English teachers and 4 Senior English teachers from 4 public schools in Oman.

#### **3.3. Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics were taken into consideration in the current

research because several ethical issues can confront researchers (Lancaster, 2017). This is especially important when considering participants' thoughts and behaviours as well as how accounts were represented. Thus, to avoid any act of unethical behaviour, ethical approvals were obtained from the relevant authority (Ministry of Education in Oman) to get permission for doing the study and obtain access to the research participants for data collection. Moreover, assurance of confidentiality and anonymity were outlined in the consent form given to participants. For example, permission was granted from participants to audio record the interviews and pseudonyms were used when presenting the research findings in the study. This is important to make sure that those who agreed to take part in the study have a full understanding of the study in terms of its purpose, the methods to be used, any risks involved and what is required from them as participants, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time (BERA, 2011).

### **3.4. Data Collection Tools**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect in-depth data about participants' views of action research. The aim behind the interviews was to investigate individual participants' ideas, and dig deeply into them by investigating feelings and motives (Punch, 2014; Kvale, 2009). Semi structured interviews have the advantage of combining structure with flexibility. This means, the structure of the interview is 'sufficiently flexible to permit topics to be covered in the order most suited to the interviewee, to allow responses to be fully probed and explored and to allow the researcher to be responsive to relevant issues raised spontaneously by the interviewee' (Legard et al., 2003:141). 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the research participants (English teachers and Senior English teachers) to explore their views about action research and dig deeply in their responses through the follow up questions, probes and prompts (Kvale, 2009).

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

The qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews

were analysed thematically through following a process in the analysis of the data. This involves preparing and organizing the data for analysis, exploring the data then reducing it into themes through a coding process, and finally representing the data in discussion (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, the researcher first listened to the audio-scripts of the 22 individual interviews, then, the interviews were transcribed through focusing on the meaning of participants words and reporting the participants' accounts in a readable public story (Kvale, 2009). So, any meaningless or irrelevant parts of the data were discarded. The research aims guided the researcher on what to omit and what to keep. However, care was taken not to miss any important, interesting or relevant information. Then, the data were coded and in order to identify codes and themes from the data the researcher has reduced the data from the interview transcripts, observation into meaningful segments and assigned names to the segments, and combined the codes into broader themes or categories (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The coding labels came from the exact words of the participants. Data were then organized into main themes/categories and sub-themes/categories.

### **4. Findings**

#### **4.1 RQ 1: Teachers' Perceptions about Action Research**

EFL teachers and senior teachers' perceptions about action research were explored through using semi-structured interviews. The data generally shows that participants hold a wide range of views about action research; while the majority of them believe on the importance of action research in improving teaching and learning, others seem to have some misconceptions related to action research as will be discussed in details below.

##### **4.1.1 What is Action Research?**

Participants were asked about the term action research and what it means to them in the interviews. The data indicated that respondents conceptualised the term action research in different ways; while the majority of them looked at the term from a more positive perspective,

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there were some misunderstandings associated with the term action research. For example, some participants (6 in total) associated the term action research with a way of improving teaching and learning through helping teachers solve the problems they face. For example, Anisa states *'Diagnosing a learning problem. Looking for solutions and testing this solution by applying it in my class using certain criteria'*. Others explained it as a systematic enquiry of own practice as Halima highlights in the following extract *'action research is a method of systematic enquiry that teachers undertake as researchers of their own practice'*, and other respondents (3 in total) related it to self-reflection. For instance, Salma states *'It is a research that depends on self-reflection'*. This might mean that many participants are aware of the importance of action research in contributing to solving issues and challenges teachers face and it encourages teachers to reflect on their own practice..

However, a good number of respondents seem to have no idea about the term action research (5 in total) as when they are asked what is action research? They simply answered *'I don't know'* or *'No idea'*. The rest of respondents (8 in total) seem to have some misunderstanding or miss conceptualization of the term action research as the following extracts from the interviews show. Asma for example, argues *'it is like other kinds of research'*, and Salwa complains *'it is more paper work which is non-sense like how research usually is'*. Similarly, Maryam affirms *'Action research is scientific research, it is based on experiments...the researcher tries out something on a trial group and see it's effects'*. To dig deeper in such a view about action research, the researcher/interviewer asked Maryam a follow up question *'so do you think teachers' can do experiments on students in action research?'*. The interviewee replied *'I think it's not teachers it's researchers who do those experiments'*. It appears from such responses that there are some misunderstanding of the concept action research among some teachers, which may need some attention from teacher educators and officials at the Ministry of Education in Oman. This could be done through providing teachers with lots of awareness raising tasks, which can be

achieved through training and professional development sessions related to action research methodology. Moreover, teachers should be encouraged by teacher educators (English teacher trainers and English supervisors) to do action research to improve their own practices and develop professionally.

#### 4.1.2 Action Research is not for Teachers

Amna stated that *'Action research should be done by researchers NOT teachers'*. In order to dig deeply in such a view about action research, the interview respondents were asked about their views as regards classroom teachers roles of doing action research and the data indicates that participants seem to strongly believe that action research should be done by researchers. For instance, Amna states *'action research is not for teachers...it is not their job to do action research I mean their job is to teach students and assess them'*. Rahma also seem to have similar ideas as she says *'action research is a way of doing research through actions following specific steps and it should be done by expert researchers'*. In order to dig deeply in such views; the interviewer/ researcher asked a follow up question *'so what can hinder teachers from doing action research?'* Again Rahma simply answered *'no of course they can't do action research, only researchers can do, teachers do not have any skills or expertise in doing action research'*. The researcher followed by a comment *'even if they receive good training on how to do action research'*, and the respondent Rahma replied *'even though they will not be like researchers...researchers duty is researching and teachers' duties are teaching... if you train teachers to be researchers they will be fully occupied and will not be able to teach properly.'*

Unsurprisingly, the data show that teaching experience and qualification of respondents reflect differences in participants' views regarding action research. For instance, three participants of the most experienced teachers who have 11+ years of teaching experience think that classroom teachers are the ones who should do action research. Likewise, all master degree holders from the participants

(4 of the 22 participants) think that teachers should do action research as Ahlam said *'to improve their practice and their class teaching and help their students'*. This suggests that the more experienced and qualified teachers are, the more knowledge about action research they have.

## **4.2 RQ 2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects of Action Research on Teaching and Learning in their context**

### **4.2.1 Improve my practice as an English Teacher**

The data demonstrates that the majority of respondents have positive views about the importance of action research in improving teaching and learning in their schools but they seem to be unsure about the role of teachers in conducting action research. For example, Samira stated *'action research improves my students' learning'*. Moreover, Halima added *'action research is one of the best ways to improve my practice as an English teacher'*. However, some respondents asked about the role of teachers in doing research, as Amna argued *'English teachers cannot conduct action research to solve the daily problems they face in their teaching, can they? I don't think so but may be'*. This finding show that teachers' belief in action research and they think it is significant in improving students learning and improving teachers' practice but teachers' role in doing action research to solve the challenges and problems they face seem to be unclear to them.

### **4.2.2 Action Research Encourages Teachers to do Critical Self-reflection**

The findings showed that participants' believe on the importance of action research in contributing to teacher development. For instance, a number of interview respondents (5 in total) state that participating in action research can help teachers' learn new strategies that can be used in their classrooms. Salha for example, explains *'doing action research helps English teachers to acquire new knowledge for classroom teaching'*. Similarly Jamila highlights *"action research can help teachers acquire some knowledge and teaching*

*strategies*”, and Suad confirms *“they can learn new ways of teaching if they do research or action research and this can help them to develop professionally”*. Some teachers think that action research develops and enhances teachers’ skills professionally as Halima stated that *‘action research engages English teachers into a more systematic examination of teaching practice’*. Other participants believe that action research enhances teachers’ reflective teaching skills. Amira, for instance, said *‘action research encourages teachers to do critical self-reflection’*.

Although participants believe in the importance of action research and its contribution to teachers’ learning and professional development, it seems that the research participants are not willing to do action research. This is due to the workload they have as the data shows. For instance, Amna stated frankly *“Teachers shouldn’t be asked to do an action research. We are already loaded (please don’t recommend that=in mother language) not fair”*. This indicates that teachers’ workload could be a real inhibitor for them participating in action research activities. This may suggest that teachers need to be provided with the appropriate training and time to do action research and their workload need to be reduced to encourage them to participate in such activities.

## **5. Discussion & Implications:**

The findings showed that English language teachers hold different views about action research. For example, while the majority of them believe on the importance of action research for improving teaching and learning, others seem to have some miss conceptions related to it. Despite the differences in their views, the data shows that the more experienced and qualified teachers are, they seem to have more knowledge and awareness about action research and its importance for classroom teachers. This could be because those experienced and qualified teachers have already experienced doing action research either as part of their practice as teachers or their postgraduate studies. Peters (2004) confirmed that classroom teachers, who engaged in action research, had transformed their thinking and practice.

Therefore, action research could be seen as a vehicle for teacher learning and educational reform.

The findings; however, shows that a good number of the research participants seem to have some miss conceptualization or misunderstanding of action research and its methodology. This is because some of them think that it is more paperwork and others associated it with experimental research. This might indicate that they are not aware of the term action research and its significance in improving teaching and learning in schools. Such misconceptions or negative perceptions of action research play a key role in a lack of a teacher-as-researcher culture in many countries because those teachers see research as something complex and a challenging task for teachers, which hinders them from doing action research (Chow et al., 2015). Both Borg (2009) and Wyatt (2011) recommended that introducing an action research element to in-service teacher development courses can be highly beneficial and encourage teachers to do research. For example, adding some awareness-raising activities to in-service teacher education programmes can help in-service teachers to become research active by putting their research ideas into practice, setting their own goals, and evaluating their progress (Borg, 2009).

In Oman, action research is part of the strategic in-service teacher training programmes run centrally at the Specialized Institute for the professional training of teachers. For EFL teachers, there is an in-service centralised programme called 'English Experts programme' that is two years long and attracts some EFL teachers in each cohort. Action research is a key component of this programme where participants learn how to do action research both theoretically and practically. The participants in this course start with reflecting on their own practice to choose a topic for investigation, they move gradually to developing their research questions, and then designing and administering their data collection tools. They continue their action research journey by analysing the collected data to writing up their research report and disseminating its findings. The outcomes of this action research course is through participants' submission of their

research reports to their course tutors. Participants are also expected to share their action research findings by presenting them to their colleagues at school, in conferences, publishing papers...etc. However, the number of EFL teachers who join this course are very little compared to the total number of English teachers teaching in Omani schools. Location of this in-service programme might be an inhibitor for many teachers to join it as it is run in Muscat (the capital city) which is hundred kilometres faraway from other governorates and cities where many EFL teachers live and work. A previous study done in Oman by Al Balushi (2017) found that location of in-service training programmes or professional development events is an inhibiting factor to teachers' participation in such events. This suggests that the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Oman needs to disseminate such kind of in-service training to all English teachers across the Sultanate by running such programmes de-centrally in the educational governorates to reach teachers at the different parts of the country, and attract as many teachers as possible each year to join this programme. Moreover, an action research culture needs to be activated in schools in Oman to encourage classroom teachers to practically apply the knowledge they have learnt from such courses by doing action research to improve their own practices and their students' learning.

### **5.1 Teachers or Researchers**

The findings indicated that the majority of respondents think that action research should be done by researchers not by classroom teachers. This finding is in line with the findings of other studies done in other contexts such as in Iran (Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015) and in Turkey (Kutlay, 2013). For example, Dehghan and Sahragard's (2015) study results showed that participant teachers regarded action research as the duty of professional researchers not teachers. According to Hargreaves (1996), such perceptions could be because teachers think that research has a theory-filled nature so it does not appeal to teachers.

I think that such teacher perceptions cannot be changed unless classroom teachers are exposed to action research a lot and a real

research culture is activated at schools. This might suggest that action research should be given good attention by teacher educators in the pre-service preparation of teachers as well as in the in-service education and training of teachers. In the pre-service teacher preparation programmes in Oman, action research seem to be totally missing from the study plans and the teaching modules except in one public higher education institution called SQU which has an AR module in its' English teacher preparation programme. However, AR is focussed on theoretically not practically at SQU and student teachers are not expected to carry out action research at schools as part of their practicum. The in-service context is no better as there is only one central programme, which focuses on action research, and very few teachers join this programme as stated earlier. Moreover, there is no action research culture in Omani schools and no competitive research culture in the educational field generally. This recommends that more budget need to be allocated for research to be conducted at schools to benefit from research findings to improve teaching and learning. Decision makers and teacher educators in Oman and internationally need to give more attention to research both in the in-service and in the pre-service context. In-service teacher education programmes that focus on action research should be done more frequently, to target all EFL teachers to join such programmes. In the pre-service context, action research should be given good emphasis in teacher preparation programmes and student teachers need to be equipped with research skills through both focussing on the theoretical knowledge and the practical application of action research during the practicum stages.

## **5.2 Improve Teaching & Learning**

The findings show that the majority of respondents have positive views about the importance of action research in helping teachers solve their problems and improve teaching and learning. This finding has been confirmed in the literature and previous studies. For example, Mills (2017) states that action research leads to change in teachers' practice, improves student outcomes, and empowers teachers. Yigit and Bagceci1 (2017) declare that action research enables teachers to solve their problems on their own where they focus on their practices

and handle their problems directly through the action research process. In fact, it has been highlighted in the literature that classroom teachers who participated in an action research have a more positive attitude towards their profession and have become more effective teachers (Kuzu, 2009). Similar findings were reported in a study conducted in Oman by AL-Farsi (2006) who found that English teachers in Oman strongly value classroom-research and think it can positively impact on developing teachers, students and schools.

Accordingly, it is recommended that action research should be activated in schools to help teachers investigate the challenges they are facing in their daily practices and thus to make changes and improvements to their teaching. It is clear from the above finding that the current study participants are aware of the significance of action research and its contribution to teaching and learning. Al-Farsi's (2006) study also reported that Omani teachers have a strong desire to implement the results of classroom-research in their schools. If EFL teachers at schools are empowered to do action research, it will probably have positive effects on the teaching learning process, which can lead to improvements in schools. In order to contribute to teachers' learning and development and to upgrade teaching and learning in Oman and in the international context, schools should have a rich and competitive culture for research where action research should be part of any professional development plan targeted for teachers.

### ***5.3 Workload hinders Teachers from doing AR***

The findings revealed that workload hinders participants from doing action research; some participants in the current study frankly stated that they do not want anyone to suggest for teachers to do action research due to their workload. Workload has been reported in previous studies in Oman as a real inhibitor for EFL teachers to participate in research activities in addition to lack of courage and lack of time (e.g. Wyatt, 2011). Indeed, not only to do action research but workload has also been highlighted in previous Omani studies as a key factor that hinders EFL teachers' participation in PD events generally (Al Balushi, 2021). Moreover, workload among other noteworthy issues seem to

create a level of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the teaching profession as previous studies in Oman found (e.g. Al Balushi, 2017).

EFL teachers in Oman like all other subjects teachers have lots of teaching duties as well as other increased administrative duties, which result that teachers often needed to work longer hours than they are expected to complete all their duties. Many teachers in Oman also take lots of their work to complete at home such as planning lessons, marking students work and some other tasks that cannot be postponed, so workload negatively affects teachers' social life and their own time is used to finish their school-related work. Such unfavourable work conditions can negatively affect teachers' commitment towards their work and can lead to their disillusionment with the system (Choi & Tang, 2009). This suggests that educational decision makers need to reduce teachers workload to encourage them to become more committed to their work, and to help them participate in PD events generally and to do action research in particular.

#### **5.4 Professional Development for Teachers**

The results indicated that participating in action research contributes to teachers' professional development. The findings show that participants believe that action research develops and enhances their professional skills, helps them to acquire new knowledge for classroom teaching, engages them into a more systematic examination of teaching practice, encourages them to do critical self-reflection, and help them to develop professionally. Such finding is consistent with other research studies done both locally (Al Balushi, 2017) and internationally (Yigit & Bagceci1, 2017) as according to these studies, action research is useful for teachers as it leads to their personal and professional development as these studies confirmed. This is because action research provides teachers with the opportunity to systematically reflect on their practice and develop as teachers (Manfra, 2019).

In Oman, the professional development of EFL in-service teachers is given a lot of attention by the Ministry of Education. This is done by providing teachers with many opportunities such as official in-service teacher training courses, attending and participating in local and

international conferences as well as PD sessions carried out at schools. For example, team teaching, peer observations, visits to other schools, workshops, and discussion sessions. From offering all these activities, the MOE is aiming mainly at improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools besides contributing to teachers' professional learning and growth (Al Balushi, 2021). Action research, if well activated, can be an excellent addition to such PD opportunities to help teachers learning and development and to contribute to upgrading teaching and learning at schools. However, in order for such PD opportunities including action research to be successful and have a real impact on teaching and learning, teachers' voice should be activated and they should actively participate in decision making regarding their PD, so they can become critical reflective practitioners. In the case of novice teachers, teacher educators need to engage them in models of critical reflection in order to help them develop their own critical questions and their own voice (Al Balushi, 2017).

## **6. Conclusion**

This qualitative study explored EFL teachers' views about action research using semi-structured interviews. The findings showed that participants hold a wide range of views about action research; while the majority of them believe on the importance of action research in improving teaching and learning, others seem to have some misconceptions related to action research. For example, they think that action research should be done by researchers not classroom teachers. The study generally indicates that action research is an effective tool for EFL teachers' professional development and encourages them to do critical self-reflection. The study recommends that action research should be well activated at schools with other PD opportunities to help teachers' learning and development and to contribute to upgrading teaching and learning at schools.

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**Standing on Common Grounds: Exploring Environmental Crises in Adamu Kyuka Usman's *The Death of Eternity***

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**Abstract**

This paper interrogates the prevalent issues of environmental crises and conflicts in Adamu Kyuka Usman's *The Death of Eternity*. This is characterized by ecological devastation, environmental impact assessment, contamination, resource control, reparation and attempts at compensation. The novel points out that environmental conflicts have gained prominent reflections in literature in West Africa as well as other nations of the world. The environmental conflicts the novel projects are diverse and their impacts are felt by land, flora and fauna because man and nature are interchangeably dependent on each other for survival and existence. Using the theoretical tool of Ecocriticism, the text raises questions of who is responsible for these conflicts by focusing its search light on the various deleterious undertakings by multinational companies through acts of inappropriate toxic waste disposal, wood felling, bush burning and oil exploration and exploitation. The paper unfolds that man's ignorance of the dangers of his destructive activities which translate to deaths and plague around him can be described as conflict in itself. Put together, the text of study examines the universality of environmental conflicts via the multiple settings of West Africa, Hungary, and other parts of Europe. Thereby, symbolizing and replicating the connections of environmental problems across the global world.

**Keywords:** Environmental conflicts, Devastation, Ecocriticism, Exploitation

### **Introduction**

An eco-critical scrutiny of any literary work provides deep insight into the natural environment. Therefore, as a style and thematic focus, it probes the realistic social crises of the remote and extended environment of the writer's setting as well as express social concerns. Sometimes, these narratives only refer to the environment as a part of the setting or/as filling the lacuna in the progress of the story. Eco-criticism in literature tends to explore the interaction between the characters and the features domicile in their environment negatively or positively. This portrayal expresses the link between form, content and context of the story in line with the author's intentions.

Consequently, African literature has always had eco-critical inclinations from inception due to the fact that colonial writings for example highlight the healthy nature of African environment, land, plants and animals before colonial incursion which stole Africa's natural resources for their benefits. What this means eco-critically is that Africa's primitive civilization or the lack of it helped Africans conserve the land and live well until the coming of the colonial masters. According to Jones "...they have come seeking gold, to deprive the people of their land and hence of their spirit, self-respect and independence" (51). The drawn relationship is that the environment is a part and parcel of the African's spirit and reverence. In other words, "eco criticism or eco-literature discourse centers on the growing concern over environmental issues with the ever-widening interest in matters relating to how nature is continually in a state of flux and how humans are faring in the face of ecological vicissitudes" (Orji-Uba 118).

### **Ecocriticism: Background and Concept**

Ecocriticism dates back to the 1970s with the groundbreaking essay titled "Literature and Ecology ..." by William Ruekert (1978). But, did not resurface until 1989 during the Western Literature Association (WLA) Conference, where under the field of "the study of nature writing" it was deliberate and the term 'Ecocriticism' was adopted.

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Ecocriticism is an established theory of literature that refers to the study of a writer's natural environment through literature. It "investigates and helps make possible the connections among self, society, nature and text" (Cokinos 3). This is to say that, Ecocriticism takes an earth centered approach to literary studies. It is therefore committed to the natural world and its importance in the life of man.

Furthermore, Ecocriticism is defined as "the field of enquiry that analyzes and promotes works of art which raises moral questions about human interactions with nature, while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations"(Gomide 10). "It is understood from the above that Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment, cutting across disciplines which analyzes environmental problems and proffer possible solutions. It investigates ecological values, nature and the question of 'place' in the study of literary works, as a distinct category like class, gender and race" (Barry 240). It provides the vocabulary to find a common ground among books that might otherwise seem to have very little in common.

Ecocriticism helps to "intercept not just our relations to a text, but to the physical (if not always 'natural') world in which that text exists" (Black 2).

It is difficult to identify a particular definition of Ecocriticism because it involves several other factors such as historical periods, region, location, race, gender, class, and politics, among others. However, Ecocriticism (irrespective of its definition) examines the use of literature as an advocate for environmental appreciation. This is as a result of the need for literature to have an impact beyond the academy to issues that affects us and our society. Therefore, there is the need to use literature to help green the environment. Literary texts, even when written to focus on the environment are not acknowledged as playing the above role, except when assessed using the theory of Ecocriticism "as a response to needs, human understanding of our relationships with the natural world in an age of environmental destruction" (Dean 19). By the above, Ecocriticism seeks to reconnect man to his natural environment and advocates for

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an understanding of the world that helps to heal the wounds humans have inflicted on the environment. Estok argues that “Ecocriticism has distinguished itself through its commitment to the natural world. Rather than simply as an object of thematic study... it is any theory that ... is committed to effecting change by analyzing functions, thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise, of the natural environment, or aspect of it, represented in documents that contribute to material practices in material world” (2). In Marshal’s view, Ecocriticism is relevant and timely for the reason that:

An ecological focused criticism is a worthy enterprise primarily because, it directs our attention to matters about which we need to be thinking. Consciousness raising is its important task. Eco critics encourage others to think seriously about the relationship of humans to nature, about the ethical and aesthetic dilemmas posed by the environmental crisis, and about how language and literature transmit values with profound ecological implications (7).

This explains the fact that Ecocriticism draws attention to the response of the environment to man’s cohabitation with it. Another function of this theory is that “ecocriticism gives a vocabulary to find a common ground among books that might otherwise seem to have very little in common” (2). It seeks to reattach scholars to each other and scholarship to the real concern of the word. Again, “it directs our attention to matters about which we need to be thinking” (Glotfelty 6). Though, nature writing is not new and literary scholars who are environmentalists seem not to be creating a new critical theory; they are drawing on existing theories to illuminate our understanding of how human interactions with nature are reflected in literature” (Sarver 9). Ecocriticism opens up man’s understanding and appreciation of the natural world and the changes it has undergone over time. Thus, the essence of deploying the novel genre to communicate about the environment, its predicament and impact on communities across the

globe is crucial. This is appropriate due to the current need to arouse the consciousness of a global audience, who seem to be unaware that they are standing on a common ground.

### ***The Death of Eternity and the Global Environment***

The writer and literary critic, Tanure Ojaide has underscored that the state of African nations before the colonial intrusion was that, there existed in traditional society, a partnership between humans and nature. In this light: the world believable for the reader. The Time of Narnia and that of the earth are different. When an authentic specification like the time of Sherlock Holmes, the Bastables or the world war are mentioned to strike a note with the Narnian Time, the reader gets a specific impression of being realistic. So the second reason why fantasy and realism co-exists is to make the fantastic more realistic.

Some animals were domesticated while others remained wild. Humans relied on animals and plants for sustenance- food in crops and fruits, fish and animals, firewood for cooking, timber for building and more. Man held aspects of nature

sacred- maintains rocks rivers trees. The forest was the home of ancestors. In the religion of Africa, nature became an integral aspect of their spirituality in the form of groves- but with the coming of Christianity and Islam to Africa, the natural world became a servant to man rather than a partner, leaving man to control and exploit nature (vi).

This historical dimension to environmental drawbacks are not only peculiar to Africa. Noticeably, Industrial capitalist multinational companies and their cohorts do the same in other parts of the world. In this context, the text of study, *The Death of Eternity* adopts a style of multiple setting- Hungary and West Africa to deduce the commonality of the world's environmental problems. The choice of settings make the focus of the narrative universal. At other instances in the novel, the writer makes references to other countries mostly in

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comparative terms; “in Hungary and other countries such as Norway and Canada, for every tree a man fell he plants two...” (*Death of Eternity* 124). This explains that environmental concerns in the world are linked. However, in countries such as Hungary and Canada (symbols for Europe) measures are taken to curtail the problem. Adamu Kyuka Usman therefore examines environmental conflicts, causes and impacts globally.

By signifying that there exists common environmental predicament in the world, the writer, uses symbolic settings and metonymic expressions, such as Hungary and Canada in as symbols for Europe. While, West Africa is used as a symbol for Africa and other third world countries and Nunsu village and its environs as a representation of Nigeria. The entire world is therefore brought together in a single whole through the novel’s attempt to tackle environmental issues across geographical landscapes in one literary projection. What makes this work of fiction unique is the author’s use of imagination to create accurate global realities, as well as fictitious use of names, geographical locations and events. For example, in Hungary, mining activities are carried out by Russians, the country’s erstwhile colonial masters who invariably, still dominates the country even after independence. This is why the protagonist, Tibor, from childhood: “Nursed a pathological hatred for Russians who were the de facto rulers of Hungary during the communist era. Hungary was forced to buy iron ore from Russia with dollars or pound sterling. The ore was refined in Hungary and the refined product was purchased by Russia with rubles a worthless currency. Uranium ore- a Hungarian natural resource was exclusively mined by Russia” (*Death of Eternity* 10).

In view of the above economic exploitation, the environment in Hungary is destroyed and in revolt to this, Hungarian youths with Tibor as a member forms the Attila, the Hungary Wild Dogs, who “had an agenda of undermining communism in Hungary and freeing the country from Russian exploitation” (10). This eventually melts

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into a rebel group named ‘Chechen rebels’ and the fostering of terrorism thereafter.

The hazardous use of the natural environment by both foreign and local hands, as well as the effect of what Aldo Leopold describes as “...biotic community” is argued by the author to be some of the major causes of the crises. Tibor’s coined word ‘eco-evangelism’ is a sustained metaphor for the importance and the need to redeem nature, along with “a call for revival and the rethinking of man’s activities with regard to the natural environment” (Jua 16). In an attempt to “make a difference in man’s attitude or towards the environment” (Jua 161), Tibor denounces his peculiar citizenship and assume universal citizenship. He sees himself as a “citizen of the world” (217). His nickname ‘the strange white man’ can be described as a metaphor for the ignorance of Africans about their hazardous use for nature; as well as the lack of knowledge or consciousness of the need to conserve and save the environment.

Along this line, Cheryl Glotfelty asserts that eco-criticism “negotiates between the human and then no human” (xix) in lamenting the ignorance of man on the dangers of environmental devastation and the need to rescue the natural habitat. Therefore, the author, Usman expresses the commonality of man’s naivety and ignorance using the character of Tibor to sensitize the people about the impending environmental doom as he states:

There was an increase in evaporation ... due to global warming. When he complained to people, they only laughed, telling him there was no such thing ....Cockdens will soon be fighting over a bucket of water, yet they did not realize it ...what was true of cockde, he suspected to be true to the rest of Africa. He had read with rising disappointment the sarcasm of Waitari, a Kenyan nationalist concerning the beauty of the elephant (whom to him its beauty only translates

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to ‘meat’ for man) ...Robert Nazick (a westerner) in his review of Thomas Regan’s book, *Defending Animal Rights*....had maintained that “Animal rights seemed a topic for cranks. Who else would devote major energy to promote changes in our treatment of animals, or write a book on the subject? (*Death of Eternity* 176-177)

The above explains that the issue of eco-ignorance is a common issue globally which results in the nonchalance towards the natural environment. The oil refining at Cockde, whose industrial activities cause air pollution and its toxic deposits cause water pollution of the river Kadewa and affect the village of Nunsu. Notwithstanding, “corporations like the refining feeding, on the bounties of the environment, never paid up easily ...corporation do not like to live with their wastes...” (*Death of Eternity* 178). Therefore, the prevalent images of ecological disaster which is not just in Africa but the world over becomes a thing of huge concern. For this reason, Tibor’s proactive steps towards eco-conservation and restoration to establish a harmonious environment “were the resources of nature guarantee and sustain existence” (Okuyade 19), is commended. Uniquely, the author fuses together diverse environmental disasters, causes, effects, victims and settings. This literary style enables the reader to view the versatile nature of the subject matter of the text from varying directions. It also enables an understanding of the global common environmental disaster.

In a similar vein, Nigeria’s Niger Delta is symbolically represented in the novel as Cockde, Nunsu and its environs. River Kadewa is a metaphor for the waterways of the Niger Delta, while the refinery represents all the multinational oil companies that are largely liable for the ecological disaster of the Niger Delta. The novel uses substantial imagery to portray the setting as well as the problems. On Tibor’s visit to river Kadewa, the use of images vividly describe the devastation and pollution of the river as he says:

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Even from a distance they could see black glazing rings of oil writhing on the water surface according to the tidal movement of the river. When they reached the water edge, Tibor said (to the pollution control officer) you can see...the carnage your industry is causing to the ecology of this poor river and those depending on it for drinking water.....see that hole that your waste has bored into the bank of the river. It looks like the un-healing sore of a diabetic... (*Death of Eternity* 182)

On the other hand, the pollution control officer of the refinery is used as a synecdoche for the faceless oil refinery. In his contact with his company's mess, the ironic pollution control officer wants to go far away from the repulsive sight, which makes him "think of a human body on which acid had been poured- he couldn't get away from the river fast enough" (*Death of Eternity* 182). Also, the ambition of Francis and others like him to acquire "a lorry and a generator, which everyone in town owns..." (*Death of Eternity* 188) is a metaphor for the global insatiable quest and consumerism for modernization and technology. Francis death, therefore is a metaphor for man's destruction, in the quest for modern lifestyle.

In addition, the protagonist, Tibor is depicted as the channel that connects the developed and the developing world towards eco-activism. This is achieved by the triangular dimensions from which Tibor; a Hungarian, working for an NGO- "Justice for Nature International", which has its "headquarters in the United States and branches all over the world" (*Death of Eternity* 210) operated. For instance, the correspondence he receives from Wilson, the President-general of Justice for Nature International was sent from America to appreciate Tibor's efforts in saving the West African environment. In his letter to Tibor, Wilson, laments the environmental problems in America- due mostly to industrial pollution thus:

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You must have heard about the increasing slide in the fortunes of the White Mountain here in the US, the White Mountains people go to ski and bike because of their outstanding natural beauty are beginning to give way to the tear of over use and pollution. There is little beauty to be found in the White Mountains today. The Vermont Yankees nuclear power plants, the burning of coal, oil and gas by cars, trucks, power plants and factories, and biomass burning for commercial agriculture are all planting soot in the White Mountains. (*Death of Eternity* 325).

After presenting an image of the ecological problems of America's natural environment due to industrialization, similar to the situation in Africa, Wilson, refers to Tibor as a metaphor for hope and an ambassador for the course of eco-recovery. This is captured in the words "Like the flag of America hoisted in the moon, you remain the flag of justice for Nature International hoisted in Africa" (*Death of Eternity* 327). Wilson also discloses the helplessness of Africa under the industrial activities of the Western world by referring to Africa as "the victimized continent" (*Death of Eternity* 327). In his response to Wilson's letter, Tibor brings to light that the Western world should be held accountable for the dilemma in Africa's environment as he bemoans the eco-crises as a result of chemical fertilizers which have degraded their lands and polluted their waters therefore, translating to tensions and conflicts between communities thus:

The so-called developed western world has been a cat to Africa. The people were content with drinking yomo and bobuto until we brought them five Alive...Europe brought trailers and the lorry, which do not have roads to ply. Soils here were fertile until our chemical fertilizers arrived ....it is my duty to mobilize Africa against the attempt by so-called developed countries to export pollution to them...to tell them not to allow their continent to be turned into a trashing ground while someone claims the grains.....at times aerosols are

migrating from Europe to Africa, and at a time global warming is spawning drought the way frog spawns eggs in a pond. (*Death of Eternity* 329)

### Conclusion

This paper demonstrates the socio-environmental relevance of *The Death of Eternity* in that it does not merely address diverse areas of environmental problems, but also pinpoint the adverse causes, effects as well as man's role, either individually or collectively, directly or indirectly, locally or internationally to the aggravation of environmental crises. The paper reveals that the direct and indirect victims of the crises are both man and the environment (physical or conceptual), health, wealth and social existence. Therefore, the need for preservation and sustainability of the biotic system is a fundamental concern in *The Death of Eternity* using Ecocriticism theory. Though, the paper attributes that the problems of Africa is due to colonial imperialism however, it does not fail to admit that the Western world are also sufferers of environmental problems. Small wonder, the allusion to places like Ecuador and Canada in the narration. Thus, what is important as the novel asserts is the dire necessity to rise above these environmental complications and actively fight to preserve the natural world locally, nationally and globally. This is because, what affects one, affects the other, we are standing on common grounds.

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## **Language Teachers and their Professional Development: Mainstreaming some Sustainability Dialogues**

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### **Abstract**

This article introduces the idea of society 5.0 and juxtaposes it with the guidelines given by India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). I would like to argue that to contribute to the development of the society and in particular to the knowledge society, teachers need to reconsider the teacher agency in the sphere of education, in their respective classroom contexts and reenvisage the classroom as a space to move beyond the syllabus to promote sustainable learning practices among the learners. The article offers some suggestions to the post method teaching practices that teachers of English can employ in their classes and thus enrich their professional development practices continuously.

### **Insights into Society 5.0**

Human beings evolved through various social and intellectual revolutions claiming their rights for survival, equality, liberty, equity and human rights. When concerns on progress and betterment in human life are taken into consideration, it is interesting to see that the modern world gives a great deal of value to the information revolution and knowledge revolution. Centralising educational reformations, policy makers of all nations underscore the importance of inculcating global competencies that enable the young generation of learners to become global citizens.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Science and Technology Basic Plan for Japan proposes the idea of Society 5.0 which focuses on a sustainable development agenda for the well being of all social units and entities. According to the plan, Society 5.0 is a “human-centred society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space”. Or in other words, it is a forward-looking society that breaks down the existing sense of stagnation, a society whose members have mutual respect for each other, transcending the generations, and a society in which each and every person can lead an active and enjoyable life. Incorporating these aspects of social vitality, comfort and the assurance of high quality life into the social context of India becomes challenging owing to the lack of capital(both social and economic) that we struggle with. The question of sustainable development looms large in India but usually is discussed only in terms of tangible developmental practices like dams and development or industrial accumulations. With the new National Education Policy (NEP 2020) in place, and all higher education institutions focussing on the policy implementation, Indian higher education system is now revamping its ideas about sustainable practices in education and emphasising the usefulness of these practices in assuring the educational outcomes that are designed as part of the courses it offers to students.

### **NEP 2020 and the Sustainability Dialogues**

The sustainability dialogues that the policy document emphasises focuses on the aspects of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which are part of the global competency model proposed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in their guidelines for the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA).

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NEP 2020 focuses on the holistic development of the students and maintains that the development of higher order thinking skills, creativity, employability competencies along with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as the major objectives of education from elementary level to the higher education realms. When the policy clearly articulates global competency as a central point to focus upon, educators of all disciplines must consider or maybe reconsider the teaching practices employed in the classrooms. When all streams of disciplines are engaged in rethinking the teaching and learning practices and processes, English language teaching cannot be exempted from this revamping process.

Sustainability dialogues must be fostered in the language classrooms because language and cultures are inseparable and all our classes are a melting pot of multiple languages and cultures. Compared to the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) classrooms, humanities classrooms especially English classrooms are conducive spaces for encouraging discussions on issues of global relevance. Usually the teachers engage in deeper conversations with learners on matters of common concerns, societally relevant issues and global

challenges. Content Based Instruction has been a popular method owing to its effectiveness in raising the learners' awareness on relevant social issues at local and global levels.

### **ELT Classrooms, Employability Skills and Social and Emotional Learning**

If education is to enable the learners to excel in the global market that demands greater employability skills, teachers must be able to move beyond the curriculum and the hitherto practised ways of teaching. Learning must happen as a holistic process by focussing on the process of learning but also clearly setting the goals of education. This goal setting must happen in ELT classrooms too. The employers are seeking candidates who have solid critical thinking ability, creativity, capability to collaborate along with their sound subject knowledge. Transcending the geographical boundaries, when multinational companies are searching for globally competitive and competent candidates who are proficient in their English communication skills, the ELT classrooms must be redesigned to incorporate the employability skills, both soft and hard skills, into the curriculum. What I argue here is that the teachers do not have to wait till the curriculum gets redesigned. On the contrary, teachers can assert their agency and begin to incorporate elements, practices and concepts that can nurture the desired qualities in the learners. Cross cultural communication and analytical ability must be focussed within the language classrooms. English classrooms must be a space for learners to be introduced to and to foster healthy discussions on global and local level problems. Social and Emotional Learning becomes very crucial at this point.

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The core competencies of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) allow the stakeholders to be globally competent by enabling them to be active partakers in their societal interactions and thereby helping them to assert their identities as social beings.

### Engaging in Sustainability Dialogues in ELT Classrooms

Functioning within the framework of SEL, teachers of English language can assist the learners to bring in problems and possibilities from their own familiar contexts. Linguistic tolerance also is part of the SEL competencies and therefore multilinguality in English classrooms is no longer despised. On the contrary, teachers are now using the learners' more enabled language, that is their first language (L1) for various transactional purposes in classrooms. Using learners' first language in the English classroom is a step towards inclusivity and embracing multilinguality can further be carried out through the use of adapting multilingual materials into the classroom. That means, the learners deal with the content in their more enabled language and they will carry out the activities and tasks based on it in English.

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Teachers accommodating the experiential learning framework into their classrooms can get engaged in sustainable learning and teaching practices as the learners will be actively engaged in their learning process and this pattern encourages critical thinking and inculcates problem solving skills. Teachers must facilitate more real-life oriented projects and assignments which engage the learners' higher order thinking skills and thereby encourage collaboration and greater constructive communication.

Emphasising interdisciplinarity is also important in English classes. English classes cannot be anymore the classes that discuss Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Grammar and Vocabulary skills. By appropriating content that addresses the global level issues, and providing an experiential learning context, the teachers also redefine their teaching methodology. They will have to research for new methods of evaluation too. While these practices can benefit the learners in terms of linguistic knowledge, word knowledge and skills, the teachers are making their move towards a sustainable professional development practice. By incorporating the hitherto neglected questions of inclusivity and sustainability into English classrooms, the teachers actually partake in the revamping of our education system.

Even if the teachers cannot redesign the entire curriculum using the SEL and experiential learning framework, they will be able to use materials that could work well in the classroom context within the aforementioned frameworks. When the learners' critical thinking ability and creativity in an English classroom determine greater language learning outcome, there are by-products such as the increment in motivation, willingness to learn, collaboration and constructive

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communication. Fostering all these learner variables can enhance the learners' skills- both soft skills and hard skills- that are required for being part of an excellent work force.

By drifting away from the usual text-based content and moving towards authentic, digitally smart materials that are inclusive in nature teaching methodology undergoes a significant transformation. Assessment methodologies also change. Teachers will then be focussing more on their professional development and strive to update their theoretical and practical knowledge. Through a judicious mixture of various methods, by carefully choosing the content that focusses on local and global issues, by enabling the students to collaborate and to think critically and creatively, the teachers will be fostering their own professional development too. If Society 5.0 has to be actualised a major revision in the field of education is required and English language classrooms cannot be exempted from being refurbished not in terms of its infrastructure but in terms of the linguistic, cultural and social transactions that occur within the classroom premises. Smarter ways of teaching, learning and evaluating must be a part of a teacher's practices and they must make sure that these practices make the learners and teachers excel because what we look forward to is a greater way of knowledge sharing.

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## ELT Practitioners' Language Policy Perceptions in India

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### Abstract

Teachers can change society through education and they can, therefore, be called 'change-agents.' Particularly, language teachers can crystallize students' perceptions of, and attitudes toward different languages in multilingual India where hundreds of languages compete for recognition as a national language and a medium of instruction. Multilingualism inevitably leads to language politics and India is no exception to this sociolinguistic phenomenon. Language politics causes language tension and social unrest. This tension remains unresolved in India ever since the adoption of the Constitution in 1950. It is fitting to seek the language policy perceptions of English language teachers from the most linguistically sensitive State of Tamil Nadu in the 75<sup>th</sup> year of Independence for the 21<sup>st</sup> century through a questionnaire constructed on a three-point Likert scale. The study confirms that their perceptions both differ from and concur with recommendations of Commissions including the National Education Policy 2020 and they are by and large incoherent and ambiguous.

**Keywords:** teacher cognition, learning outcomes, three-language formula, language politics, language attitude

### Introduction

Language Planning And Language Policy (LPLP) is never attempted for its own sake. Languages are valued for their social utility (Ricento, 2006). They always serve as a means to an end. LPLP is viewed as a political exercise in India since there is a heavy,

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acrimonious competition for the position of the national language among 22 scheduled languages. It is also influenced by various non-linguistic considerations such as economic growth, cultural and political hegemony, minority groups' interests, and religious intervention. Though LPLP aims to bring about social change (Cooper 1990), it is fraught with controversies and political upheavals in multilingual India. In spite of 1652 Indian languages (1961 Census), English continues to be valued. It shadows the importance of Indian languages that are both regional and national. However, Indians have an ambivalent attitude toward English and its inevitable, continued presence as a 'killer-language.' (Phillipson 2003) *National Educational Policy* (NEP 2020), which recommends the use of the mother tongue even for research, has opened the new Pandora's box in parts of India and has elicited sharp political reactions from people of Tamil Nadu who are known for their pride over ancient Tamil language and rich culture. They are also exceptionally emotive over the Tamil language. The well-known poetic expression "*udal mannukku, uyir Tamizhkkku*" (body is for the earth, life/breath/spirit is for Tamil) characterizes their perception of and attitude toward Tamil.

Language policy that leads to language planning is usually evolved in the reports of educational commissions that consist of bureaucrats and educationists who usually share the ideologies of the political party in power. It is a kind of top-down approach taking into account very rarely the views and needs of stakeholders and political parties in opposition. At the same time, the party in power is acutely aware that language policies are influenced by politicians, religious leaders, and leaders of language nationalist movements. Moreover, teachers can also motivate stakeholders to form their views on language policy in a multilingual setting. Teachers are, therefore, seen not as passive receivers of language policy but as critical recreators of language policy in classroom practices. (Throop, 2007). At this juncture, teacher cognition of language policy assumes importance. According to Simon Borg (2003: 81), teacher cognition is "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching—what teachers know, believe, and think." It is unobservable since these three dimensions lie hidden in their mind.

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They are, therefore, sometimes referred to as “mental” or “psychological constructs.” Thus, there is some relationship between what teachers do in the classroom and what they believe or think or know, though such a relationship is equally complex for investigation.

Perception is a cognitive process of being or becoming aware of an object (language). It is shaped by learning, memory, expectations, and attention. It is defined as “processes by which an individual receives information about his environment—seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling.” (Joseph Reitz 1987). Hence, it is the way individuals experience the world by organizing, interpreting, and experiencing the ideas. Teachers’ language policy perceptions are crucial for students’ perceptions to be shaped. Language perceptions also crystallize language attitudes in multilingual settings. Language attitudes may or may not be openly manifested. They are subtle dispositions and are rarely well formulated until one is challenged to verbalize them. Besides, Brudner and White (1979: 51) are of the view that “the fate of a language is determined by what people do, think, and feel about it.”

Language attitudes are also basically social attitudes. They are not personal but collective. Thus, they have sociolinguistic considerations. For instance, in a multilingual country like India, there is a strong correlation between people’s positive attitude toward English in the power domains (the mass media, administration, and education) and their negative attitudes toward the indigenous languages in the same domains. Similarly, people who are oriented tend to think colonially that their views on anything expressed in English would gain maximum attention. It is their perception and conviction that English can achieve big and incredible things in their life where the indigenous languages might fail. For example, there is a common perception among the illiterates, the semi-literates and the educated alike not to question the veracity of the new items in English dailies as much as they do in the case of regional languages. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that negative perceptions of Indian languages in the power domains are simply and purely unhealthy. It is socially and psychologically

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retrogressive for national development and mobilization. The high rate of illiteracy can also be partly traceable to the negative attitudes toward Indian languages in the power domains. Teachers' perceptions of English and other Indian languages as medium and as subjects of study can play a vital role in crystallising students' and parents' attitudes toward several aspects of multilingualism. After all, people are not born with perceptions and attitudes.

Language attitude is also an important notion in bilingualism and multilingualism. In fact, it is relevant only in a multilingual setting since it needs a companion language to compare and contrast in its status and function. Bilingualism refers to the habitual use of two (or more) languages by individuals or speech communities. In other words, it refers to the learning of, proficiency in, and use of two or more languages. It is an individual accomplishment, and may characterize the whole speech community. It is the communicative functions in society that help people, particularly parents form perceptions of bilingualism. Every Indian aspires to become bilingual in English. Though bilingual perception is usually desired and acquired in the home to some extent, it is reinforced in the community via educational institutions.

### **Method**

Since the study is quantitative in nature, a comprehensive questionnaire with 20 statements on language policy constructed on a three-point Likert scale was administered through google form among tertiary level ELT practitioners, and the responses from 168 college English teachers from across the State of Tamil Nadu were received. The subjects were chosen at random on the basis of professional networking. They were contacted through personal and group WhatsApp from 3 March 2022 to 5 March 2022. The statements were purposefully shuffled so that they were not to be read as a continuous narrative. Each statement was to be read in isolation though

it was not conceptually complete and independent. The aim was to unearth the respondents' perceptions and attitudes with all unconscious or hidden contradictions. Thus, some of the statements were arranged incoherently so that respondents could not identify the relationships among statements. The researcher expected respondents to treat each statement independent of others so that they are not influenced by the preceding or succeeding statements. A pilot study conducted among 23 teachers enriched the questionnaire with their critical insights and feedback

The research questions help the researcher focus on the issues without any diversion or deviation from the central purpose of the study. The following questions were, therefore, initially constructed:

- i. What are the English language teachers' language policy perceptions in multilingual India?
- ii. How do their perceptions sound, coherent or not, and clear or ambiguous?

Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formulated for validation in the study:

- i. ELT practitioners' language policy perceptions contribute to the crystallization of LPLP.
- ii. ELT practitioners' language policy perceptions are incoherent, ambiguous, and ambivalent.

## **Results**

The responses were computed in simple percentage. The twenty statements were grouped under four themes for computation and categorization.

Table 1: Attitude toward Multilingualism

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Statements	Agree	No Idea
Disagree		
Learning many languages has great cognitive benefits to children.	92.3	
School children should learn at least one additional Indian language in addition to their mother tongue and English.	83.3	11.9
Bilingual teaching and textbooks should be encouraged.	71.4	21.4
Union government should focus on the development of all scheduled Indian languages.	82.7	13.1

Table 2: Mother tongue vs. the Other tongue

Statements	Agree	No Idea
Disagree		
Mother tongue should be taught only as a language from Grade 9 to Grade 12.	16.2	12.6
English shall be the only language of schooling throughout the country to eliminate social disparity.	41.1	8.9
Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction only up to Grade 8.	29.8	50
		62.5

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Table 3: Pedagogy

Statement Disagree	Agree	No Idea
A language need not be the medium of instruction for it to be learnt well. 27.4	63.1	9.5
Communication should be the sole outcome of teaching English.	65.3	32.9
English proficiency should be a basic requirement for all teachers.	89.9	7.7
Learning how to learn should be adopted as pedagogy.		93.5
Scholars should focus on academic research on ELT.	83.9	9.5
Classroom interaction should be only English.	51.8	41.7
English can be taught without textbooks and technology.	51.5	41.3

Table 4: Language Politics

Statement Disagree	Agree	No Idea
Children of regional medium education develop inferiority complex. 72	8.3	19.6
All India entrance tests should be conducted in all regional languages. 78		17.9
Sanskrit should compulsorily be taught to all students at school. 8.3	8.3	75.6

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Learning Hindi is only an added advantage to students.	72.7	20.6	
English can be an optional language in colleges.	25.1	67.7	
No Indian language can replace English as the language of higher education.	70.8	19	10.1

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**Analysis**

An average of 82% English language teachers exhibits positive attitudes toward learning many languages by children in educational institutions. 92% perceive cognitive benefits of multilingualism. 83% believe in three-language formula proposed by earlier education commissions though it is politically unacceptable to ruling Dravidian parties. 71% are in agreement with the proposal of National Education Policy 2020 to bilingual pedagogy and textbooks. 83% demand the Union government to promote all scheduled languages.

Teachers' perception of mother tongue as a language and a medium is a little ambiguous. They are not able to articulate it clearly. While 62.5% of them disagree with the idea of the mother tongue as medium of instruction only up to Grade VIII, and 71% disagree that it should be taught only as a language (not as a medium) from Grade IX to Grade XII, only 50% of them disagree with the idea of English used as medium of education uniformly throughout the country in order to eliminate social disparity. Interestingly and ironically, an average 11% of them do not have any idea about mother tongue being taught as a language at secondary level and English being used as a medium at all levels of school education. Their perceptions of and attitudes toward the use of the mother tongue and English as a medium of instruction and as a language need to be further explored.

Sixty three percent of them assert that a language need not be used as a medium of instruction for a language to be learnt well. It is

likely to be inferred that English can be taught as a language and not necessarily as a medium. Conversely, the mother tongue can be used as a medium at least up to secondary level. An overwhelming majority of them (90%) are convinced that English proficiency is the basic requirement for teachers of all subjects. It indicates that students pick up English not only from English teachers but also from all subject teachers. However, only 59% of them think that classroom interaction should be in English. Unfortunately, they are oblivious of the fact that the best classroom is always interactive since interaction promotes both language proficiency and knowledge acquisition. 33% of them do not view the acquisition of communication skills as the sole outcome of teaching English. It means that English teachers have a different hidden agenda of teaching English like inculcation of literary values. A vast majority of them (94%) are in agreement with the recommendation of NEP 2020 that students should 'learn how to learn' English lifelong. 84% of them perceive the need for academic research on English language teaching. Fifty percent of them are dependent on texts for teaching English. Of course, who needs a textbook is an issue that requires further research.

Their political perceptions on mother tongue and other tongues appear to be complex, ambiguous, and incoherent. 72% of them accept that regional medium creates a kind of inferiority complex in students, whereas 68% feel that English should be a compulsory subject in colleges. Again, only 50% of them are of the view that English can be used as a medium of instruction. At the same time, 71% are convinced that no Indian language can replace English as the medium of higher education. These perceptions do not reflect the recommendations of NEP 2020. However, they advocate the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools. They are also of the opinion that all India entrance tests be conducted in regional languages. It is aligned with the promotion of regional languages as recommended by NEP 2020. While 73% of them welcome the learning of Hindi as an added advantage to students, 76% of them oppose the idea of Sanskrit being taught as a compulsory language at school. Their attitude toward Hindi vis-à-vis Sanskrit is fraught with tension and contradiction. NEP 2020

advocates the promotion of Hindi and Sanskrit across the country as in the case of earlier commission reports, but English language teachers prefer Hindi to Sanskrit perhaps for its functional value and contemporary relevance. Sanskrit in Tamil Nadu is associated with one specific religious function to be performed by one particular community.

### Discussion

English language teachers' language policy perceptions in India are as complex and ambiguous as language policy. Mostly, they are unable to crystallize their attitudes toward the role of mother tongue and other tongues like Hindi and English in education. Socio-psychologically, their mind reflects ambivalent social language attitudes in multilingual India. India's language scenario is highly complex and mind boggling for those who are relatively new to Indian languages and cultures. India with 1.3 billion people does not have any particular national language even though it is rich with 1652 languages out of which 22 are spoken by 96% of Indians as mother tongue. Its Constitution has recognized Hindi, an Indian language as the Official language of the Union government and English, a foreign language as Associate Official Language. Hindi along with 48 dialects is used as a state regional language in more than one State mostly in the North, and it accounts for 43.63% according to 2011 Census. Each of the remaining 21 scheduled languages is used in other States in single digit. Of course, English is used as the Associate Official (intra-state) language or as the *lingua franca* (inter-state) language in almost all States. Thus, it serves as the *lingua franca* of India with 28 States and 8 Union Territories reorganized on the language basis. Against this complex linguistic background, LPLP has to be viewed as an extremely sensitive issue for the simple reason that language is promoted chiefly through education and education is in the concurrent list, a Union and a State subject.

Education for all at all levels cannot be planned without language planning. Language planning is solidly based on language policy. The recommendations related to LPLP as part of the earlier educational

commissions since Independence in 1947 could not be implemented in full and uniformly across the nation due to language nationalism, language prejudices, language phobia, and different perceptions of the various minority linguistic groups. At the same time, English is silently perpetuated through education as a subject, as a language, and as a medium. It continues as the only administrative language of the Supreme Court and several High Courts even 75 years after independence. Sahitya Akademi, India's premier literary institution, has recognised English as one of its 24 languages. It is the medium of instruction in schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the most popular school board in India. Each State has its own school board with its regional language as the medium of instruction. Of course, several of them offer English medium instruction from Grade I as well to meet the societal (parental) pressure. The Council of Indian School Certificate (ICSE) uses English as its medium of instruction.

Tamils are historically caught in the vortex of language issues on account of Sanskritization of Tamil language and culture. English added to their woes. Their attitude toward English has always been politically contingent and ambivalent. For example, before independence the Tamils endeared English as a language of development and used it as a shield to fight against the hegemony of Sanskrit which was perceived to have colonized the Tamils and to promote religious, caste, and ethnic affiliations. This anti-Sanskrit, anti-Aryan ethnic attitude, which is essentially political and ideological, continues to be indoctrinated in the social psyche of the Tamils to date in their perceived supremacy of Hindi, a language with close, biological affiliation to Sanskrit. Their anti-Sanskrit political rhetoric was extended to Hindi after independence and it was crystallized in their popular slogan "*English Ever, Hindi Never.*" However, around the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Indian independence, political language perceptions of the Tamils turned against English itself. They started new linguistic jingoisms "*Long Live Tamil,*" and "*Tamil Everywhere, Tamil Anywhere*" in sharp contrast to the earlier slogan. However, there is a huge chasm between political perception and people's perception. Tamils continue to patronize English as a

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language of professional development and social uplift.

Since the 1960s, the two ruling Dravidian parties claim that they have a moral obligation to implement people's language choice. The social-psyche of Tamil parents demands English as a medium since it provides more exposure than when it is taught as a subject. Tamil parents prefer English as a medium of education uniformly throughout the country so that all children irrespective of socio-economic status can have access to it. (Sekar 2007). Right now, only the rich and the educated alone have access to English medium education. It is their socio-economic and locational disadvantages that drive them to admit their children in Tamil medium institutions. However, the two ruling Dravidian parties vie with each other to promote Tamil as a medium of education mostly in state-run institutions with fee-waiver schemes and quotas for admission to higher studies and employment. Parents are now allured and therefore expected to turn their attention to Tamil medium education in government institutions for these material benefits, not out of any ideological conviction.

Meanwhile, there has always been a political tension in Tamil Nadu when Hindi is promoted as per the mandate of the Constitution. Political resistance to promotion of Hindi as the only official language is unambiguous in Tamil Nadu though other non-Hindi speaking States resist but allow their children to learn it as an additional language. In fact, Hindi has no relevance in daily life in Tamil Nadu. There is no utility or possibility of using it as a functional language right now. It is not used in any domain at any level. It is not read, spoken, heard, and written. An additional language is learnt for its perceived utility value and not for political purposes. All social schemes of the Central government are named in Hindi, but Tamils do not understand and therefore they are unable to use such expressions. Hence, Tamil parents and English teachers rightly understand that Hindi can be learnt as an additional language and the learning of it has some added advantage compared to learning any other contemporary regional Indian language. Post-pandemic reality has taught everyone that Hindi is useful for inter-state social mobility and interaction for common people who migrate for employment opportunities. After all, not all

people can be expected to learn all regional languages. Hindi, which is the majority minority language, can be promoted not just as official language but as an inter-state language in lieu of English.

Language policy recommended by all Educational Commissions appointed in independent India (*University Education Commission, 1948-49; Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53; Education Commission, 1964-66; National Education Policy, 1986; National Knowledge Commission, 2007; & National Education Policy 2020*) are ridden with contradictions. They have recommended the use of mother tongue/regional language as medium of education at all levels, the learning of English as a language with emphasis on communicative competence, and the development of Hindi as the link language. While the first education commission (1948-49) articulated the need for English in order to “keep in touch with the living stream of ever-growing knowledge,” *Education Commission (1964-66)* suggested that no university student be considered eligible for a degree without a reasonable proficiency in English. While all commissions recommended the bilingual approach to teach subjects, *National Knowledge Commission (2007)* suggested Content and Language Integrated Learning since English was recognized as “a most important determinant of access to higher education, employment possibilities and social opportunities.” *NKC* therefore recommended that English be taught along with mother tongue (MT) and /regional language (RL) right from Grade I and that the pedagogy changed from disproportionate emphasis on teaching language structures to creating meaningful learning experiences to students. *National Education Policy of 2020* states that “Wherever possible, students till Class V in schools should be taught in mother tongue/regional language/local language.” Research findings indicate that young children best understand things in their mother tongue or home language. It also recommends that teachers use the bilingual approach to teach subjects.

At the same time, there is a social perception against English as a medium of instruction (EMI) due to several reasons. One, children learn best only through their mother tongue. It is very strongly recorded

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in NEP 2020 in its draft on pages 56-57. Two, the English medium has an alienating effect on children resulting in psychological disaster. Three, it is associated with colonization and slavery. Four, mother-tongue is impoverished. Five, creative thinking is possible only in MT. Six, no education commission has ever recommended English to be used as a medium of instruction. Last, English is perceived to widen the gap between the rich and the poor, the Bharat and India, and the urban and the rural.

NEP 2020 echoes the ideologies of the current ruling party at the Centre which is not favourably disposed toward the continued use of English. It promotes the use of mother tongue in education from primary to research levels. During the inaugural function of the South Asian Institute of Peace and Reconciliation at the Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidyalaya in Hyderabad, Vice President of India Venkaiah Naidu spoke in favour of Indianization of education and argued that Indians' dependency on English as the medium of education has slowed India's growth. He advocated the use of mother-tongue for education. He asserted that "Your mother tongue is like your eyesight, whereas your knowledge of a foreign language is like your spectacles." Very recently, the Union Home Minister observed on the second anniversary of the launch of NEP 2022 on 29 July 2022 that India was lagging behind in research since mother tongue was not used for research purposes. He advocated the use of mother tongue for teaching law, engineering, and medicine. He claimed that the NEP 2020 is a counter to the Macaulayan education system that was introduced to colonize the minds of Indians. He also observed that promotion of regional languages/mother tongues was essential to unlock the full potentials of the 95% of Indians who received primary education in their mother tongue. (*The Hindu* 2022, p.1).

On the other hand, those who advocate English medium perceive many benefits. Inherently, no Indian language can be compared with English since it enjoys a global and mobility status. It is seen as a language of upward social (economic & cultural consequently) mobility that Indian parents and youths aspire to achieve. Whether one likes it or not, English provides access to knowledge and power, better

occupations, intellectual status, trade and commerce, and diplomacy. Teachers themselves agree that the use of mother tongue creates a kind of inferiority in students who would only be anxious to ‘possess’ English at school level so that it can be used as the language of higher education and at work later. Even if English teachers prefer English to be taught as a language and not as a medium, it is in the hands of English teachers to devise locally and contextually a suitable pedagogy for the same purpose. However, there is a difference between learning English as a language for communication and using English as a medium of instruction.

### **Inferences**

There is an urgent need to hold wider consultations with all stakeholders like higher education students, scholars, academics, parents, and prospective employers on language planning and language policy. LPLP should be a reflection of the needs and demands of all these stakeholders rather than an imposition of an unacceptable, ideological proposition designed by bureaucrats and educational administrators. The study confirms that teachers’ perceptions of language policy in the country are as opaque as language policy designed from time to time. Perhaps, present-day teachers are a product of these socially unacceptable yesteryear policies, and in turn, they would produce more uncertainties in the minds of the present generation which are being moulded in the classroom. All stakeholders need to look at LPLP in a broad spectrum and adhere to the postmodern spirit of “*thinking globally but acting locally.*”

The research questions are satisfactorily and successfully addressed as follows:

- i. English language teachers’ perception of language policy that promotes multilingualism is positive and encouraging.
- ii. Their perceptions of the politics of language are predictably incoherent and ambiguous.

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As far as the validation of hypotheses is concerned,

- i. H1 is partially validated.
- ii. H2 is totally validated.

### Recommendations

In view of the politically surcharged language-emotive context and the language perceptions of English language teachers, it would not be improper to make the following suggestions for policymakers to their future endeavours:

1. (English) language teachers shall be involved in evolving LPLP.
2. At macro level, teachers should address the following questions in their academic research as valuable inputs for LPLP:
  - i. How many languages should children learn?
  - ii. When should English be introduced?
  - iii. Should English be used as a medium?
  - iv. How can English be taught as a language?
  - v. What should be the professional competencies of English language teachers?
  - vi. What are the global perceptions and those of parents and employees?
  - vii. Shouldn't Hindi be learnt as an additional language?
  - viii. Is the development and declaration of Hindi as the sole official language of India desirable and acceptable?
3. At micro level, they should deal with the following issues in research and action:
  - i. What is the nature of materials and methods to be used?
  - ii. What should be the content of pre-service and in-service teacher training and development programs?
  - iii. How should assessment be done?
  - iv. What should we learn from the history of English in India?

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- v. How is English related to our multilingualism?
  - vi. What methodology is available for Hindi to be taught as an additional language?
  - vii. How should mother tongue be taught as a language and a medium?
  - viii. How can content subjects and the mother tongue be integrated?
4. English language teachers from primary to tertiary levels shall be involved in eliciting their perceptions of English language teaching policy and planning vis-à-vis other languages through action research.
  5. Research can be jointly undertaken by teachers of English and regional languages for clarity and comprehensiveness.
  6. Academic research should focus on the relative advantages and disadvantages of the use of English and mother tongue as medium of instruction.

### Conclusion

Language teachers have an enviable role in crystallizing societal perceptions of, and attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue/ regional language as a medium of instruction at all levels and the learning of English and Indian languages as additional languages. Teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and multilingualism is healthy and robust. Their research should therefore focus on the use of all regional languages as medium of instruction in respective States, the consequences of learning Hindi as the most widely used Indian language, and English as the most desired additional language, and not as a medium of instruction at any level. Academic research and social engineering in campuses should focus on the means of developing mutual respect for all languages, minimizing hostility toward each other's languages. Language teachers should also help students crystallize the distinction between an additional language and the official language of the Union. They should also aim at phasing out English as a medium of instruction and as the associate official language eventually.

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## ELT through NLP

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### Abstract

The paper is to highlight the efficacy of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), as a teaching approach in ELT. NLP is a collection of techniques and strategies that offer choices to learners and help them achieve their goals. The implementation of its techniques in the English language teaching classes can contribute to the success of the learners by enabling them to communicate better, improve their ability, and enhance their performance. This paper also focuses on exploring the concepts and techniques of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and its potential for learning and teaching. NLP is designed in such a way that it offers people choices and helps them to achieve their goal. The paper concludes that NLP is effective in language teaching and can be used for attaining better results.

**Keywords :** - Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Learning Styles and Language Teaching. English Language Teaching

English plays an indispensable role in the contemporary world as it has language attained the status of lingua franca. In India, it enjoys the status of second language and every learner is expected to be proficient in English right from the school level. The learners, especially in the rural areas, though unaware of the importance of the English language, find it difficult to develop their proficiency in English skills. As a result, it remains a major obstacle in reaching their academic and professional goals. The paper focuses on suggesting remedies to improve the English language skills by introducing Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).

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Ever since English Language Teaching (ELT) entered the curriculum of school and higher education, several methods, approaches, and language acquisition theories to teach the language emerged and have significantly contributed to the growth of ELT as a distinct area of research. Although ELT has come a long way and has enabled learners/ teachers to achieve better results in English language learning/teaching, the quest to find out a better alternative teaching methodology has been consistent. In recent times, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), has been advanced as an efficient method to teach English.

NLP, an eclectic and multidisciplinary approach developed in the mid-1970s by John Grinder, a psychologist, and Richard Bandler, a student of Linguistics. They were interested in identifying how people influence each other, and how the behaviours of highly effective people could be duplicated. They initially developed it as a collection of techniques which therapists could use to elicit proper responses from their clients, to bring about their personal change. NLP was centered on its key principles - outcome, rapport, sensory acuity, and flexibility and its applicability to teaching, enabled it to become popular in education, and language teaching in particular.

NLP refers to techniques and strategies used for personal growth and professional development of individuals in diverse fields namely, education, medicine, business, and sports. “Neuro”, in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, refers to the beliefs about the brain and how it translates sensory experiences into conscious and unconscious thought processes, which, in turn, activate the neurological system. The term “linguistic” points out the way people use language to understand the world, detain and conceptualize experience and then correspond that experience to others. “Programming” is training people to speak and act in new and positive ways in order to achieve their desired results.

NLP can be defined as a “collection of techniques, patterns and strategies for assisting effective communication, personal growth and change, and learning. It is based on a series of underlying assumptions about how the mind works and how people act and interact” (Revell and Norman 14).

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NLP is different from other approaches and has its techniques and strategies that are extremely powerful. It encourages change in the classroom right from its set-up to the way classes are handled. NLP gives importance to the emotional needs of the learners. It is based on the principle that, “simply changing the internal dialogue, from criticism and negativity to kind words spoken in a gentle, accepting tone, can make a profound difference to people’s self perception, self confidence, and hence their ability to act effectively and successfully” (Byram and Hu 505).

NLP as a teaching methodology has the potential to address multiple intelligences of learners, involving their linguistic, emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. The teaching methodology followed in NLP insists that learners should know the objectives, be familiar with how others learn, maximise similarities with other learners, and respond flexibly to achieve their outcome. Furthermore, it assists in maintaining the rapport between teachers and learners throughout their learning process, and encourages learners to learn effectively. Teachers also play a vital role in the teaching-learning situation. They are the individuals with proficiency to edify learners, and have the potential to create strong impact on students’ performance. Moreover, if teachers are efficient, they themselves can get rid of most of the other shortcomings that hinder effective teaching. Therefore, teachers were fixed as the respondents of the study. It also paved the way to increase the number of students getting benefitted from the study.

NLP affirms that learners have their preferred sense for taking in information which is predominantly visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Therefore, it insists on multi-sensory teaching, using as many channels as possible. It also has its presuppositions that guide in the application of it. “It is a humanistic philosophy and a set of beliefs and suggestions based on popular psychology, designed to convince people that they have power to control their own and people’s life for the better” (Richards and Rodgers 130).

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In the lecture method teachers play an active role whereas students pay conscious attention to teachers, and non-consciously notice to themselves, and the happenings around them. It appeals to learners but not all of them. NLP caters to the needs of all the learners. Unlike the conventional mode of teaching, NLP reaps positive responses from the learners. The learners play an active role in classes when different modes of teaching are implemented. The learners find learning in groups more comfortable. It enables them become familiar with their representational systems and other effective learning strategies.

To implement NLP in the English language classes, teachers can prepare instructional material, as the class progresses, having in mind the representational systems of the learners. The techniques and learning strategies of NLP can be used to teach effectively. The greatest advantage is that NLP is applicable to any teaching-learning environment and can be applied to the teaching of all aspects of language. It is a suitable approach to teach the present generation learners who learn well by doing, visually, and collaboratively. It enables the learners to learn English easily and effectively.

The key principles of NLP, namely outcome, sensory acuity, rapport, and flexibility, play a major role in enabling learners to achieve their expected outcome. The teaching methodology followed in NLP insists that the learners should know the objectives, be familiar with how others learn, maximize similarities with other learners, and respond flexibly to achieve the outcome.

NLP incorporates Learning styles and Humanistic theory of learning. Learning style is how individual processes, comprehends, and processes information. It emphasizes on these three modalities: Visual, Auditory, and Kinaesthetic.

NLP insists on using multiple modalities to present the information in the classroom to ensure active participation of the learners. It takes into account the emotional needs of the learners. It is a humanistic approach due to its method of concentration, focusing on the ability of

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the learners, and capacity that all learners are supposed to possess. It insists that the whole being be engaged in learning. Thus, the learners shall have a self-realization experience and learn through multiple modalities. NLP is centered on the four key principles namely outcome, rapport, sensory acuity and flexibility, which help the learners to achieve excellence:

**Outcome:** One should know what they precisely want to achieve. The goal should be fixed and focused.

**Rapport:** It is the factor essential for effective communication. One should build rapport with oneself and with others. It is ‘maximizing similarities and minimizing differences’

**Sensory Acuity:** It is using one’s senses effectively. One should notice what other person is communicating consciously. They have to listen and feel what is actually happening around.

**Flexibility:** It is being ready to do different things until the outcome is achieved. It is having the range of skills and techniques to try different things.

**Modelling:** It forms an important strand in NLP. It is based on the assumption that if the learners understand how someone does something, they can practice and teach others. In the case of teachers, they can model their teachers, whom they admire for their work. Similarly, learners can choose their own models and can aspire to become like them. In order to improve the communication skills, the learners can model some of the best speeches to meet excellence.

Rapport is one of the key principles of NLP and a factor essential for effective communication. Building rapport in the classrooms can ease students’ willingness to take part actively in the class. The students who are in good rapport with a teacher are motivated and able to learn easily. Maintaining rapport in the classrooms leads to different responses and processes. The teacher can give feedback to motivate the learners and not correcting them. This shall motivate the learners to be active and help them to learn in the class.

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An individual's capacity to learn is influenced strongly by their neuro- physiological 'state' (e.g. a state of curiosity rather than a state of boredom), and their beliefs about learning and about themselves as learners [...]. Such states and beliefs are also learnt and susceptible to Change. Such modification happens through communication between teacher and learner, which takes place through verbal and non-verbal channels, both consciously and unconsciously. (Tosey and Mathison 2003)

Learner's body and mind should function in the class. Some physical activities can be given in the class to make them active. The learners can often check the state of their body and mind and relax. They should be taught to look at the funny side of the things. The teachers should not impose their ideas in teaching rather should ask for the learners' suggestions and opinions to enhance their participation. They should be made to think optimistically because positive thoughts can influence them to a greater extent. Learners can be exposed to brainstorming sessions.

The teacher should create a safe atmosphere in the classroom. The learners should feel free to express their ideas and try to become successful learners. They should not worry to make fool of themselves. To make it happen, the teachers should give learners constructive feedback. The focus should be on the solution and not the problem. As words have a tremendous influence, NLP insists on the conscious use of the language. The concept is that renaming or re-labelling things can alter the perception of them.

The learners should know what they want to get it. They should think about the steps they need to take. Teachers can encourage the learners to dream. The greatest resources one can have are the positive qualities and are within every person. The learners should realize it. As 55% of the message is conveyed through body language and 38% through the tone of voice, the learners should practise non-verbal as well as verbal interaction.

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## Teaching the ICT Way

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### Abstract

ICT stands for Information and Communication Technology. Information is knowledge represented in any form like data, opinions or facts. It can be audio-visual, written, oral, graphic or cartographic. Thus ICT covers computer hardware, software and telecommunication facilities and covers various fields like media and broadcasting, documentation centres, internet services, virtual labs, simulations and libraries. These technologies facilitate the learning process as well as the method of instruction and help in learning and diagnosis, feedback and remediation. ICT also leads to professional development and international partnership in the field of education. This leads to continuous professional development in a very flexible way both for the students as well as the teachers. But, it has also been seen that ICT also leads to the increase in gaps between the haves and the have-nots. It has been seen that ICT has penetrated the education field at a lower rate in the developing countries when compared to their developed counterparts. ICT is readily incorporated in the institutions in the developing countries but its upkeep and continuity has become a major challenge.

ICT involves the use of various technological tools and resources that are employed to create, disseminate, store and manage information. The main focus of ICT has been the use of computers and the internet. However, various other devices like radio, TV, audio devices etc. also are related to ICT because these devices also help create and disseminate information. These days, accumulation of information is not the primary focus. Rather, its sharing and propagation

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is of more importance. This is because anybody can accumulate information these days with a little effort. But, it is the knowledge that is able to impact lives, is the question of interest. In other words, students should not simply be 'fed' information. Rather, they should be made capable of 'creating knowledge'. This can be possible if a student is transformed into an 'active learner' and the teacher becomes a facilitator in this process. The facilitator's role is to help the students understand, organize and share the information they have gathered. The information is to be 'taken out' of the learners rather than spoon feeding them with it. This change in focus from spoon feeding of knowledge to its extraction from the students is the rationale behind the use of ICT in Teaching.

In an average Indian classroom, various problems are faced by both the teachers as well as the learners. These include copious syllabus, a large number of students, attention deficit and lack of modern facilities. ICT can help tackle these problems. Various strategies should be used for different topics. It's common knowledge that certain topics can be easily understood by discussion while others require the exhibition of various kinds of diagrams and animations. For topics of the latter kind multimedia presentations and PowerPoint presentations can be readily used. Simple presentation should be coupled with worksheets that are given to the students during the progress of the presentation.

While using multimedia presentations, it should be taken care that your session is divided into three parts. The first part is the building up of the initial interest of the students. In the second part, the development of the topic should take place and in the third part the discussion and recapitulation should be the focus. Multimedia presentations are most useful in the initial phase. However, in the hands of an expert, these can be of much importance in the other stages as well. To take an example, while teaching Hamlet, if certain short videos and animations that depict the England of that period are shown, it will kindle the interest of the students. Similarly, short videos from movies or theatre shows can be used to depict the intense scenes in the play. Similarly,

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while teaching about the animal kingdom or the plant kingdom, interesting videos can be incorporated into the lesson. Not only this, various difficult concepts of physics like wave particle duality, quantum entanglement etc. can be easily understood by appropriate animations. These concepts are very tricky and are not at all commonsensical. It's very difficult for the students to grasp them without the aid of ICT tools. To elaborate more, various processes like mitosis, meiosis, respiratory system, circulatory system etc. kindle the imagination of students when taught through the use of multimedia techniques.

In another method, a single computer is assigned to a small group of students. A PPT made by the teacher is loaded on the computer. Students watch and study the PPT and deliberate on it. They note down their reactions and inputs in a word file in the computer. Not only PPT, various apps and drawing tools can be used, where students themselves draw and illustrate what they have grasped in the session.

More creative ideas are available for hardworking and vibrant teachers. Teachers can also make a personal blog, which they update on a regular basis and ask for feedback from students. The students can also form their individual accounts in the teacher blog. Various online websites give ample free resources and techniques through which a nice 'teacher blog' can be made. Students who are reticent can also take part in the activity at their own leisure. Similarly, slow students can participate in the blog at their own pace and level of interest.

Even simpler methods can be employed to engage students in your teaching. These days very good programmes are available on TV, especially on channels like Discovery, Animal Planet and the History channel. Students can be asked to watch certain specified programmes and then discussions be held in the classroom. Same method can be used with the radio programmes. The rationale behind the use of ICT in teaching is not to make it modern or state-of-the-art just for the sake of it. The purpose to be achieved through this is the better understanding, participation and independence of the students.

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Mere addition of ICT to teaching does not add quality and value to it. On the contrary, ICT can even be used for immoral purposes like creating a divide between students. Such a case surfaced in the USA in the 2000s where white students were given more exposure to ICT than their black counterparts. Not only this, there was a difference even in the quality of assignments given. The white students were given refined assignments whereas the blacks were given mere repetitive and drill based assignments.

Not only direct teaching, but data about teaching and learning can be gathered, shared and analysed in a more precise way using the ICT. This helps further to find out flaws in the education system and make need based changes at different levels. Different concepts like access, assessment and accountability can be dealt with in a better way using the modern methods and devices provided by ICT. ICT enables us to transcend the limitations of art, language and even the senses. Experience can be simulated and represented in a much better way using modern technology.

Students are able to expound upon what they have learnt in the class and are able to organize in a better way what they have grasped in the class. In a way, they become independent learners and acquire a sense of responsibility for what they have done while using ICT. Introduction of ICT in learning institutions can be a boon for students in this regard. It will give them information, confidence and a sense of independence.

ICT is a world-wide phenomenon and students who are well versed with ICT stand a better chance succeeding in the fierce competition. In this way they can become a part of skilled workforce and have increased social mobility. Students can gather all together a new set of skills and can have enhanced learning experiences. Laptops, tablets, smart boards, E-readers are the new tools being employed in teaching and learning. Various activities like online advertising, online registration, quick access, e-learning, availability of best persons in the education field and e-communication are the innovative methods that have been brought in by the ICT revolution. This has helped integrate ICT in the

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teaching, learning and evaluation process. In this way, students are able to get quality services at the click of a mouse.

The earlier a student becomes familiar with ICT the better because ICT skills are required at every stage of life of learning and life. It increases the knowledge as well as the presentation skills of the students. They are able to innovate more and are keen in putting more efforts in their learning. They can access information as per their wish and availability of time because they are able to get access to study material via remote devices. Here the concept of flipped classroom comes. In this, students are not given lectures. Rather, the study material is provided to them at their home through the online mode. The time in the classroom is spent in experiments, projects and discussions so that the students get a deep understanding of what they have studied at their home. In other words the role of a classroom and home are flipped or interchanged. What is normally done at home is done in the classroom and vice-versa.

The students do their traditional class work (listening to lectures) at home and they do their homework (projects, assignments etc.) in the class. In this way, students are able to reflect on what they have learned at home. They also feel less stressed in this way. They are free to ask any question they want, which is not possible in a normal classroom environment. They acquire team-work skills because now they have ample opportunities to interact and discuss with their peers. They learn in groups and this has a dramatic and long-lasting effect on their learning.

However, this new class work is surely to be done in the presence of a qualified teacher and is best suited for students who have high motivation for acquiring new knowledge. A student who lacks motivation will not listen to lectures at home and hence will not come prepared to the class. Breaks in internet connectivity can also further hamper the motivation of such students because high speed internet is indispensable for such an environment. The student may over-rely on the instructional material and hence may develop hampered critical thinking and enquiry.

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He may be able to download anything he wants but may have only a superficial understanding of the concepts. This may lead to barren imagination and listlessness. Students may also fall prey to copying and rewriting the already available material. Distraction to unimportant or unwanted sites also becomes an issue in this method of instruction. They may not be able to develop good hand-writing and their oratory skills may also take a beating. Not only students, teachers may also become lackadaisical and use ICT just to reduce their burden or simply to leave everything to the screen and have rest in their cosy chair.

The role of a teacher becomes all the more important because now the teacher is free to use interactive techniques. Rather, now the teacher is free to move out of the bounds of the task of finishing the syllabus. He now becomes more focused on open-ended problems so that students can rectify what they have learned themselves. He can work more closely with the students and help students understand the concepts in a better way. This provides a lot more opportunity to a teacher than traditional classrooms.

The evaluation of such a classroom however is a bit tricky. It's because testing is usually done at the same time to judge the knowledge acquisition of students. In this method, different students are at different levels. So, multiple tests become the responsibility of the teacher. It may also happen that some students or a group of students deliberately delay their learning so that they are given a test at a later time or are given an easier test. Here, the role of a teacher becomes all the more important because he has to give special time and attention to slow learners. On an average, various new methods of evaluation have been developed over the years using ICT techniques. Certain institutions upload the checked answer sheets on their websites to ensure transparency. This facility can be availed by desirous students on the payment of a stipulated fee. Students who get frustrated over failure or less marks can satisfy themselves in this way.

The use of ICT also increases the reach of an institution to a large extent. The physical limitations don't matter much. But, the content should also be developed in local languages. It should incorporate

nuances of the local culture. Teachers and administrators need to be trained well in these new tools. Good technical support is also a prerequisite. Equitable access of students to ICT devices and tools also needs to be ensured. If the access remains with only a privileged few, the new ICT revolution may end up increasing more disparity.

It has been found that most of the students learn better when they learn through visual and tactile means. A student who experiences information and not merely hears it is more capable of understanding and retaining it. Students with special needs can also benefit a lot from the ICT revolution. Simplified screens, combination of graphics with texts and setting of learning pace are the advantages that are of immense benefit to special children.

To conclude, it must be stated that ICT should not privilege one culture over another. It should be used universally, focusing on internationally shared values amongst learners and educators. It must also be kept in mind that quality in education is also dependent upon local conditions, ethos and individual needs. These factors need to be respected. Divergence, plurality and diversity need to be emphasized over hegemonic or monoculturalist tendencies.

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## English Language Teaching in Malabar and the Role of Gulf Migration

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### Abstract

Malabar region in Kerala was against English language and culture at the time of colonization and established the belief that 'English is the fume of hell' as an agenda of eradicating English influence over the people of Malabar region. The people of Malabar kept away from English language, culture and education as a method of resisting colonial influence over their life. They created their own language for written and oral communication in order to keep secrecy of communication in the fight against colonial powers. Their skills in creating a new form for communication and the way of preserving the new form of language prove to resist the colonial aggression is well marked in the pages of history of Indian independence struggle.

But even after the liberation of motherland from the colonial shackles the people of Malabar stood hostile towards English language and communication. The hostility extended to English education system culture and even the dress code. This hostility towards English language and communication changed with the migration towards the gulf countries in order to relieve them from the debilitating poverty brought about through colonial exploitation, feudalism and caste system. This migration changed the attitude towards language and communication as the migrants realised the real value of communication skills in the globalised world and this brought about sea change in the attitude of Malabar towards communication skills. The dependence on Malayalam and other local languages for

communication changed to a global perspective and the necessity of language skills begin to influence the younger generation.

This paper tries to analyse the changing aspects of English language teaching in Malabar region brought about by the gulf migration.

The region of Malabar holds a peculiar place in the history and geography of the state of Kerala with its elegant flora and fauna and a significant role in the fight against the colonial powers. Even from the pre-colonial times the region of Malabar marked its presence in the cultural atmosphere of the country with the relationship with the outside world as the Arabian people from the Middle East came to the Malabar Coast for trade. The cultural exchange from the trade relations created a specific culture in the Malabar region. The people, the flora and fauna, natural elegance and the geographical specifications helped the region of Malabar to mark its identity in the Indian subcontinent. Colonial times witnessed anticolonial resistance from the people of Malabar as they were not ready to bow before the might of the British Empire.

Colonial Kerala was divided into Cochin, Travancore and Malabar regions. The regions of Cochin and Travancore were ruled by prospective kings or queens with the support of the British Empire. The emperors and administrators of Cochin and Malabar region cooperated with the British Empire to exploit the nation as they were enslaved to the might of the British rulers. But the region of Malabar was ruled directly by the British Empire and the people of Malabar were not ready to subdue their dignity in front of the might of the British. They even fought the British and succeeded in establishing their own country with their own passports called the Malabar passport. As a mode of resistance against the rule of the British the people of Malabar took a decision to keep away from English language, tradition, culture and religion. They were not ready to accept the tradition of concepts of British and they resisted the Anglicisation of the region which was the main agenda of British colonists apart from exploitation. So as a part of the resistance against the process of

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Europeanization by the colonial powers the people of Malabar considered English-language as a tool for transforming the indigenous culture and tradition based on Europeans standards. They took a decision against teaching and learning the English language. They even created a new language called Arabi-Malayalam to resist the supremacy of the English language and also to keep the confidentiality of communication in the process of resistance against the English powers. This mode of resistance through the aversion towards English language created an atmosphere in the Malabar region as English language learning and teaching was unthinkable for most of the people in the region. Only the higher caste and class and elite of the region who were supporting the British Empire and cooperating with the British administration for the process of exploitation were able to attach themselves to the English language, culture and tradition so as to make them more akin towards the English rulers.

Moreover English language learning and teaching was encouraged by the colonial powers in the region both as a part of cultural resistance against the anticolonial struggle and they made the people believe that only through the following of English language, culture and religion the indigenous people can improve their standards and achieve the status of European individuals so as to attain progress and development in their life. But the people in Malabar who took anti-colonial mindset as their main agenda kept themselves away from the English language religion, culture and tradition. This was the technique of the leaders of colonial struggle to keep away the common people of the region from the colonial influence. This was also a method of colonial resistance in the region.

But with the attainment of freedom the British powers were no longer a challenge for the people of Malabar as foreigners left the land forever to award liberation for the country and the region of Malabar. While the colonial times witnessed the aversion towards English language as a way of colonial resistance, the postcolonial Malabar region showed hostility towards English language as the exploitative minds wanted the people of the region of Malabar to

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keep away from the paths of development and progress through the process of education and English language learning. The crooked clergy who wanted the people to be in illiteracy and ignorance exhorted the people to keep away from the English language and the process of learning. So the colonial standpoint against the English language was used by the clergy to exploit the people who continued in illiteracy and ignorance. While the anticolonial leaders made the people believe that 'English is the fume of hell' as a part of their tactics to keep the people away from the English language the postcolonial clergy in Malabar region followed the same slogan and they mingled or mixed religious feelings with anticolonial standpoint so as to meet their personal needs. As a result of this attitude of the religious leaders and the clergy, the post-colonial atmosphere showed backwardness in the region. The clergy of the religion wanted the people to learn from the very mouths of the religious tutors and teachers and they closed all the possible ways of learning and development of the individual so as to block the possibility of protest or questioning against the exploitative actions of the religious clergy and elite groups in the Malabar region. As a result of the aversion towards modern methods of learning especially the methods of learning and teaching English language the region of Malabar could not march towards the paths of progress and development along with the development of the global standards which was visible in almost all parts of the world in the postcolonial scenario.

The people in the region suffered because of the poverty and hardships left to them by the rule of the suffocating British colonists and they were struggling hard to find the methods of sustenance as they were plunged in ignorance and illiteracy. So in order to save themselves from the debilitating poverty and hardships the people of Malabar struggled hard to find ways of earning and sustenance. The growth of Middle Eastern countries as a result of the oil boom gave much hope to the people of Malabar as they began to migrate from their regions to the Middle Eastern countries. "...millions of Keralites have migrated to the Gulf for higher paying and more attractive employment opportunities" (Rajan 231). The countries were rich with oil and poor in human resources for the development of the nation. As

a result of this the rich human resource and the young individuals from Malabar regions began to migrate to Gulf countries and the Malabar region began to show the signs of progress and development. The remittances from the gulf countries began to show its effect as the state and the region began to develop which in turn helped the overall development of the state, region and different sectors of life. “It was the oil boom in the Middle East since the early 1970s that made the big difference” (Harilal 7)

Along with the economic progress the attitude towards learning and knowledge acquisition also changed with the influence of the migrants from Malabar region. According to Balasubramanyam Pattath “The fruits of their labour transformed not just their families but also contributed to building a new Kerala...”(2021). Those who migrated from the Malabar region to the Middle East got exposed to the globalised atmosphere of the world and began to think of the necessity of learning and acquisition of knowledge for individual and social development. People who got exposed to the globalised world realised the methods of acquiring success and progress both in the social and professional life and they realised the value of learning and education. They also realise the value of English language education to succeed in professional and individual life. So people who realised the value of learning in education exhorted the younger generation of the region of Malabar to acquire knowledge and learning. This impulse from migrants from Malabar created a sea change in the social atmosphere of the region (Prakash 119). As a result of the interest in English language learning many English medium schools began to pop up from the different nooks and corners of Malabar and the state. These English medium schools became the pioneers in imparting English language and they became the institutions employing systematic English language teaching. But the English language teaching in the English medium schools was in the traditional way of forceful teaching of English grammar and other technicalities of language which created an aversion towards the language learning process among the younger generation of the region in Malabar. Though the younger generation of the region learnt to read, write and speak in English language it

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was only based on the professional method and this was limited to a minority of students who were able to afford the high fees of private English medium education institutions. The English language teaching in the private schools were done by the graduates and postgraduates who were not exposed to this method of English language teaching in the English medium education system. They were the products of the public education system where the medium of instruction was Malayalam. So the teachers experimented with the younger generation of students and both were confused about the utility and benefits of the process of English language learning. Their aim was solely based on the migration from the Malabar region to the countries so as to make them able to qualify for interviews and professional communication. But the people who were educated themselves from English medium schools could not fulfil their dreams as they found a difference in the language learned in their native lands and the method of communication in the middle eastern countries. Most of the people who got educated from the English medium schools in Malabar were not able to communicate effectively in a foreign land and this realisation made them find means of communicating the language in a better way. Moreover the people who were educated themselves in the public education system in the Malayalam medium also were not able to communicate in English language. This created an atmosphere in the Malabar region where many institutions began to make the generation able to speak English language and a new method of English language teaching began to show its presence. Many spoken English institutions and schools began to sprout in different nooks and corners of the region with a capsule like English language teaching so as to meet the needs of the aspirants in a foreign land. So English language teaching showed new waves of execution. As the English medium schools in the region taught the students on the basis of the traditional methods of teaching spoken English, educational institutions were giving capsules so as to meet the essential needs of communication in a foreign land. The spoken English academies assure the aspirants that the institutions will ensure the injecting of English language into their very veins. The spoken English institution tutors who were having

not enough academic qualification and excellence failed to make English language learning and teaching effective and fruitful to ensure overall development of the aspirants.

The condition of difference in the quality of education and English language learning and teaching changed with the development and progress in the public education system. With the proper intervention from the government and other stakeholders the public education system which was in the Malayalam medium began to improve the quality of education and infrastructure facilities in public schools and they began to start English medium classrooms in the public education system. With the development of quality of education and progress in the infrastructure facilities the difference between public education system and private education system began to diminish from the Kerala state as a whole. This in turn helped the region of Malabar as there was a boom towards the acquisition of knowledge and learning after the splendour of migration and after realising the value of education and knowledge and the importance of English language in the competitive world. The approach towards English language learning and teaching changed with the diminishing difference between public and private education system and better English language teaching became accessible to the common public and to the different sections of the society. As a result of the presence of able, educated and efficient teachers in the field of English language teaching, the approach towards teaching and learning also changed the nature of the schools despite regional differences. So the English language learning and teaching in Kerala as a whole is in a new way of improvement with the influence of migrants and the changes in the education sector of Kerala.

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## **English for Specific Purpose among Industrial Exposure Trainees in Hotels: Problems and Solutions**

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### **Abstract**

Tourism has become inevitable in this era, people travel for many purposes. Guests from diverse linguistic backgrounds come to India, thus trainees undergoing Industrial Exposure Training (IET) in hotels find it very difficult to communicate with such guests. Hence there is a drastic need for English for specific purposes (ESP) to the trainees to host the guest effectively. To deal with this issue, analyzing the problem and need of the trainees is considered obligatory. This paper discusses the specific patterns of English language needed for the trainees to associate with the guest and the staff in the hospitality industry to the various stages of the hospitality operational cycle from the guest check-in to check-out. Using the questionnaire, data were collected and analyzed from 42 students of Vels University, Chennai and followed by interviews with 5 hoteliers. The study has reported that speaking skills is the most important among the four skills. Concerning achieving the requirement in the hospitality industry, the result shows that specific conversation, answering questions, problem solving, decision making and serving the guest were the important functions. It also reveals that multilingual accent, phonetics and fast delivery of language were also the problems faced by the trainees. Thus, the researcher concluded from the finding and recommended

that the pedagogical implication during the training period and special focus for deserving trainees is mandatory to the hospitality industry.

*Key words: ESP, Hospitality Industry, problems, pedagogical practice, trainees.*

### **Introduction**

In this work the researcher has shed light on the importance of ESP in the Hospitality industry and the ways one can enhance it to flourish in their career. Kavaliauskienė G. (2009). Effective communication in English is necessary in all the industries around the globe which includes education, medical, business and hospitality industry. Communication is one of the integral parts of the hotel operation since it focuses on hosting the guest and giving them a comfortable experience at their time of stay in hotels but to fulfil the expectation by the guest is not possible for all the employees in the hotels say Tussyadiah I. P. & Zach F. (2017).

English communication has been a barrier between the host and the guest because almost all the hotels erected were following the western tradition and after world war two the Oberoi group of hotels and Taj launched the early Inn in Mumbai (India). Hotel employees appointed for the operations were all Indians who could manage with a broken English which especially got its name called “Butler English” just because it was being practised by cooks and butlers when the hotel or inn emerged. Hotel employees not only communicated with the guests, they were also required to communicate with higher officials who could be westerners. Wang, Y., et al., (2008). Some managed but most of them could not due to their inability, which led to problems in dealing with the customer and failing to follow certain simple instructions and information in some cases they happened to lose their confidence over the profession and could not sustain.

Heads of the departments will have some problems like losing their command over subordinates due the lack of communication, which also affects in writing documents, emails, reports and other collaterals and also they face the same situation from their superiors. In conclusion, English language skills are very essential for the hospitality industry.

Enhancing the Learning of ESP for the hospitality industry will definitely develop their personal career and the industry reputation. While working in the hotel industry one must need to fulfil various aspects, so practicing and enhancing the English language skills is important. A good communication will not only help the hotel flourish but also will help the guest to gain satisfaction about their skills. Thus, enhancing a hotel industry worker's language skills is essential to enhance the customer experience and increase profitability by Kangogo, et al., (2013).

### **Problem of the Study**

English language proficiency is the prerequisite of the trainees in the hotel sectors. In addition, various hospitality skills to be developed during the course of training in various departments. As a result, improving the English language in the hotel industry is the pressing need. In India very little research has been carried out to determine the trainee's need of English in the hotel industry and what problems they face while handling guests in real life situations and respective department heads.

### **Objective of the Study**

The present study aim to address the following research objectives:

1. What level of English language skills do trainees require in the workplace?

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2. Which skills are considered to be the most important in the training period?
3. In which skills do trainees encounter problems among the four skills?

### **Review of Literature and Related Studies**

Jhaiyanuntana A. & Nomnian S (2020), have mentioned that the hospitality industry is one of Thailand's most significant areas that contributes to their economy. Human capital has become so vital that a strong foundation and development of undergraduate students in this discipline are needed. Their internship experience is part of the process of learning and integrating their knowledge into practice, especially concerning intercultural communicative encounters. The researcher also mentioned the need to incorporate intercultural communicative competence into the hospitality programs that can produce graduates who are well-equipped and prepared for multilingual and multicultural working environments.

According to Yasmin et al., (2016). The hotel industry in Pakistan makes up a very important part of the service sector. This industry demands highly developed communication skills from its employees, as 5-Star hotels deal with guests from foreign countries as a routine matter. This study explored the specific language needs of students in the hotel industry in Pakistan and evaluated a textbook to determine its pedagogical value and suitability for subject-specific communicative needs. The sample consisted of 10 professionals and 40 students from Lahore and Gujrat (Pakistan), where the subject is being taught. Recommendations are made to consider these communicative activities and skills while designing English language courses for the hotel industry. Moreover, fostering autonomy through learning strategies is also accentuated to enable students to enter into the world of work.

Internships form an important aspect of the graduate/undergraduate programs. They are instrumental in formulating the key competencies required by the graduates at the time of final placements. Internships are imperative in mapping the personal characteristics of the student vis-à-vis the requirements of the industry and give them a feel about the working conditions. This paper aims to investigate the experience of the interns and compare it with their expectations and highlights how smoothly they can be transformed into hospitality professionals. This is done with the help of the Serval instrument applied for the internship program for students undergoing training in India and the United Kingdom. The factors impacting the internship for the students are highlighted with the help of factor analysis and recommendations for the industry and academia are highlighted according to Singh, A., & Dutta, K. (2010).

Zopiatis, A. & Constanti P. (2007), shed light on the primary purpose of investigating the relationship between hospitality education and the industry of Cyprus as it relates to students' internship practices. The mismatch between the educational experience delivered to hospitality students and the "real world" practice they experience is investigated are the main focus of the study.

Baum T (2002) addresses the skills debate in hospitality in four key theme areas: the nature of work and skills in hospitality; deskilling within the hospitality workplace; the technical/generic skills debate within hospitality; skills and the education/training process in hospitality.

The purpose of this study is to determine the discrepancies, if any, in the competencies being taught in the classroom for hospitality tourism students versus what lodging and food and beverage professionals believe are the most important competencies to be taught. Personal interviews were conducted with both educators of, and industry professionals working in, lodging management, and the food and beverage industry according to Millar et al., (2010). The results, incorporated into a competency domain model, indicate that there are

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small gaps between professionals and educators in both industries. This discovery suggests that lines of communication are not fully open between educators and professionals.

Needs analysis (NA) has long been argued to be the prerequisite for the design of language curricula or syllabi and the selection of tasks. According to Long (2005), a one-size-fits-all approach should be substituted by a careful examination of learners' needs in a particular domain or learner community. Despite the increasing practice of carrying out a NA as a first step in curriculum design, it is still unclear how exactly the insights obtained from NA can be used in meaningful ways to make informed decisions about task and syllabus design, says Malicka, et al., (2019).

### **Methodology**

Since there is more scope to systematically describe the target population, a descriptive approach seems to be suitable for the researcher.

### **Sample of the Study**

The target population of the study consists of 42 (boys and girls) B.Sc. 2<sup>nd</sup> year students of Hotel and Catering Management, Vels institute of science technology and advanced studies, Chennai.

### **Study Tool**

Based on the review of literature, the researcher developed a five point Likert scale questionnaire to identify the trainees needed in the hotel industry, and shed light on the important skills required in the training period, and problems they faced.

### **Validity of the Study Tool**

To check the validity of the study tool, the questionnaire was distributed to 3 language experts from the related demine and two hoteliers. The language experts and hoteliers agreed upon 92 % of

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the questionnaire item and gave some valuable suggestions to be made and that was implemented before circulating the questionnaire to the trainees.

### **Reliability of the study tool**

The researcher tested the reliability of the questionnaire used for the study using Cronbach Alpha and got the value of (0.95) as coefficient.

Collected data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package, researchers used a 5 point Likert scale to explain the Trainees needs and problems in English language according to the following standards.

### **A: Skills needed**



**B: Problem**

Scale	Skills
80% above	Extreme
70 – 79%	High
60 – 69%	Moderate
50 – 59%	Low
50% below	Least

**Result and Discussion**

The following section introduces the needs and problems of the trainees in hotels when interviewing the hotel employees. The results were illustrated in the table below

The present study attempted to answer the following question: ‘What level of English language skills do trainees require in the workplace?’ The researcher used Means, standard deviations and percentages to address this question as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Means, SDs and percentages of English language functions**


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As Table 1 shows, according to the guests, the most English language functions needed were general conversation ( $M = 4.56$ , 91.2%), answering questions and solving problems ( $M = 4.10$ , 82%) and providing services ( $M = 4.06$ , 81.2%) respectively. The data indicates that the fourth language function the tourist police perceived essential is asking for cooperation ( $M = 3.86$ , 77.2%), followed by the function of giving information ( $M = 3.84$ , 76.8%), and the final rank is offering help ( $M = 3.76$ , 75.2%). As for the total score, and based on hoteliers' responses, it was ranked as very important ( $M = 4.03$ , 80.6%).

It is obvious from the results of Table 1 that trainees use English in general conversations with guests, providing services to foreigners, and answering questions and solving problems if they meet in hotels/resorts. Those communicative functions of English are very important in the language of the hotel industry and require that trainees should be highly trained and good at language. "Hospitality industry is often described as 'the pleasure industry'. It's an industry where communication is the key feature. It's also an international industry and will involve a range of intercultural encounters. The language of this industry is quite clearly English in an international context, but it is also the language of meeting needs, of providing high levels of service, of understanding people, of delighting people, of solving problems" (Harding 2011).

These findings agree with the results of Simion (2012) who pointed out the importance of learning language communicative functions for the tourism industry and personnel. In contrast, Prachanan (2012) results showed that the highest rank was giving information, whereas the lowest rank was for the general conversation.

### **Second: Results related to the Second Question**

Which skills are considered to be the most important in the training period? The results were illustrated in Tables 2

### **Table 2. Means, SDs and percentages of English language skills needs for trainees**

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As shown in table 2, most of the hotel employees rated all the four skills are important. What is so exhilarating is the rank of speaking skills was so crucial among the skills where the mean was ( $M = 4.30, 86.09\%$ ), followed by listening skill then writing skill and finally reading skill ( $M = 3.61, 72.17\%$ ).

For the total score, it ranked as important for the trainee ( $M = 3.89, 77.83\%$ ).

This indicates that the majority of superiors of the hotel expressed a need of the speaking skill for the trainees since they feel its importance in their workplace. This may explain the fact that the hotel industry, consequently many foreigners visit every year. As a result, one can assume with confidence that the trainees use English speaking skill more in their daily work to communicate with the foreign guests. The result of this study agrees with the studies of Alhuqbani (2014), Akyel and Yalcin (1991), Abo-Mosallem (1984), Coskun (2009), Keyoonwong (1998), Lin, Wu, and Huang (2013), Prachanan (2012), Romaya (2009) and Tangniam (2006).

### **Third: Results related to the Third Question**

In which skills do trainees encounter problems among the four skills? The results were illustrated in Table 3.

Mean, SDs and percentages of the trainees and their general English problem

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Table 3 indicates that the trainee in the hotel's main problem in English language skills were notably in listening (74.4%) which is considered the highest among the others. Then the problem with speaking (71.4%) followed by reading and writing, and the total mean score was 3.57 (71.4%). Generally it is observed from the table that there are acute problems in the English speaking skills especially in listening and speaking as hoteliers perceive them. This could be due to the new experience direct from the college and the workplace and the nature of work is new to the trainees.

### Conclusion

The study examined the needs of English language skills for hotel trainees during their training period and their future careers in the workplace. The result concluded that the trainee encountered some sort of problems and embarrassment during the guest interaction as per the hoteliers report. We conclude that the trainees should be specially focused on the main two skills like listening and speaking before they get into action in the hotel for good will of the hotel standard and the guest satisfaction aspect.

### Pedagogical Recommendations

Pedagogical practice is very important mainly in hotel management studies. Hospitality industry is extremely competitive, providing great service is necessary to stay ahead. Training can give staff the knowledge and ability to create a customer focused experience.

Training helps staff to be valued and appreciated. This creates a better work environment and makes staff more capable.

The meaning and implementation of the word pedagogy is debated throughout the education world. The importance of pedagogy is asserted by Anderson through “Pedagogy affects students’ lives and expectations”.

Education must be understood as producing not only knowledge but also political subjects. In the hotel industry, teachers practice with educationally, culturally and linguistically diverse students. Teachers are in the business of pedagogy and are responsible for the enactment and evaluation of curricula in classroom teaching and assessment.

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## The Quality of College Students' Writing under Free Writing Technique

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### Abstract

The most difficult skill to learn is writing, according to most people. When it comes to writing, the majority of people have an uncomfortable and at times debilitating translation process. Control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and letter for action are all required at the sentence level; beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts. This may be one of the reasons why students have difficulty learning to write. When students complain about how difficult it is to write in a second or foreign language, they are referring to the difficulties of not only finding the right words and using proper syntax, but also developing and expressing ideas in a new language. Students, particularly at the tertiary level, have been noted as having some difficulty enhancing their writing ability. Because writing is a complex talent, especially in English, some pupils struggle in this subject. It's challenging not just to come up with and organize thoughts, but also to turn them into legible writing. Students should schedule extra time to practice writing in order to become more acclimated to it. One style of writing that can help you enhance your writing skills is free-writing. As a result, the current research focuses on the quality of college students' writing when they apply the Free Writing Technique (FWT).

**Keywords:** Self-evaluation, improved learning-writing, expressing new ideas, complex skills, free-writing, and writing challenges are all examples of writing challenges.

## Introduction

Writing is a medium for self-expression, self-assessment, and teacher-assessment as well as a means of communicating meaning. Because of its social setting and epistemological challenges of knowing, writing in the tertiary context has much more complex meanings. Students' written language communication abilities are crucial in clearly communicating their knowledge and comprehension, as writing entails more than just producing words and sentences. Paying attention to linguistics is critical to producing high-quality writing, which is indicative of the efficacy of language acquisition techniques. Writing encourages students to focus on accurate language use and provokes language development as writers try to solve the problems that the writing involves. The issues with writing frequently appear as soon as the first words are penned. Difficulties are exacerbated during the selection and generation of ideas, followed by the organisation of thoughts and the selection of words/vocabularies to begin writing. The difficulties do not end here; they continue when the student is required to write in the context of a specific discipline, such as politics, economics, education, and many others. Because different fields have distinct understandings of written language, the writer must be cautious in how he or she uses his or her language. Furthermore, while writing in a second or foreign language, such as English, it becomes more challenging. It's unsurprising that some second-language writers, even as third- and fourth-year university students, struggle with the technical and scientific writing required in their subject. Apart from the issues mentioned above, cultural values play an essential role in writing since they impact the way people write. It is evident that cultural issues are inextricably linked to features of literature. The academic culture, which includes behaviour, values, and attitudes, should be suited to writing. Although it is understated, the goal is for pupils to express themselves clearly in their writing in order to produce a communicable and legible document. In order to establish a conventional written structure, this approach necessitates the use of particular organisational principles.

### Reviews of Related Literature

**Nguyen et al. (2018)** have summed up their review as in figuring out how to write in English, understudies from supposed reliant societies may confront the conflicts of the correspondence shows of their native language and of English as a Foreign Language. These challenges in learning to write in English might be overcome through prewriting tasks. A two-group pretest-posttest design with switching replications was used to investigate the effects of two prewriting tasks, group discussion and free writing, on the length and quality of Vietnamese university students' English argumentative papers. Both activities had a beneficial effect on productivity and writing quality, according to repeated measures analyses of variance, with free writing having the greater impact on productivity. The limitations of learning English as a Foreign Language in interdependent cultures, as well as the repercussions of doing so, are examined.

**Phonna, Rahmi. (2014)** inspected as composing contains a compound cycle to be communicated that involves the author to focus closer on connecting fitting words together. The majority of linguists think that in order to pursue lifelong learning of academic writing pedagogy, a writer must have a high degree of comprehension. The goal of this research was to examine students' free writing by identifying the types of errors that frequently appeared on their writing assignments. As the major data for this study, 28 students' free writings were obtained from 28 students as samples. After that, they were examined using Hogue's (1996) and Oshima's (1996) correction symbol standards (1999). The findings indicated 11 types of grammar that were often misused in students' free writing. The most common category was verb-agreement (V/A), followed by word form (Wf), and spelling errors (Sp). Conjunction (Conj) and erroneous word (Ww) errors were the least common types of errors found in the students' free writing. In total, the pupils' free writing contained 175 faults arising from various grammatical standards.

**Phonna, Rahmi. (2014)** have brief their review as composing is a method for correspondence to pass on significance just as a mode

for self-articulation and self-evaluation and furthermore for educator appraisal. Because of its social context and epistemological difficulties of knowing, writing has even more complex connotations in tertiary education. This study was conducted to identify errors and mistakes made in free-writing by students at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena, as well as to investigate the reasons why they had so much difficulty producing good free-writing, as well as to investigate the students' attitudes toward writing in general and their lecturers' comments on their free-writing assignments. For this study, 18 students provided 18 free-writing tasks to be used as samples. To supplement the information gleaned from the writings, a questionnaire was issued. The written assignments were then evaluated using the form feedback framework, which was derived from Ashwell, in terms of common grammatical faults (2000). Agreement/verb tense, spelling, articles/determiners/plurals, lexical choice, pronoun, and preposition/collocation were all found to be often misused in the students' free-writing. The results of the questionnaires suggested that the students' primary barriers to producing free-writing were a lack of ideas / difficulties organizing ideas, as well as grammar issues.

### **Free-Writing Technique – An Overview**

Free-writing is a prewriting technique in which one writes for a set length of time without stopping. This means that pupils are free to write about whatever they like. They are free to write whatever they choose without regard to genre, context, or topics. In addition to being one of many pre-writing approaches, free-writing can be used to acquaint kids with writing by allowing them to write freely during those periods. In fact, the more they write, the more fluent writers they will become. Certain procedures must be followed in order to produce high-quality writing. These procedures are required to meet the requirements of the writing idea. The writing process is divided into four steps: generating ideas, organising ideas, creating a rough draft, and polishing the document. The steps of writing, on the other hand, can be broken down into seven categories: brainstorming, organising ideas, building cohesion and style, writing the first draught,

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practicing editing, editing writing, and producing the second draught. Creating ideas, organising ideas, producing a rough draught, and polishing the document are the four steps in the writing process. Exploring ideas, organising ideas, building cohesion and style, writing the first draught, practicing editing, editing writing, and producing the second draught are the seven steps of writing.

Free writing is a technique for teaching students that personal and emotional components of the “self” are acceptable in all kinds of writing, including academic writing. The use of the personal or emotional to make a point is frequently discouraged in high school “academic” writing. Every reader should be aware that every written work contains a small amount of “personal and emotional” impact. When students “ignore personal or sensitive issues, a source of inspiration and interest is lost,” and they develop a resistance to write anything, according to the study. When taught effectively, expressive writing, particularly freewriting, can help freshman composition students develop critical thinking skills. As a result, the myth that freewriting is a pointless activity that prevents students from learning academic language is debunked. According to Peter Elbow, an English Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, “freewriting” is a form of creative writing “not to pause for anything when writing without rushing, go swiftly. Never look back, cross something out, worry how to spell something, ponder what phrase or notion to use, or stop to consider what you’re doing “. Students know they will not be “graded” on their emotional responses to a particular topic, so freewriting encourages them to think freely. They also understand that there are no “rules” to follow in terms of style, language, or structure. Students, on the other hand, face a slew of worries when it comes to academic writing. They must follow rigorous criteria in terms of structure, mechanics, organisation, style, and so on, and they don’t have time to “think” about what they’re writing about because so much time is spent focused on the “right” way to write. Many freshmen believe that if they follow the five-paragraph pattern they learned in high school, they would get an “A” on their

paper. The first paragraph is an introduction, and the last sentence of the paragraph is the thesis statement. The body of the paper is made up of the second, third, and fourth paragraphs, which give evidence in favour of the thesis notion, and the last paragraph is a neat conclusion that restates the thesis statement in somewhat “different terms.” The five-paragraph essay is “today’s formalistic approach to writing, which encourages pupils to box their ideas in pre-made formats, to write by formula.” Freewriting, on the other hand, has no set format and is intended to allow students to write for five to ten minutes about a topic that they have been assigned or selected. This type of activity will assist the student in organising his or her thoughts in preparation for writing a longer, more focused essay. Freewriting is a technique for teaching critical thinking abilities to freshmen as well as motivating them to write. There is also evidence to support the idea that, despite the haphazard ideas seen in students’ freewriting, there are underlying organisational aspects to these writings that, if the student were to analyse them thoroughly, they would discover that hidden among their ramblings and/or venting of emotions is a focused idea that could be developed and expanded to aid in the production of academic papers.

Free-Writing as a tool of improving the effectiveness of language competence of students and its different phases.

### **Prewriting**

The prewriting stage focuses on stimulating students’ creativity and assisting them in deciding on a topic to write about as well as the optimal writing method. Teachers should remind students of two important things: the importance of their writings and their intended audience, in order to help them implement this stage effectively. When creating writing outlines, students must consider their intended audience as well as the content of their texts. Various prewriting tasks for children in the classroom. Brainstorming, listening, grouping, prolonged passage reading, and skimming are all examples of these actions. These activities can help students generate ideas for a topic and encourage them to begin writing on their own. Due of their usefulness, teachers must use these exercises. These exercises also don’t

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necessitate any additional supplies from teachers or students, and they're simple to put into effect without taking up a lot of time. Teachers should encourage students to select the most effective approaches for them while providing opportunities for them to practice all prewriting tasks.

### **Drafting**

Students find it difficult to make the shift from planning to writing. Students must, however, convert their plans into temporary writing at some time. Present a variety of exercises to help students migrate from idea generating to drafting in this regard. Associating the theme with something else, defining the theme, applying the idea, summarizing the idea, comparing the idea to something else, arguing for or against it, and recounting the history of the subject's development are just a few of these tasks. Learners are urged to concentrate on getting thoughts down on paper rather than worrying about mechanical or grammatical faults when drafting. Students and teachers should be aware that first draughts will not be error-free. Teachers should concentrate on the big picture (topic, evidence, and organisation) rather than minor difficulties (wordiness, punctuation, and spelling). In following iterations, the bulk of surface issues are addressed.

### **Revising**

Learners select how to improve their writing abilities at this free-writing stage by looking at their work from many angles. Instructors should make it clear to students that revision is about focusing on the order and content of the work rather than correcting small grammatical faults. During the revision phase, students can make changes to their texts. Learners refine their work while also developing and integrating new ideas throughout the revision stage. Through peer correction, self-correction, and teacher-initiated remarks, instructors should present students with revision guidelines. Teachers should also provide feedback on the initial draft so that students can improve their revising skills. Major content-related problems, rather than minor grammatical errors within paragraphs, should alarm instructors. They should make suggestions for better expressions and word choices as well as

comment on the structural organisation and general thesis. The main purpose is to provide proper comments on the initial draft in order to assist students in revising their work appropriately.

### **Editing**

Learners must proofread their own work or that of their peers to catch grammatical and technical problems at this stage. Learners' primary concern prior to the editing stage was content rather than grammatical or technical errors. However, once learners reach this stage, they will be able to polish their work by correcting spelling and other minor faults. Teachers should create these checklists based on the needs and abilities of their students. Because editing comes last in the free-writing process, students should concentrate on correcting minor errors. Because L2 learners cannot be free of exam circumstances, editing is valued more in EFL writing classrooms than in L1 writing schools. EFL teachers should emphasise on linguistic accuracy rather than fluency when evaluating students' work. To do this, instructors should encourage students to write more and worry less about grammar problems until they are ready to edit. To help learners improve their writing accuracy, Mort believes that mini-grammar lessons should be provided during the editing stage.

### **Discussion on the Study**

As previously stated, the goal of this study is to use the free writing technique to improve students' writing quality. The study's findings revealed that after two cycles of implementing the strategy, pupils' writing quality improved dramatically. The pupils wrote, and as time went on, they were able to write longer and use a wider range of vocabulary. Students' comprehension of the nature and process of academic writing improved as a result of free writing; they became more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in writing, and so developed more confidence in academic writing. According to this conclusion, free writing is an effective approach for students to develop writing material. Furthermore, students' writing improvement is due to the benefit of free writing, which can be a useful technique for students to get words on paper quickly because a lack of sufficient

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English language proficiency can shake students' self-confidence, leading to writing anxiety, and it will make writing less blocked because words will come more easily, so free writing can be an effective way to reduce students' writing anxiety. Writing anxiety has been linked to lower grades on writing tests, according to several studies. The ability for students to undertake some activities during the use of the free writing technique is also linked to improved writing after two cycles of implementation. This means that students will have more opportunities to practice writing through free writing exercises. Free writing is used as a warm-up practice to provide pupils with language, ideas, and motivation before they begin writing. Practice is preferable to theory while learning a language. Students' writing habits can be strengthened through free writing exercises. Many pupils believe or claim they are unable or unwilling to write. This could be due to a lack of confidence, boredom, or the belief that they have "nothing to say." They are involved in free writing activities.

### Conclusion

Students from so-called interdependent cultures may encounter conflicts between their mother tongue's communication standards and those of English as a Foreign Language as they learn to write in English. These challenges in learning to write in English might be overcome through pre writing tasks. Writing is a complex process that involves many aspects and is an important skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to master. As a result, any curriculum must include writing assignments. Excellent grammar understanding is one of the most important parts of efficient writing. Process writing proponents say that teaching EFL students to write through a free-writing notebook is a practical strategy. Literacy requires strong writing skills. To contribute to a literate society, learners should be skilled writers. Society's literacy needs are growing, and they are predicted to continue to grow in the next decades. Students' writing proficiency improves dramatically after two cycles of deployment of the strategy. In other words, after two cycles of implementing the free writing technique, pupils' writing quality has

significantly improved. The free writing technique is effective in improving students' writing quality for the following reasons: (1) it reduces students' writing anxiety; (2) it allows learners to focus on exploring their ideas; (3) it is motivating; and (4) it is a practise technique that allows learners to regularly improve their writing skills. Technology and societal changes have impacted and will continue to modify how we interact and think using language. These expectations must be met by students." The brain, eye, and hand all work together to produce effective writing.

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## A Return to Nature for Life and Completeness

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### Abstract

World over, at present there is a marked shift towards a nature-centric lifestyle in response to the failure of systems and practices that exclude the environmental dimension or embrace pseudo environmental beliefs. Man's survival on this planet is under serious threat, bringing about the realization that the onus is now on us to conserve nature or arrest its destruction or reverse the damage caused by our mindless actions. Concepts like de-growth, downswing and eremetism offer fresh hope to people seeking sustainable solutions to problems of health, food supply, housing, sanitation, employment, pollution and climate change.

Within such a context this paper attempts to examine the unique and transformative experience of a thirty-seven year old French man named Sylvain Tesson who opted to inhabit a cabin alone for six months in the wilderness of Middle Taiga in Siberia, on Lake Baikal in freezing conditions in 2010, and documented his experience in a journal which was published. The account is a compulsive and contemporary retelling of what the Romantics professed – a return to Nature because only Nature has the answers to the world's problems. However, the world is more dangerously polluted and distressed than during the time of the Romantics and nature is not safe from man's exploitative pursuits. But nature is still able to provide man with much needed succour, space, shelter, solitude, silence, peace and healing. If man will open his eyes to the transformative power of nature by choosing less instead of more in a world which worships consumerism, he

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may succeed in slowing down the destruction of the world which is fast accelerated by man's greed and shortsightedness.

Tesson's insights and experiences reiterate a process of self-discovery, celebration of life, freedom and harmony within the framework of an environmental philosophy.

**Keywords:** return to nature, nature-centric experience, lifestyle choice, romantics, transformation.

Increasingly at present there is a distinct shift towards nature in man's lifestyle and habits. While on the one hand technology and everything else manmade are consuming physical and mental spaces in gigantic proportions, leaving scant room for nature, on the other hand, there seems to be some force driving man towards reclaiming nature in a desperate bid to embrace life, health and wholeness for the present and the future. While it is something of a fad or even a commercially viable choice at present to resurrect traditional family recipes, herbal remedies, customs and practices that are eco-friendly (hence healthy), people are also exploring the wisdom behind doing so. Particularly in the light of diseases and disasters that are rapidly debilitating populations universally despite the best that science and technology can offer, we have realized better late than never that man's existence on earth depends on the nurture and protection of nature. Without this realization and timely remediation, human life on this planet will continue to be a losing race against time, finding desperate, short-term solutions to the surging ecological, social, psychological and health problems that we have brought on ourselves through sustained misuse and abuse of nature and natural resources.

We are now attempting to revive many of the eco-friendly practices that our ancestors upheld but lost eventually in the name of modernity or urbanization. The food or grain that the poor have always depended on for their sustenance is now the fanciest, most-sought on the menu cards of gourmet restaurants, both regionally and globally. The 'pazhaya kanji' or 'pazhankanji' (old rice fermented overnight in water, rich in vitamins and antioxidants, served for breakfast along with raw onions, green chillies and pickle), millet-based recipes (thanks to this

inclusion, millets which the poor could afford in the past, now come with a fancy price tag), tapioca and fish curry, ‘chakka puzhukku’ (cooked raw jackfruit), the humble ‘koozhu’ (fermented ragi porridge served with sour buttermilk), ‘chatti choru’ (rice that is stirred in an earthen utensil from which the prepared fish or meat curry has been emptied), microgreens, sprouts and several other region specific, everyday-fare of older, agrarian communities, have made a noticeable comeback among affluent, urban populations. These are commercially exploited as well, with catering businesses trying to make a quick buck when the fad is trending. Such dishes are also glorified in contemporary novels and films where their preparation and presentation are described with a touch of nostalgia and glamour. The growing crop of food bloggers and vloggers are also cashing in on this trend and some of them throw in a bit of health information along with the ‘healthy’ recipes or reviews they present, with the focus being mainly on prevention of lifestyle-based diseases.

Cooking shows on television and internet seem to have left behind the plush, urban studio kitchens of the past and gone in search of countryside or pastoral settings such as farms, village squares, toddy shop kitchens, dhaabas or humble hamlets, and the much sought after master chefs are elderly, rural men or women (often toothless), adivasis, or the likes of them who use indigenous/traditional/natural methods and ingredients which exclude kitchen appliances and processed ingredients of the modern world.

With regard to construction of buildings and housing, there is a distinct shift in priorities world over, with increasing emphasis on environmental factors or eco-friendly practices advocated by governments and environmentalists, implemented by new-age architects, engineers and designers, and welcomed by enlightened consumers. The Green Building concept, promoted by World Green Building Council is worthy of mention here. It is any “building that, in its design, construction or operation, reduces or eliminates negative impacts, and can create positive impacts, on our climate and natural environment.” (worldgbc.org). Green buildings attempt to conserve

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valuable natural resources and improve quality of life through the “efficient use of energy” or “renewable energy, such as solar energy”, “non-toxic, ethical and sustainable” materials, eco-friendly “design, construction and operation” that enables “adaptation to a changing environment”, “pollution and waste reduction measures”, “re-use and recycling” and optimum indoor “air quality”(worldgbc.org).

The principles can be applied to any sort of building but what is important is that the implementation style differs from region to region or country to country based on “distinctive climatic conditions, unique cultures and traditions, diverse building types and ages, or wide ranging environmental, economic and social priorities – all of which shape their approach to green building.”(worldgbc.org). In addition the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns have inspired people all over the world to turn to growing indoor plants as a hobby, as a solution for pollution and as a therapy for social isolation.

Attempts to reintegrate or restore nature in urbanized spaces (both outdoor and indoor) include hydroponics, vertical gardens in private and public areas including the pillars of flyovers, community gardens in educational institutions, agricultural and animal farms near urban areas (with farm visits becoming a sought-after recreational activity), and Miyawaki forests or plantations in the midst of concrete jungles, “seen as a panacea for everything from polluted urban air to dwindling biodiversity”(Eapen, thehindu.com).

While the common man settles for such choices there are a few people in any country or period of time who push the limits and make daring choices, renouncing the world and embracing nature permanently or for a while. The unique experience of one such Frenchman, Sylvain Tesson (aged 37 at the time), as recently as 2010, sheds valuable insights about the power of nature to nurture, succour and heal human beings despite all the adversities nature faces through man’s mindless, exploitative actions. Inspired in 2003 by a wish to live in a Siberian log cabin, Tesson returns in 2010 to North Cedar Cape in the Middle Taiga, on Lake Baikal in Siberia in below freezing conditions to live alone as a modern-day hermit in a geologist’s

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hut for six months, in an attempt to “withdraw” for a time from a highly globalized world, where the fact that even ketchup has to have fifteen varieties annoys him. He also makes a list of reasons why he made this choice and it includes too much talking, noise and telephone, among other things in the urban world. While he is in Siberia, Tesson documents his day to day experiences, observations and insights in a diary-style journal which deftly intertwines personal, literary, pastoral, romantic, ecological, philosophical, speculative and instructional dimensions all at the same time. The experience is a journey of self-discovery which helps Tesson master his own time and space, while drinking deeply from uninterrupted silence and solitude, far from the madding crowd. He writes: “Luxury? Twenty four hours at my complete disposal each and every day, for the fulfilment of my slightest desire”(173). The result is a rich account of the transformative experience of the writer facilitated by the union of primal man with primal nature.

The Romantics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century idealized the solitary retreat of the recluse and celebrated the hermit who voluntarily and passionately withdrew from the madding din of towns and cities to drink deeply from nature. The mood was not only nurtured by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Rousseau, Emerson and Thoreau but inherited by later day Neo-Romantics as well. Natural beauty is presented by Wordsworth as “a combination of the Promised Land, the Elysian Fields, and Paradise all rolled into one: Beauty, whose living home is the green earth... Pitches her tents before me when I move, An hourly Neighbour. Paradise and groves.” (Johnston, 84). To his American counterpart, Thoreau, the “scenery, when it is truly seen, reacts on the life of the seer. How to live. How to get the most life. . . .”(Heitman).

Tesson’s views on beauty are in sync with the Romantics, to the extent that he believes *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is “a requiem for wounded nature” (77). He says in his journal, “Why believe that God is anywhere else but in a sunset?” (179) or “One day, the sun will reveal to us where it finds the strength to get up at dawn.” (54)

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Again, “How can people adore abstract fancies more than the beauty of snow crystals?” (23) Tesson drinks in “snowflakes at the breast of the sky” (80). Various descriptions of the “intense beauty” of the skies and seasons also find a place in his accounts. His prescription for a good life therefore lies in “sunshine, a commanding view and legs aching with remembered effort” (49). Tesson calls beauty “the luxury of the hermit” (31). By extension, he is spurred by the “need to constantly confirm the merits of solitary life by insisting to oneself at every occasion on the beauty of such an existence” (93). Tesson’s account speaks of reverence for the boundless, overwhelming, brutal beauty of nature which is renewed and enriched each day by all her priceless treasures, be it the elements or the trees or living creatures, possessing the power to heal and to provide companionship to man. However, on a rare pessimistic note, he feels this beauty will never save the world; it only provides “lovely settings” for men to “kill one another” in this chaotic world (125).

While a number of people seek peace and rejuvenation through travel, Tesson retreats to an inaccessible wilderness containing just cedars, sky, seasons and a frozen lake, with a small cabin to shelter him, food that he has taken with him or the char fish he catches from holes in the ice covered lake, vodka that feeds his spirit, a mini-library of carefully selected books that feed his thoughts, and two dogs for company. There is limited contact with human beings, which include his nearest neighbours who stay miles away, a few rangers or occasional travellers who briefly stop by and whose visits are few and far between. The conviction for such an experiment comes from the belief that “cold, silence and solitude are conditions that tomorrow will become more valuable than gold” (22).

This journal is clearly a representative of nature writing, set in the “natural context of human life”, and going by Joseph Krutch’s definition, of the account of a man who tries to “communicate his observations and his thoughts in the presence of nature as part of his attempt to make himself more aware of that context.” (ThoughtCo). It was published in French in 2011 and in English translation in 2013

titled *Consolations of the Forest – Alone in a Cabin in the Middle Taiga*. Through a comprehensive personal narrative chiselled out of the luxury of time and solitude that “fosters” thought, according to Tesson, the book explores profound, universal truths about man’s relationship with nature. It familiarizes the reader to and even makes “relatable” (Amazon’s review of the book) an exotic and rare experience such as the one Tesson had. The point is that a conscious return to nature is not impossible. On the contrary, it is desirable and beneficial in numerous, holistic ways. What is needed is a firm conviction and the courage to pursue what one wants from life. In Tesson’s words, “Maybe life in a log cabin is a regression. But what if I’m making progress through this regression?” (33). His life in the woods may not solve any ecological problem but it certainly solves some of man’s problems by instilling in him the conviction of the oneness of life on planet earth. It is an attempt to live for a time like a hermit without harming anyone, while appreciating the “intrinsic value of nature rather than its gifts”. “Togetherness, It’s Everything” (a French novel’s title mentioned by Tesson) is the dictum he would like to embrace, for the “forest draws together what the city disperses” (24). He also observes how “the animal and vegetable biological organisms exist together in equilibrium. They destroy one another and reproduce within a greater, well-regulated harmony. Thanks to our frontal cortex, humans cannot manage to coexist in peace. Our music is out of tune” (37). Even the seasons share the same harmonious relationship: “each one politely hands over its charge. Not one of them lingers too long” (150).

Man, however, has lost the ability to coexist harmoniously with other human beings and with nature. Life is chaotic and exploitative. Consumerism reigns supreme. Man has become “a capricious child who believes the Earth is his bedroom, the animals his toys, the trees his baby rattles” (121). under the pretext of progress that “desubstantiates” the world and debases/demoralises the human spirit, according to Tesson. We need to “neutralize our desire to destroy the world” (145), An effective prescription for this, according to Tesson, is to “organise your life around the idea of possessing nothing – then

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you have everything you need” (149) or to become “dead to the world” for that makes us “fully alive”. Life in a nature reserve helps him realise that we are simply passing through this world and others will take our place after we leave, like footprints in the snow. These are the principles of eremitism, the way of ascetics and hermits, who bring no harm to the world but lead lives in active seclusion from society, after renouncing all their ties with the world, with the intuitive knowledge that it is better “to live joyfully in a wilderness clearing than languish in a city” (22). Tesson’s experiment as a hermit in extremely hostile and harsh environmental conditions was miraculously successful, but this sort of experience is not feasible for all to attempt. It is for the fewest of the few. But Tesson clarifies that it is possible for people to practice non-action like the hermits and to live in harmony with nature through conscious choices. This can also happen through “revolutionary asceticism” in an “urban milieu.... retreating to inner forests without leaving their apartments” because in “a society of penury, there is no other alternative.... condemned to a state of want, and conditioned by it” (97).

The universal message of his experiment with nature is the need to slow down, simplify our lives, become self-reliant, match our actions with our noble ideas and consume less. This way we will give the earth some time or space to heal itself. Through the principles of “non delegation” and “proximity”, he learns the value of physical labour to keep fit, appreciates better the food, water and wood that he has had to source himself, “deciphers” the “language of the trees” when cut off from all communication, especially the television and the telephone, and “discovers that a window is more transparent than a TV screen” (23). Even some Russians, Tesson discovers, believe that city life “must be only an interlude to life in the woods” (168). All this leads Tesson to believe that we should voluntarily “reconsider our requirements” and “decelerate our rhythms” with the help of ecological notions like “de-growth” or “downswing”, before the world forces it on us once we exhaust our resources. (28) Tesson’s solitary experience in the wilderness also taught him that “having little to do prompts one to pay attention to everything” (117). He quotes John Burroughs

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(from “The Art of Seeing Things”): “The tone in which we speak to the world is the one the world uses with us. Give your best and you will get the best in return”(176).

The wooden cabin itself plays an important role in Tesson’s process of reconciliation with nature. He calls it a hole where an animal licks its wounds; also an organic womb which fulfils a maternal function for him – warmth, nurture, protection and comfort. Ecologically he calls it “a creature of the forest, destined to rot; .... The cabin will return to the soil when abandoned by its owner, yet in its simplicity it offers perfect protection against the seasonal cold without disfiguring the sheltering forest. With the yurt and the igloo, it figures among the handsomest human responses to environmental adversity” (12). Thus one of the first things Tesson does after reaching his cabin is to return it to its natural form by stripping it of its “kitsch” (linoleum, formica, polyester and plastic), which he explains this way: “The principal phenomenon of globalization has been a worldwide embrace of the ugly.... Bad taste is the common denominator of humanity” (11). The Siberian cabin, incidentally, as his account tells us, is not built to the specifications of the civilized world, and excludes arrangements for security, government assistance and insurance.

The two windows of the cabin bring the world outside to Tesson’s admiring gaze: “invite beauty in and let inspiration out.” (24) Gazing out of the window for long stretches of time is an activity that finds frequent mention in his journal. The silence of his existence “rejuvenates” him. Solitude is his companion, a “reconquest of the enjoyment of things” (17), a chance to commune with the solitude of nature and a “salve for wounds” (79). Walking is his preferred activity apart from doing his chores or fishing or reading or writing. These walks enlighten Tesson about the terrain, climate, trees and life forms of the Taiga, whose observations extend to the philosophical realm as well, instilling in him a devotion for all things. They also liberate him from the chaos of overpopulated cities that are slaves to many things including technology and harsh rules. Added to all this is his weakness for vodka, true Romantic that he is. There are numerous references to his drinking both alone and with the few visitors he

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entertains during his stay in the Taiga. He also mentions “getting drunk in the woods” and this can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically.

In the final analysis, Tesson’s fulfilment lies in the knowledge that such a life brings him happiness, peace, gratitude and liberation from suffering: “It’s good to know that out there, in a forest in the world, there is a cabin where something is possible, something fairly close to the sheer happiness of being alive” (229). This is how Tesson sums up his experience towards the end of his journal:

I came here without knowing whether I’d find the strength to stay; I leave knowing that I will return. I’ve discovered that living within silence is rejuvenating....The virginity of time is a treasure. The parade of hours is busier than the ploughing-through of miles. The eye never tires of splendour. The more one knows things, the more beautiful they become. I met two dogs, I fed them and, one day, they saved me. I spoke to the cedars, begged forgiveness from the char, and thought about my dear ones. (228)

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**Where is My Green Gaia?:  
An Ecocritical Reading of Children's  
Picture Books**

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**Abstract**

“Man is a child of his environment”

- Shinichi Suzuki

Children's literature encompassing various modes of writing has served as a form of edutainment to the curious young minds. On the surface level, it is believed that children's literature, especially picture books with their colourful illustrations offer a world viewed through rose-tinted glasses. However, when one takes a closer look, it is abundantly clear that the duality of pictures and text most often subtly work the magic of shattering illusions and address serious topics as well. Environmental crisis is one of the rising concerns of the century. Over the years, climate anxiety has become a reality and literature offers this safe space for children to consider such frightening possibilities while also fostering them to open their minds to deeper avenues of thoughts. Picture books enable children to understand the complexities of constant environmental change while navigating their own realities by delving deep into their fascination with the wild and the world. This paper attempts to analyze how picture books serve as agents that instil and foster such ecoconsciousness by focusing on the featured depictions in three children's picturebooks namely *P.S. What's Up With the Climate?* and *Earth, Our Home*.

**Keywords:** climate anxiety, environment, picture books, eco

consciousness, safe space

Children by nature are highly curious and sensitive to their surroundings. However, in this era of technology, children are more likely to be enslaved by the latest gadgets and it's rare to see a child running around or climbing trees, much less paying attention to their surroundings. As much as technology has helped mankind to make leaps in terms of advancement, it is quite disheartening to observe that a child is more entranced by the virtual world rather than hopping and skipping through the wonders of the real world. Children's literature then becomes a vital space in rekindling the child's curiosity to explore and become conscious of this natural world. It also subtly brings to the child's attention that human beings are not the only inhabitants of mother earth and that there are numerous other species that share this space with them. Makwanya and Dick in their research concluded that children's literature is efficient in educating children as it instils an appreciation for nature and stimulates environmental consciousness in them (15). This paper attempts to analyze how picturebooks serve as agents that instil and foster such ecoconsciousness by focusing on the featured depictions in three children's picturebooks namely *P.S. What's Up With the Climate?* and *Earth, Our Home*.

Picturebooks are found to be widely attractive because of the vibrant illustrations and evocative language. Visuals and written texts in these picture books can be read and interpreted in multiple ways depending on the reader. Mitchell talks about how picturebooks "touch our emotions, delight our senses, appeal to our whimsy" (70) which proves how when it comes to environmental literacy, picturebooks can be considered a boon. Contrary to popular belief, children's literature is not free of ideology as the author's beliefs tend to affect their writing. Composite texts like picture books thrive on the synergistic relationship between the words and the pictures on the page. Illustrators and writers addressing environmental themes and concerns have used this to their great advantage as these picturebooks are making such topics comprehensible to young minds

and are amplifying the conversations around environmental crises.

Publishing houses these days are providing free online books for children so that they can widen their knowledge. In India, Pratham Books, a non-profit publisher of children's books, has taken the initiative of publishing picture books through the StoryWeaver platform. The StoryWeaver offers an open source of children's books and encourages users to translate, adapt and use the content for free successfully serving Pratham Books' mission "a book in every child's hand" (Publishing Perspectives). The picturebooks chosen for the study have been accessed through StoryWeaver. Research shows that environmental crises render children the most vulnerable and this is quite troubling for a developing nation like India. A newspaper article reported that children born in 2021 "will experience on average twice as many wildfires, between two and three times more droughts, almost three times more river floods and crop failures, and seven times more heatwaves" (India Times) than their grandparents experienced in their lifetime. Picturebooks addressing environmental themes and concerns aid in fostering a relationship between the reader and the environment. It not only garners respect and love for nature but also makes them aware of the role they play in their immediate environment and pushes them to connect it to the global environmental crises.

William Rueckert coined the term 'eco-criticism' in his book titled *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* published in 1978. The term was only later popularized by Glotfelty when she mentioned it in her work *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Glotfelty defined ecocriticism simply as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). The term 'anthropocentrism' is etymologically derived from the Greek words 'anthropos' and 'kentron' meaning human beings and centre respectively. In brief, anthropocentrism is the idea of placing humans at the centre and everything else only serving as a means to their ends. Understanding this concept is of vital importance when it comes to raising awareness in children about human greed and how it has affected the environment. Picturebooks are efficient in doing this

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because while words describe, it is pictures that can show the reader the crisis that is trying to be captured through the narrative. In picture books, the text and the illustrations need to be balanced ensuring that they go along with each other or as in Goins' words picture books "as marriage between text and images" (21). The magic here is that the illustrations in most cases provide extra snippets of information about the setting, plot, characters, and even themes by projecting the mood of the story through colours and lines. It is to be noted then that picture books act as a medium to connect the human world with the natural world.

The picture book *P.S. What's Up With the Climate?*, written by Bijal Vachharajani and illustrated by Archana Sreenivasan was published in 2020. It is a picture book that explores the pressing reality of climate change and its impact on different species globally through a series of letters exchanged between various animals and birds. The epistolary picture book introduces the reader to a wide range of species like penguins, polar bears, a flying squirrel, ants, a hermit crab, a grizzly bear, a snow leopard, kangaroos, a bee and a Northern pintail duck. The book starts with a letter from the author and illustrator to the reader defining climate change and the drastic impacts it has had on earth and its inhabitants. They also talk about practical solutions like afforestation and the implementation of the 4Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Refuse) in very simple terms. This chain is then continued by each of the aforementioned animals or birds by stating the condition of their degraded habitat and enquiring about the status of the other. This repetitive pattern is again a technique used so that the child not only learns the format of a letter but also iterates the fact that degradation of the environment irrespective of habitat has been repeated mindlessly leading to such a dilapidated situation. Onomatopoeic sounds like 'grmp' (polar bear), 'phhrp' 'hssssss' (hermit crab), 'khroaaa' (grizzly bear) and 'bzzzzzz' (bee) are also used in the picturebook which excites the reader while simultaneously adding an auditory dimension to the narrative which raptures the audience and brings their complete attention to the climate crisis featured in the depictions as these are cries for help.

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The polar bear is standing on the edge of a melting and broken iceberg complaining about the climate that is too warm for it to be comfortable and the lack of prey. In the background, we see a man-made building amidst the breaking icebergs and a signal tower indicating the human interruption in the natural flow of life leading to disruptions in the food web. The penguins are surrounded by chimney smoke and melting snow as they complain about how the fishes seem to have gone far away once again leading to food deficiency. The word 'flap' is repeated multiple times to emphasize the fact that while the fishes could swim far away because of their fins. The penguin is tragically stuck in the polluted place as even though it has wings it is not physically possible for it to fly and save itself. On the other hand, the flying squirrel is trapped in its nest due to the constant cold weather indicating that different geographical locations are devastated due to the rapid climate change. The ants are also seen to be suffering as they seem to be "Hanging on. Just about." (6) due to the incessant rains and its consequent flooding, rendering it impossible to survive. The hermit crab is set in the background of a seashore of happy families contaminating the place with plastics and vehicle smoke. The crab in the letter complains about the rising acidity level in the sea while the illustration depicts the ironic reality where the hermit crab finds land and water to be uninhabitable because of human actions. The grizzly bear complains of the lack of trees, water and food and even the sudden change in season which has completely thrown its hibernation cycle off the kilter. The implicit message here is that such terrible conditions and changes in lifestyle if not taken care of immediately might lead to the extinction of the grizzly bears.

The snow leopard, kangaroo and northern pintail duck seem to be affected by the same crisis as their natural habitats have become uninhabitable due to less snowfall, forest fires and freshwater sources turning salty respectively. The kangaroo talks of a "burnt paw" (10) highlighting the physical injury and exhaustion that they are put through because their homes are being destroyed by man-made activities and natural calamities. The 'bzzzzzz', onomatopoeic sound made by the

bee is the only response from the bee since it is in a stressed and sleepy state induced by the insecticides being sprayed by the masked man in the background. The anonymity of the man due to the lack of a face can be understood as a representation of the entire human race being held responsible for all the aforementioned environmental crises globally. The final blow comes in the last layout where on the verso is an illustration of a letter addressed to the Oliver ridley turtle being returned to the sender as the species is on the brink of extinction and no longer visits the beach while on the recto is an illustration of a man standing on a doorstep where in lies the numerous number of letters addressed “to humans”, “to humanity” and sarcastically the “two legged creatures” indicating that they are part of this earth just as much as humans.

*Earth, Our Home* is a picture book published in 2021 containing a series of short poems written by four writers namely, Anushka Ravishankar, Karthika Nair, Salil Chaturvedi, Sampurna Chattarji and illustrated by Aindri C. The book is roughly divided into five segments each showcasing a different environmental concern such as climate change, deforestation, habitat destruction, degradation of freshwater sources and extinction of a species. The illustrations in the picture book strike a chord with the reader as every spread is split into two halves where the verso depicts the condition before the issue while the recto displays the aftermath of the said environmental issue. The illustrations on the verso are colourful and brim with life while the illustrations on the recto are mostly X-ray visuals representing lifelessness and are marred by shadows of the previous condition. Each segment is followed by a page containing a small text box that explains the context of the poem. This format helps the children gain an insight into the flourishing nature and feed their curiosity while also explaining how various environmental problems caused by different factors lead to the loss of biodiversity.

The first poem titled “The Earth’s Story” introduces our planet as this wonderful and loving habitat and slowly transitions to show its present condition where it is “Choking on carbon, Gasping for breath”

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(2). The poem ends with a call to protect and safeguard the earth. Though the text is quite simple, the illustrations for the poem carry multiple layers of meaning that can be unravelled upon a closer look. The page is split into two halves where the left side has this beautiful depiction of a man in a small boat, coconut trees and a clear sky while the right side shows a shadow of the coconut tree created by plastic spoons and the river now outlined and filled with shadows of buttons, spoons and fishnets. The vibrance of life is literally sucked away in the illustration to demonstrate that this is what happens when human beings selfishly place their comfort above all else and keep taking from nature without reciprocating the kindness and fail to replace the resources that they take for granted. Instead of being anthropocentric, “revaluing nature oriented literature can help redirect us from ego-consciousness to eco-consciousness” (Glotfelty xxx).

The next segment contains two poems dealing with a forest named Hasdeo Arand in Chhattisgarh. The first poem titled “Hasdeo Arand: Hear My Story” is the voice of the forest itself which claims to be the home of trees, tribes, beasts and birds. It speaks of how it has withstood the test of time through so many natural calamities. It speaks of the interconnectedness of the ecosystems. The following poem titled “Hasdeo Arand: Now Do Something, Please” is a piercing plea of the same forest that is being torn apart by humans for “the black gold” (5) i.e. coal by the process of mining. The verse “for my plight turns the sky to dust and rivers to ash” (5) mourns the fact that rivers are going dry which in turn affects the monsoon cycle giving way to arid lands. Flora, fauna and innocent tribals are losing their only home to fill the greed of the capitalists who own these mines. Verses like “Act, before it’s too late” and “Act, and save yourselves from the Earth’s backlash” highlight the urgency of the situation and even serve as a warning as to what might happen if people do not stop deforestation and keep robbing the earth of its resources due to their unsatisfiable greed.

The next three segments deal with the plight of the two endangered species and one critically endangered species namely the Orangutan,

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South Asian dolphin and the Pondicherry shark. “The Orangutan’s Call” and “The Orangutan’s Sigh” highlight habitat degradation caused by deforestation and how this increases the severity of forest fires. The last four poems focus on pollution and poaching that has led to the demise of the South Asian dolphin and the Pondicherry Shark. The illustrations of the South Asian dolphin floating in a pool of red with a black background sets a gloomy and chilling mood that awakens the reader to the heartbreaking cruel reality.

The fifteen-year-old climate activist, Greta Thunberg stated “But I’ve learnt that no one is too small to make a difference” (80) which reflects the importance of young minds in building a better and sustainable future for themselves. Both these picture books cover a wide spectrum of environmental concerns including habitat degradation, food security, climate change, repercussions faced by species and so on. An analysis of these two picture books has shown that picturebooks can serve as an efficient and effective tool that instills and fosters ecoconsciousness in young minds.

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## Revisiting Indian Philosophy in the Context of Environmental Ethics

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### Abstract

Mary Robinson in her book “Climate Justice: A Man-Made Problem With a Feminist Solution” calls: “The climate crisis is a crisis of humanity. In “The Money-Sucking Octopus Economy” (Masanobu Fukuoka’s phrase) people’s value or worth comes to be determined by their possessions. The “Myopic fog” (E. O. Wilson) of human understanding is the reason for underestimating the gravity of environmental problems. One of the greatest menaces which the entire human civilization is grappling with today is the environmental crisis. Environmental crisis is posing a serious threat to biodiversity. Human beings alone are responsible for the growing environmental crisis. Human species is, in a word, an environmental hazard. Ethical erosion is all-pervasive in our culture. Rachel Carson calls “No witchcraft, no enemy action has snuffed out life, the people have done it themselves. Joseph Meeker’s *The Comedy of Survival* (1974), proposed a version of an argument that was later to dominate ecocriticism and environmental philosophy; that environmental crisis is caused primarily by a cultural tradition in the West of separation of culture from nature, and elevation of the former to moral predominance. In Indian philosophical tradition there has always been a feeling of respect and reverence towards nature. Nature is worshipped in all its forms—living and non-living. The ‘Cartesian’ division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from themselves and treat material objects as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. As Fritjof Capra, a physicist and deep ecologist writes in his book *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels*

Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism (1975) that in contrast to mechanistic Western view, the Eastern view of the world is 'organic' for the Eastern mystic, all things and events perceived by the senses are interrelated, connected and are but different aspects or manifestations of the same ultimate reality. This paper attempts to study impact and influence of Indian philosophical thoughts on Environmental Ethics.

**Keywords:-**Environmental ethics, Environmental crisis, Indian Philosophy.

### Introduction

Mary Robinson in her book *Climate Justice: A Man-Made Problem with a Feminist Solution* calls: "The climate crisis is a crisis of humanity. " In "The Money-Sucking Octopus Economy" (Masanobu Fukuoka's phrase) people's value or worth comes to be determined by their possessions. The "*Myopic fog*" (E. O. Wilson) of human understanding is the reason for underestimating the gravity of environmental problems. One of the greatest menaces which the entire human civilization is grappling today in the environmental crisis. Environmental crisis is posing a serious threat to biodiversity. Human beings alone are responsible for increasing the environmental crisis. Human species is, in a word, an environmental hazard. Ethical erosion is all-pervasive in our culture. Rachel Carson calls "No witchcraft, no enemy action has snuffed out life, the people have done it themselves. Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival* (1974), proposed a version of an argument that was later to dominate ecocriticism and environmental philosophy; that environmental crisis is caused primarily by a cultural tradition in the West of separation of culture from nature, and elevation of the former to moral predominance.

In Indian philosophical tradition there has always been a feeling of respect and reverence towards nature. Nature is worshipped in all its forms —living and nonliving. The 'Cartesian' division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from

themselves and treat material objects as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. As Fritj of Capra, a physicist and deep ecologist writes in his book *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975) that in contrast to mechanistic Western view, the Eastern view of the world is 'organic' for the Eastern mystic, all things and events perceived by the senses are interrelated, connected and are but different aspects or manifestations of the same ultimate reality.

The crucial role of our cultural and spiritual heritages in environmental protection and sustainable development was ignored or outrightly rejected by international bodies, national governments, policy planners, and even environmentalists. The religious and spiritual perspectives in environmental protection are considered as regressive and primitive. Many people express their concern that bringing religion into the environmental movement will threaten objectivity, scientific investigation, professionalism, or democratic and secular values. But none of these need be displaced in order to include the spiritual dimension in environmental protection. That dimension, if introduced in the process of environmental policy planning, administration, education, and law, could help create a self-consciously moral society which would put conservation and respect for God's creation first, and relegate individualism, materialism, and our modern desire to dominate and exploit nature in a subordinate place. Indian Philosophy to environmental protection is deeply rooted in religious and spiritual values. The Assisi Declarations (1986) comprised the first significant attempt by religious traditions to come together to discuss the relationship between their teachings and practices and the environment. Within this debate it is frequently argued that humanity has 'forgotten' the sacredness of nature and that this needs to be rediscovered in order to address the environmental crisis. Thus, religious teachings have been reinterpreted and in order to express concern for the environment, old rituals have been given new content and new rituals have been devised to reinforce the idea that there is a need for a re-evaluation of humanity's relationship to the natural world. (Emma Tomlin 2 ). In the seminal 1967 article *The Historical*

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*Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, Lynn White Jr. states that:- “more science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one” (1967 p. 1206) (Emma Tomlin, 3).

We know that God pervades the whole universe...It is due to this knowledge alone that we never have thought of nature as inanimate and never did we make the mistake of over exploiting it for our own benefit. That is why an average Indian has always had an inclination to worship everything in nature. This knowledge of the divinity of nature which has been with us as part of our nature and tradition ought to be protected and propagated. In our country before setting foot on the ground after waking up in the morning, people address it as mother and ask mother earth's forgiveness for stepping on it. We regard rivers as *tirthas* (places of pilgrimage) and worship gods whose abode is in lakes and mountains from which rivers originate (Banwari, 7-8).

### **Environmental Crisis & Religion**

Environmental activists across the world have focused on the ‘resurgence of religion’ to tackle the environmental crisis. Religious environmentalists not only challenge individual behaviour, but also present a critique of broader social, economic and political processes that are considered to be environmentally detrimental. Indian philosophy has always had a unique concept about the spiritual and material life of human beings. These are not two different aspects of life but are manifestations of the same universal reality. In other words, Indian philosophy believes that whatever mundane we do it must be guided and backed by ethical and spiritual values. In Indian thought man-nature relationship is of mutual dependence, no separate existence for man apart from nature can be imagined.

### **Indian Philosophy and Environment**

Rig Veda is the first literary work in Indian philosophy which enumerates the concept of man-nature relationship in the universe. The hymns of Rig Veda consider man and other entities of nature as

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the manifestation of the same higher reality. This belief is intimately linked with the Indian philosophical concept of Monism (Advaita). There has been a rich and lively tradition of Nature worship in Indian thought. People have always approached nature with a feeling of veneration and obeisance, they consider it their moral obligation to protect nature. Harming nature is considered an act of violence. In our ancient tradition and in literature nature was worshipped with the same religious fervour as other deities. Man and Nature lived in perfect harmony. According to Vedic tradition this cosmos is the manifestation of divine blessings of nature and compassion of mother nature. Emma Tomlin in her book *Biodivinity and Biodiversity: The Limits to Religious Environmentalism* says:

In the ancient spiritual traditions, man [*sic*] was looked upon as a part of nature, linked by indissoluble spiritual and psychological bonds with the elements around him. This is very much marked in the Hindu tradition, probably the oldest living religious tradition in the world...[T]he natural environment also received the close attention of the ancient Hindu scriptures. Forests and groves were considered as sacred, and towering trees received special reverence...The Hindu tradition of reverence for nature and all forms of life, vegetable or animal, represents a powerful tradition which needs to be re-nurtured and re-applied in our contemporary context. (1)

The majority of Vedic hymns are dedicated to nature goddesses. Rig Veda refers to the Sun God, the source of energy, Water (Varuna) the god of water and other gods like Usha, Rudra, Agni and so on and so forth. "In the incipient golden era, the spiritual vision, thoughts and actions of mankind were uncontaminated by corruption of any kind. Man and Nature were in perfect harmony, enjoying the abundance and the bliss of the supreme". (International Journal for Environmental Rehabilitation & Conservation Vol. IV P.n 50-55, ISSN-0975-6272 by V. Rajeev).

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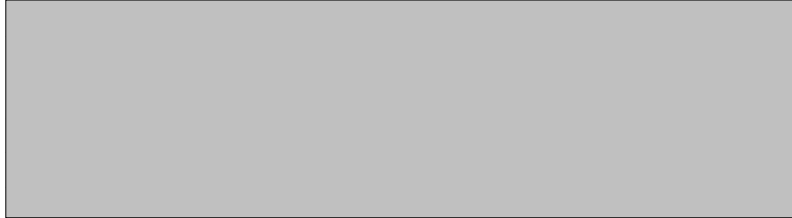
The Indian view of nature is based upon the Vedas, Upanishads & Vedanta and their philosophical views as well as Hindu devotional and ritualistic practices. According to the Indian world-view there is no separation between the Divine and the world of nature. For Indians as the Upanishads say: “Everything is Brahman “ (sarvam khalvidam brahma). It doesn't mean there is a blind faith or some sort of superstitious belief in forces of nature. The Hindu Yogi can discern the same supreme reality in the human being, a snake, particle of dust, a star, moon and other objects of nature.

The Vedic vision of unity is a very profound ecological vision in which we learn to revere the entire universe as part of higher Reality. In Western religions God is looked upon in anthropomorphic terms, as a gloried human being. It is considered profane to look at the Divine in the form of an animal, plant or other objects of Nature. The sense of the Divine in all of nature is the reason why Indians find sacredness in all places. The Indians have sacred mountains & hills, sacred rivers and lakes, sacred trees and groves. The Indian devotional attitude is not mere primitive and crude idolatry as the Western religions would deem it. The Hindu rituals are designed to harmonise the human with the world of nature and higher cosmic power. The Hindu worship of nature is a great yogic science which enables its practitioners to access and experience all the curative and transformative power of the universe. The Vedic shanti mantra prays for peace in the sky, in the vast ethereal space, all over the earth, in water and in the herbs, trees and creepers.

In 1967 the historian Lynn White Jr wrote an article in *Science* on the historical roots of the ecological crisis. According to White, what people do to their environment depends on how they see themselves in relation to nature. White asserted that the exploitative view that has generated much of the environmental crisis, particularly in Europe and North America, is a result of the teachings of late mediaeval Latin Christianity, which conceived humankind as superior to the rest of God's creation and everything else as created for human use and enjoyment. He suggested that the only way to address the ecological

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crisis was to reject the view that nature has no reason to exist except to serve humanity. (Dwivedi-2 )



For us, who are the devotees of the Supreme Truth- May the winds blow sweetly. May the rivers flow sweetly. May the herbs be to us sweet and beneficial. May there be sweetness during the day and during the night. May the particles of the earth be carrying sweetness forever. May the heaven, our father, be sweet to us (be benevolent to us) . May the fruit-bearing trees be sweet to us. May the sun be sweet and benevolent to us. May the cows give us the sweetest milk.

### **Atharvaveda says**

“The earth which possesses oceans, rivers and other bodies of water, and which gives us land to produce food grains and on which human beings depend for their survival, continues to possess these for all of us”.

### **Further:**

May she, our motherland, on whom grow wheat, rice and barley, on whom are born five races of mankind, homage to her, nourished by the cloud, and loved by the rain, ...may God, the lord of life, make our motherland, who beareth all precious things in her womb, pleasant to us on every side. (Atharvaveda, 12.1.42-43)

Nowadays various types of environmental laws like Forest act 1972, Wildlife protection Act 1970, Water protection and pollution act 1980, Environmental protection Act, 1986 have been enacted for the protection and preservation of the environment. But about 3000 years ago, the sages recited the following verse

“Let there be balance in the space ! Let there be balance in the sky ! Let there be peace on the earth ! Let there be calmness ! Let there be growth in the plants ! Let there be growth in the tree !

The idea of the Divine Being as the one underlying power of unity is beautifully expressed in the Yajurveda: “The loving sage beholds that Being, hidden in mystery, /wherein the universe comes to have one home; /Therein unites and therefrom emanates the whole; /The Omnipresent One pervades souls and matter like warp /and weft in created beings” (Yajurveda 2.8).

### **Sacredness of Animals and Birds**

The most important aspect of Indian Philosophy pertaining to the treatment of animal life is the staunch belief that the Paramatman was himself incarnated in the form of various species. The Lord says “This form is the source and indestructible seed of multifarious incarnations within the universe, and from the particle and portion’ of this form, different living entities, like demigods, animals, human beings and others, are created (*Srimad-Bhagavata* Book 1, Discourses III: 5).

In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: ‘Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both its origin and dissolution’ (*Gita* 7.6). And the Lord says: ‘The whole cosmic order is under me. By my will it is manifested again and again and by my will, it is annihilated at the end’ (*Gita* 7.6).<sup>7</sup> And the Lord says again: ‘The whole cosmic order is under me. By my will it is manifested again and again and by my will, it is annihilated at the end’ (*Gita* 9.8).

Among the various incarnations of God He first incarnated Himself in the form of a fish, then a tortoise, a boar, and dwarf. His fifth incarnation was as a man-lion. As Ram he was closely associated

with monkeys, and as Krishna he was always surrounded by cows. In all incarnations, God chose animals as His Vahanas (vehicles). Thus, we see that Surya, mounts on a golden chariot, pulled by seven white horses, Brahma, the god of creation, travels all over outer space on a swan, goddess Durga rides on a lion, the goddess riding a lion may also symbolise that she has tamed the instincts of greed, lust and gluttony to rise to a spiritual height. Ganesha, by mounting the mouse, thereby symbolically conquers impure desires, spiritual darkness and pride. Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, wealth and prosperity mounts the wise old white owl. Besides wisdom, the bird also symbolises patience and intelligence. Its white plumes denote spiritual purity.

Further, the Hindu belief in the cycle of birth and rebirth where a person may come back as an animal, a bird, an insect, a worm or a reptile gives these species respect and reverence, and makes us treat them with care and compassion. This provides a solid foundation for the doctrine of *ahimsa* - non-violence against animals and human beings alike. The doctrine of non-violence is an integral part of Indian world-view. Almost all the Hindu scriptures strongly believe in the idea that God's grace can be attained by not killing his creatures or harming his creation: 'God, Kesava, is pleased with a person who does not harm or destroy other non-speaking creatures or animals' (Vishnu Purana 3,8,15). To not eat meat in Hinduism is considered both an appropriate conduct and a duty. Yajnavalkya Smriti warns of hell-fire (*Ghora Naraka*) to those who are the killers of domesticated and protected animals: 'The wicked person who kills animals which are protected has to live in hell-fire for the days equal to the number of hairs on the body of that animal' (*Yajnavalkyasmriti, Acaradhyayah*, v. 180). By the end of the Vedic and Upanishadic period, Buddhism and Jainism came into existence and the protection of animals, birds and vegetation was further strengthened by the various kings practicing these religions.

### **Flora in Indian Philosophy**

Plants play a key role in Hindu mythology. Plants are seen as sacred and thus worshipped. Trees in India have always been treated

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like human beings, endowed with a soul; a heart that weeps with grief and laughs with joy and participates in human joys and sorrows. They have feelings and aspirations like ordinary mortals. The Rig Veda regarded plants as having divine powers. Trees were considered as being animate and feeling happiness and sorrow. It is still popularly believed that every tree has a *Vriksha-devata*, or 'tree deity', who is worshipped with prayers and offerings of water, flowers, sweets, and encircled by sacred threads. Also, in Indian thought the planting of a tree is still a religious duty. The Vrikshayurveda says that planting a tree is equally beneficial as having ten son— "dasakûpa sama vâpi dasa vâpi sama hrada% dasahrada samah putro dasaputra sama druma%" (Vrikshayurveda-5). The lofty place where the trees are accorded in Indian philosophy can be seen in these lines from *Mahabharata* "Even if there is only one tree full of flowers and fruits in a village that place becomes worthy of worship and respect". (The Mahabharata, Adiparva, 138.25).

The Vedic Aranyani, goddess of the forest, is today still worshipped in rural India as Vana-devi, or Vana-chandi. In India trees and plants have been revered not only with devotion but have been affectionately fondled and almost treated as members of a family. Kalidasa mentions kindly spirits like Vanadevatas, who had been companions of Sakuntala in the forest, almost shedding tears when she left the forest for her residence in the palace of her husband. Forest also feels the pangs of separation as human beings feel. When Sita was abducted by Ravana, Sita's sorrow stirred the trees and plants, and along with animals and birds, they too expressed their grief by shedding flowers like large drops of tears. Plants and animals felt the grief and did their best to rescue Sita. Parvati makes no difference between her fond son Kumara and a Devadaru sapling almost chosen as her pet off-spring, and she lovingly reared it by watering it with pitchers or water as with her own breast milk. Since very early times Deva Daru or the Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*) is considered as the abode of gods, may be because of the lofty, awe inspiring height the tree attains. Like the worship of Deodars, many trees are worshipped mainly because of the belief that spirits and

deities dwell in them. Just as all animals are believed to possess a soul, similarly the belief that all plants possess a soul is very strong. There are gods and goddesses of trees, shrubs and creepers. They even have a mother called Ira. Ira, a daughter of Daksa and one of the wives of Kashyapa, was the mother of three daughters: Lata (creeper), Valli (creeping plants) and Virudha. They became in turn mothers of trees, plants and shrubs. Lata created flowerless wild plants standing in sandy regions and also trees with flowers and fruits. Valli created bushes and grass of all kinds. According to the Markandeya Purana plants and trees were created from the hair of Brahma's body.

Vadari (Indian plum) tree has great significance as it is mentioned at more than one place in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. According to the Ramayana, the tree is hardy because when Ramachandra and Lakshmana were searching for Sita who had been abducted by the demon king Ravana, they came across a Vadari tree and asked him if he had seen Sita anywhere. The trees those days could see, hear and talk like human beings. On being thus questioned by Ramachandra, the tree answered in the affirmative and said that he had in fact tried to save her by holding on to her clothes. It pointed to a rag entangled in its branches and said that it was a part of her dress. The tree then pointed the direction in which Sita had been forced to go with Ravana. Rama blessed the tree for having tried to save Sita and gave it a boon that no matter how badly it was mangled and cut, it will not die and even if a single root of it was left, it will spring up again, putting forth fresh leaves and branches. And that is the reason for the tree's hardiness and ability to grow in arid zones.

### **Pollution and its Control in Indian Philosophy**

In Indian philosophy man-nature relation is pure and sacred. Contaminating nature is considered as an unpardonable sin. Persons engaging in antisocial activities and in acts polluting the environment were cursed: 'A person, who is engaged in killing creatures, polluting wells, and ponds and tanks, and destroying gardens, certainly goes to hell' (*Padmapurana, Bhoomikhananda 96:7-8*). The Indian world-

view considers water as a powerful medium of purification and also as a great source of energy. Sprinkling of pure water achieves purity.

### Loss of Respect for Nature

The concept of biodiversity is found in many of the world's religious traditions but the belief is not getting translated into actions. For instance, people in India worship the River Ganga as Ganga Ma, but they pollute it also. The idea of the sacredness of nature (*biodiversity*) is deeply ingrained in Indian philosophy but people behave in insensitive manner. Growing industrialisation, urbanisation and consumer capitalism has made people ethically barren. There is very ominous indifference towards the environmental crisis. There is a utter disregard for ecological health.

To conclude, the environmental crisis is posing a serious threat to the entire ecosystem. It must be tackled with utmost urgency to prevent the extinction of life on this planet. Bill Gates in his book *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and The Breakthrough We Need* says that we have to use all the tools at our disposal including government policies, current technology, new inventions to prevent climate catastrophe. Bill Gates doesn't include the religious and spiritual solutions to the environmental crisis. We need to revisit and reintroduce the Indian philosophical doctrines to get the holistic solution to the climate catastrophe.

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## Communion and Compassion : An Analysis of Ecojustice Principles in Pope Francis' Laudato Si'

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the theological perspectives of communion and compassion in the second encyclical of Pope Francis based on six Ecojustice principles by Norman Habel in the book named *Readings from the Perspectives of the Earth*. Ecotheology reconsiders and rejuvenates the relationship between human beings and nature through spiritual awakening. This encyclical named Laudato Si' published in 2015 elaborately presents the lamentation of environmental degradation and human dominion over Mother Nature. Amidst this pandemic scenario, it is necessary to ensure respect for the living space we dwell on. Pope Francis proposes to instil values of communion and compassion in all the spheres of development. He requests to follow the ancient practice of being content with what Christian spirituality encourages to cultivate the alternative lifestyle to counter the ecological challenges with moderation. The context of this article reinforces the repercussions of societal breakdown and consumerism, loss of biodiversity, the generation between justice, Biblical wisdom, cultural ecology, ecological education and the conservation of the Earth. It combines the resilient theme of ecocriticism and the ideals of Green Theology. Though it was written five years before the pandemic, it could be still related to the incorrigible errors of humans through their technological advances and materialistic greed.

**Keywords:** culture, ecology, humanity, society, spirituality, values

### **Introduction**

The contemporary world is in need of sound environmental management by establishing a balanced relationship between people and Mother Nature. The consequences of human actions should respond to the cry of the Earth. The present ecological crisis reminds us of our reactions toward natural resources, which are taken for granted. “A single plant, a blade of grass or one speck of dust is sufficient to occupy all your intelligence in beholding the art with which it has been made”(St. Basil 77). The objective of this paper is to analyse the eco theological values of communion and compassion in the encyclical named *Laudato Si'* based on six Ecojustice principles by Norman Habel, an Australian Old Testament Scholar in the book named *Readings from the Perspectives of the Earth*.

### **Ecotheology and Ecojustice**

Seyyed Hossein Nasr defines, “Ecotheology draws attention to the spiritual dimensions of the environmental crisis” (Sayem 440). This theory proposes the ethical standards to reform present human perspectives of Mother Nature and inculcates eco-friendly principles. “Ecotheology attempts to engage the ecological crisis from a Christian theological perspective”(Dalton 53). *Laudato Si'*, which means “Praise be to you” is the second encyclical written by Pope Francis in 2015 with the subtitle “On Care for our Common Home”. The title of this environmental cyclical is a Central Italian phrase taken from Francis of Assisi’s religious song named “Canticle of the Sun”, in praise of God’s creation. Pope Francis begins with a strong reminder that human beings are the dust of the Earth, discusses the radical manner of humanity to set right the errors and concludes with a prayer for the Earth. The paper relates the ecological degradation and the need for human concern with reference to Norman Habel’s six ecological principles of Intrinsic Worth, Interconnectedness, Voice, Purpose, Mutual Custodianship and Resistance. Ecojustice claims the right to a sustainable environment. The eco-religious perceptions are essential to break the dynamic forces of dominion and materialistic pleasures. This deconstructed opinion encapsulates the humane state

of being compassionate and being involved in communion with fellow beings. Compassion is relating to someone's situation and the sincere efforts to perceive others. Communion refers to the act of transcending our narrowmindedness to the subtlety of unswerving determination to protect Mother Nature.

### **Application of Ecojustice principles in *Laudato Si'***

“Guiding Ecojustice Principles” is the second chapter of Norman Habel's *Readings from the Perspectives of the Earth*. It outlines the connection between ecology and theology by designing ecological orientation to seek justice for the selfless Earth. “For the last four or five centuries, Christianity has focused on the individual human being; the ecological movement recalls us to this flow, reminding us of the sense of the glory of God in creation which runs through many of the books of the Bible, especially the Psalms and the book of Job” (Brady Preface 15). The root of the ecological crisis the whole world faces today is because of the desires behind the craze of technological advancements, inventions, innovations and comfort. “The promise of satisfying infinite human desires will only remain seductive in this type of society as long as the desire remains unfulfilled and also as long as there is a suspicion that the desires have not been fully satisfied” (Rego 17). Norman Habel's six ecojustice principles are applied to the discussions of *Laudato Si'* to extrapolate that the gradual geological changes have ended in reckless destruction and plundering of natural resources. This attitude of rush and accumulation of wealth has wiped out the morality of compassion and communion.

#### **1. Principles of Intrinsic Worth and Interconnectedness**

Habel quotes, “The universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value” (Habel 42). The first principle initiates the need to develop a code of ethics to promote the right eco theological perspective of the Earth. Pope Francis decodes the dangerous view of how the beautiful creation of the Earth entrusted in the hands of humans is destroyed by the same. “When Earth has been viewed as female, as ‘Mother Earth’ or as ‘Mother Nature’, Earth has often

been oppressed and abused, and denied any status as a subject in its own right”(Habel 42). The Earth should be honoured as it is in no way inferior to God’s abode – Heaven. God has created the Earth with a deliberate purpose and it’s equally important to nurture a better place for future generations. “It is our contention, of course, that this shift to a wider vision caused by ageing has at least in some instances been augmented and intensified by the sustained efforts of the eco theologians and ecoethicists who have for all these years been teaching and practicing hope”(Dalton 109).

The second principle of Interconnectedness defines, “Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival” (Habel 44). Here the Pope declares the interdependence of Nature and Human beings for survival. “Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity”(Francis para.240). The Pope intends to be painfully aware of the suffering of the world and to acquire a renewed sensitivity towards this miserable planet. The interdependence of humans and Nature is inevitable and thus it should be streamlined in the right way.

## **2. Principles of Voice and Purpose**

The third principle says, “Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice”(Habel 46). In *Laudato Si’*, Pope claims that the Earth is an embracing entity known for its selflessness. It is only through the mediated voices of environmentalists, that the cry of the Earth is recorded. The planet’s anguish and exhaustion should be retrieved. Christopher Manes quotes, “how nature has grown silent in our discourse, shifting from an animistic to a symbolic presence, from a voluble subject to a mute object”(17). The principle of purpose defines, “The universe, Earth and all its components, are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design”(Habel 48). The encyclical states the divinity of all creations which refresh and rejuvenate the minds. For everything created by God has a noble purpose unless it is disturbed by the violations of society. The

magnificent mountains with the fragrant breeze, shady valleys, and choir of birds in groves bring delight, rest and spiritual solitude to those who seek them.

### 3. Principles of Mutual Custodianship and Resistance

The fifth principle is that “Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners, rather than rulers, to sustain a balanced and diverse Earth community”(Habel 50). Nature and people should be mutually responsible to set right the detriments of the technocratic entity. Mutual custodianship means partnership and this mutual understanding to preserve the suffering Earth is the call of the Pope. He urges an integrating vision of incorporating the wisdom of different fields to balance the crisis. “An alternative ecological model views humans as a species which is an integral part of the Earth community, inevitably interconnected with other species and ecosystems, and dependent upon these systems for survival”(Habel 51). The sixth principle defines, “Earth and its components not only suffer from injustices at the hands of humans, but actively resist them in the struggle for justice”(Habel 52). This hindrance by humans should not be ignored. The landscape we live in not only suffers but also resists. Though being the victim of exploitation, accumulation and greed, Earth and the other creations have an outstanding ability to survive in any conditions, regenerate the loss and adapt to new circumstances. “There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself” (Francis para118).

### Conclusion

These eco-religious prescriptions explore how the callousness of society has ended up with the depletion of resources. With major challenges and grave implications of pollution, climate change, poverty, and water scarcity, Pope Francis ascertains to amend the melancholic disaster caused to the Earth. The planet needs special attention to enhance the quality of human life. From the application of Norman Habel’s six ecojustice principles to *Laudato Si’*, it is reinforced that

human beings should protect the wounded world with basic values of compassion and communion. “May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope”(Francis para.244). Being in union with all creations, the people need to be tender and generous to discern the interconnectedness of manifold treasures around us. The researcher has proposed a multi-dimensional picture of reality related to the purview of the eco theological domain. The paper redefines that the Earth was created with a purpose, a vision and with a strong voice for itself. To maintain ecological equilibrium, the ecological and religious discourses deliberately precisely clarify the role of human beings to be in communion, compassionate, more responsible and humane. “Paying attention to this manifestation, we learn to see ourselves in relation to all other creatures: “I express myself in expressing the world; in my effort to decipher the sacredness of the world, I explore my own” (Ricoeur 216). The scope of the paper could be further refined. Through being an encyclical, Pope Francis has disseminated environmental acumen and ecological consciousness.

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## Biocentric Ethics in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*

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### Abstract

In the name of evolution, humans have brought a huge spectrum of destruction in all facets of the ecosystem. Contemporary ecological issues such as rise in sea levels, global warming and climate changes have resulted from the violent actions of humans. It is an anthropocentric tendency to consider human's evolution above nature. These anthropocentric atrocities are highly condemned by environmental critics. Environmental discourses emphasize the harmonious coexistence of humans with nature. The interrelation between ecocriticism and dystopian fictions plays an excellent environmental critique on anthropocentric atrocities against nature. Dystopian genre delivers the concepts of ecocritics with visual effects of future consequences. It serves as an excellent platform for environmental advocacy by indicating the flaws of present lifestyle. This paper investigates the eco-catastrophe in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* and questions the amount of damage done by humans. This paper aims to highlight the ecological concern in the dystopian fiction Veronica Roth's *Divergent* by applying the concepts of ecocriticism. This paper delineates on the significance of biocentrism and about the equal treatment of all bio forms including environment and natural resources. Through devastating catastrophe, Roth insists on following Biocentric ethics.

**Keywords:** Dystopia, Ecocriticism, Anthropocentrism, biocentric ethics

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In the name of evolution, humans have brought a huge spectrum of destruction to all facets of the ecosystem. Degradation of biodiversity in the name of development has paradoxically affected the quality of bio-lives. Violent actions of humans have brought serious changes in natural order such as rise in sea levels, global warming and climate changes. It has created chaos for the survival of all bio-forms. It is an anthropocentric tendency to consider human's evolution above nature. The anthropocentric approach of treating humans as significant one in harming nature and other bio-forms. Biocentric philosophy highly condemns the attitude of anthropocentrism. It compels the society to rethink about their relation with nature, especially how humans are not superior to other bio-forms and natural resources do not exist only for humans to utilize. Biocentrism emphasizes on the egalitarian justice for all living factors and it stresses on the interdependent nature of humans for their evolution and survival. It is necessary to understand the link between society's behaviour and environmental crisis for the harmonious coexistence of all living organisms.

Biocentric philosophy places the bio-life forms in its centre and believes that all the living components have the greatest value. The term Biocentric has its roots from Greek etymology, where 'bios' means life and 'kentron' means centre. Biocentric ethics aims to prevent harming a living organism and respects nature. Albert Schweitzer is the first person to formulate the concept of ethics in the 20th century. He introduced the concept "Reverence for Life" in his book *Civilization and Ethics* (1923). According to Schweitzer, all living individuals irrespective of their size or colour have the right to live and harming any life is evil. In 1986, Paul W. Taylor in his *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* provides three components for environmental ethics which he refers as 'biocentric outlook': First is "respect for nature"; second is "belief system" on nature and appropriate attitude "towards Earth's natural ecosystems and their life communities"; third is a moral standard for treating "ecosystems and life communities" (Taylor 1). Biocentric ethics contrasts with anthropocentric perspective and promotes intrinsic value

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for all biotic components. Biocentric critic Taylor argues that, “we regard any organism, species population, or life community as an entity having inherent worth, we believe that it must never be treated as if it were a mere object or thing whose entire value lies in being instrumental to the good of some other entity” (Taylor 4). He also comments that: “The denial of human superiority is itself the result of taking the perspective on nature built into the first three elements of the biocentric outlook” (Taylor 14).

Environmental discourses have the capability to impact human actions, especially their moral way to deal with bio-resources. The restoration of ecology can happen only by changing the environmental behaviour of humans with the help of newly designed eco-friendly policies. Dystopian representations in literature reflect on future visions of hostile and unfriendly environments where the society is broken due to the wars or epidemic or natural disasters. Thomas More has introduced the concept ‘Utopia’ in his work to refer to an ideal and pleasant society. The extreme opposite to the term ‘utopia’ is ‘dystopia’. Since the present era is filled with anthropocentric disasters, the artists and writers have used dystopian visions as catalysts for environmental messages. Dystopian genre delivers the concepts of biocentric environmentalism with visual effects of future consequences. The interrelation between biocentrism and dystopian fictions plays an excellent environmental critique on anthropocentric atrocities against nature.

Biocentrism emphasises the conservation of nature and it promotes to maintain peace for all well-beings with equal concern. Biocentrism rejects anthropocentric tendency to extend intrinsic value for all the biotic community. The anthropocentric culture disrupts the living conditions of other life forms with sudden changes in external factors. Any external condition or factor that afflicts harm on life forms is an ‘Ecological factor’. It includes pH levels, humidity, temperature, rainfall etc. Sudden ecological chaos can affect the natural habitat. The sustainable condition of Earth depends on every single life form. If ruthless exploitation of the environment continues with anthropocentric

mind-set, paradoxically it is humans who are going to face the risk of their own hazard.

This paper delineates the significance of biocentric ethics and ecological justice. It investigates the eco-catastrophe in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* and questions the amount of damage done by humans with anthropocentric tendency. It aims to highlight the ecological concern in the dystopian fiction Veronica Roth's *Divergent* by applying the concepts of biocentrism.

American female novelist Veronica Roth is well known for her dystopian stories. Her mother's painting job made her occupy a creative space throughout her childhood. Her famous *Divergent* series collection has made her popular to win Young Adult Fantasy and Science Fiction award. Veronica Roth's *Divergent*, presents Lake Michigan as dried marsh without any marine life. When the protagonist Tris first sees the marsh, she describes it as: "At first, all I see is the marsh, wide and brown and everywhere, touching the horizon, devoid of life. In the other direction is the city, and in many ways it is the same, lifeless and with limits I do not know" (Roth 217). When Tris plays a flag game, her team members walk towards the 'marsh' to hide the flag but it is full of mud and too wet to walk on. No sign of bio-forms or plants exist around the lake in the description. In reality, Lake Michigan is the largest lake in North America. It is an attractive tourist spot for cruise rides, and other water sports like kitesurfing, yachting, and diving. It is highly satirical to visualise the famous lake as a dried muddy land in the novel. Extinction of marine life around the lake affects the life cycle of biodiversity. It is against biocentric ethics where ecological injustice has happened for marine organisms. Schweitzer has discussed the equal rights for all bio-forms to live but in this novel the marine 'bio-forms have become victims and lost their lives. Biocentrism is against harming any form of living component, but the lake is destroyed by anthropocentric human activity. The dystopian narration exaggerates the ruined condition of the lake without any hope. The lake is dried and turned into an unusable muddy place. The protagonist Tris describes the lake as "I wonder how long it's

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been since the river dried up ... when I was young; I tried to imagine what it would look like as a lake, but it is difficult to imagine that much water in one place” (Roth 136-37). Water scarcity in that landscape makes it difficult for Tris to even fantasize the availability of water in one particular place. The cold and lifeless setting indirectly condemns the current environmental abuse and exploitation done by the humans with anthropocentric tendency. Hughes comments, “how anthropocentric understandings of the relationship of human beings to nature have been problematized by the conditions of postmodernity, through which the privileged authority of the individual self as the root of identity has been challenged” (Hughes 4). The problems in the loss of biodiversity and depleted conditions of life-support resources on Planet Earth are manually caused through industrial-centred actions. Human-centred chauvinistic activities against nature are unethical according to biocentrism. Biocentrism advocates on the practical conduct of environmental ethics towards bio-lives to prevent any harm from happening. Biocentric fundamental principles can be found in religions like Buddhism and Jainism where killing or harming a tiny living being is avoided. In the present era, the life support systems in the ecosphere are under huge threat due to urbanization and industrialization around the globe. Frequent oil spills on the sea affects marine life forms; illegal dumping of hazardous nuclear waste destructs the natural resources; holes in ozone layer due to global warming changes weather conditions; the unpredicted heavy rains and wildfires in tropical forest challenges wild life forms to survive. In 2011, Fukushima Debris from the nuclear power plant created a great havoc by affecting the sea life organisms and also damaging the groundwater around the city. It has given long term health effects on the lives of farmers, and fishermen around that location. It is necessary to follow biocentric ethics to preserve all life forms and to balance the lifecycle of biodiversity.

Biocentrism claims that all the living elements deserve moral consideration. Taylor also highlights it while discussing two principles of inherent worth: “the principle of moral consideration and the principle of intrinsic value” (Taylor 4). Taylor’s principle of moral consideration

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states that all “living things are deserving of the concern and consideration of all moral agents simply ... being members of the Earth’s community of life” (Taylor 4). The second principle of intrinsic value states that any “member of the Earth’s community ... is something *intrinsically* valuable” (Taylor 4). But in the novel *Divergent*, no living organisms have any value, not even humans. Through advanced genetic mutations, natural human genes are altered and experimented. The experimented humans are not even considered as living beings, they are termed as damaged genes. Humans are categorised as five different specimens and considered as bio-engineered humanoids. Such dehumanisation is totally against biocentric ethics. Genetic alterations on humans without their permission and considering them as programmed robots are a biggest crime against natural bio-forms. The humanoid specimens are also injected with different kinds of injections that are called Truth serum. Protagonist Tris says the experience of her injecting experiences as: “they give this stuff call truth serum and sit you in front of everyone and ask you a load of really personal questions. The theory is that if you spill all your secrets, you’ll have no desire to lie about anything ever again” (Roth 371). All the characters in the novel are considered as humanoid specimens on whom the genetic experiments are tested in various levels. Biocentric ethic condemns such treatment because these individuals are also a part of the bio-component; they too possess emotions, and desires. Tris says that it is traumatic for her to undergo the injection procedures. She says: “I feel the trademark symptoms of fear: sweaty palms, racing heart, tightness in my chest, dry mouth, a lump in my throat, difficulty breathing” (Roth 232). According to biocentric ethics, harming any biotic community in the name of experiment is an evil act. As Taylor says, it is our duty to “respect the integrity of natural ecosystems” (Taylor 1).

Roth’s *Divergent*, presents a setting of future Chicago where the dull state of the environment has experienced an ecological collapse by war or natural disaster. The tall buildings of future Chicago are crumbled and water resources are diminished completely. The

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visualization of skyscrapers is described as: “a sea of crumbling, abandoned buildings” (Roth 122). The magnificent buildings are considered a great threat after the 9/11 attacks. By visualising the famous skyscraper in dilapidated condition, the novel satirises the ecological conditions of the future. It indirectly warns against the consequences of 9/11 attacks and war like situations. The harsh realities of nuclear wars like Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945) have created an irrecoverable havoc on the ecosystem of landscape which is globally known. But still the usages of atomic bombs have never stopped. The usage of nuclear bombs exists to show off one’s superiority over other nations. Recent wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine have caused intense destruction not only on humans but also on natural habitats. The environmental damage during war results in ‘ecocide’. The concept ‘ecocide’ was introduced by Arthur Galston, an American biologist in 1970’s Conference on War and National Responsibility. The disrespect of nature and serious environmental crimes produces irreversible destruction to the ecosystem. Mathiciparampil comments on the dilapidated condition of Chicago as: “The highways are crumbling, the bridges have collapsed and many of the once-mighty skyscrapers have been reduced to skeletons. Even Lake Michigan, the landmark of Chicago, has dried up and has been reduced to a Marsh” (182). Such vivid description exposes the cold state of the future where there are no sufficient natural resources for all living organisms.

Biocentric ethics enforces an egalitarian attitude towards all bio-components. Since humans are also a part of bio-form, their social behaviour with the ecosystem and biodiversity matters a lot in the evolutionary process. North America’s largest Lake Michigan is pictured in Roth’s *Divergent* as a muddy swamp to depict the extinction of marine organisms. Genetic experiments on humans and treating them as robotic machines are extreme acts of anthropocentrism. Dehumanised robotic humanoid specimens are another way of harming the bio-community. The catastrophic descriptions of broken skyscrapers, especially the most attractive tourist landmark John

Hancock centre in a dilapidated condition are satirical warnings on ecocide crimes. Eco-dystopian visions serve as a right platform to warn on the harmful violence against all bio-organisms. Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX has commented that: “AI is far more dangerous than nukes” (Parmar). His statement is true. Though AI, Robotics and Genetics have more merits, they may be highly dangerous to humans and other bio-organisms.

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## Non-Human World in Indian Classical Fables

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### Abstract

Why do animals figure so frequently in ancient Indian literature? For countless generations, writers have been using anthropomorphized living creatures as characters in folktales, myths, stories, and legends. Anthropomorphizing animals' characters helps readers to understand and as well as how to treat animals in the real world. This study explores how traditional languages like Pali and Sanskrit writers use anthropomorphized animal characters in the Ramayana, Panchatantra, Jataka Tales, and Hitopadesa. And this tale is still in the hands of readers all over the world because it helps to speak for animals from fresh perspectives. The current study investigates how authors used the narrative technique of anthropomorphism to generate an alternate universe that made animal characters prominent among adults and children. However, this approach helps not only to enlighten readers about the intricate behavioural and zoological aspects of animals but also about human lived experiences with animals. The mythical non-human characters were beneficial to both actual critters and humans.

**Keywords:** animal tales, classical fables, animal and human bond

### Introduction

We, humans, serve as readers and translators of the animal world. Animals have always played an important role in human lives and experiences from prehistoric times to the present day. Animal characters are usually used in classical literature to teach moral lessons and desirable attributes such as gentleness, compassion, and sympathy

especially to young readers. Writers employed anthropomorphic approaches not only to transmit their didactic thoughts and ideas to their readers but also to entertain them. The non-human characters, including the animals when made to act like humans, were amusing for young readers. Anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, and personification are age-old literary strategies that have a rich history in children's fiction from around the planet. While books for small children use animals in a comical manner to teach, books for older kids seem to focus on essential animal behaviour to teach them human moral lessons. "The books for older children are the most realistic and are often used to teach readers about the instincts, habits and life cycles of wild and domestic animals" (Vogl). Young adults are naturally drawn to animals, and animal stories are considered beneficial for teenager development as they serve as a bridge between teaching and entertainment. "Animals impress children at all ages" (Donnell). In literature, animal stories can be divided into three categories: stories where animals appear as animals, animals appear as talking animals, and animals appear as human in fur (More). Anthropomorphism is a creative method in which nonhuman beings like animals, birds, insects and non-living things are given human attributes and capabilities. Gods and demi-gods in myths are also anthropomorphised as they possessed human characteristics like beauty, knowledge, and ability, as well as human flaws like greed, wrath, jealousy, and excessive anger.

Anthropomorphism seems to help us understand complex concepts in a simple way and conveys an inherent human desire to see ourselves in the external cosmos. Most animal stories, while indicating that animals have sentiments and human-like emotions, take away the animality from the zoological animal and reduce the animals within human sentiments. Thus, most of the animals have become the human version of the animal rather than the real animal who are obviously beyond the epistemological and linguistic limitations of humans. In Indian classical texts, anthropomorphism is more common than Zoomorphism. Generally, animals are intertwined with the human characters and they act alongside humans in western texts like Aesop's Fables and Homer's Odyssey. While sensitive anthropomorphism helps

humans to understand and empathise with animals and connect with them in suffering and pain. Problematic anthropomorphism can deny the animal their real zoological nature, lived realities and reduce them to senseless metaphors, moral tools, and ridiculous jokes. It is like using the cartoon of a smiling Rooster on the packet of frozen chicken meat. False anthropocentrism also compels a few readers to adopt wild beasts as exotic pets or misinterpret the activities of wild animals as friendly and cute. Anthropomorphism is complex and hence most scholars in Animal Studies consider that this technique if not sensibly engaged is inadequate and insensitive. Wild animals and birds, in general, played a major role in most fables. Such as lion, tiger, elephant, crocodile, rabbit, fox, donkey, buffalo, and birds like a crow, crow, parrot, and so on. Writers employed anthropomorphic approaches to not only transmit their thoughts and ideas to their readers but also to entertain them. In these stories we see an entirely different version of animals.

### **Method**

This study is qualitative research that focuses on how nonhumans are represented in Indian classical literature like the Ramayana, Panchatantra tales, Jataka tales and Hitopadesha Tales.

### **Objectives**

The main objective of the paper is to see how Anthropomorphism as a literary technique is used to characterise nonhumans in Sanskrit literary texts, the Ramayana. Panchatantra, and Hitopadesa and Jataka Tales in Pali. The study begins with the hypothesis that the literary device of anthropomorphism in the works examined is complicated, paradoxical, and ambivalent as is evident in the monkey characters in these texts.

### **The Ramayana**

The Ramayana is one of the oldest Sanskrit epics believed to be written by Maharishi Valmiki. In the story, with the assistance of a battalion of monkeys, Prince Rama endeavours to save his wife Sita from demon Ravana's captivity. Ramayana in itself is an excellent

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tale of Animal-Human coexistence and cooperation with epic moments in the narrative that are excellent examples of anthropomorphism. Without animal characters like Hanuman, Jatayu, Jambavan, Sugriva, and Bali, Ramayana would be incomplete. Animals like the monkey, bear, and deer have key roles in the Ramayana. There are several monkey characters in this epic who play significant roles, as Sugriva who promises to help Rama himself is the King of Monkeys. Hanuman is one of the main monkey characters, who is a passionate follower of Rama. Hanuman is a monkey, whose ardent belief and worship in Rama deifies him. He was portrayed as a 'superhero' monkey with incomparable strength and powers, who comes to help the god as 'ordinary man,' Rama. After showing Sita the ring that Rama gave, he burns the entire palace of Lanka by setting fire and returns to Rama with the news, and Sita's jewel saying that he found her. The participation of monkeys in the Ramayana stands out when compared to the animal presence in any other myths. Through the monkey characters, especially the Hanuman, the author demonstrates that no endeavour is insurmountable if one has the drive and faith to do it. The monkeys also represent obedience, team work, hard work, determination, and loyalty. Ladd accuses "The conception of God" in many cultures "of the grossest anthropomorphism and anthropomorphism" (Ladd) This is a common tactic in religious works, where the human feeling is assigned to God, despite the argument that God as a supreme being might not experience ordinary human emotion in this way. In later versions of the Ramayana this monkey character is considered as God Hanuman. In later images too Hanuman often appears as a god with monkey head and male human body. The different narratives of the Ramayana and the multi beliefs and various depictions of Hanuman needs a focused study. Today, Hanuman is a popular Hindu deity, known for his love, kindness, devotion, wisdom, and power, with temples in various parts of India. Celibate, invincible and immortal, "Hanuman represents the peak of monkey prestige" (Morris). As a result of this zoolatry, orthodox Hindus ritually feed monkeys to please the monkey god around Hanuman temples in India. Monkeys are not harmed and are usually fed by

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people across India because of this deified identity. Monkeys being identified as descendants of Hanuman are even tolerated when they occasionally become a menace. “Anyone hurting or killing one would be liable to find themselves set upon by an angry Hindu mob... the monkeys are still being allowed to cause havoc on a grand scale is a measure of the power and persistence of the Hanuman legend” (Morris). Perhaps ancient writers depicted such animal characters like Monkeys in a favourable light to help the readers develop a positive attitude toward monkeys.

### **The Panchatantra and the Hitopadesha Tales**

Panchatantra, considered to be written between 200 BCE and 300 CE and usually ascribed to Vishnu Sharma contains a set of beast fables grouped under five divisions (agreements). Both animals and humans play prominent roles in these stories. In many stories here, monkeys, snakes, are depicted based on their zoological attributions in an unfavourable light. (Rajan). Hitopadesha is a collection of stories from India with both human and animal protagonists. It has simple, attractive language and narrative style that integrates maxims, worldly knowledge, and political guidance, and has been extensively translated. The surviving text is considered to be from the 12th century; however, it was most likely written between 800 and 950 CE by Narayana. The Panchatantra, is said to have influenced the content and style of Hitopadesha. (Haksar). While this story in Panchatantra and Hitopadesha shows animals as curious, foolish and meddling for pulling a pin, we must focus on the human knowledge about the tool handling abilities in monkeys that they share with humans. Of all the animals the writer knew that only a monkey has capability to pull off a pin.

### **The Jataka Tales**

The Jataka Tales is a voluminous body written in 300 Bc to 400 Ac, at first it was written in the Pali language, the main aim of this tale is to gain knowledge and morality (Francis and Thomas, n.d.). It has approximately five hundred fifty-four stories (554). Buddhism is the great source for folk tales and is merely adapted from other Indian

Tales. Generally, incidents happen in the life of the historic Buddha. Most of the tales verses are common to the Jataka and Mahabharata. There are 28 fables that have been identified as similar to Aesop fables with titles and similar to Panchatantra, Hitopadesha. Jataka in Pali has been translated into different regional languages all over the world and is still being translated. Why are these three rare books still translated? Because writers and translators believe that this collection of tales will help to shape human characters. Generally, the Buddha appears as a character in most of the stories, in which he appeared in various reincarnations as animals, birds, insects, sea creatures, goddess, fellow human being and preached ethics of life to others.

### **Conclusion**

We conclude that anthropomorphism is a literary device and creative method that has the potential to speak for animals from unique perspectives. However, it will benefit real animals only if this tool is used in a sensitive non anthropocentric way to inform the readers not only the complicated behavioural and zoological nature of animals, but also base it on human lived experiences of being with animals. The lived realities of animals must also be conveyed with empathy and respect. While animals are portrayed as God in Ramayana and the Jataka tales but in the Panchatantra and the Hitopadesha, animals are ordinary forest dwellers who resemble real monkeys. However, these animal behaviour in monkeys are anthropomorphised in these stories to convey undesirable human behaviours like meddlesomeness, anger, disobedience etc. On the other hand, there are stories where the 'clever animals' also appears with ideas and solutions. Like the authors of these texts, the people in India too have mixed feelings about nonhumans. Some people celebrate nonhumans as gods, some people use it for making money by stuffing them in zoos and street shows, some people feed them, some people use them for scientific and medical research, and some people eat monkey meat by renaming it as bushmeat and so on. The population of animals in India is decreasing nowadays. "AG Ansari, Ramnagar based wildlife expert said that the decrease in the number of monkeys and langurs is

worrying” (Sharma 8).

To conclude, animals have played a major role in classical literature, as both admirable worship worthy companions and meddling mess makers. Ramayana portrays monkeys as gods whereas in Panchatantra and Hitopadesha monkeys are portrayed as wild animals. However, here the inherent monkey behaviours are anthropomorphised and monkeys become fools, nincompoops, and ignoramuses. Human language has played a big role in othering animals. In our language we sometimes disrespect one another by calling each other by animal names. Silly, ignorant and naïve people are at times mocked as ‘monkey’ in India. While this is a rude practice, we must also think how such usage of language has culturally and linguistically labelled animals, and how unfair human language itself has been to animals as well. The anthropomorphism in these classical texts I argue is paradoxical and complicated: while they honour the animal by imposing on them divine and human attributes, they also dishonour the animal by reducing them to mere metaphors and thus deny them their zoological animal attributes. Incidentally there are also instances where depictions of a particular ethological behaviour of the animal is misread from a limited human perspective and is used as moral tools. This critical approach to anthropomorphism also aims to help future researchers to explore how animals are portrayed in such seminal and cultural texts.

Recent developments in technology have resulted in animals being represented using other innovative mediums such as cinemas, cartoons, television and social media. Hundreds of notable cartoon animals, animated animals, and virtual creatures have graced the screens of television, movies, and computers throughout human representational histories. Nowadays real animals are not used in making cinemas in many parts of the world due to various reasons from animal welfare activities and animal rights interventions. This has ensured to a great extent that Animals are not abused for the entertainment of humans. However, anthropomorphism as a creative technique continues to prevail in these new media and novel representations.

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## An Ecocritical Reading of Short Stories for Children by Ruskin Bond

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### Abstract

Ecocriticism centres on man's insensitivity towards nature aiming to inculcate ecocentric values in people. Drastic changes in climatic conditions, global warming, air pollution caused due to industrialization, soil degradation and loss of Biodiversity are problems which need more attention. Literary texts which are centred around nature and nature-related settings are sincere attempts to bring back life on earth. These works instill love for nature in the minds of the readers. They try to restore the glory which is lost due to man's insensitivity towards nature. This paper entitled "An Ecocritical Reading of Short Stories for Children by Ruskin Bond" attempts to analyze the role nature plays in man's life. The short stories discussed here are largely based on the impact of immediate surroundings.

Ecological sense can be inculcated in a society only when it is instilled in young minds. Writers like Ruskin Bond have written many short stories exclusively for children. In his short stories, nature and the non-human world are described and glorified. *A Special Tree, Goodbye, Miss Mackenzie, When the Trees Walked, The School Among the Pines, Tiger My Friend* etc are a few among his collection of over 500 short stories.

Life offers its best when lived in harmony with Nature. At this time of acute ecological imbalance and environmental crisis, establishing a sustainable environment is the most important task ahead of everyone inhabiting this planet. The anthropocentric attitude of man has resulted in causing irreparable damage to mother earth. This study of nature is termed as 'green studies' or 'ecocriticism'.

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'Ecocriticism' is a term introduced by William Ruckert in his seminal essay, "Literature and Ecology: an Experiment in Ecocriticism". It gained popularity after being used by the famous American ecocritic Cheryll Glotfelty. In "Ecocriticism Reader", a collection of seminal essays on Nature writing, Cheryll Glotfelty defines the term as, "the relationship between literature and the physical environment"(xviii). Cheryll Glotfelty says:

We have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's life supporting systems. We are there. Either we change our ways or we face global catastrophe, destroying much beauty and exterminating countless fellow species in our headlong race to apocalypse. (Intro.vii)

Kindling the flame of ecological consciousness can be much easily done in children comparatively. The present day crisis which the world is facing today should be slowly taken to young minds. They should be exposed to the changes which are taking place in our immediate surroundings. Apart from other social issues their curriculum should also focus on ecological crises. Through stories with illustrations children would be able to relate to various ecological problems. They should be familiarised with terms like deforestation, soil-erosion, landslides, habitat, migration, habitat destruction, extinct, endangered species etc., In her paper entitled "Eco-Consciousness through Children's Literature", Ambika Bhalla introduces a number of books for children which are capable of awakening the ecological consciousness in children. *Flute's Journey*, *The Life of a Woodthrush* by Lynne Christy, *A Dinosaur named Sue: The Story of the Collosal Fossil* by Pt Reif, *Have you seen Trees* by Joanne Oppenheim and *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, *Wild Thing: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism* by Kenneth B. Kidd, *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss and various other magazines which contain informative essays on environment exclusively meant for children.

Indian writers like Ruskin Bond, Namita Gokhale, Priyanka Pradhan

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who belong to the Himalayas have written extensively about the place they live in. They often become nostalgic when they speak about the hills. They try to make their readers experience the emotional connection they share with their place. Yi-Fu Tuan, the eminent geographer has deeply influenced scholars about the impact of place on people. In an interview he says, “People think that geography is about capitals, landforms and so on. But it is also about place- its emotional tone, social meaning, and generative potential.”

Ruskin Bond has written a number of short stories, novels, poetry and essays. His oeuvre has a considerable number of works for children. These works for children are his conscious effort to keep alive, the inherent love children have for nature and the non-human world. He is the proud recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri(1999) and Padma Bhushan (2014). He has also received two awards from the Sahitya Academy, out of which, one was for his writings for children.

“Days of Innocence: Stories for Ruskin Bond” is a collection of short stories in honour of Ruskin Bond, whose popular and enduring tales of childhood display so much simplicity, understanding and compassion... Dedicated to Ruskin Bond, who has resisted growing up for many years, the stories in this collection are a tribute from a spectrum of creative writers to the grand young man of Indian fiction. Conceived in the course of a writer’s retreat in Landour, deep in the wooden hills of Garhwal, in North India, this scintillating collection of short stories on themes of childhood, adolescence and remembrance, reaches out to the under-grown or overgrown child within us all.

Namita Gokhale, a famous Indian writer in her introduction to “Days of Innocence ” reminisces the days writers spent in Mussoorie connecting with each other. She says “The idea was to get a few writers and literary journalists to hang out together and see what came of it. The presiding genius of our little group was Ruskin Bond, one of India’s most eminent and beloved writers. Literature is writing that endures. Ruskin Bond’s work has survived the vagaries of generations of readers. The simplicity, universality, and lack of pretension in his

writings make them specially accessible to young minds. (Introduction, Days of Innocence)

*Scenes from a writer's life*, is an autobiographical account of Ruskin Bond which vividly picturises his formative years. From this work one can understand that his unfulfilled desires, longings and passion found outlet in his stories for children. He goes on to say, "I don't suppose I would have written so much about childhood or even about other children if my own childhood had been all happiness and light". The short story, "And Now We are Twelve", is another account of autobiographical details of Bond. Here he gives reasons for staying back in India. He presently lives with his adopted family in Mussoorie. He says, on a lighter note 'I forgot to go away'. Then he goes on to say the real reason, "The people here are friendly in a great many other parts. The hills, the valleys are beautiful in Kulu or Kumaon."

This paper entitled "An Ecocritical Reading of Short Stories for Children by Ruskin Bond" attempts to read the mind of Ruskin Bond when he attempted to write for young minds. It is evident that he wrote not only to amuse and bring delight to children. His underlying objective was to reinforce certain ecocentric values to children. J Edwin Moses and Suresh Frederick opines "Bond considers nature as an integral part of the human world"(142). He goes on to sensitize young minds about the importance of the place they inhabit.

Ruskin Bond has carefully woven his characters and circumstances in his short stories which help children in sustaining their curiosity throughout. Young minds, which are always inquisitive, find Bond's works very interesting. He takes the children to a whole new world where there is absolute co-existence between the human world and the non-human entity. Besides, love for Trees and other forms of Nature. In his "Book of Nature", he brings out his love for Nature as follows, "Living in the hills, or near the great forests, or near the sea, does of course make it easier to engage with the natural world. At every bend the entire vista is altered, and our perspective changes too. When we walk close to nature, we come to a better understanding of life; for it is from the natural world that we first emerge and to

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which we still belong”(60)

Book of Nature is an account of Bond’s relationship with the natural world. He says,

Nature is a reward in itself. It is there to be appreciated, to be understood, to be lived and loved. And in this way it gives us everything- the bounty and goodness of the earth, the sea, the sky, Food, water , the air we breathe. All the things we take for granted. And sometimes, when we take it too much for granted, or misuse its generosity, it turns against us and unleashes forces that overwhelm us- earthquake, tidal wave, typhoon, flood, drought. But then, Nature settles down again and resumes its generous ways. For it is all about renewal... Nature gives. And take it away. And gives again.(ix, BN) Bond reminds us that nature is all about continuous revival.

Rashmi Attri rightly points out that Ruskin is deeply concerned about issues like mining and environmental degradation propelled by industrialization. She also brings out the ‘celebratory tone’ and ‘minatory tone’ which is prevalent in Bond’s writings. Green studies warn the readers about the threats faced by mankind due to the rampant degradation of the environment. Bond’s works serve as a means to extol nature . “A Special Tree” is a short story which glorifies the hills where a little boy named Rakesh lived. He grew up listening to the stories which his grandfather used to tell him. Those were “stories about people who turned into animals, and ghosts who lived in trees, and beans that jumped and stones that wept”(3,Great Stories for Children). Together, they planted a cherry seed and took utmost care of it. Rakesh would water the sapling even on rainy days because he wanted the tree to know that he was there. He even remembered the day when a bright green praying-mantis who was the first visitor of the small tree perched on its branches. Later, bigger birds such as bulbuls and scarlet minivets visited to feast on the cherries.

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This gave him so much happiness that he refers to it as ‘a special tree’ since he planted it himself. (1,GSC)

Bond has written stories about animals and the threat they face from the human world. In the short story “The Tunnel ‘’, the leopard is also one of the characters along with Kishen and Ranji observes Dr.Beatrice. The story “Goodbye, Miss Mackenzie” is a beautiful account of a bond that develops between Ms.Mackenzy, an elderly British lady and a small Indian boy, Anil. Gardening was the only thing which kept Mackenzy going. She had no family because she had lost her parents and siblings in World War I. She lived in a British cottage at a hill resort in India. She had no relatives in India. The dahlias, chrysanthemums, gladioli and a few orchids which she grew in her small garden were her only friends. One day when a small boy, Anil entered her garden looking for flowers. When asked, Anil replied that he would become a botanist. Mackenzy was surprised to learn about the boy’s love for flowers. She gave him a most valuable book on flowers, Flora *Himalayensis*, hoping that it would be put to some use someday. (134,GSC)

Nature should be brought into the minds of children. The stories which they listen to, should contain images of plants, trees, flowers, insects, animals, hills, valleys besides everyday images of busy roadsides, cattle, vegetation, farmers, milkmen etc .All these details are capable of widening their horizons of imagination thereby evoking their memories. “The School Among the Pines” is one such story which is carefully crafted by Ruskin Bond . One can see his exceptional observation of the world around and his eye for detail in this story. This story is about the hardships faced by children in the hills everyday. They had to walk a long distance. By looking around and consciously observing the flowers, plants and leaves strewn around, the children learned about seasons and what every season brings. Once when they saw ‘Clouds of white butterflies’ they chased them and found the remains of an animal. They learned that leopards have killed those animals. Then they came to know that leopards don’t attack humans. They also came to know more about the hilly terrain when the

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mountains are blasted for the roads to be levelled. They are also worried much about the animals when they come to know that earthworks, being carried out for the construction of dams and wide tunnels which are bored through the mountains to divert the flow of water. (10, Great Stories for Children)

'Tiger My Friend' is all about hunters and poachers who killed the big cats for their skin. The forest was disappearing slowly and animals lost their habitat. They were forced to find their way inside the nearby villages and the cattle herd became their prey. Two boys named Nandu and Chotu were very interested in knowing the eating habits of the tigers. One day three hunters with guns arrived at their village in a jeep. Nandu was asked to tie a goat to the foot of a tree. Chotu quickly tied up bits of clothes to the trees and bushes to warn the tiger. The tiger probably got his warning so didn't come to eat the goat. (Great Stories for Children) Bond tries to make children learn to love wildlife thereby releasing their importance in building an ecologically balanced environment.

Arne Naess, in his essay "Deep Ecology" says "The struggle of life and the survival of the fittest should be interpreted in the sense of ability to co-exist and cooperate in complex relationships, rather than ability to kill, exploit and suppress. 'Live and let live' is the more powerful ecological principle than either you or I." (121) Nature therefore has its own way of binding all life forms and bringing about revival. The harmonious coexistence of all living beings with close connection to the environment and the place will take a long way in building a sustainable biodiversity.

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## A Study of the Relationship between Women and Nature in *Boomika* and *Flute in the Forest*

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### Abstract

Women and nature have always shared a close connection. There are various reasons for such a relationship they share. Some of them include nurturing, caring for the young ones, protection, etc. This paper shall study the movie *Bhoomika* and the novel *Flute in the Forest* to look at the relationship between women and nature. The main characters are physically challenged but are gifted in some way or the other. This quality does not affect their goal to protect and care for the flora and fauna around them. They try and fight to protect the natural resources in ways they could. They act as the voice to the voiceless woods despite being in the marginalized section themselves. The characters are young adults and their bond with nature is highly studied in this work. The answer to whether the characters succeed in their struggle even as death embraces them is to be noted upon.

**Keywords:** Anthropomorphism, Difference, Marginalized, nature, women

Women and nature have always shared a close connection. There are various reasons for such a relationship they share. Some of them include nurturing, caring for the young ones, protection, etc. This paper shall study the movie *Bhoomika* and the novel *Flute in the Forest* to look at the relationship between women and nature. The main characters are physically challenged but are gifted in some way or the other. This quality does not affect their goal to protect and care for the flora and fauna around them. They try and fight to protect the natural resources in ways they could. They act as the voice to the voiceless woods despite being in the marginalized section themselves.

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Proposed by Cheryll Glotfelty, Ecocriticism is also known as environmental criticism or green criticism as it deals with how nature and the natural world can be imagined through literary texts. One of the major types of eco-criticism is Eco Feminism. It talks about how women and nature are oppressed. Nature (mostly country life) is the feminine aspect while Culture (city life) is the masculine aspect. They are both in opposition. Nature is seen as a woman whose basic task is to reproduce and nurture. In the eyes of the materialist, labour and productive capacity of working-class women and nature are bound to serve men as it is the rule of patriarchy. Pre modern cultures treated nature with respect. That is, nature was worshipped. Whereas, modern culture oppresses nature, people are benefitted from nature at the expense of nature. Eco feminist Spiritual critics legitimates female power, female body and female sexuality as they are the representations of nature.

In cinema, nature is identified with a mother figure and another is the one responsible for bringing chaos. Both the notions are associated with women and thus projected to the external world. The movie *Bhoomika* expresses how humans are interrelated with nature. The title of the film is also the name of the main character, an autistic teenager. Bhoomi in Tamil means Earth, the film thus shows in the flashback sequence about how Bhoomika is affected when there is an imbalance in the surroundings and dies mysteriously. Later, the villagers and the school where she was admitted for her talent in painting abandon the village, also the people who try to buy the land or destruct the forest are killed. Roots and the dense forest engulf the whole area. The character Gayathri, who is an architect, concludes that all the horrific happenings are because of Bhoomika's spirit. The concept of Gaia Hypothesis is that Earth is a self-regulating organism and other organisms thrive within it. In case, any organism threatens to create an ecological imbalance, it will be killed. So, Bhoomi-

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Bhoomika, both struggle to maintain the ecological balance. Bhoomika hates it when in her own room her things are placed in a different order. She also paints outside of the paper and rejects clothes which are not made of natural sources. Her father and her relatives are clueless about why she behaves in a different way when things are not right. Bhoomika bangs her head on to the tree which has been cut down for construction purposes as she had no help to stop the imbalance that has given way to disruption in sustenance of living organisms other than humans. Bhoomika knows only about the place she lives in, she could not differentiate between good and bad and just like the Earth, she has no limits. The famous painter who visits her realises this connection between Bhoomi and Bhoomika and speaks to her father that she does not require education since she herself is everything. Even when her father Ganesan teaches her under a tree, to make her write the board exams, she can take in all the information he narrates to her and is able to reproduce the same. The director of the movie makes sure that the lines she memorizes are also related to past and destruction. Denoting how Earth rejuvenated to its present state, Bhoomika is taught about the Paleozoic Era,

“While...while the beginning of the Paleozoic Era is often described as an explosion of life, the end of the period that happened over 251 million years ago.... was more like an implosion of life. As much as 96% of all life on earth went extinct during the event known as the P-T extinction. Although the cause is not entirely understood, the P-T extinction almost turned earth into a lifeless planet.” (*Bhoomika* 52:40-51:52)

Nature and women in the movie are not only used just for visual appeal but to put forth a strong message to not destruct nature and gain its wrath. Also, to prove that nature is a nurturer, Sam's son is shown to be deprived of his speech impediment after Bhoomika's spirit helps him to paint and leaves without hurting him. Generally, women in movies are a subject of male gaze. Femininity resides in a woman's body and clothes when in a movie. Specific shots project

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the female body. In the movie *Bhoomika*, the women characters are not portrayed to be mere objects of sexual desire. The ghost of Bhoomika is shown to be a large mass of green creepers with butterflies fluttering around.

Through Ecofeminism the cause of marginalization of women and nature is brought out for discussion. In the movie, Gautham is handed over the deal for refurbishment of a deserted compound for a politician. Here, man tries to recreate an entire space after complete destruction of the existence of other living creatures as well. The anthropocentric approach here shows how man becomes the centre and takes up the sole authority. That is, man tries to become the creator. Earth or the creator can also be the destructor. A woman is thus associated with Goddess Durga devi. In the movie, Bhoomika loves to save nature and destructs anyone who tries to violate it. This includes the death of the politician, Krishna and Gautham towards the climax. Sam is exempted probably because she is a mother and the person who prompted Gautham to buy the deal but had nothing to do with the destruction. It can also be considered that; Sam was dependant on Gautham as they both were not supported by their parents due to their marriage. Now that Gautham is also going to be killed, she will be left alone to fend for her son Siddhu. This indirectly implies that Bhoomika tries to convey the message to Sam about how lonely she felt when she was excluded after losing her flora and fauna and when people deserted their village.

In-between human and nature relationships, there exists the role of sex inequality. Subjugation of women in movies is exposed with the use of the concept of Hyper Masculinity. It is not that women are the weaker sex but the idea of control and taming of women. Aditi is Gautham's sister who accompanies her brother's family to enjoy the natural environment and to be a company for Siddhu. Gautham is only able to handle her tantrums and it is believed so by Gayathri as well as Sam. Aditi ventures out of the property and runs into the forest area where she is attacked by wolves and it is Dharman and Gautham who save her. Also, she is reluctant to enter the property as

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the group confirms a paranormal presence through Gayathri's mobile. Gautham is the one who controls Aditi, drags her inside the property and shuts her up when she yells at him out of fear. Aditi is shown to be in trauma and is unable to overcome the same. In the climax, she is taking a counselling session with a psychologist.

Cinema influences people as it is the popular media till date. The relationship between women and nature is shown to be a visual appetite by the film makers. Rarely do the audience witness the real essence of nature. Wildlife and some portions of nature are shown using CG effects and graphics because they are not to be violated. In the movie, the rare red squirrel which appears in selected scenes is a graphical representation of the bond between humans and nature. Dharman tells Siddhu that he has seen the squirrel only now since ages. Nature, beauty and wildlife are thus commodities for different shots. Women are in general subjected to male gaze and are objectified for attracting the audience. The movie *Bhoomika* differs from that aspect as the female characters are not seen to be dressed or portrayed in a vulgar manner but as bold and educated women. In fact, Gayathri was hired by Gautham and the politician for the project because of her impressive ideas at work despite her reluctance to destroy the whole property. This shows the changing trends in the Cinema industry to convey a social message in modern times.

*Flute in the Forest* by Leela Gour Broome is about Atiya, a polio-stricken teenager who lives with her father in a sanctuary. His father is a ranger and mother is a dancer. Her parents separate as Atiya is afflicted by polio at the age of five and becomes unfit to perform on stage. Atiya is interested in wildlife and goes on solo trips around the sanctuary due to her adventurous spirit. This book is designed with each chapter containing a representation of the character in that chapter as a tribal art. Atiya is like her father who loves nature and wildlife. Despite having a mother who is fond of the city life, Atiya promises her father that she too will not leave him alone. This novel does not focus on the commercialization of nature and women. It deals with the life of Atiya and the jungle. She is alone when her

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father leaves for work. The little girl is well aware about the forest and during one of her adventures, she is drawn to the sound of the flute. The women characters in the novel other than Atiya is her mother, her mother's sister and Mrs. Pillai. They are not shown to be part of nature or sharing a relationship with the sanctuary. Atiya's mother chooses her passion over her family and is clearly not interested in the sanctuary or wildlife. Atiya follows her father's footsteps and goes on adventures and even learns about the forest. After learning to use the flute, she even calms down the rogue elephant Rangappa. This carries the underlying meaning of how a woman is a nurturer when she calms down a child throwing tantrums.

Gopal, Mrs. Pillai's son, joins Atiya in her adventures. He is not like Gautham from the movie. Gopal loves to be in the sanctuary post school and is the only friend of Atiya. He is mischievous, not so brave and tags along with Atiya to explore the jungle. Gopal acts as the centre when he warns Atiya to not wander alone. He also is cautious and does not tell his mother about his outing with Atiya. Both the children share a close bond for their interest in the jungle and for being the children of single parents. Gopal stayed with his mother to complete his schooling and did not have any other relationship with the jungle like Atiya. Atiya's father, Sardare is the other male figure who is shown to be caring for the life around him. He hates the poachers, cares for the tribals and animals. Despite being a male, he is seen as the mother figure for the jungle and the tribals as he saves many lives and cares for them.

Both Atiya and Bhoomika are physically challenged children. Their disability does not come in the way of their love for nature. They are treated as special children which even more elevates the reason for them to be sharing a close relationship with the natural world. It is very true that they could see the world from a different perspective than the other children. In fact, Atiya is bullied by her classmates and Bhoomika is not admitted to the school as well as ignored by the people of the village. Both the children found solace in the natural world around them. All they were aware of included the natural world, their fathers, and their skills. This side-lined concept shows how these

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children are marginalized from the already marginalized group. Leela Gour and Rathindran Prasad have tried to tell their audience about the dominance of human beings who are slowly creating a path for destruction due to the chain reactions that occur in the process of using the natural resources present in the surroundings. There is no reason for choosing disabled girl children but they are the best educators about co-existence. Gender plays a major role in this context as always girls and women are associated with caring, protecting and nurturing the young ones. Boys and men on the other hand are bound to work like Sardare and destruct for selfish benefits like Gautham. The usage of supernatural elements in the movie is to discuss how the main character safeguards the environment even after she is no more and is a ghost. Bhoomika conveys the message of protecting nature and the natural elements through paintings (which are manmade colours), Gayathri's mobile phone which works in the property where there is no signal for over a decade (technological destruction of life) and mysterious killings of men who work at the site (all their bodies having bruises similar to the one on her forehead) Atiya does the same by reading about the sanctuary and the inhabitants. She proves that learning an art is not only for a purpose but also for the good of the natural life.

The novel and the movie thus have conveyed the intended meaning. It is left to the audience to decide about choosing the side which they wish to be on. Co-existence is very much needed for a peaceful and healthy life on Earth. When the whole concept of marginalization is erased, this can be achieved. Creatures do not have a voice and these children have been the voice. When the voiceless gain a voice, then they all may become like Rangappa.

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**Ecopoetics of the Longings: A Critical Inquiry into  
Purposive Aesthetics in Shubhangi Swarup's  
“Latitudes of Longing”.**

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**Abstract:**

Anthropocentric approaches of human cultures towards nature and its resources, have led biodiversity and ecological systems to the brink of destruction. It is very much evident from the gap between discourses and execution that not enough has been done to generate more sustainable ways for co-existence of human and non-human. Along with other empirical inquiries, literature and narrative studies have also been taking interdisciplinary prudence from tools and methodology of ecocriticism and its various offshoots. One of them is eco-narratology, which is conducive to understanding stylistic and aesthetics of literary narratives from the viewpoint of human-non-human connectedness. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century with the philosophical shift from metanarratives to marginalized narratives, from binary epistemological units to deconstruction of the binaries, academic attention has turned towards intersections of literature and environment, the ethical debates towards the power of narratives to affect nature-culture complexities. This particular paper proposes to critically analyse a fictional work by Indian English writer, Shubhangi Swarup, ‘Latitudes of Longing’, collection of interwoven four stories, induced with natural and magical imagery, deep ecological nuance, connectedness of geophysical patterns and characters in the story. The story leads the readers to the realms of unreal, that intent to create more sensitivity in readers for the natural world by distancing it from the world of logical phallogocentric order. This study is intended to read the text for its eco-poetics, to take into consideration the very structure by which

the narrative constructs the natural and to point out the poignant aesthetics at work, to alter ethical discourses in ecocritical studies.

**Keywords:** Eco-poetics, eco-narratology, purposive aesthetics, stylistics, ecocriticism, eco-philosophy, deep ecology, magic realism, narratives, structure.

### Introduction

“It’s the same, religion and science. . . . . But how would you know all this?’ Apo continues. ‘You look like you were born yesterday. And science came the day before yesterday. It was made by the same people who created religion the day before that. And do you know what came before even religion and science?’

‘I know,’ Ira pipes in. ‘Salt!’” (295-296)

Thus goes the encounter of Apo the patriarch of a small village on high glacial altitudes of Himalayan Mountain range : at helm of Indus river, residing in solitude, unruffled under war, politics and partition; a man who lives in memory, his retreating heart beats with the weather and air; his encounter with a man of science who has long ancestry and genetics to talk with natural and supernatural, who is living under a gaze and a longing of which he does not even know yet and is ready to dive in the womb of the coldest earth to understand love. The excerpts have been taken from a fictional work, *Latitudes of Longings*, by Shubhangi Swarup; of which this study proposes to give detailed analysis, to approach the narrative for its efficacy to devise purposive aesthetics and to be construed as eco-narratology.

Apparently the ‘Salt’ symbolizes all nature that is in existence from pre-humanity and everything human civilization constructed after that. Perhaps began as an ambition to survive, later creative and cognitive curiosity, hence was made the entire epistemological system which in due time have otherized the non-human from human, as object and a subject respectively. Earliest human settlements, indigenous population of a demography, even to some extent early philosophical traditions of ancient civilizations likes of Vedic, Greeko-Roman, Indus Valley, maintained an attitude of reverence and co-existence towards nature.

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The human came at the centre of it all with early modernism, gave rise to competition and consumerism, a set for society as a capitalist system at large, and instituted marginalization of the weak, anomalous and aberrant. Hélène Cixous's observation in her influential essay *The Laugh of the Medusa*, in reference to the marginalization of women under phallogocentric practices, is also conducive to understand the position of non-human, under the same discourse that, "Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so, we have internalized this horror of the dark." The history of literary traditions, particularly in the west, the representation of nature, from mystic, powerful, supernatural that is beyond human agency and control, was of reverence, myth, fear and godliness; to nature as mere resource provided for human convenience and destructive force if being inconvenient. Around the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the consequences of environmental misuse gained momentum in academic circles and gave rise to a new discourse, Ecocriticism, under which all the existing and new narratives started being studied from an environmental perspective. New set of eco-critics are arguing that narratives are failing in their efficacy to build sustainable ethics because there still persists the subject-object dichotomy, between culture-nature. What is needed is a new set of aesthetics and approach, as Lawrence Buell says, "aesthetics can become decisive force for or against environmental change."

Erin James's, "eco-narratology—an analytical approach to story that unites the interests of both ecology and narratology, "studying the relationship between literature and the physical environment, but do[ing] so with sensitivity to the literary structures and devices that we use to communicate" (James 2015, p. 23). Timothy Morton, a leading theorist and philosopher in ecological studies, who postulated HyperObject, Deep Ecology, Dark Ecology and Eco-mimesis, advocates for an object-oriented approach to eco studies. In *Ecology Without Nature* (2007), Timothy Morton presents a similar argument by claiming 'that we should dispose altogether of the concept of nature we inherited from the Romantics – that is, as a transcendental

rhetorical construct – in order to aim at an understanding of the environment that is strictly predicated on its organic facticity.’ This study is an attempt to seek the patterns of narrative structure, aesthetics which enhance the dramatic quotient of a work, stylistics and techniques to defamiliarize in order to familiarize to the sensibility of co-existence, to bring forth the sensitivity in readers for the natural, as something that is part of us, not some outside entity to use, look, feared or destruct. As Morton states, “Ecological writing keeps insisting that we are “embedded” in nature. Nature is a surrounding medium that sustains our being. Due to the properties of the rhetoric that evokes the idea of a surrounding medium, ecological writing can never properly establish that this is nature and thus provide a compelling and consistent aesthetic basis for the new worldview that is meant to change society. It is a small operation, like tipping over a domino... Putting something called Nature on a pedestal and admiring it from afar does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of Woman. It is a paradoxical act of sadistic admiration.”

### **Eco-poetics of Longings**

Eco-poetics foregrounds the art of creating poetry or literature that embarks on a strong ecological concern, that exert an influence on narratives based on nature and what it signifies for the other us, as well in isolation. It would not be an overstatement that, since the invention of creative art forms, humans have drawn inspiration, vicinity and symbolism from nature to emphasize their emotions, fears, pain, love, hate, anguish and melancholy. Organic sentiments that only find justice when there is the same sublime reciprocal to them and nature has been providing her tides, rivers, clouds, forests, snow, deserts and seas to make us feel the signification of those emotions since antiquity. The four geographical oeuvres of nature; islands, Faultline, valley and snow desert in, *Latitudes of Longing* interconnect ‘longing’ that is felt by the characters their entire lives, matches the agony of the natural environment since the formation of this planet without rest, ‘The longing grows. It grows old with us but it doesn’t die.’ The four different ecologies also act as an intra-textual conjunction that leads characters into the longings and seeking of the other character and

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be a part of their world forever. Situated allegory that interchanges between human, nature and back, extends itself into memories, questions and long waiting, that allegory is of love.

The first part 'Islands', is story of Girija Prasad Varma, a scientist and scholar, who studies trees, appointed for setting up National Forestry Services in Andamans of newly Independent India and Chanda Devi, a gold medallist in Maths and Sanskrit, who talks to the trees; brought together by the islands. She can see ghosts, anticipate natural calamity and future, she can feel plants and soil, the fluctuating gravity of the islands pulls her. Though she lives in harmony and was able to find love, it is her longing to be subsumed by this nature, guides her short life. Girija Prasad a man of science, never to believe in ghosts or supernatural, is subsumed by her love, rest of the life searches for reasons, answers to the shifts, motions, tides, into these ebbs and flows. The second part, 'Faultline', begins in fault lines of politics and oppression. The story itself begins in the first part with Mary, a migrant from Burma, who returns to free his son from prison, with Thapa. She migrates between lands, surviving the worsts, kills her husband to save her infant child, leaves the same son, because she could not do anything for him. The guilt of no crime haunts her, she longs for love, for her son. Plato, a free thinker, revolutionary, a writer, lands in jail, and gets almost all his life destroyed. When he loses all hopes of change, the change is what he longed for and never got. The Faultline symbolizes their personal guilts, circumstances of crime of the conscience, allegorizes with history of Burma

Next story is of Thapa, an opium dealer, a clairvoyant who travels between lands, falls in love with a teenage girl much to his surprise. He longs for belonging and never could get it. Valley's cultural significance is of abundance, but that abundance is never for him. He moves yet has stuck in time, 'perhaps that's how time is for some of us, it doesn't fly, it sits still. The last section, 'Snow Desert', is kind of an epilogue to this long tale. Contradictorily the desert stands to the valley, the lack, but interestingly here, the longing finds a solace in certain from, though earth is still folding and rising out her longing. All

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the characters from other geographies find the origin and the end here. Apo, 87 year old village head, who much like Chanda Devi, can feel the snow and mountains; meets Ghazala and elderly lady, falls in love and marries against all odds. Thapa and Plato appear in the form of a beloved memory of a photo frame, held close by a granddaughter for her grandfather. Rana, the grandson of Girija Prasad and Chanda Devi, is born with her powers to be pulled by earth, and his earnestness to go into the depth of it all. He gets what he longs for, the answer, “It’s love, Faces change. Sometimes, one may not recognize who the real person is because faces are misleading. But love is love... You are connected through the force of love to everyone and everything.”

### Language of the Latitudes

‘Blessed are the ones who weep,

For her salt flows in their tears.

The ocean lives on in their tales

As they wander in her ebb and flow....’(112)

Creation of an ecological setting, as a formulaic pattern, has been very objective and distant since long. This work differs in this sense that, the narrative does not fill itself with embellished rhetoric to romanticize the enormity of beauty of nature, it does not either mystify it as a worshipped or feared agency and does not put human out at a distant position as an observer, acknowledging the outcomes of their doing, helpless or fragile. Instead, it shows nature living, breathing, interacting and feeling, creating language of its own. It is implausible that how can language of nature being decoded let alone, be narrativized. Shubhangi Swarup does it by understating emotions felt by the characters while letting the geological, natural environment act on the characters behalf. The lines above, are from the section where Girija Prasad after losing his wife, seems unable to weep out the pain he holds for so long, and one day he encounters something, a verse written on surfs, the ocean’s epic, it is ebb and flow of his heart that strikes in the ocean and one day the ocean will well up in his eyes. For Plato, ‘the sagging Faultline didn’t push the land apart, nor did it

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pull it down. Some say it transformed, as if after hours of meditative tedium.’, as it is transforming him. At Sangha conference when the monk asks Mary, why she is paying for the birds to be released and captured again. She speaks with an attempt that, ‘I can not release my son. I can not change a single bird’s fate. I can only see them through the illusion.’, again her worst pain is symbolized here. It is in the snow desert that, Apo and Ghazala find love again, and bliss is felt in nature like, it is at this hour that everything is in equilibrium. All the pain, anger and regrets are forgotten, ‘the moon and the sun are seen exchanging glances through the snowball, oblivious to the rest.’ (325). The Himalaya and the glaciers speak to Rana, in different languages, asking him to pursue more to find the myths and real of the tectonic shift in the range. He sees all, listens to everything, yet is unable to produce concrete to prove that language of the glaciers which only he can listen to or his grand-father. The entire text is rich with several examples, with the voice of the earth, which does not often gets heard in ecological literature.

### **Magic and Realism**

As a narrative strategy the blend of fantastic or mythical elements into realistic narration, magic realism, adheres to the fact that the natural realm, outside of human control, is beyond very truthful and just comprehension, simply because it is most difficult for us to narrate someone else’s story. When Plato speaks, ‘That is art’s biggest tragedy. We can imagine god, god’s enemies, ideologies to fight over, but we can’t tell a single story of which we are not the centre. That is the root of all the world’s problems, you cannot put someone else’s shoes until you remove your own.’, hints at this incomprehensibility. We need a little magic, drama to stimulate the conscience. This work finds a perfect balance between something that is magic and more real in this world of the novel. Chanda Devi shows heightened sensitivity for her surroundings, almost magical, as she can see ghosts of the dead settlers of the place, she hears plants and water, she anticipates danger and her death. Yet it is she who invokes in the reader real empathy for the non-human, she saves people from

disastrous consequences, living in true harmony with natural is what makes her more natural, and she turns into a 'devi' figure to the people, but for her it is the most organic and normal way to live, there is no between. The incidents defying natural science, not understood or accepted by Girija Prasad, make him a believer and a better explorer, researcher. The novel touches upon political, social footing equally as it upon fantastical. The purpose of creating such aesthetics is the ethical changes to be brought forward. It touches on Hyper Objects of Timothy Morton, that is, such ecological threats and issues, which have far reaching, broader complication as well as different local repercussions, like climate change. This particular narrative, speaks of global issues with and on local levels, by mixing and producing effects, not specific to any individual character. The oppressive political regime of Burma, the issues and plight of migrants, geo-political tensions between India-Pakistan and China, are used as a socio-political backdrop, not overtly expanded just as natural as the snow and seas are in this novel. Scientific vigor to inquire about natural phenomena, solutions to the issues of human living, are basic tenets of the field of science, to make human life convenient, but the scientists in this narrative, are of different aspirations. They desire to explore, seek reasons to understand the nature which has influenced their personal lives enormously.

The snow desert with its frozen skies and beneath, preserves myths and stories, which are narrated, neither as distant fantasies nor facts, they are the expressions of human action and folly. But under the skin of any mythical or supernatural, there are readily presented natural laws, accepted to humans, for them to make that understanding towards the non-human, in order to accept the co-habitation. The crucial balancing act between what is magic to our eyes and what is real, generates the right amount of sensitivity and ethics.

### **Epilogue**

Narratives and stories are the building blocks of our civilization and existence, forming reality, history and charting future courses for humanity. Ecological studies, as a scientific field of understanding

nature better, is doing its work for developing measures to face the threats and doom humanity has created for itself by exploiting the natural. In the same spirit humanities and art should make an attempt to update their narratives for the tough times ahead. As Thomas Adorno says, “Progress means: humanity emerges from its spellbound state no longer under the spell of progress as well, itself nature, by becoming aware of its own indigenusness to nature and by halting the mastery over nature through which nature continues its mastery”. The efforts should be of utmost urgency now, to create better critical theories and understanding towards relations between human and non-human, to analyse history and present disorder, to build common consensus and attitude for better informed choices and sensibility. This text stands as a beautiful example of how that can be achieved through stories of human emotions and aesthetics of the natural. This is true to the fact that one way or another nature will find a way to restore the balance, to save life, with or without humanity, it is our decision now on which side we wish to stand.

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## Culture and Environment: Select Texts of South Asian Diaspora in England

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### Abstract

The postcolonial prerogatives have generated the innovative paradigms to explore a literary text. A literary text has become an object of serious debate related to the concepts of postcolonial identity, culture, environment, ethnicity, race, history, migration, self, gender, assimilation, integration and acculturation. It has created the wider scope for cultural and diasporic studies across the globe. These theories have provided multiple aspects to investigate a literary text such as linguistic, aesthetic and cultural aspects. That's why, the present research paper proposes to explore the concepts of culture, environment, ethnicity and race in select texts of South Asian diasporic writers who have been living in England. It endeavours to investigate Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996), Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Kamila Shamsie's *Home fire* (2017). The paper adopts the interdisciplinary methodology to analyse the selected texts as it draws material from various disciplines such as sociology, history, literary theory, anthropology and literature. It traces the political synergies of cultural identities of diaspora in the multicultural society of London after migrating from their native land. Meera Syal has articulated the impacts of migration on the life of Meena—a second generation of diaspora. She points out her psycho-social and cultural proliferation in adopted land. Monica Ali has narrated the life of a South Asian diasporic woman through the character of Nazneen—first generation of diaspora. She delineates the transformation of her gender identity

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from innocence to experience. Shamsie explores the cultural and gender identity of South Asian women through the character of Isma in the location of England and America. So, it examines the sense of cultural fragmentation, otherness, belongingness and rootlessness in the thematic development of select texts.

**Key Terms:** Environment, Diaspora, Identity, Assimilation, Culture, Multiculturalism

The theoretical paradigms of the twentieth century have changed the entire world into new social, cultural, economical and political frameworks. It has transformed the narratives of socio-literary discourses across the globe. A text has emerged as an object of serious debate concerning the postcolonial issues of culture, environment, class, caste, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, migration, identity, memory and history. It has generated fresh discussions on the complex nature of socio-cultural environment, multiculturalism, hybridity, contact zones, mimicry homeland, hostland, sense of exile, democracy, socialism, secularism and individual liberty. The process of migration of people from one nation to another has raised questions on the aspects of socio-cultural-political environment, otherness, alienation, psychological fragmentation and cultural-hybridity. The contemporary diasporic writers quite explicitly bring to the surface the lives and fate of the migrated people of Asian and African countries since they have experienced colonialism by white race. These writers have endeavoured to give voice to the voiceless—Black race and displaced population. They seek to bring these marginalized people into the centre by depicting their inner selves. The mass migration of people from South Asia to different countries is the reason for colonization, partition and conflict—especially in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. This is what led to the creation of diasporic communities across the world. The experience of these diasporic people has generated the narratives of environment, culture, migration, colonization, partition, alienation, homesickness, nostalgia, belongingness and otherness in literary and recent theoretical discourses. These postcolonial paradigms have created new communities and societies which pave the new route for globalization, transnationalism and liberalization. That's why; the

contemporary creative writings of Edward Said, M.K. Gandhi, Homi K. Bhabha, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghost, V. S Naipaul, Amartya Sen, Arundhati Roy, Sujata Bhatt, Attia Hosain, Hanif Kureshi, Mohsin Hamid, Anita Mannur, Gayatri Gopinath, Stuart Hall, Arjun Appadurai, Gayatri Spivak, Sudesh Mishra, Meera Syal, Gita Mehta, Tahmima Anna and Monica Ali lay out the impact of new culture and environment on the lives of immigrants in the socio-political-cultural boundaries of hostland. These writers have endeavoured to give voice to the dislocated and marginalized identities in the proliferation of their narrations. These writers have tried to project how South Asian diaspora or marginalized people have been treated by the majorities in the foreign location. These immigrants try to integrate with the culture and people of new locations but they are being considered others and strangers. This postcolonial otherness has been defined and developed as a theoretical tool through the concept of alterity by contemporary theorists. The term alterity is defined by Oxford English Dictionary as “the state of being other or different, diversity and otherness” (1989). But it is undoubtedly a postcolonial aspect of ongoing debates. It has been conceptualized to lay out the otherness and diversity of migrated and displaced people across the globe.

The concept of alterity has always been a subject of debates in the fields of sociology, philosophy, psychology and anthropology. Recent cultural theories have proliferated innovative aspects related to alterity. It delineates otherness and difference among the groups and communities. It lays out “something other than sameness or outside of tradition or convention” (Bachmann-Medick, 2017). It is a concept which brings to the surface how socio-cultural identities are constructed in new societies and locations. It is a process to recognize the difference between self and self-not; us and others; we and them. These philosophical concepts related to alterity have been developed by Emmanuel Levinas in his book *Alterity and Transcendence* (1995). Cornelius Castoriadis—a Greek-French—in his famous book *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1997) puts forth his radical perceptions on alterity and otherness: “For what is given in and through history is not the determined sequence of the determined but the

emergence of radical otherness, immanent creation, non-trivial novelty” (Castoriadis 1997:184). Further in this regard, Joshua Wexler in his article *Theories of Media: Keywords glossary* utters on alterity: “Given the various theorists formulations presented here, the mediation of alterity or otherness in the world provides a space for thinking about the complexities of self and other and the formation of identity” (Wexler, 2014). Jeffery Nealon in his book *Alterity Politics: Ethics and Performative Subjectivity* (1998) lays out his innovative perspectives on the process of alterity. He tries to elaborate the concept of alterity in terms of ethics. He conceptualizes alterity as: “ethics is constituted as an inexorable affirmative response to different identities, not through an inability to understand or totalize the other” (Nealon, 1998[2015]). He explores a large number of theorists to incubate his theory of alterity such as Foucault, Butler, Derrida, Bakhtin, Levinas, Zizek, de Man, Jameson, and Heidegger. He highlights the impact of locations, societies and community culture on self and identity of an individual. He writes conceptualizing the influence of indifference on identity: “identity and indifference, though they are certainly located in specific chains of effects, likewise produce effects” (11). It lays out that alterity is a matter of representation related to otherness on the basis of gender, culture, nation, race, ethnicity and beyond.

Like philosophy, the concept of alterity has been elaborated in the field of anthropology. The anthropologists such as Nicholas Dirks, Johannes Fabian, Michael Taussig and Pauline Turner have proliferated his theoretical frameworks on the basis of social human behaviours. They have laid out the process of cross-cultural encounters of people in alien societies. They have developed their theories in postcolonial frameworks. Fabian in his book *Time and the Other* (1983) highlights a sense of otherness through the sites of religious movements, language and popular culture. Taussig has incubated his theory of alterity in *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993) considering the aspect of cultural assimilation and integration of an individual. He projects different cultural experiences and a sense of alienation which generate a sense of otherness/alterity. He lays out how new culture is adopted by

migrated and displaced people in new foreign locations. He puts forth comparative study of different cultures and human behaviours to conceptualize otherness from anthropological perspectives. Turner in his *American Indians and the American Imaginary: Cultural Representation Across the Centuries* (2012) conceptualizes alterity in terms of hybridity and identity. He analyses identity, culture, history and hybridity from postcolonial perspectives. So this research paper is an attempt to analyse such illustrations of alterity in select South Asian diasporic texts which are located in England and South Asia. It tries to conceptualize otherness in Zia Haider Rahman's *In the Light of What We Know* (2014), Neel Mukherjee's *A State of Freedom* (2017) and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017).

### **Rational of Study**

The present research paper endeavours to investigate an on-going debate on the aspects of migration, identity and alterity in the select texts of South Asian diasporic writers in England. It holds out a report on the life and culture of South Asian diaspora who have been living in England. It engages with the complex questions of self, psychology, thought process, acculturation and assimilation in diasporic location. It deals with the sense of homelessness, exile, separation, habitation, and otherness. By analysing the texts of different locations of South Asia in England, it seeks to add a fresh dimension to the spectrum of comparative diasporic fictions as the writers belong to three different socio-historic-cultural backgrounds.

### **Research Objectives**

As has already stated earlier that the objective of this research paper is to engage with the representation of South Asian diaspora in England. It tries to put forward the changing aspects of the process of alterity and its impacts on the identity and culture of immigrants in hostland. It attempts to explore the narratives of women in the strange land and locality. It deals with the process of hybridity and assimilation in the streets of London. It lays out the complex issues related to individual identity, national identities and cultural identities in foreign locations. Keeping the notion of assimilation and acculturation of

identity, contemporary aspects of movements, displacements and dislocation from the sites of travel, migration and immigration are to be observed in the selected texts.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The present research paper attempts to investigate following research question:

- Culture and environment in select texts of South Asian writers.
- Migration and identity in South Asian texts.
- Tracing the aspects of diasporic identity and self in the hostland.
- Impact of new culture and environment on diaspora.
- Otherness, acculturation, assimilation and dual identity.
- Narratives of migration and psychology of immigrants.
- Literary articulation of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- Exploring the life of diaspora in contact zones.
- Narratives of alterity/otherness and its impact on diasporic people.
- Gendered identities, self and alterity in diasporic locations.

### **Research Methodology**

The primary methodology in the research paper is to analyse the select texts critically in a comparative, historic-political and socio-literary framework. It explores the representation of alterity, identity, culture, belongingness, alienation, language, and transformation of diasporic self in the adopted land. It adopts interdisciplinary approaches in the process of textual analysis since the paper uses the relevant material drawn from literature, history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy and cultural studies. It make use of postcolonial and feminist lens to conceptualize the select texts. It looks at the sense of unity and diversity; conflict and harmony in the select texts.

It uses relevant theorists from all the discourses.

### **Conceptualizing Alterity, Culture and Environment in Select Texts**

As has already stated earlier, this research paper is going to explore the concept of alterity in the select texts of South Asian diasporic writers who have been living in England. These writers are from three different countries of South Asia. They are from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. From Bangladesh, Zia Haider Rahman's *In the Light of What We Know* (2014) has been taken for textual analysis. This novel has international critical acclaim. It has been translated into many languages. Rahman has been awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for this creative piece of fiction. He is a Bangladeshi born British writer and his mother tongue is Bengali. His family migrated to England when Rahman was a small child. His father works as a bus conductor and waiter in the streets of London. He received his early education from Hampstead Comprehensive School in London. Highlighting his earlier days in England in an interview with *Guernica*, he utters that: "he grew up in poverty, in some of the worst conditions in a developed economy" (Lee, 2104). He earned his higher education at Balliol College—one of the constituent colleges of Oxford University where he received his first class honours degree in mathematics.

As a diasporic writer, Rahman has explored his struggle of receiving education, adjustment, assimilation and integration in foreign locations. He has illustrated the experience of otherness, alienation and outsiders in the proliferation of the main contour of his literary imagination. His novel has been praised by many journals and magazines. *Sunday Time* lays out depicting the diasporic nature of the novel: "As a meditation on the penalties of exile, the need for roots and the way in which anger consumes a thoughtful man slighted by prejudice, this is a dazzling debut". It delineates the complex nature of human behaviour, friendship, love, betrayal, social and cultural relationship. It brings to the surface the problem of race, ethnicity, migration, class, poverty and homesickness. It projects ideas on fundamental human rights,

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liberty, equality, social justice and contemporary perceptions on the changing world scenario. Elaborating the concept of social alterity, Rahman writes in the text:

The greatest difference between us, however, the significance of which I did not begin to ascertain until two years after our first meeting, lay in our social classes. As I mentioned, my father was an academic at oxford, and my mother, after seeing off her only child to university, had returned to practising as a psychotherapist, throwing herself into the retraining necessary to make up ground lost while raising me (*In the light of What We Know* 2014:4).

Rahman here lays out the aspect of social alterity and otherness in the socio-culture surroundings of England. He puts forth the difference between two individuals on the basis of social structure of class. He disseminates the first hand experience as an expatriate in the multicultural society of England. He faces the problem of cross-cultural encounters on the basis of race and ethnicity every day. It creates the sense of exile and alterity in his inner consciousness. The traumatic condition of sense of exile has been conceptualized by Said in his *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. He elaborates the concept of exile which cultivates the sense of socio-cultural alterity in the psyche of immigrants: “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile’s life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement” (Said 2002).

Rahman creates a very complex character of Zafar who is portrayed as an angry young man—exiled from his roots and family. The entire story is narrated through the voice of an unnamed narrator who is reflected as a close friend of Zafar. Related to this unnamed narrator, Louise Alder in an online book review writes that he reveals

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Zafar's "alienation, rage and despair" through "research, access to notebooks and a recorded three-month conversation" (Alder 2014). Both of them narrate the stories of exile, homesickness, alienation and home. The narratives lay out the retelling of belongingness, otherness, colonialism, postcolonialism, mathematics, art, religious faith, doubt and cultural fragmentations. It depicts the encounter between East and West, America and Afghanistan, rich and poor, politics and power struggles, migrants and native Briton, Washington and Kabul. It illustrates various political events and its impacts on exiled, displaced and immigrants. It highlights contemporary issues of geopolitics, economical crisis, warfare and western outlook to Muslim. It is located in England, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and America. It puts forth the political struggle of the Liberation War of Bangladesh, 9/11 and traumatic experience of Zafar's exile. Rahman explores the question of self and identity in the western community through the narratives of Zafar. He utters:

I've never claimed to be a master of self-knowledge, and perhaps such a thing is illusory if, as Zafar said, there is no path from the self to the self, but what I would say now is that my friend had acquired a totemic place in my imagination, an emblem of an idea I have wanted to believe to be true, whether or not he himself did so. Zafar was to me proof that we are not prisoners in the lives we lead, that through each choice we might break away from lives un-lived, we are not condemned by circumstance or chance to the here and now and this. The irony is that he himself denigrated the will and its role in charting our way in the world. But irony, such as it is, only sharpens our interest. (*In the Light of What We know* 2014:67-68)

Like Rahman, Shamsie has described the concept of social, cultural and gendered alterity through the narratives of the Pakistani diaspora in England. She lays out themes of exile, otherness, female subjugation, discrimination and dislocation. She has created various characters

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who express their inner selves and sensibilities concerning the diasporic existence in the foreign locations of England and America. She engages with the problems of diasporic identities and alterity from different socio-politico-cultural perspectives. She reflects her individual knowledge and experiences of being other to proliferate her creative writings. She has highlighted her experience of alterity through her talent, aptitude and sensibility in the contact zones. She lays out how western societies look at Muslim in their communities. She brings to the surface how Muslims are seen with doubt at various public places in the foreign locations. She lays out that they have to prove their loyalty and faith towards the hostland again and again. Elaborating the sense of humiliation and otherness through the narratives of Isma in *Home Fire* (2017), she reflects:

Isma was going to miss her flight. The ticket wouldn't be refunded because the airline took no responsibility for passengers who arrived at the airport three hours ahead of the departure time and were escorted to an interrogation room. She had expected the interrogation, but not the hours of waiting that would precede it, nor that it would feel so humiliating to have the contents of her suitcase inspected. She'd made sure not to pack anything that would invite comment or question—no Quran, no family pictures, no books on her areas of academic interest—but, even so, the officer took hold of every item of Isma's clothing and ran it between her thumb and fingers, not for so much searching for hidden pockets as judging the quality of the material. (*Home Fire* 2017:3)

Shamsie has quite explicitly brought to the surface the sense of outsider and otherness in London during the time of migration. She lays out how the Muslim immigrants are discriminated and mistreated due to their cultural attire. Isma is humiliated by interrogating more than required at the airport. They ask about her background, home and ancestors. Her passport has been taken at the airport. Shamsie

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highlights the security investigation against Isma: “A man entered the office, carrying Isma’s passport, laptop and phone. She allowed herself to hope, but he sat down, gestured for her to do the same, and placed a voice recorded between them. ‘Do you consider yourself British?’ the man said. ‘I am British.’ ‘But do you consider yourself British?’ ‘I’ve lived here all my life.’ She meant there was no other country of which she could feel herself a part, but the words came out sounding evasive “ (5). She narrates everything about her in detail. She states that this is the only country where she has spent her entire life. Shamsie seems to raise the question on the concept of democracy, human rights, women’s equality, process of discrimination on the basis of origin and ethnicity in socio-political surroundings of hostland. Further exploring these paradigms, Shamsie projects:

The interrogation continued for nearly two hours. He wanted to know her thoughts on Shias, homosexuals, the queen, democracy, the Great British Bank off, the invasion of Iraq, Israel, suicide bombers, dating websites. After that early slip regarding her Britishness, she settled into the manner that she’d practised with Aneeka playing the role of the interrogating officer, Isma responding to her sister as though she was a customer of dubious political opinions whose business she didn’t want to lose by voicing strenuously opposing views but to whom she didn’t see the need to lie, either. (5)

Shamsie tries to explore contemporary issues of South Asian diaspora such as cultural otherness, and the problem of integration of identity with the host community. She lays out the struggles of immigrants to adjust in the alien culture. They face many challenges and problems but try to survive by negotiating with the traditions and cultural values of current locations. She has investigated the identity crisis of displaced people in the multicultural environment. When Isma migrates to America from London to pursue her higher education, she has to face harsh interrogation: “Just had to wait for America to

wake up and confirm some details about your student visa. All checked out. Here.' She handed a stiff rectangle of paper to Isma, with an air of magnanimity. It was the boarding pass for the plane she'd already missed" (7).

**Conclusion:**

To conclude the paper it can be stated that the three writers belong to three different socio-cultural and political environments from South Asia. But they have shared many elements related to alterity/otherness in diasporic location. Although they have been mistreated and seen as outsiders in the foreign countries, they have tried to establish themselves amongst the people of different religions, cultures and faiths. They have different stories of migration and sense of belongingness. They emerge as strong people in the adopted land. That's why, their abilities and creativity to hark into the future generated their strapping diasporic identities in the multicultural world of England.

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**Human Borders versus Ecological Borders in  
Tagore's *Muktadhara (The Waterfall)*:  
A Bioregional Perspective**

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**Abstract**

Borders are natural and man-made. Thousands of years ago, only natural borders existed. Human beings started creating borders/ boundaries for various reasons; to gain a sense of identity/ belongingness; to protect their land/resources etc. Nature is beyond borders and human borders are different from ecological borders. Bioregionalism is a social, political and literary concept/movement which focuses on living in place. A bioregion is a natural place with unique features and human culture which develop in relationship with the region. Rabindranath Tagore is a man of creative genius with a variety of artistic abilities expressing a spiritual bond with nature. In *Muktadhara (The Waterfall)*, the waterfall which flows from the slopes of Uttarakut down to the valley of Shivtarai is stopped by the greedy king Ranajit. Bibhuti, the engineer builds a dam across the river to stop the flow of river and subjugate the people of Shivtarai. This paper explores the role of borders in people's lives; the construction of an artificial border(dam) against the ecological border(waterfall). Human beings should strive to live within the ecological borders even though they create artificial borders or go beyond borders. A bioregional perspective stresses the need to fit within ecological borders to sustain life on this planet.

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**Keyword:** Bioregionalism, bioregion, Borders, Ecological borders, Human borders, *Muktadhara*, Tagore, The Waterfall

Borders are natural and man-made. Thousands of years ago, only natural borders existed. Primitive humans lived their life within ecological borders to sustain their life. Migration happened over a period but people always lived in groups in a particular place for a considerable period of time. Bill Ashcroft states “What is a border? We tend to think of borders as geographical, as outlining territory, particularly the territory of a nation. The wall and the fence appear to embody them completely. But boundaries are profoundly ideological. A border is not a thing but a practice, a practice that produces power relationships and establishes inequalities between those who are in and those who are not.”(2) Human beings started creating borders/boundaries for various reasons; to gain a sense of identity/belongingness; to protect their land/resources etc. Nations created borders to protect their territory, resources and show their power and dominance. Bill Ashcroft opines “Borders exist because of fear, and that fear is increasing”(2). Nature is beyond borders and human borders are different from ecological borders. Sometimes ecological borders go beyond political borders and political borders cut across ecological borders. Do we need borders? Imagine a world without borders. Can we achieve the utopian dream of a borderless world?

Bioregionalism is a social, political and literary concept/movement which focuses on living in place. A bioregion is a natural place with its unique features and human culture which develops in relationship with the region. It is a land that is identifiable by its natural boundaries, flora, fauna, climate, soil, landforms, and the human habitation and cultures evolved from the land. “A bioregion is a part of the earth’s surface whose rough boundaries are determined by natural rather than human dictates, distinguishable from other areas by attributes of flora, fauna, climate, soils and landforms, and the human settlements and cultures those attributes have given rise to”(Sale 78).

Rabindranath Tagore was a man of creative genius who was good

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at many different kinds of art. Tagore was a poet, painter, singer, philosopher, and writer whose unique combination of talents is reflected in his writing. He never went to school, but nature was his teacher and source of inspiration. "The water does not merely cleanse his limbs, but it purifies his heart; for it touches his soul. The earth does not merely hold his body, but it gladdens his mind, for its contact is more than physical contact – it is a living presence. When a man does not realize his kinship with nature, he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him" (Gupta 61). His close observation of nature made him understand the harmony of human and non-human world. Gupta observes "a central theme of Tagore's is the intimate kinship between human beings and nature, a kinship with moral as well as aesthetic dimensions to it" (60). Through his words, actions, and thoughts, he developed a holistic perspective on humanity. Tagore emphatically depicts how people have little command over nature and the critical outcomes of human-centric disposition.

*Mukta-dhara (The Waterfalls)* by Rabindranath Tagore gives a dramatic representation of how humans interfere with the ecological border (Bioregion). The people of Uttarakut are excited at the beginning of the play because their skilled engineer Bibhuti has successfully constructed a dam. By constructing a dam along the mountain spring of Mukta-dhara, the king Ranajit intends to subjugate and oppress the Shiv-tarai people, but his foster son fights on their behalf and destroys the dam. Leopold says "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect" (Knight 41). He expresses his concern about how humans themselves violate the land ethic by their own actions. The violation of land ethic leads to the destruction of a bioregion. Only when humans include land as part of their community, will they begin to stop interfering with the bioregion. "The purpose of my dam was that human intelligence should win through to its goal, though sand and stone and water all conspired to block its path. I had no time to think of whether some farmer's paltry maize crop would die" (1. 75- 79). His actions demonstrate utter disregard for nature and high regard for human-made machinery. His attitude could be compared to that of modern capitalist owners, who

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take on numerous unethical projects for selfish reasons and take pride in their accomplishment while ignoring the harm done to farmers, water bodies, land, and other non-human beings.

The relationship between man and nature is the play's primary focus. When he talks about the mountain spring, Abhijit demonstrates his oneness with the land and his spiritual connection to it. Every human should follow Abhijit who came to a realization of his eco-self. The chaotic intelligence that created artificial borders (dam) but failed to understand ecological borders. Human beings lost their ability to ascertain the importance of ecological borders due to various reasons. Lack of local knowledge may be one of the primary reasons. Laurence Coupe avers "The point is to learn from nature, to enter into its spirit, and to stop trying to impose upon it the arbitrary constraints which result from our belief in our importance" (Coupe 1). Coupe understands that humans can learn from nature if they have an eye for it which could help them understand the bioregion/ecological borders through a primal identification with nature.

The Ecotheological aspect of the play is mentionable in this regard. Sarah Speight avers Ecotheology is a form of constructive theology that focuses on the interrelationships of religion and nature, particularly in the light of environmental concerns. Ecotheology generally starts from the premise that a relationship exists between human religious/spiritual worldviews and the degradation of nature. It explores the interaction between ecological values, such as sustainability, and the human domination of nature. (Web)

In the play, the spring of *Mukta-dhara* is a beautiful feature of a bioregion which gives life to every creature and is hence held in worship. There is a close association between Mukta-dhara and Bhairava, the presiding deity in the temple of Uttarakut. The citizens as well as Shiv-tarai perform rituals and worship the deity" (Sumathy 111). The relationship between people of Uttarakut and the mountain spring *Muktadhara* was ruptured as they shift their reverence from Lord Bhairava to the greatness of Machine which can be very much compared to our change in cultural attitudes towards a materialistic

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modern world that promotes an exploitative attitude towards land with its inventions. They give importance to the artificial borders(dam) without understanding the ecological border/bioregion(the waterfall).

Ranjit acts in a greedy manner to become prosperous while leaving behind the people of Shiv-tarai to suffer in starvation. The words of King Ranajit reveal his attitude as he says”...There have been plenty of famines in Shiv-tarai before this, but they always used to pay their taxes...They are foreigners... one s own folk may be won by affection; outsiders should be held by fear”(1.206-207, 223-225). Abhijit taught a lesson to King Ranajit by releasing the water of *Muktadhara* by destroying the dam and losing his own life. Ranajit s attitude clearly violates Leopold s land ethic as he famously wrote, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Knight 96). Mukta-dhara has the intrinsic right to flow freely and nobody can dare to control it or exploit it. The Minister advises Ranajit that it is not our job to deal with nature, as he says “ ...It is none of our business to wrestle with earth and stones. We handle diplomacy...”. Humans should not meddle with natural boundaries which may affect the environment and humans. “The current that with gentle murmur glides; Thou knowest, being stopped, impatiently doth rage; But when his fair course is not hindered; He makes sweet music with th’ enamelled stones; Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge He overtaketh in his pilgrimage; And so by many winding nooks he strays; With willing sport to the wild ocean.”(Shakespeare 2.7 25-32).

The king’s attitude can be compared to the current situation, in which some Indian state governments are attempting to construct dams across rivers to hold water for themselves, starving other states. The condition of dams are periodically checked as there are greater chances of flooding which may cause great damage to the land/state. It is important for governments around the world to realize that they are powerless to control nature. Even though building dams isn’t the best way to conserve water, it has become a huge water conservation project for decades.It can’t be controlled by machinery.It will

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eventually break free or respond in harmful ways. Some of the points made in this paragraph are up for debate, and they are only suggestions because they call for more thought and alternative proactive actions, which goes beyond the scope of this paper.

Governments should look for new ways to meet the needs of the people, it is suggested that building dams is not a solution for meeting the needs of people because they divide nature thereby dividing people. Although linking of rivers, rain water harvesting, creating city/village ponds may be some of the solutions, but experts in environmental and conservation issues as well as the general public's views should be taken into consideration for a compromise alternative strategy. In any case, humans' very existence is harmed when nature's flow is disrupted. The value of the land should be realized by politicians and the common man. It is learnt that "Leopold reached beyond a simple and narrow, utilitarian calculation of nature's worth to humanity, invoking considerations of not only aesthetics, but also kinship and morality"(Knight 131). Leopold saw nature not as a provider of human needs but as a kin.

*Muktadhara's* analysis may reveal that borders/boundaries are not only created by governments but also by humans at the fundamental level; consequently, it is only possible to defend ecological borders when humans are aware of their bioregions. Humans may create borders/borders for practical necessity, but one should respect the ecological borders and try to preserve the integrity of the bioregion and its borders. Ecological borders can only be saved by individuals and governments working in tandem. True to the old adage "Good fences make good neighbours" humans are conditioned to create borders but humans should realize the ecological self to live within ecological borders. Human beings should strive to live within the ecological borders even though they create artificial borders or go beyond borders. A bioregional perspective stresses the need to fit within ecological borders to sustain life on this planet.

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## A Spiritual Environment that Testifies Theophany in Nature – An Ecotheological Study

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### Abstract

As the Creator of all, God is owner of all: The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, the world and all who live in it. (Psalm 24:1). This paper attempts to substantiate that God exists internally in the environment. – A reference to Environmental theology. Nature testifies God's existence. Many a time, God expressed himself through nature in the Holy Scripture. He made covenants and contacted people through nature. Even He appeared as storm, clouds and light. He spoke to humans through animals, birds for example, crow and donkey. To see God's creation is to see God. The change of seasons show his perfect timings. The whole world is governed by the Creator. Since he is the commander, the responsibility of the creation is to obey the creator. As human beings are made out of the dust, human beings carry a great responsibility of becoming a source to transform energy. The proper responsibility of the human is to honour the creator and respect and uphold the creation and to abide the creation's ordinances.

**Keywords:** Nature, God, environment, eco-theology, responsibility.

Environmental theology concerns the study of God's relationship to the environment. There is no clear distinction between environmental theology and eco-theology yet the term environmental theology might indicate a theology in which environmental ethics is established prior to one's understanding of the meaning of God. Ecotheology on the other hand is a form of constructive theology that focuses on the interrelationship of nature with religion. Basically it deals with the religious or spiritual world views of the environment

and effects of degradation and the feasibility for restoration.

Ecotheology also establishes an interaction between ecological values, similar to the sustainability of nature and the human domination over nature. Environmental issues are related to theology because religion reaches both minds and hearts. Ecotheology seeks not only to identify prominent issues within the relationship between nature and religion, but also to outline potential solutions in the light of ecosystem management. Through this study, many organisations developed steps to improve the protection of the environment and ecosystem that is much required during this time of environmental crisis.

Robert J. Jacobus divided the basics of environmental theology into three parts, based on God's physical relationship with the environment. The first part is, the Creator God exists externally to the physical world or environment, where the person of God can be distinctly separated from the environment. The second part is that the Creator God exists internally in the environment. This also substantiates that God and nature are separate deities that exist in the environment. The third basic view stipulates that God does not exist as an entity. This third variation denies God as a cognitive entity and views the environment as the creator or deity.

This paper is an attempt to prove that God surely exists internally in the environment. There is much evidence in the Holy Scripture. God is regarded as the Creator of everything between heaven and earth, and classical Christian theology has interpreted God's work as a making, preserving, and fulfilling of nature. The doctrine of creation offers the horizon for the whole understanding of Christian faith even if it historically often has been opposed to soteriology, the doctrine of salvation.

“For by him all things were created: in heaven and on earth-all things were created by him and through him.” (Colossians 1:16). Everything in this world is created by God, and he resides in it. He has all the authority over the world since he has created it. Even the creation stories in the beginning chapters of the Bible stand as a strong evidence for the duality between humanity and nature.

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The Garden of Eden was created with many specialities, is considered as the resting place for God, and shows God exists internally in the environment. The Garden had all the varieties of trees, animals and other creatures with a flourishing green environment. God used nature as his tool to help humans. He guided the people of Israel with nature. Many times he spoke to the people through nature.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. (Genesis 2: 8-10)

Nature testifies God's existence. Many a time, God expressed himself through nature in the Holy Scripture. There are many incidents in the Bible, where God appeared in the form of nature. This form of Appearance of God in the Bible is called Theophany. Before Jesus steps as Son of God in the New Testament, God Almighty himself appeared many times taking physical forms in the Old Testament. These appearances are called Theophanies, the visible appearances or the manifestations of God, which are tangible to the human senses.

Theophany is a word from Greek origin "Theophaneia", (Greek: theos means 'God' and phaino means 'appear' which means "Appearance of God". It is a manifestation of God or deity in a sensible form. The term has been applied generally to the appearance of the gods in the ancient Greek and Near Eastern religions but has in addition acquired a special technical usage in regard to biblical materials. In the Old Testament, God is depicted as appearing in human form, in natural cataclysms, in a burning bush, a cloud, or a gentle breeze forms often associated with the divine "name" or "glory".

Old Testament theophanies are presented as actual historical events or as prophetic visions with symbolic overtones. The extension of the term theophany to such New Testament events as the Baptism and

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transfiguration of Jesus are also called epiphanies. The incarnation of Christ, however, may be seen as the ultimate and fullest form of divine manifestation in a whole spectrum of theophanies.

Theophanies doesn't mean that God always appears in the form of man, he can manifest himself through other physical forms of nature. A theophany also tends to serve a purpose. For instance, when God appears to Abraham, it is to prophesy about a coming of new child in their family and to warn him about Sodom and Gomorrah. Theophanies can often have elements of prophecy or revelation, serve as a guide or a turning point, or some combination.

In all theophanies, a clear distinction is in place between God the Creator and the phenomena of creation. God the Creator is absolute; everything in creation is dependent. There is never any mixing of the two; there is no confusion between the Creator and his creation. Thunderstorms, clouds, lightning, and wind are all part of the created world and the environment. They are not God. But in special cases of theophany, God uses these created things as media through which he manifests himself as the Creator.

The first incident taken for study is that, In Exodus, where Moses was an Israelite, raised in Egypt during a time of great oppression, who turned shepherd in the wilderness. He didn't expect to go back to Egypt, but then he caught sight of a bush burning. The fire was not consuming the branches, and Moses heard God's voice through it. In this theophany, God appeared to Moses as a Burning Bush. "And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed." (Exodus 3:2) In the whole Old Testament, the most prominent of these thunderstorm appearances is the appearance of God at Mount Sinai, after the people of Israel have come out of Egypt.

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke

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because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. (Exodus 19:16-19)

The next incident is where God showed the way through pillars of cloud and fire. When Moses and the Israelites left Egypt, God led them in the right direction in the form of a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire through night. The cloud and the fire helped them throughout their way. Both manifestations always went before the Israelites. “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people” (Exodus 13:21,22).

The next manifestation is through a whirlwind/tempest or tornado. In the Book of Job, After Job had debated with his friends about the relationship of righteousness, punishment, sin, and God, he challenged what God had done to him. He had lost his family, home, health, and just about everything. God appears in a whirlwind and bombards Job with questions, essentially making clear the point that man cannot comprehend the ways of God. Job acknowledges his lack of knowledge in such matters and humbly listens to what God has to say. God blesses Job with twice as much as he had lost before. “Then the Lord answered Job out of whirlwind and said: Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38:1).

These are some of the manifestations that God took as a non-human form through nature and environment. This shows how God utilises his creation to communicate with people and to guide them in his way. Since he appears and exists internally in the environment, it is our responsibility to take good care of the environment. Theophanies reveal the aspects of God to the human world. Humans can see elements of God through these appearances. In the fiery pillar and tempest, one can see God’s power. When He appears as a man to Abraham, He reveals He has elements of His character that are

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similar to mankind, meaning He made us in His image. When He wrestles with Jacob, He shows His willingness to wrestle with us, especially in the moments we feel most like running away. Theophanies gives an enduring glimpse of the truth that God is always with you and wherever you are.

The Lord God blesses us and acknowledges us through nature. He feeds us and he guides us. And in turn we are expected to keep the earth safe and secure. “The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it”.(Genesis 2:15). Humans join the Creator in keeping his creation. When God gave his land to the people he said, “It is the land of the Lord your God cares for, the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end” (Deuteronomy 11:12).

The Lord expects responsible stewardship and a diligent practice of the Law, otherwise, “The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people: they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant”. (Isaiah 24:4,5). So those who destroy the earth will destroy themselves. So the people are called not only to be responsible stewards of God’s creation but to connect with the earth and with all the other created beings.

God’s mission includes the redemption of all His creations. So it is our duty to make a commitment to take care and tend the God given earth, because the urgent task and the need of the hour is to awaken the consciousness of our interconnectedness in the web of life and to fight not just for environmental protection, but for a renewed earth and a humanized community in communion with each other and with the earth.

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**Ecofeminism in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple***

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**Abstract**

The term 'ecofeminism' is a new term but the spirit that underpins it has long driven women's attempts to protect their livelihoods and make their community a better place. Ecofeminist thinkers portray the concept of gender in their work to analyse the relationship between nature and women. Women and nature are indispensable parts of the works of Alice Walker and she has empathetically written about them. Through her novels, Alice Walker has brought into focus the exploitation of women and the environment. The contribution of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* includes discussions about women's images, the link between women's oppression and male dominance's exploitation of nature. Alice Walker infuses her novel with the concept of feminism and natural freedom from control and violence through an ecofeminist viewpoint. Alice Walker envisions a symbiosis in which men are not oppressed and the environment is not exploited. The present paper is an attempt to explore Ecofeminism in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

Ecofeminism is a relatively new term that is attributed to Francoise d'Eaubonne who used it in *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* in 1974. Spretnak, a classic ecofeminist, defines the same term as a "joining of environmental, feminist, and women's spiritual concerns" Warren asserts that "what makes ecofeminism distinct is its insistence that nonhuman nature and naturism are feminist issues." Susan Griffin

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states that “women have some level of communion with nature that men cannot attain”. It has been noted that ecofeminism has a different meaning in the perspective of different writers but, ecofeminists share a common awareness of the inevitable connections that exist between women and nature.

In the 1970s, ecofeminism emerged as not just a social but also as a political movement that combined elements of both feminism and ecology. Ecofeminists draw attention to the fact that the patriarchal worldview contributes to nonhuman nature’s destruction and exploitation in the male-dominated civilization, as well as to women’s suffering. The most important thing in ecofeminism is the phrase “self in relationship to others” which refers to the necessity of acknowledging the integrity of our own inner centre, that includes our own body and consciousness, in order for us to acknowledge and value that of others. Furthermore, we may comprehend that we are in relationships with the natural world and all that it implies in the same way that we can grasp and learn about ourselves and who we are via our relationships with other people (family, friends, loved ones, colleagues, even enemies). Our interactions and relationships with those beings, both living and non-living, as well as their interactions with one another, can teach us something about ourselves. As the two are inextricably intertwined, an ecofeminist conception of nature also functions as a conception of society. In contrast to deep ecology, the two are regarded as distinct but interdependent entities. However, the autonomy of nature is acknowledged.

Women and nature are indispensable parts of the works of Alice Walker and she has empathetically written about them. Walker has highlighted environmental and gender exploitation through her writings. Her 1982 Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Color Purple* is an example of this. The current paper explores the major female characters’ eco-womanist consciousness. Beyond ecofeminism, the eco-womanism used in the text contends that women and nature should be treated with respect.

Alice Walker in *The Color Purple*, the most well-known of all of

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her novels, has put forward the aforementioned perspective, and draws attention to the metamorphosis in Celie, - the book's protagonist. Metamorphosis is complete when Celie achieves real oneness with nature and develops an eco-womanist awareness. Walker demonstrates how a womanist and ecological perspective together foretell women's genuine independence and happiness. Although racism and gender issues are prevalent throughout the book, it is the ecological viewpoint that forces the women characters to take back their identities. Purple is the "colour that is always a surprise but is omnipresent in nature," as Walker accurately noted in the introduction to the tenth edition of *The Color Purple*. The novel effectively illustrates the connections that exist between gender, race, and nature, as implied in the aforementioned remark. In order to increase the environmental awareness amongst people and ensure that a more peaceful world is created, this paper aims to read *The Color Purple* from an ecofeminist perspective and provide a fairly thorough and extensive look at Walker's ecofeminist views and her consciousness towards both women and nature.

Walker illustrates the twin oppression of black women due to racism and sexism that inevitably existed in the patriarchal society she presents in *The Color Purple* to show her heartfelt pity for them. They are denied all of their rights, including their status and identity, and are subjected to physical and emotional abuse. As an illustration, consider Celie, the book's main character. When she is only 14 years old, her stepfather sexually assaults her, and she subsequently gives birth to two children. Celie states in a letter to god, "I am fourteen years old. I am I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me." (8)

Celie is literally traded for financial gain to a widower with four kids after experiencing recurrent physical and sexual abuse at the hands of her stepfather. She is chosen for marriage by the widow due to her diligence, obedience, and attachment to a cow. However, this marriage only places her in a new "cage," not removing even the little oppressions she endures. She is little more than a domestic servant, a field labourer, and a sexual slave to the widower, her so-called husband.

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As the traditional belief existed amongst the black people that women are merely born to live and remain modest, the black women in the story do firmly think that they are beneath men and must endure all of these abuses. The worst form of disaster that could have happened to them was this type of mental anguish, which allowed men to demonstrate their dominance over women by exerting psychological control over them. Black women are physically and psychologically oppressed, carrying the loads that everyone else refuses to carry, and acting as mules in a patriarchal society. The women become less distinguished and unique.

In this paragraph we can see the awakening nature in the characters. Most of the women in the book have gone from being ignorant to being mature in spirit. They support one another as they seek the truth and ultimately come to see how crucial it is for them to come together. Having experienced ongoing psychological and physical abuse, Celie initially had nowhere to turn but to write letters of confession to God. Celie believes that she has to be secret about her sufferings, “You better not tell nobody but God. It’d kill your mammy.” God appears to her as “huge, ancient, towering, gray-bearded, and white.” In her imagination God dressed in long robes and walked barefoot, and she told him everything, including her doubts, fears, and even some secrets. She firmly believes that as long as she is capable of writing the word “God,” she continues to have a friend, and that God will come to the aid of those who are in need. Celie continues to believe in God’s intervention even after Sofia is locked up. Mary Agnes ultimately proves to be the true redeemer. Celie learns that “God is not a white, nor a man” while following Shug’s commands. Everybody possesses God, who is everything. Celie eventually discovers that God actually does not exist in the world with the aid of other women. She then starts talking to other ladies to seek support and bravery. Celie is happy and she says: “I am so happy, I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time.” (105)

One of the key factors influencing how males change is the self-awareness of black women. Huge changes occur in Albert’s fate as the author describes after Celie begins her journey toward a sea change

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in her life. Thus, Celie's departure for Memphis marks the beginning of Albert's enlightenment. Albert locks himself inside the home he lives in and refuses to allow anyone in. He actually leads a dirty life that is equated to a 'pig's life'. Unconsciously, Albert makes reflections during Celie's absence. He considers the numerous forms of violence he has used against Celie since their marriage, the importance he places on her as a woman, and how his life would alter as a result of Celie's departure. He comes to the conclusion that women should be treated equally and with respect as they have their own dignity. He feels inspired to accomplish something new as a result of giving up the standard masculinist mindset. All these alterations demonstrate that he underwent an ecofeminist-like rebirth and has since evolved into a natural man. It is a fact that nature's retaliation is the ultimate cause of how men have changed. Men gradually see the value of being kind to both women and the environment. One of the reasons Walker prefers *The Color Purple* from among all her other novels is that there is potential for males to mature and grow.

A form of retaliation to nature that liberates people and restores their imagination, inventiveness and sense of creativity in terms of the natural environment around them which leads to physical and mental liberation. In *The Color Purple*, women achieve true freedom by being financially independent on the basis of their mental liberation. They gain independence in the world this way and stop deferring to males. Celie runs a trouser shop in Memphis after discovering by chance that she is skilled at manufacturing pants. Celie believes that the act of tailoring pants is a difficult task for the patriarchal society in which tailoring pants is seen as a man's domain. She is a natural designer since she has the ability to create attractive, affordable pants that highlight a person's features. She enriches her life and takes a step toward becoming a complete and independent woman by opening a tailoring shop exclusively to stitch pants to cater to the local community. In doing so, she showcases her artistic abilities, genuine feelings, and thoughts. Celie mentions: "By the time I got back home I was feeling so bad I couldn't do nothing but sleep. I tried to work on some new pants." (119)

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Mary Agnes is now able to not only assemble songs but also has the courage to perform in front of others, thanks to Shug's guidance. One way or another, singing becomes an essential part of her life and simultaneously offers her courage and confidence. Through her efforts to become a professional singer, Mary Agnes receives praise from others. She is not an invisible entity or a ghost any more but rather a brand-new person, aggressive and working and owning her own business. She won't be worried by her skin colour or history of sexual assault because she has already atoned for her past injuries and shown that she is capable of achieving her goals. This clearly demonstrates whatever K. Bonetti stated: "that one purpose of art is to aid in your development as a whole person." It is consistent with Walker's view that art may improve people. Additionally, having their own employment aids Celie and Mary Agnes in achieving financial liberty. Eventually, they get to enjoy the rewards of independence and live up to their own principles. They have been successful in demonstrating that they are the type of women who have identities and are confident enough to not be disregarded.

As an ecofeminist, Walker is dedicated to working for the equal rights of all people and is constantly concerned about the victims of racism and patriarchy. She firmly believes that art can redeem humanity. She criticises androcentrism and patriarchalism, for instance, in *The Color Purple*. In contrast to other authors, she also addresses the suffering and adversity experienced by black men. Her greatest contribution to patriarchalism is not her emphasis on the abuse and brutality perpetrated by males against women, but rather her belief that the oppressors may be transformed. She aims to promote the peaceful and harmonious co-habitation of men and women, blacks and whites, and, in a broad sense, of everyone who lives in this world. Celie mentions clearly that "The only way to stop making somebody the serpent is for everybody to accept everybody else as a child of God, or one mother's children, no matter what they look like or how they act" (132). Her choice of a happy ending in this novel has practical significance to the American society where conflicts and differences

are almost everywhere. Although her fantasy is beautiful, it is coloured in utopian hues and is yet focused on the future. This indicates that our future generations will still need to put forth significant effort to realise the dream of a peaceful world. In other words, *The Color Purple* gives readers a limitless amount of room to think about reality in addition to a literary and creative shock. As the state of the environment worsens over time, the ecological balance is upset, severe consequences have resulted in an increasing number of extinctions of species, and the survival of humanity is in danger.

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**Collapse, Resilience and Sustainability:  
Environmental Concerns in Kim Stanley Robinson's  
*New York 2140***

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**Abstract**

The world is changing because of man-made and natural disasters. Man is challenging nature and over the years has interfered with the ecosystem. Climate change is the chief component that remains as a growing concern all over the globe that alters both the present and the future. Climate change as a scientific, political and economic problem emerged in the 1980s as one fundamentally concerned with the future.

Most Climate fiction, or cli-fi, is a form of speculative fiction that narrates a changed or changing climate in the imagined world. The genre frequently includes science fiction which is either dystopian or utopian in theme and imagines the potential futures based on how humans respond to the impacts of climate change. The term "cli-fi" was coined by Dan Bloom in his novella *Polar City Red*. The cli fi novels talk about the unavoidable imminent dangers of global warming and emphasises the need for attitude and behavioural change. Climate fiction is a growing genre which includes many prominent writers such as J.G.Ballard, Margaret Atwood, Richard Prowess and Kim Stanley Robinson.

Kim Stanley Robinson is an American novelist, widely recognized as one of the foremost living writers of science fiction. Whose works are described as 'humanist science fiction' and 'literary science fiction'. He is one of those Sci-Fi writers who advocates the need for awareness and measures that need to be taken for the near global

crash. He has written 20 novels, 20 short stories and 5 non fictional works.

Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *New York 2140* (2017), explores the lives of several residents of an apartment building in Manhattan who are living under submerged New York. The novel imagines the massive sea level rise due to major collapse in Antarctica and Greenland ice-sheets. The novel aims to personalise climate change by imaginatively exploring how fictional characters experience it.

The concept of sustainable development was described by the 1987, Bruntland Commission Report as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." It is important to understand that nature is not stable and the weather is the primary sign of mutability and inevitability of nature and culture. The damage to the ecosphere cannot be reverted, can only be sustained.

The paper aims to understand the complexities of climate change and how the characters in the novel deal with the crisis and its aftermath in Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140*.

**Keywords:** Climate-Fiction, Environmental sustainability, Climate change, Social sustainability, Economic sustainability

Man is challenging nature and over the years has interfered with the ecosystem; because of this the world has started changing. The humans have destroyed almost everything on earth with pollution, overpopulation, burning of fossil fuels, and this has triggered soil erosion, global warming, floods and droughts and climate change. Climate change is the chief component that remains as a growing concern all over the globe that alters both the present and the future. Climate change as a scientific, political and economic problem developed in the 1980s as one primarily concerned with the future.

The term "cli-fi" was coined by Dan Bloom in his novella *Polar City Red*. The cli-fi genre was a subgenre of science fiction which has emerged as one of the growing concepts of the 20th century. The

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term cli-fi is coined to recognize a new body of work that centrally addresses the issues of climate alteration and the environmental consequences it is associated with. The cli-fi novels talk about the unavoidable imminent dangers of global warming and emphasises the need for attitude and behavioural change.

The main motive of this genre is to impart the severity of climate change and force the current generation to imagine a future in the world of crisis. This genre is an attempt to heighten the environmental consciousness and compel people to consider the impact of climate change and its consequences. This growing field of study includes major writers like J. G. Ballard, Margaret Atwood, Octavia E Butler, Cormac McCarthy, Ian McEwan, Jeanette Winterson and Kim Stanley Robinson.

In the Brundtland Commission Report 1987, sustainable development is described as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” It is important to understand that nature is not stable and the weather is the primary sign of mutability and inevitability of nature and culture. The damage to the ecosphere cannot be reverted, can only be sustained. Sustainable development is an integration of social, environmental and economic sustainability and it uses these three structures to create a stable environment

The paper aims to understand the complexities of climate change and the environmental crisis in the future and how the characters in the novel deal with it and its aftermath through the concept of sustainability in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *New York 2140*.

Kim Stanley Robinson is an American novelist and an environmental activist, his novel *New York 2140* (2017) as the title suggests is set in the year 2140 after a cataclysmic effect of Climate change, the city is almost drowned and the people in New York are trying their best to bring back the normal in the dystopian world. The novel follows lives of several residents of an apartment building in New York who were trying to make a living in the collapsed world. The novel discusses

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the heavy sea level rise and its aftermath in the 22nd century due to what they call First pulse and Second pulse caused due to major collapse in Antarctic and Greenland Ice Sheets. The Pulses have caused insurmountable destruction to coastal countries and the city is on the verge of a Third pulse.

The novel starts with New York nicknamed in 2140 as Super Venice and the city which was once known for its skyscrapers and heavy traffic is now overpopulated with Water taxis and Super Scrapers. Kim Stanley Robinson introduces new terms used in the year 2140 like Hotello, a cheap small hotel space which he calls 'rooms that could be packed into a suitcase'. Super Scrapers( a building taller than the skyscrapers), Water barns (a place for storing boats) and Intertidal (lower Manhattan). The world in this novel is not advanced like the world in many science fiction novels; rather the world is readjusted to climate change. Inequality and Capitalism is at its peak and the majority wealth is owned by one per cent of its population. The main problems faced by the characters in the novel are capitalism, collapsible markets, the extinction of animals, unstable government and natural disasters which are more frequent than ever.

The city and the people described in this novel are the same and different when compared to the real time New York which is known for its Trade Centres, Central Park and Empire State Building are still active and working but it is now half drowned. The novel starts with the kidnapping of two coders Mutt and Jeff living in Met Life tower whose case is investigated by Inspector Gen. The building is managed by Vlade and the chairperson of Met Life Tower Charlotte Armstrong, who helps immigrants in need of Housing. Amelia Black is the Cloud Star hosting a program called Assisted Migration where she helps secure the endangered species to a habitable part of the land. Franklin Garr is the young hedge fund trader in Water price and the tower also has Stefan and Roberto orphaned children of 8 and 6 years old trying to find treasure in the middle of the drowned world. The citizen in the novel acts as an omnipotent narrator who narrates the stories of past and present. These characters evolve as a community to protect the

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world from further harm.

The need for environmental sustainability arose from the recognition of global deterioration, scarcity of resources, urgency in creating life spaces for people in metro cities and the fear of planetary collapse.

For environmentalists a collapse in nature entails a drastic reduction of natural resources, failure of crops, citizens living around without social and economic standings, disappearance of order in the world and the market. According to Dana Phillips, “Collapse is in the most dire possibility posed by an environmental crisis, albeit one that can be offset by ecological stability and mitigated by natural and cultural resilience if not circumvented altogether by the utopian possibility of sustainability” (Phillips 140).

People in *New York 2140* are trying to find a space where they could live without drowning, survive the stock market crashes now and then with minimum damage to the rich and the maximum damage to the poor. The city is overpopulated as it became a sanctuary for more migrants. The whole world is on the verge of disappearing and yet people find moments of happiness, love and compassion.

When a Hurricane was predicted many were storm proofing their apartments and made sure the batteries are charged so that, “even at the height of the storm the building itself would provide some power, as would the tidal turbines down at the waterline”(474). The Hurricane damaged almost half the population and people came together to protect themselves from natural disaster. In the face of collapse the community exuded brotherhood, “danger to be endured together, a marvel to be marveled at” (481)

On the second day after the storm the lower Manhattan was collapsing and refugees were sinking. When half the population were dying on one side the other half of the population was left unharmed. The world is controlled by the capitalists and the working classes are left to fend for themselves. Even in their darkest times there are characters like Charlotte, Amelia and come together to help people and animals in need. The capitalism in this novel is global and the

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characters in the novel are aware of it. The characters Mutt and Jeff who get kidnapped in the beginning of the novel keep arguing about the painful reality of the Capitalist Economy. “We have got good tech, we’ve got a nice planet, and we’re fucking it up by way of stupid laws. That’s what Capitalism, is a set of stupid laws”(11).

Economic sustainability is achieved when the equity gap between the rich and the poor is narrowed. According to Robert Goodland the scale of the human economy has become unsustainable because it is living off inherited and finite capital (fossil fuel) and the lack of accountability to natural capital(extinction of species). The reason for the chaos in the novel relates to two main factors, Government and public sectors ignoring the fact that every environmental change will directly affect the human beings and climatic changes are the result of human induced activities.

The world in the novel *New York 2140* has rebounded from the disturbances like hurricane, flood and ecological catastrophes; though they may not be able to regain their former status they try to retain their current status by learning to live with available resources. It was the ocean heat that triggered the First pulse. In the novel, citizens remarks “people played with the global thermostat imagining they had god like powers” (154).

People toyed with nature and that resulted in altering the climate. In the face of crisis both nature and humans are trying to adapt to the new normal, “This perpetual rise and fall now got measured to an obsessive- compulsive degree, understandable given the traumas of the last century and the distinct possibility of future traumas (27).

People are more cautious and aware of the planetary needs and necessities than before. People find ways to co- habitat with the animals and they find safe havens for endangered species by flying them out frequently.

Resilience is the ability to recover from setbacks, adapting to the new challenges and being unscathed in the face of calamity. Both humans and nature are resilient in the face of adversities. Canadian

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ecologist C.S. Hollings juxtaposed Resilience to sustainability.

It is useful to distinguish two kinds of behaviour. One can be termed sustainability, which represents the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium state after a temporary disturbance: the more rapidly it returns and less it fluctuates, the more stable it would be. But there is another property, termed resilience, that is measured of the persistence of systems and their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations are state variables ( 37).

The novel depicts the number of changes human beings made to prevent the extinction of endangered species, like the Defenders of the Earth who advocated for the rights of animal species and the need for them to live in their natural habitat and the opposing group Assisted Migration who relocated animals to safer plains to save them from extinction and unjust climate. When half the population found refuge in Central Park, Idelba and her team brought people to Met Life Tower and hospitals to keep them safe. When the storm passed the people in the city tried to rebuild the wrecked city and relocate those who lost their building and livelihood. When the vegetative ground was destroyed they grew vegetation up in their rooftops to survive. The characters in the novel strive to persevere in the adversity of climate and economic collapse.

Social sustainability is possible when there is systematic community participation, shared values and commonly accepted standards of law and discipline. Towards the end of the novel characters under the leadership of Charlotte, Amelia and Franklin come together to fight against the capitalists and they try to create a society equal for all. When faced with extinction all human life forms become resilient and the need for survival overpowers.

Kim Stanley Robinson uses the economic term ‘Tyranny of Sunk’ to explain the ability of people to live in a society despite all its

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shortcomings. According to Investopedia, The sunk cost dilemma describes the emotional struggle in deciding whether to move forward or step back from a project when time and money have already been spent but the preferred results are not attained. This is exactly what Robinson explains about New Yorkers' dilemma in the novel through these lines.

So it's still New York. People can't give up on it. It's what economists used to call tyranny of sunk cost: once you've put so much time and money into a project, it gets hard to eat your losses and walk. You are forced by the structure of the situation to throw good money after bad, grow obsessed, double down, escalate your commitment and become a mad gibbering apartment dweller, unable to imagine leaving. You persevere unto death (45).

The human system and the natural system are interconnected and interrelated. They depend on each other for survival. Any alteration to the environment leads to disruption in nature, loss of habitation and displacement of nature's inhabitants. A global catastrophe has decimated almost half the human population even then the human race and even some animals and plant species manages to thrive despite the extinction of its species

The survivors in the novel tries to rebuild a world which is habitable for the rich and the poor, a world where the extinction of species can be stopped, a world where people can live as a community despite all the catastrophes. The characters in the novel try to stop the doom cycle and implement strategies like breaking the class barrier and housing for all scheme and assisted migration and protecting the world from another Pulse. The novel insists on the hard core fact that environmental sustainability is the only solution to survive in this anthropocentric world and for the human race to survive it is important for every individual to sustain the natural resources.

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**Into the Mystical Abyss:  
An Ecocritical Reading of *Mayaanadhi***

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**Abstract**

Film as a tool for subversion as well as affirmation of conventional norms and beliefs has had a long standing function, thereby validating the power of media in ideological conditioning. An Ecocritical approach to film texts is a novel way of analysing the philosophical potential of subversion/affirmation with respect to attitudes and approaches towards environment and nature where it opens up new perspectives that would otherwise have been missed by the ordinary film goer.

This paper entitled “Into the Mystical Abyss: An Ecocritical Reading of *Mayanadhi*” intends to take up the 2017 released New Generation Malayalam film *Mayaanadhi* directed by Ashiq Abu and to engage in an ecocritical analysis of the various layers of the film, thereby zeroing in on the argument that in a ‘neo-conventional’ world the power of resorting to elements from nature for dismantling and subverting norms is a more effective method.

**Keywords:** film, ecocriticism, *Mayaanadhi*, New Generation Malayalam Cinema

Ecocriticism, which got currency in the 1990s, reached its full sway in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as one of the most popular tools of textual analysis. With the advent of Cultural Studies, everything developed the potential to be read as texts, be it clothing, football or film. Film as a tool for subversion, as well as affirmation of conventional norms and beliefs, has had a long standing function, thereby validating the power of media in ideological conditioning.

An Ecocritical approach to film texts is one of the ways of analysing the philosophical potential of subversion/affirmation with respect to attitudes and approaches towards environment and nature where it opens up new perspectives that would otherwise have been missed by the ordinary film goer. Prior to the popularity of ecocritical approaches to reading films, the only films that discussed nature and environment were the documentaries and ecological films, the feature of which were educational and direct in representation. With the advent of ecocriticism, new approaches to reading texts of various kinds that overtly express environmental representation became popular. A broad range of films were also read eco critically as an extension of this approach.

Just as the field of cultural studies has drawn our attention to the importance of gender class, race, and ethnicity, cinematic ecocriticism urges us to incorporate ecological considerations into the study of our role as co-participants with the nonhuman world in the complex symbiotic process we call evolution, a process that includes cultural evolution. (xiii, Willoquet-Maricondi)

This paper attempts to zero in on the New Generation Malayalam cinema *Mayaanadhi* (2017) to foreground the ecocritical elements in the diegetic of the film.

Ashiq Abu's directorial film *Mayaanadhi* falls into the 'New Generation' category of Malayalam cinema—a category known to break away from the traditional norms of filmmaking. Considered as experimental and subverting, the New Generation Cinema, however, is only an umbrella term that is used to refer to the type of films that were released in the post 2010 era in Kerala which exhibited a deviance from conventional movie making tendencies, be it in the form, narrative, casting or even the post production. This included casting of actors who lack star value, ensemble characters, realistic or fantasy/surreal plots, non conventional modes of cinematography

and editing, challenging pseudo moral ideals etc.

Generic classification of *Mayaanadhi* would categorise it under the romantic crime thriller genre of films. However, reading the film through an ecocritical angle would reveal dimensions and significations hitherto neglected and unexposed; significations that unearth the culture vis-a-vis nature connection inevitable for the creative expression of new subversive perspectives, which the paper tries to foreground.

*Mayaanadhi* (translated as 'Mystic River'), inspired by Jean Luc Godard's French film *Breathless*, shows a small time con man, Maathan (Tovino Thoman), on the run from the police who ends up accidentally killing a policeman in an attempt to escape with a bag of illegal money. The plot then shifts and develops on the relationship between Maathan and Aparna (Aishwarya Lakshmi) and Maathan's attempts to reconcile with her, who is now his ex-girlfriend. Aparna, known as Appu, is an aspiring actress who makes a living by MCing at various events and parties. The narrative follows how the police officers from Tamil Nadu, who were assigned with the case of the police officer's murder, track down Maathan with the information that Appu unwillingly gives them, and eventually kill him in a forest.

The film has been lauded for the way that it dealt with the idea of sex and relationship. The film dwells on the theme of love, with trust and betrayal as motifs in the narrative. But the film is potent with references that reveal the connection between environment and the social order, between humans and nature.

The hero of the film Maathan is not the conventional hero that the audience is used to. He is not one who abides by the masculinity demanded by conventional society. Even though he is a criminal (and as the plot develops we realise that he was involved in a money fraud during his college days), it is not an evil, cruel picture of Maathan that is portrayed in the film. The introductory scene itself gives the audience a hint at his character—this man is complicated. He is a mix of the canny and the uncanny. He is one who is part of a criminal activity. At the same time, there is the innocence of a child in him. He is one who always wears a cap like a teenager and prefers to drink Boost

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over other beverages. This attachment to drinking Boost is reiterated in the film later on in the scene with Aparna as well.

The very name 'Maathan' has a rustic ring to it. His real name, Mathews, is only used to refer to him by the police officers who are after him. Everyone else calls him Maathan. He is not 'Mathai', for that would be the common equivalent of the name 'Mathews' in Kerala Society. This rusticity of the name Maathan is unique and hints at his raw nature, indicative of the fact that he is not completely conditioned by culture/conventions.

Maathan does not possess the toxicity of the hero that Malayalam cinema had popularised up until the previous decade. His failure, as the police officer tells him in the end, is that he trusted a woman and that he is a fool for that. This again is the nature /culture dyad that the film has under its surface layers of meaning. He is a fool because he has not followed the conventions of the society. He has failed to be 'the man' that is conventionally demanded of him. The connectedness to nature has to be detached and conventional masculinities have to be fulfilled. Maathan is shot dead by the police officer, of course for the killing of another officer, but more so for his trusting of a woman. When the older officer, who represents the conventional society, sadistically tells him that it was Maathan's girlfriend who betrayed him, the officer expects Maathan to be in pain and be part of the society who detests women. However, Maathan replies: 'It's okay sir. I love her very much'. The officer's smile vanishes and he is enraged more than ever.

The journey of Maathan can be perceived as an attempt to journey from innocence to experience, from nature to culture. But he never finishes the journey. He is the character that shows the connectedness to nature while the others have detached from it. The only other character who has this potential is Appu.

The youngest of the officers, officer Harsh, is a character whose deviance into the natural world from the world of culture is constantly kept under check by the senior officers. The first time he is introduced,

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he is being dropped at the station by his girlfriend on the back of a scooter, which does not seem to make the two senior officers happy. More than once, there is talk about his muscles and workout. In the climax scene, he has an argument with the senior officer regarding the generalisation of women. The senior officer, who is bound by culture and conventional thoughts, cannot accept the change in power relations that is taking place around him. At Harsh's wedding he tells his colleague that the internet is screwing the youth and during the argument with Harsh in the climax he loses his cool and shouts that women cannot be trusted. His anger is a result of the painful experience he had in his marital life but at the same is indicative of the way how the conventional society wants to keep man/woman power relations under check.

The police officer questions the meaning of trust and love. "You are asking me to believe a woman?", he asks the younger officer just like how he calls Maathan a fool and mocks him for trusting a woman just before Maathan is shot. He is conditioned by the cultured society and by his experience. Any deviance into innocence would be then a movement towards nature from culture. He never deviates, unlike Maathan or unlike the attempt made by Harsh. He is rooted in culture and the conception of conventional life that he is detached from any possibility of a change away from the established normalcy. "My experience is the lesson for me! My perception will be based on the lesson I learnt!" he says. He is the one character in the film who can be juxtaposed with Maathan. The officer represents culture while Maathan represents Nature. The former is rooted in conventional norms and resists change while Maathan's movement in the narrative is from innocence to experience, a futile attempt to fit into and be part of the accepted culture. Maathan is a character who has deviated from the conventional patriarchal system; the system of man; a system that perceives nature as something to be controlled rather than to become one with. Maathan fails to attain the 'maturity' as demanded by the standards of this system. The system makes him question Aparna's act of making love with him if it were not to get married. she replies, "Sex is not a promise". Here the act of sex becomes an

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act of natural instinct, an act that arises out of the physical need rather than an act bound by conventional and cultural rules. Maathan initially finds difficulty in accepting this. He is at the same time a boy in his behaviour and appearance and a man who tries to acquire and live by what the patriarchal culture demands of him. When Dharshana asks Appu why the two cannot be together, Appu replies: He's a small boy at heart! Can't trust him yet".

Maathan will not become the 'man' that society wants him to be. He will never reach the stage of experience from the stage of innocence even when he tries for it. Because he doesn't attain this, the agents of culture will keep his movement in check, just like how officer Harsh's deviance is kept in check by the senior officer. When this is not possible in the case of Maathan, the agent of the society ensures that he will not be permitted deviance.

"The public should fear the system. If that fear is lost, the society won't be under control.", says the senior officer to Harsh. Even though he is talking about the role of the police in the society, it can be extended to the attitude of the society towards the cultural/conventional norms in general. This 'control' is fundamentally a patriarchal, androcentric control: man controlling woman, nature, etc.

Towards the end, Maathan's movement from the urban space into the space of nature is symbolic of his movement away from that demand for 'control'. He is taken deep into the forest by the officers. He is given a lecture on the foolishness of trusting a woman. The officer assumes that Maathan will feel betrayed. This brings a kind of pleasure to the senior officer who, in his opinion, is keeping things under control. However, Maathan's final words, "It's okay sir. I love her a lot!", makes the smile disappear from the officer's face and Maathan is shot. He falls dead beside the stream/river inside a dense forest on a moonlit night. He becomes one with nature. During this process of being one with nature, he sees a vision of Appu on the other side of the river. She is dressed up like a fairy, surrounded by lush nature. It is this mystical vision with which he dies.

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The scene where Appu appears fairy-like transitions to a shooting location where the audience realise that Appu is at a film set and the lush nature that was shown is only a creation with the help of CGI. Maathan has become one with nature, but Appu and everyone else will continue to live being part of the man made spaces, putting up an appearance that is not her true self (as indicated by the mirror and the makeup).

It is not only with the characters that we can identify the subtext of nature in the film. The very title 'Mayaanadhi' or 'Mystic River' is suggestive of the role of nature in the film. 'Maya Nadhi' becomes a river of illusion. The possibility of understanding and acquiring it is impossible. Furthermore, the lyrics of all the songs in the film are all indicative of nature. Along with this, an interesting element is the sartorial symbol when Appu and Maathan meet for the first time in the narrative of the film and when Appu sees Maathan for the last time in person. When Maathan meets Appu near the Shawarma shop, Appu is shown wearing a green Saree. When Appu meets Maathan for the last time, Maathan is shown wearing a green shirt. The color green signifies nature and the fact that both these characters are aligned with nature more than any other characters in the film.

The film is no doubt a thriller and a romantic love story by genre. Love, trust and betrayal feature as the obvious motifs in the film. However, the subtext of nature is something that can be deciphered which foregrounds a culture/nature dichotomy using characters, symbols, songs and even names. It is suggestive of the idea that human beings will struggle if they go against conventional establishments; masculinity if not fulfilled will be enforced; emasculation will be kept in check. Nature and the connectedness with nature is used effectively to communicate the nuances of meaning of the film *Mayaanadhi*. As Paula Willoquet-Maricondi observes, "An important and often neglected dimension of studying the environmental potential of cinema from an ecocritical standpoint is attention to the specific ways in which visual texts communicate. How information is delivered visually is vital to its effectiveness in meaningfully reaching audiences." (xii). It

is this neglected dimension of the environment present in the film that this paper has attempted to foreground.

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**Purchase your Breath: Future Civilization and Climate crisis in Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki's *O<sub>2</sub> Arena***

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**Abstract**

This Paper aims at estimating the consequence of climate crisis upon future civilization with special reference to Nigerian writer Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki's speculative fiction *O<sub>2</sub> Arena*. After mapping the implication of thematic gravity, in relation to environmental calamity; this paper will trigger the aspects of climate change where every breath demands cost. It will further disclose how speculative fiction with its projection of scenes from future eventually puts light on present realism. Extensive exploitation of Nature has landed us into a world where drastic change in the pattern of earthly matter can be observed and we can further calculate that the purity of air, water, and soil has been lost. The novelette *O<sub>2</sub> Arena* showcases futuristic pictures of the oxygen crisis, O<sub>2</sub> credits and people paying for their own supply of oxygen. This paper will highlight the plight of humans, commodification of oxygen and people's engagement in violent activity to earn O<sub>2</sub> credits.

**Keywords**

Oxygen Crisis, Speculative Fiction, Eco-criticism, Futuristic Fiction, Breathable air, Oxygen market, Ecological erosion, Air Pollution, Ecological decay, Futuristic world/

### **Speculative Fiction and Environmentalism**

The genre of Speculative fiction is a wide and popular form of narrative which encompasses elements that are absent in both history and present and thus it introduces a wide variety of them related to supernatural, fantasy and future world. This paper attempts to provide insight of Climate catastrophe and futuristic world with reference to *O<sub>2</sub> Arena* by Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki. Environmental criticism or Eco-criticism in literature aims to locate the subjugation of Nature by humans while placing both Nature and Women in the same axis. This concept holds the point that women are oppressed in patriarchal society and the Nature is also exploited by this society as Warren express his thought regarding Eco-criticism that “is used to justify the domination of humans by race/ethnicity, class, age, affectional orientation, ability, religion, marital status, geographic location, or nationality” (Warren 62). The setting of the novelette indirectly upholds the concept of Ecological decay by presenting a picture from the future where humans need to spend for Oxygen to breath which was once toxic free and freely accessible. It further draws the crisis of pure ‘breathable air’ (Ekpeki 8) and shows that O<sub>2</sub> credit is considered as money. The new wave of consumerist market culture has helped the speculative fiction genre to come into appearance. Late '940 witness the bloom of the term which came into existence as a result of science fiction criticism “originally describing a subset of science fiction whose stories concentrated on extrapolating from current scientific knowledge” (Gordon 21). The term speculative fiction in a Post-modern era mentioned as umbrella term which includes narratives like horror, science and fantasy fiction. Though speculative fiction often address as science fiction in relation to the similarities of elements like robots, time travel and spaceship; these two genres are different in nature.

### **Speculative Literature and Africa’s contribution**

The complex formation and gigantic size of speculative fiction enables it to provide shelter to various other but relatively similar forms of tale. Speculative fiction as a genre grabs attention with the rise of

sociological scientific fiction that broadcast the social changes in relation with technology. While standing apart from mainstream realistic fiction, this genre reflects the effect of the present act which indirectly hits realism. “Speculative fiction uses languages, style and setting in order to normalize or explain a situation that in some way differs from the parameters of our everyday experience. The “impossibility” of the event needs to be taken seriously, made believable within the confines of the fiction.” (Gordon 22). Africa has always been seen as a counterpart of the West and the literary production has also been judged by the same parameter. The publication of Chinua Achebe’s seminal work *Things Fall Apart* helps to shift the reader’s attention towards African Literature.

Literature of Africa is an enriched field which has suffered from the partisanship of Western readers. Thus it has been made obvious that African futuristic fiction is a fresh product which has bloomed in recent years. The politicized publication of Literature creates a hindrance to explore African Speculative fiction and very few African fictions have successfully made available on the market that are coloured by diasporic elements. To trace back the origin of African Speculative fiction novel such as *Chaka/Shaka* by Thomas Mofolo, *Ògbójú Ìdì nínú Igbó Irúnmalá* by D. O. Fagunwa, *The Pam Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Dead’s Town* by Amos Tutuola and *Jagua Nana* by Cyprian Ekwensi can be mentioned. African Speculative Fiction exists in oral form, long before the birth of European standard form. Nigerian speculative fiction writer, Chinelo Onwualu asserts that from 2008 the publication of African speculative art in Chimurenga journal provides momentum in the search for African speculative tales.

The current bloom of African speculative fiction is the result of market demand from the West who was looking for variety in literature and started exploring the writings from Africa. The global audience is incapable of noticing anything until or unless it has been highlighted by the West. In this context Colonization has a greater role to play as Frantz Fanon expresses about the psychology of colonialism where

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the constant representation of native as pagan, primitive and evil by the colonizer leads the colonized to believe it as true. Thus the colonizer also loses his self-identity as he can only discover himself through the eyes of West. Colonization and projection of Africa as “dark”<sup>1</sup> by the West has already shattered the image of Africa as well as the potentiality of African literature. African speculative fiction attains more critical attention from Western public sphere than academicians and the reason might be the commercial interest. The speculative fiction in Africa was not a new phenomenon as Africans are acquainted with this genre from quite a long time. Craving of Western world for a new form of writing has created the seed bed for the spring of African speculative fiction in Global market.

With this sudden and late prod, it appears that after the age of Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o African Writings are waking up from coma. Good chunk of modern African writings have been published by Heinemann<sup>2</sup> publication house which consider political or protest fiction as the only medium that can be counted in the canon of African writings. Unfortunately few speculative fictions which have been published during this period were unsuccessful to lure the attention. At this era writing speculative fiction has been considered as a trivial work which lacks the potentiality to hold social aspects and this genre has further been considered for the privileged Western world. *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora*, *New Suns: Original Speculative Fiction by People of Color*, *Consider Dominion: An Anthology of Speculative Fiction from Africa and the African Diaspora*, *Black Panther: Tales of Wakanda*, *The Old Drift* and *The Year’s Best African Speculative Fiction* are few African speculative writings of modern epoch.

### **O2 Arena and Environmentalism**

Arena generally defines a close environment where entertainment or sports takes place and the use of this word generates the symbolic representation of the World in future. Activities of humans have exerted Ecological stress and the purity of natural elements becomes

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questionable. Donald Ekpeki sketches down the futuristic location where fresh air is a rare phenomenon and just like in an arena opponent defeat the other near to death; people from near future will engage in taking lives of others in order to earn Oxygen supply “so I went for his throat, biting through his skin into salty, coppery flesh” (Donald Ekpeki 33). The narrative wakes up with a vicious scene where the protagonist makes utmost effort to put an end of a life. The tale is weaved around an Oxygen producing law institute where the protagonist takes admission to facilitate his Oxygen supply “I wasn’t here by choice. It was the Bar that would usher me into my position in the corrupt system where I could earn the kind of O<sub>2</sub> allowances that would quash my CO<sub>2</sub> s” (Donald Ekpeki 11).

Pollution and “thinning of the air” has made the globe inhabitable and created a crisis of breathable air. The commodification of Natural resources permits the rise of Oxygen market “What was our daily reality? You had to pay to breathe. Since the global warming crisis had affected phytoplankton and hampered the production of breathable air, our lives were our own to maintain at the requisite cost” (Donald Ekpeki 8). Once the tobacco dealers barely cared for human lungs, and were engaged in producing and selling fresh air masks. In this fictitious world money is equivalent to O<sub>2</sub> credit. *O<sub>2</sub> Arena* cultivates the notion of post Ecological decay. Eco-Marxism argues that capitalist production has turned nature into a commodity. The class inequality has an intense role to play in terms of experiencing the natural resources. Eco-socialists further introduce that wealth has the power to determine environmental experience. As Pramod K Nayar expresses:

Another dimension to Marxist environmentalism is their attention to social inequalities and its relation with nature. Eco-socialists argue that class inequalities influence the experience of environment. As an example we can think of air pollution. The wealthier class escapes air pollution through the extensive use of (non-eco-friendly) air conditioning. The experience of polluted air is, therefore, restricted to the less

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wealthy classes who cannot afford rarified environments in their homes, vehicles or offices. Eco-socialism suggests that the difference in the distribution of wealth is at the base of such an experience of environments (Nayar 247).

Economically strong countries have always looked up to the poor Third World country to establish industrial experiment and thus they engage in a habit to pass the blame of Ecological decay on the other. The law institution is located on an island where the luxury of “regulated air” is accessible only to the rich. The property of this land is on the grip of economically strong people and the poor are being washed away to the polluted mainland. The wealthy race is capable of purchasing fresh air and the incapable naïve poor have been flushed to the toxic air of the mainland. The mainland witnesses the Environmental catastrophe where not only the air is packed with pollutants but the temperature is also high. “I needed to visit the mainland. Not that the air there was any better. It was much worse, in fact. The people there were poor... You see, the rich deserve to breathe. Still, the mainland was home. Usually, I would take my Temperature Regulating Suit.” (Donald Ekpeki 18) The use of Oxygen masks confines the upper class and lower class to the Oxygen cylinder.

From surface level, the gradual Ecological erosion appears like the movement of sloth but it contains the potentiality to bestow an extensive conclusion. The “slow violence” has landed us in a world where one needs to purchase his breath. Eco-criticism analyzes the representation of nature and natural landscape in any cultural text and further estimates the damage that has brought upon nature. *O<sub>2</sub> Arena* being a speculative fiction grounded its narrative on the result of Environmental peril. Deforestation and Toxic drift have given birth to climate change which eventually leads to the Oxygen crisis. The incapability of the poor in the novelette illuminates the deplorable condition of humans. The exploitation of nature has been established as human habit throughout the ages. The “slow violence” denotes that type of violence which is not noticeable through open eyes as it

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occurs in a relatively slow motion and typically not considered violence at all. The growth of the Oxygen crisis and temperature are consequences of slow violence. As Rob Nixon Points out “slow violence is often not just attritional but also exponential, operating as a major threat multiplier; it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded” (Nixon 3).

This speculative fiction anchors the concept of adaptation of technology for biological need. The introduction of air purifying masks at one hand implies the Ecological disruption and on the other hand it tries to hit the notion of cyborgs<sup>3</sup>. With the introduction of air purifying masks the text tries to establish the picture of future generations where technology should be incorporated for the functioning of the biological body. The existentialism of human life is being closely linked with scientific invention. Dr. Umez dies because his Oxygen filtration system has been disabled. Thus the text points out the dependency of future life on technological support. The use of air purifier masks has become evitable part of life to exist in the future.

### Conclusion

*O<sub>2</sub> Arena* promotes the notion of Ecological crumbling with its projection of a speculative world where pure Oxygen is a rare element. Standing at the ground of the future, this novelette echoes the present Environmental erosion. The plot of the text appears as a result of brutal practices towards nature. Ekpeki's *O<sub>2</sub> Arena* tries to pull attention towards Climate crisis-one of the crucial threats to mankind. The protagonist's dire urge to earn “Fifty-thousand O<sub>2</sub> credits, a lifetime supply of air” (Ekpeki 25) indulge him to partake in criminal activity where he earns the Oxygen credit on the death of other life. Through the death of Dr. Umez the author has pinned the unreliability of technology dependent human life. The speculative world in the text projects that the Ecological decay has already started. The text makes an appeal to save Ecosystem by projecting the negative aspects of futuristic life. The representation of the future circulates the picture of realism.

### Footnotes

1. Dark- Joseph Conrad launches Africa as “Dark” in his novel *Heart of Darkness*
2. Heinemann- Chinua Achebe was the editor of this publishing house who helped in the emergence of African Writings
3. Cyborg- word coined in mid-twentieth-century that derives from “cybernetics”. It denotes an organic (typically, human) being altered by mechanical means.

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**Nature and Culture in Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman***

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**Abstract**

Ecocriticism deals with the relationship between literature and environment or how human relationships with the physical environment are reflected and observed in the literature. This article titled "Nature and Culture in Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman*" deals with how the objects of nature are portrayed in the novel. In the novel *One Part Woman*, the principal characters Kali and Ponnayi suffer from the problem of childlessness. In such a circumstance, the objects they see in and around them remind them about their problem of childlessness. But there are also objects in nature in which these characters find solace. Thus, this article makes an ecocritical reading of the novel which provides the representation of the natural world. Added to it, it also finds that the cultural tradition and social practices are in relationship to nature.

**Keywords:** Nature, Culture, Perumal Murugan, Kali, Ponnayi.

Perumal Murugan is an Indian author who writes in the Tamil language. He has written ten novels, five short story collections, and four anthologies of poetry. His novels which are translated into English are gaining international readership. *Nizhal Mutrattu Ninaivugal* Which was published in the year 2013 is his memoir. His novel *Poonachi* is translated into English as *Poonachi: Or the Story of a Black Goat* by N. Kalyan Raman. His novel *Amma* is translated with the same title by Nandhini Murali and Kavitha Muralidharan.

Aniruddhan Vasudevan has translated many novels of Perumal Murugan into English. *Madhurobhagan* (2010) is translated into English with the title *One Part Woman* (2013). There are two sequels to this novel which are titled *Arthanaari* (2014) and *Aalavaayan* (2014). They are translated as *A Lonely Harvest* and *Trial by Silence*. His novel *Pookkuzhi* (2013) is translated into English as *Pyre* (2016). Translator V. Geetha has translated two of his novels. *Koolamadari* (2000) was translated into English as *Seasons in the Palm* in 2004. *Nizhal Muttram* is a 1993 novel translated into English as *Current Show* (2017). This article titled “Nature and Culture in Perumal Murugan’s *One Part Woman*” makes an ecocritical reading of the selected novel which provides the representation of the natural world. Added to it, it also finds that the cultural tradition and social practices are in relationship to nature.

In his book *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism and Ecocriticism*, Pramod K. Nayar describes ecocriticism as follows: “Ecocriticism is a critical mode that looks at the representation of nature and landscape in cultural texts, paying particular attention to attitudes towards ‘nature’ and the rhetoric employed when speaking about it” (242). In a country like India where people are fond of their rich cultural heritage, nature is nurtured and protected by religion. For example, in Hinduism, people worship the elements that are essential to human survival, such as the Sun, wind, land, trees, and plants. Likewise, our cultural ethos has emphasized respect and conservation of wildlife, including eagles, lions, peacocks and snakes. In this way, culture and nature are interlinked. In an article titled “Cultural Traditions of Nature Conservation in India,” the author S.M. Nair expresses his views on cultural practices in India as follows:

Living in harmony with Nature has been an integral part of Indian culture. This has been abundantly reflected in a variety of traditional practices, religious beliefs, rituals, folklore, arts and crafts, and in the daily lives of the Indian people from

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time immemorial.... Virtually all the countries of the world have rich traditions embedded in the ethics of protecting nature. Many ancient cultures tell us how communities lived in harmony with nature, with a tradition of reverence for the elements that constitute ecosystems, drawing their sustenance from natural resources and at the same time protecting the environment that sustains them. (Nair, S.M.)

In the same way, Perumal Murugan in his novel *One Part Woman* not only describes the story of the lead characters Kali and Ponnayi but also gives importance to the elements of nature such as mountains, forests, trees and animals making it worthy of an ecocritical interpretation. Kali and Ponnayi live in a place called Tiruchengode. Kali is a farmer who also has cattle to take care of. Though he earns well and takes care of his wife and mother, the one problem which makes the entire family suffer is his problem of childlessness. The happy life of the couple is described by the author as follows: “Other than the lack of a child they could call their own, there was nothing else missing in their lives. He fulfilled every wish of hers, perhaps because he had married her out of love” (28). When he is married to Ponnayi, he plants the portia tree in his father-in-law’s home in the front yard right after his marriage. The tree grows well in twelve years but in these twelve years, the couple is not blessed with a child. Thus, the portia tree acts as a symbol that reminds Kali and Ponnayi of their childlessness in their marital life. The act of Kali planting the portia tree in his father-in-law’s home is described as follows:

He had got this stalk from the portia tree in his cattle enclosure back home. No one knew when that other tree had been planted. The gigantic spread of that tree was etched in his mind, and he hoped this one too would grow the same way. He imagined how the front yard would look when the tree spread its branches over it. Even while planting it, he focused on the pleasure of being able to lie in its cool shade

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someday. No one objected to the new son-in-law's fancies. Even before the cow-dung bandage at the end of the stalk dried, shoots started sprouting. There was now an obligation to protect the tree that the son-in-law had planted. (2)

His mother-in-law begins washing dishes right under the tree because she is worried that she might forget to water the tree amid her tasks. She also keeps a large pot of water there so that when people return from somewhere, they wash their hands and feet in that place. The area under the tree is therefore constantly moist. And Kali makes it a point of noting the development of the tree whenever he visits there. Seeing Kali's actions, his father-in-law comments as follows: "Your son-in-law comes here only to make sure we're taking good care of his dowry!"(3). The tree has been called "the son-in-law's dowry." Twelve years flew by in an instant as the tree continued to grow and spread its branches in such a way that its shade could accommodate ten cots. The sight of the compost pits filling up with the tree's leaves made his father-in-law happy. The tree produced as much dung as a cow. Since the tree was useful in many ways, Ponnayi's parents considered it "a gift" from their son-in-law. When Kali does not visit his in-law's home, they have cut the branches of the tree which is described as follows:

In the past two years or so, when Kali did not visit, the arms of the tree stretched towards the sky. Only when a tree is small can you notice its growth. When it is bigger, it continues to grow, but imperceptibly. Kali, however, could always size up a tree. For instance, he could now see that they had trimmed a branch that had outgrown the yard and started reaching into the house. It looked like a deformed body part. They must have done it to get some sun to dry something. But he stood looking at the tree's wound for a while. (4)

Kali feels proud that the tree he has planted has grown well. He utters his words of happiness and pride to his wife Ponnayi which are as follows:

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“Did you see the tree?” he asked... “Yes, I see it every time I come here,” she said uninterestedly. “No, dear one. Look up. See how it has grown. You can’t even begin to count the flowers and the top-shaped fruits!” he said excitedly... Turning back to Kali, she said, “This was planted when we got married. Twelve years have gone by.” She sighed. A shadow fell on her face. She must have been thinking about how the tree had grown so lush and abundant in twelve years while not even a worm had crawled in her womb. Every wretched thing reminded her of that lack. (8)

Thus, the portia tree serves as a symbol that reminds them of their problem of childlessness. The next symbol that shows the plight of the couple is a cow. Ponnayi fights with her father after the wedding and takes a cow from her father’s place. It gives birth to seven or eight calves, filling Kali’s barn with the young ones it produced. Though she has taken the cow to her home with excitement and happiness, she would cry when she sees the cows gazing because it reminds her of the fact that she is childless. She once cries: “I don’t have the boon that even this mute creature has been blessed with.” Seeing Ponnayi crying, Kali became furious with the cow and its calves. He wanted to kill them all. But he would melt when he gets a glimpse of their faces and would think: “Poor things. What can they do about our suffering?.”

One of Kali’s cows is unable to give birth to a calf despite several attempts at mating. He intends to sell the cow to Gounder to get rid of it. While Kali is speaking to Gounder, Ponnayi is occupied with her work of cleaning the cow shed. She hears Gounder talking to Kali as follows: “It is fate, mapilliai. That is just how some cows are. No matter what you do, they never get pregnant. Just quietly change the cow. If you say yes, I can fetch you one right away”(10). He utters these words with a smile, but Ponna recognizes the meaning right away. Her heart feels as though it had been pressed against a massive rock. She wanted to slap him with a whip and drag him by the hair. Instead, she grabs the stick that is resting in the cowshed’s corner

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and strikes the animal in the legs and back. It frantically rushes around the shed trying to avoid this sudden attack. Fear filled its eyes. She utters the following words while she was thrashing the cow: “It has no sense of time and place. Shouldn’t it know I was picking up the dung? It keeps stepping on my foot. It’s come just to incur my wrath. Are you trying to get smart with me? I will cut off your tail, you wretched creature!”(11).

When these objects in nature such as the cow and portia tree remind them of their childlessness, there are other objects in nature on which the couple Kali and Ponnayi seek refuge and try to find solace. One such thing is a horoscope given by a parrot. Ponnayi would ask a parrot to read her card whenever she went to the market. She visits every astrologer in the vicinity who uses a parrot to pick cards. They all foresaw good news. There was never even one bad card picked.

Added to these symbols, the mountain also acts as a symbol that represents Kali’s attitude. As a little child, Kali had climbed the hill numerous times. Together with other boys, he had ambled around the area. But he does not know the temple at the altitude. Thus, when he visits the temple with his family, he was surprised to see the temple. They move around the temple as the ritual’s preparations get underway. Between the temple and the hill’s pinnacle, there are trees and prickly bushes in this small woodland. The description of the small forest on the top of the mountain is as follows:

The dense foliage reverberated with the furious chirping of a variety of birds. A long mountain rock formed a border around this little forest, lying like a giant serpent on guard. Kali was wonderstruck seeing such a forest at this altitude.

He and Muthu had played here as children. They would run up to the peak and touch the rock there. They’d leap around the slopes with the ease of wild goats and monkeys. But this forest had never before revealed itself as a separate entity

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to him. He had been one with it before. But as he grew older, he began seeing things as separate from himself. He now looked at the forest in great surprise.

Muthu must have felt the same way, for he said, “We have roamed inside this. But I have never seen it this way.”

They looked around for a path to enter the forest. Birds and animals had forged a warren of paths through the forest. En route to the rock at the peak, a narrow path branched off and led into this jungle. Muthu and Kali entered it in great delight. (31)

In that forest, they see a deity on the ground. Her body is covered in vermilion and rage is written all over her face. She does, however, have a small smile on her lips. He believes the defiance expressed in the smile, which reads “What can you do to me?.” She seems to be lying there with complete assurance that the entire area is hers. Her legs and arms are as large as tree trunks. Her face is round and her wide-open eyes meet him in a fixed gaze. In this incident, the author has portrayed the practice of considering nature as a mother by describing the earthen goddess. Right from a small age, Kali and Muthu have the habit of hanging out in the mountain. One of their spots is described as follows:

Moving like an iguana that clutches tight even the smallest of surfaces, Kali entered the opening in the rock. Only then did he realize that it was not just a hole but a big cave with a rocky floor and a sandplastered roof. Kovai creepers fell like a curtain, covering the entrance to the cave. Kali was amazed. Muthu had enough things stocked up there to throw a feast. Muthu started skinning the two white rats he had caught that day and brought hanging from a string on his waist....Together, they'd make a decent amount of meat. The cave had everything—a penknife, a stove made with

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small stones, an earthen pot, wood. There was even a little money stowed away. Muthu pounded some chillies and roasted the meat. How did he manage to get wood that burnt without smoke? Even if someone were drawing water from the well, they wouldn't know anyone was down here in the cave. Kali stretched his legs and lay down. The tasty meat went well with the arrack. The little bit of gravy at the bottom was incredibly delicious. Kali poured it into the curve of his palm and slurped it down. They both drank, ate and slept there undisturbed for several hours and emerged only in the evening. (40)

Kali and his relatives made it a practice to visit this forest once a year to perform a ritual, offer pongal and then dine. The author not only makes a description of mountains and landscapes in this novel, but he also concentrates on the cultural practices that connected culture and nature. Added to it, the author also describes the ecological problems faced by the farmers who live their life with the earnings from agriculture and cattle rearing. During one such incident, Kali is seen murmuring about the shortage of rainfall and water scarcity in their village which is described as follows:

Other than the house and the portia tree, there was mainly sunscorched dry land all around. It had been twenty days since the month of Vaigasi had begun, but the sky hadn't yet opened its eyes to shed tears of rain. The farmers were waiting for the rain so they could begin the first round of ploughing. But while the heat kept rising, not a single smudge of grey could be spotted in the sky. It sowed within them the fear that the rains might fail this year. There was no problem of fodder for the cattle. One granary of pulses and another of corn were still intact. Water scarcity might hit them, but whatever water was left in the well could be used sparingly—none for the coconut trees, only for the cattle. After all, it

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would have to rain at least by Aipasi or Karthigai. The god in Thattangadu had apparently prophesied this: “There will be less rain this year for sure!” Kali thought he should plan accordingly. (69)

Kali, added to being an adventurous fellow, becomes one with the land. Even a slight movement from them in the middle of the night would wake him. No matter where he is, the barnyard occupies his mind. He could only feel secure there. Just being present and interacting with the cattle is sufficient for him. Someone would show up at night to keep him company when he is alone in the fields. He consistently slept on the farm. He set his cot out in the open, even in the summer. The cot would be kept within the shed both during the monsoon season and the winter. He had built his own home in the village, complete with a porch, a large entrance, a courtyard, and a granary. He experiments with sleeping at home in the early stages of his marriage but he could not sleep inside at home which is described as follows:

But the darkness of the four walls and the thatched roof were not for him. He had to see the stars when he opened his eyes. The moon had to shine down on him. He needed to hear the occasional sounds from the cattle shed: a cow clearing its throat, a goat bleating sweetly. How could he lie around inside the house without any of these? So he made the barnyard his spot again...This was the land in which he was born and raised. This was where he had roamed about. There was no place here that he did not know...And he would end up not sleeping well at night. His was a chicken’s sleep. If something grated against the fence, the dog would bark and he would wake up. If the chicken started clucking, that was it, he could not sleep anymore. So was the case with the calf’s moo. (74-75)

While making the review of the novel *One Part Woman*, the reviewer Parul Sehgal in his *The New York Times* article titled “A

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Novel That Roiled India Is Now Translated Into English” comments on the ecocritical aspects present in the novel. He says:

If terror is bound up in customs, there are glories in the land. Murugan is the son of farmers; he grew up closely with his family’s animals, especially the goats. “I knew their birthing and growing rhythms as my own,” he has said. Trees in the book are described with patience and gravity, treated as characters in their own right. Kali roamed every inch of the forest as a boy — he feels one with it; only as an adult does he even realize it is a separate entity.

It’s not just the physical world Murugan describes so vividly — the way a cow clears its throat, for example — but the rural community, a village of 20 huts and a thousand ancient resentments. (Sehgal, Parul)

Ecocriticism views nature and human culture as intertwined rather than as two opposing sides of a dualistic construct, which is one of its key characteristics. Every human being learns through a variety of interactions with the natural world. Knowledge can be gained even from passive observation of nature. A person’s personality and way of thinking are influenced by the sea, sand, mountains, rivers, plants, animals, climate, temperature, and seasons. People are influenced by the environment and are motivated to live sustainably. Thus, Kali and Ponnayi find solace for their problem of childlessness in nature. Kali seeks refuge in the mountain whereas Ponnayi takes care of cows and goats. The researcher has made an ecocritical reading of *One Part Woman* which provides the representation of the natural world. Added to it, the researcher also traces that the cultural tradition and social practices are in relationship to nature.

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**An Ecocritical Reading of *Green Grass Running Water* and *Back of the Turtle***

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**Abstract**

The present time has seen the effect and impact of industrialization more acutely than before. Cultivation practices are constantly undergoing change and the allure of a modern day lifestyle has had implications on climate, natural resources and our ecosystem. Globalization and technological advancement has had a significant role in propagation of violence against nature. The approach of human beings towards their natural environment has experienced a trajectory of change. The west for a long time continued to see nature and civilization in opposition to each other. Nature, time and again was placed at a position secondary to civilization. This Anthropocentric approach eventually gave way to Reform Environmentalism and then further moved on to the concept of Deep Ecology.

The concepts of Environmental Racism and Justice originated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the discriminatory practice of establishing garbage dumps, landfills and other constructions on tactically selected locations came into light. The concern later came to be found worldwide but saw the light of the day through the efforts of Dr. Robert Bullard and Reverend Benjamin Chavis. This paper attempts to carry out an ecocritical reading of indigenous Canadian writer Thomas King's works *Green Grass Running Water* and *Back of the Turtle* within the frame of reference of concepts like environmental racism and justice and look into indigenous and non-indigenous perception of present day environmental concerns.

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**Keywords:** environmental racism, environmental justice, eco-criticism, indigenous, native

The present time has seen the effect and impact of industrialization more acutely than before. Cultivation practices are constantly undergoing change and the allure of a modern day lifestyle has had implications on climate, natural resources and our ecosystem. Globalization and technological advancement has had a significant role in propagation of violence against nature. The approach of human beings towards their natural environment has experienced a trajectory of change. The west for a long time continued to see nature and civilization in opposition to each other. Nature, time and again was placed at a position secondary to civilization.

The concepts of Environmental Racism and Justice originated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the discriminatory method of establishing garbage dumps, landfills and other constructions on tactically selected locations came into light. The concern later came to be found worldwide but was first brought to light through the efforts of Dr. Robert Bullard and Benjamin Chavis. This paper attempts to read indigenous Canadian writer Thomas King's works *Green Grass Running Water* and *Back of the Turtle* within the context of these concepts and looks into indigenous and non-indigenous perception of present day environmental concerns.

Globalization on one hand has made the world a smaller place; on the other it has left people all over the world wanting for more. Globalization, aided with industrialization and advancement in technology has more significantly and negatively affected the minority

community, especially those sections whose lifestyle was in tune with the natural ecosystem. These communities saw themselves suffer the implications of the greed of the majority community of society. A desire to achieve more, even at the cost of the natural environment led to "economic exploitation, racial oppression, devaluation of human life and the natural environment, and corporate greed" and became the chief source of damage faced by the native people of North

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America (R. D. Bullard 49). The act of discrimination, whether intended or unintended, carried out against a specific place on the basis of criteria like race among others, leading its populace and natural environment to endure on unfair terms was first brought to attention by Dr. Robert Bullard. Dr. Bullard had conducted a study at Houston to locate the sites on which “landfills, incinerators, garbage dumps, and waste sites” had been established. It was found that most of these sites were present where the population of blacks was proportionately larger (R. Bullard 237). In a place where blacks formed only a quarter of the total population, this was disconcerting. Later, it was noted that this discrimination was not limited to blacks but also included “poor people, disenfranchised people, and marginalized people” (R. Bullard 239). Both, *Back of the Turtle* and *Green Grass Running Water* are works of Thomas King which uses writing as a medium to bring to light these prevalent unfair practices and their repercussions as being faced by the environment as well as on the indigenous culture and tradition.

The Euro-Canadian perspective on land and that of the Natives is very different from each other. Land is seen by the non-Natives merely as an asset and the ways it can profit them is all that counts. The Alberta Tar Sands project in Canada is an example of one such venture which is destroying the natural environment and yet continuing to exist because it is profitable for the companies involved. A similar enterprise is seen in Thomas King’s *The Back of the Turtle*, being run by the company Dominion. The greenhouse gases being produced or how close the processing units of the company are to the river do not stop the project from continuing. While ducks and fishes were dying, the primary concern of Dorian Asher, the head of the company Dominion, remained his own interest. Stress fractures and seepages find mention in both *Green Grass Running Water* and *The Back of the Turtle*, but are deliberately neglected by the very people who are responsible for these projects.

Globalisation, which has revolutionised the world, also provides opportunities to organisations like Dominion to get away with crimes.

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Robert Bullard highlights that “Globalization makes it easier for transnational corporations and capital to flee to area with the least environment regulations, best tax incentives, cheapest labour and highest profit” (R. D. Bullard 50-51). In the novel *Back of the Turtle*, the people working for the company Domidion on the ship ‘Anguis’ belong to Taiwan. Anguis itself on papers belonged to Bolivia. The enterprise did not hesitate in dealing with “poor countries” and “desperate governments” who would have no qualms with the illegal practise of the company of discarding biohazardous waste till they were being paid for it (King, BT 19). The organization can clearly be seen abusing its monetary power for its own interest with no concern whatsoever as to how its procedures and actions were affecting the environment of these nations.

The construction of dams on indigenous land is another example of Environmental Racism as has been experienced by the indigenous community. The construction of dams, touted to be a move towards development, does not actually benefit the indigenous community. In the novel *Green Grass Running Water*, an article had showcased how as the dam would become functional, “the tribe would make in excess of two million dollars. White farmers and white business would profit too, the article conceded but the Indians would be the big winners” (King, GGRW 127). These are the kind of insubstantial assurances that the government provides so as to placate the native community. In the novel, it has led to the land in question acquiring a contested status, leading to a ban on fishing. Harley in the novel states, “when the river floods, it brings the cottonwoods” and “if the cottonwoods die, where are we going to get the Sun Dance tree?” (King, GGRW 415). The Parliament Lake area too has become contested with the judiciary banning fishing in the area. The Grand Baleen Dam is referred to as the “Grand Goose” and the “Golden Goose” by the Native community, as they are clearly aware that it is of no value to them. (King, GGRW 127). The conversation between Eli and Sifton Cliff in the novel clearly shows that the construction of the dam was carried out despite the fact that none of the recommended sites were Indian land. In the same manner, in the

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novel *The Back of the Turtle*, a plan of an oil pipeline and deep-water terminus was propositioned. The plan as predicted by the people consisted of nothing but lies.

The unscrupulous practices undertaken by the government and multinational corporations have resulted in the displacement of native people. Flooding, which has impacted native people more as compared to non-native people has had negative influence on their lives. An incident in Manitoba that occurred in the year 2011 led to many indigenous people being reduced to the status of ‘refugees’ in their own land. Writers have called it “environmentally and developmentally induced displacement” (Thompson et al 75). In the novel *Green Grass Running Water*, it is told that as soon as the The Grand Baleen Dam would start functioning, it would result in the flooding of the entire Reservation. Towards the end of the novel, when the dam does collapse, Eli’s childhood home which falls in its way is washed away and Eli who had refused to move loses his life. His childhood home was seen by the capitalists as merely getting “in the way of progress” (King GGRW 122).

Growth and development, generally equated with progress and seen as parameters of a better life, when gone unchecked can become the architects of a disaster. In the novel *Back of the Turtle*, the accident involving the use of the defoliant GreenSweep in an exceedingly incorrect proportion results in deaths, destruction to the natural environment and displacement. People residing in the Smoke River Reserve were forced to leave their homes behind in order to stay alive.

Globalization, combined with technological advancement has only increased the speed in which natural resources are facing exhaustion. Indigenous people face a bigger risk of health challenges from living in areas that find themselves in close vicinity of toxic facilities and sites. Thomas King in his works brings together these issues and showcases how health and culture of the indigenous community are both being sacrificed in the name of development.

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