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Ecocritical Readings of Contemporary Indian Novels

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ABSTRACT

Ecocriticism is the study of environment and literature in different perspectives, where literary critics evaluate the texts which exemplify the environmental issues. "Ecofriendly," "Eco-consciousness," and "Go Green" are some of the trending catchphrases for nearly a couple of decades. Unexpected natural calamities due to climate change, global warming, and pollution are the marked reason for the people's concern about environmental issues. Recently, almost all the disciplines are tagged with "eco." The word is derived from the Greek "oikos," meaning house. The etymology of ecology defines "Ökologie" as "the study of a dwelling place," where the study is not limited to science. Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between environment and literature," and William Rueckert (ibid.) expounds it as "application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature." Even after three decades, ecocriticism is still an expandable field. Unconfined by boundaries, the umbrella term "Ecocriticism" ramifies into Ecofeminism, Eco-Marxism, Deep Ecology, Ecosophy, Bioregionalism, and so on. The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology elaborates on the theory's evolution, scope, and facets. Ecocriticism is considered an introductory text book.

Keywords: ecocriticism, ecofriendly, green, ecology, bioregionalism, evolution, literary, facets

Introduction

Ecocriticism, a literary theory, is crucial in the current scenario, as reading a literary work under ecocritical lens is one of the functions of ecocriticism. It not only magnifies the works that appreciate nature but also explores the linguistic and literary exemplifications of the environment. Writing about ecology and environment is documented in ancient Indian literature, hence ecocriticism is not new to Indian literary context. Ecological balance is vividly represented in the Sangam (Tamil) literature, for instance, detailing of Aintinai (five landscapes). In contemporary Indian writing, there seems to be an imbalance between fiction and nonfiction environmental writings. A focus on ecological imbalance due to urbanization and westernization is seen in many unexplored Indian novels. The number of nonfictional writings famed for their "green" concern is quite high compared to fiction. In the midst of 20s, the cultural critics and environmentalists could rightly ask why the authors are not engaged with the subject of nature and environment. This artistic and scholarly attention has gained increased manifestations of climate change and in addition to that people and the stakeholders are hoping that these plays, short stories, poems, novels and children's stories would be able to create a deeper environmental consciousness among masses that would eventually lead to better progressive policies and politics related to the environment. Climate fiction is also

known as cli-fi and its concerns are still lacking in systemic ways and approaches to investigate about its readers or audiences. [1,2]

Moreover, ecofiction has gained name among masses in recent past. The important question is to define this fluid term. Several scholars related to the field have defined it. In the upcoming section I have discussed what is ecofiction? with regards to the novels taken from Indian English literature.

Emily Stochl (2010) has defined it as “Eco fiction has environmental themes, narratives surrounding human impact on the climate crisis, the natural world, environmental activism, animal and human rights issues, and more. Some eco fiction is futuristic, and more often than not it is dystopic because of the dire state of the climate emergency that faces us. But eco fiction can also be an observation about the natural world today, or a reflection on a past climate event.” In light of these Elements given in the definition for the current survey I have taken two novels from Indian authors and the stance that I have taken from ecocritical perspective is ecocide specifically but that is not the only aspect that could be found in the selected texts. For example, the novel *The Butterfly Effect* (2018) by Rajat Chaudhri talks about how a lab experiment goes wrong and destroys civilization and takes humans into apocalyptic dystopia. Similarly, in another text *The Hungry Tide* (2004) by an Amitav Ghosh the destruction caused by human actions can be identified. As the definition entails that eco fiction has environmental themes and it has to do with the futuristic aspect, the novels that I have taken also depict the same side of ecocritical perspective such as in Rajat’s *The Butterfly Effect* (2018) the dialogue is based around a place, Darkland, which is not real but the name itself entails the calamities committed by human race in order to gain something for a short term and harming the environment and everything in the long run. The story is about a lab experiment that goes wrong. It portrays that how one man’s actions change the fate of the planet. It also sheds light on the picture of humanity and the threats of technology. Moreover, it goes on to show the disastrous conditions that humans have to face after a scientific experiment goes horribly wrong. As a result, human beings are forced into misery and chaos. The novel also focuses on capitalism, poverty, and inequity. It is also futuristic in nature as it talks about a place called Darkland (which is not real) in order to depict the atrocities committed by human beings thus harming the environment.[3,4]

Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) Is a novel that depicts the exploitation of nature and the environment by people for the sake of modernization and progress in the world. The novelist has tried to pinpoint the shop familiarity of natural issues being raised in her environment and also her concern for mother earth which is presently under an incredible and perhaps inevitable risk of contamination. her novel also focuses on the concept of more than human life and how technological advancements and modernization are so important for the human race that they have forgotten to preserve natural resources for a better future in the long run.

Additionally, the other text *The Hungry Tide* (2004) also raise similar kind of concerns related to the environment and ecosystems. As the story is based on such events that are caused by human beings and their culture. The novel is a remarkable insight into the beauty and humanity and how life, to be more specific, human life is inconceivable without the existence of nature. it also depicts that how humankind is interdependent or dependent on their environment. The title of this paper indicates the reading of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* which is set in the world’s largest mangrove ecosystem-the Sundarbans, which comprises both water and earth and the intersection of landscape, water, human beings and their culture. The tide, which is always hungry comes in twice daily, resulting in a constant reshaping of the land and an uprooting of anything permanent. During partition in 1947 there was such a girl that people covered public

and private land the way they wanted. The tides in Sunderbans reach nearly three hundred kilometers inland and everyday thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater. It re-emerges hours later. The island is reshaped almost daily by powerful currents. The theme of the novel ranges from history to current events which he reinterprets and weaves together. Jim Dwyer (2010) stated in his guide to the field of ecofiction that in this line of literature diversity plays an important part and other streams such as Black Speculative Literature, Indigenous fiction, magical realism, science fiction, and more make it more varied and diverse thus vast field. In the novel *The Butterfly Effect* (2018) two streams are evident that are magic realism and science fiction.[5,6]

Discussion

Cole Klubek (2019) has defined the term ecofiction as “Eco-fiction is a subgenre of science fiction that was first written about extensively in 1965 surrounding the effects of human activities on their branched off into three main categories of science fiction: apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic, environmental fiction, and climate fiction.” The fiction surrounding my argument also fall under the categories of two of these aforementioned groups. In fact, these terms or categories for that matter can be applied to the texts under scrutiny for example in the novel *The Butterfly Effect* (2018) Rajat has portrayed about a man and his action when a lab experiment goes horribly wrong and leave a disaster on the entire civilization. This course of action depicts the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic conditions and in addition to these, also portray the environmental issues thus making it an eco-fiction. Similarly, the other novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) revolves around the human interaction with everything around them as the narrative is set in the 1947s partition between Pakistan and India. These incidents reported in fiction corresponds to the environmental and climate change as the wars effect humans, non-humans and landscapes in all sorts of negative manners.

Rajat’s book offers an insight into the challenges of unimaginable elements of worldwide disaster that are directly or indirectly caused by human actions. Also, the thirst of technology, power and more than a human world is presented in the novel. Rajat in one of the interviews commented on his book” The book has an eco-dystopian theme centered around the dangers of genetically modified (GM) crops and the inherent threats of this technology. It also has a climate change backdrop in a near-future setting. The double whammy of climate change disaster and a GM experiment gone horribly wrong is what triggers the disastrous circumstances portrayed in the book.” In Amitav’s book effects of human Atrocities in the name of freedom and advancement are depicted. the need and requirement to search for extraordinary creatures that are no longer available and the human thirst to mold everything around them for their own benefits truly portray the binary opposition of master and slave between human beings and environment. Human beings have, for a longest time, considered themselves the master of natural world neglecting the need for harmony and coexistence between environment and human beings. They have taken all-natural resources for granted. Similarly, in Arudhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) the depiction speaks volumes of human ways to exploit, destroy and corner every natural resource in order to gain monetary benefits. The novel also depicts the selfish behavior of human beings in the name of industrialization and modernization.[7,8]

The selected novels clearly pertain to one of the dimensions given ecocritical concerns or ecocriticism called ecocide. But by mentioning I do not mean to entail or claim that they cannot fall under other ecocritical streams or offshoots such as ecofeminism, deep ecology, etc. Ecocide, the term equal side comes from a Greek word *oikos* meaning house and *cide* from the Latin word *caedere* (“to cut down or to kill”). This offshoot of ecocriticism discusses the destruction and environmental degradation caused by human world to environment and nature. it also covers the overuse or exploitation of natural resources in the hands of human

beings on a large scale thus making human lives, entire or partial civilization, nonliving and non-human lives chaotic and difficult to survive. The novels have somewhat similar kind of shades of apocalyptic dystopia caused by human race.

Results

Ray's novel *Teesta Paarer Brittanto* (Tales from the Banks of River Teesta, 1988) revolves around the River Teesta and the people that reside on its bank. Teesta is in crisis along with the local people as the government proposes to construct a dam on it. As time passes by and the date of the inauguration of the proposed dam comes closer, River Teesta and its adjacent forests become more vulnerable. Political parties and local representatives of the ruling-class want to construct the dam for their self-interest. Ray divides the epically narrated *Tales from the Banks of River Teesta* into six parts. Two of these parts are *Banaparva* (The Forest Chapter) and *Brikkhaparva* (The Tree Chapter). Bagharu, a marginalized Koch-Rajbangshi character in the novel, understands the river better than anyone in that area. As Ray writes, he understands the language of the river: "Bagharu, just like a Sal Tree, stood still in the middle of the river" (95). He has been portrayed through metaphors and similes of nature; there are no other 'literary' words to depict him but the words related to nature. Arthur Lovejoy observes:

one of the strangest, most potent and most persistent factors in Western thought [is] the use of the term 'nature' to express the standard of human values, the identification of the good with that which is 'natural' or 'according to nature'. (Lovejoy, 11)

Ray narrates civil society's deviation from nature for the sake of urbanization and 'development', which have jeopardized the lives of marginalized people.

The state and the administration as usual propagate the logic of development but the voice of the subalterns remains unheard. Rajbangshi, Bhatia (who live in the northern part of Bengal) and Charua (people live on the islands of a river) stand on the verge of displacement due to the construction of the dam. These people know very well that their future would be uncertain after the construction of the barrage. But the state and its apparatuses somehow fail to take consent of the oppressed people before building the dam. 'Elite' intellectuals and the upper-class people who visit the place and give lectures about the dam do not understand the language of the local residents. Bagharu uses the non-standard dialect of Bengali and this thwarts his communication with a big landowner like Gayanath. Also, Bagharu doesn't have an identity-card which can prove his existence. Under the hegemony of the local landowner, an innocent Bagharu comes to believe that everything on the bank of Teesta belongs to Gayanath, who aggressively tries to snatch local 'Adhiyars' (landless peasants) land by hook or crook and even takes control over a part of River Teesta by bribing a government official. Here is Ray's depiction of Bagharu's monologue,

All belong to Gayanath. This Diana forest belongs to him. That Applehand forest is owned by him. He owns this Diana River. That Teesta River belongs to him. All those lands are owned by him... This human Bagharu is also owned by Gayanath. (Ray 175)

Gramsci wrote that the subalterns have less access to the means by which they may control their own representation and less access to cultural and social institutions. Bagharu, Madari and such marginal people are subject to the hegemony of the ruling class. Bagharu doesn't understand an MLA's (Member of Legislative Assembly, an elected representative of State Governments of India) language and an MLA doesn't understand Bagharu's language too. This communication gap has existed in Indian politics for a long time continuing into the post-colonial period because people like Bagharu are a negligible part of Indian

democracy. Despite his unconditional submission to the power-structure, Bagharu cherishes a subversive dream to have his own land and home. Gayanath orders him to exile to a place surrounded by a forest, where Bagharu constructs his own hut and feels free for the first time in his life. His dream of being free from Gayanath's slavery is expressed in a monologue though he doesn't know any 'formal language' to express it,

Gayanath has sent me to this unknown land and I have built a house. This is Bagharubari, the house of Bagharu. I'll tell idiot Gayanath that the house of Bagharu exists where his vested land and control ends. Where will that idiot find me? (Ray, 176)

Because the narrator fumbles to 'give' Bagharu a suitable language to express his feelings, he says, "Bagharu doesn't have an economy. He has no production value. He can utter some scattered words but he doesn't know the language of rejection" (Ray 504). His Nimmoborger Bhasha (language of the subalterns) comprises of signs, gesture and broken words. His language is 'uncouth' and challenges the Bhadroloki Bhasha (language of the elites), attesting to the difference between his marginal (also, indigenous) culture and the hegemonic culture of the rulers. Cheryll Glotfelty writes in the introductory chapter of the book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*,

Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman. [9,10]

The author has copied Bagharu's gestures to make a bridge between the readers and the unheard subalterns. Bagharu, after being displaced, refuses to accept the dam, the economy and the development on the bank of Teesta. The narrator only understands his language of rejection, as it emerges through his 'body',

Bagharu doesn't know how to refuse development. But he has a body. He refused the development using his Body. (Ray 504)

Implications

The River Teesta bears the same 'fate' as of Bagharu because Gayanath controls river too. Landlord Gayanath shows his authority in controlling the river and its adjacent forests. Bagharu challenges the 'identity-tag' politics promoted by the state in his monologue, "I'm not a Rajbanshi... I'm not a Bhatia... I don't belong to this place... I've no political flag to uphold" (Ray 429). As Teesta changes its flow and channel, Bagharu does that too. He consciously denies to be bound in any single identity.

Bagharu's marginality lies in his never-ending and ever-deferred search for identity and land. He is assigned a name after completing a specific work: 'Bagharu' for fighting against a tiger, 'Gachharu' for climbing a tree, 'Forestua' for belonging to the forest, and many more. Rushti Sen, an eminent critic, rightly observes:

The dumb man of landlord Gayanath, Bagharu, cannot become a huge character to flow from chapter to chapter; that's why the author ends 'Banaparba' chapter with a new name of Bagharu 'Moishal' (Buffaloish)... Bagharu's name will not be short. [11,12]

Bagharu gets new names related to nature and he takes refuge in nature whenever he faces problems in the society. Nature too protects Bagharu when he fails to establish his identity in this class-based and hierarchical society.

Rural subalterns' bonding with nature

People use nature purposefully and later forget it. But Bagharu understands the emotions of the wild animals; he is too simple to interpret their instincts. Bagharu easily copies chirping of the birds. When a bird feels alone in the forest and tweets for her partner Bagharu understands her loneliness and tweets back. “The bird was feeling horny and it believed Bagharu’s tweet as its companion’s tweet” (Ray 258). Bagharu once nursed a female-buffalo while delivering a baby. Ray describes the scene of the delivery and Bagharu’s intimacy with animals:

That baby buffalo embraced Bagharu like an embryo in mother’s womb. It’s like its alternative womb in Bagharu’s chest. [13]

Bagharu builds a hut for himself with leaves, bamboo and abandoned materials during his exilic time in the forest. When he rubs two stones to create a fire-spark and when he looks for a suitable piece of stone to fight wild animals, the text detaches itself from the modern time and harks back to a primitive time. Bagharu’s struggle for existence in the forest, his comfort with dogs, birds and buffalos and his gestures and actions construct him as an ‘other’ in the text. His portrayal as a half-naked man wearing a garland made with leaves and stones emphasizes his ‘otherness’ as well as his uniqueness. Ray writes, “Bagharu got the suitable stone or the stone was made for Bagharu. Might be the stone was able to find Bagharu” (142). Bagharu fits himself smoothly in the arms of nature and silently declines to be a part of the civilization. In his monologues we hear his own voice and narration as the author doesn’t forcefully control the diversity of voices and heteroglossia. He is present at every significant event that happens on the banks of the Teesta but, at the same time, he doesn’t fit into those. His primordial appearance challenges the aesthetic of a popular cultural event: “Bagharu’s nakedness was an insult to the audience. Bagharu along with his prominent nakedness stuck in front of the stage. He was standing as such he was the symbol of a rebel” (Ray 416). Bagharu is present everywhere and at every event – at Halka Camp (a temporary Government camp built for census), at the movement of the separatists, at Operation Barga, during the flood, at the political programmes and celebrations of workers and peasants and at Sridevi’s (a famous Indian Bollywood actor of the 1980s and 1990s) dance event. But, at the same time, he is a ‘no one’ at these events; power-holders use him for their self-interest and then neglect him just as they do with the river. We can replace Bagharu with the river as Teesta is present everywhere in the text but is the most neglected one just like Bagharu.[14,15]

Like Bagharu, Madari’s mother is another character who is closely aligned with nature: “Madari’s mother is one of those 60-70 millions of people who live just like an animal in this country. ‘Poverty line’, ‘backward classes and other theoretical jargons don’t touch them” (Ray 491). Readers can’t differentiate between Madari’s mother and nature, even as the author is unable to do so. Isolation of Madari’s mother and nature becomes prominent when the author blends the character of Madari’s mother with a vivid description of nature:

Madari’s mother understands voice of the nature. Not just the sound coming from Shyaorajhora but sounds that come from deeper forest – she understands all, as well as she understands her own son Madari. (Ray 477)

The society excludes her because of her ‘primitive’ behavior. The modern society cannot accommodate a person who listens to the natural sound and interprets them; a capitalist society cannot include a person who still holds traditional values. Although she finds nothing in the civilized society, she never stops loving them, just like Mother Nature loves them unconditionally. Her beliefs, values and actions are too ‘traditional’ to be included in a ‘modern’ society. She hunts field rats, monitor lizards and eggs of julefowls. She never touches a dead animal in the forest as she believes that “dead animals should be allowed to be decomposed in the forest. There are birds and ants that get their food from it” (Ray 453). Ray uses metaphors of tree and forest to

depict her actions and compares her with the storm to narrate her actions of hunting. She goes to public gatherings, she loves to listen to a crowd, she likes their smell and a 'motherly' feeling arises when she looks at the faces of Rajbanshi people. But again, she remains detached and neglected. Ray writes, "Only the forest accommodates her... She carries reminiscence of billion year's old forest inside her" [16,17]

How does Madari's mother challenge authority? She challenges it in a subtle manner by her attachment to Mother Nature. The author writes,

Madari's mother used to love people; she fell in love with peoples' chorus, smell of their skin and everything. She was looking for her children in these people. (Ray 488)

The ruling class will never have that intimacy with the people. She lives at the border of a dense forest just beside the national highway. Many years ago, she went to an abandoned part of the forest to live. Being a 'no one' in the society, she chooses her own way to earn bread. Ray writes,

Madari's mother thought if the Shyaora tree [a big tree with long branches] could have been turned into a Tree-God, then the Truck drivers of the national highway would throw pennies to the Tree-God. (Ray 440)

Why does she think that? She knows that a Shyaora tree is not a real God but she doesn't hesitate to use that concept to earn bread. Thus she mocks the religious culture and superstitious belief of the society. Neither the state nor the political parties could provide her either land to live on or a job. As the author devotes a complete chapter, "The unique state of Madari's mother", in which she is bestowed with land, he seems to imagine a more just world for the marginalized people.

Ray's other novel, *Mofoswoli Brittanto* (Tales from a Small Town, 1989), narrates the story of the protagonist Chyarketu and his family members who roam the whole day to earn bread. As one of the founders of eco-criticism discourse Glotfelty points out that eco-criticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies, we can analyse the novel keeping this approach in mind. In the novel, nature is the silent observer of socio-political imparities between people from different classes. The author positions nature and a subaltern peasant family at the centre of the text and the reader witnesses how the family suffers in a class-based and caste-based rural society. The novel starts with the description of a night in Kartik (Oct-Nov), when Chyarketu and his family starve for three days. However, the month of Kartik is known as the month of Laxmi (Hindu Goddess of wealth and food) because the paddy ripens during this month. This is the season of dew, when trees shed leaves and hays lie on the empty fields. The narrator compares this season with the lives of the sharecroppers of Northern Bengal. Their hunger, emptiness and starvation reflect the emptiness of the pre-winter season. Chyarketu and his family is subaltern as Ranjit Guha writes, "the word 'subaltern' is a name for the general attribute of subordination... whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way" (Guha Qtd. in Alok Sen 203). Local landlords and political leaders control the economy, politics and social affairs of the area. Chyarketu and other landless farmers don't possess any means of production except physical labour. They produce rice but are forced to starve, they yield a field-full of paddy but they are compelled to remain foodless for most of the year.[18,19]

Having failed to arrange food for her children, Tultuli returns to nature where she finds her comfort zone. She knows nature very well and collects roots, leaves and potatoes from the dense forest or from cliffs of a small mountain. Here we can identify her with nature because nature too extends all its resources like a mother whenever she goes in search of food for her family. A vivid description of nature and every detail takes the reader to nature's mysterious beauty. The paddy-field which is supposed to be a great blessing of nature to the humankind has been depicted with a hint of irony:

This ripe paddy field, reflection of sunlight on the field, this dry sweet smell coming through the field, the pre-winter breeze blowing on the field, and this vast land – these all are non-real to Tultuli. (Ray 51)

After reading an elaborate description of natural resources in the novel, we can relate it to the bio-centric model of eco-criticism about which Michelle Martin writes, “it explores the complex interrelationship between the human and the nonhuman... explores the connectedness of all living and nonliving things...” (Martin 217-18). The exact same relationship we observe between Bagharu and the forest or between Chyarketu and his pet cow.

Chyarketu and Khetkhetu are deprived by the socio-economic development plans of the ruling class. Like Bagharu and Madari’s mother, their voices fail to reach the government, the police and the elected representatives. They accept the fact that, after harvesting with tiresome labor, they would get only a handful of paddy to survive the entire year, and then they would have to starve. Tultuli goes back to the forest; Chyarketu goes to sell his cow; Khetkhetu goes to get help from the headman of the village committee but gets rejected. Political parties misuse small farmers’ rights, who belong to the lower class and caste.[20,21]

With the fear of losing ‘identity’, Khetkhetu keeps conversing with the wind and with the field. “‘Who are you? Do you belong to this place?’ Breezy Wind asked. Khetkhetu replied, ‘I belong to this place. I was born here. I’m Khetkhetu’” (Ray 124). The author writes a whole chapter where Khetkhetu suffers from an existential crisis and finds meaning in nature. Khetkhetu knows everything about harvesting. He understands each and every plant of the field. He knows, better than any landowner, the exact timing and methods of farming. He rejects the bureaucracy and official discourse that speak an abstract language:

I can’t tell anything about land registration. I don’t know which land is legal or illegal. I don’t know which landlord owns the entire field. The ownership of the land is like a flowing river. I don’t have any possession. (Ray 127)

Khetkhetu’s predicament reflects a central concern in eco-criticism as Jelica Tomic writes, “Ecocriticism is concerned with the relationships between literature and environment or how man’s relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature” (43). No one but nature listens to his protest against the landlords and the government. Although he has not been assigned any land by the government or by the village council, he resists the abstract knowledge of the ruling class with his indigenous lore,

I can tell anything about harvesting. I know the character of every field of this village... All are changed but I am not changed. I was Khetkhetu and I am. I’m an aboriginal of this area. (Ray 127-129)

Ray doesn’t hesitate to listen to Khetkhetu’s language and replicate it in the novel in a way that shows his closeness to nature. After all his humiliation and deprivation, Chyarketu rides on his cow and attacks the political leaders. The narration puts Chyarketu and nature at the centre and the narrative revolves around the pre-wintery month of Kartik. In the novel we find polyphony where each and every class has its own voice; the nature too has its language. It is important to highlight these different polyphonic voices and dialogism in order to produce a critique of upper class hegemony. As Andrew Robinson writes about a ‘polyphonic text’, “The author does not place his own narrative voice between the character and the reader, but rather, allows characters to shock and subvert.” Dialogism between people belonging to different classes and between nature and the subalterns can be found in *Tales from the Bank on Teesta* and *Tales from a Small Town*. [22,23]

Conclusions

Eco-criticism challenges the conventional method of literary criticism where a narration revolves around human and their approach to life and contemporary time. The literary theory of eco-criticism puts nature at the centre and tries to review human activities with relation to it. In Debesh Ray's novels, the subalterns have intense feelings about their society and environment. But the civil society in which they live, don't allow them to be free. Ideological and repressive apparatuses dominate them through the hegemony of the ruling class. On the contrary, nature extends her hand to them. The dispossessed in the novels know that Applechand forest, Gajoldoba forest and unnamed valleys would allow them a home to stay. Ecological depreciation increases as 'development' takes place; policy-makers misuse environment for their own profit ushering in a non-sustainable development model. For instance, when Bhakra-nangal and Sardar Sarovar Dams were built, thousands of people were displaced. Bagharu, Madari and his mother all are victim of this unending process of conflicting ideas of development and ecological safeguards. After narrating the developmental initiatives centring on the River Teesta, Debesh Ray writes, "Teesta is now history... Tales from the riverbank of Teesta ends here" (Ray 495). Chyarketu and his family bear the fates of millions of peasants in the country, who get rejected by the so-called civil society and get displaced. Their vernacular language challenges the developmental language of the 'elite' and their ways of life do not reflect our notions of 'modernity'. As they struggle for their rights to live with Mother Nature and lose to superior political powers, their push-back continues. Bagharu, Madari's mother and Chyarketu walk an unending road turning their back to the so-called civilization. [24,25]

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