

# ***CONTOURS OF ECOFICTION: CANON AND BEYOND***

(Thesis submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English)

By

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### **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis titled *Contours of Ecofiction: Canon and Beyond* is the bonafide record of research work done by Imwapangla Imsong, Regn. No. 815/2018 (w.e.f. 10/08/2016), Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2016-2020. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title and that the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the scholar under my supervision. This is again certified that the research has been undertaken as per UGC Regulations May 2016 (amended) and the scholar has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinances for submission of the thesis. Plagiarism test of the thesis has been conducted and 4% of similarity has been detected which is permissible under the UGC regulations 2018.

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## DECLARATION

I, Imwapangla Imsong, hereby declare that the thesis entitled *Contours of Ecofiction: Canon and Beyond* is a record of bonafide research done by me under the supervision of Prof. Nigamananda Das, in the Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus during the period of 2016-2020 and that the content of the thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis or any part of it, has not been submitted by me for any other research degree, fellowship, associateship, etc., in any other university or institute. This is being submitted to the Nagaland University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Page No.</b>
CHAPTER I: Introduction	1-43
CHAPTER II: Ecomysticism, Wilderness and Pastoral in European Ecofiction	44-66
CHAPTER III: Ecofeminism and Ecoethics in American Ecofiction	67-116
CHAPTER IV: Creation Spirituality in Australian Ecofiction	117-143
CHAPTER V: Ecosocialism, Ecopsychology, Environmental Aesthetics and Eco- spirituality in Asian Ecofiction	144-187
CHAPTER VI: Conclusion	188-194
Bibliography	

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

“Man is a biological entity before he is a Roman Catholic or a capitalist or anything else...The first step to understanding man is to consider him as a biological entity which has existed on this globe, affecting, and in turn affected by, his fellow organisms, for many thousands of years”

-Alfred W.Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange* (1972)

Twentieth century was marred by a rise in large scale human activities which had dire effects on the environment. This dawning of global ecological degradation sounded a clarion call for man's response to the ailing earth and called forth for remedial measures. Environmental movements laid down the foundation for a renewed interest towards environmental studies in literature as well. In order to address the intensifying issue, literature had to redefine its contours and converge thematically with the ecological crisis at hand. As such, “In the mid-eighties, as scholars began to undertake collaborative projects, the field of environmental literary studies was planted, and in the early nineties it grew” (Glotfelty xvii). Various platforms of writing from short essays, book reviews, to academic discourses started expanding the appetite of the readers by ushering in a more comprehensive literature that now addressed environmental concern, as well as, an ecological awareness. Educational institutions gradually adopted Environmental studies into their curriculum to channelize learning from grass root level. The literary arena also witnessed the proceeding of several conferences and meetings on nature as an exclusive issue. During the 1992 Western Literature Association annual meeting, ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) was formed. The ASLE's mission statement was “to promote the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world. “It also envisioned for channelizing a “new nature writing, traditional innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature, and interdisciplinary environmental research” (Glotfelty xviii).

The literature that proliferated from this environmentally challenging period came to be termed as Eco literature or environmental literature. In literary criticism, Ecocriticism emerged as a critical body. It explores environmental problems by also delving deeper into man-nature relationship tension. The root cause of environmental problem is Anthropocentrism which has caused disharmony in nature, domination and demystification of nature. Awareness coupled by consciousness and action becomes a necessity. As Timothy Clark also stated, “Environmental issues pose new questions to inherited modes of thought and argument. To try to conceptualize and engage the multiple factors behind the accelerating degradation of the planet is to reach for tools that that must be remade even in the process of use” (xiii).

In the literary field, the framework of eco-literature which is a fruitful combination of the subject of the science of ecology and literature explores the relationship between human and nonhuman nature and how human’s attitude towards nonhuman nature is articulated in literary texts. Ecocritics mainly focus on the representation of nature, author’s ecological perspective and analyze the environmental messages embedded in the texts (Mahato 3-4).

Over the course of time, literature has been taking constructive leaps and strides in molding the conscience and conditioning the mind of readers and scholars through the various fields of inquiry, thus expanding the ghetto of literature and evolving towards an interdisciplinary and practical approach.

This thesis *Contours of Ecofiction: Canon and Beyond* has studied select authors from four continents: Europe, America, Australia and Asia using a corpus of ecocritical approaches. The novels are spread across two timelines- twentieth century to contemporary literary works, but situated within the environmental crisis radar and those that have encapsulated environmental concerns. The purpose of this work is to study literature from an ecocritical perspective and analyze the chosen texts to elucidate on the significance of Ecoliterature, power of narratives in reshaping the mindsets and to study the transition of nature representation within a text. This thesis also traces the changing concerns in literature coinciding with environmental awareness and movements. The critical appreciation of varied literary works is also done in order to relook at the old Western view, a dualistic divisive philosophy in contrast with other ecocentric philosophies. An array of authors from different cultural backgrounds are curated to analyze the

universality of oppression, domination and the pathologies of this world deep seated in human nature, that translates into man-nature relationship, which then justifies the domination and destruction of nature, and to further analyze the ecological dilemma presented in the literary text. A major concern of this thesis is to study and establish a concrete understanding of the symbiosis of man-nature relationship and suggest measures in restoring the imbalance by approaching matters from an ethical viewpoint through the medium of the written word.

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter I “Introduction” studies the context of Ecocriticism and Ecoliterature in detail and introduces the theoretical base of the thesis. Chapter II “Ecomysticism, Wilderness and Pastoral in European Ecofiction” analyzes Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Nostromo* (1904) written at the backdrop of British colonialism where nature is commodified and projected as a wild entity that needs to be tamed. The theoretical approach used here is Anthropocentrism and Deep Ecology. Chapter III “Ecofeminism and Ecoethics in American Ecofiction” explore Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982) and *The Temple of My Own Familiar* (1989), and Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), and *The Sun also Rises* (1926). Environmental Ethic forms the bedrock of this chapter along with Ecofeminism wherein the intrinsic value of nature is explored. Chapter IV “Creation Spirituality in Australian Ecofiction” studies Patrick White’s novels *The Tree of Man* (1955) and *Voss* (1957). White redefines the Australian imagination in his work and the celebration of the Australian natural environment. Chapter V “Ecosocialism, Ecopsychology, Environmental Aesthetics and Eco-spirituality in Asian Ecofiction” will study two different worlds: of the modern and the traditional. As Dwyer mentioned, “a contrast traditional and industrial cosmologies, or in which nature or the land has a prominent role” (2) Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian* (2007) and *Human Acts* (2017) are studied using Spiritual Ecology theory to shed light on the cruelty of human nature and study how it impacts nature and abuses life forms around us. The novel also portrays man’s innate nature that gravitates to stay connected with nature. Easterine Kire’s *A Naga Village Remembered* (2003) and *When the River Sleeps* (2015) observe the Naga world of spiritual unison and symphony. She brings to the readers stories of the mystical past and the lifestyle of the Nagas who live in harmonious conformity and reverence of the spirits and nature. Chapter VI will embody the concluding remarks and observation.



## 1.1 Ecocriticism

The run up through the late 1980's and 1990's witnessed a shift towards industrialization while modernity had gained worldwide acclamation. A new trend began to emerge with *Ecocriticism*, revisiting and reanalyzing old texts and literature that would shape the present day corpus of literature. The "Ecocritical readings of canonical texts, then, begin by adding a different perspective, and are not limited to works self-evidently about nature" (Barry 250).

Ecocriticism is defined by Cheryll Glotfelty as,

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

The term Ecocriticism first made an appearance in William Reuckert's 1978 essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", but it was only in the early part of 1990 that Ecocriticism became a popular legitimate movement. Ecocriticism was distinctly American in its roots emergent during the late 1980's. The tenets of Ecocriticism were purveyed through works such as *Nature* (1936) and *Walden* (1854), with American Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Margaret Fuller at the fore. They aimed to highlight nature and its role in their personal life, insisting on the human need for nature, environment and American wilderness. According to British Ecocritic Richard Kerridge,

Ecocriticism is literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist viewpoint. Texts are evaluated in terms of their environmentally harmful or helpful effects. Beliefs and ideologies are assessed for their environmental implications. Ecocritics analyze the history of conceptions such as 'nature', in an attempt to understand the cultural developments that have led to the present global ecological crisis. Direct representations of environmental damage or political struggle are of obvious interest to Ecocritics, but so is the whole array of cultural and daily life, for what it reveals about implicit attitudes that have environmental consequences (530).

With the rise of its American counterpart, the British versions of Ecocriticism, influenced by the former, emerged and flourished in the early 1990's, known as the *Green Studies* or ASLE (Association for the study of Literature and Environment). Great Britain drew prestige from its legacy of Romantic ecology, with the opulence of landscape writings of such Romantic poets as Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge and John Keats progressing well into John Ruskin who was an admirer of Wordsworth. Inspiration came from the first generation of British Romantic poets who then embarked on an Ecological Campaign, speaking for the glorification of the physical environment and natural elements while focusing on the early Romantic notion of a symbiotic (dialogic) relationship between the mind and nature, of human and non-human actors. In the *Preface of Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth outlines this kind of relationship. Coupe observes his subtle understanding "of the relationship between human 'pleasure', poetic 'purpose' and the 'primary laws' sustaining both human and non-human nature" (13). This led the Romantic Poets to devote themselves to the aesthetics of nature, pastoralism and the English rural life; flora and fauna, which were prominently embossed as literary animals and plants. Elements of nature such as the green fields, silent deer, brooks and rivers, chanting bird, forest and mountain, were integral parts of Romantic poetry as well as American Transcendentalism and were perceived through their relationship with human beings. Literary motifs of flora and fauna were regarded as exerting supernatural powers by occupying the poet's eco-consciousness, as a source for inspiration, providing a certain sense of psychological and spiritual comfort in a cheerless human culture of despondency.

A new ecocritical paradigm emerged which no longer took nature at face value but rather viewed nature as a life force. This paved the way for scrutiny and debunking of the preceding reductionist views on nature.

For the ecocritic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironised as a concept by enclosure within knowing inverted commas, but actually present as an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it (Barry 243).

Nature was no longer seen as a dark nemesis of humanity or a source of passion, but as the very essence of life itself. It was not segregated as a constituent concern of ecology alongside other environmental issues like deforestation, the ozone layer, green house effect, and so on.

Another development was the reassessment of the Cartesian Cogito. To quote from Encyclopedia Britannica, “*I think, therefore I am* dictum coined by René Descartes in his Discourse on Method (1637)” (n.pag) had been a leading factor in promoting dualism and isolating man from his counterparts. Man was encouraged to embrace his faculty of reason and to dissociate from any empathetic feelings toward living beings that did not possess the same. This eventually reduced the status of animals. Ecocriticism provided the platform to doubt this perspective, and it also resulted in various academic rebuttals.

Decades of culturalism which had perpetuated the notion of nature as cultural-linguist construct being subservient to man have been redressed through Ecocriticism, where man was not thought of as the de facto protagonist in nature, but rather both existing in harmony. From the advent of Ecocriticism, humans are no longer isolated creatures in nature but rather an interdependent member, aligned and mutually consecutive. The hierarchy that existed between culture and nature that privileged culture at the expense of the latter was challenged. The binary opposition was opposed because it obliterated equilibrium. The ethical slant of Ecocriticism lay within the interaction, that is, man’s demeanor towards nature. So then, nature, without the isolation of man, inclusive, nature in its fullest, truest sense, models itself into an all encompassing sense of literature with which to scale further works of literary virtue.

#### 1.1.1 Symbiosis of man-nature

The first step of ecocritical approach lies in understanding the symbiosis between man and nature. Man and nature are intrinsically interconnected for according to Barry Commoner, the first law of ecology is that “Everything is connected to everything else” (33-45). Humans thrive in a balanced system sustained by an interactive and interdependent relationship. With advancements in science and technology, there could be the probability of an alternate planet in the future. As of today, with an increasing world population of 7.8 billion, Earth is our only home in the entire galaxy. “What makes earth unique is the presence of life” (Baarschers 9). But the paradox of modern society is that mankind is standing at the threshold of an impending environmental apocalypse. Natural calamities, climate change and pollution have become synonymous with twenty first century. As human activities continue to inflict pain upon the earth, the last two decades has experienced unprecedented augmentation of calamities resulting in long term damage on man and nature. The impacts of

natural calamities are life threatening, to cite a few: loss of habitat and homes, injuries, spread of diseases, threats to health and mental well being, famines and droughts. Alongside the calamitous tremors brought upon by man-made activities, a pressing concern also lies with energy depletion. Global Footprint Network conceived a concept called “Earth Overshoot Day” which is supposed to be the day when the renewable resources would get exhausted for that particular year. The problem is that, the overshoot day is reaching its mark earlier by the years. In 1987, it was on December 19<sup>th</sup> and in 2019, it was recorded on July 29<sup>th</sup>. Environmental groans resulting from exploitation and imbalance is profound. This calls for serious human retraction from their anti-ecological actions and individualistic life styles. The choice is upon mankind; if man has the power to destroy, then the decision to stop- if not rebuild, is also within him.

For a long time in history, scientists were unaccepting of the innate symbiosis in nature. James Lovelock proposed an alternate view to the existing theories called the “Gaia Hypothesis” in his book *The Ages of Gaia* (first published in 1988) analyzing as to why earth is the only planet that can sustain lives. “He extended Darwin’s theory of evolution of the species and that of their physical environment are interdependent” (Baarschers 10). During one of his radio interviews by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1985, he spoke about how “Nature as a whole therefore appears as a single living organism, able to coordinate the activities of its constituent processes and in doing so, it displays what we can only call intelligence” (Baarschers 11). He accounts how Lovelock’s theory of “global links” especially the “idea of earth as a sentient, even intelligent, organism was too hard to swallow for much of the scientific community” (11).

Environmental movement in the 1970’s somehow coincided with this study. In 1866, another Biologist Ernst Haeckel coined the term ecology. Kerridge expounds Ecology as the “scientific study of natural interdependencies: of life forms as they relate to each other and their shared environment” (535). Ecology is derived from Greek word *oikos* which means home or house. It “implied a family of living organisms, each dwelling in close proximity to each other, sharing the same physical space, with conflicting appetites or complementary” (Arnold 2). In the year 1962, biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* which led to the revival of ecology and became the impetus of Environmental movement post World War II. This book addressed the adverse effects of chemical industry in the form of pesticides.

Having analyzed the developments of scientific discourses, it is established that Nature is an organic whole. In the preface to *Cosmos*, Alexander Von Humboldt noted that “We are naturally led to consider each organism as part of the entire creation, and to recognize in the plant or the animal, not merely an isolated species, but a form linked to other forms either living or extinct” (Freeman 33). As such, everything in nature is fashioned in a certain way to fit into a perfect wholeness and therefore, in unity and not in isolation. Although Greek Philosopher Plato propounded the theory of Organic Unity with regard to literature, it can also be pertinent in understanding the symbiosis in nature, as the analogy he has drawn upon is also on nature. In Plato’s work *Phaedrus*, while Socrates explained to Phaedrus about the different parts of a speech and how it gets internally organized, he referred to the similarity of wholeness in the bodies of all ‘living creatures’. To quote the dialogue:

Well, there is one point at least which I think you will admit, namely that any discourse ought to be constructed like a living creature, with its own body, as it were; it must not lack either head or feet; it must have a middle and extremities so composed as to suit each other and the whole work (Plato 510).

Later, Aristotle in his *Poetics* further developed the concept of organic unity. He explained Organic unity as,

a complete whole, with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole. For that which makes no perceptible difference by its presence or absence is no real part of the whole (8).

Organic Unity established nature as a harmonious, unified and organic whole. It can also be rallied in understanding the significance of each component and life in nature. Everything in nature operates in a spherical cycle, or what can be called the Circle of life. *Collin’s Dictionary* defines Circle of Life as “Nature’s way of taking and giving back life to earth. It symbolizes the universe being sacred and divine. It represents the infinite nature of energy, meaning if something dies, it gives new life to another” (n.pag). This is benevolent nature functioning with each step as purposeful as the other, and as contributive to the cycle as the rest.

Nature is Mother Earth in her natural essence. It is composite of the physical world including air, water, land, water, plants and animals. Nature is the mechanism that keeps the house running. It is an accommodative space where humans, animals, birds, fishes, microorganisms live in constant interaction with each other sharing the comfort of the house in the form of land, water and air. In the larger integrated Ecosystem, man and nature are part of an interconnected community. Truly as John Muir stated, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe” (110). Indeed we are all kin, a part of a big family. Man is not separate from nature. We partake in interaction and hold the onus towards managing and protecting our environment. Jagdish Singh reiterated this point in his essay “Environmental Management: A Framework”. He wrote, “the geographical environment...is a vast interacting system comprising of several sub-systems in a hierarchal order. Man, with his socio-cultural system is an integral part of this system” (Singh 41). Therefore, it all resonates how humans have a high commission to realize, given the fact that each form on earth is solely not living for itself, but in birth, life and death exudes a greater symbolic act of union.

#### 1.1.2 Engendering an ecological sensibility

Ecocriticism reawakens an ecoconsciousness through recognition of the interconnection, whereby, a certain reassessment and reshaping is orchestrated. This is how the whole ethical accountability arises. Earth is mankind’s only home, but it is not exclusive to humans that men should dominate and control. In doing so, we deprive and exploit the other counterparts and as members of an interwoven community, man do not escape either; human lives are also reversely affected. Earth is home to trillions of organisms, including animals and plants. Owing to heedless anthropocentric activities, many animal species and plants have gone extinct and are also on the verge of extinction. The constitution of nature is balanced; it is humans who wreck the environment greatly. As inmates of the same planet, it is the right and moral responsibility of humans to be concerned about the environment and strategize actions towards the welfare of community as a whole. Man must be accountable. Chantal van Ham’s article *In the Spirit of Nature, Everything is Connected* strongly advocates to take the matter into our hands, challenges for “a new economy that is sustainable and respects the limits of natural resources and the functions of ecosystems, is

fundamental” (n.pag). An assessment of the status quo of man-nature relationship shows discord and negative behavior patterns from humans.

The root cause of this global ecological crisis is excessive anthropocentric intrusion. It is not a resultant of natural imbalance, and definitely not an armageddon heralded against mankind. Therefore, there is a strong need to identify and reassess the ethical systems and reform them accordingly. One of the biggest threats today is the alarming loss of biodiversity. Biologist R Alexander Pyron in his article “Perspective” published by *The Washington Post* with the headline “We don’t need to save endangered species” made a controversial argument by advocating the cause of men altering our environment to meet our ends. He wrote,

Extinction is the engine of evolution, the mechanism by which natural selection prunes the poorly adapted and allows the hardiest to flourish. Species constantly go extinct, and every species that is alive today will one day follow suit. There is no such thing as an “endangered species” except for all species. The only reason we should conserve biodiversity is for ourselves, to create a stable future for human beings... the inevitability of death is the only constant in life, and 99.9 percent of all species that have ever lived, as many as 50 billion, have already gone extinct...Extinction of individual species, entire lineages and even complete ecosystems are common occurrences in the history of life...Invasion and extinction are the regenerative and rejuvenating mechanisms of evolution, the engines of biodiversity (n.pag).

The very premise of Pyron’s argument is shallow and vested on human interest devaluing the animal community. In actuality, if the total biomass on earth be weighed, humans make up only 0.01% yet our ecological footprint is deep seated. Therefore, to balance out everything in favour of humans is unfair and ecologically unsound. Despite of humans, ecosystems are sustained by some keystone species. At all cost they must be saved to maintain the ecosystems. Biodiversity is not for aesthetics alone. It contributes towards the productivity of ecosystems as each entity lives in competition and interaction with one another, and each has a carved niche. Adam Hart pointed out how commercial harvesting of fishes has led to a decline in the population of larger fishes. Human choice of fishing the larger fishes disrupts the balance and the genes of smaller fishes populate the water. He notes that fishes are “evolving to become sexually

mature at a younger age. This is because those fish that have genes causing later maturity are likely to be harvested before they have the chance to breed, removing those genes from the population” (n.pag).

Natural selection is part of evolution where the universal law of nature “Survival of the fittest” prevails. Extinction forced by anthropocentric activities is not the evolution Charles Darwin expounded in his book *Origin of Species* in 1859. Evolution as quoted from Ker Than’s article analysis of Darwin’s Theory:

is the process by which organisms change over time as a result of changes in heritable physical or behavior traits. Changes that allow an organism to better adapt to its environment will help it survive and have more offspring (n.pag).

Carl Safina, therefore, clearly counters in her article “In Defense of Biodiversity: Why Protecting Species from Extinction Matters” that, “New species do not suddenly “arise”, nor are they really new. They evolve from existing species, as population gene pools change” (n.pag).

Humanity would pay a heavy price if evolution is pushed. It would lead to the loss of biodiversity as humans are directly dependent on them. COVID-19, the Global Pandemic which broke out in Wuhan, China towards the end of 2019 is taking the world by storm. Since it is a contagious virus with no medical cure as of now, a large part of the world population is under lockdown. While humans are under home quarantine, many places across the world are reporting sighting of animals, birds and sea animals like never before. This phenomenon in itself is a great reminder and has channelized a couple of realizations: that man had encroached upon their habitats in the first place; that man cannot live without nature, but nature is better off without humans. What Alan Weisman imagined in his book *The World Without us*, this pandemic has unfurled a partial glimpse of nature restoring herself. Masanobu Fukuoka in his book *Sowing Seeds in the Desert* also promoted this view of how the grasses, trees and songbirds will continue to live on even without humans having to do anything for them.

### 1.1.3 Anthropocentrism to biocentrism

Ecocriticism shepherds man toward a biocentric pen, and takes a diversion from the anthropocentric path. “Anthropocentrism is the placing of humanity at the centre of



everything, so that other forms of life will be regarded only as resources to be consumed by human beings” (Kerridge 537). Anthropocentrism has only disturbed the equilibrium on earth. Ecocriticism provides an alternate path where man as the center point is withdrawn, and a more ecocentric approach is suggested.

Anthropocentrism is the philosophical perspective asserting that ethical principles apply to humans only, and that human needs and interest are of highest, and even exclusive, value and importance. Thus, concern for nonhuman entities is limited to those entities having value to humans (Botzler 309).

Anthropocentrism is not a product of modern society alone. It may be traced by relooking at the historical context of man and his changing relationship with nature. Nature has been inextricable from men since primordial times. Subbarao notes that “Prehistoric man already had empirical knowledge of ecological requirements in the quest for food and shelter” (133). Likewise, nature was exalted and revered by men who lived in close proximity with Nature. It has been a source of existence and epitome of power. Nature formed an intricate part of men’s sustenance and life. However, man’s affinity and perception of nature has altered over time. Man’s relationship with nature initially started off as gatherers. During this stage, humans survived through hunting and gathering activities in small scale. The gatherers lived in groups; they were egalitarian because their roles were specific and the idea of private property was distant. In this set up no one could dominate the other, it was more about mutual dependency. While women concentrated on nurturing and gathering plants and small animals, men primarily hunted. Subbarao observed that,

In the gathering mode, societies depend almost exclusively on human muscle power and wood fuel as sources of energy, and on naturally available plants, animals and stones to fulfill their material requirements. Their knowledge base is fairly limited, and nature is viewed as almost totally capricious, as something not subject to human control. The ability to store food and other materials is also very limited, as is the ability to transport materials over long distances (38).

This stage did not demand much of nature’s resources and therefore, nature was not pressured and stable. There was mutual respect and the human population was also sparse. The symbiosis between man and nature is of mutual respect.

Gatherers typically regard humans as merely part of a community of beings that includes other living creatures, as well as elements of the landscape such as streams and rocks. Especially where gatherers are attached to particular localities, as in productive and stable environments...they attribute sacred qualities to individual trees, ponds or mountain peaks, or to all members of a plant or animal species...They often treat plants, animals or elements of the landscape as kin, or as being in relationships of either mutualism or antagonism... Gatherers therefore enter into a whole range of positive relationships with these other 'beings' of their own locality (Subbarao 41).

The ecological footprint of this phase is very less with a low population density and anthropocentric activities being least unsustainable. The equilibrium is maintained. As Baarschers substantiates in his statement:

even the hunters and gatherers could harm the environment. Prehistoric hunters set large fires as part of their hunting strategies, and caused substantial changes in vegetation as early as 11,000 years ago...However, the population of the world was small. Environmental degradation remained insignificant in a global sense (16).

Pastoralism soon superseded the Hunting- Gathering phase. Man started reshaping their lifestyle. As time passed, it is believed that climatic changes resulting in vegetational alterations led to the practice of agriculture and domestication of animals in order to increase their resources.

By surviving successfully in harsh and variable environments, and with little attachment to any particular locality, nomadic pastorals were perhaps the first societies to perceive human communities as separate from nature, and therefore in a position to dominate it (Subbarao 49).

The great Mongolian empire has its genesis of emerging from pastoral nomadism. History accounts how Chengkiz Khan, the founder of the Mongol Empire usurped huge regions of Asia and Europe. Nomadic Pastoralism encouraged a negative attitude towards nature because the nomads were extorting from people who they had no kin with and nature was theirs to

acquire. Many lands belonging to settlers were passed into the hands of nomads through conquest. In addition,

ideologies which rejected the attribution of sacred value to living creatures or to natural objects, e.g. religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, arose in tracts that were dominated by nomadic pastorals in the Middle East...They have also contributed to ecological degradation through the organization of trade and the diffusion of technology over large distances and perhaps most importantly by disseminating the belief in man's mastery over nature" (Subbarao 49-50).

Pastoral nomadism impacts cropped up in the form of gradual overgrazing and expansion of arid regions at their margins.

On a parallel plane, alongside the pastoral nomads, as mentioned earlier, settled cultivators began to develop. Agricultural peasants modified the land. Cultivation demanded for intense production and therefore, some alterations had to be made which affected the fertility of the soil and balance. By this stage, man had established a certain control over nature but without the impediment of natural calamities like floods, droughts, frost etc. The ecological impact factor increased. Many natural lands were converted into cultivable landforms.

Cultivation also imposes increasing demands on natural vegetation...the discovery of iron, which in many areas led to the colonization of the forest...The cumulative impact of these interventions is a striking change in the landscape, which very likely becomes heterogeneous...it could also result in the local extinction of some species of plants and animals (Subbarao 57).

With the zeal of conquerors, man marched into industrial mode leading to a drastic inflation of the impact factor on environment. Industrial Revolution dawned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and changed the course of man- nature relationship. Large scale extraction of resources like mining and resource harnessing took place. Industrial societies intensified the consumption of resources resulting in an energy crisis. The entry of Industrial Revolution made a permanent imprint on man's understanding of nature that strayed man away from an ecologically conducive behavior pattern.

Environmental equilibrium from this stage began experiencing increased interference from man in the form of deforestation, leading to major landslides and loss of wilderness. With the turn of a new century, World Wars I and II released massive chemical pollution. Effects of the anthropocentric pollution deepened and the end result came in the form of acid rain and what the millennial generation are well acquainted with- Global Warming. This was a great epiphany to modern society- the knowledge that pollution in a certain area does not affect that particular area alone. The equation of being a knitted community started to dawn. Humans are facing more than what they can handle. Earth, that was once replete with resources, is at a crisis. The concept of pristine earth is no more; it is being mined, manipulated and exploited. As a result, today, mankind is surrounded by unprecedented catastrophes all over the world. Climate change is another modern dilemma alongside ozone layer depletion, pollution, toxic waste, loss of biodiversity etc. When the environment is harmed, nature does not get wounded alone. Millions of lives have been lost to natural disasters. Health hazards and threats have been on the rise as Baudot remarked, “History is littered with the remains of societies that have succumbed to various diseases” (288). There has been a huge shift in the basic paradigm of man-nature relationship, man as he wanted seemed to have gained dominance over nature but at a heavy price he has to pay with his life.

The scales of earth at this juncture are lopsided, and the most efficient way to balance it is by withdrawing the centripetal factor- that which positions man as the privileged dominator. Paul W. Taylor lays down alternate path he termed as ‘Biocentric Outlook’ in his article “Respect for Nature”. Taylor mentions four reformatory core views which are as follows:

- 1) The belief that humans are members of the Earth’s community of Life in the same sense and on the same terms in which other living things are members of that Community.
- 2) The belief that the human species, along with all other species, are integral elements in a system of interdependence such that the survival of each living thing, as well as its chances of fairing well or poorly, is determined not only by the physical conditions of its environment but also by its relation to other living things.

- 3) The belief that all organisms are teleological centers of life in the sense that each is a unique individual pursuing its own good in its own way.
- 4) The belief that humans are not inherently superior to other living things. (Taylor 366-367).

This biocentric approach transpires a relationship of domination to a relationship of respect, care and stewardship. At the end of the day, the actions of the inmates of the house contribute to either destroy or maintain the balance in the house. Human actions are disfiguring nature and even changing her aesthetic aspects and altering her whole being. This is why all the actions of humans have significant impact on nature. The fault in man's attitude has been the general perception that he is superior to nature and the world is his to conquer. The reasons are manifold. The root cause is yet seen in an absence of a sense of belonging. This is used as a stimulant to coagulate the sentiments of people towards their nations by developing a sense of attachment. As significant as it is in nation building, so also is it in building the natural home, Mother Earth. For, it has not just been human ignorance in the past, but a feeling of disconnection that surfaced discord and antagonism in men against nature. The journey of man away from nature has been long and tumultuous what did begin as a relationship of reverence degenerated to a vicious cycle of domination and exploitation.

## 1.2 The tide of Western thought and ecological implications

The rift in man-nature relationship has less been guided by natural forces. The choice was always within man's capability. There must have been certain thought processes or ideologies which led to a consistent shift from an amicable relationship of respect to one of destructive domination. These silent aspects as confirmed from many studies are the malignant determinants towards a transposition from harmonious living which has its origin in western thinking. The major fallout of nature historically resulted in demystification of nature. It was a slow but penetrative process spread across time which simultaneously inverted the mystic status of nature. It can be traced from the Greco-Roman ideology to the advent of Christianity. Most ancient societies as in the phase of gatherers were attached to their environments and a sense of reverence prevailed. Nature was a mystic. The most common form of belief during this phase was Animism. Everything was attuned because animistic beliefs honour nature as a sacred entity and laden with spirits and souls, therefore,

rejecting acts of abuse against nature. This thought process could have been the force behind ecological balance given of course the low population density. John Black compiles the following as western world view points that governs the general perception:

- 1) A conviction that man's role on earth is to exploit the rest of nature to his own advantage.
- 2) An expectation of continuing population expansion,
- 3) A belief in progress and history, with an underlying linear concept of time,
- 4) A concern for posterity (21-22).

J. Donald Hughes in his work *The Ancient Roots of our Ecological Crisis* points out that the earliest form of indifference and exclusionist attitude was harbored right from the Greek period. According to Hughes, the Greeks made a departure from animism "rejecting traditional mythological and religious explanations of the natural world, they insisted on the ability of the human mind to discover the truth about nature through the use of reason" (158). He continues by saying that western society was influenced by Protagoras dictum, "Man is the measure of all things" (158), which propagated that the utility of each entity in nature be measured by its purposefulness towards mankind. In the Roman period, the same ideology was passed on. "The Romans treated the natural environment as if it were one of their conquered provinces" (Hughes 158). Thus, nature was devalued as it lost its mystic status to an object defined by its usefulness to man and an accessible land man could conquer and make economic gains from this trend was largely popularized and the amount of empires and annexations that were made is well known. This perspective which accords value and importance making humans exclusive is what Donald Hughes calls Anthropocentrism or the anthropocentric view. The moment man began to see the worth of nature from his utility point of view, a domineering human clique gets formed which immediately segregates nature as the other.

The advent of Christianity was another factor that contributed in deconstructing sacredness from nature. Many indigenous communities lost their touch with nature with the onset of Christianity resulting in a distancing and loss of empirical knowledge about nature. Lynn White believed that human actions are dictated by how one sees themselves with relation to the things around them. It is conditioned by factors like religion. In his critique, he

branded Christianity as “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” (1205). “Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia’s religions...not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends” (White 1205). Christianity as a monotheistic religion with a male God is also criticized for encouraging the rise of patriarchy and gender domination. It also led to the creation of hierarchy in society and between man-nature. The book of Genesis chapter 1 verse 26 in the Holy Bible reads:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and then let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground (3).

This verse has been a misleading verse for many and as Lynn White argued, one cannot deny what has come to pass with how some people chose to interpret the verse. In modern ecological context, Christianity is from where concepts of ecological stewardship, creation spirituality and ethics, moral accountability have emerged.

These western views about the environment are dedicated towards creating dichotomy between nature and human. Western thought have always been determined to unravel the natural forces, overpower them and extract resources. It was a quest man was proud to pursue. Yaier Heber points out that “During the Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution, ideas of human domination and utilization of nature were re-proliferated into mainstream thought” (n.pag). Perhaps not the whole school of enlightenment thinkers but the reductionist thinkers definitely bore the bone of contention and moved in the direction of Greek application of rationality to assess the man nature matrix. Alexander Blum in his article “How the Enlightenment Separated Humanity From Nature/ We need a new way to understand our relationship to the physical world”, elaborates how Enlightenment has its own shadows. Blum attributes Descartes enunciated dualism in nature. According to Blum,

The empire of reason can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the dualism of Rene Descartes”/ Bacon, gave this separation a deeper element of sinister power-fantasy. If humankind was distinct from the natural world, then we could infact treat it as our servant, our slave” (n.pag).

Descartes and Bacon upheld that the elevated status of man is owing to the presence of rationality and the capacity to apply it. For in the words of Descartes, “to be possessed with good mental power is not sufficient; the principal matter is to apply them well” (Descartes 24). Similarly Bacon also wrote, “ a way must be opened for the human understanding entirely different from a hitherto known, and other helps provided, in order that the mind may exercise over the nature of things the authority which properly belongs to it” (Bacon 1). Heber points out that the roots of European colonialism also germinated from this thought process which will be further discussed in Chapter II under British Ecofiction. An ideal that also pervaded modern society was the rise of individualism. Henceforth, humans redirected their objectives and withdrew from collective living to an individual focus. Individualism counters the very essence of being organically united with nature. This resulted in man settling away from nature thus, husking himself from any physical or emotional connection that allowed distance to build up. The predicament of an alienated individual will be studied in a segment under Asian Ecofiction in Chapter V.

#### 1.2.1 Integration of Nature in literature

A detrimental effect of the western view of environment on nature resulted in the absence of nature in mainstream history. Human experiences and events are recorded in Cultural and Social History. Natural History was marginalized and excluded. The recognition of the duality of man and nature leads to the collective responsibility of man not to segregate from natural history. If indeed man and nature are interconnected, there should be no distinction in writing and history as well. History needs to be reassessed because we cannot deny the impact of humans on natural history and likewise, the role of nature in the human realm is indelible. Perhaps the reason why writers and historians have not felt the need to incorporate nature is conditioned by the lack of recognition in history. Another reason is that it has been just a few decades since men have become aware of his interconnected status with nature and the impact of his actions. As David Arnold had stated, “nature has a long ancestry, but a sense of human beings as the guardians and destroyers of nature has only recently dawned upon us, and with it an awesome sense of our responsibility for the past destruction and the future survival of other species” (5).

The subjectivity in history writing faces resentment and backlash even from the marginalized or the subaltern voices of women, coloured people, the Dalits and so forth. The



solution to the problem of being shelved away does not conclude on the shortcoming of the historians. It needs to be challenged, relooked, and redefined. The only way to counter written accounts then would be to present the other side of the story or the fragment of it. Although the judgment would eventually rest on individuals, thought processes would then at least be a product of a comprehensive overview and not a selective account alone. A consequence of being marginalized in history results in a devaluation of the subject in matter because, as Stephanie Lahar mentioned in her essay “Roots: Rejoining Natural and Social History”, history shapes our value systems and thinking (96). If stories had not acknowledged man’s static state of dependency on nature, then no one would have put any value on it and actions would likewise follow suit. In omitting nature, another consequence is the loss of apathy to the point of ignoring it or, simply not being aware of the ecological impact. To cite Lahar:

When we set ourselves apart from nature, we disembody human experience and sever it from an organic context. This means that we stop being aware of the shapings and natural containments that a particular environment places around human practices and social structures. But of course environmental effects do not cease to exist. Instead society is shaped by a fractured relation to the ecosystem(s) it inhabits, losing both characteristic bioregional contours and a sensibility for natural limits...separating ourselves from our natural heritage, which has been a central project of human civilization, also has profound psychological and social implications as it supports our non perception of others. When we cut off a part of ourselves that we share with all other human beings and, by extension, all of life, it is easier to deny that others, or a particular other, exists (96).

The disparity in history formed a huge crater on the credibility of what has come to pass. Humans may mentally and physically distance themselves from nature but since humans are the children of the earth, they can never be practically without nature. The bitter fact is that each misdeed toward earth has a boomerang effect on all its inhabitants.

Man’s relationship with nature has evolved and traversed along time. The previous section has highlighted the growing pressure of anthropocentric activities on nature. Relationship paradigms have shifted where humans either considered themselves dependent and subordinate to nature, or that, they were above everything. This illuminating realization which guided as the

light toward human enlightenment was facilitated by contributions from scientific dialectics especially the works of biologist. For a long time in human history, nature was not recognized as a subject of importance in history writing but was rather considered as an oyster for man to conquer. The general perception of man was that the world was theirs alone, as history was also believed to be only about people. This is the reason why, history writing have huge crevices of empty narratives. Arnold mentions about how nature was seen as insignificant and not recognized as a “historical problem” (1). He wrote,

Indeed many historians would feel uncomfortable at the intrusion into their narrative of something so abstract or so complex. Nature, they might well argue, belongs to those technically qualified to deal with it: to biologist, climatologist, epidemiologist, and the like. The proper study of history is people (1).

This pernicious system of exclusivity has been addressed since the ecological dawn of mankind. Truly, nature cannot be outside of the human experience and because literature should be comprehensive of all human experience, nature is also a protagonist in the narrative of mankind. Indeed, tracing back, history to be politically accurate was not devoid of nature but, there definitely has been a paradigm shift in representation and narration. It added cohesion and coherence to history.

Ecocriticism propagated “a critical perspective on the relationship between literature and the natural world, and the place of humanity within- not separate from- nature” (Dwyer 1). This was coupled by a “greater understanding of ecological processes, concern over the intensification of global environmental degradation” and various ecological philosophies (Dwyer 1). It resulted in Ecocriticism concomitantly remodelling the structure of narratives in literature by placing “the ecosystem, rather than humanity, at the centre” (Kerridge 537) in a new form of writing called Ecoliterature, where the place of nature in literature undergoes a redefinition and is relocated.

The purpose of ecoliterature is to reveal and underline the relationship between nature and human beings, digging up the deep roots and that cause conflicts between nature and human beings, digging up the deep roots that cause conflicts between man and nature: the social roots of our thought, culture, economics,

science, lifestyle and the modes of social development with which man tends to conquer and plunder nature. (Hamilton 25).

Nature in narratives is repositioned from being mere backgrounds and symbolic objects because as Sumathy notes, “literature cannot exist in a vacuum and that all creative activity takes place on this earth where life exists, is reason enough for all literary environmental connections” (1). By de-centering man in narratives, a more comprehensive vision is achieved where the realistic dimension of man-nature matrix is retrieved. Nature is no longer the canvas filler and this adds deeper dimensions and layers to the novel and moves the plot forward.

Literature possesses such an extraordinary power to present hard hitting truth and reverse the condition of a desacralized nature. Art, in whatever form it is, can provide a different lens to view the world when a writer is truly eco conscious his/her conscious gets embedded and stamped in his/ her writings” (Hamilton 29).

In context of this, Laurence Buell has streamlined some pointers on how literature can incorporate Nature without marginalizing it or omitting its indelible role.

1. The non-human environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.
2. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest.
3. Human accountability to the environment to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation.
4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text (7-8).

Although nature was often celebrated in literature, the onset of the new environmental consciousness redirected the compass of writing. With the environmental movement causing a stir in the social realm, literature had another crucial role to play; to tell the story and reconnect the dots and to incite eco-consciousness through the most powerful art, that is, writing. The pressing call of the last century was to generate a renewal of thinking because awareness does not always amount to action. Literature had to partake its role and realign the track of thinking, and reshape the mindset. Literature translates reality into imagination. History and literature complement and strengthen the building of concrete stories. For to understand the depth of the

Diary of Anne Frank, one needs to know what happened in history, and in order to feel the soul of history, literature is required. Literature does not approach environmental crisis as a modern problem alone. It analyzes the reasons why human race have plundered the way it has in the past. There is an imploration of the mindset to generate a stronger and practical consciousness by changing the course of narratives. Therefore, everything is interconnected. As such, human history must not isolate natural history and history must allow literature to add depth and soul to it.

### 1.2.2 Narratives and ecological significance: the power of stories

There is a variety of literature today written by myriads of authors across the world and over time. Some were celebrated in their own age; some faced the wrath of critics and public, some gained recognition posthumously, while some never got any recognition at all. We are surrounded by a vast array of books which every now and then impacts the lives of readers. There can be no one parameter to ascertain the quality of written works but surely, a work of art propelling readers to think by opening their minds to something different and challenging the mind is not something new. Literature creates the platform for people to imagine, empathize and realize various matters in our day to day life. What the mind is fed also becomes the truth one registers to. Therefore, the credibility of stories is necessary when it comes to secular criticism.

The power of narratives must not be underestimated. During the German *Sturm und Drang* movement, a proto-Romantic movement, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published his novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). The captivating narrative entails the sorrows of a young romantic Werther over his failure at love. To overcome the pangs of unrequited love, he shoots himself dead. This novel started a trend called the Werther Fever. Young men throughout Europe dressed like Werther. The novel had such a profound reader response that Europe also witnessed a series of suicides in the manner of Werther, which is termed as Copycat suicide. During the American fight for emancipation from slavery, slave narratives by speaking and telling about the horrors of their lives eventually built up to their liberation. Women throughout time were perpetually written out of history; they were misrepresented, stereotyped and diluted in narratives. Women began a movement of writing and sharing stories, which formed an affirmative standpoint and strengthened the feminist movement reminding women of their importance all over the world. The #me too hashtag movement on social media (Maryville

online n.pag) first initiated by Tarana Burke in 2006, has permeated social platforms today and women are sharing their abuse stories, giving hope to the women who have faced abuse in their lives and normalizing the pain and psychological trauma they go through and sensitizing the world on the pain women experience. These accounts validate the impact of stories as well as, the importance of storytelling.

Narratives are significant regardless of time and change. It helps to bring matters to light and in doing so, stir the hearts of people. Where instructions, awareness and rules do not work, narratives find a way to move the hearts of people. In an analogy, in the book of 2 Samuel chapter 12 from the Holy Bible, Nathan fearing for his life could not directly confront king David about his infidelity. He does this by telling him a similar story and succeeds in touching the conscience of David who repents (222). In the same way, most of the teachings of Jesus Christ are also in the form of stories and parables because this was an effective means to communicate with the common folks. Narratives have gained in significance because stories have a way of psychologically appealing to readers and it creates empathy delving into the story. The assumptions of this thesis are thus planted along these foundational thoughts. Earth was stripped down from her rightful place as the upholder of all lives forms. From the overhead account, it is understood that the relationship is broken and healthy and secondly, the earth is wounded from heedless anthropocentric activities.

Why literature can be a powerful tool to incite a new consciousness is because as Mythily stated, “Even illiterate people can understand problems by the examples of life stories with the awareness of ecological balance” (n.pag). This allows readers to reflect and empathize on a personal level. Gary Peterson also notes:

How people use and relate to nature is determined in large part by the models, theories, and stories that people use to describe how human society and nature work. These concepts provide the mental infrastructure that underpins much of human action. Stories can help people reflect on their own models, and perhaps help them better understand their own ways of thought as well as those of other people (Dwyer 6).

Reaching the conscience of people is important. It is only then that new perspectives are formed that may incite reformative agendas. And if narratives can achieve it, great things will concur. For “action springs from consciousness, sensitivity, concern, optimism, and inspiration” (Dwyer 7).

Another aspect is because what the mind is exposed to has a way of getting internalized, this thereafter, shapes the ideologies and modes of thinking. Narrative theory states that one lives by and through stories. Stories influence the decisions taken and have a shaping influence. However, humans do not live in isolation and stories are not merely individual tales, they are constantly changed and shaped by their contexts. The prevalent stories in our communities also tend to become our stories. These stories are absorbed without realizing it and organize our lives according to these internalized narratives and discourses. An example in literature would be how the forest that was once considered a sacred dwelling was subverted into a dark and forbidden place under the influence of Christianity.

Narrative theory encourages the investigation of the internalized stories and the power they have on our lives. For as Salman Rushdie stated, “Those who do not have power over the story that dominate their lives, power to retell it, to rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts” (104). The great responsibility before literature is then to challenge the dominant literature and debunk the recurring portrayal of nature as an atrocious and vengeful entity. The onus is on literature to revamp the narrative patterns and retell the stories. The subdued voices are not framed to fit into the narrative but the narratives are expanding to be more representative. Disney animation movie “Moana” is a post modern movie changing the course of narration in media where nature is reconstructed from a depiction of a vengeful and atrocious being to a life giving entity. This generic approach to writing subverts the current hierarchy and division which make it carnivalesque. The narrative pattern is evolving and making way towards a more realistic approach dissociating from the tradition of transferring epitaphs to nature, making them voice of humans or humanizing them in narratives. Human effects on nature are realistically discussed and the cynical nature of man is also explicated.

### 1.3 Deep Ecology

There are two types of human approaches to save the environment- one is called the Shallow ecology which deals with eradicating issues concerning humans. The other school of thought is Deep Ecology- the understanding that nature has value in its own right, independent of the interests of humans (Baarschers 14). If lives on earth are cherished, the path to holistic ecological reverence and preservation would be a remedy if not a solution at this juncture. To exemplify, David Day in his book talks about some heroes without capes called 'The Green Rangers'. These individuals sacrifice their lives to save endangered species from armed poachers. He writes,

There have been martyrs in all of them, but there seems to be kind of selfless purity, in those who risk their lives for a cause of no direct benefit to themselves or even to their own species. They hold the belief that the extinction of species at the hand of man is an ultimate crime against the whole of life upon the planet (23).

Day also gives an account of how governments started funding for wildlife conservation and protection from around the 1960s. This kind of conservative measures and mindset is progressive and is a reminder to all humanity what their roles are towards the environment.

Deep Ecology was coined by Norwegian environmentalist Arne Naess. It was later popularized by US environmentalist Bill Devall and George Sessions. It is built upon two principles: first that it encircles around the scientific insight of interconnections of all systems of life on earth and antipathy toward anthropocentrism. Second, that deep ecology presses for a self realization, wherein, the self is renounced and an affiliation with nature is emphasized. Deep ecology has eight fundamental points according to Naess:

1. The well- being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity to satisfy vital needs.

4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires a smaller human population.
5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes (Naess 439).

Deep Ecology does not ascribe values to beings alone but it also subscribes to Ecocentrism where the fundamental understanding is that the ecosphere is a whole. Deep ecology is an empirical science of ecosystems or a set of environmental policies endorsed by attitudes or principles that are ultimately supported by a scientifically informed view of reality and humankind. It critiques the predominant social paradigm and calls for a transformation of values.

### 1.3.1 Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a generic feminist approach of interpreting ecology. It is an auxiliary shoot of feminism and is identified with the third wave of feminism. Ecofeminism is historically a women's movement focusing on their potentials to bring about an ecological revolution by establishing a profound understanding of interconnections between women and nature. Feminists over time have incorporated ecology culminating into Ecofeminism because the key insight among Ecofeminists is that beliefs which "legitimate the oppression of women also legitimate environmental degradation" (Kerridge 538). Karen Warren in her essay "Nature is a Feminist Issue" justifies that anything becomes a feminist concern "if an understanding of it helps one understand the oppression, subordination, or domination of women" (1). Therefore, "there are



important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of colour, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature” (Warren 1).

French Ecofeminist Francoise D'Eaubonne is credited for first using the term 'Ecofeminism' in her essay “*Le Temps de L'Ecoféminisme*” (The Time for Ecofeminism translated to English by Ruth Hottell) from her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, 1974. In the 70's, feminism was growing very strong in France. In 1973, women of various parties and movements in France conglomerated under a common banner called the 'Feminist Front'. They formed a strong 'sorority' and stood for parliamentary representation, obligatory home-economics courses for boys as well as girls, professional promotion, and equal salaries, a woman's right to abortion and divorce. Alongside, 'The League of Women's Rights' formed by a group of Revolutionary Feminists were also functioning legally against discrimination on constitutional rights. In 1973, Shulamith Firestone in her work *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* had pointed out about the intrinsic relationship of ecology with feminism. The merging of the two approaches- feminism and ecology did not materialize until 1973. Certain members of the Feminist Front tried to incorporate this collaboration into their manifesto but did not work out. So finally, some members “the authors then separated themselves from such a timorous new movement and founded an information center: The Ecology- Feminism Center, destined to become later, as a part of their project of melding an analysis of and the launching of a new action: *ecofeminism*” (D'Eaubonne 174). Ecofeminism disseminated out as a political movement in the 1970s. “Since then, ecofeminist political events, conferences, and publications aimed at showing important connections among the dominations of women, other subordinated human groups, and non human groups, and nonhuman nature have surfaced throughout the world” (Warren 21).

Ecofeminism is a call to thoughtful integration of what has been separated: nature and culture, mind and body, male and female, reason and feeling, theory and practice/ Ecofeminist theorists stress the importance of individuals and their relationships, as well as the appreciation of genuine differences between peoples, organisms, and individual human beings (Botzler 470).

There are different versions of ecofeminism with various plausible standpoints but the common conviction they all uphold is that “there are important connections between the

unjustified dominations of women and nature” (Warren 21). Ecofeminism is a very fluid and pluralistic term and thus cannot be narrowed to one single perspective. It is an attempt to reclaim and rebuild all that has been lost to an oppressive history of domination.

### 1.3.2 Environmental Ethics

The earth is splintered and groaning deeper with the rise of anthropocentric activities. The beacon in this narrative is that humans are capable of reshaping their lifestyle and behavior through a relentless de-cluttering of the mind and educating themselves about their environment. “Environmental ethics is the field of enquiry that addresses the ethical responsibilities of human beings for the natural...this field is not limited to ethical inquiry, but also is embedded in a larger matrix of aesthetic, religious, scientific, economic, and political considerations” (Botzler 2). Some of the concerns of this field of enquiry include reassessing the value of nature and the responsibility of men toward nature. Environmental Ethics takes a moral stance to counter the western world view which places men above everything else. It repositions men from a dominator to a member of an organically interconnected community by delving into the question of equality, and through a reevaluation of the value of each entity beyond their immediate utility to humans. Environmental ethics delineates three types of value: the Intrinsic, Inherent and Instrumental value. Botzler notes that Intrinsic value is “the value of an object that is independent of the presence of a valuer” (54); Inherent value is that which “requires the presence of a valuer who can appreciate the object or experience” (54), and Instrumental value is “the value of an object or experience in serving as a means to accomplish a goal that has intrinsic or inherent value” (54). Environmental ethics focus on the intrinsic value of nature. The significance of “this call for revolutionary transformation of morality understands the ecological crisis as originating from the loss of the interconnectedness sensibility” (George 251). Aldo Leopold in his article “Thinking like a Mountain” brings out an illustration for this difference. The wolves that are considered predators of deer have no instrumental value to the human poachers who are on the lookout for deer. But what happens when human actions are dictated by values accorded according to one’s functionality in benefitting a human? As Leopold wrote, the mountain would be grazed down by the unchecked deer population leading to the creation of a greater disaster whereby, a whole mountain would be destroyed. As for the wolves here, they

may not have any known instrumental value to man but they surely have an intrinsic value and purpose regardless of a human valuer. As deliberated by Holmes Rolston, III in his essay “Environmental Ethics: Values in and Duties to the Natural World”, any form of ethics seeks for ‘an appropriate respect for life’ (Botzler 72). Man cannot enforce their need oriented values on the other life forms, thus a radical shift from anthropocentrism is demanded.

### 1.3.3 Spiritual Ecology

Ecospirituality is the study of ecology with an intermingling of the spiritual. It is defined as “a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment” by Lincoln Valerie. It evolved around the 1960s as a response to ecological crisis and the need to find a deeper meaning between the Earth and spirituality. In Leslie E. Sponsel’s article “Spiritual Ecology”, she writes

Spiritual ecology is a major shift from religions that ignore nature into a growing sense that we participate in nature, realizing and feeling that we do not stand against nature, but are part of it. We do not have dominion over nature, but we depend on it- for air, water, earth, food, and the entire system of life given by whatever force created all its wonders. It is spiritual when we think at the ontological level, seeing ultimate reality as the ground of being that underlies all existence, and is far grander than our systems of thought (n. pag).

Ecospirituality can also be seen as men’s effort to free themselves from a materialistic and consumerist lifestyle. Mathew T Fox attempts to define ecological spirituality through the Christian tradition by introducing a concept called Creation Spirituality. He was a Roman Catholic priest, a professor of Religious Education, St. Thomas, Houston, Texas, and a lecturer at Thomas More Association. Fox reinvents a spiritual sense into the understanding of Nature. In his work, Fox has outlined four paths to spiritual ecology:

- 1) To experience the Divine in terms of delight, awe, and wonder at being present in the world; it involves the intuition that creation is a blessing, and response of gratitude ( via *Positiva*)

- 2) Experiencing darkness, deprivation, suffering, and pain (via *Negativa*)
- 3) Identifying new ecological virtues for living such as vegetarianism, recycling, relearning the sacredness of nature, defending creation through political action, and making new rituals to celebrate sacred places, times, and being in nature. (via *creativa*)
- 4) A transformation to a more compassionate society in which all beings love one another (via *Transformativa*); such compassion includes the making of justice (Fox 228).

Fox in his essay “Creation Spirituality” redefines the spirituality from a dimension of religion to a wider retrospection into the inner self.

In order to rediscover spirituality, which is at the heart of any authentic and healthy religion, one has to be free of religion. This is a paradox. Spirituality is the praxis of the heart, the praxis of our living in this world. It means dealing with our inner selves and not just living on the level of our outer organisations (Fox 229).

Carl Von Essen’s *Ecomysticism: The Profound Experience of Nature as Spiritual Guide* is an attempt to revive the mystic essence of Nature. The possibility of men healing the environment, learning to differentiate spiritual practice and environmental activism and mystical experiences in nature is healing our minds and bodies leading to a more comprehensive understanding of our natural world. Essen’s book harps on the idea that a renewing of man-nature spirituality can truly heal the environment. Ecomysticism is thus, a conditioning of the mind. As the profound experience of nature deepens men’s understanding of nature, it is also empowering to know how much the environment can impact human consciousness.

In the context of nature writing, ecomysticism is worth thinking about because mystical states—those awe-struck moments of quasi-religious reverence—have been a primary characteristic of that genre since at least the Romantic period. The ubiquity of this mode has been well-noted and analyzed—and sometimes pilloried—but mainly in the context of philosophy, aesthetics, or cultural history; it has been studied primarily as a mode of writing, as a literary style or topos, in keeping with the postmodern focus on nature as a cultural construction (Tagnani 4).

Tagnani streamlines three points that defines the concept of Ecomysticism:

Ecomysticism is material mysticism. It is a state of consciousness brought about via the five senses interacting with the rest of the material world...Ecomysticism involves an ecological vision. A common attribute of mysticism across traditions is that it offers access to insights not accessible to the normal waking consciousness...Ecomysticism is affective. Like other forms of mystical experience, Ecomysticism involves a significant emotional or affective component (7-9).

#### 1.4 Ecofiction: a social eco-tool

Ecofiction is a portmanteau of Ecology and fiction. It is the ecocritical study of novels. Ecofiction as a branch of novel came into popularity during the 1970's environmental renaissance.

Ecofiction roots are as ancient as pictograms, petroglyphs, and creation myths. Nature forms the very core of Native American, Australian Aboriginal, pagan, Celtic, Taoist, and many other cosmologies and their associated oral and written literature. These legends and the values they represent are echoed in contemporary Ecofiction by indigenous and white authors alike. They can be found in classical literature such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Latin pastoralism. Animal legends, human- animal metamorphoses, and pastoralism are common to many oral traditions and much written folklore (Dwyer 9).

Ecofiction can be instrumental toward building a bridge to appeal to readers to give an ecological message and can possibly be the thread that reconnects and reconciles man with nature. Novel as a genre is a very adaptable literary form and is representative in content. Novels embody fictitious prose narratives with a ring of truth and realism. Novels are vistas of the human soul. In the process of assimilating, Novels absorb the spirit of every age. To quote Cheryll Glotfelty "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). Scott Slovic substantiates this point in the following lines:

Ecocriticism is the study of explicitly environmental texts (including literature, film, music, visual art, and popular media) from any critical perspective or the application of various environmental lenses (ranging from scientific ecology to the language and terminology of environmental justice scholarship) to any kind of “text”, even material that presents no obvious statement about the more- than human world or the relationship between the human and non-human (23).

Therefore, the first rudimentary step in ecocritically analyzing a text would be to acknowledge there is a relationship between literature and its environment which includes man and nature. Ecofiction is an examination of fictional narratives with the application of ecocritical theories to establish the basic premise- to make a shift from an anthropocentric conceptualization and reading to an ecocentric analysis of the text.

There were strong apprehensions with regard to the genre of novel accommodating and addressing ecocritical initiatives. The apprehension was that narratives only distance further away from nature because the aim of fiction calls for a focus on purpose, “The tendency of the novel to focus on personal development, and on social rather than environment matters (and on time rather than place) is sometimes said to create an impression of alienation from the natural” (Coupe 236). This is negational. Novel is a genre particularly apt to forbear the ecological concern because according to Russian theorist and critic Mikhail Bakhtin, “It is the only genre that was born and nourished in a new era of world history and therefore it is deeply akin to that era, whereas the major genres entered that era as already fixed forms, as an inheritance” (42). Bakhtin also elaborated,

The novel has become the leading hero in the drama of literary development in our time precisely because it best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making, it is, after all, the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it. In many respects the novel has anticipated, and continues to anticipate, the future development of literature as a whole (44).

As such the novel is a vehicle for addressing contemporary reality which is plagued by environment concerns and marred by patriarchy, war, industrialization, urbanization and colonialism. Contours are shaping lines to demarcate or define a shape.

Ecofiction is a synthesis and evolution from Nature Oriented Literature and Environmental Literature. “Ecofiction is a composite sub genre made up of many styles, primarily modernism, postmodernism, realism and magic realism, and can be found in many genres, primarily mainstream, westerns, mystery, romance, and speculative fiction” (Dwyer 3). There are varied debates on what calibers must be applied to identify a true work of Ecofiction. For Mike Vasey, he understands Ecofiction as, “stories set in fictional landscapes that capture the essence of natural ecosystems... [They] can build around human relationships to these ecosystems or leave out humans altogether”. Patricia D. Netzley, claims that “all works of environmental fiction have one element in common: the author’s desire to promote environmentalism among the general public”. (Dwyer 6) When it boils down to the authenticity of a work of literature as Ecofiction, one must bear in mind the magnanimous universal aegis of Ecofiction.

#### 1.4.1 Canon of Ecofiction and beyond

The etymology of the word canon is derived from Greek “kanon” which signifies a rule or a measuring rod. In the Greek context, a rod symbolized a measure to correct and discipline. A Canon,

was extended to denote a list or catalogue, then came to be applied to the list of books in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament which were designated by church authorities to be the genuine Holy Scriptures. A number of writings related to those in the scriptures, but not admitted into the authoritative canon, are called apocrypha; eleven books which have been included in the Roman Catholic biblical canon are considered apocryphal by Protestants (Abrams 41).

A canon was thus, originally used as an ecclesiastical code of law.

This division was rigid and exclusive, where deletions or additions were not allowed. Historically, the term Canon had a restricting tone to it. Since it was conceived, it has been like a special rod granted to elitist to set standards to measure the quality or worth of a written work based on a standard text. The power to choose canonical words was initially conferred on the

priests and clergies of the age. In literature, a book is used as the measuring standard. As an implication of men in the past monopolizing canon formation and canonical works, there is a valid number of dissenters questioning the credibility as well as the function of a canon.

According to Jordan Bates, “Literary canons exclude works no matter how selective canon makers are” (n.pag). The apprehension must be shelved away because the modern canon sets a certain standard but does not restrict nor support biasness. As such, the contour of the older canon was prejudiced in many ways that led to the exclusion of literary works. It was narrow in scope as compared to the more canon of literature. The modern canon is clearer and more accommodating in scope. There is a presence of fluidity which breathes a progressive intonation upholding the true spirit of Ecocriticism. The elasticity of canon diversifies the canon of literature and celebrates literature irrespective of class, gender or race. It may be noted that during the 1980s, a sense of inclusiveness ushered into literature. This widened the circumference of the literary canon. Contours of Ecofiction here as in demarcation, or boundary is not an indication of raising walls of separation. “The boundaries of a literary canon remain indefinite and disputable, while inside those boundaries some authors are central and others marginal” (Abrams 42). Therefore, as the environmental subjects and crisis has no boundaries, so will the contour of Ecofiction only keep expanding.

In fiction and literature, the canon is the collection of works considered representative of a period or genre. A canon is also susceptible to change and reshapes itself over time and in relevance. Overtime, some works become less pertinent in the canon as they are replaced by more modern counterparts. The canon of Ecofiction comprises of fiction on ecological disorder and an exploration of unbalanced equilibrium in all aspects. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the increasing number of colonies around the world that were rampantly ravishing the forest cover, ecological damages were reported and came into light. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, anthropocentric activities had intensified with the onset of Industrial Revolution. The canon of Ecofiction is thus traced from the time people and writers came to a consciousness about men’s aggression against nature and developed an environmental concern that found expression in fictional works in cohesion with scientific theories. In the literary arena, the Romantics with their slogan ‘Back to Nature’ pioneered environmental campaigns. It was an initiative to return to nature. Industrial Revolution resulted in a shift of the rural population flocking to the cities in search of better jobs



at the factories. This mass exodus symbolically marks the transition of traditional society and their breakaway from nature. “Value and behavior pattern changes accompanying the industrial revolution have created permissive societies in which large numbers of people have now strayed from ecologically acceptable behavior patterns” (Pirages 292). The material culture in the form of local cottage industries that organically connected man and nature were overtaken by the incoming cheaper machine made products and gradually went out of business. As such, the rural economy suffered a great setback. Industrialization also led to a spike in deforestation and pollution. Europe was plagued by various health hazards resulting from poor air quality and water pollution. The irony of this disappointed generation was their inability to be happy neither in the rural areas nor be contented in the cities owing to lack of resources. The twentieth century dawned no better. It only saw the growth of science and technology which reversely damaged the environment. It was a hard pressed century that witnessed the two world wars- World War I and World War II and the history making atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Only Colonialism climaxed as communism and rapid development marked the anthem of the day. Science with its many benefits altered the belief system of the world and disrupted the natural course of nature. The trend of dominating nature through exploitation sadly seeped in. Literary discourses delved into raising awareness by retrospectively values and ethics, examining mindsets and cultures to weigh if what was being giving up for the sake of human satiation was worth it.

The dimension of Canon changes from time to time. Ecofiction started as an Ecological campaign and has escalated into a major form of writing that redresses the environmental concerns. The canon of Ecofiction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century interfaces with an acute stage of environmental crisis. All matters have gained in stature and intensified as mankind head along a probable eco-apocalypse ever since the environmental renaissance at the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> century was witnessed.

The motive of Ecofiction is nature representation. The canon continues to expand and reshape itself along the course of time and space. Ecofiction is a synthesis of two literary phenomena: Nature Oriented Literature and Environmental Literature. According to Jonathan Levin, “Ecofiction is an elastic term, capacious enough to accommodate a variety of fictional works that address the relationship between natural settings and the human communities that dwell within them” (1122). Ecofiction is interdisciplinary and holistic. It can be seen as an

umbrella for, or literally relative to, many genres and subgenres and works well within the parameters of the main categories of speculative fiction, contemporary fiction, Anthropocene fiction, climate fiction, literary fiction, eco-futurist and solar punk fictions, magical realism, ecological weird fiction, and more. Ecofiction is cross-cultural and syncretic and is written by authors all over the world. Environmental issues, the desire to protect our natural ecological systems, and the praise of nature is an all-encompassing intention of many authors, which crosses all borders, languages, ethnicities, and belief systems. Ecofiction is also revolutionary in its form and content. Jim Dwyer's field guide *Where the Wild Books are* has hundreds of examples of ecofiction across time, from the roots and precursors- the earliest cave drawings, pastoral and classic, etc.--up through the 21st century. The continuity goes on.

Ecoliterature is a prism in itself. It radiates colors of imagination of silenced voices and unheard stories; it renews the mind and the eyes. The scope of it is as limited as the expanse of nature. It is the one symphony every nation can sing to; the one melody they can hear in their language. Today, Nature is that one song which all the nations are chiming along to. Although it is universal, the canon of Ecoliterature embroiders the unique experiences of people living in different parts of the world without neither delimiting nor devaluing their experiences. This thesis presents the voices of a generation parked with environmental crisis; the authors tell stories from a spectrum of cultural backgrounds and historical context. It gives a glimpse into the twentieth century fiction written during one of the most conflicted era in human history. Through the integration of nature in writing, literature has attained a multi-disciplinary stature that truly bears the spirit of the age.

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## CHAPTER II

### ECOMYSTICISM, WILDERNESS AND PASTORAL IN EUROPEAN ECOFICTION

“I wander thro’ each charter’d street,  
Near where the charter’d Thames does flow.  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe”

- William Blake, *London* (1794)

2.1 The Europeans had one of the biggest colonies in the centuries prior to world war and their religion, culture and world views have been infiltrated into their colonies through their imposed system of governance and evangelical mission strategies. European colonialism started from 15<sup>th</sup> century with the Spanish and Portuguese expedition to explore America, coasts of Africa, the Middle East, East Asia and India. Nineteenth century Europe witnessed the Industrial Revolution which strengthened the imperial grasp. The expansion of colonies and colonial ramifications went on till 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the World War period, the defeated European countries had to give up many of their colonies. Post World War II, the colonies fought for independence in their own strides and broke away from the century old bondage.

Colonialism is the process of settlement by Europeans in non- European (Asian, African, South American, Australian) spaces...colonization... meant a violent appropriation and exploitation of native races and spaces by European powers. Colonization often destroyed native cultures, or altered them significantly, often producing new (hybrid) forms (Nayar 3).

Post colonial studies oppose this system of dominance and exploitation. For “In the process of colonialism, colonizers may impose their religion, language, economics, and other cultural practices on indigenous peoples. The foreign administrators rule the territory in pursuit of their interests, seeking to benefit from the colonized region’s people and resources” (Veracini 5). Colonialism is of various types. This chapter will highlight on Exploitation Colonialism. Natural resources are exploited and the native or indigenous population is used as labour force. It also

includes trading posts where the colonists take a lion's share in the political and economic administration. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy also states that,

Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another...imperialism also involves political and economic control over a dependent territory... Colonialism is not a modern phenomenon. World history is full of examples of one society gradually expanding by incorporating adjacent territory and settling its people on newly conquered territory. The ancient Greeks set up colonies as did the Romans, the Moors, and the Ottomans, to name just a few of the most famous examples. Colonialism, then, is not restricted to a specific time or place (n.pag).

It is true that colonialism is something that has moved in circles in history. A glance into the natural history clearly indicates how colonialism has been a part of man's long standing history. However, this European colonialism corrupted the environment, altered its course and removed the people from their lineage. As explained in chapter I, this attitude of positioning one's interest above others was prevalent right from the Greek period.

The world literature remained saturated under the autonomy of the Europeans. They formed the canon and were the canon for many successive years. The English Language spread to her colonies together with the expansion of colonialism. English language amidst backlash and efforts by the resisting nations continued to be a major language for many countries in which literature was written. European colonizers were the practitioners of the infamous western world view. In the post colonial literature, the Europeans were divided in their opinions. There was a group of thinkers who felt that the world needed the white men to rule them and have enhanced the world for the better. Joseph Chamberlain in his discourse "The True Conception of Empire" justified the necessity of killing and violence which according to him has facilitated security in life and property and a visible material improvement. As an egg shell needs to be broken to savour the egg, he parallels the acts of barbarism, slavery and domination as the ultimate road to redemption. He said,

In carrying out this work of civilization we are fulfilling what I believe to be our national mission, and we are finding scope for the exercise of those faculties and qualities which have made of us a great and governing race. I do not say that our success has been perfect in every case, I do not say that all methods have been

beyond reproach; ... if you will fairly contrast the gain to humanity with the price which we are bound to pay for it, I think you may well rejoice in the result of such expeditions as those which may have, and indeed have, cost valuable lives, but as to which we may rest assured that for one life lost a hundred will be gained, and the cause of civilization and the prosperity of the people will in the long run be eminently advanced... Great is the task, great is the responsibility, but great is the honour (n.pag).

These thinkers were patriotic and saw it as an obligation for them to civilize the brutes and bring them out of the darkness. It was like an ideological drive that kept the white men motivated. Rudyard Kipling also expresses the same thoughts in his poem *The White Man's Burden* (1899). In the novel *Heart of Darkness* Kurtz held this iron supremacy and used all means to maintain it. He wrote,

we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, "must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings- we approach them with the might of a deity"...By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded... Exterminate all the brutes! (78).

William H. Murdy traces three forms of anthropocentrism that have evolved over the long course of history that cradled the western world view. He traces from the period of Socrates. In this "Pre- Darwinian Anthropocentrism...the idea that nature was created to benefit man was a popular belief throughout Western history and was still very much alive in the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (Murdy 316). He then comes to the age of Darwin. Here, "species exist as ends in themselves. They do not exist for the exclusive benefit of any other species. The purpose of a species, in biological terms, is to survive to reproduce" (Murdy 316). Anthropocentrism over time escalates into a pyramid wherein, humans only saw the intrinsic value in themselves. To quote Murdy again, "To be anthropocentric is to reaffirm that mankind is to be valued more highly than other things in nature- by man. By the same logic, spiders are to be valued more highly than other things in nature- by spiders" (317). This modern anthropocentrism is found in the European world view where they call themselves the most superior race and subjugate people of other races and nature alike. The Pre-Darwinian idea of nature created to meet the needs of man is also

observed in the way the characters in the novels race against one another to obtain the ivory and silver.

The other group of thinkers reproached colonialism and their works questioned the plausibility of the Europeans and their mindless colonialism. Joseph Conrad one of the most acclaimed novelist of twentieth century critiques colonialism from a white man's perspective. He was of the opinion that colonialism was just a façade to normalize an otherwise horrific act of exploitation and human cruelty. Colonialism era has come and gone but it has left indelible scars on mankind and as evident in the emerging voices, communities are still garnering their lost traditions and rebuilding their cultures. The environmental implications are multifarious. Daniel Macmillen Vosboynik analyses how colonialism can never be staked away as a dark history because it is still colliding with the reality and narratives of people and the environment. To quote Vosboynik,

The consequences of colonialism and imperialism, in all their forms and across all their epochs, defy our imagination. Unspeakable cruelties were inflicted, their scars and agonies are unspeakable. Colonialism was, and remains, a wholesale destruction of memory. Lands, the sources of identity, stolen. Languages, ripped from mouths. The collective loss to humanity was incalculable, as cultures, ideas, species, habitats, traditions, cosmologies, possibilities, patterns of life, and ways of understanding the world were destroyed. Countless ecological traditions-involving diverse ways of being with nature- were swept away (n. pag).

## 2.2 The Heart of Colonialism

Colonialism is not justified and can never be. The history writers tried to blot out the cruelty of it but this dark past needs to be revisited in order to reclaim the past traditions which were intrinsic to the people. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* engages with post colonial realities and probes into the horrors of western colonialism. This semiautobiographical narrative is an exposé of a phenomenon that destroys not only the people and land it exploits but also those who perpetrates it, that is, the West. Though condemned by critics for the dehumanizing

representation of the colonized and the dismissive treatment of women, *Heart of Darkness* has come to be one of the most analyzed works of English literature.

This novella tells a story within a story and begins with a group of voyagers aboard a boat on the River Thames. One of the voyagers, Charlie Marlow, narrates to his fellow seafarers his experience of another sea expedition that took place on River Congo. His story begins somewhere in Europe in the sepulchral city where an organization simply referred to as the Company that runs a colonial enterprise in the Belgian Congo, appoints him as captain of a river steamer and sets him out for Africa.

As Marlow proceeds with his travel, he encounters rampant and unrestricted brutality in the Company's stations. The bestiality and squalor of imperial operation in Africa and in the Congo is in sharp contrast with the apathetic and majestic jungle that surrounds the settlements of the white man. Marlow himself refers to the Africans under his command as cannibals.

Marlow's expectations of a promising expedition, however, turns sour as he witnesses the violence inflicted upon the African people by the West and he is exposed to the evils of imperialism. He saw the despondence sprawled all over the faces of those bodies reduced to skeletons and chained to labour. This was the ugly truth of Colonization.

A slight clinking behind me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on theirs, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose brights swung between them, rhythmically...All their meager breasts panted together, the violently dilated nostrils quivered, the eyes stared stonily uphill. They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages (43).

Marlow was mortified and felt as if he had stepped into a "gloomy circle of some inferno" (44) as they witnessed the mining activities that were going on. Instead of the sound of nature in the wilderness, Marlow observes that it reverberated with uninterrupted and uniform noises with an

air of melancholy all around, “not a breath stirred, not a leaf moved, with a mysterious sound- as though the tearing pace of the launched earth had suddenly become audible” (44). Marlow describes how the earth was being ripped open for mining purposes and how the people lay there crouching hopelessly.

They were dying slowly- it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, -nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air- and nearly as thin (44).

Mining exposes the workers to multiple toxic and harmful materials and emissions. It is one of the most dangerous activities. Laborers often lose their lives in land collisions. The environmental impacts of mining are manifold. It destroys the soul of the land resulting in soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and chemical contamination of soil and water. It may also be added that mining is widespread. As such, it does not just affect the area where mining takes place but it also shakes the surrounding ecosystems. Alex G. Stewart explains in his article how mining is dangerous and has adverse health repercussions on humans. This explains the waning dead like condition of the blacks as observed by Marlow. Long time exposure to unhealthy working environments led to numerous respiratory diseases like tuberculosis among the African miners. The lengths men went to satiate their greed and devalue human lives was promoted by the colossal civilized white men.

Marlow’s journey into the Congo, the heart of darkness is not only geographical but also psychological as he travels into the dark recess of his own mind. The novella is also perhaps a journey into the dark psychic interior of Western civilization. The narration leads to talks about Kurtz (a colonial agent) whose ability to procure ivory from the interiors of Africa is supposedly unmatched. However, rumours have it that Kurtz is severely ill thereby putting the Company’s venture in the Congo under jeopardy. Marlow is given command of his steamer and a crew of European and African workers to repair the steamer that has broken down. After being confronted by many obstacles, Marlow is finally able to make it to Kurtz who has already taken

command over a tribe of natives and was now employing them to raid on the neighboring regions.

The place where they travelled into is referred to as the heart of all the brooding darkness. As they proceeded further into the deeper wild “the heart of darkness” (63), the intensity of the darkness escalated. Out in the wilderness, the sailors felt as if they were wandering on a “prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet” (63). The narrator felt like they could claim the prestige of being the first men for taking hold an “accursed inheritance” (63), this was the western attitude toward the land. It was seen as something to be owned or claimed and something at their disposal. As they neared the heart of darkness, they felt like they were entering a mad house.

We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would have been before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse... The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were— No, they were not inhuman (63).

In the heart of darkness, Kurtz is found. He is presented as a voice, before the readers are finally introduced to him. The narrator is told that Kurtz is a talented man with a gift for words and expression. The Kurtz who had outperformed all the officers had even written an excellent report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. When Marlow finally meets the man, he finds him in a state of illness, both physically and psychologically. Kurtz was so intent on accomplishing his lofty plans, Marlow had to threaten him to return along with them. Kurtz an embodiment of colonialism himself wanted to gain control over everything. He would say,

My ivory...My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—” everything belonged to him...Everything belonged to him— but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own (76).

Marlow could tell how dark the soul of Kurtz and could only wonder how he had become a monster himself. He had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land- I mean literally (77). It was depressing to witness how a man of exceptional literary caliber and sound mind had been engulfed by madness. Just as the charm of exploration and white men were, Kurtz is projected as an enigma and the narrator said that Kurtz would not be forgotten. He said, "Whatever he was, he was not common" (78).

The young man who was found with Kurtz adored him. He claimed that Kurtz enlarged his mind (82) and he was more than happy to serve the great man. Marlow found him "improbable, inexplicable, and altogether bewildering. He was an insoluble problem" (82). He shared that he had stayed through two illnesses with him. He is an example of how colonial mindset can dilute the imagination and rip the innocence and mysticism in nature. The young man tells Marlow,

He made me see things- things... I looked around, and I don't know why, but I assure you that never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness (83).

Marlow remarked, "I did not envy him his devotion to Kurtz, though. He had not meditated over it. It came to him, and he accepted it with a sort of eager fatalism. I must say that to me it appeared about the most dangerous thing in every way he had come upon so far" (83). He could not see through his madness and idolized him. It was all clear to Marlow. Kurtz was mad, he was the reason the district was destroyed and he was the man behind all the exploitation. Kurtz was obsessed with ivory and he like a Machiavellian despot took all measures to obtain it. He was his own undoing; the brutal jaw of imperialism and the blind eye of colonialism. Even in his state of madness he shouted,

Save me!- save the ivory, you mean. Don't tell me. Save me! Why, I've had to save you. You are interrupting my plans now. Sick! Sick! Not so sick as you would believe. Never mind. I'll carry my ideas out yet- I will return. I'll show you what can be done (89).



Kurtz controlled the natives by exercising power and by resorting to weapons. The young man was too naïve to understand but Marlow understood that Kurtz raided the country and made the village tribes to follow him. He practiced imperialism on the native population. The young man told him that Kurtz had a fancy for killing, he could do it and nothing on earth could prevent him. Imperialism does not have a different face. Even without settling in the colonized regions, the Europeans could control the native population. Imperialism is “the concept that proposes the conquest of newer regions for the sake of economic exploitation” (Nayar 5). George Orwell served as an officer in the British colonies. While he was posted at Burma, he was compelled to shoot an innocent elephant to appease the crowd. He then realizes that “imperialism was an evil thing” (Orwell 20). Under the garb of power and authority, he understood that imperialism was just a sham. It was just an exercise of a despotic government and in actuality as he said, “I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys” (Orwell 24).

Kurtz passes away on the journey back up the river his last words being, “The horror! The horror!” (97) revealing the horrifying glimpse of evil in human that he has been exposed to. The ivory for which he forsook everything on his deathbed stood for “somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror- of an intense and hopeless despair” (97). It was all prompted by a desire, a submission to that temptation and a suffering ensued as a result of succumbing to the evil desire. As Orwell understood, imperialism curbs the freedom of those who curbs the freedom of others. It was a death end as exemplified by the death of Kurtz. The operators of this ideology committed to the cause of colonialism were hypocritical and everyone was basically after the same gain.

There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing came of it, of course. It was as unreal as everything else- as the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages. They intrigued and slandered and hated each other only on that account, - but as to effectually lifting a little finger...there is

something after all in the world allowing one man to steal a horse while another must not look at a halter (52).

Marlow also falls sick and almost dies but he makes it back to the sepulchral city. The darkness he has experienced in the Congo makes him disdainful of the frivolous tribulations that the Western civilization seems to be occupied and engaged with. Marlow before the eye opening experience in the heart of darkness was also an enthusiastic and ambitious sailor. He like a typical and true white man who saw the world from an explorer's lens and he yearned to go out and experience it.

Now when I was a little chap, I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there... True, by this time it was not a blank space anymore. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery- a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness (35-36).

The western world view of domination and the disregard of nature possessing intrinsic value are quite pronounced in the novel. Marlow's expectations are crushed and the colonial reality dawns on him as he progresses. To reiterate the statement made in Chapter I, the major fallout in the man-nature relationship with the culmination of the western world view was the demystification of nature. Nature in the novel is draped in darkness. As Marlow sailed towards the Congo, he noticed that nature was contorted and it grew nightmarish. Marlow clearly indicates there was something ominous about the whole atmosphere (38) and there was neither peace nor joy. He found the atmosphere ominous and felt like they were guarding the door of darkness (38).

We called at some more places with farcical names, where the merry dance of death and trade goes on in a still and earthly atmosphere as of an overheated catacomb; all along the formless coast bordered by dangerous surf, as if Nature herself had tried to ward off intruders; in and out of rivers, streams of death in

life, whose banks were rotting into mud, whose waters thickened into slime, invaded the contorted mangroves, that seemed to writhe at us in the extremity of an impotent despair...the general sense of vague and oppressive wonder grew upon me. It was like a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares (42).

As validated by Kurtz, the colonial spirit as charted out by John Black, there is “a conviction that man’s role on earth is to exploit the rest of nature to his own advantage” (21). To Kurtz, nature was his to possess and kill and exercise his power. As explicated by Conrad, the whole facade of Colonialism and colonizers in the land of another was not an act of courage or of a noble cause.

They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force—nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a large scale, and men going at it blind— as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much (34).

2.3 Ever since the Europeans entered the world arena in power, the wilderness which is nature as it is, was seriously threatened. “The incursion of Europeans into other regions of the globe in the centuries after 1492 resulted not only in genocide, but also in radical changes, unparalleled in human history, to both tropical and temperate environments” (Ashcroft, et al 491). Wilderness literally means anything that is untamed and in a free state. In the context of nature, wilderness is outside the domain of human intrusion and thrives in its natural course. The colonial empire as if perturbed by the symphony of nature, started shaping and altering ecosystems to meet their economic agendas. According to David Henderson, “Conquering wilderness was central to colonial and pioneer narratives of progress... Wilderness is understood to be self-willed land, not subjected to the will of a domesticator or cultivator... wilderness points not only to the absence

of human culture in the landscape but to the presence of that which is often incompatible with it” (n.pag).

*Heart of Darkness* battles in representation and the tension between man and nature. Conrad does address the sublimity of nature and the forest in his novel. He wrote,

There it is before you- smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage, and always mute with an air of whispering, Come and find out. This one was almost featureless, as if still in the making, with an aspect of monotonous grimness. The edge of a colossal jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black, fringed with white surf, ran straight, like a ruled line, far, far away along a blue sea whose glitter was blurred by a creeping mist (40-41).

There is a recurring motif of wilderness in the novel and often the characters are placed together with the wilderness. “I’ve never seen anything so unreal in my life. And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion” (51).

The black natives are blended in the wilderness. Their nature is in unison with the wild nature. Conrad wrote,

It was paddled by black fellows. You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks- these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast (41).

In one instance when a nigger was accused of starting the fire and beaten badly, he took several days to recover and when he did, the narrator mentions that, “the wilderness without a sound took him into its bosom again (51). It is in the heart of wilderness that Kurtz meets his retribution for his ‘deficiency’, and in realizing Kurtz felt it profoundly because whatever fantastic vision he beheld was simply disillusionment and a shallow objective to gratify the greed of man.

They only showed that Mr Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him...Whether he knew of his deficiency himself I can't say. I think knowledge came to him at last- only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic vision. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude- and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core (*Heart of Darkness* 86).

2.4 The novel *Nostromo* is an extension of the darkness of imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*. It is an epic adventure novel of Joseph Conrad. Conrad in his author's note to the novel wrote that,

The first hint for *Nostromo* came to me in the shape of a vagrant anecdote completely destitute of valuable details...in 1875 or '76, when very young, in the West Indies or rather in the Gulf of Mexico...I heard the story of some man who was supposed to have stolen single-handed a whole lighter-full of silver, somewhere in the Tierra Firme seaboard during the troubles of the revolution (*Nostromo* xxiii).

Conrad then fits this story to the fold of Costaguana. It is believed to resonate a version of Colombia. It is set in a fictitious South American country called Costaguana and concerns the life of Nostromo, an Italian longshoreman who is entrusted with hiding the silvers belonging to Charles Gould, a native Costaguanero of English descent who had overtaken his father's silver mine at Sulaco.

In the time of Spanish rule, and for many years afterwards, the town of Sulaco- the luxuriant beauty of the orange gardens bears witness to its antiquity- had never been commercially anything more important than a coasting port with a fairly large local trade in ox-hides and indigo (5).

Robert Hampson points out that the above lines "immediately establish the theme of colonial exploitation" (xi). Gould is tired of the political instability and rampant corruption in Costaguana and sees hope only in the Ribiera regime. He therefore decides to donate his wealth

to the regime. However, as soon as Ribiera is elected to a five year terms as national leader with help from Charles Gould, a revolution led by General Montero, Ribiera's former Minister of War, breaks out leading to chaos in the country. Montero invades Sulaco and fearing that the enemy would seize his fortune, Charles Gould entrusts the trusted Nostromo to transport the silver offshore. Nostromo, whose real name is Giovanni Battista Fidanza, is an Italian expatriate known to be an incorruptible *Capataz de los Cargadores*. He is introduced as "a fellow in a thousand" (10).

A critical episode in the novel takes place when Nostromo sets out at sea with the silver but meets a collision with a ship bringing the rebels and is forced to abandon his boat and bury the silver on a deserted island called Great Isabel.

Back in the country, it is Nostromo with the help of few who restores some kind of order in Sulaco. However, his service does not bring him the fame that he had hoped for and Nostromo is consumed by resentment. This leads to his corruption and finally his destruction. He decides to keep the buried silver for himself and when the Oceanic Steam and Navigation team (O.S.N.) builds a lighthouse on the island, Nostromo becomes paranoid and gets his friends, the Violas installed as the caretaker of the lighthouse. He then gets engaged for marriage to Linda, the eldest daughter of the Violas in order to stay close to the buried silver. While sneaking around the treasure one night, Giorgio Viola, the father of his fiancée, mistakes him for a trespasser and shoots him thereby killing him. In the end, the silver brought him to his end.

Narrated in the third-person-omniscient perspective, the novel has a very impressive structure. The first part of the novel moves slow giving the reader an account of the fictitious Costaguana and the back history of the main characters. The second, that is, the central part of the book that occupies more than half of the novel presents the dramatic events of the rebels attacking Sulaco, the silver being smuggled and all these events occur in just a time period of two to three days. This section of the narrative that contains scenes of military insurgency and high drama shows the ambiguity of civil wars, the frailty of individuals and the impact that large scale events can have: outlaws becoming generals, break of normal communications, law and order giving way to chaos. The novel delves into how both individuals in particular and the society in general are acutely affected by the process of government in its most callous form. Several of Conrad's recurring themes such as the destructive effects of imperialism, the

calamitous influence of wealth, and the evil consequences of human beings acting without moral restraints are all found in the novel.

A major ecological concern in *Nostramo* is the destruction of nature. It engages “with the rhetoric and practices of American imperialism that have come to dominate the twentieth century” (Hampson vii). Conrad stations these characters in a place withdrawn from others in an imagined land. It is a town attacked by repetitive raids and there was great social unrest. It is a materialistic society impregnated in their race for silver. They are alienated from nature and nature almost has no role in this novel. This is purposely done to show the hollowness and stagnation of the characters. “What follows is man’s alienation from his community and most of all the alienation from his own self, which quickly ends in the characters’ death” (Luther 126). Mrs. Emilia Gould, the only English woman in Sulaco remembers the way industrialization in Sulaco affected the natural environment. She had travelled to the interiors the province with her husband in search of labours and she had seen the land “with a deeper glance than a trueborn Costaguanera could have done” (59). People admired her wisdom and integrity. She was believed to have a masculine mind. As she travelled, Mrs. Gould, “with each day’s journey, seemed to come nearer to the soul of the land in the tremendous disclosure of this interior unaffected by the slight European veneer of the coast towns, a great land of plain and mountain and people, suffering and mute, waiting for the future in a pathetic immobility of patience” (60). These people were then untouched by the civilization drive but they were all affected by the political unrest.

In all these households she could hear stories of political outrage; friends, relatives, ruined, imprisoned, killed in battles of senseless civil wars, barbarously executed in ferocious proscriptions, as though the government of the country had been a struggle of lust between bands of absurd devils let loose upon the land with sabres and uniforms and grandiloquent phrases. And on all the lips she found a weary desire for peace (60).

Mrs. Gould recalls how Sulaco operated before the coming of railways and development.

Those of us whom business or curiosity took to Sulaco in these years before the first advent of the railway can remember the steadying effect of the San Tomé

mine upon the life of that remote province. The outward appearances had not changed then as they have changed since, as I am told, with cable cars running along the streets of the Constitution, and carriage roads far into the country (65).

The plot of *Nostromo* revolves on the theme of materialism. According to the Collins Dictionary, “Materialism is the attitude of someone who attaches a lot of importance to money and wants to possess a lot of material things” (n.pag). Cambridge dictionary defines it as “the belief that having money and possessions is the most important thing in life” (n.pag). The novel is saturated by materialistic ambitions and led by materialistic gains. The plot builds on the silver in San Tomé mine. Silver is symbolic and runs throughout the novel. Mrs. Gould stands as a witness and voice of reason in this madness the town people had allowed themselves into. As for Mrs. Gould, “Thus, even the most legitimate touch of materialism was wanting in Mrs. Gould’s character” (51). But to the others, “The mine was a power in the land” (75). The narrator questions the concept and European understanding of the land, “Then the earth for you is only a standing place- and whether to be like this is your loss or your gain I won’t pretend to say. But most of us are neither one nor the other. The earth for us is place to live in, where we must put up with sights, with sounds, with smells, too” (77). The value of the land was quantified based on its economic value.

Mrs Gould knew the history of the San Tome mine. Worked in the early days mostly by means of lashes on the backs of slaves, its yield had been paid for its own weight of human bones. Whole tribes of Indians had perished in the exploitation; and then the mine was abandoned, since with its primitive method it had ceased to make a profitable return, no matter how many corpses were thrown into its maw (36). It remembered the San Tomé mine with a secret conviction of its worthlessness in their own hands, but with an ingenious insight into the various uses a silver mine can be put to, apart from the sordid process of extracting the metal from under the ground (37).

Nostromo or Giovanni Battista Fidanza, an Italian was a established figurine in Sulaco. In a politically charged situation where rampant corruption tried the security of the citizens, Nostromo also submits to the lure of silver and joins the bandwagon of lies and deceit. When the



silver was involved, human relationships are broken and like Nostromo, the silver becomes the goal. The tragic end of Nostromo can be likened to that of Kurtz (*Heart of Darkness*), each with an objective to conquer but they both meet the same fate from the path they chose. Nostromo the indestructible man is also killed in the easiest way possible, and the location of the silver that they coveted so much gets lost with the death of Nostromo. He admitted to Mrs. Gould, “The silver has killed me. It has held me. It holds me yet” (372). He asked her if she would like to know where the “Shining, Incorruptible” (372) treasure was hidden but she denied saying that nobody missed the silver anymore and that he should allow it to be lost forever. She instead tells him, “I, too, have hated the idea of that silver from the bottom of my heart” (372).

The silver mine was the magnet that brought the people together. “Most of the Europeans in Sulaco were there, rallied round Charles Gould as if the silver of the mine had been the emblem of a common cause, the symbol of the supreme importance of material interests” (175). The silver was the emblem of their materialistic pulls. This materialism in addition to an already despotic rule, introduced corruption.

The natural treasures of Costaguana are of importance to the progressive Europe represented by this youth, just as three hundred years ago the wealth of our Spanish fathers was a serious object to the rest of Europe- as represented by the bold buccaneers. There is a curse of futility upon our character...chivalry and materialism, high sounding sentiments and supine morality, violent efforts for an idea and a sullen acquiescence in every form of corruption (116).

*Nostromo* through the character of Mrs. Gould shows her inclinations for a pastoral hiatus. She unflinchingly stands with integrity, often reminisced the bygone days of Sulaco. Entrapped in an alienated environment, she expressed her nostalgia for the land that once was unblemished. The pastoral form of writing is presented in many modern texts. It is artistically used in literature to express concerns of our environmental. “Dreams of quitting modernity for a natural, simple, and instinctive way of life” (Kerridge 540). Pastoralism is seen as an interlude where the restless character takes a break from mankind in the recesses of nature before he resumes again. Here nature operates as a healer.

The silver that caused so much stir and led to the exposure of the dark heart of humans, lost its value and charm as now reversely reminded of the great misdeed. Instead of symbolizing power, it now represented the brazen indestructible face of imperial corruption.

Joseph Conrad wrote about the significance of fiction and stories in writing history. In his work "Henry James: An Appreciation" he mentioned, "Fiction is history, human history, or it is being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena... a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder, of human experience" (286). Conrad was straightforward in his approach and he addressed the dark nature of humans and on themes of colonialism and European imperialism. Conrad emerged as a distinct storyteller of the twentieth century. "The tradition of storytelling a story in a relatively straight-forward way by an omniscient narrator had made the genre popular and easily accessible" (Indra 37). The discourse on colonialism shows that colonialism was destructive not just for the human races but it adversely impacted the human nature relationship and destroyed the balance of nature. In many cases, ecosystems were affected and it resulted in the loss of biodiversity. Colonialism was anthropocentric and deeply entrenched in exploiting nature to gratify the wants of people, or the superior case. As Val Plumwood laid down,

It is usually now acknowledged that in the process of Eurocentric colonization, the lands of the colonized and the non-human populations who inhabit these lands were often plundered and damaged, as an indirect result of the colonization of the people. What we are less accustomed to acknowledging is the idea that the concept of colonization can be applied directly to non-human nature itself, and that the relationship between humans, or certain groups of them, and the more-than-human world might be aptly characterized as one of colonization" (503).

Man and nature co-exist in a matrix of interrelations and interconnections, as rightly pointed out by Arne Naess in his Deep Ecology fundamental points, "Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity to satisfy vital needs" (Naess 439). It was typical in the colonial tradition to value one plant over the other depending on their economic value. This is a form of racism. The Europeans were guided by a sense of hierarchy and they transferred the same thought process to the environment. This selective nurturing is something Deep Ecology opposes because in the organic unity of nature, each component, each plant, each animal has a

role to play and contribute to the composite unity. To quote Naess “The well-being and flourishing of human and non human Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes” (439). The European world view at the same time also practiced land exploitation for “the colonizers land was an object to be possessed, property to be owned. The colonizers brought with them the hierarchal demarcation between land and people” (George 83). It is through stories that a part of untold colonial oppression sees the light and justifies for the uncountable number of people whose lives were devalued and snuffed as a result of it. In doing so, the cultures that were dislocated and pushed into the dark shelves of amnesia have a chance to redeem what they have forsaken.

As mentioned in Chapter I, this idea of man having dominion over creation has its roots in Christianity. These monotheistic religions like Islamism, Christianity and Judaism ascribes all power to one entity and this conflict with environmental ethics. Lynn White Jr. critiques that,

The victory of Christianity was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture... Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as non repetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely, Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule (207).

The process of naming the animals to establish dominance was a common feature of European colonialism. There are many stories in the former colonies of how their native names of places and natural landscapes were mispronounced and recorded and also named by them. In the post colonial world, nations are renaming their cities as an act of decolonizing and assertion of their identity. Paul Carter wrote that,

The truth is that the naming process may have been metaphorical... but it was not associational in intent. It was not a retrospective gloss, after the event, a sort of gliding in bad taste round the physical mirror of history. It was the names

themselves that brought history into being, that invented the spatial and conceptual coordinates within which history could occur” (353).

Histories are being retold and re-written. The empires are long gone and lost but the scars of the wounded still remain. It is then essential to prune out the negative understanding and embrace the rules of stewardship of Christianity, practice inclusivity- as everyone being equal in the eyes of God, and the responsibility to God to take care of his creation. As Donald Hughes stated, there is a need to revive the sense of respect for nature which was a natural thing to do in the ancient societies. He says, the revival can happen by reforming the current belief system and is not necessarily an outreach to resuscitate the animistic tradition. To quote Hughes, “This could come not as a renaissance of animism, or a revival of ancient religions which have lost their ability to infuse human minds, but as a new insight compatible with many religions and philosophies” (161). Policies and measures must be made with a progressive mindset. Keeping in mind the ecological crisis at hand, deep ecological values must be imbibed and translated into reality without ever forgetting the amount of destruction the exploitative mindset have brought upon mankind.

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## CHAPTER III

### ECOFEMINISM AND ECOETHICS IN AMERICAN ECOFICTION

“These are the Gardens of the Desert, these  
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,  
For which the speech of England has no name”

- William Cullen Bryant, *The Prairies* (1833)

3.1 Ecocriticism legitimately was borne out from the bosom of American thinkers. Ecocriticism was adopted as the blanket term under which nature writings came to be studied. Nature has always been an integral part of American livelihood but that pristine status was marred by the colonial western view. As the Americans gradually decolonized themselves, there was a strong need to have a body of works they could identify as American literature. They desired for “a novel literature that would express the spirit of independence, democracy and nationhood” (Ruland xii) after being in the shadow of European literature.

In the early decades of seventeenth century, Puritans from England flocked to America in thousands in search of a better world to practice their faith. The Puritan literature embodied the Puritan perspective of how they saw America and it was not the full story. The entry of the Puritans into American took an iron bearing on the literature and life of the Americans. America was seen as the golden land of resources which the Europeans called New England. It may be noted that,

America became the space exploration program of an expansive, intensely curious, entrepreneurial and often genocidal era of European adventuring. It stimulated and shaped the direction and expectation of the Western mind, and also filled its treasure chests. It provoked Utopian social hopes, millenarian visions of history, new scientific inquiries, new dreams of mercantilism, profit and greed, new funds for the artistic imagination (Ruland 5).



The English settlers annexed the land, and populated the otherwise peaceful co-existence of man and nature. American history for the Europeans may start with them but America was not devoid of dwellers. America was neither “new, nor virgin, nor unsettled” as fantasized by the Europeans. They first arrived as explorers, and then conquered “populated the virgin continent” (Ruland 3). They saw it as the Promised Land and attributed their skills and curiosity for the achievement.

Postcolonial history shows how the Native Americans were massacred and persecuted as pagans and heretics. It was not just colonization of the natives but also of an ecological encroachment and alteration. It was further aggravated by the rapid development and extraction of resources. In the bigger circle as they monopolized everything, American writings were also controlled by their imagination. Some other people were writing their stories and it was not about them. Europeans like Captain John Smith a promoter of colonialism had a general perception that the Indians in America were savages and thus he wrote, “What so truly suits with honour and honesty as the discovering things unknown: erecting towns, peopling countries, informing the ignorant, reforming things unjust, teaching virtue; and gain to our native mother country a kingdom to attend her” (Ruland 8). According to Ruland and Bradbury, the Puritan Imagination brought to American writing a “Judaic sense of wonder and millenarian promise- the American Dream” and implanted ‘a vision of the task and nature of writing itself’ (9).

What they wrote, prolifically, was another kind of beginning to the American story, another kind of narration that gave shape and significance to the process of plantation, settlement, social development. But now the voyager was not the explorer or the planter but the Pilgrim entering new space and new history. The plot was providential; God guides these encounters between the traveler and the not yet written New World. The myth remains shaped by European sources, but now one source above all, the Bible, and especially its opening chapters, Genesis and Exodus, the tale of the Chosen people and the promised Land (Ruland 9).

A reverse effect of the Puritans on the environment is that, they would write accounts of the wilderness where amidst all the comfort of the new home, they were faced with the adversities of life in the form of landscape, climate and the native Indians. The forest is seen as a

dark place where they would encounter Satan. These settlers also had a huge role in shading the account of the native dwellers. They were presented as the antagonist in their narratives whose beliefs and culture were associated with Satanism and the evil forces of the world. It extolled the so called civilized world and condemned the wild nature and her inhabitants. To address this and in order to transcend the shadow cast under which the writers were comfortably writing, a new form of writing unique to the Americans had to come up, that which did not exclude nor antagonized. The writings were Eurocentric and largely guided by self vested interest. Lawrence Shaffer notes that the colonizers wrote “for practical purposes. They wished to dramatize their achievements, to justify their actions and principles, and to provide guides for future settlers” (2).

As the Puritan Revolution phased out in Europe toward the end of the seventeenth century, America became a residual society. American literature had many facets of marginalized representation or non representation of her identity. As the Indians were seen as forces of evil, so were the Blacks in the south stereotyped and marginalized in literature, as was their reality. In the years that followed Americans slowly embraced the land that existed before them. In Robert Frost’s poem “The Gift Outright” he begins his poem with the following lines:

The land was ours before we were the land’s  
She was our land more than a hundred years  
Before we were her people (n. pag).

The rise of transcendental authors redefined the contours of American imagination in literature. As such,

What the Puritans denied, then was what, two hundred years later, Henry David Thoreau accepted, that American nature was the greatest form of instruction the continent offered, that, as Whitman said, the land itself was the greatest poem. While some Puritan nature writing exists, the forest beyond the settlement, rather like the Europe left behind, seemed, as Nathaniel Hawthorne would suggest in “Young Goodman Brown”, dangerous and forbidden space, psychologically as well as geographically...The Indian sense of mystic reverence for the land, of the timeless cycles that separated him from European linear history, had not yet

become central to American culture... American writer and critics took many generations to come to terms with the implications of Puritanism (Ruland 31).

Transcendentalism was a philosophical movement “based on a belief in the innate divinity of every man and a faith in man’s capability to understand immortality, the soul, and God through intuition, which transcends pure reason” (Shaffer 22). The transcendentalist “work celebrates nature, the life force, and the wilderness” (Barry 240). The transcendentalist emerged as a reactionary move against the 18<sup>th</sup> century rationalism, wherein, an emphasis was given to insight over logic. They also adhered to an ideal that all creation is united and that humans have innate goodness. The dissension arose from “empirical philosophy of the school of John Locke, which derived all knowledge from sense impressions; to highly formalized religion, especially the Calvinist orthodoxy of New England; and to the increasing social conformity, materialism, and commercialism that they found increasingly dominant in American life” (Abrams 413). Thinkers like Emerson were confident “in the validity of a mode of knowledge that is grounded in feeling and intuition, and a consequent tendency to accept what, to logical reasoning, might seem contradictions; an ethics of individualism that stressed self-trust, self-reliance, and self sufficiency; a turn away from modern society, with its getting and spending, to the scenes and objects of the natural world, which were regarded both as physical entities and as correspondences to aspects of the human spirit; and, in place of a formal or doctrinal religion, a faith in a divine “Principle”, or “Spirit”, or “Soul” in which both humanity and the cosmos participate. This omnipresent Spirit, Emerson said, constitutes the “Unity within which every man’s particular being is contained and made one with all other”; it manifests itself to human consciousness as influxes of inspired insights; and it is the source of the profoundest truths and the necessary condition of all moral and spiritual development (Abrams 413). “The idea that American literature was destined to become not only an expression of American identity but the great modern literature- and therefore more than simply an American literature- has long had great power” (Ruland xi).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the ecocritical field of enquiry and writings on nature emerged with America as one of the originating bedrock of environmental movement. The transcendentalist’s works served as models in the development of Ecocriticism and Ecoliterature. In America, a large segment of society have formulated certain definite opinions and attitudes

about the environment based on the colonial mindset. There are two streams of thought that the Americans have showcased as a response to ecological crisis. “Historical evidence suggests that one early and prominent orientation to the natural environment was fear, and with this was linked the desire to conquer and control nature for man’s ends” (McEvoy 215). James McEvoy III in his article “The American Concern with Environment” terms this mental orientation of the environment as “transformational” as “it includes not only the agrarian pastoralism which motivated the Puritan settlers and their westward- migrating descendants, but also the view of the natural environment which embraces the value of maximum economic return from the exploitation of natural resources” (215). As discussed, this was a product of the European western world view which insisted on conquering the wilderness through control and gaining mastery over her. The other orientation that started to develop toward early nineteenth century was the Preservationist viewpoint which culminated into the Conservationist Movement toward the end of nineteenth century.

Arising out of the fundamental changes in man’s conception of nature, the promulgation of this view became the goal of the American wilderness movement. Its spokesmen, John James Audubon, James Fennimore Cooper, Thomas Cole, Francis Parkman and John Muir, were responding to the destruction of forests and wild areas by an unplanned and sprawling civilization, which, after 1850, was to be predominantly urban and industrial. The ideology of this early movement was organized around the goal of preserving, in their natural state, tracts of wilderness for the spiritual, esthetic, tradition-evoking and scientific values these men and their followers argued were inherent in undisturbed nature (McEvoy 216).

The preservationist aimed to “keep unique features of the natural environment from alteration and from use except for man’s aesthetic and controlled recreational enjoyment” (Morrison 261). Morrison traces four important developments from the historical context as the changing American environmental concerns. From a limited scope of natural preservation, the environmental compass now included all aspects of the environment, including manmade environment. It also widened the canvas of man and his role on the environment beyond the supply and demand cycle. To quote Morrison, “There is concern with how values, institutions,

technology, social organizations, and, in particular, population, influence the long- and short-term quality and quantity of all resources available” (262). The general conception of man and nature matrix was broadened by ushering in ecological explanations about the interconnectedness of everything in nature, and therefore, instead of just monitoring the use of some natural resources, a new consciousness sank in about the risks of losing out on the quality of life and survival of humanity. The next course of development was to restore or optimize the ecological balance by spreading awareness about our environment.

3.2 The African Americans form one of the largest ethnic groups in America. Today, they have a full fledged US citizenship. The African Americans are the descendants of the African slaves who were brought to the New World. American history bears witness to the cruelty and injustice shown towards this community. The inclusion of the blacks however, has only contributed and enriched the American culture and history. Hollis Lynch comments on the density of African American population by the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, “more than half the country’s more than 36 million African Americans lived in the South...African Americans were also concentrated in the largest cities, with more than 2 million living in New York City and more than 1 million in Chicago. Detroit, Philadelphia” (n. pag). The black people stand as testimony to cultural division and racial segregation, discrimination and domination. The Black slavery was legitimized through the establishment of the Black Chattel slavery by 1661 in Virginia. This horrendous inhumane practice where the value of a human being and the right to live was abused gained liberation only during the Civil War in 1861. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by the then President Abraham Lincoln the following year in 1862. The coloured community was not only robbed off of all their human rights but the Americans even wrote them off from the leaves of history. “Only over the past few decades have American history books begun to include information about black Americans that had been repressed in order to maintain the cultural hegemony, or dominance of white American” (Tyson 344). The African American literature is expressive and recharged with creativity and powerful stories. At the same time, it has never forgotten the oppression of their past and the racial discrimination that still prevailed after emancipation. It is through their literature that they embrace their history and reclaim their identity in the American milieu. The tides of their Antebellum literature, slave narratives and inclusion of oral tradition gradually built up to the literary ambitions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The objective was for them to carve their niche without having to imitate the white sentiments.

African American literature completes the wholeness of representation of the American identity and history.

From the beginning Black writers have produced a literature of social protest and human enlightenment. (Black writing has always been under siege and during the two hundred and fifty years of slavery, it was a legal crime for blacks to read and write). What motivated blacks to write was the condition of oppression and what they desired of their writings was for it to ameliorate their condition (Shetty 71).

However, “men authors and gatekeepers of Black American literature have historically ignored, belittled and suppressed the women authors and the works they have produced” (Shetty 72). This led the African American women to struggle and wriggles themselves free from being sidelined and ignored. As such, “the black woman writer chose to make a discourse of her own experiences, and this led to a strong correlation between the emergence of the woman characters in the fiction of the writers” (Shetty 73). The only way for them to make known their deplorable conditions was to tell their stories. African-American women writers have been so true to their experience that they have helped inspire literatures of various communities in their nascent stages. In their stories, they developed their vision and used it as a platform to resound social change. In the European concept of conquering, dominance and owning, everything belonged to the whites. Nature was also colonized and owned by them. The cotton fields where they labored day in and out was all for the white master. Although the African Americans come from a rich culture of oral tradition and oneness with nature, it was dislocated in the new land. Ruffin writes,

For as long as Africans have been Americans, they have had no entitlement to speak for or about nature. Even in the twenty-first century, standing next to a tree has been difficult. A student tradition in Jena, Louisiana, brought this fact to national attention in August 2006. A black freshman at the area high school asked permission from the school’s principal to sit under a tree commonly understood as the white tree” (1)... “the history of racialized slavery and its continuing aftermath are factors in African Americans’ access to the natural world and their perceptions of nature. Long-standing environmental micro and macro aggressions that reinforce oppression have left African Americans simultaneously separated

from prime non human natural resources and characterized as animalistic sub-humans. Indeed, many African Americans have not had much actual or conceptual refuge when it comes to environmental concerns in the United States” (4).

The black literature as such stood like a mosaic piece of art, painfully true but never a narrative of defeat. Alice Walker is one of the story tellers. She makes the unknown voices heard. Walker has a very organic approach and understanding of nature as she addresses the stars, moons and everything. The African-Americans come from a rich lineage of matriarchal culture and ecological society.

### 3.3 Conceptual framework as a deterrent in *The Color Purple*

Women of the African American community faced racial discrimination and domestic abuse. American society possessed domination patterns. Racism by definition “refers to the unequal power relations that grow from the sociopolitical domination of one race by another and that result in systematic discriminatory practices (for example, segregation, domination, and persecution)” (Tyson 344). Gloria Wade Gayles in the book *No Crystal Stair: Visions of Race and Sex in Black Women’s Fiction* (1984) wrote about this depressing reality of a black woman. A black woman has three realities. The reality of being born black in a white society; secondly for being born as a woman in a black society; third reality is her own pathetic, dark and abused space.

The novel *The Color Purple* has a woman protagonist and since the allocated space for women is the home, the domestic space has been chosen. The context is of a coloured community who are spread out across two continents- America and Africa. The novel published in 1982 is an epistolary novel which recounts the experiences of coloured women in a male dominated world. The plot expands to about a span of thirty years over Celie’s life. To quote Maya Jaggi’s review from the novel, “The novel is a testimony of the violence and pathologies within the family and inside beleaguered communities”. The domestic space is studied because, “most African- American novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are concerned with the plight of the black woman, her position within the family, in society and the world at large. As her position within

the family is the focal point of this unending spiral of relationships, this is their primary concern” (Shetty 74).

#### Pa’s home

Celie is subjected to sexual abuse from a man she considers her Pa. She is verbally and physically abused and the two children she bears are taken away from her by Pa. She is subdued and suppressed. The novel begins with a 14 year old Celie writing letters to God asking him what was going on in her life because she has always been good. Her school education is stopped when her Pa impregnates her and when she attempts to lay herself in order to save her younger sister from Pa’s lecherous advance, she is married off like an unwanted piece of property. Very late in life, she learns that Pa is actually not her real Pa but a step father, much after all the physical torture and emotional turmoil had been afflicted.

This is an example of a coloured woman’s place in her father’s home. As Sofia once told Celie, “A girl child is never safe in a family of men” (39). A home is supposed to be a place that nurture her, enable her growth and give her security is represented by their Pa, who mistreats her, who never had a kind word to tell her nor speak of her. Celie’s childhood is deprived and her girlhood is exploited by this man she reveres as her Pa. Her Pa only told her whilst choking her, “You better shut up and git used to it” (3). So a woman must only learn to shut up and get used to oppression in a home. She cannot utter a single voice of protestation but has learn to get used to whatever form of oppression befalls her. This is the spirit in which Celie is guided and molded to be a subservient woman before men. Her education which is supposed to be her stepping stone is also stopped. She is discontinued not because she has to play the role of a mother but perhaps because she was learning too much for her own good and the man, as always had to restrain that growth of a girl child for fear of being overpowered. Celie remembers how her Pa ended her education. “He never care that I love it... I was all dress for the day. You too dumb to keep going to school, Pa say... Pa say, Whoever listen to anything Addie Beasley have to say. She run off at the mouth so much no man have her. That how come she have to teach school” (11-12). The girls are not just abused physically. The fear of never getting married is instilled in them, for a woman to be too educated would be to remain unmarried like their teacher Ms. Beasley. Nettie protests that Celie was smart too. Their Pa bluntly corrected saying Celie is dumb. This manipulative



man is gaslighting the situation here and making Celie accept she is dumb when they know she is not. And in each they are pushed to a sense of guilt to maintain that Pa was their provider and they needed to be grateful to him. She also later admits that she got married because she was told to do so. A woman's body which belongs to her is treated like a piece of property for self indulgence; she is not given power even over her own body and children (the two children she bears with him are taken away from her by him). In fact, she is left in horror of bearing incestual children with her own Pa and her own children possibly being her own siblings as well. Celie when she learns that Pa is not their Pa, she said, "All my little half brothers and sisters no kin to me. My children not my sister and brother" (160). She is verbally and physically abused, subdued, suppressed, oppressed and dominated under her Pa. This home environment only leaves her confused, ashamed, unproductive, timid and submissive.

#### Mr Albert's home

Celie is married off to Mr Albert, a widower whose wife was murdered. With no one to tend to his four small children, he marries Celie after contemplating the whole of spring. He inspects Celie before taking her home. "I go stand in the door. The sun shine in my eyes. He's still up on his horse. He look me up and down" (12). The male pride and sense of superiority is noticed in the way Mr Albert even without dismounting from his horse inspects Celie's body. In this framework, women bodies are all that matters to meet their male needs, bear them children and to keep their homes. The intelligence of a woman is shunned and stunted as much as possible. Mr Albert has a scandalous affair with a certain blues singer by the name of Shug Avery. Mr Albert's son, Harpo is a progeny of the innate belief system. He is what his father has passed on to him with a very condescending sense of gender roles and an ego so lofty, he breaks his marriage with Sofia.

Mr Albert stands as the iron face of patriarchy. He dictates over Celie's life, over his children and over his entire household. He has a very tilted opinion of women. To reiterate the point would be when Harpo asked him why he beats Celie, he responded, "Cause she my wife. Plus, she stubborn. All women good for nothing" (23). Celie also mentions how he would beat her with a belt like she was child who needs to be taught a lesson. As mentioned earlier he

clearly had passed on the message to Harpo that it was a woman's responsibility to work and that men shouldn't. He questions Sofia's morality for getting pregnant and accuses her. The months of thinking he did over Celie was not to prepare himself but to weigh and measure if Celie was worth anything to him. Men always thought that it was privilege for women to be married and be called their wives. He is a very selfish and calculative man with a very malignant mindset.

Harpo on the other hand, is a progeny of the patriarch. Harpo is also dictated by the ways of patriarchy and although his time with Sofia, his wife were the happier days of his life, he falls into the fold of domination, where he feels the need to dominate women. Harpo also comes with a very strong sense of gender roles. Even if Harpo was quite happy with Sofia, the ways of how his father treated Celie is also seen as an accepted way of life and ironically Harpo senses abnormality when the wife finds her own way. This preconditioned mindset is guided and moulded by his father Mr Albert.

Until the advent of Shug Avery, the women in this home are stagnated, suppressed and freely exploited. This household highlights the plight of a wife. As such, when Harpo asked Mr Albert how to deal with her he replied, "Well how you specs to make her mind? Wives is like children. You have to let é m know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating...Sofia think too much of her anyway" (35). According to Mr -, women are meant to be controlled and guided by men like she cannot reason out, or know the difference between good and bad; women are seen as lowly and beneath men. This is the hierarchal structure patriarchy creates. In these lines Mr Albert clearly tells us, men have the upper hand which means Men have the authority and if women are unable to accept that or adhere to it, she needs to be fixed through beating.

There is a strong division of gender role which has its inclination toward the males. It is not just the men who are jeopardizing lives, women also sense the same abnormality when the said form of domination and oppression is absent. People like Celie from their timid shells are also made to see things the way men have established the system. When Mr Albert advises Harpo to beat Sofia, Celie also tells Harpo to beat her. She felt that Sofia did not show much respect to her husband because when he and Mr Albert came to the room, if she was talking she would continue talking. These are the accepted ways of thinking which are unjustified. Sofia

rightly tells her, “You remind me of my mama. She under my daddy thumb. Naw, she under my daddy foot. Anything he say, goes. She never say nothing back. She never stand up for herself” (39). When women functioning outside the framework advice her to stand up, she considers herself lucky to be alive than to be out and be lost and be a nobody. Celie thought, “I don’t say nothing. I think about Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don’t fight, I stay where I’m told. But I’m alive” (22). These lines lucidly projects Celie’s mindset which has been soaked in the system. She justifies her action by saying that, because she stayed meaning married the man her Pa chose for her, and she did not fight back, she is alive, as in she owes her life to her Pa and husband and she is happy to be alive. Women never learnt to think beyond their circumstances but lived in gratitude of what the men did or accorded to them.

### Olinka

The accounts of Olinka are from Nettie’s letters to Celie which forms the sub plot. This community lives in close union with nature, where women are the home keepers and tend to the other chores. They are a polygamous community where men are allowed to keep multiple wives. Samuel, Corrine, Nettie, Adam and Olivia are surprised to learn that girls are not allowed to access education in Olinka. Nettie mentions in her letters that Olinka men are like the white people at home, who do not want coloured people simply to learn. They say, “a woman is nothing to herself; only to her husband can she be something and become the mother of his children” (140). Women who refused to marry like Tashi’s aunt are outcast without an identity. She is eventually sold off to traders. In Olinka no matter how the women were stampeded and sad as they were, they thought it was a brazen thing to look at his feet or his knees. Olinka women’s identities were not only drawn from men. Even their lives are dependent on them because in case a husband accused a woman of witch craft or infidelity, she would immediately be killed on the basis of a man’s accusations. Tashi’s father clearly put his foot down against the educating her. His patriarchal mindset is clearly explained in the following lines.

Our women are respected here, said the father. We would never let them tramp the world as American women do. There is always someone to look after the Olinka woman. A father. An uncle. A brother or nephew... We understand that there are places in the world where women live differently from the way our

women do, but we do not approve of this different way for our children (145-146).

The lives of the women in Olinka are possible and exist because of a man. She was nothing without a man. Her life depended upon the man to take care of her. The irony of this arrangement is that man wanted to decide everything for the women and keep them within their control. They were voiceless people compelled to follow a tradition decided by men and for the benefit of men and women are used as social pads to exercise their superiority. When Tashi's father said a woman always has someone to take care of her, it is questionable because one part of them does not want women to rise but another part says they are their protectors. The sense of hierarchy is profoundly explained in the following lines.

There is a way that the men speak to women that reminds too much of Pa. They listen (146) just long enough to issue instructions. They don't even look at women when women are speaking. They look at the ground and bend their heads toward the ground. The women also do not 'look in a man's face' as they say. To 'look in a man's face' is a brazen thing to do. They look instead at his feet or his knees. And what can I say to this? Again, it is our own behavior around Pa (146-147).

Celie once mentioned how Mr Albert always looked at her as if he was looking at earth, something that has no value. This is the double face of patriarchy how men justify their actions of domination by focusing on their male prowess and the physical inferiority of women. This hypocrisy is also the same mindset which decides what a woman must do to her basic entitlement of life. The andro-centric rule of how "If he accuses one of his wives of witchcraft or infidelity, she can be killed" (151) is framed by men. If there was any rule or tradition that benefitted men, it was framed by them. Women are at disadvantage here because it is the men who make the rules and bind them under the same. Women here are no different than the caged bulls in *The Sun also Rises* whose lives depended on the matadors. Their roles are circumscribed to function and respond to the enslaver's wants and needs.

A close study of the three homes under purview brings to us the conceptual framework of how one sees the world and the world around them. The domestic space is the circumscribed space of women where their growth and mobility is demarcated and scrutinized. Any sort of

abridgement is judged as renegacy. According to Karen Warren, some types of conceptual frameworks are oppressive.

A conceptual framework is a set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world. A conceptual framework functions as a socially constructed lens through which one perceives reality. It is affected and shaped by such factors as sex- gender, race/ethnicity, class, age, affectional orientation, marital status, religion, nationality, colonial influences, and culture (Warren 46).

The conceptual framework analyzed in Chapter II was the colonizer's western view. This chapter and the corresponding chapters each study gender based and white man's exploitative mindsets. As Warren explains, these are not inherent in nature. They are socially constructed and brought about by divisive forms like race and gender, etc. The kind of conceptual frameworks that circulates in the homes of these coloured people are oppressive and unjustified. For "an oppressive conceptual framework is one that functions to explain, maintain, and justify relationships of unjustified domination and subordination. When an oppressive conceptual framework is patriarchal it functions to justify the subordination of women by men" (Warren 46). There is what Karen Warren calls a strong base of value hierarchal thinking or the up down thinking, "which attributes greater value to that which is higher or the Up, than to that which is lower, or Down" (46). There is a presence of oppositional value dualisms which excludes men from nature, women from men and creates disjuncts which are oppositional. There is a practice of power over power typical of an oppressive conceptual framework. Explicitly we have noticed the practice of privilege like how education is a privilege only for the boys in Olinka. The characters like Mr Albert and Tashi's father justify the logic behind these forms of domination where they either shade the victims or sheep clothe their wolf actions.

#### Patriarchy as an oppressive conceptual framework

Through the reading of the three homes in *The Color Purple* patriarchy can be established the malignant conceptual framework. As seen in the way Harpo practiced the same ideals as his father and Olinka observed the tradition, Patriarchy is seen as a contagious and well practised pattern. It is passed from one head to another and it is an accepted way of thinking among the

people, irrespective of gender. Patriarchy can be considered an oppressive conceptual framework in accordance with what Karen Warren has stated. This way of thinking brings about an up down thinking, value hierarchical thinking, justified logic of domination, a system of privileges and so forth. A close study of the status of coloured women shows us how possibly unfair is patriarchy and how efficacious it is. It is unfair and prejudiced where control and power, malignant forces prevail and this is against the law of nature which dictates man to live inter dependently and stay interconnected.

In the simplest terms yet again, patriarchy is oppressive because it oppresses women for the fate of being born as a woman, and abnormally transfers all power to men, ascribed to them by birth. This form of division is like the social stratifications we find in social evils like caste system. This form of stratification is dangerous for the environment because women are also an integral part of the environment. It abridges the sanctity of harmonious living, mutual respect and co-dependency. These oppressive frameworks are the agents which trigger the mind to enact greater acts of violence extended to animals and nature. Patriarchy gives males an elevated sense of entitled supremacy while legitimizing their disregard for others at the same time. These patterns of thought disperse into bouts of racial discrimination, domestic abuse, gender abuse, and environmental abuse. The domineering attitude of men studied in Chapter II, is validated by this system. These iron faced Olinka patriarchs were also lured by the pull of the white men. The incident of the roofleaf is evident enough how this conceptual framework is detrimental for the environment. Nettie writes to Celie of the story of an Olinka chief who had ulterior motives. It is said that, “he wanted to make more crops so as to use his surplus for trade with the white men on the coast” (137). He usurped a large part of the common land eventually invading the roofleaf region of Olinka. It is said that, “Nobody could remember a time when roofleaf did not exist in overabundant amounts” (137) in Olinka. Unfortunately, a great storm struck the village and to the people’s dismay “there was no longer any roofleaf to be found. Where roofleaf had flourished from time’s beginning, there was the cassava. Millet. Groundnuts” (138). Celie speaks of how she senses man’s attitude toward Nature and in pain and oppression feels interconnected with nature. She writes, “I make myself wood. I say to myself. I sat to myself, Celie, you a tree. That’s how I come to know trees fear men” (23).

Perhaps if the men had believed in the values of each entity and distanced from exercising supremacy perhaps, what happened to their lands and roof leaves would never have happened. The same attitude with which they treated their women, is the same attitude with which the chief pillored the land. In his eyes, his self interest was above his responsibility towards nature, beyond the number of wives he took upon himself to work on his fields, and the harm it could bring to his villagers, and upon himself.

Glimpses of the colonial wave on the land are narrated by Nettie in her letters. In one of her letters to Celie, she wrote about how the whole village of Olinka had become the property of rubber manufacturer in London. Roads were being cleared and forests were being grazed down to turn them into rubber plantations. The white men now altered the natural form of the land. “The ancient, giant mahogany trees, all the trees, the game, everything of the forest was being destroyed, and the land was forced to lie flat... and bare as the palm of his hand” (153). Nettie wrote,

The village is due to be planted in rubber trees this coming season. The Olinka hunting territory has already been destroyed, and men must go farther and farther away to find game. The women spend all their time in the fields, tending their crops and praying. They sing to the earth and to the sky and to their cassava and groundnuts. Songs of love and farewell (156).

Patriarchy is not only hierarchal but it also creates gender roles. The purpose of females was confined to child bearing and housekeeping. The place of a female is debated through the novel. Harpo was baffled by Sofia’s mind and although he loved her, her independence, strong physical built and assertive personality threatened him. When Sofia was intimidated by Mr Albert and accused her of entrapping Harpo by getting pregnant. He tells her, “No need to think I’m gon let my boy marry you just cause you in the family way. He young and limited. Pretty gal like you could put anything over him” (31). To this Sofia replied, “What I need to marry Harpo for? He still living here with you. What food and clothes he git, you buy” (32). She tells him she has a home to go to and Harpo could come to her when he was free. Harpo and Sofia reconnected but he was never freed from his father’s teachings. For Sofia she did not necessarily

think her husband was her means to an end. When she wanted to visit her sister, Harpo shouted at her.

I tell her she can't be all the time going to visit her sister. Us married now, I tell her. Your place is here with the children. She say, I'll take the children with me. I say, your place is with me. She say, You want to come? She keep primping in front the glass, getting the children ready at the same time (35).

Sofia refused to let Harpo chain her down to a single delineating role and to be subservient to her husband like as if marriage meant she became his property. Sofia is an example of Walker's emergent woman. She was not a product of just anything. She had emerged from a dark experience and this is what Mr Albert also admires in both her and Shug.

She say, All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men. But I thought I'd have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I loves Harpo, she say. God knows I do. But I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me (39).

This also breathes black hierarchy; it was not a myth. Hierarchy existed with double standards. The black community opposed racism but in their domestic space, they were practicing the same. Women writers captured this in their writing. Chandrika Shetty wrote,

These women writers had to struggle against the confines of race and sex for both freedom and selfhood... but the fighting spirit of these black women writers endured against all adversities and they exposed their trauma through their writing...the black woman writer chose to make a discourse of her own experiences, and this led to a strong correlation between the emergence of the woman characters in the fiction of these writers (72- 73).

The female black writers created characters from whom the imagination could be renewed and the blue eyes would not be the only story they know about. The community could now see strong women standing on their own feet, asserting their own identities and saying no to domestic abuse. In this new narrative, Shug Avery surpasses the poles set for women. She is



Walker's womanist. Storytelling is central to the African American culture. Literary voices of the twentieth century used this tool to construct the identities of women. The narratives do not just have strong women, it also shows how a woman who possesses the qualities in the likes of Sophia and Shug are valued and appreciated. When Celie asked Mr Albert tells of what he loves about Shug Avery he replied,

He say he love her style. He say to tell the truth, Shug act more manly than most men. I mean she upright, honest. Speak of her mind and the devil take the hindmost, he say. You know Shug will fight, he say. Just like Sofia. She bound to live her life and be herself no matter what... Sofia and Shug not like men, he say, but they not like women either...They hold their own, he say. Its different. What I love best bout Shug's eyes you know she been where she been, seen what she seen, did what she did. And now she know (244).

Shug is never judged for her decisions in life. She is valued for her experience and she acts as a catalyst for Celie's self emancipation and transformation. All along it was not just the patriarchal mental framework but Celie's choice to allow it to oppress her. These women also show economic independence by making their own living. When Celie makes pants for women, Mr Albert was not too happy about it. His dualistic mindset is seen when he yet again tried to divide the identity of men and women. "Men and women not suppose to wear the same thing, he said. Men suppose to wear the pants" (246).

Walker's stories celebrate the rich tradition of African handicrafts and recognize women as artists. Shug Avery is the artist in the new age. In *The Temple of my Familiar*, Zedé is also an artist who sews capes with feathers. So also Lissie. Walker uses the motif of the quilt in her novels to represent this tradition. The people of Olinka made tribal quilts "known for their beautiful cotton fabric which they hand-weave and dye with berries, clay, indigo and tree bark"(143). The roofleafs and these tribal quilts represent how the Olinka community was entwined with nature in their material culture as well. The quilt also represents the sorority among black women and the bond between a mother and a daughter. Every black woman is a daughter and the quilt is a symbol of their collective history. In the turmoil of their existence, the dyad had only each other to keep their lives going. This mother-daughter relationship then

becomes a powerful cord (Cole xiii). This is witnessed in the novel with Celie and Nettie how they supported each other over the years through the art of letter writing. The bond of Shug with Celie also becomes the source of her enlightenment and the strength she needed to emerge from the black pool of oppression. “For Walker, the pieced quilt is an emblem of a universalist, interracial, and the intertextual tradition. It brings together elements from American and African history” (Shetty 81). Similarly, Samuel also remarks on the close knitted friendship of women in Olinka (150).

A reading of *The Color Purple* brings to an understanding the exclusionist attitude that sets man on a central role. The concept of the other is deep seated and protected under the age long established and accepted system, that is, patriarchy. It is this system comfortably set to the convenience of man which stops any other contributing member, sex or entity to gain in importance. Therefore, as Warren suggested the same conceptual framework is what translates into our relationship with our environment and this must be done away with. It calls for a fresh system of equality and to do away with this system of unjustified oppression.

Walker promotes an alternate system she calls womanism through Shug Avery. It is a call for integration and inclusion. Everyone is the same beneath, but hides of patriarchy worn over the years have grown into the skin of people. Walker through Shug’s character says that God is found in nature and not in the prejudiced bible of the white men. She tells that her first step in moving closer to finding god was by connecting with nature. This perspective states that everything is interconnected and organically unified.

Here’s the thing, say Shug. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifest itself even if you not looking, or don’t know what you looking for... I believe God is everything, say Shug. Everything that is or ever was or ever will be. And when you can feel that and be happy to feel that, you have found it... She say, my first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But oneday when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to: that

feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed (176).

This view does not discriminate anyone but instead as Walker continued, “I think it pisses God off if you walk by the colour purple in a field somewhere and don’t notice it...People think pleasing God is all God care about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back” (177). This ecological message in the novel presents nature as a benevolent entity ever present help for man. The conclusion it makes is that, “Man corrupt everything” (177).

### 3.3.1 Bringing wholeness in Alice Walker’s *The Temple of My Familiar*

History can be understood as an aggregate of past events, a set of events involving an entity or a record/ narrative description of past events. However, in the truest sense, history remains only half told, subjective and one tracked. The greatest drawback of history being that it had been the privilege of only a few white men, who accordingly have interpreted gender, culture, beliefs, traditions and historical events from their limited perspectives, which remained saturated with their experiences overshadowing the experiences of others. It is undeniable how stories of the colonized, the weaker sex as they formulated or the smaller race and the minorities have failed to receive any significant recognition in written accounts, which albeit suffered from omissions, misrepresentations, fabrications, and threatened of being obscured.

The need of the hour for all the unrepresented, marginalized voices like the coloured people, the Diaspora writers, the subaltern voices and the post colonial native writers was then to begin a new journey of retelling their individual stories. It was necessary for them to construct their own presence and experiences into history. To reiterate, in 2009, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author at the TED talks delivered a powerful speech on “The Danger of a Single Story”. She stressed on how vulnerable it is to rely on one single story, which leads to stereotyping and a misunderstanding of others. This speech was in context of how coloured people like her in Western societies are misrepresented, owing to a lack of narratives. She says that the point is not to turn a blind eye toward all that has been accounted, but, to have a balance of stories as in the tradition of Chinua Achebe. This balance can only be ushered in through storytellers. Single stories are also detrimental in a sense that it empowers the oppressor and

silence only justifies their actions, and the most corrosive would that it crystallizes in time into social value systems which then becomes a boulder too hard to be challenged. This is the reason why stories are so powerful and we must never fall into vulnerability and never underestimate the magnitude of it.

### Why Ecofeminism?

It is through stories that survived or was told that has created a rift between people, sexes and most importantly with Nature. Ecofeminism is comprehensive and relevant in restoring the balance of stories because, it “is a call to thoughtful integration of what has been separated: nature and culture, mind and body, male and female, reason and feeling, theory and practice” (Botzler 470). Ecofeminism, which comes under the broad wing of Ecocriticism is a generic feminist approach of interpreting ecology. Ecofeminism influenced a contemporary genre of Ecofiction called ‘Ecofeminist Fiction’ post 1970’s during the flowering of Ecofiction (as classified by Jim Dwyer in his book *Where the Wild Books are, A Field Guide to Ecofiction*). Ecofeminism calls on integration with natural history as well, because “When we set ourselves apart from nature, we disembody human experience and sever it from an organic context. This means that we stop being aware of the shapings and natural containment that a particular environment places around human practices and social structures” (Lahar 96).

Ecofeminism also opposes the act of marginalizing people and Nature out of history. Stephanie Lahar in her essay, “Roots: Rejoining Natural and Social History” writes “History has rendered women and most non-European, non- privileged people invisible or despicable, destroying identities and cultures. Invisibility and violence are strangely and intimately related; refusing to perceive or acknowledge another person is one end of a continuum whose other is murder and genocide” (93). Lahar makes a very radical but substantial point by stating that depriving people of their cultural histories is as unjustified as genocide and as equivalent to it. Because the very act of hiding people from history is an act of discrimination, an act of cruelty, and interplay of power.

Ecofeminism emphasizes on retelling earth stories to bring about a wholeness “because history has made the nonhuman environment invisible, we do not understand the ecological impact of our social choices, nor how they will come back to haunt us” (Lahar 99). If as Gerda

Lerner stated “recorded and interpreted past of the human race is only a partial record, in that it omits the past of half of humankind, and it is distorted, in that it tells the story from the viewpoint of the male half of humanity only” (16). If it is so then, writing off earth stories and our natural heritage reduces us to the catastrophe of half told stories and a state of ignorance arrogance.

### 3.3.2 Lack of models and lost Mothers

With the coming of age of gender consciousness, the plight and identity of black women became a growing concern for African American novelists. In the book *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* edited by Cathy N Davidson and E.M. Broner, the authors show how history has a long tradition of lost mothers, depriving women a lack of models. They have assessed how from an all powerful Goddess, mothers have been faded in literature to the point of absent mothers. The main reason for the fall out is attributed to a lack of stories and the male monopoly over written narratives (2-5). Likewise, Alice Walker in her book *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* talks about how black women were presented only as abused and mutilated creatures, who lived their lives without a hope and devoid of it. In the book, African-American Poet Jean Toomer gives an account of his experience as he walked through the South in the early twenties. He observed that, “black women whose spirituality was so intense, so deep, so unconscious, that they were themselves unaware of the richness they held. They stumbled blindly through their lives: creatures so abused and mutilated in body, so dimmed and confused by pain, that they considered themselves unworthy even of hope.” (232). The story Toomer tells us here is of crazy, loony, pitiful’ coloured women who with so much of recharged potentials but led an unexpressed existence “the “God” that was in their gaze was as mute as a great stone leading lives and dreaming dreams nobody could comprehend. And when these women died, all that remained was emptiness. This set the pattern for many coloured women. Walker, as she studied the works of other black writers she found what she calls ‘contrary instincts’ and this was an impact of a lack of models resulting from the absence of narratives. Walker redefines the black woman’s identity by citing her mother’s life, and the rich cultural tradition. Walker focuses on mothers and now each one of them may not have a name to a book or literature but each one is a creative artist. The art they left behind like the quilt in the museum or Walker’s mothers garden is a testimony that counters Toomer’s observation that black women’s lives were so

doomed. The previous section on *The Color Purple* has shown how women are projected as artists. In fact, Walker wrote, “black Southern writers owe their clarity of vision to parents who refused to diminish themselves as human beings by succumbing to racism...Blindness about other human beings, especially for a writer, is equivalent to death” (19). This was supposed to be about themselves and not simply their pitiable stories. The lost mothers and grandmothers in literature who were supposed to be models, Walker observes that folklore calls them “the mule of the world”, “Matriarchs”, “Superwomen”, “Mean and Evil Bitches”, “Castraters” and “Sapphire’s Mama” but other than that, they do not have a name to history. It is generalization, a stereotyping, but without an individual identity. She is born and buried as a mother/ wife / daughter. Walker challenges this and writes about the moral responsibility they have towards their culture. She justifies, “We are a people. A people who do not throw their geniuses away. And if they are thrown away, it is our duty as artist and as witnesses for the future to collect them again for the sake of our children, and, if necessary, bone by bone” (Walker 92).

Alice Walker wrote about the importance of storytelling in bringing wholeness and for exploring their identity. She establishes story tellers as artists who are messengers to the world. The earlier literature embodying shame of being coloured and confusion in the slave narrative is because they did not have a model to emulate or follow. The stories of slavery, oppression and abuse were all they knew of themselves. Walker’s justification to this is that, because they were artists, as each African is, coming from a rich tradition of storytelling, the sheer ignorance of their history made them unable to release their creative spirit and thus, waned their lives away. Walker yet again justifies that not all is lost because the legacy of creativity has been passed on from mothers to daughters and so on. Black women even suffered attacks from coloured male authors when they wrote about their domestic abuse. Their lives in general and their maternal essence were demeaned. The natural process of giving birth to children is powerful and creative. This was subverted by the menfolk as a weakness and as observed in *The Color Purple*, women were kept at home and their roles were delimited to child bearing and rearing. In the Renaissance that Walker ushers in, she calls mothers- Creators. They are wired to create once again, and called the nurturers of life. And unless she creates as an artist, she is unable to attain fullness of her womanhood or of the self. According to Walker, the act of storytelling is like saving lives and it is done because they care about the ordinary human beings and know the value of each of their individual experiences. And it is this knowledge and care that makes them save their own

lives (Walker 14). Walker discovers the real artist in her mother, after many years as she recalled what kind of a garden her mother kept. She filled the deep sufferings in their lives with a touch of art through her flowers which was her creation space. Walker's memory as she looked back, then was not filled with one dark stroke of memory but coloured with the different flowers her mother kept. This spirit of resistance and the determination to remain true to the self is what the modern writers like Walker show in their novels through the strong characters she creates.

### 3.3.3 Walker's Womanism and wholeness

The same integrated status attained through a retelling of stories is termed as wholeness by Walker. According to her, a womanist is a woman who,

Loves other women, sexually and/ or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/ or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist... Traditionally capable/ Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless./ Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender" (Walker xi-xii).

In *The Temple of my Familiar*, Walker reintroduces Shug Avery from her book *The Color Purple*. Shug is Walker's ideal woman, who possesses all the qualities of a womanist. Her understanding of finding god and the concept of an integration is further developed here. Shug's pamphlet called 'The Gospel According to Shug' is a womanist propaganda to create a new set of values that does not disregard anyone or anything, but supports a pursuit of wholeness as a human and with the universe. To quote a few lines,

Helped are those who find something in Creation to admire each and every hour./  
Helped are those who love the stranger; in this they reflect the heart of the Creator  
and that of the Mother./ Helped are those who love the entire cosmos rather than  
their own tiny country, city, or farm, for to them will be shown the unbroken web

of life and the meaning of infinity./ Helped are those who create anything at all, for they shall relive the thrill of their own conception, and realize a partnership in the creation of the Universe that keeps them responsible and cheerful./ Helped are those who love the Earth, their mother, and who willingly suffer that she may not die;/ Helped are those whose every act is a prayer for harmony in the Universe, for they are the restorers of balance to our planet./ Helped are those who love all the colors of all the human beings, as they love all the colors of animals and plants; none of their children, nor any of their ancestors, nor any parts of themselves, shall be hidden from them.” (289-291).

This novel was published in 1989, and Walker called it “a romance” of the last five hundred thousand years. It is considered a sequel to her novel *The Color Purple*. *The Temple of my Familiar*, hereon, *TTOMF*, is Walker’s attempt to retell the rich oral tradition of her ancestors and in doing so promotes the above propaganda on womanism. It is narrated by multiple voices. The novel tells the stories of a generation of people displaced and dislocated in time. It is through the medium of storytelling and stories that the novel becomes a piece and the characters also reconciles with their lives. The novel is female centric with story tellers like Lissie, Zede, Hal, Nzingha. Women are significant story tellers because,

Like men, women are and always have been actors and agents in history. Since women are half and sometimes more than half of humankind, they always have shared the world and its work equally with men. Women are and have been central, not marginal, to the making of society and to the building of civilization. Women have also shared with men in preserving collective memory, which shapes the past into cultural tradition, provides the link between generations, and connects past and future. This oral tradition was kept alive in poem and myth, which both men and women created and preserved (Lerner 16).

*TTOMF* has no time frame and has a most fantastical fluidity in terms of execution. Lissie, is symbolic of a story, that which makes up the history. Her name Lissie meant “the one who remembers everything” (52). She is a lot of things. She is a white man, a black person, an animal, a familiar of animal, she is a goddess, she is everything and has lived thousands of years. And even after her death, stories continue through Hal and her art.



And I only came to understand myself- at first it frightened me to see myself as so many different people!- after years of memory excavation and exploration, years of understanding I'm not like most other people, years of anger and confusion over this, years of fighting everyone! But finally it dawned on me that memory and the photographs corroborated each other exactly. I had been those people, and they were still somewhere inside of me (*TTOMF* 92).

This baffled Lissie initially because each photograph Henry Laytrum took of her came out differently. Lissie says this eventually made her understand herself. It was within her; all the stories they knew was shelved within her. It is through the photographs that she is reminded of her identities. She is an embodiment of history herself and she relives those memories.

Suwelo remembered Mr Hal's remark: Lissie is a lot of women,' and expected to see a lot of pictures of the same woman dressed to make herself appear different; and it was true, in each picture the chair- one of those in the photograph left behind- was the same, and the outfit varied greatly. What he saw, though, were thirteen pictures of thirteen entirely different women. One seemed tall, another very short, one light skinned, with light eyes, another dark with eyes like obsidian. One had hair to her waist and another has hardly enough to cover her skull. One appeared acrobatic, healthy, and glowing. Another seemed crippled and barely ambulatory (*TTOMF* 91).

Arveyda is an artist, a Griot in the novel. He comes in contact with Carlotta and Zedé when he ordered one of her capes. Arveyda was a rock star of the 60's. He realized his attraction towards Zedé and becomes a bridge to his wife Carlotta and her mother. As he continued to wear capes and clothes made by Zedé, people nicknamed him Bird. He says that he is attracted to Zedé because she has lived through so many ages. He is an artist and he becomes a messenger who acts as a filler in the open tales of the mother-daughter duo. Arveyda's tells Carlotta,

It does not matter if you love me or not... But I want to give you the gift of knowing your mother- which I don't think you would have without me, because she couldn't tell you herself; she was too ashamed- and I wanted to give to you

exactly what I wish someone could give to me, and what since my mother is dead, no one ever can (*TTOMF* 123).

Arveyda passes a very crucial message through his character. Just as he never got his whole story as his mother died, there is a chance of a story dying and never having another to tell it. The next aspect is about the responsibility of storytellers. Stories are passed on from one person to another. If the storyteller does not carry out his responsibility of telling the story, as in Carlotta's case, things would remain unresolved and the gift of knowing will be missed out. The novel begins with a fragmented story; a presumed history; a history-less plot. It is but through storytelling, all those dots are connected and it ends with redemption and liberation of the self; rediscovery of one's past; an admiration for mothers; reconciliation and a new found realization for academicians like Carlotta and Suwelo.

3.4 Story telling is indeed the backbone of African American history. It is owing to storytelling that issues about their identity and discrimination have come to light. Walker *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens* felt that the experience of each human being was valuable, and in "danger of being misrepresented, distorted or lost" (13). To maintain the continuity is more important. There is no ordinary or extraordinary aspect, all stories matter. Most importantly, it was crucial to tell the story from a black perspective. Chapter IV on Australian Ecofiction ruminates on the effect of absence of insider story tellers. Walker strongly felt the need to erect new stones and inscribe them with the lost names as she does for Zora Neale Hurston (107).

In *TTOMF*, Walker succinctly tries to also retell stories of the past from a womanist perspective. Stories are redemptive. At the same time, a retelling is necessary because a woman's share to her own story was never even accounted; so also nature. History can be subjective. For,

Not only have historians been men, but they have been particularly privileged men who have generally recorded events from the point of view of a small elite group. Women are not the only ones who are missing from their accounts. People of colour in the West, non-Western peoples, and poor people are also absent as historical subjects (Lahar 93).

In the novel *The Temple of My Familiar* through Lissie's retelling of the story to Suwelo, she revives the African matriarchal history which as mentioned before were silenced by the black male writers. In a series of stories, Lissie narrates the different roles she incarnated as in her past life.

#### 3.4.1 Retelling the stories: challenging accepted barriers

A major finding in this novel is that, one of the determining factors for sidelining women in literature is owing to the advent of Monotheism. In Christianity, men were considered to be closer to God and women were of lesser significance. *The Temple of My Familiar* retells the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. Alice Walker through a dream-memory retells how Lissie is reincarnated as Adam. In this tale, a woman's familiar is a snake.

Her own familiar, a serpent, slid alongside us. Serpents then were different than they are now, Suwelo. Of course, almost everything that was once free is different today. Her familiar, whom my friend called Ba, was about the thickness of a slender person's arm and had small wheel-like extendable feet (363).

Upon realizing his difference, he gets furious on his companion, Eve, causing her familiar snake to be frustrated. As he started running after the girl, the snake who was trying to protect her gets killed. The realization that angered Adam so much was that, he was differently coloured.

And she scooped up a handful of water and vigorously scrubbed my face; then we bent down over the water, and there my friend was, looking very much like my mother and her mother and the sisters and brothers and aunts of the village- all browns and blacks, with big dark eyes. And there was I- a ghost... I did look as though I had no skin (*TTOMF* 365).

In this retelling, Lissie tells Suwelo that it was from the giant apes they learned how to mourn and feel grief (365). Husa, the lion is shown as an "angel of mercy" (367), the only one who ended to the man in his self exile. This story establishes the white man for the downfall and the serpent Ba emerges as a noble creature who was the girl's protector and familiar.

In *The Color Purple*, Shug shares her journey of finding God. And in many cases, looking back at the black history, religion was manipulated by the white men to control the

blacks. Walker on role reversing the story of the man and the woman is simply an act of resistance to show that a story could have another side to it and how through a retelling, an entire belief system can be overturned.

This story subversion is explicated through the story of Medusa. The stories of Medusa that have survived through western civilization project an evil goddess. As the story of creation in the Bible, Walker retells the other side of the Medusa Perseus slayed. Medusa is shown evil who stones anyone who looks her way. Medusa is associated with a head full of snakes in place of hair. According to Walker this has been misunderstood for snakes, “everywhere in Africa a symbol of fertility and wisdom- and there were even two snakes floating about the corners of her mouth” (269). The idea of a woman being a goddess to life and nature was one of the greatest strength for women. So what the men did was that, they tried to make the idea of goddess mythical.

Because she is an angel. She is the mother of Christian angels. She is Isis, mother of Horus, sister and lover of Osiris, Goddess of Egypt. The Goddess who, long before she became Isis, was known all over Africa as simply the Great Mother, Creator of All, Protector of All, the Keeper of the Earth. The Goddess (269).

From the position of a loving mother and goddess, the story of Medusa was interpolated by western world view and fabricated as a demon. The symbolism of snakes as in the story of Adam and Even is antagonized. She was reduced to a deadly entity and her maternal trait was completely silenced.

In an account given by Zedé, she shares how her mother taught her the “history of civilization” (45). She had also learned the art of making clothes and capes with feathers from her mother. In this account it is said that, once upon a time, only women were the priests. It was actually the men who made them priests when they learned that women could produce. These women were special women who were ahead of the men in everything. “Woman was entirely used to herself, while man was still infatuated with his relative newness. Woman was already into adornment. In truth, she was already into high fashion!” (49). Men were better at hunting because women did not give much interest. Hunting is seen as a symbol of masculinity. Here Walker subverts it by saying “women had found they could live quite well on foods other than

meat” (50). The men eventually realized how women birthed and they started cutting off their genitals to imitate the women, and become the priests. This is how men learnt to castrate themselves according to Walker. This story shows how men rebelled when they had to bow down to women.

In another dream sequence Lessie dreamt that she was showing Suwelo her temple. She incarnates as an ancient African goddess. This is the description of the temple of her familiar.

I don't where it was, but it was a simple square one-room structure, very adorable or Southwestern- looking, with poles jutting out at the ceiling line and the windows set in deep. It was painted a rich dust coral and there were lots of designs- many turquoise and deep blue, like Native American symbols for rain and storm- painted around the top. It was beautiful, though small, and I remembered going there for the ceremonies dressed in a long white cotton robe (118).

Even in this story, the woman's familiar is an animal. It was “a small, incredibly beautiful creature that was part bird, for it was feathered, part fish, for it could swim and had a somewhat fish/ bird shape, and part reptile, for it scooted about like geckoes do, and it was all over the place... its movements were graceful and clever, its expression mischievous and full of humour” (118). In this Suwelo is seen as a white man. Lissie entraps her familiar and makes it suffer and destroyed her relationship with her familiar.

For I understood quite well by now that all of this activity on the familiar's part was about freedom, and that by my actions I was destroying our relationship... and suddenly there were dozens of your people, white people, standing about watching this contest- I next imprisoned my beautiful little familiar under a metal washtub. I paid little attention to the coldness or the snow and did not even think how cruel and torturous for it this would be (119).

This temple was a sacred place. The temple of the goddess and her familiar (who represents the collective identity of all creatures) is raided when she gives in to the white men. Lissie says she betrayed her own familiar out of pride. This remembrance indicates the familiar history with

nature. She also incorporates the motif of the Native Americans to show how nature was given up when the white men came and destroyed it.

In another dream memory, Lissie saw that they were cousins of animals. And they lived together as a family. “There was no violence in them- that is to say, they did not initiate it, even only thoughtfulness” (86). Lissie recollects how their fathers came with sticks and killed them. This story shows how the animals lost trust in humans and the land became a commodity.

It was this way of living that gradually took hold in all the groups of people living in the forest, at least for a very long time, until the idea of ownership- which grew out of the way the forest now began to be viewed as something cut into pieces that belonged to this tribe or that- came into human arrangements (87).

Lissie’s storytelling of the story to Suwelo revives African Matriarchal history which were stacked away by the black writers. Through the various stories, the rich tradition of the exotic past is revived. The stories also bear proof of how the dominant western view interfered with their stories. Lissie wrote of the white men’s teachings,

The religion I was taught as a child, growing up on the island... is a thing that causes people to try up the earth, since we were taught “everything is for man” while man was never asked to be for anything in particular (*TTOMF* 196).

Fanny’s postcard to the nuns is a strong message Walker is giving to the readers. Men searches for answers and goodness in temples but according to her,

Goddess is not confined in the monuments men allegedly create for her to dwell in, and which are really erected to themselves. That She the spirit of Mothering, of Creating, of Blessing and Protecting All- lives within us, and is confined neither or shrines nor to any particular age (270).

Generally those who are written out of history are those who suffer at the hands of dominant groups. Ecofeminism which strives to end all forms of domination and oppression argues that the type of historical fabrications are detrimental because it leads to “perpetual distancing and isolation of different peoples from each other, but also the habits of dualistic thought that separate human society from nature” (Lahar 96). The views and opinions of people

have created a path of wind in the narratives. The policy of exclusivity and anthropocentric storytelling must be transcended to a more integrative system of writing history. As Walker also envisions in her womanist theory, wholeness must be pursued. “One way to approach history is to begin with a particular event or phenomenon and follow its paths backward and forward, exploring nonhuman and human forces that acted upon and resulted from it” (Lahar 100).

Nothing is nature is by itself, we live for each other. We reciprocate to each other’s existence. A collective locus of identity will be able to maintain a sustainable relationship between man and non human environment. In order to gain insight to a more meaningful life, one needs to have a clear idea of the past.

### 3.5 Moral ethics in *The Old Man and the Sea*

Chapter I have laid down the premise that man and nature are part of a single woven community and inmates of one home- Earth. In order for the various life forms to co-exist as well as thrive, a certain amount of accountability and consideration is required. This section will study the question of morality taking into consideration Ernest Hemingway who is America’s acclaimed Nobel laureate for bringing out one of the century’s best nature novels *The Old Man and the Sea*. As we know, animal taming and violence has been part of human lives right from the agricultural and pastoral age. Man has been dependent on nature for food and hunting was a practical role of man. The constitution of our ecosystem requires a chartered systematic form of living. For any form of change in a human it begins with eco- awareness and building that into our conscience. This in turn provokes sensitivity toward our environment.

*The Old man and the Sea* is set in Cuba where Hemingway spent a large part of his life (30 years on and off). This was a comeback novel after years of unanticipated unpopular publications and also ironically his last work before he ended his life. He celebrates nature and fishing as an art in the novel which was one of his favorite past times and it also beheld a spiritual meaning to him.

*The Old Man and the Sea* is a tale of an old fisherman by the name of Santiago who had been out in the Gulf Stream for eighty four days without any luck. Santiago was old and shriveled but he was fascinated by the sea and his eyes “were the same colour as the sea and

were cheerful and undefeated” (4). Santiago loved the life forms around and in his hour of crisis, his composure and unwavering reverence for creation is commendable. “He loved green turtles and hawks-bills with their elegance and speed and their great value” (25). Santiago communicates with the birds and fishes of the sea. He does not grow anxious over his luck but calmly reposes in his skimmer. He believed in the goodness of the sea and provision and never grumbled about his ill luck. Santiago was a fisherman but he is not a commercial fisherman. His fishing involved rowing out in his skimmer and setting the baiting lines and waiting for the fishes. Fish forms an essential part of the diet for the people living in the coastal areas. They live in close proximity with nature and their interaction with nature is on a daily basis. Therefore, fishermen like Santiago fish for a living and for food but they do not destroy the ecosystem nor pollute the sea. They instead nurtured the sea as if it were a woman, the love of their life. Santiago “always thought of the sea as *la mar* which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman” (19). There were however some younger fishermen who had switched to relying on floating buoys from lines and used motor boats. Hemingway here brings about the difference between a manual fisherman and fishermen who were driven materialistically. The attitude is no longer of nurturing the sea. The amount of effort is lessened for them, and their goal is now driven by gains. The sense of gratification Santiago has for the sea, his awareness of the power of nature and affinity with the sea are all subverted by this upcoming generation of fishermen who jeopardised the traditional essence of fishing.

Some of the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motor- boats, bought when the shark livers had brought much money, spoke of her as *el mar* which is masculine. They spoke of her as a contestant or a place or even an enemy. But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things, it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought (20).

The old man finally lands upon a big marlin. But his journey was not over. He had to hold the line across his shoulder and feel the weight of the marlin. He suffered through various cramps



and body scarring. He and his boy Manolin, who used to sail with him had once hooked a female marlin and separated her from her companion, the male marlin. He tells of the male marlin,

When once, through my treachery, it had been necessary to him to make a choice... His choice had been stay in the deep dark water far out beyond all snares and traps and treacheries. My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world (36).

He felt that they had once again been rejoined and they were both in the same state of helplessness with no one to help them. Here Santiago, calls the act of fishermen using food as bait to hook fishes as “treachery” and he takes his isolated and entrapped state as a penance for his misdeed. He questions whether he should have ever become a fishermen but he realizes he was born for it and his present suffering was just a price for his own acts of treachery.

He looked across the sea and knew how alone he was now. But he could see the prisms in the deep dark water and the line stretching ahead and the strange undulation of the calm. The clouds were building up now for the trade wind and he looked ahead and saw a flight of wild ducks etching themselves against the sky over the water, then blurring, then etching again and he knew no man was ever alone on the sea (45).

In the moments that passed after hooking the marlin, Santiago continuously empathized with the marlin while he also suffered under the weight of the marlin and wonders if he is worthy of the great Marlin.

I must have confidence and I must be worthy of the great DiMaggio who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur in his heel. What is a bone spur? he asked himself... We do not have them. Can it be as painful as the spur of a fighting cock in one's heel? I do not think I could endure that or the loss of the eye and of both eyes and continue to fight as the fighting cocks do. Man is not much beside the great birds and beasts. Still I would rather be that beast down there in the darkness of the sea (51).

Here, Hemingway is making a point on how humans may empathize with creatures and nature but it can never be fully comprehended because the biological set up and needs are different. The fault of human beings lies in trying to correct nature or reshape nature when it is already in perfect harmony. Firstly, man can never fully perceive the unique species and their coordination and most importantly, man's effort to help perpetuate the course of nature is a sham.

Santiago muses on the cruelty of human nature. He appreciates and understands the value of each entity. He said, "Most people are heartless about turtles because a turtle's heart will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered" (25). Although Hemingway does not give a detailed picture of animal butchering like in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), he subtly insinuates about the shark killing activities that was taking place. Santiago "drank a cup of shark oil each day from the big drum in the shack where many of the fishermen kept their gear...Most fishermen hated the taste...it was very good against all colds and grippes and it was good for the eyes (26). It is said that shark liver oil was used for centuries as a remedy to heal wounds and for treating various health ailments. In the small cosmos of Santiago's world, as mentioned earlier, the people had tasted the sweet monetary returns from supplying shark livers, so much so they were using tool and modern implements to carry out the shark killing. Twentieth century saw the unprecedented growth of shark killing across the coastal regions of the world.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the oil was used to fuel lamps before it was replaced by petroleum. Other uses, however, were found for the shark liver oil/ The oil contains squalene, a property that helped in the manufacture of industrial lubricants and, at the other end of the scale, cosmetics, perfume and artificial silk (McKenzie n.pag).

Sharks were also harvested for their skin and also for manufacturing fishmeal for livestock. The process of harvesting is an amplified act of cruelty. It was getting out of control and "across the whole of the North East Atlantic, there was a record 4,500 basking sharks caught in 1960" (McKenzie n.pag).

As more time passed, Santiago could feel the surmounting pressure on him and he is aware of his position in nature. Santiago's problem of not catching a fish for eighty four consecutive days is not the problem anymore. The focus is on the swaying of the fish and

Santiago's efforts to save the marlin from the sharks. He is not presented as a hunter but as an equal entity in nature fighting for his own life and food. As the fish bled, Santiago was also wounded. "The speed of the line was cutting his hands badly but he had always known this would happen and he tried to keep the cutting across the calloused parts and not let the line slip into the palm or cut the fingers" (63). He grew faint after passing three days in the sea without any proper food and the strain of holding on to the fish. Santiago communicates with the fish as if he were a human.

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who (71).

As he reached the shores of his fishing town, only the "white naked line of his backbone and the dark mass of the head" (94) remained.

The fishing community is not explored. The readers set sail together with Santiago and as he maneuvers his way the moral ethics and man's role in the wide mysterious expanse of nature is dexterously depicted. Modern criticism weighs the journey of Santiago as man's struggle against nature. While another companion could have eased the social animal's isolation and eased the job, it is the most natural description of man in nature. In the bosom of nature whether it was the marlin, sharks or Santiago, they were all fighting for their own needs and resisting the other forces. For Santiago, he despises the *aqua mala* because its sting came like a poison to him. He calls them "the falsest things in the sea and the old man loved to see the big sea turtles eating them" (25).

This novel was published in the year 1952. It is the post world war period and modernization was peaking. America had emerged as the world super power and advancing towards a stronger economy. The time signature is left to the imagination of reader however, there is mention of commercial activities seeping into Santiago's world. Santiago sees an aeroplane and wonders how strange it must be like to fly so high. Although the novella establishes Hemingway's ethical values, there are some instances where he subtly displays human superiority. He called the *Aqua mala* a whore and calls the other life forms beasts. During the Enlightenment, Renes Descartes's slogan "I think therefore I am" generated dualism in the

minds of people. This theory stated that man could think and rationalize and this has placed him on a higher plane above all forms of life. It also gave out an idea that animals could not think. When he catches hold of the marlin, he shows this attitude of superiority and as man being the master. He said,

He is a great fish and I must convince him, he thought. I must never let him learn his strength nor what he could do if he made his run. If I were him I would put everything now and go until something broke. But, thank God, they are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and more able (47).

However, when Santiago is counter attacked by a fiercer force of the sharks, he displays the same superiority over them and momentarily thinks man may not be indestructible but how he is the master of everything.

‘But man is not made for defeat’, he said. ‘A man can be destroyed but not defeated’...The *dentuso* is cruel and able and strong and intelligent. But I was more intelligent than he was. Perhaps not, he thought. Perhaps I was only better armed (80).

Momentarily, he thought that he was more intelligent but he again relapses into the passive mood and says he could only overpower the being with a spear on his head only because he has had a tool. This experience prunes the overbearing anthropocentric tendrils in Santiago and brings him back to the biocentric vision.

There is a vivid ethical exploration in *The Old Man and the Sea*. In this small universe of Gulf Stream, as Santiago waits upon the Marlin, he communicates all life forms, shows his appreciation for nature and empathizes with them. Santiago’s treatment and understanding of nature correlates with Paul W. Taylor’s Biocentric outlook. Santiago is like a man in media res. He is neither the traditional man who worshipped and spiritualized nature nor does he identify himself with the young people who were gravitating towards a more exploitative ideal. He admits that he saw nature without its mysticism but he held on the ethics of respecting nature. His ecological conscience was active and his actions were organized around it. He still held on to the old values he had been told about and practices them religiously. “It was considered a virtue

not to talk unnecessarily at sea and the old man had always respected it” (27). He does not dominate nature as he is fully aware of his position in nature. The plot consists of a series of his own monologues speaking his conscience. He justifies the necessity of killing but does not take a life for personal gain apart for his basic survival needs.

According to Paul W. Taylor, there are four biocentric outlook core beliefs. The first is “the belief that humans are members of the Earth’s community of Life in the same sense and on the same terms in which other living things are members of that community (Taylor 366). The sea is symbolic in *The Old Man and the Sea*. In it is the man in his skimmer, the birds come, the fishes come and we see how they interact together as a community. Santiago looked to the sea as a man would tend to his wife who kept his house. He invites the birds into his skimmer he calls his house. He claims kinship with the fishes. He calls the marlin his friend. He also says, “He is my brother” (44). He constantly interacted with the fish and questioned his own intentions. He could not bring himself to the fact that killing his own brother should be necessary for man and it filled him with sorrow. He praises the dignity of the Marlin.

Then he was sorry for the great fish that had nothing to eat and his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him. How many people will he feed, he thought. But are they worthy to eat him? No, of course not. There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity/ I do not understand these things, he thought. But it is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers (57).

The second belief is “that the human species, along with all other species, are integral elements in a system of interdependence such that the survival of each living thing, as well as its chances of faring well or poorly, is determined not only by the physical conditions of its environment but also by its relations to other living things” (Taylor 366). Santiago questions the need for a brother to kill another brother but he realizes that it is necessary. It shows how man and the animals are all interdependent on each other for their survival. There is no one here who is trying to change or modify the ecosystem and each is left to its own course of development and growth.

Perhaps it was sin to kill the fish. I suppose it was even though I did it to keep me alive and feed many people. But then everything is a sin... You were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish.

He resolves that everything would be a sin if his killing of the fish was a sin. This culminates with the third belief which states “that all organisms are teleological centers of life in the sense that each is a unique individual pursuing its own good in its own way” (Taylor 366). One of the most fascinating aspects about nature is that, creation is designed and each life is made for a purpose. As a fish is born a fish, so also a man and a shark are born into their forms. If the shark lives on the live fishes as Santiago also does, then he concludes that he is also not a scavenger. He justifies that he is unlike the other fishermen who are paid to fish, and he had killed the sharks only in self defense. He further said, “Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive” (82). He relates with the shark and questions how many it has killed so far. Santiago fully asserts his own identity in the sea. He has appreciation of nature. The last belief is “that humans are not inherently superior to other living things” (Taylor 366). He declares, “Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother” (71).

The novel breathes an air of sustainable living and an ethical view point and a large focus is made on the human conscience which guide human actions. He exemplifies the organic unity in nature and peaceful co-existence and mutual respect.

### 3.5.1 The ethic of bullfights in *The Sun also Rises*

Ernest Hemingway wrote *The Sun also Rises* after a series of visits to Spain. The idea of expatriates and Lost Generations comes from his exposure to modernist writers in Paris. He was delegated as a journalist during the Spanish War (1936-1939). The plot is about a group of expatriates from American and Britain visiting Spain to attend the Festival of San Fermín in Pamplona. Hemingway attended the same with his wife Hadley in 1923 where he developed a fascination for bullfighting which is a part of the fest. He thus visited Spain the following year and also in 1925. This time around he brought his friends like in the novel to witness the great festival of San Fermin. Hemingway detested the degradation of the sacred San Fermín simply to one of a tourist playhouse.

### 3.5.2 San Fermín and bullfighting

The festival of San Fermín is a historically rooted festival held in Pamplona, Navarre, Spain from 6<sup>th</sup> July to 14<sup>th</sup> July annually. The festival is named San Fermín in honor of Saint Fermín, one of the patrons of Navarre. Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun also Rises* center on the fiesta and is believed to have introduced the grand festival to the general English speaking community. Today, it is an internationally acclaimed festival which attracts over 1,000,000 visitors every year.

Among the kaleidoscopes of the festival, Running of the bulls and bullfighting forms an integral part of the traditions of San Fermín. Bullfighting was popular from ancient Greek period as reflected in paintings which can be dated to 2000 BC. "Pamplona Bullfights" article by The Running of the Bulls state that "With its roots based in gladiator competitions, bullfighting has evolved into a sort of religion on the Iberian Peninsula and Pamplona shares a part of this deep cultural legacy" (n.pag). The morning of each of the eight day, a running of the bulls or *encierro* or *los toros de san Fermin* running is organized. Six separate bulls are chosen every day to run out from their corral till the Plaza de Toros, the bullfighting stadium of Pamplona. This sprinting sport involves hundreds of people running before the dashing panic stricken bulls. The price of this thrilling sport has resulted in a number of deaths and injuries over the years.

By afternoon, the six bulls are then brought to the arena where a proud matador slays them to appease the jeering crowd and fulfill a tradition. Bullfighting or Corrida is banned across the world except for a few countries like Spain who continue to practice the tradition. An estimate of at least forty eight bulls are massacred every year in the most barbaric manner during the fiesta alone. Bullfighting is mainly opposed for it glorifies masculinity over the suffering of another being; the cruelty involved and the domination of another. Animal rights group PETA explains the excruciating the process of bull killing in their article "What happens During the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona" (n. pag). It is not an equal fight. The bull is weakened by making him run from one end of the arena to the other. When the fatigued bull retreats, a man on a blindfolded horse enters and uses a lance against the bull's back to cause bleeding and further disarm the animal's confidence and strength. More injury is inflicted on the bull with men entering the arena with harpoon like stick heads to scar the bull's back with each movement it

advances. It is in this weakened and defeated state, the matador plunges his sword across the shoulder plunging through the heart of the bull to prove his male prowess. If the bull survives the blow, the matador uses another weapon to attack the spinal cord of the bull to kill it. This wild sport is one of the cornerstones of the fiesta. These corpses are then taken to slaughter houses. An estimate of approximately 250,000 bulls is killed every year during bullfights.

3.5.3 Hemingway presents the other world of animal abuse immensely juxtaposed with the biocentric approach observed in *The Old Man and the Sea*. Jake Barnes, a war veteran narrates the tale of a group of expatriates who goes to partake in the Pamplona Fiesta of San Fermín. The novel is also titled *Fiesta: The Sun also Rises*. Barnes is accompanied by a small group of friends who represent the expatriates of the lost generation. The post war period saw a generation of people “fleeing from political repressions and the nightmare history of post war Europe” (Kirpal 4). Harris, an Englishman Jake runs into tells him, “Really you don’t know how much it means. I’ve not had much fun since the war” (112). The company includes Robert Cohn, a Jew. Who was “once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton” (3). The next character is Lady Brett Ashley, a promiscuous woman who served as a nurse during the war. She is with the Scot Mike Campbell with whom she was going to get married. Along with them is Bill Gorton, an American writer. In the festive atmosphere of the fiesta, the characters smoke and drink to their hearts’ content. The characters in the novel decide to attend the fiesta at Pamplona. Jake puts up at hotel Montoya. Jake informs the readers that, Montoya is a fan of bullfighting- an aficionado.

*Aficion* means passion. An aficionado is one who is passionate about the bullfights. All the good bullfighters stayed at Montoya’s hotel; that is, those with a *Aficion* stayed there. The commercial bullfighters stayed once, perhaps, and then did not come back (115).

The novel explores the heart of this obsession for violence. Montoya and his lodgers took pride in the fact that they loved bullfighting and were set apart from the others. They called themselves the aficionado, the one with passion. The true passion for bullfighting is considered to be only possessed by the brave hearted. For as Jake said, “Somehow it was taken for granted that an American could not have *Aficion*. He might stimulate it or confuse it with excitement, but he could not really have it” (115). The article on “San Fermin’s Dispute: The Symbolic Use of



Bullfighting in *The Sun also Rises*” points out the concept of bullfighting and its relation with male masculinity.

Bullfighting is similarly depicted as an inherently masculine sport. It originates from an ancient rite of passage for boys symbolizing their evolution into young men. The strong and powerful bull is a symbol of masculinity, and its converse, the passive steer, is a symbol of de-masculinization (n.pag).

The male characters all through the novel struggle to assert their masculinity. As people who glorified bullfighting, they considered the steer as an inferior creature and called them old maids as in the extract: “They let the bulls out of the cages one at a time, and they have steers in the corral to receive them and keep them from fighting, and the bulls tear in at the steers and the steers run around like old maids trying to quiet them down...To quiet down the bulls and keep them from breaking their horns against the stone walls, or goring each other” (116). In the universe created by Montoya, aficionados are highly valued and “Montoya could forgive anything of a bullfighter who had *Aficion*. He could forgive attacks of nerves, panic, bad unexplainable actions, all sorts of lapses” (115). Hemingway identifies himself as an aficionado. This segment analyzes what aggravates this appetite for violence in humans. The involvement of male masculinity with this cruel sport make the act more exotic than it really is. The expatriate squalor soaking in misery probably found a cathartic release through this display of violence. The novel reads, You’re an expatriate. You’ve lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working (100). There is indeed “an air of disenchantment, a climate of ennui or boredom, an atmosphere of morbidity, depression or futility that goes counter to the general physical condition of Europe” (Shams 26). The much cherished pride of being an aficionado is actually not a virtue but an obsession that finds gratification in violence and death.

Death is the dominant theme in both *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Sun also Rises*. Ernest Hemingway operated under the Red Cross during World War I and he had encountered brutal death on many occasions as well as grave physical injuries. According to Mark Spilka,

One of the most persistent themes of the twenties was the death of love in World War I. All the major writers recorded it, often in piecemeal fashion as a part of the

larger post-war scene; but only Hemingway seems to have caught it whole and delivered it in lasting fictional form. His intellectual grasp of the theme might account for this (33).

Similarly, Hemingway almost obsessively dwelled on the theme of death. His sensitivity to life and death is profoundly felt. Edward Wagenknecht observes, “Hemingway’s characters are soldiers, sportsmen, prizefighters, and matadors; his word of fiction swarms with perverts, drunkards, and prostitutes. He is greatly preoccupied with death and violence” (371).

Running through Ernest Hemingway’s work from *In Our Time* to *The Old Man and the Sea* are two dominant motifs- the matador and the crucified. The matador represents a great force held in check, releasing itself proudly in a controlled yet violent administering of death. The crucified stands for the taking of pain, even unto death, with all of one’s courage and endurance so that it becomes a thing of poignancy and nobility. Although it was not until *The Old Man and the Sea* that Hemingway achieved a perfect blending of his two themes, the continual tension and interplay between those forces represented by the matador and the crucified create a pattern in the Hemingway canon against which the individual work of fiction may be profitably studied (Backman 2).

Hemingway’s non-fiction *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) provides an in-depth picture of the Spanish bullfighting and his view on life and death. He wrote, “The only place where you could see life and death, i.e., violent death now that the wars were over, was in the bullring and I wanted very much to go to Spain where I could study it” (2). As mentioned before, he did visit Spain but his initial apprehensions of witnessing a horrific act did not happen. Hemingway admits that instead he was introduced to something else. He did not see it as a gruesome act but realized it as a form of art which he calls the decadent art; the death of the bull was an act of nobility; the courage of the matador as greatness.

So I went to Spain to see the bullfights and to write about them for myself. I thought they would be simple and barbarous and cruel and that I would not like them, but that I would see certain definite action which would give me the feeling of life and death that I was working for. I found the definite action; but the

bullfight was so far from simple and I liked it so much that it was too complicated for my then equipment for writing to deal with (Death in the Afternoon 3).

Hemingway on the moral of bullfighting wrote, “I feel very sad but very fine” (4). “I suppose from a moral point of view, that is, a Christian point of view, the whole bullfight is indefensible; there is certainly more cruelty, there is always danger, either sought or unlooked for, and there is always death” (Death in the Afternoon 1). There is beauty in life and death and considering the act of cruelty from the modern concept, as Hemingway said, it cannot be defended. The ethical principles are subverted through this outlook. The novel also describes the caged up lives of the bulls that are manipulated to anger and then killed in their moment of fatigue.

I leaned way over the wall and tried to see into the cage. It was dark. Someone rapped on the cage with an iron bar. Inside something seemed to explode. The bull, striking into the wood from side to side with horns, made a great noise. Then I saw a dark muzzle and the shadow of horns, and then, with a clattering on the wood in the hollow box, the bull charged and came out into the corral, skidding with his forefeet in the straw as he stopped, his head up, the great hump of muscle on his neck swollen tight, his body muscle quivering as he looked up at the crowd on the stone walls (121).

Hemingway introduces Pedro Romero a nineteen year old bullfighter. He is charismatic and catches the attention of Brett. Jake comments, “Pedro Romero had the greatness. He loved bullfighting, and I think he loved the bulls” (187). Like Santiago he calls the bulls his friend (161) but he kills them to entertain people. There is actually no recognition of the intrinsic depth. When Brett questions him why he kills his friends, Pedro laughed and replied “Always. So they don’t kill me” (161).

In the 1970s, Environmental ethics propagated that man must see nature and animals beyond fulfilling man’s immediate needs and wants. A major concern here is the way in which the bulls are not just killed but are made to bring their own death. Humans are concerned about preservation and conservation of wildlife especially those species that concern them. But humans do not see the cruelty in defeating a caged exhausted animal to assert power or display male

prowess. As discussed in Chapter II, mankind still bears the tradition of exploiting the environment and this lack of ecological consciousness is not an excuse for having the audacity to allow this much of control and abuse on the animals.

Alice Walker's novels highlight the patriarchal overture within the domestic circle. In this section, bullfighting and the glorification of the aficionados is seen as a symbol of male courage. The fascination for killing and violence is perhaps not the same case with everyone as it was for Hemingway. For Hemingway, as discussed it involved a deeper symbolism with regard to his spiritual comprehension of life and death at a time where the world was recuperating from a war torn wasteland and disillusionment. Relooking at the art and culture of bullfighting from an ecocritical perspective, the facade of it is realized. In the modern context, bullfighting has become a depressing reality, a tradition where the people are trained to be matadors and taught to kill innocent lives for the vain purpose of human pleasure and entertainment.

There are alternatives to this brutal sport. Racortadores/ bull leaping/ bull acrobats can substitute this bloody tradition. This is an oppressive conceptual framework, and as the Ecofeminist philosophy reiterated, it is patriarchy that legitimize this thinking behavior in men. "Ecofeminism describes the framework that authorize these forms of oppression as patriarchy, an ideology whose fundamental self/ other distinction is based on a sense of self that is separate, atomistic" (Gaard 2). Unlike Santiago, Pedro's failure to recognize his interconnection with the bull as a living creature with an equal right to live and value makes him easily vanquish lives over and over. To be interconnected is emphasized because, "a failure to recognize connections can lead to violence, and a disconnected sense of self is most assuredly at the root of the current ecological crisis" (Gaard 2). In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago's actions are guided by love and affection for his brother the fishes who he must kill as a law of nature to survive. However unlike Pedro, he is fully aware of his dependability on nature and his kinship with nature. A matador's act of killing is different from a fisherman foraging from nature. The attitude is different and they operate on different ethical standards. As for Jake, Montaya, Pedro and the shallow aficionados situated far away from the touch of nature, the animal is seen as an inferior and the value of whose life is not considered at all. The ethical principle is a concoction of the patriarchal mindset and anthropocentric view. Patriarchy creates hierarchy and hierarchy in turn leads to oppression. According to Lori Gruen,

The categories “woman” and “animal” serve the same symbolic function in patriarchal society. Their construction as dominated, submissive “other” in theoretical discourse (whether explicitly so stated or implied) has sustained human male dominance. The role of women and animals in post industrial society is to serve/ be served up; women and animals are the used. Whether created as ideological icons to justify and preserve the superiority of men or captured as servants to provide for and comfort, the connection women and animals share is present in both theory and practice (61).

The bulls are living entities. So also the steers they condemned as lowly creatures. It is unethical to entrap them for the purpose of human levity and the sake of tradition when there are alternatives to avert violence and cruelty. A life is too precious to be slaughtered for the sadistic gratification of men. In this tradition, it is not just a bull, millions are killed in a year. As noted earlier, this patriarchal mindset of seeing animals as an icon to aid in asserting male superiority is explicitly seen in the novel through a close analysis of the Aficionado mindset. The ethic in bullfighting is a dereliction of human responsibility towards his nature and de-recognition of his own sense of what is right and wrong. Man consciously live in denial of the suffering of others. Chapter V on Asian Ecofiction will further discuss how patriarchy stimulates the people to obey rules and generates the crowd mentality that leads to a suspension of logic. As opposed to the egocentric ethical constitution in *The Sun also Rises*, an ecocentric ethic is “grounded in the cosmos. The whole environment, including inanimate elements, rocks, and minerals along with animate plants and animals, is assigned intrinsic value” (Merchant 75).

It is important for an individual to be connected to nature. Conditioning the self is very crucial. Disconnectedness from nature is a reason for the violence and cruelty humans inflict on animals. For this alienation eventually alters his moral conscience and affects his behavior with the people around him as well. Thus, this chapter explores the ethical landscapes through the novels of Alice Walker and Ernest Hemingway. Patriarchy is studied as the detriment in the otherwise harmonious relationship of man and nature. The wings of Ecocriticism and environmental moves must spread out more beyond the sustainability measures because one of the most dangerous things in the world which is the human mind is still sitting in an entitled place of human superiority. As long as this mindset is not addressed, the intrinsic value of nature

will be quantified from a man's vantage point and the need to be interconnected may never be bridged.

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## CHAPTER IV

### CREATION SPIRITUALITY IN AUSTRALIAN ECOFICTION

“Australia is a land that has no people,  
For those that were hers we have torn away,  
We who are not hers nor can be till love  
Shall make us so and fill our hearts with her”

- Rex Ingamells, *The Gangrened People*

#### 4.1 Integration of Australia

Australia, an island continent was originally inhabited by the Indigenous Australians: The Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander before the advent of the British colonizers. According to the article “Human Occupation of Northern Australia by 65,000 Years ago”, these First Peoples of Australia had occupied the continent for about 65,000 years. Accounts show that Dutch explorers entered the country around 17<sup>th</sup> century. By 1770, the eastern half of Australia was claimed by Great Britain. Accordingly, Australian Ecosystem was also permeated and altered by these colonizers.

European man is a part of a very different cultural tradition from Aboriginal man. While he has made use of fire, he has also initiated further modifications of ecosystems to produce the things necessary to make a living on a new continent. Forests were cleared to provide needed timber. Crop plants and grazing animals were brought from Europe and ways of growing them successfully were sought. A search began for metals useful in making tools and the machines of industrial society. Australia entered a period of exploitation (Clark 49).

The anthropocentric view of centring man and nature dominance made way into the Australian soil early on. During the 1850s Gold Rush in Australia, it was already a well explored region. It was pushed from a primitive landscape to a cultural landscape. According to A. J. Rose, cultural landscape “involves philosophically the idea that man is apart from the rest of nature. This is an idea which...lead to all sorts of ecological problems... A cultural landscape is

any landscape where the works of man have interfered with the workings of non-human nature” (58). Although the impact of anthropocentric activities on our environment is universal, colonialism was a conscious exploitation of nature and in many cases, impaired the ecosystem permanently. As for the Australians, their entire landscape is a product of the European colonialism over two centuries. A. J. Rose states that the European lava came as a flood upon Australia and “swept aside, ignored or obliterated the features of earliest human settlement” (60). Australia owing to its location remained unexplored for a comparatively longer time. The explorers faced many hardships while trying to study the continent island and suffered in representation. “Not only was the continent less attractive the further one went, but the condition of the environment itself changed significantly not only from season, but year to year...The impression gained by the explorers, therefore, varied according to the seasons” (Heathcote 78). As a result, the written word on Australia could not be taken for its face value. Many of the accounts created confusion and were misleading given the fact that it was an English man writing the accounts of a different land and her people. Semantics posed as a barrier in many instances.

Terms such as ‘river’ and ‘stream’ gave a false sense of permanence to what were often seasonally dry watercourses...The open woodland of the southeast inland plains was usually and enthusiastically described as ‘parkland’- implying a ‘cultivated’ pattern of trees and grass, but in fact representing a vegetation community apparently mainly maintained by natural or Aboriginal fires which burned off the tree seedlings (Heathcote 82).

These crevices of confusion were gradually addressed by mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and authors started to claim the landscapes in their own writings. Adrian C.W. Mitchell’s article on “Australian Literature” explains the integrative and collective identity of Australian literature.

The literature of Australia characteristically expresses collective value. Even when the literature deals with the experiences of an individual, those experiences are very likely to be estimated in terms of the ordinary, the typical, the representative. It aspires on the whole to represent integration rather than disintegration. It does not favour the heroicism of individual action unless this shows dogged perseverance in the face of inevitable defeat.

With Australian literature marching towards an integration and representation of an all Australian experience and landscape, Patrick White's narratives gain in significance as he stands as one of the quintessential voices of modern Australian Literature dedicated towards transforming the empty narratives of Australia. Patrick White is a profound story teller in Australian Ecofiction who is claimed to have dominated the Australian novel for twenty years. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1973. He is known as "The Great Poet of Australian Landscape". Patrick White's *The Tree of Man* is a domestic drama that chronicles the changing lives and fortunes of the Parkers over a span of decades. The novel is immersed in Australian folklore and myths and is considered an attempt of White to infuse the distinctive way of life in the outlying Australian bush with some sense of the cultural ideologies and traditions bequeathed to the Australian society by Western civilization. In *The Tree of Man* Patrick White narrates the story of Stan Parker who leads the simple life of a hard-working farmer with his wife and children in an ever changing world. He does what is expected of him as a farmer, husband and father and accepts all vicissitudes, both joys and trials, with seeming passivity although all his life he wrestles inwardly to arrive to a deeper understanding and find God. The novel opens with a young Stan Parker who arrives at a piece of bush land that is remote of any human dwelling and that had previously belonged to his late parents. He arrives empty handed except for a dog, a horse, a cart and some tools to clear the place and build a hut for his shelter. After settling in the bush land for a while, Stan Parker takes Amy for his wife. For Amy the marriage means a turn for the better although life on the remote farm would be hard in addition to being quiet and desolate. Steadily the community in the bush land starts to grow with more people beginning to settle in the area despite the fact that the land is susceptible to fires, floods and droughts. Stan and Amy do not communicate with each other much but they do feel strongly attached to each other, the reason of this attachment is unclear though. After being through several miscarriages, Amy is finally able to give birth to a boy whom she names Ray. Not so long after, Amy gives birth to their daughter- Thelma. Thelma is a delicate girl and different from Ray in all respects. While Ray is naughty and wild, his sister is good and quiet. However, later as grown-ups they share a similar longing: the pleasures and riches denied to them on the farm. Both leave the farm to make their own fortune. However, while Ray soon gets into trouble because of his dishonest ways, Thelma starts a career in the city and is able to find for herself a wealthy husband.

Meanwhile, Stan and Amy Parker have become old following the monotonous farm routines in a neighborhood that has transformed over the years into the suburb of a big city.

Patrick White's *Voss* is set in the mid-nineteenth century and relates the story of Voss, a German who sets out to cross the Australian continent. Patrick White has based his doomed protagonist Johann Ulrich Voss on Ludwig Leichhardt, a German explorer who was one of the several nineteenth-century adventurers to pass away in the Australian outback. However, White was not interested in a historical representation of the 1848 expedition that failed but rather in exploring humans' flawed abilities to perceive and communicate profound truths through the character of Voss and the role that suffering plays in leading to the path to wisdom. These themes recur throughout the novel. Sponsored by the wealthy Sydney resident Edmund Bonner, Voss set out on an ill-advised expedition with a decrepit group of men that included Palfreyman, an ornithologist who struggled to reconcile his faith with his scientific principles, Le Mesurier, whose most important possession was a notebook filled with ominous prose poems, two aboriginal guides, Dugald and Jackie, Angus, a young and rich property owner, and Judd, a recently freed convict. To each of these men the journey held different significance. Edmund Bonner had brought these men together partially so that his name would get attached to what could be a historic expedition. To Palfreyman, the journey would certainly have scientific utility. To Judd, it was an opportunity to use his recently gained freedom and his daunting bush skills. To Voss, the journey took him to another dimension that was both metaphysical and spiritual.

#### 4.2 Reconstructing Australian narratives

Australia, even before its official finding by Captain James Cook in the 1770's existed as a hypothetical continent in the thick of the European imagination. The implication was based on the conjecture that continental land in the Northern Hemisphere should be balanced by lands in the South. Cook, upon arriving at Botany Bay, now part of Sydney, did not find the supposed monstrous flora and fauna which had captivated European minds then. Declaring the land *Terra Nullius*, Cook ignored the indigenous Aboriginal communities who had been living there for over 65,000 years resulting in the altered shaping of the Australian culture and history: the relationship between whites and the Aboriginals in the development of the nation. The experiences of the Australian Aboriginals are very similar to the Native Americans, in the sense that colonizers usurped their cultures and their identity. Dwyer also points out that the "Earth-

centered cosmology” (103) of the Aboriginals is also similar with that of the Native Americans. He notes that “Emergence tales, legendary characters, Aboriginal Dreamtime, and other mythical elements are frequently strong elements of fiction from these cultures” (103). Their close relationship with nature and their in-depth knowledge of nature were ignored by the European explorers. In the Aboriginal oral tradition, Adrian C.W. Mitchell writes that, “Even the most uncomplicated narratives of the Dreaming introduce basic concepts about the land and about what it is that distinguishes right behaviour from wrong” (n. pag). As is evident in the novel *Voss*, the Aboriginals lived harmoniously with nature. They were pre-agricultural with a curtailed population. There was no control on the productivity of nature apart from the small scale domestication of livestock they maintained. Tim Flannery attributes the Aboriginal population for shaping the land and by the times James Cook arrived he found it to be like a gentleman’s park. As the Europeans gained knowledge of the new continent, it proportionately led to a loss of Aborigines’ knowledge of their own land. They lost the power to define their own narratives geographically, historically and literally. P.R Stephenson explicitly in his essay “The Genius of Place” wrote that the immigrants ‘raped the land’ (295). In the true spirit of post colonialism, the European approach of one tracking narratives have to be done away. For “If we claim that great literature has a timeless and universal significance we thereby demote or disregard cultural, social, regional, and national differences in experience and outlook, preferring instead to judge all literature by a single supposedly ‘universal’ standard” (Barry 185). Therefore, it is essential for the silenced to voice their stories as a way of reclaiming their past and exert their existence and identity.

Patrick White portrays the marginalized Aboriginals in his novel *Voss*. He writes about their deplorable living conditions and emphasises on the latent suppression within them through their conspicuous silence. Australian government aided the community by way of providing educational facilities and bestowing full rights of Australian Citizenship from the 1960s but there has been no visible progress in their status and still remains at the bottom of socio-economic strata.

Two aboriginal women, dressed in the poorest shifts of clothing, but the most distinguished silence, were seated on the dirt beside the wharf, broiling on a fire of coals the fish that they had caught. And a little boy, introduced especially into

this regretful picture, was selling hot mutton pies that he carried in a wooden box (93).

In the novel Jackie and Dugal are the Aborigines accompanying Voss on his expedition. White describes them as, “two blacks ...chattering to each other. The naked Jackie dangled the stiff lizard by its tail” (184); “the smell of their rancid bodies in the patch of the scrub” (329). For Voss, he loved Jackie the most for his “impaired innocence” and “perfect devotion” (355). Voss and his entourage come in contact with the natives and in doing so reflect the grim history of Australia by reminiscing on the conflict between the white men and the natives whose cultures and lands were usurped from them. As the company traversed further, they eventually reach the settlement of the Aborigines.

The travellers embark on a cave to fortify themselves from the rain. Since Dugal was not found, Jackie inspects the caves. He tells Voss that the Aborigines belong to the caves. To quote Jackie, he said “Blackfeller belong by these caves” (267). It was a cave with drawings. It was a drawing of the Snake, which Jackie explained was their Grandfather. He said, “Father my father, all blackfeller” (268). The Aborigines belonged to an ecologically spiritual lineage. They subscribed to the concept of The Dreaming. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, The Dreaming is a “mythological period of time that had a beginning but no foreseeable end, during which the natural environment was shaped and humanized by the actions of mythic beings. Many of these beings took the form of human beings or of animals (“totemic”); some changed their forms” (n. pag). Owing to this, the Aborigines placed utmost importance to the spiritual. In the Britannica article on “Beliefs and Aesthetic Values: Religion”,

Everything that now existed was fixed for all time in the mythic past, and all that the living were asked to do, in order to guarantee the continuance of their world, was obey the law of the Dreaming and perform correctly the rituals upon which physical and social reproduction were said to depend. Human creativity was not excluded but was explained away...This view of the world gave precedence to spiritual powers and explanations over mundane knowledge or human intellect, and it placed everyone squarely under the authority of the law rather than that of other people. Aboriginal people were constantly surrounded by proofs of the existence and power of spiritual forces—the landscape itself was a dominant

representation of the Dreaming's reality—and their everyday activities were in large measure a reenactment of those of the creative beings, making religion indivisible from the mundane concerns of daily life. Outside the ritual arena, and notwithstanding the superior rights of men over women and of older men over younger men, people valued their personal autonomy highly and were likely to react with anger and violence to any attempts by others to deny or diminish it (n. pag).

In this belief system, the Snake held great symbolism to the Aborigines. As shown in the novel. As Voss and his company come under captive, the natives are shown as robust protruding characters like the true sons of the grey earth. Jackie one evening enacts the story of the Great Snake, “the grandfather of all men, that had come down the north in anger” (Voss 372). Their lives were surrounded by worship and appeasement rituals.

Jackie ends up leading the natives to Voss and his entourage. On being questioned, Jackie now although with still some innocence replied angrily: “No me. Jackie do nothun. These blackfeller want Jackie. I go. Blackfeller no good along white men. This my people. Jackie belongs here” (358). Voss tried to extend friendship but Jackie again replied by saying, “Blackfeller dead by white men” (359). Jackie's resentment and action clearly shows the deep seated pain within the Aborigines. For a person like Jackie who had travelled with white men and had earned their live and trust could not accept that they could be friends. A series of conflicts took place where the native population tried to stand against the white men which is remembered as the Australian Frontier Wars.

The Australian Frontier Wars is a term applied by some historians to violent conflicts between Indigenous Australians (including both Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders) and white settlers during the British colonisation of Australia (Connor xi- xii).

The enmity and brutal violence is embodied in the novel. Jackie tells the white men that if the Great Snake gets angry it would eat people. The blacks did watch out toward the sky for the Great Snake to disappear but realised that it was a fraud. They tramped and stamped the earth



with joy for having been saved, but they got angry realising that the white men who deceived them were still around and so they prepared to kill them.

Their feet were thumping the ground. The men had painted their bodies with the warm colours of the earth they knew totem by totem, and which had prevailed at last over the cold, nebulous country of the stars. The homely spirits were dancing, who had vanquished the dreadful ones of darkness. The animals had come out again, in soft, musky fur and feather. They were dancing their contribution to life. And the dust was hot beneath their feet (Voss 385).

After this, the blacks killed all the horses and mules of the white men. Compelled by his people, Jackie uses the 'bone-handled clasp-knife' given to him by Voss to undertake the evil task of stabbing the life of the white men he had come to know. White explains, "The boy was stabbing, and sawing, and cutting, and breaking, with all of his increasing, but confused manhood, above all, breaking. He must break the terrible magic that bound him remorselessly, endlessly, to the white men" (388). Although Jackie could not comprehend much of the hate, he was made to partake in the killing in order to detach him from the white men. Just before Voss was beheaded, a comet raced across the night sky which may be an allusion to the fall of Lucifer, but to the Aborigines it was an enactment of the story of the Great Snake, their ancestor, who returned to earth to punish man. In this colonial world, Voss in the typical post colonial tradition showcases sympathy and loves when faced with betrayal and defeat in the wilderness. Voss always took pride to trust in the black boy Jackie. Even when they were looted of their belongings, Voss simply said "We cannot accuse the natives on no evidence" (334). He even admitted his compassion for them. "Voss believed that he loved this boy, and with him all men, even those he had hated, which is the most difficult act of love to accomplish, because of one's own fault" (376). Truly for Voss, he was "sustained by a belief that he must communicate intuitively with these black subjects, and finally rule them with a sympathy that was above words" (328). This European hypocrisy and resentment against the unclothed coloured people can be seen when Voss, a foreigner himself hesitates to warmly welcome Dugald and Jackie into their company.

In other circumstances, Voss would have liked to talk to these creatures. Alone, he and the blacks would have communicated with one another by skin and

silence...but in the presence of Brendan Boyle, the German was the victim of his European, or even his human inheritance (164).

Brendan Boyle was outright vocal about his disdain for the Aboriginals. He does not recommend Voss to take the blacks as travel companions. He doubted their reliability and raised his voice as a superior whenever he spoke with Dugald and Jackie to give orders. He detestably called them “dirty beggars” (166).

The First Fleet that set sail to Australia in 1788 consisted of mostly convicts. Australia had been established as a penal colony following the loss of the American colonies in 1776. “Australia is a land of mediocrity, but if it is explored, if its seemingly sordid history of convicts, failed explorers and alienated artists is examined, there is a source for a true understanding of the nation” (King 167). In the spirit of integration, characters like the emancipist Rose Portion, and convict Judd are also included in the modern Australian narratives to achieve a holistic wholeness.

Australia has to European eyes been an ‘empty’ continent, there for the taking, its original inhabitants not worthy even of being numbered in the musters and censuses of the population. To be ‘Australian’ has meant, almost to this day, to be a descendant of recent immigrants from the richer and more complex societies of distant lands. So, too, with the cultural features built by man within the landscape. Not even the holy grounds of Aboriginal Australia have been respected; a new pattern of spiritual belief has reared its churches and temples where previously only the rocks and trees, the animals and the landforms themselves brought solace to the sensibilities of man (Rose 60).

#### 4.3 Australian Bush

In the heart of Australia lies the Romantic vision, which is a “sympathetic response to the Aborigines, and a delight in the ‘uncivilized’ nature of the landscape leading to an almost Arcadian attitude to the countryside or ‘bush’” (Heathcote 87). In Australia, the bush holds a symbolic meaning and is native to Australian life. Australia has arid soil and “More than a million square miles is loosely called desert” (Peterson 177). Therefore, dry and infertile soils are common. In terms of land, a bush is a wooded area but sparser compared to a dense forest. These

areas are mostly devoid of grasses owing to its dryness but abundantly populated by bushes. Sandie Penn in her article writes,

Australia as a country, as distinct from its landscape, is a recent creation, settled by Europeans merely 220 years ago, but the Australian land, this physical place- the Australian Bush- is infinitely older. The Bush is a term culturally understood in Australia to be any environment that is sparsely populated uninhabited... The Bush encompasses barren regions, forested areas and farming landscapes and is also known as the Outback The indigenous peoples of Australia, the Aborigines, traditionally have had a spiritual and nurturing relationship with the Bush, seeing themselves as belonging to the landscapes, intrinsically woven into its every fibre (n. pag).

Patrick White in *The Tree of Man* attempts to fill these voids and allows the readers to re-imagine the Australian landscape. Since the European colonies were each weighed according to their disposition, Australia was used as a depot for convicts and their connection with the land varied greatly. For some it was a gaol, while for some it held as an object of fascination while some saw the land as an investment. It was also a site for the white men's exploration. Encapsulating the true spirit of Australian narrative, and the series of explorations that took place in the continent, we have German explorer Voss as the protagonist in the novel *Voss*.

Literature had been at the fore of the early Australian settlements. The first forms of literature produced in Australia dealt with the longing of home, the strangeness of the landscape, its fauna and flora, the praise of the convict, and the contact with indigenous Australians. A prevalence of the image that Australia was one such nation where only the strong and hard would sustain was made all the more evident. The British would have to adapt and become Australian. A lot of misrepresentation is evident from the way white men tried to study Australia from their country's point of view.

The soil of Australia presents as many anomalies as its configuration and animal and vegetable productions. In other parts of the world the most fertile tracts are generally found near the mouths of rivers; in Australia the greatest fertility usually commence where the navigation ceases. In Europe the valleys will generally be

found full of rich soil; in Australia some of the richest mould is to be found on the top of the hills (Sidney 247).

Literary works like Baron Field's "The Kangaroo" (1819) were instrumental in creating the fallen image of Australian landscape. Field's impression of Australia as a land created after Creation and, therefore, cursed by the Original Sin, whose lives must be made of combined, complex, mythological beings indicate the underlying tensions in the design and circumstance that had shaped the environment and have saturated the literary and cultural representations of Australian land and people since. To substantiate, Sharma notes, "The geographical position and the natural distinctiveness of a country is a fact, too fundamental to be ignored while assessing and appreciating its art, culture, the psyche of the people inhabiting it and their literary output" (15). The settlers found the new land with a different climatic condition from theirs a literal place of banishment. Hickey writes how the white settlers disagreed with the soil and weather of Australia. In the pastoral land they could not find the expected tranquillity as they were surprised by droughts, floods and an overbearing heat. She states that, "For over 200 years, the white sentiment of desolation and anxiety about the "untamed" land has pervaded much of Australian literature. Children went missing, men went mad, and women suffered" (n. pag).

Elizabeth Webby observes that this degraded vision of Australia only elevated with the discovery of gold in 1851. People started seeing Australia beyond her utility as a gaol for convicts and prisoners, to "a prospective El Dorado" (17). Nineteenth century literary expositions varied between the harsh, realistic representation of the topography and its people.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the realization of many of the hopes of the colonial developers and out of the success of land settlement and the wealth so accumulated, from mine, field and paddock, came a confidence in and new attitude to the continent and its landscape. From the conflict between man and nature had come the glorious union of Darwin's art and labour- a union which by late nineteenth century was claimed to have produced a unique, Australian, landscape (Heathcote 91).

With the coming of a new century, Australia transitioned into a nation state, a federation under the British Commonwealth. The task at hand was to integrate Australia without

marginalizing neither the Aborigines, the history as a penal colony without excluding the English roots. These tensions are embodied in the literary discourses of this century. The twenty first century underwent a make shift in the way they saw the bush and wrote about it. Tim Flannery's Australian Day Address 2002, breathes the new century concern and vision for Australia. He stresses on embracing the unique identity of Australia, on integration and in preservation. To quote a few lines,

Certainly I don't mean to suggest that the European aspects of our history are irrelevant or should be disposed of – only that they reflect us as a people who have not yet developed deep, sustaining roots in the land. Yet Australia – the land, its climate and creatures and plants – is the only thing that we all, uniquely, share in common. It is at once our inheritance, our sustenance, and the only force ubiquitous and powerful enough to craft a truly Australian people. It ought to – and one day will – define us as a people like no other...Our European heritage left us appallingly equipped to survive, long-term, in this country. For a start it left many colonial Australians unable to see the subtle beauty and biological richness of the land, and what they could not understand they strove to destroy as alien and useless. For most of the last two centuries we have believed that we could remake the continent in the image of Europe – turn the rivers inland and force the truculent soils to yield. We even knowingly introduced pests – from starlings to foxes and rabbits – in our history reads as a rush towards 'development', which was then – and often still is – just a soft word for the destruction of Australia's resource base./ That arrogant colonial vision left a fearful legacy, for it actually made people feel virtuous while they dealt the land the most terrible blows (n. pag).

All these insensitivity and men's efforts to transform a landscape resulted in extinction of many species and affected the biodiversity of Australia and her ecological balance. According to Tim Flannery, after more than two hundred years of land oppression, Australians are finally making progress by opting for more sustainable alternatives for living.

In empathizing with the Aboriginal sentiment, White also exposes the landscape of Australia. As stated earlier, comparatively Australia has a harsher terrain which the Europeans

found unpleasant and difficult to adapt. In an account given by Trollope, he presents the country as lethargic and tedious.

The fault of Australian scenery is its monotony. The eye after a while becomes fatigued with a landscape which at first charmed with its parklike aspect. One never gets out of the trees, and then it rarely happens that water lends its aid to improve the view...unceasing trees...become a bore, and the traveller begins to remember with regret the open charms of some cultivated plain (128).

This aspect of a difficult Australian environment is projected in *Voss*, a narration from the white man's perspective. As the explorers sailed further away from civilization, they were also confronted with various challenges. It is believed that Australia remained a gaol for a long period in history because the continent was vast with a challenging environment.

This devilish country, flat at first, soon broke up into winding gullies, not particularly deep, but steep enough to wrench the backs of the animals that had to cross them, and to wear the bodies and nerves of the men by the frantic motion that it involved. There was no avoiding chaos by detour. The gullies had to be crossed, and on the far side there was always another torturous gully. It was as if the landscape had been thrown up into great earthworks defending the distance (Voss 330).

Many of the men accompanying Voss led by him grew feeble and were ailing physically. Mesurier in particular was under excessive physical distress.

Frank Le Mesurier was the worst, who had begun the soonest in fact the night of his ride across the mountains to deliver the leader's message to the shepherds... He had grown very frail and thin, yellow, and transparent; he had the appearance of a yellow lily, but hairy and stinking (262).

The romantic sight of the Australian landscape is better presented in the linear and long novel *The Tree of Man*. On her deathbed, Stan Parker's mother Noakes tells him about the land his father Ned Parker had left behind. She said, "And there's that land that was your father's, in the hills from back here, I don't just know the name... Your father did not think much of it. The

land was always unclear. Scrubby, he said. Though the soul is good in patches” (14-15). This novel is about the celebration of Australian landscape through the daily life of the Parkers and the portrayal of bush. So Parker looks at this bush as a ray of hope for a new beginning in his life. He thus moved in his cart to the designated plot along with his dog and started to build a house for himself. Contrary to the European distaste, a very keen Stan Parker is looking for redemption from the land and earnest to adapt with the bush life. The narrator mentions that Parker had to “tear the bush apart” and “there was also the meaner warfare of the scrub, deadly in technique and omnipresence, that would come up from behind and leave warning on the flesh in messages of blood... There in the scarred bush, that had not yet accepted its changed face, the man soon began to build a house, or shack” (16). Stan easily adapts into this bush life. The novelist mentions how the folks of Willow Creek barely noticed he had left. Stan had tried his hands at various handles; “he had driven a mob of skeleton sheep, and a mob of chafing, satin cattle; he had sunk a well in solid rock, and built a house, and killed a pig; he had weighed out the sugar in a country store, and cobbled shoes, and ground knives. But he had not continued to do any of these things for long, because he knew that it was not intended” (13). He soon marries Amy Victoria Fibbens. She was a thin orphaned silent woman. Amy harboured no particular attachment with his uncle or aunt. As Stan Parker took her to his house from the town of Yuruga, White writes,

Amy Parker’s eyes were at present for the landscape. What she had just done, whether momentous or usual, did not concern other people. She did not belong to anyone in that town...As if the cart, with its aspiring roll, and the retrospective landscape, were fighting for a declaration of her love (25).

These two lonely people find redemption by the isolated virgin bush landscape. This overwhelming silence and emptiness in the novel is White’s attempt to represent “the bourgeois philistinism, the material ugliness of the country itself” (Ramesh 246). For when Stan moved out, he wanted to make life purposeful and to oppose the silence and rocks and trees. Amy adapted easily to her new home and she admitted to her husband that she was going to like it here. She was happy that she finally had a place she could call home and be attached with. They relied on the land for food by growing vegetables and rearing cattle. They named their yellow cow Julia. Amy was happy in her space and with time, other inhabitants also joined them. Out in

the wilderness, couple also experienced the wild side of nature in the form of different calamities like droughts, floods, storms and bush fires. These kind of unpredictable calamities are characteristic to Australia. It may also be added that, in the bush regions, extremes of both floods and droughts prevail. In telling a story nothing out of the ordinary, Patrick White presents the Australian experience. As is the nature of man, the Parkers do struggle to tame nature to twine them to man's advantage but here in the wilderness, he realises that he is part of nature but not the master. The storms and natural calamities are reminders of man's insignificance in the sublimity and greatness of nature. They were emotionally confused and could not systematically articulate the ways of nature. There is no extraordinary exploits or exaggerated heroicism but the ordinary is revisited. The overpowering silence and loneliness is White's attempt to portray the void he was feeling inside. Australia may have been an uncharted territory for the explorers but as validated in the novel *Voss* the natives and the concept of the Australian landscape existed before the white men. "The Australian view of reality has been shaped by the view that the country's history began with white settlement. We are given the view the British arrived in an empty land" (Kerr 22). White also dwells on the "inner hollowness of Australian life...he calls The Great Australian Emptiness" (Samad 117). Patrick White's *The Tree of Man* is like the Romantic attempt of English Romantic poet William Wordsworth, who tried to eulogize the ordinary and mundane things with a colouring of imagination- finding the extraordinary within the ordinary. White returned to Australia from Cambridge in 1948.

After his experiences of war in the African desert and in London during the Blitz, the landscape of Greece which he visited shortly after the War was over had reminded him of the Australian landscape, of the "state of silence, simplicity and humility" it seemed to embody for him as a child and which, disgusted with the empty sophistications of London intellectual life as well as with the moral and physical bankruptcy he felt in post-war Europe (Brady 134).

Returning to Australia, White was not completely restored. In fact, he found out that Australia was under a masque; beneath it all was a nation grovelling under depression. Brady elaborates,

All around stretched what he called "the Great Australian Ugliness" in which the mind seemed the least of possessions and the spiritual life seemed nonexistence, crushed by the imperatives of making money and consuming and accumulating



material possessions. Understandable enough perhaps in a society which had been precipitated from the Great Depression (which had hit Australia very hard) to the austerities of war, his preoccupation with material things and mindless pleasures was nevertheless distasteful to White, who had come home in search of something he felt he had lost within himself, some deep and peaceful centre of self (134).

As such, *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* is White's attempt to re-embrace spirituality in the silence, humility and simplicity of life. As in the case of Stan Parker and Amy Parker in the Australian countryside whose lives bear testimony of the author's romantic vision and remembrance of White's childhood. White's novels also commemorate the author's spiritual journey of acknowledging God and appreciating his creation.

Mathew Fox proposes four paths to spiritual ecology he termed as Creation Spirituality. Both *Voss* the white man in his ambitious expedition and Stan Parker in his own isolated Australian bush life undergo the spiritual experience in nature. In Australian literature the bush is a "metaphor for the self; exploration of the one was an analogy for the search for identity in the other...The challenge of its mystery [the bush] is a challenge in self-discovery, both on a national and personal level" (Mitchell 3). Australia when under the guardianship of the Aboriginal community revered nature and a harmonious relationship prevailed. The novel *Voss* is a spiritual journey that develops as he delves deeper into the wilderness. It is a journey into the core of his true inner self. As stated by Fox, spirituality is not a product of religion. He wrote that, "In order to rediscover spirituality, which is at the heart of any authentic and healthy religion, we have to be free of religion...Spirituality is the praxis of the heart, the praxis of our living in this world. It means dealing with our inner selves and not just living on the level of our outer organizations" (229). For Laura, she had become skeptical as she felt suffocated by religion. Laura, "Like her recent decision that she could not remain a convinced believer in that God in whose benevolence and power she had received most earnest instruction from a succession of governesses and her good aunt" (*Voss* 3). As Laura experiences suffering and loss, she comes to knowledge. Fox's second path is to "Via Negativa, the way of darkness, the way of despair and grief" because Fox continues, "God is found not only in the light and glory of creation, but also in absolute darkness" (233). The path of creativity in a human is only possible when one is enlightened after walking the dark road. Fox explains the Christian concept of how the third

path, “a rebirth of creativity comes from delight and after the darkness” (233). In the novel, Voss and Ms. Trevelyan exchange a series of letters along the course of Voss’ expedition. In one of her letters to Voss dated November, 1845, Laura confessed to Voss that it was her arrogance and the way Voss ignored her so coldly that made me realize her own insignificance and isolation. She wrote, “Mr Voss, we have reached a stage where I am called upon to consider my destroyer as my saviour” (179), and urges him that they must pray together for salvation. In her letter dated March, 1846, Laura writes a very moving letter to Johann Ulrich Voss. In it she mentions the death of Rose after giving birth to her daughter Mercy. This loss made Ms. Trevelyan gain new wisdom. She wrote,

If I continue to dwell upon the death of Rose, it is because of the great impression it left upon me...as I stood, the material part of myself became quite superfluous, while my understanding seemed to enter into wind, earth, the ocean beyond, even the soul of our poor, dead maid. I was nowhere and everywhere at once. I was destroyed, yet living more intensely than actual sunlight, so that I no longer feared the face of Death as I had found it on the pillow...Finally, I believe I have begun to understand this great country, which we have presumptuous enough to call ours, and with which I shall be content to grow since the day we buried Rose...Do you know that a country does not develop through prosperity of a few landowners and merchants, but out of the suffering of the humble? I could now lay my head on the ugliest rock in the land and feel at rest (233).

After walking through the valley of the shadow of death, Laura begins to understand the truth and shares about humility to Voss and her earnest appeal to serve the one on the throne together.

For Voss, a German man, he had taken several short expeditions. He admits that he felt “compelled into this country” (14). Mr Bonner called Voss’ fervor “fever of exploration” (13). Voss was ambitious and excited about undertaking the expedition to the interior part of Australia, west ward from Darling Downs. From the beginning, in the spirit of Fox’s first path to spiritual ecology, Voss had a fascination toward the environment but it was guided by his own desires. The first path is “to experience the Divine in terms of delight, awe and wonder at being present in the world; it involves the intuition that creation is a blessing, and response of gratitude

(via Positiva) (Fox 228). He is indeed drawn by the land and exploration, but as he starts off the journey, it is a physical relationship only.

As for Voss, he had gone on to grapple with the future, in which undertaking he did not expect much of love, for all that is soft and yielding is easily hurt. He suspected it, but the mineral forms were an everlasting source of wonder; feldspar, for instance was admirable, and his own name a crystal in his mouth. If he were to leave that name on the land, irrevocably, his material body swallowed by what it had named, it would be rather on some desert place, a perfect abstraction, that would rouse no feeling of tenderness in posterity. He had no more need for sentimental admiration than he had for love. He was complete (Voss 35).

The expedition begins as a gratification for Voss, to fulfill his lust for exploration. Voss can be seen as a megalomaniac. He compulsively wants to explore to be able to possess and be like god. His intentions towards the land and ambition are clearly indicated in the following lines. These emotions ran through him as they came in contact with the natives.

The foreigner himself remained indifferent. Seated on his horse and intent on inner matters, he would stare imperiously over the heads of men, possessing the whole country with his eyes. In those eyes the hills and valleys lay still, but expectant, or responded in ripples of leaf and grass, dutifully, to their bridegroom the sun, till all vision overflowed with the liquid gold of complete union (Voss 148-149).

He considered himself to be the Lord but this view sheds off along the course of the narrative through the paths of suffering. He is often likened with Herman Melville's conceited captain Ahab in the novel *Moby Dick*. His spiritual state like Patrick White is also unasserted and he felt inexperienced as he associated with men "who assumed humility without shame" (42). Voss initially detested humility. As he proclaimed, Voss was undertaking the journey out of pure will and lust for exploration. Voss liked to see himself as an embodiment of Nietzsche's overman/Übermensch, the superman who is a manifestation of will. As the explorers advanced deeper into

the bush, Voss became less of a superman and more of a martyr in the likeness of the passion of Christ. The Christian symbolism in the novel highlights Voss's suffering and also his conceited nature for assuming the role of martyr as well as deliverer. As such as the novel closes, Miss Trevelyan with her unflinching loyalty says, "I am convinced that Voss had in him a little of Christ, like other men" (439). Later in the novel, when it became clear that they had ventured into the contentious aboriginal land, Judd persuaded few of the members to abandon the expedition and return with him. To Voss, Judd became the Judas to his Christ. The remaining adventurers continued following Voss in his pursuit for divinity. He will either triumph against death and despair or will offer himself as a sacrifice. The Christian concept of death, how in death life springs forth is evoked. White writes, "Dying is creation. The body creates fresh forms, the soul inspires by its manner of leaving the body, and passes into other souls" (355). As Voss also goes through various challenges in the mysterious labyrinth of nature, his relationship with nature attains a metaphysical unison from a physical appreciation and his character also evolves spiritually. Generally, in a bush narrative, as Sandie Penn mentioned, "contact with the Bush frequently results in characters contending with insurmountable difficulties: flood, fire, drought, isolation. Similar to that of the Bush Legends, a character's identity, or the reforming and transforming of a character, can be recognized" (n. pag). All these are observed in the tumultuous life of the explorers in *Voss* and the bush life of the Parkers in *The Tree of Man*. A change in the characters' lives forms a part of the bush narrative. As Penn further notes, "Intellectual change may be facilitated in the character's identity, such as the feeling of regaining one's memory, or a maturational change like discovering the opposite sex, or simply growing into adulthood" (n. pag). Thus, in the works of Patrick White, like suffering purges the soul in Christianity, his characters are positioned through challenges and suffering to come to a self realization or enlightenment.

Patrick White as an author wanted to introduce some images and symbols beyond the Christian symbols which he considered sterile, vulgar and felt they reflected on the bigotry of the churches. He adopts what Jung calls the Mandala to conjure his own images. According to Jung, "Mandala a Sanskrit word, means circle or magic circle. It symbolism embraces all concentrically arranged figures, all circular or square circumferences having a centre, and all radical or spherical arrangements" (58). Jung elaborates that a mandala may be divided into two halves: light and dark and at the centre of it is a figure of the highest religious order. Patrick

White in his novel *The Solid Mandala* develops his idea of Mandala in the style of Jung. He understands a Mandala as the very symbol of totality and the dwelling of God. It has a protective circle forming a pattern of order, which White says is “super-imposed on psychic chaos. Sometimes its geometric form is seen as a vision (either walking or in a dream) or... or danced” (238).

In *The Tree of Man* Patrick White uses the image of a tree spreading to explicate the idea of Mandala. Stan Parker’s life is a journey where he experiences growth. The tree in the Christian context “denotes the life of the cosmos, consistence, growth, proliferation, generative and regenerative processes. It stands for inexhaustible life... It corresponds to the Cross of Redemption and the Cross is often depicted, in Christian iconography, as the Tree of life” (Cirlot 328). The novel has the ramifying image of a tree. This tree of life, as discussed above, is at the centre and a totality of everything. Everything moves in circles. The man and the woman in *The Tree of Man* begin their life with trees. The trees also typify and add layer to the theme of permanence. The novel narrates how they removed the trees to build their home. “The clearing encroached more and more on the trees, and the stumps of the felled trees had begun to disappear, in ash and smoke, or rotted away like old teeth. But there remained a log or two, big knotted hulks for which there seemed no solution, and on these the woman sometimes sat in the sun, shelling a dish of peas or drying her slithery hair” (31). As the novel closes with the death of Stan Parker, the trees remained.

In the end there are trees. These still stand in the gully behind the house, on a piece of poor land that nobody wants to use. There is the ugly mass of scrub, full of whips and open secrets. But there are the trees, quite a number of them that have survived the axe, smooth ones, a sculpture of trees. On still mornings after frost these stand streaming with light and moisture, the white and the ashen, and some the colour of flesh (479).

In this regard, the novel *The Tree of Man* is more organic in theme than social. There is no clear explanation as to why both Amy and Stan Parker could not find their peace with society but they find their peace away from the materialistic world. So basically, the new life Stan Parker sought

in the Australian bushes began with trees and ended with them. This is White's way of leading Parker into the centre of a Mandala. It is through this image of a mystical circle that the readers are made aware of Parker's inner unity and perfection as is a circle. For White, he

strongly believes that life is an interminable force, an organic cycle, reaching beyond the world of flesh and even God...The unredeemed isolation of an individual, therefore, is treated as a travesty of the search for permanence. The self's immersion into the organic forces of nature is absolutely necessary for the achievement of a state of permanence (Khan 161).

In the tranquil moments that passed before his death, Parker was visited by an evangelist to share about salvation. Stan replied to him that he can find God in his 'gob of spittle' (476). He got a new understanding and the novel reads that, "a great tenderness of understanding rose in his chest. Even the most obscure, the most sickening incidents of his life were clear. In that light" (476). Stan experienced, "Branches of shadow... drifting across his face, interfering his sight. The scent of violets was a cold blur" (476) and all the pieces started to fall into perfect unison. After all, the world is indeed in a cohesive unity and meant to be, and therefore, it cannot exist in a state of chaos. Stan Parker recognizes the answer to all and says,

Exquisitely cold blue shadows began to fall through the shiny leaves of the trees. ...I believe in this leaf... I believe, he said, in the cracks in the path. On which ants were massing, struggling up over an escarpment. But struggling. Like the painful sun in the icy sky. Whirling and whirling. But struggling. But joyful. So much so, he was trembling. The sky was blurred now. As he stood for the flesh to be loosened on him, he prayed for greater clarity, and it became obvious as a hand. It was clear that One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums (477).

He unifies with nature. And dies an enlightened man, and submits to the circle of life. His gradual isolation from society by moving closer to nature is his spiritual metamorphosis. From his isolated state, he comes to recognize the faults in humanity. He transfers his affection to the

leaf where he finds unity and beauty. He believes that nature ought to be loved and appreciated. Stan's journey to finding permanence is achieved by immersing in nature and conforming to the tree like harmony. The image of the garden he visualizes and immerses into is symbolic of Stan immersing into nature. In this garden, man was at the centre and from his heart trees radiated.

There was little of design in the garden originally, though one had formed out of the wilderness. It was perfectly obvious that the man was seated at the heart of it, and from this heart the trees radiated, with grave movements of life...All was circumference to the centre, and beyond that the worlds of other circles, whether crescent of purple villas or the bare patches of earth (474).

There is also this transcendence in *Voss*. In the novel, he is seen undergoing transformation in his relationship and perception of nature along the course of the journey.

The journey of Voss that began as an exploration expedition resulted in the growth of his own self knowledge, so also the life journey of Stan Parker ended with an outcome of accepting the spiritual unison with nature. These characters illustrate Fox's outlook on how there is an inner violence within all humans which is proven by how nature is dying in the hands of men. He calls upon for a re-examination of the inner self and an exploration of our inner houses. Fox writes, "Exploring the inner house of our soul means listening to the deep self. This exploring of the inner house is not just one's personal inner house, but the inner house of our communities, the inner house of our nations, the inner house of the gender, the inner house of our species" (229). As exemplified in both the novels, in order to recover and retain the profound spirit of the soul, the inner house needs to be reassessed, and a spiritual awakening. However, religion is not always the reason. The conditioning of the heart is prime and everything else gains meaning in its own course. For "when authentic spirituality leads, religion will follow" (Fox 234). Thus, Patrick White's novels occupy a vital and representative aspect of Australia, and the relationship between the Australians and environment. In order to achieve the fourth path of Creation Spirituality which is *Via Transformativa*, a state where everyone lives in cohesive unity and love dedicated to justice, the works of White also validate that more than a religious make shift, a renewal of the mind is more necessary. Fox believes in searching for the mystic in every soul.

The modern society is plagued despair and shallow souls. Like the characters in the novels, only a discovery of the mystic, which is innate within everyone will unlock the compassion in a human heart. In the tradition of modern Australian writing, the works of White also contribute towards finding the mystic in every heart and the potential of the human heart to love. Nature is beyond a mundane entity and far from being a vengeful force. In this pastoral set up, as White reconstructs the Australian landscapes, he restores the belief that humans can exist without destroying and nature can nurture without always spewing disaster upon her inhabitants. The western imagination is subverted and Australian landscape is presented realistically as a place of growth and of unique aesthetic value.

Elyne Mitchell in her essay “Spirit of the Land” writes that Australians have not been true to the land and accepts that it is their fault that the landscape of Australia has remained as in the pages of European settlers. They have failed to tell the stories of Australia from their experiences. She writes,

We have failed to assimilate the idea of Australia, the idea of Australia, the reality beneath the differing appearances, so that by voice, poetry, prose, by our own lives the consciousness of all Australians to the land on whose rim they live is awakened./ We have not told of the silver- mauve evenings that enfold the paddocks- the woolsheds, the yards- in an essence of the ending day. Nor of the depth of ‘belonging’ that comes with utter tiredness after the giving of all one’s strength to the work with the land. Untold are the ‘droning and drumming’ of the snow-water floods; unheard the eternal harmonies of ice-cast snowgum leaves ringing in the cold north wind. Unplumbed and uncharted are the depths within this land (324).

The importance of storytelling is re-emphasized through this study of Australian literature. For a long time, after the Aborigines were stripped off their native rights, Australia remained a no man’s land with little to its name. It is through a retelling of stories and realization of the distinct natural identity of Australia that the island continent diverted vanishing from



human history. It was the land that restored their identity, and it is the story of the land that will connect the nation and its people in the years to come.

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## CHAPTER V

### ECOSOCIALISM, ECOPSYCHOLOGY, ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS AND ECO- SPIRITUALITY IN ASIAN ECOFICTION

“Grandfather constantly warned  
That forgetting the stories  
Would be catastrophic:  
We would lose our history,  
Territory, and most certainly  
Our intrinsic Identity”

- Temsula Ao, *The Old Story Teller* (2013)

5.1 Asia is the largest and most populated continent on earth. Many regions of the Asian continent were engulfed by the wave of European colonialism. Unlike the other literatures under study, Asia does not have a shared common history. Easterine Kire from the state of Nagaland in India discusses the role of colonizers in destroying a rich tradition of spiritual ecology. In addition to this, to represent the violence of the twentieth century, Han Kang from South Korean is selected. The modern alienation from nature and the brutality of the Gwangju Uprising is studied in this chapter.

The Nagas inhabit the mountainous state of Nagaland. The Angami Nagas, one of the major tribes of Nagaland occupy central and northern parts of Kohima, the capital city and also, some parts of Dimapur district amounting to about seventy villages. In the tribal culture of the Nagas, Nature functioned as an integral component in shaping their culture, customs and belief system. They consider the mountain and the hills as their home. They are, therefore, aptly called the Hill people. The advent of the white men and the onset of modernity served as the rift in creating discord between the Nagas and their cultural identity in nature.

Modernity is blacklisted as the main factor behind the whole phenomenon that led to man's distancing from nature. In the Naga cultural context, as retold in Easterine Kire's novel *A Naga Village Remembered*, hereafter *ANVR*, the advent of white men and his religion almost

distorted the spring of their identity. It is only through the revival of oral traditions and postcolonial critiques and retelling of stories that Nagas are slowly reclaiming the lost tradition. According to Oppitz, there were three waves that marginalized the tradition of the Nagas.

Three powerful waves of mythical proportions have washed over the mountain regions of the Nagas: the wave of the British colonial rule; the wave of the Christian Mission; and the wave of the Indian state. Each has a scene of devastation amid the pattern of traditional local cultures, thoroughly shaking the self-confidence of the inhabitants who have been molded by them (9).

The Nagas did display resistance towards the penetrating force of the colonizers, but it was ousted out and the few traditionalists were stigmatized as old fashioned and as people stuck in the past. Meanwhile, the course of history changed forever with the outbreak of the two World Wars that shook the entire world. It may be noted that, even in the postcolonial era, the brooding shadows of colonial mindset still persists and the religion Christianity serves as an emblem of them. All these led for the Nagas to transition from the old to the new world view. Nienu states that, “A Naga born after 1960 fell victim to this terrible tragedy” (xv) because what remains today are only the copies and imitations of an otherwise great heritage.

Today, although marred by a colonial history, the environment still plays a huge role in shaping the culture of the Nagas. For anyone who has been in Nagaland, it is well known fact about how nature forms the mould on which the people shape their lifestyles.

The physical environment, especially the mountains and the climate, formed two major ecological entities that strongly shaped the life and culture of the Naga tribes, as can be seen from their habitats, settlement patterns, and subsistence systems. The imposing nature of the mountains, often inaccessible, and the seemingly inexhaustible resources they sheltered, led the Nagas to respect the mountains to the extent of deifying them. Instead of nature controlling them, the Nagas through the years learned to adapt to nature for their own benefit (Nienu xv).

Therefore, the Naga identity which so grapples for recognition lay in the retrieval of their own oral tradition through a retelling, and through a reclamation of their cultural heritage in

nature. For truly, there is no lineage of the Nagas without the integration of nature in their narratives.

Easterine Kire stands as a colossal and prolific storyteller in Naga writings in English. Her novels are attuned to the Naga experiences of times both bygone and contemporary reality. Kire's *ANVR*, is a retelling of the history of Khonoma, an Angami village that came under the siege of the British colonials. In the years that followed the war and signing of a treaty, Khonoma went on to be Christianized. Kire accounts the brave fight the villagers put up to resist the engulfing influence and control of British imperialism whilst highlighting the cultural amnesia that seeped into the natives through the introduction of western education, ideals and beliefs that totally disregarded the old ways. It gives a glimpse into the trajectory between the old world view and the new world. *ANVR* is based on the historical context of this colonial siege and brought alive through this fictional narrative. The plot revolves around a group of characters who are placed at the threshold of modernity. This novel accounts the influence of education and Christianity on the characters. The narrative has three generations of people positioned together. The first is of Kovi and his warrior generation, then the second is of Levi and his batch who tasted the bitter pangs of colonial encroachment and fought for the freedom and resistance, the third is of the colonized world of Sato and Roko who witness the death of their fathers and tradition and embrace the new world ideals. In the fictional world of the characters, it chronicles how cultural homicide gradually slithered its way, and how derogative it has been toward Naga cultural identity. It brought about disillusionment and a breakaway from the spiritual man- nature relationship.

The British first entered Kohima in 1832 on the pretext of checking the possibility of a route from Manipur to Assam to ply through Nagaland in order to protect themselves against Burmese invasions. "British entry was resisted fiercely by spear-welding warriors who saw the expedition as an inroad into their land" (Kire 217). Historical accounts show that one of the fiercest resistances was displayed by the warrior village of Khonoma who unswervingly raised Nagaland's biggest anti-colonial shield. Three expeditions in 1844, 1849 and 1850 respectively had been attempted on Khonoma prior to 1800. The final attack on Khonoma was launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1880 and came to an end on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1881 through the declaration of a treaty is the backdrop of the novel *ANVR*.

Khonoma is geographically located on a high altitude and is surrounded by majestic mountains. It was owing to the high terrain and natural topography that often kept the village mounted and shielded from advancing enemies. “The Angamis, like other Naga tribes, favored hilltop settlements for a variety of reasons, the most dominant being strategic defense purposes” (Kire 60).

After the treaty was signed, the years that followed saw the advent of Christian missionaries and western education. In chapter twelve, *ANVR* has Dr. Sidney Rivenburg running the Mission school which Sato attended. The aftermath of the colonial intrusion was the loss of Naga identity and cultural amnesia. It was only obvious that the white men should capture the literature of the Nagas because it was they who introduced the print culture and educational institutions in the hills.

#### 5.1.1 Reclaiming the lost tradition: on storytelling

Toward the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, literary writings and criticism underwent a shift to address the growing environmental concerns around the world. Ecocriticism emerged as a literary effort to reassess the relationship between Nature and Literature. In the field of writing, the representation of nature widened with the coming in of a more comprehensive understanding of man-nature symbiosis. Simultaneously, Naga writing in English was also surfacing to form an identity and place in literature.

The Nagas by themselves have a very strong oral tradition base. Devoid of any script and written accounts, the transmission of stories, songs and poems were all orally carried forward from one generation to the other. Post Indian independence, a strong need to form a literature arose. Once again, literature needed to begin from the roots and for oral traditions to be revisited. Temsula Ao, one of Nagaland’s most prominent authors envisioned to commingle the past tradition with the new present. This could be only achieved through a new method of storytelling. In her poem “The Old Storyteller”, Ao writes that “Storytelling was my proud legacy...each telling revitalized my life-force” (240). The only nexus to reconnect with a forgotten history was through storytelling. Storytelling was at the heart of Naga society and today, it functions as the thread that connects contemporary man with his past heritage. This is ecologically beneficial and significant because the Naga culture is deep seated in reverence and



in honoring nature. Stories were central to the Nagas. The stories they shared were charged with legends and myths and a clear understanding of their identity and cultural heritage.

There were stories and songs that celebrate the beginning of a people; where they come from, why they do things the way they do, how the sky, the earth and everything in them came into being. They speak of animals, birds and spirits to show of the close affinity that existed between them and that each one should respect the other. They sing of legends who brought pride and honour to their land (Pou 59).

In order to evoke the spiritual symbiosis of man and nature, the spiritual meanings attached to places can be transmitted largely through the indigenous art of storytelling. Why indigenous story telling is relevant to Ecocriticism and the realm of Ecospirituality is because these stories are charged with the values and knowledge of nature, as well as beliefs. They dwell on the intrinsic value of nature, each as an indispensable entity. It also renews the imagination, because in these stories, pristine landscapes are projected and instead in the spirit of Ecosocialism show a society in harmony with nature devoid of modern destructive practices and mindset. The environmental aesthetics are highly elevated as spiritual abodes and breathing with life. Hence the Nagas,

have a strong conviction to know about the physical environment around them. Their understanding and connection are spread across both vertical and horizontal dimensions: Creator in the sky and deities everywhere, sun, and moon, and man on Earth with everything in it- mountains and forests, rivers and streams, plants and animals, his kin and his neighbors. This comprehension of nature has also helped him realize a sense of morality, a responsibility to his natural environment and to his fellow men on a reciprocal basis (Nienu 38).

Easterine does not only depended on oral tradition and Naga history for her enterprise but she also revives the imagery of Naga imagination by using nature imageries as in the tradition of our songs and stories. In chapter two, Keviselie decides to take the title by giving a feast after he sees a dream of the short tailed *gwi* (mithun). Kire also rekindles the imagination of the old world by comparing the roar of Levi to that of a tiger in chapter thirteen. Kire acknowledges the

imposing natural topography in her work and enriches her narration with vivid descriptions of nature. This is ecologically significant because Nature does not linger as a landscape alone or as an accompanying background. It plays as much an active role as any human does. Nature permeates all lifestyles of the Nagas and in the spiritual world served important functions. The novel *ANVR* mentions how nature stood together with the people to protect her villagers from the advancing enemies.

The British had their cannons but the men of Khonoma were protected by the natural world they had always lived so close to. Crude nets of cane held rocks fell upon the ascending soldiers, killing and wounding and deterring any further attacks (*ANVR* 84).

The Nagas “love of nature continues to be profusely expressed in the various forms of arts and crafts, in dress and ornaments, in religious ceremonies, and in the stories and songs of rich oral traditions. Nagas perceive and extol the uniqueness of the physical world, often portrayed in oral traditions” (Nienu 35).

Kire further incorporates the role of nature in another light where it is used as a protection or a shield to ward off the evil spirit. She brings in the image of the bitter wormwood. *Ciena* or bitter wormwood was traditionally used by the Angamis to protect themselves against spirits. In chapter four, when Vikhwelie was being chased by the spirits, he uproots a bitter wormwood plant which the narrator tells us saves his life and enables him to enter his village gates. When the villagers set out to search for him, “they stuck bitter wormwood behind their ears before they reached the forests” (*ANVR* 28).

The white men did open the gateway for the Nagas to a world of new possibilities and especially in terms of development. There are, however, some areas where they inflicted permanent injury, like in the case of Naga identity in nature which resulted from the oral tradition digression. In the Angami tradition the *Thehou* (meeting house) and *Kichüki* (male dormitory) served as symposiums for all types of discourses. Apart from many important social utilities, Kire notes that it was,

the seat of oral tradition because all the stories of the clan and village are passed down to the next generation orally through storytelling. Stories are also told to

teach acceptable social behavior, thus the *Thehou* functioned as a vital centre of education preserving the culture, history and religious practices of the tribe (62).

In the novel *ANVR*, we see how all the important discussions took place in the *Thehous* where women were not allowed pass. Male members of the village were the wells of oral tradition who then, passed it to their families.

Reminiscing about hunts and battles in the past made the *thehou* a place where any youth with a man's heart inside him linger to listen or add his stories as well. But if the elders were there, the younger men listened closely without speaking much. They came to learn the stories of the village. It was good to be called a *thehou no*, a child of the *thehou*- it meant that such a person was well versed in the stories and customs of the village (*ANVR* 6).

The *Morung* (Kichüki in Angami) in general was the primary social and educational institution and a depot of traditional knowledge, values and ethics. The *Morung* life covered all aspects of the community and stood as a robust pillar. Historically, the functions of the Morungs were all round development and all comprehensive. It was a,

Centre for attitude formation of young people where the young men received semi-military training and taught war tactics. At the Morung, they performed difficult initiation rituals. They also received training in various cultural, arts and craft skills. Naga oral traditions were kept alive in the Morung and passes on from one generation to the next in the form of folk songs, dances and folk tales. The education system of the Morung was highly relevant and utilitarian, serving the practical needs of the people while developing character and a sense of civic duties, community ethics, cooperative labor and responsible citizenship (Kire 32).

However with the introduction of western education and beliefs, all these values that defined the Naga cultural identity and unison with nature were gradually subdued. The incorporation of the western imagination took a serious toll on the songs and stories that lay at the core of every Naga. As result, oral tradition underwent the dark years of negligence. Westernization and Christianization created misconceptions around their existing oral tradition by associating it with the dark heathen Naga past and as such, their stories and songs suddenly

“weren’t colourful and musical to their ears anymore” (Pou 59) and instead they shunned and despised their past. In the novel, the new generation who were being moulded under the new education system found new values. The significance of the *Morungs* also phased out and was replaced by the white man’s mission schools and church institutions. For truly, colonialism was not just a political or economic condition; “it was a powerful cultural and epistemological conquest of their native populations” (Nayar 3). In chapter twelve of *ANVR*, Sato, the son of Levi attends a Mission School in Kohima run by a white man called Dr. Sidney Rivenburg. He was not just educated academically but western moral ethics were also imbibed. Dr. Rivenburg gained the trust of the natives through his medical knowledge and they so respectfully called him *Chaha Ketsau* meaning “Old Sahib”. Under the influence of the new education, Sato was reluctantly initiated during *Sekrenyi*. Sato did not just shed the usual prowess of a male Khonoma warrior but he started alienating himself from the culture he no longer identified with anymore. It is interesting to note from a conversation that took place between Sato and his older brother Roko who shouted angrily at him by saying, “Huh, you’re learning book but no one eats book. Someday you’ll wish you had learnt more of field work” (97). Although now to engage in farming seemed like a futile investment, this was the beginning of the new generation who started losing on the knowledge of the ways of nature and their ecological consciousness.

Before the intrusion of the white men ideologies, the Nagas lived in close proximity with nature, in a spiritually coordinated symphony. They honoured nature as a scared abode of the spirits and lived in adoration and reverence of it. One grievous alteration brought about by the colonizers was the antagonizing of nature in representation, in the process demystifying it. The forest which was the sacred dwelling place of the spirits was now projected as “unclean places for spirit” (*ANVR* 100). From a place of affinity, it was reversed to fear. And from a place of nurture, an attitude of domination seeped in. The villagers of Khonoma were thrown into utter disbelief when the wrath of the spirits they so feared were diminished and overcome by the white men. In the novel a story was widely circulated about how Chaha Rivenburg made a spirit disappear. Demystification continued when the sacred abode was now considered a place where the sanctified Christian souls were lured away. Kire writes, “The spirit of man was so easily lured away by spirits of the forest and spirits of unclean places for spirit will always hearken to spirit” (*ANVR* 100). Man and nature were segmented as opposites and opposing forces. Taboos/*genas* played a huge role in nature preservation in the olden days. It was closely observed with

careful precision and this in a way, especially the *genas* concerning agriculture allowed the land to rest and take its natural course. As the demystification process continued, the taboos naturally lost their function. Sato would often compare the two religions and tried to draw relations between them. The taboos were significant because of the old religion. In the old ways, to forgo a *gena* meant death. On one occasion in the novel, the villagers were so maddened by the new converts that they forced a man by the name Krusietso to plough his field at *Ngonyi*, a *gena* day. “Everyone knew the breaking of the taboo would be punished by the violator being bitten by a snake. Miraculously, nothing happened to Krusietso” (ANVR 103-104). All these events historically and in the novel led to the slow of the old system.

Characters like Levi in the novel were totally against the new system. He disowned his own son Sato. He did not judge Sato’s conversion just as an act of defiance but as an insult to his forefathers and their belief system. He questioned his son, “The white man killed your grandfather’s brother and burnt your grandfather’s house four times... You will have the blood of your ancestors on your hands” (ANVR 102).

From a cultural and ecological vantage, indigenous storytelling is very significant for revitalizing the imagination and sensitization. As Nicoletta Lanese wrote, “Stories give character to local wildlife, voices to trees and spiritual resonance to the sunrise. They connect indigenous people to their environment and guide their interactions with it” (n. pag).

#### 5.1.2 Ecological significance of the Naga ethic and *genas*

The Nagas are a well knitted community where values, ethic and norms define the members. The Nagas always had a profound understanding of nature resulting in sheer reverence and acknowledgment of all entities. For in,

the Naga worldview, the universe was inhabited by a vast array of spirits, ghosts, and strange creatures who affected human fate. The domain of the supernatural was too vast and too difficult for most humans to fully comprehend, and within the Naga belief system, only the priest could approach supernatural forces” (Nienu 138).

They were never ignorant of the value of nature but there was an element of mysticism in their belief and understanding of nature. The treatment of nature was of a higher order being an entity shrouded in mystery and protected by the spirits. As in the concept of Aldo Leopold's 'Land Ethic', the community of the Nagas included people, "soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (413).

Even in the bygone days, the Naga Environmental ethic was what helped in contributing towards the equilibrium in the environment. This led to a working consciousness, and a moral responsibility that guided the actions of the people and shaped their mindset. As Leopold rightly stated, the presence of an ethic "reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land" (Leopold 419). *Genas* or taboos played an immense role in preserving the environment. Kire reminds the readers of some traditional observances in the novel. The Nagas were all well aware of the violation of the *genas*. "If you had not heeded the taboos, you could soon live on unharmed for some years but the day would soon come when the earth would open up to receive you before your time" (ANVR 12). Taboos were an ethic of the Nagas that bridged the crevice between man and nature. "Taboos were important and formed an integral part of the Naga society at large, but were executed more at the individual level with religious overtones" (Hibo 1).

Environmental ethics is a branch of Ecocriticism that came into prominence in the sixties. "Environmental ethics is the field of enquiry that addresses the ethical responsibilities of human beings for the natural...this field is not limited to ethical inquiry, but also is embedded in a larger matrix of aesthetic, religious, scientific, economic, and political considerations" (Botzler 2). This field of criticism opened the platform for an ecological enquiry into the attitudes and actions of men. A core value of Environmental Ethic is the belief in the holistic intrinsic value of nature as opposed to the popular anthropocentric view which bestows the intrinsic value only on humans. Environmental Ethics is an offshoot of philosophy. For a long time in the dominant western view, which is also native to the British colonials, man was at the center of everything. This mode of inquisition questions this stance of man as the moral superior. It also emphasizes on our moral duties toward our environment.

The traditional world as portrayed by Kire in her novel *ANVR*, is ecologically in sync with nature.

Mountains, hills, forest, and rivers were held sacred and respected, for they were the source of all good things and had the power to affect crops fertility- all believed to be controlled by supernatural forces...Reverence for Nature, to which their lives were inextricably joined, became the guiding principle (Nienu 35).

The general perception of nature was of deep reverence and an ecological awareness coupled by consciousness. Nature was a sacred embodiment of the spiritual forces that controlled their lives. The Nagas had a deep attachment with their land. The land was considered sacred and the people felt so bonded with it that they could not bear to imagine a life without living in it. Easterine Kire refreshes the mind by reminding the readers about Nagas and the identity that is attached with their land and how their life is dependent upon it. The narrative and the concept of the land will always be different from the colonizers because unlike them, the Nagas saw it as a birthright, a heritage they were proud of upholding and taking forward. “To the tribals, land is a symbol of pride, identity and prosperity” (Lasetso 3).

The Nagas did not come and conquer land and take it away from someone already living there, beyond pushing their own farther by those trailing behind; rather, the Nagas came and occupied a virgin territory that their Creator gave them. The Creator also gave them both the rights and obligations to maintain and be sustained by the land and resources of their country. It is upon the indigenous ethic that the Nagas insist upon the moral and ethical rights to own and preserve their God given land (Nienu 34).

The colonial mindset not only demystified nature, it was now commodified as a material thing. The way in which Nagas valued and identified with their lands was totally challenged. The attachment with the land that harbored in the hearts of the people can be understood through the way Levi reacted during his homecoming. In the narrative, Levi comes home after being imprisoned for six years by the British administrators. After a hard pressed time of torture and pain he is overcome with emotions as he looks at his village. The narrator notes, “Levi, hardened by jail life saw his village with new eyes...But he felt, too, a deep bonding with his ancestral village and he thought that he would cry” (ANVR 38). The land was their home, and they had an overwhelming attachment with it. Such that, characters like Levi was overcome with emotions when he was kept away from his village.

Impulsively he picked up a bit of soil and smelt its earthiness. He felt bonded to the village, to the land, and feelings surged up in him that he'd never known before. I should feel strongly for a mistress he mused smiling to himself. That was what this village did to her men, she bonded them to her so strongly that they were always striving to prove themselves men enough for her (ANVR 40).

It was the land that made Levi felt connected to his village and reminded him of his identity in his hour of distress. The land was a source of life, their identity and a symbol of their unity. Materialization and commodification of the land was opposed to the Naga land ethic. They could fight back for the land taken from them but it was against their moral disposition to conquer lands and commodify it. Instead, in their spiritual world, the Angami Nagas claimed the Sky to be their father and Earth as their mother and *Kepenuopfui* as their god. This concept of the duality in nature is foundational towards the Nagas treatment of nature. In the novel *When the River Sleeps* Vilie in his hour of desperation, calls upon the strength of Nature and rebukes the spirit of death. "Vilie summoned all his knowledge of the supernatural in a last effort to battle her back to life" and he shouts, "Sky is my father, Earth is my mother, *Kepenuopfui* fights for me! Take your hands off her!" (193). The retrieval of oral tradition, values and ethics are emphasized because people in the past were more ecologically sensitive. Lasetso commented that,

The sky is seen as the male and the earth the female. The health of either was considered of paramount importance for life's sustenance...if this mother earth is harmed through deforestation the sky will be injured. And if the sky does not provide due rainfall and sunshine the mother earth will be injured (2).

This ideology resonates the organic unity in nature and how in injuring one entity, the other gets hurt too. Perhaps the explanations are not justified but the eco-sensibility and comprehension is something the modern Nagas need to revive and cultivate.

The Angamis have an agrarian base. It is said that they can produce nearly twenty varieties of paddy crops annually. Terrace cultivation and Jhum cultivation methods of farming are popular among them. In the old belief system, a lot of rituals and *genas* were concentrated on agriculture. In the modern era, land ownership has become privatized from a tradition of community landholding. As such, "Land relations in an agrarian society are in the form of



ownership, control and access to the use of land. Basically, ownership means the right to control, use and dispose off the thing owned” (Christina191-192). In the novel, the community-loving characters working in unison with nature, nurturing her and asking to bless them with a good harvest is observed. In *ANVR*, a lot of taboos surrounding cultivation and agriculture are accounted. During *Sekrenyi*, the festival of sanctification, they would observe the *rhoutho* ritual of seed sowing, where the elders of the village would bless the harvest ahead.

My paddy may you grow up well, though the weeds are abundant, my paddy do you grow around the tree stumps and boulder. It will be the food for generations, the food of wartime, grow bent over with full husked grain (*ANVR* 66).

The *genas* surrounding agriculture and farming and their removal was a violation of nature’s course of recuperation and assimilation. This one incident in the novel marks the departure from this system where the *genas* halted the people from overusing the earth for his own purpose. Modern ethics also involves giving value to all forms of life equally. There are two cases of accidental death in the novel *ANVR*. The first one is the tiger, and the second one is when Penyü accidentally shoots Levi dead in chapter thirteen. Kire explicitly shows how the Naga ethical values respected all forms of life equally. In both the cases, strict rituals and *genas* were observed. As the novel opens, the village of Khonoma is alarmed one evening with the news of Vilau having killed a tiger. The villagers knew very well what to do when the brother of man was killed. They had to begin the tiger killing ritual of *Tekhu kete*. In the Naga oral tradition, there is a folktale that recounts how man, tiger and the spirit lived together with their mother in the same house. Tigers are therefore, not only a revered animal but also considered the brother of man. The ritual involved piercing the tiger by all the males with their spears. What is intriguing is not the ritual but the attitude with which they observed the ritual and honoured the dead tiger. As Vilau entered the village gate his paternal uncle stopped him from entering the village and rebuked him saying, “They say you have killed our elder brother who was kind and gentle. Do not come” (*ANVR* 12). In the folktale, the tiger was the eldest among the three siblings and it is against the Naga ethics to disrespect the elders at any given time. Even in the traditional world, tiger kill was a rare event. In case of a tiger kill, “the Angamis have to cook outside the house or in the porch and may not bring it near the woman. It is taboo to eat the head

because the tiger and man were believed to be brothers and afraid that they may come avenging the dead tiger” (Angami 117).

As such, the humans who committed the crime also believed in the supernatural forces and were careful not to invite the wrath of the tiger spirit. They carefully conducted the ritual where they opened the mouth of the tiger with a stick and placed at a waterfall allowing the water to flow through its mouth. This, the villagers believed would save them as declared by the eldest man among them,

When your relatives come asking for you, be smooth-voiced as the straw and the leaves of the chili and may your voice be as unclear as the sound of this waterfall so that your kin will never discover who killed you (ANVR 13).

This was not the end of the ritual. The owner of the spear responsible for killing the tiger had to observe a five days ritual. After hoeing water from a new channel, Vilau made fire from split bamboos and cooked his food from a new fireplace.

Vilau killed a pig and cut the front right leg to give to the *tekhu theno-u*, the man who had injured the tiger. Later, when his wife served him dinner, he divided his food into 39 shares and ate all portions after careful counting (ANVR 13).

It was an expensive affair for the man who had killed the tiger yet more, the sincerity with which this *gena* was observed reflects on the spiritual connection and reverence of life forms. Also, what is not mentioned in the novel is that blood significance is very strong.

Another ethic of the Nagas in their spiritual cosmology was that they valued the purity, and power of the blood of animals.

In the Angami worldview of the olden days, the nature, mother earth, the malevolent and benevolent spirits, animals and humans were closely connected. To kill any wild animal or even domestic animals, cannot be done at will. It has to be an occasion or that too rituals should be followed (Angami 108).

In this case, animals performed symbolic roles. As stated by Angami, in the spiritual matrix of man, animals and nature, they were interconnected. Animal sacrifices were made to

either atone for an act or as a bargain for life, or for determining the fate of a person. As opposed to modern animal cruelty, the animals in this sphere, made noble sacrifices and acted as messengers from the spiritual realm. Animals like the chicken were most commonly sacrificed. In the novel, in the case of Viselie, they sacrificed a chicken to start the ceremony. Also, when the time for initiation came in chapter twelve, a chicken was similarly sacrificed to determine the fate of Sato. These were taken as signs and the people took the sacrifices very seriously. When Levi brings his new bride to a new house, he kills a rooster and sprinkles its blood on the middle beam of the house. Kire mentions these sacrifices in her novel *When the River Sleeps* as well when the people would sometimes release a chicken in the forest and proclaimed “Life for life” (54). It was a symbolic act of bartering a life for a life.

The character Kovi meets with a tragic accident while out in the field and he passes away. His death symbolizes the death of tradition in the pristine hills of Nagaland. The colonizers did inflict cultural amnesia; efforts through various literary discourses are being made to retrieve the lost tradition. In the midst of this storm of environmental crisis, there is a strong need to revive the relevant practices and to remind people the ethics on which our culture oscillates and moves forward. Storytelling holds the key to this dilemma as “Oral tradition is much more than just the songs and stories that memorialize the history of the people, it constitutes the philosophy and the life world of a people” (Pou ix).

The same attitude that rejected the social taboos still grows in the bosoms of people and is stigmatized as something superstitious and out of relevance and is only associated with the indigenous religion. Today, indeed, “Laws, values and ethics have taken the place of taboos. However, a gap or vacuum exists in contemporary times, particularly for the young” (Hibo 4-5). According to Hibo, owing to the loss of the Morung culture and the thinning ‘kitchen talks’, modern Nagas and the upcoming generation are losing touch with our ethics and values, without the education of which the Nagas will be just another one in the shallow crowd. Hibo observes that,

Values, norms, folkways, ethics, religious beliefs and other important discussions are no longer taken as familial role, which is leading to disintegration of good existence or good citizenship in contemporary Naga society (5).

Taboos and *genas* are brushed away as shadows of the old religion and nullified as superstitious, but the ecological significance of it has never changed. Instead its abeyance has cost more harm than good because many taboos revolve around the preservation of nature and is about maintaining her equilibrium. “Taboos serve as a warning against breaking the rules and norms of the community or the natural order” (Lasetso 7). It then serves as a social rod against heedless anthropocentric activities. On the pretext of accessing medicinal nutrition, animal hunting despite various restrictions have become commonplace. It may be pointed out that the removal of taboos paved the way for people to mindlessly destroy nature and her biodiversity. Lasetso comments that it was the British who introduced guns and the concept of hunting. He also mentions that taboos prevented many hunting and fishing activities and community hunting which was an annual event happened, in this case to serve a purpose during the festivals (6). As ecological calls are made to rediscover the intrinsic and inherent values in nature, the onus upon the Nagas is to segregate the religious connotations and reattach social values to the wisdom their forefathers have carefully woven into the oral tradition. Cultural taboos can still be implemented as an ethic to check the abuse of nature at the local level to preserve certain areas and to regulate the resource usage.

In the real world, the village of Khonoma, which is memorialized in *ANVR* renounced their weapons in the year 1998 as a collective measure to preserve the rich biodiversity of their village. Today, it is called “Green Village” of Nagaland. Hunting and trade of timber in their forests is prohibited. “In 1998, the Khonoma nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary was founded over 20 sq km” (Singh 1).

## 5.2 Spiritual Cosmology of the Nagas

The Nagas have always lived in unison with nature. The lifestyle and culture of the inhabitants of this mountainous state as stated by Nienu were largely shaped by “the mountains and rivers of their land, combined with the indigenous flora and fauna” (34). As observed in *ANVR*, the Naga life was surrounded by rituals and taboos. Easterine Kire’s *When the River Sleeps*, hereafter, *WTRS*, is about the spiritual journey of Vilie, a 48 year old man who embarks on a lone quest for the ‘Heart- Stone’. The entire novel is conditioned on a deep ecological base. Kire in her interview on “Greening the Imagination” stated that her novel is inspired by hunter stories she had heard as a young adult (Imsong 171). Although there is no specific time line, it is

an excellent testimony of the Naga experience in the wild. As Kire shares her tale, she brings to the readers the world of Naga spirituality and their association with nature.

The crux of Naga traditional life was their firm belief in the tangible presence of the spirits.

The Naga mind accepts the parallel existence of the natural and the spiritual world. All the tribes believe in life after and in coexistence of spirits with man. Spirit- sightings are common even among Christians. Weretigers or tigersmen- the practice of some men becoming dual- souled with the tiger- are part of the Naga recent past. Though there is no spirit worship in the tribal religions, there is a practice of spirit appeasement or spirit propitiation if a member of the family falls sick after a trip to the deep woods. An egg or a chicken is sacrificed to the spirits to purchase the health of the sick person. Sacrifices are also made with pieces of metal which are discarded outside the village after some ritual words are pronounced. The Naga spirits have names and are identifiable by their native names which speak of their nature and describe their identity (Kire 46).

The spiritual cosmology of the Nagas was tripartite- of man, spirits and nature. The spirits dwelled in nature, men were guardians of nature and nature protected men. “The Nagas believed in two types of spirits: the Benevolent and the Malevolent. In order to appease both types of spirits, sacrificial rituals were performed” (Ngone 25). The rituals can be abundantly observed in both *ANVR* and *WTRS*. These spirits are omnipresent and found everywhere. In the spiritual cosmos where Vilie treads, he encounters multiple spirits. One of the toughest encounters was with the spirit widow-women who guarded the sleeping river. “They carried baskets on their backs and walked into the fog and down to the river. They looked as though they were fetching water but their water pots stayed in their baskets” (101). In *ANVR*, when Kovi’s first child was born, he quickly swore on the infant by smearing the child’s forehead with his saliva stating “I am first” (5). This was done to claim the child before any malevolent spirit did. “The Angami is deeply aware of the spiritual world around him and accepts its parallel existence with the natural world” (Kire 63).

In the Naga ritual world, it was the village priest who acted as “a mediator between the Supreme Being and the villagers” (Epao 70). Fortune telling was the role of the shaman as mentioned by Jacobs (93). When Vikhwelie got spirited away in *ANVR*, seers were consulted and this is what the seer of the Thevo clan responded: “He is not far away from where you have been searching today. But his hands and feet are bound and his mouth too. Seers always stated cryptically necessitating an elder to interpret their words” (28). He was bound by the malevolent spirits and he needed to free himself from them.

In the novel, *WTRS*, Kire introduces the concept of weretigers which was part of the spiritual symbiosis between men, spirits and animals. As mentioned earlier, Nagas believed in the folktale of the ‘Tiger, Spirit and Man’ and thus in, “Under linguistic taboos, hunters do not say the word tiger when they are in the forest. They refer to him as the ‘elder brother’” (Kire 63). As Vilie sets out on his journey, in chapter five and six, he encounters a weretiger or *Tekhumiavi*. Weretigers are those men whose spirits have been metamorphosed into tigers. “Among the Angamis, the weretiger ritual was a closely guarded one” (*WTRS* 27).

The material culture of the Nagas is also deeply in nature. They reflect on the unity Nagas shared with nature. They foraged materials from the forest without destroying the source of life and turned them into various items including their houses, roofs, cooking pots, medicines and body cloth. In *ANVR*, Kovi is found eating from his “wide wooden plate” whose “wooden legs were convenient, one could carry hot food about and not burn one’s fingers by using this facility” (2). Likewise in chapter seven of *WTRS*, Vilie encounters two young girls and an older woman. They were “harvesting nettle which they would strip for fibre to make into yarn- it was called barkweaving” (32). He saw that they had pared down the stems to remove the thorn leaving the sturdy and fibrous stems. They would later “strip lengthwise and lay in a room for a few days until the bark fiber was ready to be wound into yarn” (33). Kire through this story highlights on the dying art of barkweaving. These women knew their way around the forest and the nettle and were dexterous in not injuring themselves. Vilie, in his haste and disregarding the women, when he tried to cut off a stem, he injures himself. To the sting, a kneaded bitter wormwood was applied as an antidote. Later, Idele also applies some Rock bee honey saying that “it’s a cure-all” (38). Among many instances, when Ate gets attacked by a weretiger, Vilie “staunched the blood flow with a paste of *vilhuü nha*... he covered the wound with herb paste

made from *tierhutiepfü* and bound it up with cloth” (190). Kire in sincerely adding these details to the novel is her way of restoring imagination to see the value of nature and how it is capable of providing and taking care of all our needs.

In the novel, Vilie claims the forest to be his wife and bride. This same emotional attachment can also be seen when Kovi returns home in *ANVR*. He said that he felt strongly for the village as he would feel for a mistress (40). Similarly, the forest was home to Vilie, and the forest was also his wife. He felt that it was his duty to take of the forest and to miss the village community life was like a betrayal to his spouse, the forest. Vilie had spent twenty five years in the forest, and in his forty eighth year, he did neither felt incomplete nor the need to go back to his village. He was the guardian of the *gwi* (mithun). The Forest department also made him the official protector of the rare Tragopan in the forest. Kire brings in the animal and birds closely related to the Nagas. In many ways, Vilie exemplifies the Naga perception of the forest.

Forest to the tribals, is the sustained/ provider of life...For many tribal communities, as long as, big clouds hang over the forest, it is a sign of good fortune, because it indicates the health of the forest with its bounty to offer. Therefore, utmost care was taken by the tribals not to disturb the abode of the cloud. Tribal communities knew that harming the forest through timber felling and deforestation can lead to the removal of cloud over the forest. This would be a bad sign as the natural order will be disturbed” (Lasetso 3-4).

On one level, Kire shares in “Greening the Imagination” that, Vilie considers the forest as his wife because,

the forest gives him food, meat of animals, herbs, roots, fruits and wood to make a shelter and warm him...Vilie feels a sense of loyalty towards the forest in the same way a man would feel loyal to his wife. He acknowledges that the forest gives him so much and does so much for him by way of shelter and food and as a spiritual sanctuary that he feels disloyal when he feels lonely. The Angami has fear and awe of the forest for it is a place he does not fully understand. At the same time, he feels his responsibility to take care of it, like a shepherd or a

husband. Vilie feels the forest accommodates him more than a human society (Imsong 173).

The villagers of Vilie also guarded the forest because it was their land. As stated earlier, the same reverence and responsibility for nature perseverance is found in *WTRS* as well. Easterine Kire reimagines the concept of the Unclean forest in the novel. When Vilie was out on his journey, he takes shelter in the unclean forest where he meets a spirit in the form of a beautiful girl. He then realizes that “There were others who made it their home” (80). The unclean forest ethic was that if one took anything from the forest, whether it was firewood or herbs, they had to acknowledge the owners of the forest and thank the spirits. In the Naga spiritual world, everything has a spirit or a guardian spirit. The river is also a spirit. As the novel opens, Vilie had been constantly visited by the same dream every month over a course of two years. As the title goes, it is about the enchanted Sleeping River which holds the Heart Stone. This is what Vilie shares about the enchanted river:

When the river is asleep, it is completely still. Yet the enchantment of those minutes or hours when it sleeps is so powerful, that it turns the stones in the middle of the river bed into a charm. If you can wrest a stone from the heart of the sleeping river, it will grant you whatever it is empowered to grant you. It could be cattle, women, prowess in war, or success in the hunt. That is what is meant by catching the river when it is asleep. That way you can make its magic yours. The retrieved stone is a powerful charm called a heart stone (3).

In terms of literary representation, the natural entities are beyond being personified, or a voice (as in apostrophe) or a case of transferred epithet. They are presented as they are, in fact in their spiritual grandeur, as an equal member of the ecosystem equally contributing, and equally present. Nature is projected as a provider and sustainer as well as a colossal and mysterious force that men live in constant acknowledgment of. In this particular narrative, the river is a spirit. When Vilie tried to retrieve the Heart Stone, he feels the true strength and force of the river.

Vilie was flung back like a bit of driftwood by the intruding waters. His mouth and nostrils filled up with water as he felt himself sucked down by the treacherous undercurrent. The river was almost human as it pushed him down and under,



down and under, and the water rushed at him as though it would strangle him. He was shocked at the violence of the water (103).

Rivers are also a recurring entity in the Naga spiritual world and oral tradition. The Angamis in the past were very particular about not building a house across a river or stream because it was believed to be the path way for the *terhuomia* (spirits)". This was an eco-friendly taboo because it helped maintain the course of the river.

The entire novel *When the River Sleeps* is about the quest of the Heart Stone. Stones also stand as a symbolic entity in the Naga Spiritual Cosmology. Many tribes in Nagaland like the Angamis, Chakesang, Lotha, Semas, and the Rengmas have their origin myth of their ancestors having originated from the Spirit Stone known as the *Tsotawo*, where *Tso* means stone and *Tawo* means the spirit (Zehol 93). In the Angami culture stones form an important part of their history. Kire notes that "Angami areas are markedly prominent for the absence of megaliths...The megalithic culture represents a civilization which has a unified culture. The practice of erecting megaliths is one sign that the Nagas were not nomadic groups" (59). In the novel, there is a chapter called "The Screaming Stone". Kire narrates about two stones in the village of Zusie that would scream in the evening. The mothers would plug their children's ears to avoid hearing whatever the stones were spewing. It was a bad omen whenever the stones screamed. Either a "war, or pestilence or sudden death" (141) would follow.

Easterine Kire heralds a back to nature call in her writings and celebrates the land, her inmates and their relationship. She stresses on the importance of storytelling by an insider. Her novel does hold testimony of the loyalty and deep love Nagas had for their land and culture. Kire in her novels tries to subvert the centrality of humans in every narrative and emphasizes on the intrinsic value of nature through her depiction of the Naga spiritual lifestyle and belief system. She does not agree with humans being simply the takers and wants to encourage a culture of nurture as we evolve from a tradition of nature reverence and affinity. Through the character of Vilie and his enlightenment, apathy is presented to the readers in *WTRS*.

When he lay down to rest, he was suddenly filled with a great wave of sympathy for all creatures that had ever been in the situation that he found himself in now. So this was how they felt- the fugitives on the run from other men, both the guilty

and the innocent- a cringing fear of all men and all signs of human dwelling. He had never experienced this before. It was unusual to feel this way. He felt somewhat guilty and tried to shrug off the feeling (59-60).

From her interview “Greening the Imagination” Kire shared that as in Arne Naess’ Deep Ecology path, we need more institutions and bodies to implement policies that caters to the natural environment. Indeed, truly as Kire stated, “There is a lot of wisdom in the Folk...The global environment movement can learn from our native ways of preserving the earth, and the sense of respect our culture displays towards the natural world” (Imsong 176). Therefore, indigenous story telling is a very integrative and creative in Ecofiction. As Vilie was haunted for not responding to his moral duty on the face of danger to fend for Pehu, so also, if the current generation do not rise to the occasion to play their role, there will be no one else to blame but ourselves. For “If old generations do not tell younger generations how ecosystems resembled in the past, ecological changes remain unnoticed to younger generations. Such phenomenon poses a threat to conservation, because the failure to recognize ecological changes usually translates into unsustainable uses of biodiversity and/or decreased support for conservation” (Llamazares). As Llamazares and Cabeza stated, the mode of writing stories alone may not be sufficient to actually transmit the stories. So the onus of storytellers to share and tell is still profound. As deliberated in *ANVR*, the past is a mine of knowledge especially in terms of identifying one’s identity in nature. Studies show that “changing human perceptions of biological systems” resulting from “loss of experience about the past conditions”, this is termed as “Generational amnesia” (Papworth 93). Generational amnesia is when one fails to share their perceptions and experience to the future generations, which then creates a vacuum, a discord in the continuity of tradition and culture.

Taboos and *genas* was the driving force in the Naga spiritual world. “The Angami religion can be summed up as a religion of taboos. The taboos are interesting as some have serious consequences while the role of others is obviously to teach acceptable social conduct” (Kire 62-63). A *gena* meant three things: *Penie*- a non-working day/ *Kenyü*- forbidden (taboo)/ *Nanyü*- a ritual (Kire 63). The moral credibility was very strong in the Naga spiritual world. One had to be accountable, aware and cautious of others co-habiting in the forest. As Vilie returned home, he reaches the same shed where Pehu was murdered. Although as he claimed he had not

killed the man, he realized he had done nothing and it was a failure of his moral responsibility. He seeks forgiveness from Pehu at the spot where his congealed blood still lay, covered the blood with soil and erected stones as a memorial to the demised.

These strong ideals of the Nagas still remains and storytelling is a means through which we are reminded that Nature as we may infer does not react according to how we behave. As in the spirit of the Heart Stone, only a man of a bigger spirit could retrieve it, likewise nature is a blessing to those who seek its blessings and takes care of nature and a stumbling block to those who do not understand its mysteries (142). Today in the realm of literature, our earth stories are very less. Most of the stories pervaded were of nature as the antagonist. As the general perception is, Ecofiction comprises of narratives that echoes authenticity, not of farfetched stories but of stories that bring about enlightenment. These set stereotyping and the death of nature in literature can only be reanimated by an act of retelling and reinterpretation of written body of works.

5.3 Juxtaposed from the spiritual fold of the Nagas, is the metropolitan life of Yeong-Hye in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*. Han Kang is a South Korean author whose novel *The Vegetarian* translated to English by Deborah Smith went on to win the International Man Booker International prize in 2016. *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang is about the evolution of an ordinary woman into a vegetarian. Yeong-hye, a voiceless woman seeks liberation and dreams to become a tree. The novel embodies the struggles and failure of a woman who seeks refuge in the confines of Nature by spiritualizing it. The story of Yeong-hye is the predicament of every woman, who is misunderstood and used.

Han Kang's historical novel *Human Acts* is set at the backdrop of the 1980 Gwangju Uprising where about two thousand lives were slaughtered. In an effort for democratization, Park Chung-hee, the military strongman who had ruled his coup in 1961 was assassinated. Chun Doo-hwan succeeded him. It was not long before the citizens realized that he was a dictator on the rise. Deborah Smith in her Introduction to the novel *Human Acts* explains how he tried to "expand martial law to the entire country, closing universities, banning political activities, and further curtailing the freedom of the press" (2). When the university students started their demonstrations to oppose the martial law, paratroopers were sent in. It is said that the protestors were killed, raped and beaten up. This angered the citizens who retaliated by using arms stolen

from local armories and police stations. This Uprising started on May 18<sup>th</sup> and went on till May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1980. The protagonist is the ghost of a young boy by the name of Kang Dong-ho. Dong-ho dies during the Gwangju Uprising. The entire novel has multiple characters who also contribute in the narration of the terrors of the uprising. They are all representative of the pangs of the cruelty and inhuman acts that South Korea witnessed in 1980. There is a realistic, graphic and almost grotesque portrayal of human corpses, bloodshed, and the horror of human violence. The chapters are interconnected and dwell on themes of denial and forgiveness. It also documents the censorship through the character of Eun-sook. It reverberate the agony of the original trauma and questions the system that legitimize the brutality of the powerful. Han Kang also enquires why the truth is censored and why remembrance should be a threat to them.

An author from South Korean has been purposely placed together with an author from Nagaland to bring about contrast, as well as, correlation between the two cultures. South Korea is one of the most popular and upcoming economy in the world. It has Seoul Capital Area, as the fifth largest metropolitan area in the world.

The development of South Korean economy is one of the great stories of post-World War II era. It is a tale whose drama is heightened by breathtaking contrasts...a war-ravaged Seoul of gutted buildings, rubble, beggars, and orphans in 1953 versus the proud, bustling city of the 1988 Summer Olympics with its skyscrapers, subways, plush restaurants, boutiques, first-class hotels, and prosperous middle class; a country abjectly dependent on foreign aid in the 1950s versus a 1980s economic powerhouse” (Eckert 388).

The twentieth century was indeed tumultuous for the country considering the Japanese occupation from 1910 to 1945 and the Korean War from 1950-1953. The subsequent years were followed by alternate years of democratic and autocratic rule. Han Kang was also born in Gwangju and the terrible incident took place four months after the family had moved to Seoul.

5.3.1 Chapter I has laid down the foundation for explicating the ecological connection between man and nature. Transcending the economic and sustenance indispensability, Naga Ecofiction has shown the emotional and spiritual bond between man-nature. Han Kang in her novel presents a dystopian reality of a generation famished from natural affiliation and exposed to the stark

reality of human violence and cruelty. Modern research reaffirms that the traditional system of association with nature had so many benefits for man and his well being. In the present day, people are resorting to nature walks, hugging trees and seeking ways to physically connect and be in nature. This had positive impact on improving the health and mental state of people. It is not about how nature can profit man but rather it a realization of how there is an innate longing for man to be connected with nature and how his build up is to sustain in and from nature. Simply put, man is designed to be in nature. Kris Abrams, a nature based psychotherapist states that, “we love nature because we evolved in it” (n.pag). Abrams came to this conclusion after dealing with clients who showed improved results after their engagement with nature. Abrams states that nature makes man more reflective and appreciative about life and serves as a comforting source in a world of chaos. Nature is indeed man’s greatest teacher, because it gently shepherds man back to the reality of life and death; it sows into the heart a spirit of gratitude that cherishes life as a gift bestowed with a moral responsibility above the nuances of life. Ecopsychology is a branch of Ecocriticism which dwells on the bond between man and nature.

Ecopsychology is nascent field that believes implicitly in the notion that one cannot have sanity without a sane relationship with the environment. It attempts to redefine rationality within an environmental context. It asserts that seeking to heal the soul without any allusion to the ecological system of which a human is an integral part is a form of self destructive blindness. The healing of the self and the healing of the earth are dovetailed (George 25).

In addition, “Ecopsychology brings together the sensitivity of therapist, the expertise of ecologists, and the ethical energy of environmental activists” (Brown xvi). The same feeling of emptiness and resistance is showcased by the protagonist in *The Vegetarian*. The novel progresses from Yeong-hye beginning a spiritual journey to freeing her body from all desires and sinfulness. Yeong-hye’s soul is wounded by years of oppression and suppression. She becomes disillusioned and wants to evolve into a tree. She feels empty and attempts to connect and unify with nature by trading her body which made her human. She stops eating which can be seen as self destructive. But Yeong-hye was not trying to kill herself; it was her effort to connect with nature and to be like the trees in a community of love and kinship. *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang is a multi layered novel which explores human desire. The story is set in the beautiful city of

Seoul, South Korea. The entire plot revolves around the lives of two sisters, Kim In-hye and Kim Yeong-hye. Han Kang brings to us an ordinary married woman who in her whole existence has not done anything extraordinary. In part of the novel, Yeong-hye's husband Mr. Cheong describes her as a woman lacking vigor and life.

She made for a completely ordinary wife who went about things without any distasteful frivolousness... She was a woman of few words. It was rare for her to demand anything of me, and however late I was in getting home she never took it upon herself to kick up a fuss. Even when our days off happened to coincide, it wouldn't occur to her to suggest we go out somewhere together. While I idled the afternoon away, TV remote in hand, she would shut herself up in her room. More than likely she would spend the time reading, which was practically her only hobby. For some unfathomable reason, reading was something she was able to really immerse herself in- reading books that looked so dull I couldn't even bring myself to so much as take a look inside the covers (4-5).

One nightmare turns her entire life around. And without a warning, Yeong-hye stops consuming meat and turns into a completely different person. Yeong-hye, the protagonist grew up in a traditional South Korean family with her brother, sister In-hye and her conventional parents. As a child she had grown up under the oppression of patriarchy both physically and mentally. Yeong-hye according to societal rules was married to a husband she religiously served but she was a recluse from the beginning. Her husband's description of her shows he never tried to understand her and was instead happy to have a silent wife. He was a misogynist domineering husband in thought and action. He stated, "There's nothing wrong with keeping quiet; after all, hadn't women traditionally been expected to be demure and restrained?" (21). The journey of Yeong-hye springs from her years of subdued oppression and silence. Her dreams were bloody dreams of murder. She therefore, dissociates from her linear existence and stops eating meat. But it was not easy. During In-hye's housewarming, as the whole family was sharing food, her father tried to shove meat into her mouth, and she slits her wrist in distress. With time, as the novel progresses, she became more and more of a recluse and slowly stopped eating in her quest to metamorphose into a plant. Outside of Yeong-hye's blood kin and her husband, there is another narrator- her sister In-hye's husband, a studio artist by profession. He notices the injustice being

done to Yeong-hye and the vagueness of survival for her. He notes, “there was nothing anyone could do to help her. Every single one of them- her parents who had forced-fed her meat, her husband and siblings who had stood by and let it happen (67). Following all these sad events, Yeong-hye is also served divorce.

Yeong-hye has a very unsettling life where she cannot conform to the world ideals that surround nor could she grasp meaning in the life she had compartmentalized for herself. Her days were spent in isolation and silence. Han Kang is an effective narrator and supplies the readers with vivid imageries.

Through the regretful flashbacks of In-hye, the readers are informed on the domestic abuse they faced from their father, “As small children their young cheeks were frequently left throbbing by their heavy- handed father” (129). After some time, her parents and sibling even stopped visiting Yeong-hye. This was very cruel and heartless for a family to display toward their own child and sister. Her memory takes the readers to a time when the two sisters got lost on a mountain and the nine year old Yeong-hye suggested they never go back. She realizes that all those years, it was her sister who had been the “only victim of their father’s beatings” (157). In-hye regrets that she was unable to do anything for her sister and recognizes her compliance as the matured and responsible elder sister was a survival tactic but surely an act of cowardice.

In an attempt to grapple this and to overcome the fearful face in her dreams, Yeong-hye stops eating meat. But soon she realizes that it was her subconscious grilling her and reaching out. She admits,

I thought it was all because of eating meat...I thought all I had to do was to stop eating meat and then the face wouldn’t come back. But it didn’t work...And so...now I know. The face is inside my stomach. It rose up from inside my stomach...But I’m not scared any more. There’s nothing to be scared of now (115).

When her brother in law, paints her body with flowers, she confessed that it stopped the dreams. Yeong-hye embracing nature in the form of body art is symbolic because it also signifies her reconciliation with nature and deepens her conviction to quit the ways of her father.

Half- opened buds, red and orange, bloomed splendidly on her shoulders and back, and slender stems twined down her side. When he reached the hump of her right buttock he painted an orange flower in full blossom, with a thick, vivid yellow pistil protruding from its centre (84).

Carol J. Adams points out that, meat eating is a symbol of male power and patriarchy. And the modern generation has been advertising the need to consume more meat and cut down on vegetables and cereals. The vegetable is thus seen as “the least desirable...in passivity of” (46). Male patriarchs like Yeong-hye’s father were furious at her non compliance to follow the tradition of eating meat for “To remove meat is to threaten the structure of the larger patriarchal culture” (47).

Yeong-hye never had a voice or an opinion. She always kept everything to herself with the violent childhood she endured. But with this step, she could now take charge of her body she never really had power to control. She purges herself of all desires patriarchy had normalized. She even avoided her husband saying that he smelled of meat and she couldn’t take it. As her brother in law narrated, “It was a body from which all super fluidity had gradually been whittled away. Never before had he set eyes on such a body, a body which said so much and yet was no more than itself” (87). He was overwhelmed by “the power of her own renunciation” (87). Her new self embraced nature. When her brother in law initiates coitus, she is symbolically presented as a plant to show her transcended self.

Her skin was a pale green. Her body lay prone in front of him, like a leaf that had just fallen from the branch, only barely begun to wither...her whole body was covered evenly with that pale wash of green...a green sap, like that which oozes from bruised leaves, began to flow out from her vagina when he entered her. The acrid sweetness of the grass was so pungent he found it difficult to breathe. When he pulled out, on the point of climax, he saw that the whole of his penis was stained green. A blackish paste was smeared over his skin from his lower stomach to his thighs, a fresh sap which could have come from either her or him (96).

In-hye also mentions how, the scene although graphic was very nature like and it appeared more like the commingling of two jungle creepers.



She recalls the sight of those two naked bodies, twined together like jungle creepers. Of course, it had shocked her at the time, and yet oddly enough, the more time went by the less she thought of it as something sexual. Covered with flowers and leaves and twisting green stems, those bodies were so altered it was as though they no longer belonged to human beings. The writhing of those bodies made it seem as though they were trying to shuck off the human (179).

The difference between Han Kang's character and the characters in Kire's novels is the proximity of nature and the conceptualization of nature. Nature is loud and alive in Kire's novel, but in Kang's modern narrative nature is silent and distant. It is true as Ecopsychology states, man do have an innate longing to be connected in nature. If not an imposing effect, the natural environment till today has a remarkable presence in the lives of people. The prominence is profuse and the presence is strong. Yeong-hye is often shown as embracing the sun.

She thrust her glittering golden breast over the veranda railing. Her legs were covered with scattered orange petals, and she spread them wide as though she wanted to make love to the sunlight, to the wind (118).

In the third part of the novel "Flaming Trees", Yeong-hye is transferred to Ch'ukseong Psychiatric Hospital. By now she had completely stopped eating and was caught behaving like a tree. In the first incident, "Yeong-hye in an isolated spot deep in the woods covering the mountain slope, standing there stock-still and soaked with rain as if she herself was one of the glistening trees" (125). On another occasion she calls on In-hye and shouts,

Look, sister, I'm doing a handstand; leaves are growing out of my body, roots are sprouting out of my hands...they delve down into the earth. Endlessly, endlessly...yes, I spread my legs because I wanted flowers to bloom from my crotch; I spread them wide (127).

Trees run as a motif in the novel. Even In-hye tried to connect with trees but "hadn't been able to find a tree that would take her life from her. Some of the trees had refused to accept her life from her. They'd just stood there, stubborn and solemn yet alive as animals, bearing up the weight of their own massive bodies" (169-170). Trees could represent greatness, life, growth, wisdom, power and prosperity across various cultures and time line. The formidable sisters in their

repressed state wanted to be like the trees, strong, powerful and capable of growth. Although her family had shown her less love and affection, Yeong-hye finds that in nature “all the trees of the world are like brothers and sisters” (144) and she longs to be part of this unity. For Yeong-hye she established spiritual connection with the trees.

In-hye says “they were two birds caressing” (103). The cover of the novel also has a broken wing and this shows the dreams and aspirations of their souls but how patriarchy had broken their wings and reduced them to the same fate as every woman. It is a sad ending for the sisters who are groping to come in terms with their reality. Although the symbiosis with nature here comes from a place of oppression and violence, Ecopsychology believes that there is an innate emotional affinity between humans and nature. Yeong-hye’s vegetarianism was a response to the propelling of her sub conscious which resulted from a traumatic childhood experience of meat, violence and murder. As such, it becomes her greatest weapon which she uses to free her body from the male control.

In terms of presence and role taken by nature, Kang has aptly presented the space that has come over modern and his environment. Today, more than the economic and sustenance benefits, people are also realizing the role nature has on the mental health of a person. According to Selin Kesebir and Pelin Kesebir, “People who are more connected with nature are happier, feel more vital, and have more meaning in their lives...even in small doses, nature is a potent elixir”. The eye of wonder and satisfaction with which Yeong-hye embraced the sun, the rain and the trees is what contemporary citizens have lost.

In addressing the domination of women in the South Korean households, and by presenting Yeong-hye alternatively as a bird and sometimes as an animal in distress, it is understood that “the categories woman and animal serve the same symbolic function” (Gruen 61). Patriarchy itself makes this connection between women and animals that they are similar not because they are but in oppression created by patriarchy, they serve the same symbolic function.

### 5.3.2 Ethical consideration: on violence and nature of human hearts

A major concern today is the cruelty of animal killing that has become synonymous with modern man with the onset of industrialization. Animals are sedated and slaughtered and used for various cruel experiments. Animal sacrifices and rituals did form an essential part of the

traditional fold but the way in which it was carried out was very different from the modern animal harvesting and past time killing. Neither the biodiversity nor balance was disturbed through their activities.

In her interview with Sarah Shin, Han Kang shares that both these novels are thematically so similar, it can be seen as a pair. She says,

While writing *The Vegetarian*, I was harbouring questions about human violence and the (im)possibility of innocence. On the reverse side of the protagonist Yeong-hye's extreme attempt to turn her back on violence by casting off her own human body and transforming into a plant lies in a deep despair and doubt about humanity...the gesture of refusal also holds within itself an attempt to recover- narrowly, with great difficulty- dignity through a self-destructive action. *Human Acts* also began with agony over human violence.

Peter Singer states that ignoring the welfare of animals when one talks about the other forms of discrimination is simply prejudice and can be likened to "white slave owners against taking the interest of their African slaves seriously" (55-56). Singer dwells on the suffering animals face which calls for action. He says,

If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take the suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that the suffering be counted equally with the like suffering- in so far as rough comparisons can be made- of any other being (57).

Modern man have lost touch with nature and today, there are so many souls like Yeong-hye shut in exotic sky scrapers and buildings who do not know anything about nature.

For most people in modern, urbanized societies, the principal form of contact with non human animals is at meal times. The use of animals for food is probably the oldest and the most widespread form of animal use. There is also a sense in which it is the most basic form of animal use, the foundation stone on which rests the belief that animals exist for our pleasure and convenience (Singer 62).

The anthropocentric view that places man on the centre and the value of nature in this case, evaluates animals in terms of its instrumental value. Just as in the human world some humans are selectively discriminated, animals are also brought under the same oppressive framework and selectively tortured and harvested for food. The consumerist societies in industrialized countries probably do not know the cruelty involved to bring food on their table. It is a violation of the basic right to live. Sadly,

Modern forms of intensive farming apply science and technology to the attitude that animals are objects for us to use. In order to have meat on the table at a price that people can afford, our society tolerates methods of meat production that confine sentient animals in cramped, unsuitable conditions for the entire duration of their lives. Animals are treated like machines that convert fodder into flesh (63).

The question Kang raises is on the necessity of killing and what truly is the nature of the human heart. Likewise, Singer in his practical Ethics wrote the same, “If animals count in their own right, our use of animals for food becomes questionable- especially when animal flesh is a luxury rather than a necessity” (62). He cites the Eskimos who kill animals but is justified because it is necessary for them to survive in their environment. He is more concerned about the industrial society that mindlessly consumes the animal flesh without the slightest concern. Although the journey of Yeong-hye is more symbolic, Han Kang vociferates the cruelty and brutality involved in killing the animals and most importantly, how it is now practiced in the domestic circle.

Yeong-hye remembers how her father oppressed and murdered a dog that once bit her when she was young. Later, she was made to eat the meat of this dog to counter the venom. This horrific act of cruel inhumanity against a helpless dog, and all her years of eating meat tortures her through a series of nightmares, finally making her come out of her complacency by renouncing her family, culture and body. This incident shows that an act of violence and cruelty is not a product of immediate circumstances. It is a fabrication and overgrowth of unchecked misdeeds and unregulated behavior. Violence only breeds greater violence. Immanuel Kant in “Duties to Animals” wrote, “We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals... The more we come in contact with animals and observe their behavior, the more we love them, for

we see how great is their care for their young. It is then difficult for us to be cruel in thought even to a wolf” (Kant 312). This small act of violence is replayed many years later when her father force feeds Yeong-hye meat and by then, her father’s violence had grown more aggressive and the family no longer saw anything wrong in the violence thrown upon to Yeong-hye. It is only her brother in law, who notices how unjustly she has been treated. As explained by Kant, the same heart with which the father murdered the dog, is also the same heart which had the courage to disown his own daughter, inflict violence upon her and remained un-empathetic to her suffering.

Yeong-hye felt that her soul was trapped inside a contaminated body and she journeys to metamorphose her being into a tree. Like Vilie in *WTRS*, Yeong-Hye breaks away from the heart of her own culture. Vilie embraces the forest as his home, Yeong- hye stops eating meat which is a rare food choice in South Korea. According to the “Meat Market in South Korea- Statistics & Facts”,

A majority of Korea’s most popular dishes are heavily meat based. Meat is found in most Korean dishes and is valued in South Korean society. The total sales volume of meat in South Korea was at around 2.55million tons in 2018 and is expected to increase up to 2.63 million tons by 2023. Around half of the sales volume of meat consisted of pork, followed by poultry, and beef and veal (n. pag).

*Human Acts* is splattered with accounts of dead bodies, wounds, and blood from the Gwangju Uprising. Han Kang uses very provocative imagery with words like “You step into the gym hall, fighting down the wave of nausea that hits you with the stench” (11). The novel pervades with talks of where to dispose the dead rotting dead bodies and how the city had run out of coffin.

The soldiers who had brutally gunned down the civilians, talks were going around that they were even trying to finish off the wounded in hospitals. “According to them, even the wounded lying in hospital beds are a “mob” that need finishing off. Does it really seem likely that they’ll just turn a blind eye to all these corpses, to the families over them?” (43). The victims here are not seen as humans. The value of a human life is threatened and here everyone is just considered as the mob without a face, without an identity that just needs to be killed. Life is understood as a gift and sacred. Ethically, everyone has a right to live and no one can say

otherwise. But, massacres go on and humans murder one another. If the readers can see through how the government wiped out her citizens in thousands so mindlessly, Han Kang makes the mind question the very value of life. They were killed and their bodies were piled one upon the other like in the animal slaughter house where they were all just seen as food without any individual identity or value. The dead bodies of the protestors likewise were also burned down disregarding all human recognition. “The tower of bodies collapsed into an indistinguishable heap of glowing embers, bodies formerly separate now mingle together” (67).

Han Kang takes the readers to imagine what it means to be killed or murdered and to be torn away from their families and loved ones? She gives voice to the boy’s friend Jeong-dae who was murdered at fifteen and separated from his sister. He wondered where his sister’s soul like his might be wondering as a shadow without bodies. He comes to hate his body which was scarred and shapelessly crushed. He said, “I was filled with hatred for my body. Our bodies, tossed there like lumps of meat. Our filthy, rotting faces, reeking in the sun” (57).

In the chapter “The Prisoner”, he talks about human conscience and admits that it is “the most terrifying thing in the world” (120). Like animals in the slaughter house, he remembers how he was branded on his back as “Violent element. Possession of firearms” (124). He describes the series of tortures the ones found with guns went through. They no longer were beaten. Instead they went through physical tortures like Hairpin Torture, Water boarding, Electric torture ,the Roast Chicken. All sense of civility was tried upon and he describes how he and his cellmates grappled with a single tray of meal. They ate “in stony silence, fighting the temptation to scrap like animals over a shred of kimchi” (125). Death only seemed refreshing from this torturous life and he longed for freedom; because the basic instinct of every life form is to submit to their nature. No one is meant to live dictated caged lives at the mercy of others. It is against the natural law.

Han Kang continuously uses images to compare violation of nature as well as humans. When the prisoner was being tortured and almost starved, he realized that they were trying to torture them. “We will prove to you that you are nothing but filthy stinking bodies. That you are no better than the carcasses of starving animals” (126).

Using the character as the mouthpiece, Han Kang questions the accountability of human beings and integrity of humanity.

Is it true that human beings are fundamentally cruel? Is the experience of cruelty the only thing we share as a species? Is the dignity that we cling to nothing but self-delusion, masking ourselves this single truth: that each one of us is capable of being reduced to an insect, a ravening beast, a lump of meat? To be degraded, damaged, slaughtered- is this the essential fate of humankind, one which history has confirmed as inevitable? (140).

Kang talks about violation of human lives in context of patriarchal oppression of women and the horrors of the Gwangju Rising where the right to life of civilians was stripped away. In Eco-socialism, Ecocentrism is shown as an option to combat any type of socially or ecologically destructive system, in this case, Patriarchy. Patriarchy is shown as a divisive, hierarchal and oppressive system that disregards the value of all life forms beyond the central man himself. In this system, meat eating is an assertion of power and domination. Han Kang harbours an ecosocialist vision where she sees a world purged of violence and discrimination and a place where all lives are equally accounted. "Ecocentrism views humankind as part of a global ecosystem, and subject to ecological laws" (Pepper 33). She strongly feels that consuming meat is a violent act in itself and is in no way justified given the fact that so much of life is slaughtered just for consumption alone. Her portrayal of the suffering of human characters in the novel does open up the cruelty involved in meat eating. As the character Yeong-hye, she propounds vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is not just diet choice for health reasons. It sprouts from a realization of the value of each life and the willingness to dissociate from participating in the violent and barbaric culture. As Warren stated, vegetarianism must be opted because "it is morally the right thing to do, rather than for health, economic, or environmental reasons" (124). Vegetarianism is also ecologically healthy because it recognizes and adheres to the "human and non human animals as both discrete individuals and co-members of an ecological community" (133). This is the conscience Kang ushers in through her retelling of the Gwangju Uprising and sharing the story of patriarchal oppression in South Korea. In addition to this, Vegetarianism does nullify the act of ecocide because animals have intrinsic roles and value towards the environment. For example, Carol J. Adams states that "cattles are responsible for 85 percent of

topsoil erosion. Beef consumption accounts for about 5 to 10 percent of the human contribution to the greenhouse effect” (506).

The ability of man to snuff out lives and disregard the value of life and at the same time, the nature of humans to also go out of their way to help another human is what baffles the author Han Kang. Mankind might be at the apex of progress and development, but if one cannot muster enough courage to make shift their lifestyles and do not make amends to eradicate the socio-ecological threatening thinking patterns and systems, then surely even without an environmental apocalypse, society will collapse under the shallow ways of man.

Patriarchy is one of the many systems where people unquestioningly subscribe to domination and legitimize the oppression. In this regard, Patriarchy is corrosive to the well being and growth of society. If society must truly progress than an ideal society must be able to grow more in compassion. Public Library of Science in their news “Human Obedience: The myth of blind conformity” released that,

In the 1960s and 1970s, classic social psychological studies were conducted that provided evidence that even normal, decent people can engage in acts of extreme cruelty when instructed to do so by others. However, professors revisit these studies' conclusions and explain how awful acts involve not just obedience, but enthusiasm too -- challenging the long-held belief that human beings are 'programmed' for conformity (n.pag).

This blind conformity or blind obedience is deployed in the novel *Human Acts* where the paratroopers without a moment of hesitation carried out the orders to kill the protestors. Alongside, the student protestors also displayed the mob mentality and engaged in the same act of violence. Social psychology scientifically studies the pattern of human behavior and how they are influenced by their environment. Crowd psychology or mob psychology is a show of an individual's poor conviction. “Mob Psychology” by Psychology Wiki explains that,

Individuals tend to behave in a different manner as part of a group in contrast to acting independently. Members of a group are prone to acting in ways that they would deem immoral or unjust if in control of their behavior. This is not due to change in one's belief or principle, but rather the fact that individuals tend to



ignore or avoid one's conscience or rational judgment. It can be said that individuals in a group defer their goals and take upon the identity of the group. Therefore, members of a group are likely to commit acts they would never commit alone. Being in a group allows individuals to defer blame, responsibility, accountability, and/or judgment upon the group (n. pag).

Human beings are driven by the mind. And as mentioned above, man is designed to conform. If the mind is not conditioned for love and rooted in ethical morality, it is easily swayed by the other opposing force. In a patriarchal set up, men conform to the ideals and ideas of violence because they fear to be excluded. And this fear is what makes people willingly suspend their rational judgments for what is right and instead conform to the collective judgment or opinion. This willing suspension of fair judgment and apathy is easily noticed in Han Kang's novels, whether it is the family of Yeong-hye or the government shadows and the protestors in *Human Acts*. The evil in this system is how people in conforming to the system of violence and camouflaging with the crowd also suspend their sense of accountability. The lack of remorse in Yeong-hye's parents and husband are perfect examples of this diabolical suspension. Although it was each an individual that takes a life, the blame is on the system and people are made shallow. These acts are in fact legitimized. The sense of responsibility and accountability are then diminished. For in this arrangement the mob thinks that

As long as I am obedient to the power of the State, the Church, or public opinion, I feel safe and protected. In fact it makes little difference what power it is that I am obedient to...My obedience makes me part of the power I worship, and hence I feel strong. I can never make any error because it decides for me; I cannot be alone, because it watches over me (Fromm 686).

In this global crisis, there is a massive calling for mankind to be accountable and responsible in their treatment and perception of nature. If men continue to follow the crowd and mob, the shallowness would only grow in mountains. Society needs to evolve. For a society to evolve, Erich Fromm suggested in his essay "Disobedience as Psychological and Moral Problem" that,

Man has continued to evolve by acts of disobedience. Not only was his spiritual development possible only because there were men who dared to say no to the

powers that be in the name of their conscience or their faith, but also his intellectual development was dependent on the capacity for being disobedient, disobedient to authorities who tried to muzzle new thoughts and to the authority of long-established opinions which declared a change to be nonsense (684).

Even if it takes an act of disobedience, it is important for people to break away from this cycle of mindless oppression and conformity if society must evolve. The very concept of disobedience is subverted. Years of political control on people have been as Chomsky noted owing to a delimiting of acceptable opinions. This is why age old traditions still affect the way society operates.

The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum—even encourage the more critical and dissident views. That gives people the sense that there's free thinking going on, while all the time the presuppositions of the system are being reinforced by the limits put on the range of the debate (Chomsky 43).

The only solution then is to free the mind from all these complexities and norms of society. People must risk exclusion. In-hye regrets her inability to stand for her sister because she was scared to be excluded too. Human beings are all capable of perceiving pathologies and are equally equipped to make a difference. Owing to the presence of oppressive frameworks in society, and the crowd mentality, these patterns of violence have continued. It is important for society to identify and be like the *Übermensch*, who is free of all inclinations and allegiance. An *Übermensch* is a man whose mind is freed and enlightened. According to Christopher Muscato,

In this worldview, the *Übermensch* is the person who is able to break from the illusion. Basically, the *Übermensch* recognizes that society's definition of morality is biased and socially constructed... Rather than accept the morality dictated by institutions like the Church, the *Übermensch* creates his own morality, based on his own experiences, which is grounded in this secular physical world... It is this superpower, the ability to see past the illusion, which creates an *Übermensch* and makes this person a superior being... In this enlightened

position, the Übermensch is dedicated solely to the advancement and betterment of humanity. In fact, as the Übermensch is aware of the suffering of existence, he is even willing to sacrifice his own self in order to help improve humanity. Over time, he will help other people break from the bonds of institutional morality and thus become a figure who impacts history forever. In fact, Nietzsche defined humans as being the link between animals and the Übermensch. Humanity was caught in a constant struggle between animalistic instincts and a pull towards this more perfect existence (n.pag).

An Übermensch is a transcended being with his own values and guided by the will. This overman is a character who serves as a goal or model for people to aspire and imitate from. If society can choose to filter themselves from common opinions, steer away from the mob mentality and be able to sieve their opinions then surely, people can attain the status of the overman/ the superman. Therefore as Erich Fromm stated, “one must have the courage to be alone, to err, and to sin” (686). But simply having courage is not enough. There should be a willing suspension from “mother’s lap and father’s commands” (Fromm 686) for a person to truly be transcended and freed.

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## Chapter VI

### CONCLUSION

“I spent many years of my youth foolishly searching for something I “should” have been doing. Instead, I should have entrusted everything to the flowers blooming in the meadow. Even if the people do nothing at all, the grasses and trees and the songbirds will live on”

- Masanobu Fukuoka, *Sowing Seeds in the Desert*

This thesis focused on the study of fiction of various authors from across the globe. In studying the novels written post-twentieth century, it has been observed that there is a spirit of revival and recognition of nature and environmental concerns. Scientific discourses and various environmental movements and theoretical concepts were fundamental in reshaping the narratives. As such, it has created possibilities for works of bygone centuries to be reanalyzed from an ecocritical approach. Twentieth century with a very crowded history of events conditioned the paradigm shift in literature. There is a gradual progression from an anthropocentric narrative to a holistic approach; it is a move towards whole narratives by giving voice to the silenced and creating a platform for the marginalized through the medium of storytelling. Storytelling is indeed very integral to the current times as it engenders an eco-conscious society. The multi-ethnic cultural context has not been a dividing factor in comprehending the contours of ecofiction. It may be noted that, the nature of human beings is universal and the trail of events have had similar environmental repercussions; however, the European approach of reducing everything to one narrative is not justified. As the environmental set up is different everywhere, the people whose lifestyles are moulded by their environments have different tactics and ways of managing their surroundings and this must be respected and preserved. This is in contrast with the old western method where men excavate nature to meet his ends. They model their lives around nature and nature is the shaping compound.

Chapter I highlight the various theories of Ecocriticism and also, develop the premise for the thesis. It gives a brief overview on events leading to the dawn of ecological awareness. Scientific discourses are resorted to understand the symbiosis of man and nature. A study of the

transition of man from a primitive gathering society to an industrialized society marks the beginning of anthropocentrism. The western world view is explicated which can be safely concluded as one of the most corrosive detriments in the man-nature relationship. This chapter emphasizes on the integration of nature in literature and stresses on the significance of stories and storytelling in man's effort to reclaim their lost identities. The canon of Ecofiction is reassessed. The canon of Ecofiction is ever renewing. The scope of Ecofiction is extensive. Ecofiction is established as an indispensable eco-tool.

Chapter II focuses on British Ecofiction. The novels of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo* critique the dark nature of European colonialism and imperialism. It recalls a disappointing past of pillaging and exploitation. Through the characters of Kurtz and Nostromo, the vanity and limitations of a human being are exposed. Conrad was against the European dedication and ideology to colonize the world. He strongly shades the actions of his characters whose attempts to control and tame the environment are faced with the same fate themselves. The heart of colonialism is dark and the deplorable conditions of the black population and a ripped earth are shown. Colonialism was not just an exercise of dominating man. It also led to the exploitation of nature and with activities like mining, which scars the surface of the earth forever. Wilderness is explored in the novel. There is tension between the African Congo wilderness and the white man. It is this wilderness that engulfs Kurtz and reprimands him for his ambitions. *Nostromo* extends the theme of darkness by exposing the accompanying evil of colonialism. The people of Costaguana are struggling under a politically unstable government and during such a time, the silver mine of Charles Gould strikes a good vein. Silver and materialism become the prime objective and the dark side of people's misdeeds is revealed. Nostromo- the man who is respected also falls down as a victim to the lure of wealth, and dies a sad death. This chapter clearly shows how the European rule destroyed cultures, values and ethics of people and most importantly the ecological stability of the colonized regions. The western world view is branded as anthropocentric and compares it with the deep ecology values. In addition, it critiques the colonial and imperial mindset of the Europeans and concludes that it only ends in one's doom and is an unjustified act of domination. Colonialism also had dire impacts on the environment.

Chapter III is on American Ecofiction. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and *The Temple of My Familiar* are analyzed. The American literature was dominated by the Puritan imagination for a good many years even after independence. The African American literature contributes massively to American history and literature. Their inclusion adds to the cultural diversity and experience. In the novel *The Color Purple* Walker weaves a tale on the plight of the coloured woman. By engaging theory of Ecofeminism, it has been found out that it is through the same conceptual frameworks of domination and oppression that nature is also abused. Patriarchy is narrowed down as the defining factor behind a coloured woman's domestic violence and suppression. Through the study of the novel *The Temple of My Familiar*, the importance to integrate earth history with social history is asserted. In order to achieve this, as the African women reclaimed their identity through storytelling, so also the need to give voice to the marginalized sections like the coloured community, women or nature is realized. Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* is studied using the biocentric approach of Paul W. Taylor. The value of a life and how man relates with it is observed through the study by comparing it with the second novel *The Sun also Rises*. The brutality of the sport and the concept of aficionados is condemned and concluded as an overgrowth of violence deep seated in human hearts. The same conceptual framework that operates for running patriarchy is the same framework which also legitimizes this fascination for violence. The aficionados are largely imposed on the men by their need to prove male prowess and to assert their superiority. All these overshoots result from man's digression from nature. Chapter III thus, focuses on being interconnected in order to recognize the intrinsic value of each being.

Chapter IV on Australian Ecofiction focuses on Patrick White's *The Tree of Man* and *Voss*. Australia was also a colony under the Europeans and for a large part of history it remained a settler's colony. The native population of the Aborigines went down with their coming and the novel *Voss* re-weaves the tension in the White- Aboriginal relationship. The spiritual journey of Voss, the German explorer enables him to transcend to a metaphysical relationship with nature. It is through the art of storytelling that the empty spaces of Australia are filled with accounts bearing the true essence of Australia. The Australian bush is typical of any Australian landscape. It has been realized that the European settlers had an effective impact on shading the Australian landscape as being unlivable, harsh and unpleasant. White reconstructs the unique aesthetic of

Australian landscape through the story of the Parker in the bush. In Australia's efforts to establish her literature and identity, storytelling stands as an instrumental compound/ velcrose.

Chapter V on Asian Ecofiction studies two female authors, Easterine Kire from Nagaland and Han Kang from South Korea. Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* and *When the River Sleeps* are studied. The Nagas have a rich connection of heritage with nature. However with the advent of the British men, a cultural amnesia overtook them. This chapter analyzes their traditional belief systems. In order to revive the Naga cultural ethics, storytelling is very essential especially because the Nagas have a rich oral tradition. Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* and *Human Acts* explore the violence and cruelty deep seated in human hearts. The value of a human life is quantified. It has been observed that modern man has lost touch with nature and the more men move ahead with progress and modernity, the further he moves away from nature. The conception of Yeong-hye's perception of nature is almost distorted. This chapter studied the mob mentality and how this system legitimizes the cruelty of Yeong-hye's father, the protestors and paratroopers in *Human Acts*. The concept of the *Übermensch* is employed to set the goal for society to transcend the mob psychology.

Literature does have an immense responsibility towards mankind and nature to transcend in re-conceptualizing a dead nature and to consciously avoid misrepresentation. History has neglected the value of nature guided by western world view. Nature was perceived as a bounty for men to conquer and exploit. Through the literary efforts and voices united across the world for a common purpose, history is being redefined. It is therefore, important for complementary parallel narratives to be told in order to bridge the gaps. Ecoliterature in general is man's responsibility to educate one another. Humans are literary beings and it is only natural to write and imagine a better world.

Education on ecological responsibility is absolutely necessary on a war footing as to restore the lost glory, splendor and health of the planet earth, the place one dwells in- oikos and it is here that literary works of merit come to restore the glory and the sacredness of the primal mother or the virgin mother. Literature plays a significant role with the written word (Hamilton 29).

Easterine Kire also shares the importance of telling stories and educating children about it. She said,

I wish schools would teach how important it is for humans to take care of nature. We take and take, exploit, destroy and there is not enough of giving back to nature. The nurturing of nature is still at such a low percent that we may need many more institutions and bodies implementing policies that care of our natural environment. Not just that, we should spend more time studying what lessons the forest yields for us, both spiritual and otherwise (Imsong 175).

Nature is indispensable to man; it is vital for man's existence. Man must learn to preserve and respect Nature in order to ensure peaceful and sustainable co-existence. "Extending the literacy idea to environmental issues leads us to *environmental literacy*" (Baarsher 7). Ecofiction continues to develop and expand with the growing need of the hour. The current trend of environment threatens an apocalypse where human beings may face their own extinction and become a model of study like the dinosaurs a hundred years from now. According to the *Lexico Oxford dictionary*, Ecotopia is "an ecologically ideal region or form of society, generally viewed as imaginary" (n. pag). The term has its origin from Ernest Callenbach's utopian novel *Ecotopia*.

Ecotopian air and water are everywhere crystal clear. The land is well cared for and productive. Food is plentiful, wholesome, and recognizable. All life systems are operating on a stable- state, and can go on doing so indefinitely. The health and general well being of the people are undeniable. While the extreme decentralization and emotional openness of the society seem alien to an American at first, they too have much to be said in their favour. In these respects, I believe, Ecotopia offers us a difficult challenge, and we have far to go to even approach their achievements (Callenbach 150-151).

Callenbach's *Ecotopia* provides an antidote to the environmental crisis and presents an ecologically balanced alternate future society. It is necessary to provide and envision alternatives in literature. Human beings thrive on hope. If the coloured people were unable to imagine in their distressed states, they would perhaps never have attained the recognition they have today. Nor would any of the stories seem pertinent. If there is anything we can, we can at least rely on the

pages of our imagination to make a difference. Because Cheryll Glotfelty truly tells us, “If your knowledge of the outside world were limited to what you could infer from the major publications of the literary profession, you would quickly discern that race, class and gender were the hot topics of the late twentieth century, but you would never suspect that the earth’s life support systems were under stress. Indeed, you might never know there was an earth at all” (Dwyer 1). To imagine is to have a vision. To maintain the continuity then is to imagine. Ecofiction is within the area of ecotopia where the alternative green world is imagined to thwart the ever expanding waste colonialism spreading ecocidal effects.

This thesis approaches the canon of Ecofiction from a specific time and only a few select authors from Europe, America, Australia and Asia are studied. Given the wide gamut of literary works breaking forth from this genre, this current research makes up a small contribution in the sea of possibilities. The research sheds light on European colonialism and the retrieval of oral traditions and cultures through the art of storytelling. This is just one aspect. There is a world beyond these texts that are drowning in chemical pollution, waging eco wars, bombarded with weapons and are experiencing the fall out of nature. The scope is unlimited within the umbrella of Ecofiction for future research endeavors. At a time and age where environmental awareness and concerns are only increasing, the need to indulge in more research is strongly realized. The canon of Ecofiction can be redefined and expanded with the contributions of more research insight. It is a virgin field of research requiring innumerable fresh efforts towards further research enquiry.

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