

KIRAN DESAI'S INHERITANCE OF LOSS: AN ECOCRITICAL OUTLOOK

G. Sandhya and V. Bhuvaneshwari

The global environment crisis has led various people from various regions to voice their concerns towards environment. Ecocriticism as a literary genre started gaining its significance first in the US and in the UK as more literary scholars came up with the questions concerning what their field has contributed towards the environmental crisis. Ecocriticism is the discipline which shows interconnection between nature and culture. "Eco" in short means ecology which refers to the relationship between organism and natural environment and logically eco-criticism is concerned with relationship between literature and environment. Ecocriticism is a literary theory of recent origin, which takes an earth centered approach to literary studies. Eco-critics believe that the human culture and the physical world are interlinked. On par with the bygone critics the literary critics of the recent era also try to bring out the relationship between nature and society through their writings. This paper attempts to analyse on Kiran Desai's "Inheritance of Loss" from cross-cultural eco-critical perspective. Through this novel Kiran Desai poignantly delineates culture as one of the causes leading to the destruction of the nature and also picturizes people who are in search of their identity in their own land and how they get entrapped in the Indian class system and also under disturbing environment.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecology, Literary criticism, culture, Landscape, Nature.

Introduction

Man's insatiable avarice has led to the contamination of the whole environment leaving

...our streams fishless and our gardens and woodlands silent and birdless. Man, how-ever much he may like to pretend the contrary, is part of nature can he escape a pollution that is now so thoroughly distributed throughout the world ? (Carson 168-169).

We are already under the pressure of highly growing awareness of a world which is under the threat of environmental degradation. We survive in the age of technology where our lives are led partly by the realization and by the mechanistic approach and thus the act of exploiting and depending on nature, which is a non-human factor, has put human lives at stake. This threat has made many scholars, writers and contributors belonging to various disciplines to come up with environmental discussions and deliberations as their part of contribution in protecting the environment. Even the science disciplines join hand to interpret environment to theorize the possible solutions for redeeming the environmental issues. The sudden revival is witnessed in the form of "new nature writing" from the past decade. Nature writing is supported by accurate details and also draws attention towards growing environmental crisis and interior losses.

Address for communication: **G. Sandhya**, Research Scholar VIT University & **V. Bhuvaneshwari**, Associate Professor, VIT University

We are trapped under the global crisis today and the best way to getting through the crisis requires a better understanding of the impact of nature as much as possible. We realize that our careless attitude towards the physical world and our mechanistic world view are affecting the planet's regular cyclic ecosystems. This irregular way of balancing between humans and ecology has forced man to be biocentric i.e., where both human and environment ought to share a good relationship. Many of the critical works insists on voicing the same motivation of giving importance for creating better bonding between human and non-human. "Environmental justice movements and Ecocritical theory were thus a natural outcome of the growing public awareness of profound ecological crisis the world over, as well as the natural culmination of the historical development of contemporary social and critical theory". (Sivaramakrishnan 30).

This awareness among the literary scholars paves way for the environmental restoration. Ecocriticism is the word, which was only two decades old, first found in an anthology entitled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Formm. The collection of the essays in this book highlights that ecocriticism tries to bring the transformation in the literary studies by linking the literary criticism and theory with the ecological concerned issues. Cheryll Glotfelty defines Ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty xviii). Ecocriticism deals with how nature is represented in the literary works, and also mentions the relationship between literature and environment. There exists a close relationship between ecocriticism and literature. Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary study of ecology and literary criticism which similar as the study of natural science and humanistic discipline. To say in simple way, ecocriticism is a theory which shows the relationship between man and his physical environment as reflected in literature. Ecocriticism includes subjects like science, literature, anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc. It also includes dealing with study of man's attitude towards nature.

Ecocriticism had its first start in 1980's in USA and latter in early 1990's in UK, In 1992 Cheryll Glotfelty along with founded the The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) which owns its "house journal" named *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment (ISLE)*. Ecocriticism movement is an "Emergent Movement" which does not have any framed doctrines or principles (Barry 239). The first two presentations in the conferences of ASLE was dominated by the whites.. The term "Ecocriticism" first appeared in William Reuckret's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. This theory is being accepted worldwide in recent times (Barry 240).

Ecocriticism in the USA

In USA, ecocriticism takes its relevant connection from the three major nineteenth-century American writers whose writings deal with the nature, life force, and the

wilderness. These American writers include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau. All three were the “members” of different groups such as New England Writers, essayists, philosophers and these three were collectively known as ‘Transcendentalists’. Thoreau’s writings were widely appreciated as it deals with nature, degradations of human lives and values. His famous work was “Walden” which gives an account of his two years stay in a hut which was built on the shore of Walden pond which was a couple of miles away from his home town of Concord, Massachusetts. This is a classic work that gives a detailed account of dropping of modern way of living in search of something to renew the self by returning to nature.

Ecocriticism in the UK

“Ecocriticism” or “Green Studies” started in UK in 1790’s by taking its significance from the British Romanticism. The founder of Ecocriticism in UK is Jonathan Bate, the author of the book entitled “Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition” (Barry 241). There were no reputed journals to establish their infrastructure as they had one in USA. In UK, the definitive collection of essays entitled is “The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism”. In USA, the frequently used term is “Ecocriticism”, in UK the most preferred term is “Green Studies”. It is very interesting to know that many scholars are found in the field of ecocriticism belongs to African and Asian countries. It is found that few South African critics have used ecocritical approaches to evaluate some of their works of South African writer. These critics showed their interest on the works of the writers like J.M Coetzee, Zakes, Mda, Ruth, Miller, and Jane Rosenthal and among others who are environmentally conscious by profession. Ecocriticism can also be further differentiated from other literary theories and critical approaches. Literary criticism is the evaluation, analysis, description and interpretation of the literary texts. Ecocriticism is one branch of literary criticism. Ecocriticism is a scholarly site that even engenders fertile cross-discipline and cross-cultural analysis:

Furthermore “Green Reading” encompasses within itself a wide range of ethnic and cultural boundaries, not only by expanding awareness but also encouraging an understanding of a diversity of practices that could become a mutually beneficial far from being American, Ecocriticism consists the very earth assuming its size and its shape. Imagine literature courses explore readings of gender in relation to nature; imagine courses that cover Native American, Asian, African, Hispanic, (or) other traditions and draw views of nature. Studying diverse interactions with the natural can expand cross-cultural understandings enormously (Arnold 1).

Bary Lopez, an American author, essayist, fiction writer who is known for his humanitarian and environmental related works says: “I hope that practice and study of nature writing may someday provide the foundation for a reorganization of American political thought” (Doncheese). He believes that ecocriticism will gain

its value when it is combined with the other literary theories. It is necessary that when ecocriticism is interrelated with the other literary theories for a discussion it might result in better understanding of nature and nature writing.

Added to this, Ecocriticism not only deals with the ecological issues but also deals with the theoretical approach towards the international considerations of nature and culture. Ecocriticism is totally divergent from the main theme of literary criticism. In a sense that it expresses one thing clearly that there is a rift between nature and culture."Moreover, ecocriticism has sought to investigate how particular templates of storytelling and shaping the humans' real-life interactions with the natural world in ways that are historically and culturally distinctive" (Heise 419).

Connection Between Nature and Literature

Nature and Literature have been closely interconnected with each other. Many writers and scholars from different cultures focused on this particular relationship as a main theme in their works. Thus there is a need for manifesting these issues through the mode of literary texts since the physical environment which gives room for people to sustain life on the earth is in the verge of danger and extinction due to the selfish acts of human exploitation of natural world. This sense of Consciousness forced the writers to give their ecological concerned ideas through their writings in order to prevent the future degradation of mother earth. According to Jana:

We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding (Jana 256-257).

The major forms of literature such as novels, poems, and other expressions of literature have been dealing on issues related with nature. Many writers have shown their concern towards the destruction of nature due to growing population and depletion of environment. Issues related to nature were focused as one of the major themes in many of the literary works in English. Colonialism is also considered to be one of the major factors for ruining of the environment. Transformation in Social and cultural environment also had an impact on man's attitude towards nature which had also underwent change. Ecocriticism is a vast spreading research area which encompasses a wide realm of theories and texts. This study shows the relationship between nature and man. There are many writers in the Indian writings in English where some of their works deals with the theme of ecocriticism. Authors also have explored this field of ecocriticism through many modes.

Cross-culturalism and Ecocriticism in Indian Writing in English

Literature is a reflection of life and the major works of Indian writes are infused with a lot of green ideas. Contemporary writings provide a wider scope for ecological

renderings. India is a nation which encompasses a wider range of eco-systems from the Northern Himalayas to the Southern plateaus and from Sunderbans to the Thar desert in the West. These eco-systems indispensably a great source of inspiration for writers. Generally, a culture is formed and created by the humans who belong to the respective locality and country from where the people have their origin. All cultures are interdependent of that country and people who resides respective of their nativity and adaptability. Within the framework of eco-critical theory, where culture is tied close to the ecosystem, geographical location, and thus cross-cultural is generally presented in terms of search of identity and impact of foreign culture on them. When it comes to Indian English literature, it is a conglomeration of classic literatures of different cultures and status. The main theme in fictions includes class discrimination, quest for identity, problems caused by cultural dislocation, migration, environmental disturbance due to sharing the mother land by the alien instead of the natives. Thus, Indian English writers no longer come under the two categories i.e. Resident and Non-resident. Some Indian writers like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth travel up and down between India and other countries whereas some other writers like Aravind Adiga, Kiran Desai lives abroad but has retained their Indian "Passport". It is notable that Indian women Diasporic writers focus on emotional disquietude and psychological trauma due to ongoing migration and the impact of cross-culturalism. Among many women novelists some outstanding women writers who lifts Indian English literature to next level are kamala Markandaya, Arundathi Roy, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bharathi Mukerjee, Kiran Desai.

Kiran Desai

Kiran Desai (born 3rd September 1971), the most well known young Indian English writer is the daughter of reputed writer Anita Desai. Born in New Delhi, she spent her childhood days in India until she was 10, later she and her mother lived in England for few years then finally moved to United States where she studied creative writing at Bennington College. She started her literary career with the publication of "Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard" in the year 1998. Her second fiction was "The Inheritance of Loss" which got its appreciation from the critics throughout Asia, Europe and was awarded the Man Booker prize in 2006 and also the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award. She was the first youngest female writer to bag this award. Her second novel "The Inheritance of Loss" is an autobiography which is based on the difficulties encountered by non-residents in foreign countries. This novel has been translated into major international languages. The novel shares its commonness with some international considerations such as cross-culturalism, globalization, economic inequality and class system. Desai in this novel writes about "what happens when a person become an immigrant", "What happens when people from developing country is forced to survive in the developed country",

“How the environment gets disturbed when there is a conflict between alien and natives. My paper focuses on Desai’s “Inheritance of Loss” gives a picturesque description of nature surrounding the beautiful snow covered Kalimpong with ecocritical concern in juxtaposition with the cross-cultural issues which affect two main characters Biju and Jemubhai Patel.

Inheritance of Loss

Desai begins the novel with a short poem from Jorge Luis Borges entitled “The Boast of Quietness”. She gives a gist of the theme through this epigraph that novel has got within it. This poem is used as an ode and also as a tool to highlight poor people’s defenselessness against the upper class system. The epigraph depicts the lives of people who shift their homeland and cultures similar to the characters such as Biju, the cook’s son and the judge Jemubhai Patel who shuffles between America and India for their survival, thinking that they will have a better life but their expected dreams are shattered. Many show their fascination towards alien land rather than showing interest for their own native land. This attitude of leaving their mother land makes them to feel alienated. This discrimination is witnessed, where for a while Biju works for a short period in Brigitte’s restaurant, where one of his dishwasher named Achootan says to Biju in the kitchen

“Shit ! But atleast this country is better than England”. At least they have some hypocrisy here. They believe they are good people and you get some relief. There they shout at you openly on the street “Go back to where you come from”(IoL 141).

This bitter words from the mouth of white man either its from England or New York makes the immigrants feel lonely and gives a clear feel that they are in the foreign land where the idea becomes more informative and more realistic. The title has the relation to Sai who lost her parents. The title can be interpreted in alternative way where the loss is passed on and carried over from one generation to the other generation. It is witnessed that everyone is experiencing the loss. The word in the title “Loss” gives negative associations. The line “could fulfillment ever be felt as deeply as loss”? (IoL 9) gives us clear picture is each and every character in the novel who finally experiences loss. Both the natives and immigrants lose their dignity and respect. The feeling of being lost is throughout the novel.

The novel travels beyond the boundaries of continents, maps, to intricate ethno-racial relationship between people who have come from different cultural background. Desai has given importance to two places in this novel Kalimpong and New York. Desai has give two different storyline for two places having a totally a different outlook. As we come across the place name New York we are able to get renowned mind picture of it, whereas when we hear about Kalimpong, only through Desai we are aware of such a place named Kalimpong. Desai was able to relate the two places through the various characters. The loci is not stable, both the places have their own past, present and future. The protagonists of the

story are the retired judge, his grand-daughter Sai, their cook, and Biju, the son of the cook. The novel opens with Sai living in his grandfather's home at Kalimpong. The judge is an educated man with a degree from the prestigious Cambridge University and falls down economically due to the country's class and political revolt. Sai, falls in love with her mathematics tutor Gyan, who is a Gorkha by birth, a Nepalese ethnic group, and a graduate. He fights against Indian people for Gorkha's independence and eventually ends up hating Sai, who is the representative of westernized culture but an Indian by birth. Parallely the storyline shifts to the life of Biju, the son of Sai's grandfather's cook, who belongs to the "lower class system" who faces difficulty to adapt to the new foreign environment. He works along with the other illegal immigrants who spend much of their time in finding fault with the authorities and oscillating from one ill-paid job to another job. The major characters who get trapped in class and cross-cultural conflicts are Jemubhai Patel and Biju. They both are the victims of racial discrimination and cross-cultural problems. Jemubhai hates the human beings after his bitter racial discrimination he faced during his days. Another parallel story runs through the Gorkhas indomitable fight for their own land where the environment gets completely destroyed. This destruction and the situation of the place is well picturized by the author in her very first chapter:

All day, the colors had been those of the dusk, mist moving like a water creature across the great flanks of mountains possessed of ocean shadows and depths. Briefly visible above the vapor, Kanchenjunga was a far peak whittled out of ice gathering the last of the light, a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summit (IoL 8)

The description of the mountain covered with vapor, shadow and fog indirectly describes about the blurred and gloomy past hidden within the characters and gives a picture of that Kalimpong is under severe critical situation.

Up through the chimney and out, the smoke mingled with the mist that was gathering speed, sweeping in thicker and thicker, obscuring the things in parts— half a hill, then other half. The tree turned into silhouettes, loomed forth, were submerged again. Gradually the vapor replaced everything with itself, solid objects with shadow, and nothing remained that did not seem molded from or inspired by it (IoL 9)

We can see the mist and fog directs the narrative of the novel. The nature's representatives are merely depicting the conditions of human over there. The shadows symbolizes the hidden past of each characters. Biju and Jemubhai Patel are living in the shadow of westernized culture hiding their true culture. We can hardly see the presence of the sun in this novel. Usually sun is a symbol of warmth and fertility in contrast the absence which is replaced by mist. Though insignificant it imposes a powerful message. "The structure of the house seemed fragile in the balance of this night—just husk" (IoL 41). The lines symbolize the oppressed minds of the humans living in that environment. Apart from mist, fog and shadow there are other objects in nature which voices the inner thoughts of the characters.

Kanchenjunga Mountain with its natural hue forms a majestic backdrop for the plot. The beauty of the hill covered place, the serenity of the attitude and the calm atmosphere are totally destroyed by the war and boycotts. Kalimpong is the place where Jemubhai Patel resides and that beautiful place is greatly disturbed by the Nepali insurgency thereby affecting the humans and non-humans. It is noted that only because of cross-cultural problems the peaceful environment gets disturbed. One side Jemubhai Patel in the past and Biju in the present go to foreign land in search of their identity but they didn't cause any harm whereas Gorkhas who are fighting for identity in their own did not bother about sabotaging their own mother land. They didn't think about the loss that they cause to the own environment where they going to live.

Desai crosses the international borders (India and USA) to portray the difficulties faced by the Indians who go to foreign country for their survival and who are mentally attacked by the impact of westernization and blindly get attracted towards the west resulting in immigration. Almost all the characters in the novel becomes victimized and goes without identity inside or outside their native land, Biju is a victim of identity crisis and to cross-cultural subjugation in Indian-American social set up. He is the son of the old cook in India who tries to leave India and goes to New York City, where he cause living by selling hot dogs for Gray's papaya. Wherever he goes he is tormented by the segregation of class system. He himself feels too inferior to all. There are ups and downs in his life in New York, his lifestyle is not stable. Biju realizes that he is also a servant like his father. Biju belongs to a lower class and this insecure feeling which runs within him affects him unconsciously and wherever he goes, he feels insecure about his identity as Indian. Biju has almost spent one year of his life with dissatisfaction in an alien land. He was once fired from his job because he was stinking. Good –bye; Baby Bistro, "Use the time off to take a bath" said the owner. He had been kind enough to hire Biju although he found him smelly" (IoL 30). On the grounds of racial discrimination and his smelling body as Americans view him he was to quit his job and search for a new job. This vividly indicates the cross – cultural difference. Biju is emotionally unstable. He constantly shifts his job and takes up a job in a Chinese restaurant. Once he overhears an Indian woman saying that she likes to marry a westerner who has finished PhD but not an Indian. This makes him feel inferior about his class system and Indian culture by birth. The culture and the mentality of the people belonging to a foreign land make him feel uncomfortable to work in such an environment. Then he develops a friendship with an African man named Saeed while working at Banana republic. Thus this sharing of a short term friendship between the immigrants highlights the thought to overcome racial differences. Biju knows that he could not meet Saeed again due to hectic work. As he was alone he sat on the basement shelf at night feeling deserted and isolated in an alien land recalling his memories with Saeed, at the same time he was reliving

in the days he spent with his grandmother in his childhood. He could not even forget the rustling noise of grasses, every naturalistic elements was given life by Desai in her novel through Biju's nostalgia.

Biju recalls how he would make trips, how peaceful the village of Kalimpong was once with all smell of nature. In everything they enjoyed from the environment they lived and the food they consumed was cooked all cooked by choolah. It is still in practise that women in North India still uses chulha or choolah. It is a type of cooking stove and their advantages are plenty. Besides providing smoke free hygienic cooking atmosphere it greatly helps in the conservation of firewood and helps avoid deforestation. We can witness that through the words his memories of the past found their way to present recollection:

Biju and his grandmother would cross on market trips into town and back, his grandmother with her sari tucked up, sometimes sacks of rice on her head. Fishing eagles hovered above the water, changed their horizontal glide within a single moment, plunged, rose sometimes with the thrashing muscle of silver... when he had visited his father in Kalimpong, they had sat outside in the evenings and his father had reminisced: "How peaceful our village is. How good the roti tastes there! It is because the atta is made on a choolah, better than anything cooked on a gas (or) a kerosene stove..... (IoL 110)

The beautiful ambience of Kalimpong has left an indelible mark in Biju's mind to think of the roti prepared using choolah is better than the roti cooked in a star hotel. These lines picturize the village life which serves as a complete contrast to mechanistic life at present. Desai uses the food as a symbol of identity, and also to highlight the class discrimination which forms a major gap between two cultures. In this novel beef eating is dealt as a major issue. "To kill a cow is equal to kill a Brahmin" (Puri 4). As Biju is from a typical Indian culture he finds difficulty in adjusting to the food habits and menu which they follow

Being a cook he should be ready to prepare and serve any dishes to the customer's table. The lady at the restaurant comments: you know Biju, she said laughing, isn't it ironic, nobody eats beef in India and just look at it—..."I'll have a steak, they said with the practiced look....Holy cow unholy cow ...Job no job Biju: One should not give up one's, the principles of one's parents, and their parents before them, No, no matter what (IoL 142- 143).

Due to these customs Biju leaves his job when it comes between serving beef or to work by going against his religious customs. This clearly indicates that how the same animal is treated in one culture as holy and in another as unholy. According to Indian culture cow is venerated. The lines typically focus how the Indians respect and worship the cow. The Indians consider the animal to be a personification of Goddess Lakshmi. Even now the Jainist and the Buddhist culture vehemently follow the tradition of worshipping the animals. Kalimpong is the place which is noted for its Buddhist ideals. Since Biju hails from that culture he finds it difficult to accept the things which go against his culture and his behavior against cooking

beef shows the Indian spirit that is strongly imbibed in him. The thought against killing animals show the people's concern towards animals either because of religious fear or due to their control towards some inherited rituals followed for animals down the ages

Biju is torn between two cultures and drifts in an alien land with a quest for identity. Desai takes the narrative in a parallel way by focusing on the life of another character, Jemubhai Patel. A retired judge, Patel faced such a discomfort in adjusting to the new culture when he went to Cambridge for his studies and for his survival. He was almost disturbed by the new culture and with the confusion of finding many ways to get adapted to the dominative alien culture. Desai succinctly points out:

Thus Jemubhai's mind had begun to warp; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar. He forgot how to laugh... In fact he could barely let any of himself peep out of his clothes for fear of living offence. He began to wash obsessively, concerned he would be accused of smelling (IoL 47).

He realizes that he is almost an "unknown citizen" in both foreign and in his native land. He sees everything over there modernized and starts completely losing his emotional balance. The colour complexion of makes him feel inferior. This culture variation spreads like a disease in almost every Indian who goes to a foreign land for their living.

In addition to this chaos, we witness some unrest in public life by Nepalese insurgencies. The Nepalese illegally takes shelter in Kalimpong by breaking into every upper class house of Indians.

...there was a report of new dissatisfaction in the Hills, gathering insurgency, mens and guns. It was the Indian Nepalese this time fed with being treated like minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country (or) at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs... (IoL 16).

From the above lines it is obvious that this riot and environmental destruction due to the Gorkha protest forms the central theme of the novel which is a burning problem of insurgency growing in the north-east of the country. The lines clearly give the picture of the ongoing protest . This Gorkhaland movement was started by the Nepalese. Gorkha and Lepcha are natives of east side of Himalayas who raised their voice for their rights such as negligence, poverty, and illiteracy. The different phase of this movement has been penned down by Desai in her novel. In 1800, Nepalese had arrived in India and had lived here for several generations, but they never got any solutions for their racial and identity crisis. They didn't even posses a land on their own. Young boys who were fifty in number who belong to youth wing of GNLFF (Gorkhaland National Liberation Front) have taken up oath to fight till the last breath unless they get a homeland for them. They raised slogans such as:

“Jai Gorkha” said the cook, and “Gorkhaland for Gorkhas”, we are the liberation army said although they had been asked to say anything” (IoL 14) the slogans voiced by the Gorkhas conveys the riot has not been reduced and the impact of their thoughts started to reflect in their action. Moreover, the protesters started destroying the public property and caused damage to the environment.

“The GNLF boys had burned down the government rest house by the river...In fact, forest inspection bungalows all over the district were burning, upon whose verandas generations of ICS of men had stood and admired the serenity...the circuit house was burned, and chief minister’s niece. Kalimpong was turned into ghost town. (IoL 287)

Environment is a part and parcel of an individual’s daily life, either a direct or indirect damage in environment will also affect the human world to a large extent. There is nexus between culture, nature and human world if one gets disturbed everything suffers. The same happens here in the “Inheritance of Loss”, the cross-culturalism impacts lead to environmental disturbance in public lives and mental turmoil in characters. Since nature forms an integral part of the biological cycle if it gets disturbed either by natural calamities or by political unrest it affects every individual of that ecology.

According to Peter Barry: Nature really exists out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ionized as a concept by enclosure within knowing inserted commas but actually present as an entity which effects us and which we can effect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it (Barry 252).

The atmosphere of the Kalimpong was almost transformed due to the growing political unrest. The change in atmosphere was almost felt through the character Sai where she was able to perfectly feel that disturbance within her. She could sense the communication thereafter is totally impossible. She was sitting on the veranda and just observing the situation deeply. The effects, the phone lines were cut barring communication and there was a change in the season lined up with the diseases. Thus the political revolt was growing intense, that it got even more intense where three day strike rose to thirteen day strike and the situation deteriorates. The house where Sai and Jemubhai Patel lives itself is located in a place where the nature can be enjoyed. In spite of the ongoing chaos in and around Kalimpong there are certain things that Sai and other minor characters enjoys the atmosphere around the areas of Darjeeling.

Sai wondered as they drove in jeep , huge spread open Easter lilies were sticky with spilling anthers; insects chased each other madly through the sky, Zip Zip; and amorous butterflies, cucumber green... the delicacy of love courtliness is apparent even between the lesser beasts(IoL 201) .

These lines shows the picturesque description of author at minute things of the nature, she was able to focus on these things too in her storyline as a part of main elements which shows that the characters in the novel were able to enjoy the nature and forget their bitter happenings around them for short span of time:

The incidence of horror grew, through the changing seasons, through winter, and a flowery spring, summer, then rain and winter again. Roads were closed, there was curfew every night, and Kalimpong was trapped in its own madness. You could not the hill sides; nobody left their houses... but stayed locked in... the trees that provided Lola and Noni with pears has been stripped overnight...the GNLF boy had burned down the government rest house by river, the circuit house was burnt down...Kalimpong was turned into a ghost town (IoL 286). These lines clearly explain the situation over there where humans and their environment witnessed high threat for their survival. True to the lines of Tennyson "Men may come and men may go but I go on forever" (Tennyson). According to Tony Juniper, sustainability and environment adviser, in an article entitled "What nature has ever done for us" says: "From Indian vultures to Chinese bees the nature provides the "natural services" that keeps the economy going"(Harding). In juxtaposition to the positive views of Juniper on nature we can see nature with its abundant resources serves humanity even at the time of distress.

The garden was feeding them almost entirely, for the first time, they in Cho Oyu were eating the real food of the hillside. *Dalda Saag*, pink flowered, flat leaved; *bhutiya dhaniya* growing copiously around the cook's quarter; the new tendrils of squash or pumpkin vine; curled ningro fiddleheads, *churbi* cheese and bamboo shoes sold by women who appeared from behind bushes on foot paths with the cheese wrapped in ferns...After the rains the mushroom pushed their way up sweet as chicken and glorious as Kanchenjunga so big fanning out, people collected oyster mushroom in Father Booty's abandoned garden (IoL 288)

Conclusion

The novel begins and ends with the description of mountain Kanchenjunga, as Sai arrives at Cho Oyu, the mountain is described as macabre, which symbolizes the sober mood of child who has lost her parents. The loss in each character's life is warned by the change in nature. Almost all the characters lose what they possessed in the beginning. They experience a heavy loss both in public and private life. The fertility of the land is lost and it is shown very clearly even though there is possibility of cultivating all crops "It is very isolated, but the land has potential", the Scotsman states, "Quinine, Sericulture, Cardamom, Orchids" (IoL 35).The impact of alien culture and the deep rootedness of the native culture run in the blood of all the characters in the novel. This novel covers a wide variety of concepts such as race, ethnicity etc. and also deals with the inhabitants of Kalimpong and its landscape. There is a blend in the novel where the emotions and psyche of the characters is purely reflected through nature. Desai has vividly picturized nature and environment being dominated by culture. Besides presenting the gleaming beauty of nature, trees, mountains, rivers, birds and animals one can visualize a firm blend of cultures from an ecocritical perspective.

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