GREEN CULTURAL STUDIES: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES, TEXTUAL PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

THESIS

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by

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CERTIFICATE

As required under the University Ordinance, OB-9.9 (viii), I hereby certify that the thesis entitled, ***Green Cultural Studies: Theoretical Perspectives, Textual Perceptions and Practical Applications***, submitted by Ms. Akshata Ashok Bhatt for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English has been completed under my guidance. The thesis is the record of the research work conducted by the candidate during the period of her study and has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other similar titles to her by this or any other University.

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DECLARATION

As required under the University Ordinance OB 9.9(v), I hereby declare that the thesis entitled, ***Green Cultural Studies: Theoretical Perspectives, Textual Perceptions and Practical Applications***, is the outcome of my own research undertaken under the guidance of Dr. Nina Caldeira, Professor, Department of English, Goa University. All the sources used in the course of this work have been duly acknowledged in the thesis. This work has not previously formed the basis of any award of Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other similar titles to me, by this or any other University.

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1.1 Preface to the Study

Nature occupies a very chequered representation in collective human discourse. From being a familiar 'home' one is born into, to being an unpredictable adversary posing newer challenges; from being an unmapped entity of opportunity and experience, to being a 'constructed' tool weaponized in aiding political domination; from being a source of poetic inspiration, to being deemed a product of linguistic signification; from being a marginalised victim of developmental juggernaut, to surfacing as an inevitable global agendum in the 21st century, the re-presentation and representation of nature in human narrative has followed a trajectory that has been inherently pluralistic.

But even while these various representations of nature continue to take shape within the cultural stratosphere of human discourse, the *real entity* – the physical environment – continues to undergo drastic and often adverse changes owing to tangible human interference exposing, willy-nilly, a perceptible abyss between intellectual engagement with nature and the practical actions impacting it. However, this abyss does not get the due attention it deserves. To substantiate this statement, the present research employs a methodology of gap-analysis adopted by Laurence Coupe in his work *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. It recovers two vivid occurrences of recent past as points of departure for the larger argument.

On 19th January 2000, BBC News carried an article titled, 'Cereal sowing clue to skylark slump' by Environment Correspondent Alex Kirby. According to this investigative report, between 1972 and 1996, the population of skylarks in the United Kingdom had fallen by 60% and 75% on farmland. This slump was attributed to the cereal monoculture of intensive agriculture (Kirby) – an *act* which destroyed the habitats of these creatures thereby visibly endangering the sustenance of this species.

Approximately five years later, on 13th June 2005, *The Times of India* featured an article titled, 'Even sparrows don't want to live in the cities anymore' (TNN). The investigative report noted that the population of house-sparrows was dwindling in urban

areas due to factors such as lack of nesting spaces in modern buildings of concrete, disappearance of kitchen-gardens, inadequacy of food sources due to drastic displacement of cultivation patterns and accentuated use of pesticides in farming. The report further cited a study conducted by Sainudeen Pattazhy's environmental science expert team which deduced that electromagnetic fields and radiation effects created by mobile towers and mobile phones were some of the significant causes of reduction in house-sparrow population (TNN).

It is interesting to note that while these two natural entities continued to visibly bear the brunt of human disruptions in ecological systems, their renditions as literary and cultural referents seemed antiseptically quarantined from the grim realities of their existence. Between these reports and present day, John Clare's poem "The Sky Lark" continues to be subjected to literary appreciation, Ralph Vaughan Williams' piece of orchestra, *The Lark Ascending*, continues to garner viewership across virtual web-platforms and the classic "The Crow and the Sparrow" story continues to illustratively dot children's books. The point is, the *presentation* of these creatures in literary/cultural works hardly seems to be *representation* since it does not rise from an incidental to an existential level. Does this mean then, that human engagement with nature at the level of intellectual critique and analyses will continue to get 'refined' even as human action continues to persistently affect and substantially endanger the sustenance and existence of 'nature'? If so, isn't this superficial 'literary' or 'intellectual' refinement as much responsible for a rapidly deteriorating natural environment as a well-informed act of intentional deforestation or a massive nuclear disaster owing to anthropocentric need for technological and military superiority?

This question serves as a point of departure for the quest entailed in the present study. With the threat of environmental catastrophe(s) becoming more discernible and incontrovertible each day, a study in the area has moved from the stature of being important to being indispensable.

1.2 Introduction

The terms 'Global Warming' and 'Climate Change' have become prominent watchwords of the 21st century. Through various points of departures, an increased engagement with natural environment and environment-related concerns are coming

forth visibly and tangibly on the global front. Preoccupations with the interanimating relationship between humans and environment has manifested in the form of systematic studies in several disciplines across sciences, commerce and humanities as well as emerging pedagogies of business management. The immediate pulse of this urgent awakening is informed by the belief that the issue of Climate Change and its severely catastrophic implications are too pressing and pervasive to leave anyone out.

And yet, one observes that despite an acute understanding of damages caused to environment by human interferences, the relationship of humankind with the natural non-human world around it has been historically beset by fundamental dichotomies. Human constructs such as 'culture', 'civilization' and modernist notions of 'development' have been key-players in informing, impacting and guiding human negotiations with natural environment. Thus, the collective ways of thinking, acting and living of people(s) have been at the crux of environment-related changes. The answer to ecological crises, therefore, does not float above the physical or visceral world of human beings. It lies in the nuances of human expression – in its tangible as well as intangible forms.

In stating the above, the present research has spelt out one of the most prominent challenges confronting this study. The issue that forms the indispensable backdrop of this research is present environmental crisis – a multidimensional phenomenon etched in concrete manifestations. Climate Change is real, the depletion of ozone layer is real, the melting of mountain caps, the extinction of species and subspecies of flora and fauna, the depletion of natural resources are all real – the repetition of the word 'real' being deliberate and emphatic to denote the palpability of a problem in a world which is increasingly being taken over by the technology-driven 'virtual'. As Timothy Clark aptly puts it in the "Preface" to *Ecocriticism on the Edge*: *Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*,

> Phenomena such as ocean acidification, climate change, the general effects of incremental forms of ecological degradation across the planet, global overpopulation and resource depletion do not present any obvious or perceptible target for concern or protest at any one place, or often any immediate antagonist perceptible at the normal human scale. The largely benumbed recognition of this reality has become one feature of life in the

so-called Anthropocene, to use the currently still informal term for the epoch at which largely unplanned human impacts on the planet's basic ecological systems have passed a dangerous, if imponderable, threshold. One major new effort at work in contemporary literary and artistic practice and criticism is to find some way of usefully or authentically engaging such crucial but elusive concerns, precisely when it is acknowledged that they resist representation at the kinds of scale on which most thinking, culture, art and politics operate. (x).

Clark's view is suggestive of the internal binary that confronts corrective measures oriented towards the combat of environmental concerns. While the effects of environmental crises are concrete and conspicuous, their antagonists are complex. To elucidate, large-scale deforestation may be a cause of Climate Change on a multiscalar level, but then it is also a *symptomatic* cause. The real challenge for the mitigation of Climate Change, then, is not the 'planned' human act of deforestation, i.e. cutting and felling of trees on a large scale. It is the 'unplanned' or rather, the non-explicit human thought that willy-nilly permits, facilitates and in doing so, validates the act of deforestation. A study of ecological concerns, therefore, needs to take an appraisal of human action and also study this human action in tandem with the more intangible plenum of collective thought-processes which *inform* this action. In other words, it needs to take cognizance of human 'culture(s)'. It is here that the largely unmapped terrain of 'Green Cultural Studies' comes into picture.

1.3 Green Cultural Studies: Mapping the Scope

At the outset, it is important to clarify that in the term 'Green Cultural Studies' although the word 'study' is used in its plural form 'studies', the word 'studies' in the present research will be used to denote a collection of approaches which constitute the subject under analyses.

'Green Cultural Studies' is a fluid academic discipline because of its expansive nature and its largely fragmented manifestations burgeoning in many isolated but loosely connected areas. However, an underlying scepticism confronts the core existence of the field of Green Cultural Studies. The issue centripetal to its inception is rooted in tangibility with palpable manifestations. Hence, can a theoretical approach be

an answer to a problem that is fundamentally practical? An attempt to answer this question is integral to the thesis statement of this research. Individually, the terms 'Green' and 'Cultural Studies' constitute distinct approaches carrying significations within the scope of contextualised studies. In the interest of this research however, the nomenclature is the coming together of these distinct approaches. The process is not a mechanical yoking together of two elements; it is rather, amalgamating the practical commitment of the former with the fundamental perspectives of the latter. For further clarity, the present study will entail an overview of the terms 'Green' and 'Cultural Studies' within the scope of present analysis.

Paul Willis in his Foreword to *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* postulates his views on 'culture' thus,

> 'Culture' is a strange and capacious category. It's one of those concepts, perhaps the best example, that we simply cannot do without – it is used everywhere – but which is also very unsatisfactory and cries out for betterment (xxi).

In putting forth the complexity of the term 'culture', Willis actually captures the contemporary dilemma. The term 'culture' has become a catchword in the 21st century. Almost every discourse speaks of the concept of culture as integral to its existence and operations. Willis emphasizes this point when he says,

> …culture has become an important and much used theoretical and substantive category of connection and relation. Both in academic and popular writing and commentary we see countless references to 'cultures of… schools, organizations, pubs, regions, sexual orientations, ethnicities etc.' You name it and you can add, 'culture of…'. All those evoked domains of 'culture' are seen as containing a multiplicity of human forms and relations: from micro-interpersonal interactions to group norms, processes and values to communicative forms, provided texts and images; wider out to institutional norms and constraints, to social representations and social imagery; wider out still to economic, political and ideological determinations. All can be traced back for their cultural effects and meanings, all traced for their mutual interactions from the point of view of

how the meanings of a particular 'culture' are formed and held to operate

(xxi).

As Willis suggests, one constantly hears of 'tech-culture', 'pop-culture', 'millennial-culture' and even 'subversive culture'. These cultures inform and define the pluralistic palimpsests and orientations of the contemporary world. But what exactly is culture? Is it a mere 'concept' and a 'term'? Is it an abstract human construction floating in intangible ethers totally unaffected by the socio-political realities of the phenomenological world? Or is it something tangible – something palpable and conspicuous, simultaneously impacting and getting impacted by the socio-political and economic rubrics of its immediate reality? In order to understand this, one must go to the etymological roots of the term 'culture'.

The term 'culture' is derived from the Middle French 'culture' which in turn takes its form as a learned borrowing from Latin 'cultūr(a) which stands to mean '*tending*'. This Latin term is in turn derived from 'colere' which means to till. Thus, one may observe that the term culture has often been associated with nuances of caring, grooming and cultivating. In adopting this semantic sense, it becomes the opposite of nature/instinct. It denotes a trajectory *away* from the 'natural' tendencies towards something that is nurtured or cultivated. Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary reinforces this view when it defines culture as, "the sum total of ways of living *built* by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another" (325; my emphasis). Thus, as a signifier, the term 'culture' is pregnant with connotations which establish a nature/instinct versus nurture/intent dichotomy. At the centre of this dichotomy is the 'human' as an agent, a catalyst, a participant as well as a recipient of the dynamic processes of culture-related creations, transformations, transmutations as well as disruptions.

Culture manifests largely through the temporality and spatiality of the individual or collective human society and its norms, structures, patterns of thinking, beliefs and ways of life all of which are at once dynamic and, to adapt a term facilitated by Aristotle, 'entelechic'. To say that cultures are capable of completely dying out may contain within itself the hamartia of grossly underestimating their power of disruption and palimpsestic pervasion within an existing or new culture. For instance, colonialism as a systematic political process of annexation and consolidation of foreign rule in native land(s) may have ended, but can one definitively say that colonial 'culture' as a

disruptive force causing, impacting and influencing native cultures has ceased to exist? Thus, one may be able to opine that the very notion of culture carries within itself the concept of 'permanence of change'. One culture may branch out into meta or composite cultures in a state of constant mutation even while being passed on in essence from one generation to another. Thus, 'contemporary culture (s)' – a term loaded with syntaxes in present-day cultural studies – is not removed from the cultural processes of production, dissemination and consumption which have informed human worldview since centuries. Therefore, it may not be wrong to say that culture, even in its most mutative, multitudinous and pluralistic state, carries underlying patterns of collective thought processes and worldviews which influence the way humans receive, perceive and negotiate with the world which they inhabit, steer and try to gain control over.

It is here that the above-mentioned nature/instinct versus nurture/intent dichotomy becomes crucial. Culture does not operate in a vacuum. It constantly negotiates with the sociological, political and economic aspects of human life. The burgeoning academic discipline of cultural studies undertakes intensive cognizance of this process while recognizing its internal interfaces, conflicts and limitations. Thus, culture is more than a mere abstract entity. It is a 'way of life' built and constructed by individuals negotiating constantly with the *world* around them. It is this negotiation with the *world* around culture that forms the point of departure for Green Cultural Studies.

Cultural Studies, therefore, akin to the subject-matter it deals with, is a fluid area. Simon During emphasizes this point in the Introduction to *The Cultural Studies Reader*,

> …cultural studies is not an academic discipline quite like others. It possesses neither a well-defined methodology nor clearly demarcated fields for investigation. Cultural Studies is, of course, the study of culture, or, more particularly, the study of *contemporary culture*. But this does not take us very far. Even assuming that we know precisely what "contemporary culture" is, it can be analyzed in many ways – sociologically, for instance, by "objectively" describing its institutions and functions as if they belong to a large, regulated system; or economically, by describing the effects of investment and marketing on cultural production. More traditionally, it can

be studied "critically" by celebrating either large forms (like literature) or specific texts or images (like *Waiting for Godot* or an episode of *Cheers*). The question remains: does cultural studies bring its own orientation to these established forms of analysis? (01)

The question During asks is of relevance. If 'culture' as a concept represents the collective ways of living of a people or select peoples, then in what context does Cultural Studies as a theoretic approach unfold itself? In an article titled, "Green Cultural Studies", Adrian Ivakhiv sheds more light on the unfolding of Cultural Studies when he opines that,

"[c]ultural Studies" refers to the study of cultural objects, meanings, and processes, and their productions and use in contemporary society. It is an interdisciplinary field with a twin commitment to intellectual rigor and social relevance. While the 'rigor' piece sometimes means 'objectivity', often it involves a questioning of the assumptions that objectivity and subjectivity can be easily distinguished and kept separate; studying 'culture' in other words, is hardly possible without some level of engagement in culture, which raises ethical issues for those doing studying. *The 'relevance' piece means an applicability to real-world situations – an applicability that often means critique but that also intends to promise action towards change for the better (which generally means toward the more democratic and socially just)*. (Ivakhiv; my emphasis).

Ivakhiv's notion of 'relevance' of cultural studies plays a pertinent part in the present context. In modern theoretical discourse, when one speaks of the 'real-world situations' of humans, one concentrates largely on the social, political, economic and of late, the virtual world. However, there is another *world* which tends to be given marginal or ancillary positions in human discourses. This world is the 'natural' or 'physical' one – the world which, along with human beings, also constitutes the non-human living and non-living entities that form the biotic community of the world. This world, metaphorically termed 'Green' in the context of this study, conjuncts with the afore-discussed area of 'Cultural Studies' to constitute the fulcrum of analyses; the nuances of this term, therefore, will be discussed in the forthcoming segment.

The human-environment relationship is not a recent phenomenon; however, the keen and widespread attention which this relationship has been receiving, is. It will not

be an exaggeration to say that people *across* the globe have taken cognizance and responded to dynamic human-environment interfaces subjecting it to myriad kinds of analyses from various points of departure – political, sociological, scientific and economic. But how has 'culture' – in its multiple forms and manifestations – responded to nature? How have the collective ways of human life influenced and been influenced by the natural, non-human world around them? How have humans continually negotiated with environment whilst driving the juggernaut of 'development' and 'civilization'? And why are these questions relevant?

It is interesting to note how all these questions are interlinked and the answers to them, consequential. The last question finds its answer in more concrete and in most cases, conspicuous manifestations – the depletion of the ozone layer, the century-scale rise in earth's temperature, the melting caps, the rising sea levels, the extinction of non-human species largely due to habitat-displacement and erratic climatic changes directly impacting the existence and survival of humankind. All this and several other recorded changes in the climate system are collectively known as the environmental crises of the present age.

Within the scope of this study, the term 'Green' has been employed as a two-tiered signifier. On one level, it is a representative metonymy which stands for the biotic community that extends to include flora, fauna and landscapes which are not quintessentially 'green' in colour (for instance, water-bodies, snow mountains or deserts). This metonymic term hence incorporates everything that constitutes and occupies the natural world – including human beings. In doing so, subtly but significantly, the term 'Green', capitalised to convey its inclusiveness, shatters the centre-margin dichotomy. This, however, does not mean that nature derives meaning only within the mental functions of humans. Trees, animals, birds, insects, landscapes and elements of the physical world exist even beyond the human ability to signify them. Thus, the term 'Green' is an attempt not only to actualise nature but also see humans as a part, not at the centre, of the biotic process.

On the second level, the signification of the term 'Green' assumes deeper meaning and broader relevance. In the General Introduction to *The Green Studies Reader*, Laurence Coupe puts forth that

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...green studies is much more than a revival of mimesis: it is a new kind of pragmatics. While 'nature' is referred to by critics, it seeks to go further: to use nature as a 'critical' concept. It does this in two related senses. First, in invoking nature, it challenges the logic of industrialism, which assumes that nothing matters beyond technological progress. Thus, it offers a radical alternative to both 'right' and 'left' political positions, both of which assume that the means of production must always be developed, no matter what the cost. Second, in insisting that the non-human world matters, it challenges the complacent culturalism which renders the other species, as well as flora and fauna, subordinate to human capacity for signification. Thus, it queries the validity of treating nature as something which is 'produced' by language. Denying both assumptions, industrialism and culturalism, it sees planetary life as being in a critical condition; and it is to this sense of 'crisis' that it offers a response" (04).

The term 'Green', as Coupe suggests, represents an inherent commitment to environmental praxes. It recognizes that nature exists as an independent entity and not merely as something to which human perception attributes meanings. Therefore, irrespective of human acknowledgement, physical nature continues to undergo changes and these changes can bear direct implications toward the existence of human and non-human living entities. As Kate Soper emphatically puts it, "[i]n short, it is not language which has a hole in its ozone layer; and the real thing continues to be polluted and degraded even as we refine our deconstructive insights at the level of the signifier" (qtd. in Coupe 03).

The 'Green' signifier is gradually entering into discursive parlance in dynamic ways. Therefore, the biggest advantage of undertaking any research on environment or environmental issues is the fact that there is already a lot of existing data available on the topic. Ironically, this is also the most challenging and at times, encumbering factor. The trajectory of human awareness on this issue has been subjected to so many conflicting ideologies, rhetoric, discourses and discussions that any serious work on the issue has to take cognizance and be wary of the often-misleading assurance that the gargantuan amount of data available may provide.

Similarly, on one hand, many words, ideas and concepts related to environmental issues have entered colloquial jargon and are often employed loosely even in academic discussions; on the other, some notions are clouded in obscurity and rarely leave the marginal hinges of quarantined scientific discussions thereby making it difficult to understand the issue in all its complex totalities.

Therefore, there it is a prerequisite to understand and contextualise the usage of these terms for their nuances to be integral and meaningful to the respective discussion. As mentioned earlier, any study on environment-related issue, even one that hinges on the ecology-culture paradigm needs to take into account the fact that this issue is rooted in tangibility. Even as one speaks, changes in environment are underway albeit gradually. Hence, an uninformed usage of terms related to the contemporary global ecological issue may not only be disingenuous but also fatal to the basis of the study.

The present study will provide a brief overview of three key terminologies viz. Global Warming, Climate Change and Anthropogenic/Biogenic Causes. Pertinent ideas from these will be exhumed and kept in sight during the course of this study.

Of all the terminologies used in relation to environment, the phrases, **'Global Warming'** and **'Climate Change'** have received widespread attention. Stephen Henry Schneider in his work, *Global Warming: Are We Entering the Greenhouse Century* highlights the heightened visibility and stature of the word by pointing out that,

> [i]n 1988, the environment was as big a story as politics, AIDS, or baseball. Heat, drought, air pollution, and forest fires filled the front pages of newspapers, newsweeklies, and TV news cover stories for months. The greenhouse effect and global warming had emerged from academia and government offices to mingle with popular culture. Unknown scientists appeared on national television or in the pages of *Time* magazine. New bills to control the climatic threat were introduced into Congress, international leaders called for global action, and some spoke of reviving the environmental ethic that was obscured during the 1980s. But others said it was premature to act and folly to over-react. Battle lines were being drawn for what promises to be one of the most important political debates (of) this – and the next – century: what can or should we do to avert the possibility of an unprecedented threat to the global environment, global warming? (ix).

Schneider's concern brings to fore one of the most important paradigmatic rhetoric in contemporary environmental-politics. Although Global Warming is increasingly being employed in mainstream discourses, the immediate implications of human culture on this phenomenon are still shrouded in ambiguity. Global Warming has been defined as, "a long-term rise in the average temperature of the Earth's climate system… an aspect of climate change shown by temperature measurements and by multiple effects of the warming" ("Global warming"; my ellipsis). The term is also commonly used to denote warming that is human-caused especially in wake of Industrial Revolution and its aftermath, as well as the anticipated continuation of this rise in temperature if strong deterrents are not placed on anti-ecological human activities.

The stature of the problem of Global Warming was significantly underlined in the Fifth Assessment Report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2013 when it said, "It is *extremely likely* that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century" ("Global warming"; my emphasis). This 'human influence' which the report speaks of has been mainly caused due to harmful levels of emission of greenhouse gases such as CO_2, methane and nitrous oxide. In turn, since these emissions are mainly, if not solely, caused by human activities, this phenomenon has come to be known as 'anthropogenic global warming'. So severe is the impact of human stimuli on the phenomenon that the Climate-model projections summarized in the IPCC report anticipates that during the 21st century, "the global surface temperature is likely to rise a further 0.3 to 1.7 °C (0.5 to 3.1 °F) to 2.6 to 4.8 °C (4.7 to 8.6 °F) depending on the rate of greenhouse gas emissions" ("Global warming"). As of 2017, no documented scientific body of national or international repute has disputed this hypothesis.

While a lot of consensus and awareness is being disseminated with regard to the anthropogenic causes of Global Warming, it has also been seen that the measures which should be adopted to ensure environmental sustainability are being met with increasing scepticism. In 2015, a research survey conducted by Bruce Stokes, Richard Wike and Jill Carle showed that a median of 54% of respondents considered global warming "a very serious problem". And yet, this understanding was subject to glaring regional differences. The study showed that ironically, of the respondents, "Americans and

Chinese (whose economies are responsible for the greatest annual CO_2 emissions)[were] among the least concerned" (Stokes et. al.)

Latin America, Africa More Concerned about Climate Change Compared with Other Regions

Regional medians

	Climate change is a very serious problem	Climate change is harming people now	Very concerned that climate change will harm me personally
Latin America	74%	77	63
Africa	61	52	61
Europe	54	60	27
Asia/Pacific	45	48	37
Middle East	38	26	27
U.S.	45	41	30
China	18	49	15

54% GLOBAL MEDIAN   51% GLOBAL MEDIAN   40% GLOBAL MEDIAN

Note: Russia and Ukraine not included in Europe median. Asia-Pacific median includes China.
Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q32, Q41 & Q42.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Fig.1.1. Stokes et. al. "Global Support about Climate Change, Broad Support for
Limiting Emissions". Pew Research Center.

Such glaring inconsistencies in human perceptions of the problem of Global Warming and the hitherto dichotomist approaches towards its adverse implications are some of the key driving force behind the rise of Green Cultural Studies. This is because there is a need to understand the larger human 'way of life' which inadvertently negotiates with and plausibly permits ecological destruction while living in the shadow of its own annihilation. Laura Jones, in her 'Introduction' to *Global Warming: The Science and the Politics* aptly voices these concerns when she says,

> [m]any are convinced of another untested proposition: global warming is occurring as a result of human activity. So why does a treaty with binding commitments to reduce carbon dioxide remain controversial? Largely because any treaty that attempts to control greenhouse gas emissions will have substantial economic costs, at least in the short run: since carbon

dioxide, the principal suspect, is emitted during the burning of fossil fuels, trying to reduce these emissions would affect the economies of the entire developed world…As bureaucrats from around the world search for a solution to this environmental crisis that they have identified, discussions about global warming focus on how reductions in greenhouse gases can be achieved with minimal impact on the economy. In these discussions, *the doomsayers' version of climate change is accepted as representing the "scientific consensus," scientists with legitimate criticisms of the apocalyptic theory are ignored and, as a result, fundamental scientific questions are being side-stepped in the public discussion of greenhouse gas emissions.* In this case, does it make sense to take actions that we can be reasonably certain will have a high economic cost? (4; my emphasis).

Jones' argument, published in 1997, foresees many of the current political tendencies vis-à-vis carbon-emission reduction for mitigation of Global Warming and Climate Change that have been emerging in the second decade of the 21st century. For instance, Brazil's current foreign minister Ernesto Araujo termed Climate Change nothing but a 'plot' planted by 'cultural Marxists' in order to deter the growth of Western economies as compared to that of China. Surprisingly, Araujo is not the only one to harbour such sentiments about Climate Change and environmental crisis; his voice has been backed by several other influential political pavilions. On August 26 2019 Jeff Mason presented the reasons behind US President Donald Trump missing the crucial G7 summit of environmental dialogue in a tellingly titled report "Trump, on climate, says he won't jeopardize U.S. wealth on 'dreams'" and juxtaposed it with a compelling picture of an empty chair (reserved for Trump) at the summit in Biarritz. While the picture starkly displayed the USA's non-agreement to carbon-emission reduction under its elected President's leadership, Donald Trump's views on the matter reinforced the alarms when he said,

I feel that the United States has tremendous wealth. The wealth is under its feet. I've made that wealth come alive. ... We are now the No. 1 energy producer in the world, and soon it will be by far…I'm not going to lose that wealth, I'm not going to lose it on dreams, on windmills, which frankly aren't working too well. (qtd. in Jones).

Thus, although viewed and validated as a 'scientific phenomenon', Global Warming has become a contentious term in contemporary socio-political rhetoric. It's meaning has been disputed and the concept itself has been condemned as a ruse constructed by select ideological groups to deter the economic growth of others. This fluidity attached to the nomenclature accorded to scientific phenomena opens up discussions in the power of meaning-making discussed later on in the present thesis.

Allied to the phenomena of Global Warming, Climate Change has been defined as, "a change in the "statistical distribution of weather patterns when that change lasts for an extended period of time (i.e. decades to millions of years)" ("Climate Change [general concept]"). Although caused due to biogenic processes, recent studies have shown that Climate Change is also caused by the collective phenomena of anthropogenic interference. Through systematic observations and theoretical models, scientists work to measure and understand changes in climate from the past to present times and accordingly make future projections. Based on geological evidences, a climate record is built up and continuously worked upon. Although, for the longest time, certain sections of society, prompted largely by economic motives, have denied the influence of anthropogenic damages done to environment, recent researches have proven otherwise. Taking cognizance of this factor in its work, *Advancing the Science of Climate Change*, the United States National Research Council states "... there is a strong, credible body of evidence, based on multiple lines of research, documenting that climate is changing and that these changes are in large part caused by human activities. While much remains to be learned, the core phenomenon, scientific questions, and hypotheses have been examined thoroughly and have stood firm in the face of serious scientific debate and careful evaluation of alternative explanations" ("Climate change [general concept]").

The major anthropogenic interferences causing Climate Change are factors leading to increase in carbon emissions. This includes emissions from fossil fuel combustion, aerosols and CO_2 released by cement manufacture. In conjunction with other factors, deforestation is one of the major causes leading to collateral damages that have been proven to have caused major environmental hazards threatening to annihilate the balance of the natural ecosystems. Recognizing the socio-political as well as economic urgency of the matter, World Meteorological Organization and the United

Nations Environment Programme along with the later endorsement of United Nations General Assembly established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) with the main objective of providing the world "with an objective, scientific view of climate change and its political and economic impacts" ("IPCC"). The attempt was oriented towards bridging the gap between researchers, scientists and policy-makers. The Panel attempts to bring together the research contributed voluntarily by thousands of scientists and experts. It then prepares reports entailing a "Summary for Policymakers" which is presented for line-by-line approval of all the delegates of participating governments. Thus, it provides the framework for global participation and also fosters a platform where internationally accepted authority produces reports formed out of consensus of climate scientists as well as participating governments. This indicates that published literatures on issues related to Climate Change play a huge role in understanding the unfolding environmental crisis and its implications. However, akin to Global Warming, the term 'Climate Change' has also been subjected to critical scrutiny especially by governments that hinge their pro-development policy on an implicit anti-environment action-plan. Refusal in accepting the reality of Climate Change by terming it a 'hoax', a 'sham' or an 'alarmist façade' has exposed a sharp non-unanimity among nations participating in global climate summits. It has also, once again, accentuated the role of language in the mental subsuming of phenomenological occurrences thereby reinforcing the need to juxtapose socio-political critiques with structuralist and semiotic theoretical approaches.

Another discourse that is being touted by select sections in society is that Climate Change is caused only by biogenic factors – factors that would play a pivotal role in Global Warming even without any human interference. According to a study by Jonathan Bate and Julian Morris, the view that humans actually add to the naturally occurring greenhouse effect can be traced to an article by Svente Arrhenius in 1896. In this article, Arrhenius postulates calculations suggesting that a doubling of carbon dioxide (CO_2) could lead to a temperature rise of around $5^\circ C$ (10)

Although today, the terms 'Climate Change' and 'Global Warming' have come into mainstream usage and the fact that human activities are adding to the greenhouse effect is getting validated by increasing scientific data, this view neither had a smooth trajectory nor has its advocacy been unanimous. As Jones points out, "The theory of

the enhanced greenhouse effect gained many advocates in the 1950s but lost popularity in the 1960s and 1970s when average temperatures fell" (5). In fact, an opposite postulation came to fore as a result of this. During the 1970s, the supposition that pollution was in fact leading to a phenomenon called 'global cooling' had begun to be advocated. The notion was that this pollution was "reflecting sunlight away from the earth's surface" (Bate and Morris; 12). Despite the absence of any supporting evidence, many who believed this hypothesis advocated that efforts must be made towards combatting this 'global cooling'. However, the year 1988 turned out to be a turning point in the discourse related to Global Warming and Climate Change, largely due to two almost contiguous events. After an uncommonly warm summer in the US, the Director of Goddard Institute of Space Studies, James Hansen attested before the Senate Committee on Science, Technology and Space that "he was 99% certain temperatures had increased and that there was some global warming" (Jones 5). Hansen's view garnered widespread media attention. Around the same time, in the year 1988, IPCC was established largely to disseminate and more importantly, assess the scientific evidence on Climate Change. Subsequently, the IPCC produced two reports which played a nodal role in,

  a.   Guiding the UN policies on Climate change and
  b.   Lending credibility to the notion of enhanced greenhouse scare (due to human activity).

Jones aptly maps the development thereafter,

> The first scientific assessment report, released in 1990, was the first declaration by the United Nations that global warming was occurring. It laid the foundations for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, a treaty produced at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This treaty calls for countries to reduce voluntarily their greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. (5).

The second report published by IPCC in 1996 brought the troubling undercurrents of the issue to fore. Firstly, it pointed out that there had been a failure in stabilizing greenhouse emissions as per the 1990 levels. Along with this, the report also suggested

a discernible human impact on climate. This report fuelled the need to implement immediate and mandatory corrective measures to mitigate Climate Change.

Since then, there has been an active distinction made between the terms Biogenic and Anthropogenic. **Biogenic** factors of Climate Change constitute all those 'natural' or bio-geological factors that cause a change in climate, for the better or worse, irrespective of human interference. On the other hand, the term **Anthropogenic** denotes an emphasis on human engagement with and an active intrusion in environment thereby causing direct or indirect, immediate or long-term changes in natural cycles, patterns and trajectories.

1.3 Why 'Green Cultural Studies?'

Environmental criticism has come a long way from being an ancillary 'motif' in larger critical discussions of literary or cultural production to being the fulcrum of multitudinous theoretical approaches which are making inroads into political discussions. However, one can't help but notice a reductionist strain in some early discussions in the field of environmental criticism. To explicate further, any literary or cultural text which has a mention of environment, nature or ecology in it, doesn't, by default, become ecocritical. So, to define environmental criticism simply as a study of works (literary and non-literary) which re-present environment is not enough. One needs to study *how* environment is represented, *how much* is represented, from *whose* perspective it is represented, what is the underlying agendum of the representation, which politico-cultural trend implicitly or overtly informs the representation, what is the influence of historicity in the representation and other such matrices.

Moreover, it is of utmost importance to save environmental criticism from the heavy jargonising and compartmentalization it often falls into. To explain further, the present research will engage in a brief analogical analysis between Feminism and environmental criticism. Feminism as a theoretical approach, in essence, cannot be a self-enclosed, quarantined movement existing only in intangible theorisation or representation in literatures. Firstly, Feminism is a concrete movement taking roots in palpability; its points of departures have been and continue to be the inequalities and subjugations women have suffered but these in themselves cannot be homogenized or generalized. They need to be addressed in their pluralities and often, in all their inherent

contradictions. Therefore, an all-encompassing feminist theory has often been an idea vehemently eschewed. Secondly, Feminism as a movement has to take cognizance of representation of women in all other tangible and intangible spheres – art, politics, family structures, architecture, theology and the like. Thirdly, even as a literary movement, Feminism has to be continually in dialogue with the larger socio-political, cultural and even economic trends and trajectories. At times, these dialogues can get difficult and complex. For instance, in contemporary times Feminism has to be in conversation with the "#metoo" movement, the conflicts over women's reservation bill in government bodies, the recent assertive voices against pay-parity in the entertainment industry and even the LGBTQI drives. All these together inform and influence Feminism as a movement, even its deepest, most fundamental theoretical bases.

The same can be said about environmental criticism. Firstly, even as a theoretical approach, environmental criticism cannot operate in abstractions. The problem it is addressing is real, with implications that are far-reaching and extensive. Secondly, in literary as well as extra-literary discourses, environmental issues cannot be compartmentalized in gulags each taking its own course. All these discourses need to take due cognizance of each other and evaluate the larger problem accordingly. For instance, literatures of significance to environmental dialogue may be found in works of fiction, non-fiction and as cultural texts in the form of art, architecture or any other tangible/intangible insignia that expresses human culture and perception. To explicate further, the socioecological subjugation of a character in the novel *The Kiln* by Mahabaleshwar Sail (a primary text under analysis in the present research) can be more perceptively understood through the non-fictional accounts entailed in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* or Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* or Ramachandra Guha's concept of 'ecosystem people' in his critique of Deep Ecology, all of which highlight the problems of 'maldevelopment' or 'selective development' that harm the larger balance of ecosystems. Therefore, there is a need to bring more holistic perspectives to engagements in environmental dialogues. Theoretical perspectives to environment, even in literary criticism, cannot be divorced from the larger realities of the time. As Emily Potter, in her article, "Ecological Crisis and Australian Literary Representation" puts it, "How we represent the world informs how we live in it – either responsive or not to our ecological place... Far from being irrelevant to the anxieties of a planet in crisis, literary poetics can claim an engagement, not only with this theme, but also its

material unfolding" (Potter). The 'poetics' which Potter speaks of must take cognizance of the fact that the subject matter which it presents exists even beyond the narratology's capacity of signification. Literary criticism and poetics, then, become referents as well as participants in the larger environmental discourse.

Thirdly, it is important to connect the environmental problem with human culture. This is neither to overemphasize the perceived 'centrality' of the human race in the larger biotic system nor to render a misleading anthropocentric perspective to the issue. If anything, it is to shatter such presumptions. There is a need to understand that human beings and their ways of living are *part* of the larger biotic system. Hence, their actions, even the most innocuous ones, can impact nature in a positive as well as negative way. Therefore, there is a need to critique these actions as well as the notions and ideologies that sanction them or give them their concrete manifestation. It is also important to emphasize that given all the differences, the entire of humanity willy-nilly participates in the environmental movement. Therefore, theoretical perspectives related to environment need to leave the narrow annals in which they operate and pursue more holistic trajectories. This endeavour is crucial to the shift from environmental criticism to Green Cultural Studies.

In section 1.3. of this Chapter, an attempt has been made to explain the contextual significance of the term 'culture' and its conceptualization in the present study. Culture, as a collective gamut of human ways of living is a complex but important human construct. Practices which constitute human cultures play an important role in determining the course of the future in very tangible ways. Therefore, it is important to critique these practices as they appear in various manifestations; most importantly, as they appear as human *expressions*. One way of doing this is to study the living reservoirs and signification systems of human cultures – their 'texts'.

The paradigm of Green Cultural Studies, then, does not seek to reject the existing models of environmental criticism; it seeks to expand it. Therefore, rather than restricting the study only to literary narratives, the research orients itself towards studying texts. The texts selected for study take different forms of narration – written/oral, fiction/nonfiction, lettered/graphic, print/visual. These texts are thus viewed as cultural signifiers in a signification system each adding to the matrix of understanding pertinent and crucial dialogues with environment.

However, as mentioned earlier, the focus of the present study is not in analysing these texts as individual gulags. Rather, the focus is in deconstructing the intertextuality which is critical in understanding fundamental and evolved approaches to environment. All these texts are pivotal testimonials of human culture located in significant times in history. But they are not frozen either in space or time. The dialogues they introduce and initiate are crucial in continuing our conversations with and about environment; in some cases, these dialogues have become more pertinent to contemporary times than those in which they were produced. Thus, the focus of the present study is to engage in a meaningful discourse with human culture and its impact on the environment through the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies. This focus constitutes the point of departure of this research and informs its objectives.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the study

The central aim of the present thesis is to reinforce the need to study human culture(s) and their signification systems as 'texts' that need to be read in order to assess the stature and relevance of their engagements with physical nature. The aim branches out into and is further informed by its nodal objectives as follows:

i)   To study Green Cultural Studies as a distinct critical approach in contemporary theory.

ii)   To undertake pertinent study of nodal theoretical approaches viz. Structuralism and Semiotics, Post-structuralism, New Historicism, Spatial Criticism and Subaltern Studies in contemporary theory in an attempt to utilize their paradigms for analyses in Green Cultural Studies.

iii)   To map, locate and analyse important thematic matrices in select texts in order to bring to fore their engagement with environmental dialogues.

iv)   To locate and study literary-fictive, popular, folk and visual cultures through representative texts in an attempt to analyse the ecological conversations they initiate into society through diverse fora.

v)   To study the relevance of texts as environmental 'movements' and the relevance of environmental movements as 'textualities' by mapping their practical value with direct influences on environmental policy-making.

vi)   To enlist and connect pertinent observations made in the course of the study in order to highlight the relevance of green cultural paradigm in critical discourses on environment.

1.5 The time frame of present study

The literature survey conducted as part of this study indicates that issues related to environmental crises became more conspicuous in critical discourses in the era after the twin movements of Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment. The Romantic and Transcendentalist movements of 18th and 19th centuries preoccupied themselves with important environmental themes. Distinct patterns of their poetic and critical engagement with nature show their acute awareness of the damage environment was enduring. These damages were largely due to an increased anthropocentricism peddled during the Enlightenment era fuelled by spirited techno-Benthamism. However, although Romanticism and Transcendentalism flourished as literary-cultural movements and in a way pioneered the ecocritical dialogue, their arguments did not enter post-war contemporary theory until they were revisited by Ecocriticism as late as the last quarter of the 20th century.

The present study has focused on select theories and texts dating roughly from 1948 to 2018 – a period which tentatively corresponds with an era of hyperactivity in the field of environmental criticism especially on socio-political fronts. With the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change spelling out its objective as one directed to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations…that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" ("IPCC") an acute awareness that there *have* to be meaningful dialogues with environment emerged on myriad scientific, academic, industrial, literary and creative fronts. However, even before this awareness dawned in literary academia and criticism, there were texts that engaged in complex discourses on nature-human relationships. The study has taken cognizance of these texts and selected them for present analyses. The study also draws references from contemporary events and occurrences as and where deemed relevant.

This study has not kept the geographical origin of the text as a yardstick for selection of primary literature in present study. The texts have been selected on the basis

their relevance to the study, availability and also potential for multidimensional research. These texts have then been brought under critical scrutiny through an application of select theoretical perspectives, which, although influenced by the critical moorings of late 19th and early 20th century discourses, took concrete shape under the heterogenous possibilities provided by contemporary theory.

1.6 Thesis Statement and Hypothesis

The central thesis statement of the present study is that:

There is a need to reinstate Green Cultural Studies as an approach that brings together and amalgamates theoretical perspectives, textual perceptions and practical applications in order to initiate meaningful contributions in contemporary ecological dialogues oriented towards positively addressing present environmental crises.

This thesis statement prongs into a five-fold hypothesis formulated as given below:

i)   That, the present ecological crises call for urgent attention to human impact on the natural world.

ii) That, it is also important to understand that while anthropogenic *interference* in the ecosystem can *cause* environmental damage, positive human *intervention* can *combat* the implications of this damage while fostering a sustainable world driven by values of balance and coexistence.

iii) That, human culture – manifested largely in 'texts' – plays a huge role in understanding, influencing and shaping the human-environment dialogue.

iv) That, there is a need to undertake a study of human cultural texts by situating environment at the crux of the discourse.

v)   That, there is also a need to make this study intertextual and amalgamative of theory and praxes in order to underline the tangibility of the problem of ecological crises as well as the direct impact of human ways of life on them and vice-versa.

1.7 Primary Texts

[1] *Cry, The Beloved Country* – a novel written by Alan Paton and first published in 1948.

[2] *The Inheritors* – a novel written by William Golding and first published in 1955.

[3] *The Kiln* – a novel written in Konkani as *Hawthan* by Mahabaleshwar Sail in 2001 and published in 2009. The present thesis refers to the original text as well as the translation.

[4] *Avatar* – a sci-fi film written and directed by James Cameron, produced by Lightstone Entertainment and released on 18 December 2011.

[5] *The Yellow Ouch & Moo Book* – a graphic short-fiction created by Trupti Godbole, Govind Mukundan and Poonam Bir Kasturi with illustrations by Ishan Ghosh; first published in 2012.

[6] *Our Toxic World: A guide to hazardous substances in our everyday lives* – a graphic novel created by Anirudha Sen Gupta with illustrations by Priya Kuriyan; first published in 2010.

[7] **Select images from** *Green Humour* – a curated website entailing comics, cartoons and illustrations by Rohan Chakravarty first launched in January 2009.

[8] *Dhalo –* a folk-practice from Goa. Select songs from *Rotha Tujeo Ghuddio: Amonnechim Dhalo-Gita* – a collection of Dhalo songs compiled by Jayanti Naik and first published in 1992 have been used for the purpose of demonstration only. The songs selected have been translated by the present researcher for the purpose of analyses.

[9] **Silent Spring** – a non-fictional book by Rachel Carson first published in 1962.

[10] *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* – a campaign launched by citizen-groups and non-governmental organisations in Goa. The present study will examine the activities undertaken by the movement as an opposition to the Regional Plan 2011.

1.8 Literature Survey

The present literature survey was undertaken to study pertinent thoughts and trajectories in Ecocriticism, Green Cultural Studies and environmental approaches in literary criticism in general through select sources that included books (fiction and non-fiction), research articles, proceedings of summits and conferences, television shows and interviews, blogs, pages on social media, films and documentaries. Over the course of this research, the points of view, perspectives and critical lens entailed in these works significantly defined and shaped the line of inquiry that this thesis pursued. While the

insights gained from the afore-mentioned sources have been integrated into analysis in the Chapters that follow, the following survey enlists some of the nodal works that perceptibly underlined and at times, shifted the crucial foci of the study undertaken:

Works that aided the understanding of ecocritical, environmental and green perspectives in literary and cultural criticism.

Over the years, studies pertaining to the representation of environment in 'text' have evolved to accommodate myriad interdisciplinary convergences and have been significantly redefined with distinct terms as per the focal orientation and/or newness which the respective study seeks to bring into the burgeoning oeuvre of critical thought in the area. The underlying foundation of all these analyses, however, has been an 'idea' that the representation of nature in literature can facilitate a greater understanding of the unfolding climatic crises. This very idea branching out to be more rigorous, systematised, analytical and documented began to be termed, 'Ecocriticism', its etymology traced to William Rueckert's now-renowned essay titled 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism' (1978). In his work, 'Seasick Among the Waves of Ecocriticism', Scott Slovic makes an interesting observation,

> After more than three decades of doing this work, I still cannot pinpoint the Urtext of ecocriticism, the absolute source, but I have the sense that ancient commentaries on the Dead Sea scrolls or the Upanishads, if they happen to refer to natural motifs in these works, would count as precursors to twenty-first-century discussions of the stories embodied in the lives of toads and stones and in the traces of industrial waste found in human bodies. (qtd. in Rangarajan *Eco Criticism: Big Ideas and Practical Strategies*).

As Slovic points out, the 'idea' of representing nature in human discourse has existed since a long time. Systematic studies pertaining to these ideas, and moreover, the coming-together of these ideas as a collective response to the practical crisis of Climate Change, is, however, a distinctly 20th century phenomenon. Even so, critical approaches in ecological and green studies are hardly a 'category' or a 'cluster'. Evolving, distinct and pluralistic, over the years these approaches have operated under several nomenclatures – diverging and converging in thematic concerns, practical methodologies and representative mediums.

The present study has extensively relied on some of the nodal works in the field for theoretical perspectives, textual perceptions as well as practical applications

discussed and postulated in the Chapters that follow. Following is a brief survey enlisted of these works:

The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism (2000) edited by Laurence Coupe became one of the first few points of departure that aided the present research. In his "Introduction" to the work, Coupe presents vigorous arguments reinforcing the need to give literary studies a reality check vis-à-vis the present environmental crises. This oft-underrated article makes some statements that have proven seminal in the present study on Green Cultural Studies. Firstly, Coupe points out a trend within modern (mid-1970s) critical theory – namely Formalist, Psychoanalytic, New Historicist, Deconstructionist and Marxist – in which nature seems to have been primarily textualized in theoretical discourse and used as a 'term' constructed by and subsumed within the mental operations of human beings. This fatally fallacious trend, Coupe suggests, may as well be one of the crucial reasons for the unfolding environmental crises; how can humans strive to protect the environment, 'the real thing' (03), if they undermine its existence as an entity independent of human capacity for signification? This view largely formed the fulcrum of the present study's postulations entailed in Chapter Two. Secondly, Coupe opens up the paradigm of 'place' – both, physical as well as representational – in theoretical discourses. The characteristic error of relegating 'place' as a mere setting in human narrative – a mute spectator to human interjections within and towards itself, devoid of any character or 'voice' – may subsequently, if not necessarily, translate into similarly neglecting the concerns of the actual, physical environment. An aspect of this paradigm has been explored in Chapter Three of the present study. Thirdly, in mapping the purpose of eco-literary engagements, Coupe highlights its significance opining, "green studies is much more than a revival of mimesis; it is a new kind of pragmatics" (04). For Coupe, the theory, practice and praxis of green studies are intertwined. He does not validate the relevance of ecocritical theory sans its commitment to environmental praxis. The present study co-adapts and explores this argument in Chapter Four.

In ***The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecolog****y* (1996) edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, Glotfelty points out to the disturbing abyss that exists between the reality of environmental crises and its representation in literary studies. She opines that although literary studies claim to be responding to contemporary pressures, they restrict themselves to issues of race, gender, class, caste and regionalism

without taking cognizance of one of *the* most pressing problems of the 20th (and subsequently, 21st) century – the crises of environment. In her argument, she calls for a quick recognition and redressal of this issue stating that,

> 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 that there was an earth at all. In contrast, if you were to scan the newspaper headlines of the same period, you would learn of oil spills, lead and asbestos poisoning, toxic waste contamination, extinction of species at an unprecedented rate, battles over public and land use, protests over nuclear waste dumps, a growing hole in the ozone layer, predictions of global warming, acid rain, topsoil, destruction of the tropical rain forest, controversy over the Spotted Owl in the Pacific Northwest, a wildfire in Yellowstone Park, medical syringes washing onto the shores of Atlantic beaches, boycotts on tuna, overtapped aquifers in the West, illegal dumping in the East, a nuclear reactor disaster in Chernobyl, new auto emissions standards, famines, droughts, floods, hurricanes, a United Nations special conference on environment and development, a U.S. president declaring the 1990s "the decade of the environment" and a world population that topped five billion. Browsing through periodicals, you would discover that in 1989 *Time* magazine's person of the year went to "The Endangered Earth". (xvi).

Much water has passed under the bridge of green-literary studies since Glotfelty's discourse. Not only has there been keener interest in representation of environment in 'textual discourse' but also a proliferation of output that is diversified, multipronged and intentionally, interdisciplinary. But Glotfelty's concerns have a denser orientation than their surface implication. Traditionally, Glotfelty's views have been interpreted as deep anxiety over the inadequacy of environmental representation in literature symbolising an implicit apathy of critical discourse towards matters of ecological concern. However, her apprehensions are deeper than that – Glotfelty fears a lack of practicality in the literary discourse as far as its reaction to phenomenological reality is concerned. It's as though the institution of literature operates in a realm above

environment where matters of 'race, gender and class' matter more than the devastating repercussions of Climate Change – a view reinforced by Emily Potter in her essay. Much of these apprehensions are shared by the present study. Although, as mentioned earlier, theoretical productivity in the field of eco-literary studies has exponentially increased since Glotfelty's afore-mentioned rhetoric, its tenuous and slightly diffident dealings with the practical unfolding of ecological crises continue to churn the need to remap and reshape the orientation and by extension, significance of green-literary studies.

By virtue of being a cohesive and critical documentation of myriad ideas and ideologies that green studies have branched into, ***Ecocriticism: Big Ideas and Practical Strategies*** (2018) by Swarnalatha Rangarajan served as a point of departure as well as reference in the present study. In the work, Rangarajan calls Ecocriticism, "…one of the youngest, cutting-edge, revisionist literary movement with a profound advocacy function that has influenced teaching and scholarship in the humanities since the late 20th century" (02) and in doing so subtly points to the amoebic structures of ecological studies in contemporary times. This fluidity, however, works more as a positive attribute in the methodology of ecological criticism breaking free from the otherwise watertight compartments that theoretical approaches are usually placed into. Rangarajan neatly delineates the critical junctures at which green studies in humanities intersperse with those being undertaken in areas of pure sciences. This methodology of work further facilitated the present study's preoccupations with the crossdisciplinarity of Green Cultural Studies. Employing German Chancellor Willy Brandt's distinction between the developed regions of the world as the 'The North' and the lesser developed regions as 'The South', Rangarajan begins her work by detailing the contributions of different critics and bodies of 'The North' in heralding as well as mainstreaming ecocritical dialogue in literature and humanities. However, towards the end of the work, she studies distinct patterns of green dialogues amongst the critics and activists of 'The Global South' noting their characteristic and at times, subversive stands on the ecocritical paradigms determined by 'The North'. Rangarajan's analysis of the 'ecosystem people' informed by ideas put forth by environmental historian Ramachandra Guha and activist Vandana Shiva played a huge role in shaping the socioecological analysis in Chapter Three of the present study.

Green Cultural Studies: Nature in Film, Novel and Theory (1998) by Jhan Hochman provided much of the conceptual clarity in the usage of the term 'Green Cultural Studies' as a multipronged approach that hinges on praxis and practice of nature-representation in cultural formation, interpretation and appropriation. Hochman, in fact, makes a very strong case for the inclusion of the 'green component' in contemporary cultural studies, stating that "[a]bsent a green component, cultural studies' prevailing concerns are with (popular) texts/ practices. Primarily impacting upon ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality, economic class and age (particularly youth subcultures)" (Hochman). One of the primary tasks of Green Cultural Studies, then, Hochman asserts, is to critically examine the 'proliferating cultural representations of nature' (Hochman). His paradigm of analysing the cultural re-construction and re-presentation of nature in three major dimensions viz. – lexical, pictorial and actual manipulation of flora, fauna and space, has informed the critical scrutiny of spatial representation of environment in select texts entailed in the present study.

Written roughly six years after the publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Emily Potter's essay, **"Ecological Crisis and Australian Literary Representation"** (2005) carries some of Glotfelty's trepidations about environmental representation. Potter's purview of study is Australian literature's response to ecological crises but in analysing this area she puts forth relevant arguments about the need for an inevitable engagement of literary studies with ecological concerns. She calls for a reappraisal of ecological consciousness in literature claiming that our representation of the environment has a deep-seated impact on its material unfolding. Potter's view reinstates the concern surrounding an inadequate connection between literary studies and ecology not just at the level of figurative representation but also of practical action. Through arguments made by Michael Pollak and Margaret MacNabb in their work, *Creative Australians and the Environment*, Potter puts forth the power-paradigm present in Australian environmental poetics of the self-reflexive power of literary representation with its ability to evoke emotive response that ultimately shapes a deterministic ethical system that informs human *action* towards environment. Potter, however, moves beyond this argument and in fact, points out at its ability to be subtly anthropocentric – ultimately yoking the reality of ecology with the success or failure of human discourse. She believes that an approach of this sort suppresses the independent, non-signified existence of ecology and carries disturbing resonances of the colonial tactic of silencing

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environment. Potter is sceptical of a reductionist approach to human-environment relation in literary representation; she believes it severely undermines the complex web of relations that all life shares. In this sense, the impact of human discourse on the material unfolding of climatic crises should take into consideration the dynamic, unfixed and non-finalised relations that all entities operating in the biosystem share with one another. Potter's article reiterates concerns over some of the self-limiting and over-imposing tendencies of ecocritical discourses that were anticipated by Serpil Opperman in 1999 and reinforced by Ramachandra Guha in 2008; the present study draws in on both these essays and relates it to some of the growing concerns of Green Cultural Studies in Chapter Three and Four of the current thesis.

In the Chapter, "Futures: The Earth" entailed in the work *Ecocriticism* (2012), Greg Garrard asserts the relevance of the interconnectedness between international capitalism and environmental protection drawing heavily on the First World/Third World dichotomy. Key decisions pertaining to ecology world-wide are heavily governed by economic interests whetted by the policies of globalisation and liberalisation. Garrard's analysis seems to infer that at the turn of the late twentieth century, planet Earth has evolved from being a mere geo-ecological entity to become a politico-economic entity. However, the makings of this politico-economic entity not only draw from but also impinge upon the geo-ecological identity. Garrard's assertions rally concerns over 'homogenisation' of ecological solutions – a sentiment later postulated somewhat more forcefully by Indian environmental theorists like Vandana Shiva, Ramachandra Guha and Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak and fiction writers such as Amitav Ghosh. As Garrard observes, "…the universalising scientific and moral discourse of biodiversity is seen by some critics as a cover for First World pharmaceutical and agricultural corporations seeking to expropriate Third World biological wealth" (164) while also placing the onus of carbon-footprint reduction on them.

The articles entailed in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* edited by Greg Garrard published in 2014 exhume and present critical junctures during the medieval, renaissance and romantic period of the West in which ecocritical practice was juxtaposed with eco-ethical ideologies thereby pointing out that green critical trends are not an exclusive prerogative of late 20th century literary thought. However, two articles

in this book were of particular interest to the present research in order to map the landscape of green cultural trends which have been taking theoretical roots in India and China. Swarnalatha Rangarajan's "Engaging with Prakriti: A Survey of Ecocritical Praxis" speaks of the complex dynamics of India's ecosystems where nature is as much a means of subsistence and survival as it is of reverence and worship – a concept that stands distinct from the Western ecocritical outlook. Vandana Shiva, in her work *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, calls Prakriti, "the primordial vastness, the inexhaustible, the source of abundance" (Shiva 281), which Rangarajan connects to Seshagiri Rao's theory of *Panchamahabhuta* which puts forth that, "Nature and the environment are not outside us; they are not alien and hostile to us. They are an inseparable part of our existence" (qtd. in Rangarajan "Engaging with Prakriti…" 529). Rangarajan then documents the presence of ethnoecological trajectories in ancient Indian literature including the great Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as well as Sangam literature where ecological biodiversity is an integral and tangible presence in literary thought. This is also true of the concept of *tinai* in Sangam literature where, as Nirmal Selvamony says, human beings, nature and the spiritual realm form a deep and complex relational web and therefore, "the earliest extant literature of the Tamils (300 BCE – 200 CE)…stems from a culture deeply rooted in the soil where place is the first principle of literary representation" (qtd. in Rangarajan 529). Reinforcing this paradigm of nature-human inextricability are the oral traditions fostered by 'ecosystem people', largely constitutive of tribal communities whose sustenance depends on ecologies and whose sensibilities are seamlessly honed by the primordial knowledge attributed to flora and fauna. Interestingly, in the same volume Qingqi Wei's article "Chinese Ecocriticism in the last ten years" speaks of the rise of green theoretical trend in Chinese literary criticism via a reinstation of 'spiritual ecologies'. Presenting prominent ecocritic Lu Shuyuan's perspective that "ecology has grown well beyond its core scientific discipline and has developed into a discursive system that shelters beliefs about life and environment, mankind and nature, society and earth, spirit and material, and so on (541), Wei speaks about green studies as an inherently and inevitably cross-disciplinary branch of study which draws in from scientific discourses, cultural approaches as well as spiritual systems. Interestingly, both Rangarajan and Wei speak of the displacement of local ecological paradigms in wake of industrial capitalism and modernization; in case of India, this translated into a systemic marginalization of the ecosystem people and creation of 'ecological refugees' (Rangarajan 527) and in case of

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China this meant deterioration of both 'cultural and natural ecology' (Wei 537). While Indian environmentalists vehemently oppose essentialist impositions of Western green critical trends on native (Indian) eco-paradigms, Chinese ecocritics like Shuyuan view green studies as a "spiritual coming-home" (qtd. in Wei 541).

Soper's oft-quoted statement, "…it's not language that has a hole in its ozone layer" appearing in the work *What is Nature: Culture, Politics and the Non-Human* (1995) provided much fillip to green studies' radical opposition of modern critical theory's overemphasis on arbitrary human signification systems that seemed to treat nature too as a linguistic construct. The statement simultaneously rendered the problem of Climate Change tangible, concrete and real. In the same work, Soper presented her tripartite model of the nuances that the word 'nature' carries and the relevance of identifying the distinctness of each of this nuance. She suggested that in ecological discussions across fora, the 'idea' of nature gets transmuted into three distinct but often converging concepts – 'metaphysical', ''realist' and 'lay'. Soper's tripartite model of the 'idea' of nature played a significant role in shaping the textual perceptions entailed in the present study; it also shed light upon the significance of 'textualising' green movements and simultaneously underlining the applicability of green 'textuality'. The present study explores this paradigm vividly in Chapter Four on Practical Applications.

Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies (2016) edited by Greg Garrard catches the pulse of a niche area in green cultural studies – representation of environment in the digital space. The web-world has ushered a new territory and realm which has significantly redefined notions of spatiality in the 21st century. Through Mitchell Thomashow's early concerns on the impact of the Internet on biospheric perception of millennials, Garrard raises a very pertinent point,

> …we encounter the challenge that troubles instructors at every
> level of education: the near-total absorption of our students, the
> first generation of 'digital natives', in the virtual worlds they
> carry in their pockets. Thomashow, writing before the
> smartphone and social media, extols the capacities of the
> Internet for extending both knowledge and communication, but
> he also warns of its distorting effects on perception and
> expectation. He urges us to teach students to 'balance the virtual

and the visceral'… even as he acknowledges the degree to which they arrive already *cognitively moulded by digital technology*' (x; my emphasis,).

Garrard's views served as points of departures in two distinct but overlapping trajectories: the need to factor in the element of cognitive mapping in green studies especially in relation to children's literature via graphical and illustrative texts *and* the need to engage digital spaces in Green Cultural Studies especially through social-media forums. The present study, therefore, employed operatives representing graphical and digital textualities in order to explore the dichotomic virtual/visceral paradigm, not in order to pit one against the other, but instead to explore how each can possibly shape, signify and underline the other.

Ursula Heise's conversational rhetoric in the work, ***Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species*** (2016) presents a crucial reinforcement of the need for cultural studies' intervention in environmental politic by trying to understand the sociocultural traction and community perception that play a major role in discerning the practical endangerment of biological specie. Heise states that "biodiversity, endangered species, and extinction are primarily cultural issues, questions of what we value and the stories we tell and only secondarily issues of science" (05). Heise's argument is relevant not only because it reinforces the need for textualising the practical unfolding of environmental crises, but also highlights the relevance of intertextual operatives in ecological movements (theoretical and applicative) thereby bridging the disturbing and often egoistic gulf between scientific and literary green studies. In context of the subject matter of her work, she states that "[p]ublic engagement with endangered species depends on these broader structures of imagination, and individuals' paths to conservationist engagement become meaningful for others only within these cultural frameworks" (05). Heise's foci served important functions in the present thesis – firstly, they whetted the need for intertextual readings of primary texts as well as secondary references while simultaneously highlighting the need to cross disciplines, mediums of narration and means of textual expressions in representations of environment. Secondly, they also called for a keener study of the seismic shifts that occurred in terms of human perception of nature that occurred at the turn of the nineteenth century (owing to heavy industrialization) and then at the turn of twentieth century (with increasing awareness of and attention to tangible implications of Climate

Change). These views played an important role in formulating a more synergistic interface between theoretical frameworks and textual postulations within this study.

In **'Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness: A Third World Critique'** (1989) Ramachandra Guha points out to the hamartia of imposing overarching paradigms of ecological conservation without taking indigenous diversities as well as sociocultural histories in purview. Guha argues from the baseline of 'Deep Ecology' – a term coined by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. However, he puts into focus the American variant of the term and critiques its assumptions. He points out, for instance, that the vehement demand made by deep ecologists for a seismic shift from anthropocentricism to biocentrism to the extent of cordoning a large part of globe off from human beings (2) and bringing about a drastic reduction in the human population in order to restore nature back to its 'natural order', are not only naïve but also inherently damaging because they tend to neglect the larger, and more tangibly manifested causes of environmental degradation. In fact, he shifts focus onto the extensive and largely unapologetic "(i) overconsumption of the industrialised world and by urban elites in the Third World and (ii) growing militarization, both in short-term sense (i.e. ongoing regional wars) and in a long-term sense (i.e. the arms race and the prospect of nuclear annihilation)" (2) as the main culprits of rapid environmental deterioration. These causes, Guha states, do not even work in the best interest of *humans* and operate detrimentally towards the quality of life at large. Hence, invoking the 'bogy' of anthropocentrism is not only presumptuous but also redundant. He also goes on to criticize the rigid environmental programmes or 'restorative' projects implemented by ecological and welfare agencies without taking due cognizance of and often carried out at the cost of native populations on the land in question. This, Guha implies, simply means "a wholesale transfer of a movement culturally rooted in American conservation" which can result in the "social uprooting of human populations in other parts of the globe" (03).

In the essay **"From 'Red' to 'Green'"** included in *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (2000), Jonathan Bate invokes an important rhetoric on 'There is No Nature' (171). His views essentially touch upon the human/nonhuman dichotomic nerve that often plays a crucial role in environmental policies vis-à-vis biotic community. He contests the view of 'There is no nature' entailed in select approaches

of modern critique which endorse the view that nature is no more than a Romantic and therefore, by default, *anthropomorphic* construct used as a natural recourse and panacea for social ills wrought in wake of utilitarian industrialism and over-consumerism. Bate's rhetoric, echoing the concerns of green critics like Kate Soper and Laurence Coupe, goes on to draw a more direct and conclusive connection between human perception, human action and environmental deterioration. He opines that,

> [w]e are confronted for the first time in history with the possibility of there being no part of the earth left untouched by man. 'Human civilization' has always been in the business of altering the land, whether through deforestation or urbanization or mining or enclosure or even the artificial imposition of 'nature' through landscaping…But until now there have always been domains into which 'human civilization' does not extend; there has always been a 'state of nature'. Enclosure and landscape gardening have had no effect on the higher fellsides and tarns of Westmorland. Chernobyl, however, has. There is a difference not merely in degree but in kind between local changes to the surface configuration of the land and the profound transformations of the economy of nature that take place when the land is rendered radioactive or the ozone layer is depleted. When there have been a few more accidents at nuclear power stations, when there are no more rainforests, and when every wilderness has been ravaged for its mineral resources, then let us say, *There is no nature*'. (171; original emphasis)

Bate's argument reminds one that the repercussions of human actions and interferences in nature, seemingly innocuous and/or short-term and limited in impact *at the time*, may actually have long-term and more pervasive implications than perceived and/or intended. This aspect firmly puts into perspective a continual fight of green critics and more so, environmentalists, against sections of society who claim that natural biogenic causes are far more responsible for Climate Change than anthropogenic causes ever were or could be. Through analysis of texts and their textualities in Chapter Three and Four of the present thesis, the researcher too presents perspectives that resonate with Bate's arguments thereby rendering the relevance of human thought and its rendition in literary and cultural productions even more pertinent in understanding the role of anthropocentric ideologies in present-day environmental crises.

In her work, ***Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*** (1988) Vandana Shiva equates the post-industrial notion of 'progress' and 'economic development' with "modern western patriarchy" (xii). Subsequently, she relates this to the axiomatic fact that nature is, in fact, the proverbial sacrificial lamb – the binary *other*, the receiving end of human disruptive forces – that is dying. Emphasising upon the feminine affinity she accords nature, Shiva documents its swiftly spiralling degradation reiterating that, "[t]he earth is rapidly dying, her soils are dying, her waters are dying, her air is dying" (xii). Shiva's detailed presentation of factual data of the fast-disappearing sources of nature that support biodiversity, explaining the disappearances, extinctions and endangerment of an alarming number of specie over the last few decades, is juxtaposed with her well-formulated view that since this obliteration of nature is largely a result of human desire and subsequent action *towards* 'progress', the destruction of nature seems to be inbuilt in the developmental model. Shiva's study blends sociology with ecology, giving rise to an important 'socioecological' paradigm and approach which the present study deploys extensively in its perceptions of selected primary texts such as *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *The Kiln*. Her arguments stem from practical engagements with environmental movements fought with and on behalf of the rural sections of India – especially women – against industrial lobbies and political clouts that sought to destroy natural systems and subsequently the diverse life that they support. The paradigm of her approaches has been extensively used by the present researcher in assessing the *terra mater* to *terra nulis* shift entailed in both colonialist exercises of 20th century as well as capitalist enterprises of present times.

In their essay titled, **"How Green is Our Language Textbook?"** featuring in *Essays in Ecocriticism* (2007) edited by Nirmal Selvamony, Nirmaldasan and Rayson Alex, Selvamony and Solomon Raju Kama state at the outset that,

> In the present essay the word "green" is a metaphor for that which is "ecological" or "ecocritical" depending upon the context. Accordingly, when we say a text is green, it means that the text is somehow ecologically or ecocritically oriented. (144)

They then proceed to analyse the 'greenness' entailed in a collection of poems prescribed for the classes "IX and X by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations" (145), thereby putting forth the view that not all poems dealing with any element(s) of nature can be termed 'green'; for that to happen the text must "evince an

ecological orientation" (145). The critics' analysis of selected poems and emphasis placed on the relevance of 'positional or spatial' relation of the ecocritical lens, informed the present study's concept of cognitive mapping and locational relevance of imagery in Chapter Three. The article also played a key role in initiating a discussion on 'ecolinguistics', greening language (including tropes) and the twin concepts of 'contentual greenness [and]…formal greenness' (Selvamony and Kama 152,155) which have been informed select textual perceptions in the present thesis.

In the Introduction to the same work, Selvamony introduces the idea of 'oikos' and relates it to the theory of 'tinai' which, he believes, 'may be the earliest known "ecocritical" theory" (xii). Derived from the Greek term 'oikos', the branch of oikocriticism undertakes a critical reading of texts in an attempt to unravel the human-nature-spirit connection. Selvamony claims that the earliest source of the oikos' theory's counterpart 'tinai' can be found in "the most ancient Tamil text extant, *tolkaappiyam*" (xii). He further goes on to present a demonstration of the 'oikos' and 'tinai' critique in green studies stating that,

> [t]here is a close correspondence between the nature of the oikos and the world view of the oikos. The organic world view of the tribal (and *tinai*) societies derives from the maximally integrated interrelation among the members of the oikos. This integration is in fact, a continuity of being, an ontic continuity which results in identification. The being of a member of that oikos is seen to be flowing into the being of the other resulting in an organismic being in which human being, nature and the spirit are members. The identity of any one member is defined by means of that member's relation to another. If nature is anthropomorphized and sacralised, human is naturised and sacralised, and the spirit is both anthropomorphized and sacralised. For example, when a coastal girl regards a Laurel tree as her sister in the coastal region (*neytal tinai*), she not only anthropomorphizes the tree but also naturises herself as a tree. Even as the tree takes on humanness to some extent, she takes on the treeness to some extent…As for the sacralisation of nature, the practice of tree worship endorses it. The sacredness of the human is quite evident in the case of shaman/shamaness. As for the anthropomorphizing of the sacred (*muruku*), the Tamil deity Murukan is a shining example. (xx)

Selvamony's demonstration of the working of *tinai* concept found resonances in the study of folk-culture signifiers in the present study. The present study, therefore, went on to explore the processes of anthropomorphising, naturalising and sacralising in the practice of *Dhalo* through a simultaneous critique of 'space' representation and oikic interpretation.

R. Sreelatha, in her article, "Tribal Perceptions of the Forest: A Study of Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*", speaks of the 'violations' that arise when assumptions are made about economic development (173). Through the baseline of Shiva's perspectives in *Staying Alive* and a textual analysis of Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, she shows how violation of nature is interconnected to violation of indigenous people(s), especially the *women* among the community. Sreelatha's views helped the present study to delve deeper into environmental-sustainability-versus-economic-development paradigms being touted in contemporary politic through an intertextual reading of Mahabaleshwar Sail's *The Kiln*. Issues of resistance to 'settler' invasion, dire attempts to protect eco-sustainability and a systematic displacement of the indigenous ways of life in favour of 'mainstream' developmental paradigms were integrated through a polysemic module by bringing into discussion a deconstructive analysis of *Avatar* by James Cameron, *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton and select images from Rohan Chakravarty's *Green Humour* selected for the purpose of present study.

Writing in 1999, Serpil Opperman in his work, **'Ecocriticism: Natural World in the Literary Viewfinder'** anticipates many of the present concerns that literary studies confront vis-à-vis representation of ecological issues. He categorically states that literature, "should *not* be used as a pretext for examining the ecological issues" (03; my emphasis). Opperman forewarns about a plausible reductionist approach that might make an inroad into ecocritical literary studies stating that literary texts should not be treated as pellucid and naïve mediums that unproblematically reflect and represent phenomenological reality. Largely rejecting the anachronistic representational models in critical thought that operated in antiseptically quarantined compartments, Opperman proposes a conversant use of intertextuality in eco-literary studies. While Opperman postulates this intertextuality as an interface between 'literary language and language of nature', the present study co-adopts the approach to study intertextual relations between different modes of human cultural productions and consumptions. In this sense,

Opperman's contention of making green studies non-reductionist and non-compartmental has played a huge role in shaping some of the critical perspectives in the present work.

In the documentary, ***An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*** (2017), directed by Jon Shenk and Bonni Cohen, Al Gore, in an address to the public says,

> [T]his movement to solve the climate crisis is in the tradition of every great moral movement that has advanced the cause of humankind and every single one of them has met with resistance to the point where many of the advocates felt despair and wondered "How long is this gonna take?" …we are close in this movement. We are very close to the tipping point beyond which this movement like the abolition movement, like the women's suffrage movement, like the Civil Rights movement, like the anti-apartheid movement, like the movement for gay rights is resolved into a choice between right and wrong. (1:32:46-1.33.38)

Oratorical and zealous as Gore's declaration may sound, it's reiteration of some of the major arguments in Green Cultural Studies is strong. With Gore's decade-long Climate Reality Project at the crux, the documentary chronicles chief political events that affect environmental movements and leads viewers into the inner corridors of Paris 2015 UN Climate Change Conference COP21-CMP11 – considered to be, by far, one of the most important global forum for environmental discussion by world-leaders. The documentary ends with the U.S. Government, under the governance of President Donald Trump withdrawing from the Paris Agreement in 2017. Whatever its intended motive, the work brought some important aspects under present study into sharp foci. Firstly, it enabled in understanding the magnitude at which environment has emerged as a global political agendum for, it was considered crucial enough for the conference to be carried on despite the host country, France, being under terror attack merely two weeks prior to the event. Secondly, it helped to understand the crucial nature of the dialogues between developing and developed countries especially on issues of economic growth and access to renewable energy sources drawing attention, once again, to neo-capitalist and neo-imperialist forces that are considerably affecting dialogues in global environmental policies. Thirdly, it showed that the environmental movement, much like some of the major trajectory-changing events which unfolded in the last three centuries (between the 1800s to present times), is transforming into a citizens' movement, at times,

subverting, contesting and severely altering policies coming from forces or institutions of governance. The third point, especially, played a key role in the present study's preoccupation with the practical applications of green theories and movements and their impact on environmental policy-making.

Works consulted on Contemporary Theory and Culture Studies

Three works of contemporary theory and culture studies proved to be seminal in honing critical perspectives towards Green Cultural Studies in the present research.

In his work, ***Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*** (2002), Peter Barry summarises the distinctness of contemporary theory through a quintuple matrix saying, "Politics is pervasive, Language is constitutive, Truth is provisional, Meaning is contingent, Human nature is a myth" (36). In mapping the preoccupations of contemporary theory, thus, Barry instituted some nodal points of departure for the present research. One of the major concerns in contemporary green cultural dialogues is the rigid line being drawn between scientific, humanistic and artistic discourses on nature. Either one is privileged over the others making it seem as though the task of understanding the causes of current environmental crises, devising mitigations and/or ideating eco-solutions is the onus or prerogative of only a few. The present study argues that such categorical quarantining has proven to be a detriment in the contemporary responsiveness to ecological issues because it rules out the possibility of significant permutations. For instance, can politics be kept away from 'scientific studies' heavily funded by agencies that follow capitalist economic models? Can a work of fiction not be based upon or informed by scientific enquiry? Are artistic representations less meaningful or truthful than investigative reports? Are meanings generated in 'discourse' merely ontological and not 'constructed? Barry's quintuple model opened the paradigm for such interrogations. Through this, the present study could revisit some prominent theories and contextualise them within select scientific, humanistic and artistic discussions on environment. The concept of contingency of 'meaning' helped in the exploration of textual interplays over and beyond the determinates provided by authorial voice. The concept of constitutive nature of language oriented the study towards decoding not just representative 'voices' but also repressed 'silences'. All these aspects found their way into the polysemic analyses undertaken as part of this study.

The section titled, "A brief history of cultural studies" by Simon During featuring in his Introduction to ***The Culture Studies Reader*** (1992) highlighted the inherent malleability and fluidity of the term 'culture'. Considering the diverse forms of 'cultural manifestations' that the present thesis has brought into discussion in their capacities as primary texts and secondary/tertiary references, there was a need to broaden the paradigm of the term cultural studies in order to accommodate the metonymic signifier 'green' into it. During's detailing brought one more interesting paradigm to the forefront; it showed how 'cultural studies' can be simultaneously, an affirmation of the disrupting processes of globalization as well as a strong negation of overarching meta-discourses. Culture studies therefore could take into account mass and marginal cultures as well as commercial and niche cultures; moreover, within each of these, one could take up 'preferred', 'negotiated' or 'oppositional' readings (During 15) depending upon the locational and/or temporal relativity of the investigator. Using neo-Foucauldian thesis and Tony Bennett's arguments, During linked cultural studies with 'governmentality' thereby breaking new ground for present study in stating that,

> [i]n its most radical guise, the neo-Foucauldian thesis argues that culture is neither an end in itself nor the product of autonomous agents – whether individuals or communities – but a mechanism for transmitting forms of "governmentality", for ordering how we act, think, live. Indeed, so the argument goes, cultural work and effects exist only in relation to other governmental structures. Thus, Tony Bennett has argued that "policy and governmental conditions and processes should be thought of as constitutive of different forms and fields of culture… The implication is that the least mystified task of the cultural studies analyst is to enter into alliances with, and attempt to influence, the processes of governmentality. (16).

In building a crucial link between the theory of culture and its implicative impact on the practicality of policymaking or governance, During's discussion underlines the fact that 'culture' even in its most intangible or abstract form is not quarantined from the living realities of human socio-political institutions. In this affirmation lies the validity of extending the dialogue of Green Cultural Studies into the arena of practical applications viz. policymaking and environmental movements as explored in Chapter Four of the present study. Can human signification system – from all levels of sociocultural hierarchy, especially the grassroots – effectively influence politico-legal directives

related to environment? This crucial question is explored in the said Chapter through the baseline of During's afore-mentioned postulation.

Postcolonial critical orientation forms an important line of critique in the present study as it argues that a massive reshaping of the earth's geo-ecological identity was undertaken as part of the colonial enterprise. The impact of this reshaping has largely been irreversible. In the pursuit of this line of enquiry, *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (2006) edited by Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin and Gareth Griffin was heavily referenced.

1.9 Layout and Chapterization of present study

- Chapter One – Introduction - Engaging Culture with[in] Nature: A Case for Green Cultural Studies
- Chapter Two – Rethinking Theory: A Study of Select Perspectives through the Green Paradigm
- Chapter Three – Textual Perceptions: A Study of 'Re-presentation' and 'Representation' of Nature in select texts.
- Chapter Four – Locating the Theoretical and Textual Patterns in 'Practical Applications': Narrative as Movement and Movement as Narrative.
- Chapter Five – Conclusion: A Reinstation of Green Cultural Studies

Chapter One is be an attempt to contextualise the present study within the framework of ongoing dialogues on environmental issues. A lot is being said; but a lot is being left out too. Moreover, a lot has to be re-thought vis-à-vis human relationship with nature as part of collective responses towards some of the most pressing global environmental issues. This Chapter re-reads some of the factual literature (news reports, scientific data etc.) on issues of environmental crisis and juxtaposes it with select theoretical observations regarding representation of environment in human culture. While doing so, it seeks to define the aims and objectives as well as focal thesis statement and five-fold hypothesis of the study. It enlists the primary texts that will be put to critical scrutiny as part of the analysis and gives a comprehensive overview of the literature review of select secondary references, most of which have been used as points

of departure for several arguments within the study and some of which have served as critical baselines for ideas postulated by the present researcher. It also provides the scope and perceived limitations of the work.

Chapter Two begins with a discussion on 'Theory' in order to *reinstate* the significance of theoretical perspectives vis-à-vis human worldview *towards nature*. It presents the current researcher's revaluated paradigm for theoretical studies in environment by emphasizing on the need to render it polysemic, intertextual, pluralistic and practice-oriented. The study selects five theories viz. Structuralism and Semiotics, Post-structuralism, New Historicism, Spatial Criticism and Subaltern Studies in order to analyse the matrices entailed in these approaches towards studying environment. The Chapter presents a re-shaping of some of the tenets of these theories within the framework of Green Cultural Studies.

Chapter Three has investigated eight texts viz. *The Inheritors*, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, *The Kiln*, *Avatar*, *Dhalo, The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book*, *Our Toxic World: a guide to hazardous substances in everyday lives,* and select images from *Green Humour* through the frameworks devised as part of Chapter Two. The Chapter invokes the revaluated paradigm of contemporary theory to present a nuanced deconstruction of these texts in order to make submissions about human cultural engagement with nature, the relevance of polysemic perceptions, the constant need to interrogate nature-human interfaces and subject it to intertextual dialogues in view of altered and aggravated impacts of human ideologies and actions on tangible environment.

Chapter Four veers the present study into the thrust of practical applications. The term 'practical applications' needs to be defined here. Critical theories and textual perceptions formed within/outside the purviews of these theories often operate in a complacent quarantine from the *actual impact* of nature-human interactions in the 'real' world. As seen through the discussion put forth by the present research through the news articles about skylarks and sparrows provided in section 1.1. of this Chapter, there is a visible chasm between theoretical undertakings on representation of 'nature' and the practical human actions impacting nature in palpable ways. The present study interrogates this chasm and tries to provide alternate readings in human cultural production towards devising more holistic dialogues. For instance, while one studies the 'theme' of 'nature' as a focal preoccupation of Romantic imagination in William

Wordsworth's poetry and refines one's understanding of the poet's nuanced affiliation with nature, isn't it also relevant to bring the ongoing #climatestrike mass movement of 2019 led by environmental-activist Greta Thunberg into the same discussion? After all, wasn't Wordsworth's Romantic re-creation of his innate connexions with nature, a protest movement in itself against the counter-worldview of techno-Benthamite Industrial Revolution that perceived the utility of nature only in terms of its concrete resourcefulness? Moreover, isn't the global #climatestrike movement one in a long series of *narratives* textualized within the langue of subversive and/or counter-poetics that have so very often rebelled against political monologues of hegemony since the inception of human civilization? This Chapter, therefore, undertakes a critical mapping of the confluence of cultural theory and praxes with focus on the practical application of approaches within Green Cultural Studies in human cultural production. The same has been carried out through the study of a literary text that shaped environmental policy and the study of an environmental movement that impacted a key governmental decision.

Chapter Five is a metaphoric stringing together of the threads and matrices unravelled through the study of theoretical perspectives, textual perceptions and practical applications. Any study in environment and environmental issues, especially one related to nature-human interrelation, is at best an ongoing process and in the very least, a point of departure. Therefore, while the concluding segment of the present study records, reiterates and reinforces the major submissions made as part of this research, it also charts the scope for future analyses in the area.

1.10 Methodology

(i) Extensive study of existing literature on contemporary theory, ecocriticism and green studies in order to formulate the distinct approach of present study.

(ii) Selection of theoretical approaches to assess and apply their relevance to present study.

(iii) Critical survey of existing literatures in identified forms of culture relevant to study (literary-fiction, literary non-fiction, visual-illustrative/graphical/digital, popular and folk).

(iv) Selection of multimedial texts as primary sources in tandem with the study's orientation of viewing them as cultural products.

(v) Critical study of secondary references inclusive of newspaper articles, children's text-books, social media pages (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), realtime feedback avenues, voting polls, webpages and Play Store Apps to assess matrices and trajectories in contemporary environmental dialogue.

(vi) Field visits to sites of ecological interest from the point of view of present study.

(vii) In-situ observations of folk-practice.

(viii) Personal interview.

(ix) Translations of texts from Konkani into English for analyses.

(x) Collection of data as part of Minor Research Project on the topic, 'Ecological Consciousness in Goan Cultural Signifiers'.

(xi) Participation in Skillshare videos and workshops on image-designing and panelling for analysis of visual culture.

(xii) Presentation of research output at international and national conferences and seminars to test their currency and validity through feedback.

(xiii) Publication of research output as research articles in peer-reviewed journal and books.

1.11 Limitations of present study

▪ The critical approaches chosen for the study have been largely postulated in documented form in Western critical thought. Although Indian approaches to environment have been discussed in the study, they have not been used as theoretical frameworks for critical analyses of texts under study. However, the concept of *Prakriti* in Indian thought and the notions of Deep Ecology that presently inform several approaches in environmental studies have been brought into discussion.

▪ Gender approaches of Ecocriticism as postulated by Cheryl Glotfelty with regard to noting the difference between male and female 'writing' of nature have not been included although the study does entail discussions on gynocentric affiliations. This dimension of study, however, is extremely relevant and may be undertaken in future by extending the discussion to include nature-writings and expressions by LGBTQI communities.

▪ Although the study has tried to incorporate cultural texts produced in different mediums of narratology, it has left out other significant signifiers due to paucity of time-period for study and increasing vastness of this area of research. Further studies may diversify the selection of texts to include textbooks in Environmental Studies in kindergarten, pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher learning, web-series, travel narratives, social practices, festivals, architectures and community recreational activities.

▪ The 'geographies' i.e. places of origin of the texts have not informed the selection of texts although the relevance of their spatialities have been brought into discussion under textual analysis. However, this is a dimension that can be explored further especially through representative selection of narratives belonging to different socio-economic and political geographies.

1.12 Conclusion

The time in which the present thesis has been written is urgently pulsating with concerns regarding environment. In fact, it would not be an overestimation to submit that Climate Change and allied environmental issues featured as *the* greatest newsmakers of the first two decades of 21st century. Due to these bathochromic shifts fervently demanding attention, the need to continually interrogate, monitor, alter and/or reinforce human perceptions and interactions with nature has become not just relevant but also inevitable.

The present study, then, does *not* claim to join any *particular* movement towards environmental issue. Doing so may be a personal commitment; the commitment of the current research is only to initiate and steepen an insightful gaze into the multivocality, interconnectedness and palimpsestic poly-semiosis of the different narratives being rendered vis-à-vis environment from the point of critical vantage. Therefore, the tonality of the present research bases itself upon objective critiquing without trying to be accusative or defensive of *a* particular ideology/ideologies over others and also, without trying to either valorise or condemn 'textualities' brought within the purview of the discussion. The focus of the study remains on initiating and adding informed dialogues in present narratology related to environment as much as it seeks to steer clear from the pitfalls of grossly homogenising the narratology itself.

The ensuing discussion, therefore, entails recorded observations, fact-based postulations, expository analyses and evaluative submissions conceived through a process of critical reasoning.

CHAPTER TWO
RETHINKING THEORY – A STUDY OF SELECT PERSPECTIVES
THROUGH THE GREEN PARADIGM

2.1 Why 'Rethink' Theory?

In order to 'rethink' theory, one needs to first 'think', 'identify' and 'understand' its role and rubric in contemporary human thought and by extension, human action. Merriam Webster Dictionary offers six nuances of the term of which the explanation, "[theory is] a belief, a policy, or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action" ("Theory") best suits the discussion undertaken in present study. The constructedness of theory is its essentiality. Theory evolves as a plausible explanation to a phenomenon hitherto unexplained; it perceives patterns in occurrences which may be lost or rendered inconspicuous in the humdrum of phenomenological realities; it connects the dots and offers an analysis which can significantly impact existing worldviews by either strengthening them, disrupting them, altering them, or shattering them completely. It can also initiate a new worldview altogether. To put it simply, by virtue of being a thought *put out there*, theory, in its wake, causes a dent in human epistemology and phenomenology. Therefore, to look at theory as a rigid construct meant to dictate human action is as faulty a hamartia as undermining or completely eschewing its deep, tangible impact on the physical trajectories of the human world. When the present study asks for a 'rethinking' of theory, therefore, it does not seek to debunk the significance of theory or theoretical perspectives; it, in fact, seeks to do the opposite – reinstate its validity even as it stands open for interrogation and invalidation at any point of time in human history.

What then, is the role played by 'literary' or 'cultural' theory in contemporary world? Is it necessary to devise frames of reference *towards* or *from* 'texts' of human production and subject these frames of reference themselves to further analyses? The present study believes that it is necessary and links it towards asserting the need to 'rethink' theory towards studying select theoretical perspectives through the centripetal preoccupation of Green Cultural Studies of the research.

The fundamental understanding from which literary theory and cultural studies stem is the belief that any *text* of human production is not produced in a vacuum. Even those texts that break the bounds of reality as it is known and perceived, those that transport thought to the world of unknown through flights of imagination, those that rebel against the very structures in which they are produced and those that seemingly carry a quality of permanence that makes them shatter temporal and spatial vortices to become forces of timelessness and universality are essentially produced under a given 'set of conditions'. The said conditions may be abstract or concrete, tangible or intangible. But the point is that there are underlying systems of thought, beliefs, ideologies and worldviews from and into which human literary/cultural production incepts. Theoretical perspectives, then, are interested not in the individual products per se but the underlying systems that inform them. These systems are then subjected to scrutiny leading to strands of consent, dissent, questioning and *a priori* arguments among theorists and critics. Wedging a 'literary product' in the larger canvas, thus, is done more to understand the processualism of production rather than the planked product itself. In turn, the conceptual scaffold of 'theory' may help in decoding the chiaroscuro of the textual product and pointing out at its pluralistic and polychromatic exigencies.

The proposal to rethink theory is by no means a new initiation. Theory has been constantly 're-thought' thereby participating in the process of eschewing an uninterrogated reception of any constructed paradigm dubbed as 'reality'. Thus, theory is fundamentally fluid open to vicissitudes and vistas of adherence and non-conformity. But to rethink literary theory, this study will, at this juncture, delve deeper into what it believes to be theory's rise to intellectual stardom. Literary criticism, starting traditionally with Plato's Mimetic model largely envisaged to launch an unflinching attack on poetry on epistemological, emotional, moral and utilitarian grounds, has been dramatically prescriptive in nature. Questioned and altered to justify and reinstate the importance of poetic truth in human existence, Aristotle's version of the Mimetic model espoused concepts of entelechy, constructive mimesis as well as his prescriptions on the craft of creating a work of 'tragedy'. But even while providing a blanket and formidable justification to the relevance of poetic truth in human society, Aristotle's criticism drew the checklist of 'must and must-not' thereby defining and in a sense limiting the boundaries of literary as well as textual inquiry. What followed were a

series of emulations, reconfigurations and deviations of critical approaches that, willy-nilly, sought to categorize and demarcate literary products even with a well-placed intention of keeping the notion of literature's significance sacrosanct. This is not to say that the journey of literary criticism has been linear continuing as though it's an arrival and not a departure. It also does not suggest that criticism remained restricted to determining textual prowess without taking due cognizance of its interstices with contemporary socio-realities. Literary criticism drew heavily from major events; the cadences of Renaissance, the rise and fall of empires, the amoebic genesis of colonial expansions, the onset of major politico-economic movements such as the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution as well as the Enlightenment heavily impacted textual and analytical orbits substantially shaping their arcs. However, that being so, a visible tenuousness and reductionist strain existed between critical approaches to literary productions and the milieus that fostered them. Criticisms that invoked osmosis between fiction and reality and/or opened embrasures for 'looking-beyond-the-obvious' did so with a smattering of self-conscious and self-proclaimed responsibility of privileging one set of literature(s) over the others.

However, critical approaches breaking out at crucial turns of 19th, 20th and even 21st century couldn't afford an interface of fragility with the immediate as well as larger structural milieus in which they were fostered. They couldn't afford to read 'literary texts' merely as sources of intellectual finesse, as evidences and reinforcements of human civilization proving its self-worth. They couldn't afford, also, a seemingly objective privileging of one narrative over the other as much as they couldn't rigidly locate or fixate the received semantics of the text based merely on historical, autobiographical and/or epistemological research. In short, they couldn't straight-jacket – they had to unlock breakages, fissures, eruptions, radical non-fixations, uncertainties and the power of 'not-knowing'. They had to incorporate a visible, stream of consciousness technique moving back and forth to revisit what seemed to be anachronistic perceptions in order to revitalize contemporary paradigms of 'receiving', 'consuming' and 'perceiving'. As a testimony to this statement, the present study cites the views of Michael Fisher from his work, "Marxism and English Romanticism: The Persistence of the Romantic Movement" in which he draws a significant connexion between contemporary Marxist theoretical approaches and 18th-19th century Romantic criticism saying,

…they (contemporary Marxist critics) praise the Romantics for rebelling against the sane social circumstances criticized by Marx himself. Ernest Fischer, for example, notes in *The Necessity of Art* that "Romanticism was a movement of protest – of passionate and contradictory protest against the bourgeois capitalist world of 'lost illusions', against the harsh prose of 'business and profits". Similarly, for Adolfo Vasquez the "fundamental principle of romanticism" was the view that "bourgeois life does not deserve to be exalted". (27)

Theory, then, seemed to have evolved as a reaction to and response against the complacency of liberal humanism – a view that Peter Barry espouses in the Introduction to the work, *Beginning Theory*. In tracing the growth of theory from Structuralism (heavily drawing from its significant predecessors in Russian Formalism and New Criticism) up until Postcolonialism, Postmodernism and Ecocriticism, Barry draws up a useful quintuple model entailing the points, "Politics is pervasive; Language is constitutive; Truth is provisional; Meaning is contingent; Human nature is a myth" (32), emphasizing the inherent disruptiveness with which contemporary theory operates. The model reinforces the idea of contemporary theory as an arena of unending possibilities, burgeoning simulations, emerging interconnections and multivocal conversations. It is on such an arena that the present study seeks to carve its postulated niches and exchanges vis à vis the existing paradigms of Structuralism and Semiotics, Poststructuralism, New Historicism, Spatial Criticism and Subaltern Studies. The sections carrying discussions on each of these theoretical approaches will follow a common pattern in the present study. The study will first re-state the central tenets and preoccupations of the respective theoretical approach. It will then undertake a process of creating embrasures in the approach in order to locate a plausible integration of Green Cultural Studies within the applicative values of the respective critical area.

2.2 Structuralism and Semiotics in the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies

At the outset, it is pivotal to state that the present study yokes together the allied but often distinctly-operating areas of Structuralism and Semiotics in an effort to study the phenomena of 'meaning-making'. Structuralism juggernauted as a fiery intellectual movement in the 1950s, disrupting in its wake several long-held and 'given' notions about truth, meaning and human culture. But 1950s was neither the time nor the space

of its original genesis. Structuralism took its core cue from the 19th century Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's ground-breaking intervention in the study of language. Saussure suggested a paradigmatic shift via which the synchronic mode of studying language took predominance over the diachronic mode of tracing etymologies and origins of languages. He challenged some of the core beliefs of language studies – for one, he rejected the idea that human language(s) was a 'heap of words' from which words are then chosen for meaningful construction of sentences for communication-facilitation. In rejecting the 'heap of words' model, Saussure also implicitly questioned the naivety subsumed within the notion that language is a tool through which humans concretize and give form to the phenomena as well as the truth *out there*. Instead, Saussure said, language is a 'system of signs' constituting a signifier and signified where the relationship between the two is completely arbitrary sanctioned and validated only by human convention and usage. He also went on to claim that every sign operates in a structure and derives its meaning only in its relation to and difference from other signs in the systemic structure. The relational and differential dimension that formed the baseline of the signification system brought to fore the idea that 'meaning' like 'truth' is not something *out there*. It is 'formed' as in 'formulated' by an informed process of selecting and processing signs to create meaning towards the desired effect(s). This meant that language did not *reflect* reality; in other words, it did not 'mime' what was already out there. On the contrary, it constituted, shaped and even constructed reality thereby drastically influencing even the most basic ideologies and actions of human beings.

The Structuralist movement which was crafted in 1950 France filled the vial of its fundamental paradigms with perspectives put forth by Saussure and then made pivotal perforations to emanate ideas in the mainstream literary and cultural episteme of the times. Co-opting the Saussurean model of linguistic analysis, the structuralists exhumed and put forth the overarching notion that human-culture in itself is both an embodiment as well as a product of the signification system(s) where "things cannot be understood in isolation – they have to be seen in the context of larger structures they are part of…" (Barry 34). These structures, Structuralists claim, do not evolve as human responses to objective entities already present in the world; rather, they emerge from implicit or explicit, conscious or subconscious processes of organising experience in order to create meaning. Meaning then is inherently *attributed* – there is nothing 'given'

about it. The privileging of car as a status symbol over much larger vehicles such as buses or trucks, is a matter of meaning-production, not meaning-reflection. The features attributed to what constitutes 'feminine' vis à vis what constitutes 'masculine' is also an outfall of meaning-attribution rather than scientific postulation. Simplistic and inconsequential as they may seem, the processes of meaning creation and attribution are the driving forces of contemporary culture significantly influencing and getting influenced by human discourses. They drive and are driven by economic modalities, models of production and consumption, types of governances and rule, rise and fall of hegemonies, formations and dismantles of identities, so on and so forth to cite a few. Structuralism, however, does not stop at the level of meaning-analysis. It digs deeper into the structures that predetermine the phenomena of 'meaning-making' drawing in the concepts of langue and parole from the Saussurean model. Saussure defined langue as a predetermined, underlying structure through which individual utterances (parole) are created and made sense of. In view of this, structuralists espouse the idea that

> [t]he culture we are part of can be 'read' like a language, using these principles, since culture is made up of many structural networks which carry significance and can be shown to operate in a systematic way. These networks operate through 'codes' as a system of signs; they can make statements, just as language does, and they can be read or decoded by the structuralist or semiotician. (Barry 39).

To employ an analogical analysis, when a consumer buys a fairness product from the market, the *act* of buying itself can be read as a parole. What prompts consumption, validates its and imbues it with meaning is the *underlying* structure (langue) in which *a* particular skin colour is attributed higher desirability than other (even natural) skin colours. Therefore, if structuralists were to study the economic models upon which the cosmetics industry operates, they would probably decodify the other, larger structures that inform consumption of fairness (or other skin-colour) products, the cultural appropriation of 'skin-colours', theories of racial superiorities, theories of anthropological studies vis à vis social hierarchies, evolutionary studies and cultural materialism.

Drawing from the Structuralist paradigm of 'sign system' and 'signification', Semiotics undertakes an investigation into the multipronged processes of 'meaning-

making'. The notion that meaning is attributed to forms and substances – concrete and intangible – is central to Semiotic critique but it also lays emphasis on the non-obviousness, the inconspicuousness and the palimpsestic nature of meaning. Gary Genosko, in the Introduction to his work *Critical Semiotics: Theory, from Information to Affect*, states the complexity of the semiotic enterprise thus,

> Variations of meaning considerably complicate the quests undertaken by semioticians and direct them into different worlds, human and nonhuman, where they hope to recover the codes in which meaning is nestled and that make communication possible. (Genosko)

Thus, Semiotics studies is a twin processuality of deconstruction and reconstruction. Semioticians seek to exhume and uncover the fundamental as well as advanced structures that inform the systemic procedures of signification. The fulcrum of their enterprise is 'meaning' – its generation, articulation, consumption, manipulation, re-production and also representation. The Semiotic approach, however, is not always motive-driven. It often takes, what semiotician Scott Simpkins terms an 'asymmetrical approach' in critical semiotics where the analysis may, in fact, 'go-nowhere'. This brand of critical Semiotics, much like Poststructuralism (discussed later in the Chapter), focusses on the uncertainty, suddenness and hyperplay of meaning codified within and without (outside of) objects of study. Thus, Semiotics preoccupies itself not only with intended meanings but also with the unintentional (but often symptomatic) ones. This process of 'meaning-making' is more pervasive than oft recognised. For instance, the process of medical diagnosis relies heavily upon the process of meaning-making through visible as well as symptomatic signs. The same paradigm is applied in the reading of culture(s) as well.

While the ubiquity of Semiotics in everyday functionalities of human beings may be implicit, the fact that the process itself relies heavily upon literary devices is further marooned in imperceptibility. Semiotician Umberto Eco brings this point to fore in his work, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* when he says,

> …[t]he sign is a manifest indication from which inferences can be made about something latent. This includes the usage of sign for medical symptoms, criminal evidence, weather forecast, premonitory signs, presages, the signs of the coming of the Antichrist…A sample of urine for

analysis was called *signum* by the ancients, which leads us to think in terms of a ***synecdochic*** relationship, as if the sign were a part, an aspect, a peripheral manifestation of something which does not appear in its entirety. But the relationship may be a ***metonymic*** one as well, since the dictionaries speak of sign also for any trace or visible imprint left by an imprinter on a surface. (15; original ellipsis; my emphasis).

The Semiotic enterprise, thus, draws heavily from the devices of symbolism, analogy, allegory, metonymy and metaphor in identifying and unlocking codes within signification systems. Of these, the metaphor has been accorded special significance in the semiotic discourse. Venerable Bede calls metaphor, "a genus of which all the other tropes are species" (qtd in Eco, 87). The importance of metaphor in Semiotic studies is not aesthetical in that, Semiotics does not study the metaphor as an ornament that embellishes language. Doing so, de-limits the scope of semiotic interrogation. Instead, it questions the cognitive value of a metaphor – whether it appears in the form of a word, an image, a sound, a non-verbal sign, a punctuation mark, a sudden break or rupture in a sentence. The cognitive value is measured in terms of the effect that the metaphor has on the receiver. As Eco puts it, semioticians are interested in the function of the metaphor as "an additive, not substitutive, instrument of knowledge" (89).

Like Structuralism, Semiotics draws heavily from the fundamental scaffolding put forth by Ferdinand de Saussure through his conceptualization termed 'semiology'. In late 19th century itself, Saussure spoke of devising semiology as a 'science' of decoding the signification systems of social life. He goes on to assert that linguistics is just one of the matrices of semiology which, then, will be more of a general science. As part of the science of semiology, Saussurean discourse launched a dyadic module of decodifying viz. sign/syntax and signal/semantics.

Along with the Saussurean model of semiology which has been integrated in several linguistic and communicative studies, the Peircean model of Semiotics will also be invoked in the present study. In the 19th century, Charles Peirce expanded the scope of the term 'semiotic' to include an analysis of the receiver's internal reception machine along with the external communication mechanism that contemporary Semiotic models explored. In *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, he speaks of this form of Semiotic study as the "quasi-necessary, or formal doctrine of signs" (para. 227). While

earlier Semiotic studies placed the significance of meaning-making on the non-rigidities, fluidities and meta-synthetic abilities of signs themselves, Peircean model ushered in the dimension of the interpretant – all the elements which participate in the process of sign-reception and sign-consumption.

Peirce proposes that there are three different kinds of signs – an icon, an index and a symbol. An icon is anything with a physical resemblance to the idea or thing that it is trying to evoke. For instance, if one draws a picture of an apple, then the *icon* (the picture) ideally evokes the actual thing (*the apple*) in the mind of the interpreter. This is because the icon has an inherent link with the object it tries to evoke due to its physical resemblance. An index is a sign which has a link to the thing that is being evoked by a direct or more specifically, causal relation. For instance, smoke coming out of a window may be an index for fire by virtue of generating a causal link. A symbol, however, is one where (as Saussure suggests) there is no connection between the signifier and the signified other than arbitrary linkage governed and validated by human convention. A symbol may be founded *a priori* based on convention or *posteriori* by cultural habit. Akin to Saussurean signifier/signified model, Peirce's tripartite distinction of 'icon-index-symbol' plays a major role in understanding the processes of decoding communications and communicative patterns in a world of highly mediated information and textualities.

The most important aspects of the Peircean model in context of present analysis are the concepts of representamen and interpretant. Integral to understanding Peirce's model of Semiotics, these concepts shed light upon the phenomenon of multiplicities of meanings in cultural productions. According to Peirce, a representamen is a sign or a thing that represents another 'thing'; before it is interpreted in the third cycle of Semiotics, it only carries potentiality of meaning. The 'thing' that a representamen represents is the object. It is important to note here that a sign can only represent a particular object and not necessarily provide acquaintance with it – the acquaintance aspect is almost presumed in the process of production. Once exposed to the representamen, an interpretant is generated in the mind of the interpreter (receiver of the sign). This interpretant, then, assumes the role of a second representamen in order to produce further meaning. As such, the one particular representamen may give rise to multiple layers of interpretants thereby complicating and diversifying the process of meaning-making. To illustrate, a picture of a half-eaten apple – the representamen –

may evoke in the mind of the interpreter, the object, i.e. a half-eaten apple. The object of the half-eaten apple evoked is the interpretant in the first line of signification. Depending upon the contextual, cultural and/or intellectual experience of the interpreter, the first interpretant would become a representamen for a second-level of signification; in the present example, the half-eaten apple may signify the signage for the Apple Inc., the multinational technology company. In this case, the signage indicating the apple becomes the interpretant which may take the role of a third-level signification to signify a specific apple product or products in general. Furthermore, Peirce provides three phases or grades of interpretants. Victorino Tejera, in his work, *Semiotics – From Peirce to Barthes: A Conceptual Introduction to the Study of Signs* explains this model thus,

> …(i) the immediate interpretant, "the Interpretant represented or signified in the Sign," (ii) the dynamic interpretant, "or effect actually produced on the mind by the Sign", and (iii) the normal (final) interpretant, "or effect that would be produced on the mind by the Sign after sufficient development of thought. (41-42)

The three levels or gradations of interpretants are not absolute; they are relative, informed largely by the receiver's intellectual and cultural experience. For instance, in case of the example of the half-eaten apple cited above, the second and third level signification will happen only if the receiver has had acquaintance with the signage and/or the concept of Apple Inc. as a tech-based company or product.

The process of meaning-making, thus, is neither singular, linear, objective nor finite. Seemingly received, the process follows a deep-seated procedure of *creating* meanings, that may, according to the Saussurean model, occur at the level of langue. This procedure of meaning-making is in line, complex, non-linear, subjective (conditioned by intellectual exposure and cultural habit) as well as infinite (by virtue of each interpretant becoming a representamen for an advanced level of signification).

In view of the above discussion, the present study believes that there is a need to contextualise Structuralism and Semiotics in the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies. Critical approaches in environmental criticism have often been accusative of the Structuralist views of discoursing the world. The former have often indicted the latter of privileging linguistic constructs over tangible reality, emphasizing upon referential dimensions of 'things' as opposed to their existentiality and in doing so, endowing

human intellect with an inherent supremacy over the rest of the physical world around it. In other words, theories of Structuralism have paved way for the belief that everything exists because the human system of signification *allows* it to. Such a perception, green critics believe, has led to a gross decimation of the natural world which exists with or without human capacity of signification.

The present study deviates from this view in an attempt to make a case for incorporating the approaches of Structuralism and Semiotics within the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies. Towards this, the present study advocates the following propositions:

(i) If language shapes human reality, it also shapes, informs and constructs relevant ways in which humans perceive the physical world of environment.

(ii) Thus, while not denying the presence of nature as a 'reality beyond language', the Structuralist and Semiotic models can be employed to critique human signification systems in order to understand the crucial role played by language in impacting human-nature interfaces as well as human *actions* towards environment.

(iii) For doing so, contemporary theory can adopt Green-Structuralist and Green-Semiotics approaches in order to study the representation of environment in the form of tropes, metaphors, metonymies, settings, images and illustrations in a diverse range of human discourses. The present study will attempt to do the same.

(iv) The codification of environment in such discourses can then be deconstructed in order to identify, evaluate and critique the processes of sociocultural politics which inform policymaking.

(v) The 'codes' of environment incorporated within the human signification systems can then be studied for the different gradations of meaning they produce by assuming the role of advanced interpretants in specific culture-groups. It may be further studied how differences in perceptions of codes due to diverse levels of intellectual exposure and cultural nuances can impact land-management and environmental policies across regions in meaningful and concrete ways.

The present study will deploy the above-mentioned paradigm of Green-Structuralism and Green-Semiotics in critiquing select primary texts incorporated within the research.

2.3 Post-structuralism in the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies

Post-structuralism to Structuralism was perhaps what Aristotle's Mimetic model was to Plato's. The baseline of belief and theoretic operation remained the same, but the application of the belief and its tonality became not just radical but rebellious. Poststructuralism worked through the theoretical schemata that Structuralism had offered – that language does not reflect or record reality; it rather, *shapes* it. Structuralists, in their postulation, stood on the brink of proposing a fundamentally de-centred universe but stopped short at the level of bringing to fore the underlying structures and intertextualities in the process of 'meaning-making'. But even while foregrounding the arbitrariness inherent to the linguistic model, Structuralism believed in the possibility of 'meaning'. In fact, Peter Barry believes that Structuralism worked with an outlook of scientific temper that believed in the human signification system i.e. in the ability of human systems of meaning-making, even while it set-up critical inquiries into the processes of structure-formation and structure-interpretation.

Post-structuralist approaches did not assume the confidence of its predecessors. Barry points out that as opposed to Structuralism that *believed* in 'method, system and reason' as dependable yardsticks in the effort to establish reliable truths through signification systems, Post-structuralism invested its faith in the disruptive power of uncertainty and transience. He remarks,

> …[P]ost-structuralism derives ultimately from philosophy. Philosophy is a discipline which has always tended to emphasise the difficulty of achieving secure knowledge about things. This point of view is encapsulated in Nietzsche's famous remark, 'There are no facts, only interpretations'. Philosophy is, so to speak, sceptical by nature and usually undercuts and questions commonsensical notions and assumptions. Its procedures often begin by calling into question what is usually taken for granted as simply the way things are. Post-structuralism inherits this habit of scepticism, and intensifies it. It regards any confidence in the scientific method as naïve,

and even derives a certain masochistic intellectual pleasure from knowing for certain that we *can't* know anything for certain, fully conscious of the irony and paradox which doing this entails. (50)

Theoretic euphemism, thus, is neither the motive nor the forte of Post-structuralism. Therefore, in its wake, it ushers the process of critical analyses into arenas of uncertainties *always* hitherto unknown. In the Post-structuralist world, there are no fixed intellectual points of references. If anything, the contingency and precariousness of 'meaning' become the crucial vantage points *into* as well as *through* which Post-structuralism hurls its operatives.

The central conflict between Structuralism and Post-structuralism as foreshadowed earlier in the section is the issue of linguistic reliance. Structuralists propose that reality is accessible to humans through linguistic mediums – the myriad sign systems that have been constructed through convention – and then they invest an unflinching and almost 'given' belief in this proposition. The basis of this conviction is in the Structuralist point of view that language is after all an orderly, non-chaotic system where meanings, however pluralistic, are possible and accessible. Post-structuralism contends this conviction and raises terminal anxieties about the realities as well as their accessibility through the unreliable media of signification. In other words, while Structuralism believes that reality is subjected to textual processing by humans, Post-structuralism claims that reality itself is textualized. In Structuralist and Semiotic studies, a sign, even the one that carries multiple levels of gradations as 'representamen' and 'interpretant', still fixes and locates itself in respective contexts of meaning-making. On the other hand, Post-structuralism believes that a verbal sign is "…constantly floating free of the concept it is supposed to designate…signs float free of what they designate, meanings are fluid, and subject to constant 'slippage' or 'spillage'" (Barry 50). Therefore, since signs – the fundamental generators of meaning – are fluid, slippery entities, the 'meaning(s)' that they generate are never planted, fixed or located. They are dispersed and scattered with 'landings' that are unpredictable and possibly unmotivated.

Post-structuralism's revisionist approach of de-centralising the world by undermining the validity of linguistic signs has generated much detraction from more recent critics. Donald G. Ellis, for instance, in his article, "Post-Structuralism and

Language: Non-sense", clarifies his emphatic position vis-à-vis the theoretical approach saying,

> …[P]ost-structuralist concepts are so misguided that any serious scholar, in particular communication scholar, must surely abandon them. The arguments for the inevitability of shifting signifiers and endless semiosis made by deconstructionists and those of that ilk are nonrational and without basis, which means that there is no basis for post-structuralism itself. (213)

However, the present study hypothesizes that much of the aspersions cast against Post-structuralist views largely stem from disoriented or out-of-context applications of some of the pertinent statements made by nodal Post-structuralists. Exempli gratia, when Jacques Derrida put forth that, "…there is nothing outside the text" (163), critics interpreted the statement as an overestimation of the 'textualities' composed by linguistic perceptions as opposed to material 'realities' as they exist and/or occur in the world. However, upon contextualising the statement in the larger argument presented by Derrida, one realises that he was simply making a case for the deconstructionist model of critique and analysis without trying to shun or undermine the corporeality. He repudiates a mere re-interpretation of the original intent of the author calling the enterprise a redundant 'doubling commentary' and instead emphasizes that analysis has to be deconstructionist without trying to reconfigure "…a pre-existing, non-textual reality (of what the writer did or thought) to lay alongside the text" (53). Under the critical aegis of the deconstructionist model, signs in a text engage in free-play and the reader essentially 'produces' the text without pre-formed authorial or allied domination. In this process of deconstruction, the text as well as the reader are not fixed entities; they are signs of social and linguistic forces themselves – 'merely tissues of textualities' (51).

The vortices of Post-structuralism created numerous watershedding embrasures of which the present study utilizes a select few. It borrows from the notion of the 'death-of-the-author' that forms the crucial hinge from whence Roland Barthes turns from Structuralism towards Poststructuralism. That a 'text' is an entity independent of its creator was a proposition made in some proportions by Russian Formalism, carried forth by New Criticism and placed in critical paradigm by Structuralism. But Post-structuralism emphatically pinned the view down in contemporary theory. The

conceptual upholstery of 'death-of-the-author' carried deeper implications of asserting the radical independence of the text free from authorial or contextual intent. The possibilities carried by the text, thus, are unlimited – a view voiced by Peirce's concept of the *infinitum* of the semiotic process. Congruent to the death-of-the-author is the heightened stature accorded to the reader as an instrument catalysing as well as decoding the free play of signs. This radical shift from textual intent to an almost hedonist textual permissiveness paves way, in select trajectories of Post-structuralism, to more systematic dissembling of the sources of textual prowess postulated crucially in Barbara Johnson's rhetoric on 'difference' in *The Critical Difference: Essays in Contemporary Rhetoric* published in 1985. However, the fundamental revelry in the tenuousness, slippages, non-conformities and non-normative fluidities of 'signs' stay at the fulcrum of the Post-structuralist functionaries and continue to influence some of its major preoccupations in decentring the universe.

The concept of a de-centred universe itself is credited largely to notions put forth by Jacques Derrida in his 1966 lecture, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" where he speaks of Post-structuralism as a modernist 'intellectual event' that catapults the world into non-fixations and non-references. The deeper implications of a claim of this sort would be a vehement shattering of all models of 'understanding'. 'knowledge' and 'perception' on the basis of which human civilisation built its self-proclaimed supremacy. For instance, harmony of notes was no longer a point of reference for standards of music; linear narration was no longer a prerequisite for sense-narratology, scientific discovery was no longer an indicator of social progress. In this universe conceptualised by Derrida under the aegis of Post-structuralism, there were no others, because the traditional centres were de-centred; absolutism had paved way for inherent relativism and at best, there was a free-play of interpretations as opposed to the hegemony of validated 'truth'. As exaggerated and dramatic as Derrida's claims seem, their emphasis on moving away from 'known centres' and treating 'texts' as fragmented, self-divided and unlocated narratives has resonated with much of the postcolonial and postmodernist forms of analyses. With no frame of reference, the possibility of any 'text' is unlimited – there is neither authorial nor authoritative interference in this infinite process of meaning-making. The present study co-opts this model of non-fixations and draws heavily from the free-play of signs as they challenge and refute 'known facts' and veer into unknown and pluralistic significations.

Post-structuralism is a strange paradox in literary theory. While the term 'theory' evokes a sense of high-handed authoritativeness in 'making sense' of phenomenon/phenomena hitherto unexplained, Post-structuralism derives its power from challenging any sense of rigidity or authority. In doing so, it turns the process of meaning-making into a prerogative rather than an onus of the interpreter. While heightening the stature of the reader in the procedure of meaning-derivation, as afore-mentioned, it provides explicit scope to study the role of cultural cadences, new historicities, spatial interlocutions and narratorial subconscious in the methodologies of analysis.

However, the objective of co-opting the Post-structuralist model in the purview of Green Cultural Studies faces the same conundrum as that confronted by Structuralism and Semiotics. Are theories that emphasize and build their fundamental arguments upon the free-play of human signification models that devaluate the presence of concrete realities capable of contributing towards studies in areas that are emphatically tangible and 'real'? This question confounds several green critics leading to an ambiguous and sometimes hesitant rejection of Post-structuralist models in ecocritical studies. The present research, however, makes a case for Post-structuralist adaptations in re-emphasizing some of the central preoccupations of Green Cultural Studies.

As argued in Chapter One of the present thesis, while environmental issues may have palpable manifestations driven by actions, which too, may have been rendered 'concretely', (the physical act of felling a tree, for instance), the machinations that operate behind or within these concretised actions are more often than not implicit, or to borrow a term from Post-structuralism, 'textually subconscious'. Moreover, contemporary socio-political dialogues in environment-related issues are heavily nuanced by cultural connotations which call for meta-language analyses in negotiations and deliberations. An analytical forum that does not take into consideration the impact of these connotations may fail severely in its target-enterprises. Moreover, environmental discourses in contemporary pan-global conversations have become increasingly polysemic calling into action multivariant patterns of deconstruction. Lastly, almost all information received and perceived in the present century tends to be highly mediated. The said mediation, often covert, is rarely naïve or by-the-way; its construction is informed as much by its intent as its predicted impact. Therefore, a metalinguistic module that enables a deconstruction of such mediations can help in

understanding and taking directive measures towards detrimental human-actions towards nature.

The present study works through the baselines of Post-structuralist approaches in order to apply it in textual analysis within the ambit of Green Cultural Studies. The working model of the same is as follows:

(i)   Vis-à-vis environmental critique, a given 'text' will be read with the purpose of excavating the textual subconscious in order to underline meanings generated through free-play of signs entailed within (and without) the text, even those contrary to surface or superficial meanings (or the textual 'conscious')

(ii)   The disunity of the text will be highlighted in order to trace its movement *away from* or *re-oriented towards* authorial and/or contextual intent with the objective of foregrounding the representation of nature within the signifying model.

(iii) Etymologies of signs, dead or dying metaphors, orphan-lines, absences and omissions, slippages, silences and aporia will be analysed in order to underline implicit environment-related discursive deliberations within the text.

(iv)   Discontinuities and repressions textualized within the text will be foregrounded towards studying dichotomies between intended and received perceptions about environmental imageries, thematic matrices, symbolisms or motifs.

The above-mentioned paradigm of Green Post-structuralism will be employed in reviewing select primary texts incorporated within the study.

2.4 New Historicism in the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies

As an epigraph to the novel *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy quotes lines from John Berger's 1972 novel, *G.* which read, "Never again will a single story be told, as though it's the only one" (Epigraph, Roy). In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the megalomaniac protagonist Saleem Sinai claims that he will crumble into no lesser than 630 million pieces (representing the population of India at the time of the

book's publication) in an attempt to release and represent modern India. In a distinctly exhorting (but most likely unintentional) manner, both these narratives exhume and embody some of the central preoccupations of New Historicism. Fundamental among these preoccupations are the historicity of the 'text' and by extension, the 'textuality' of history, the importance of literary 'anecdotes', intersections between political ideology and personal experience as well as the possibility of multitudinous 'historic*ist*' perspectives.

New Historicism, is many ways, an approach of juxtapositions. It re-reads literature without privileging the 'literary' in it vis-à-vis the historicity of which it believes the said literature to be a product. At the same time, however, it does not superordinate the 'historic*al*' in the text by viewing it as a factual and objective background that consciously participates in the writer's imaginative moorings in the era. It puts forth a *parallel* re-reading of literary 'texts' and 'co-texts' without giving either one a prerogative over the other. At the same time, however, it draws meaningful connections between the effects of the former and the latter upon, towards and within one another. In this sense, New Historicism carries forward the Post-structuralist enterprise of excavating the textual subconscious while keeping the historic*ity* of the text in sight.

All these overarching statements about New Historicism, however, need qualification. In order to do so, it is important to delve deeper into the thoughts and perspectives that went into designing a rather elastic and non-exclusive but distinct theoretical scaffold on which the tenets of New Historicism are planked. The term 'historical fiction' has been a problematic notion in literary criticism for the oxymoronic derivatives it inspires in most critical aspirants who feel the need to fixate upon 'facts' or 'truths' that (may have) informed literary texts. History, after all, assumes the scientific temperament of objectivity, authenticity and validity. Fiction, operating through annals of imagination, is subjective and very often flirts with and/or shares a tenacious relationship with issues of authenticity and validity. As such, the coming together of *history* and *fiction* within literary analysis has been informed by a sense of tension and tentativeness contrary to traditional prescriptive criticism.

In this sense, New Historicism has served as a reconciliatory ground established on the belief that even when a 'text' germinates out of the innermost recesses of the

imaginative faculty, it is shaped and moulded by forces which are based in the material world.

In the Introduction to *Practicing New Historicism*, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt usher the thought that, "There is no longer a unitary story, a supreme model of human perfection, that can be securely located in a particular site" (5). This notion informs most of the multithemed orientations that applications of New Historicism assume in contemporary theory. In postulating the presence of multiple stories in 'textualized' cultural phenomena, New Historicists follow the orbit arced by Semiotics and Post-structuralism in foregrounding the possibilities of pluralistic meaning-making and interpretational paradigms. However, New Historicism distinctly de-links its orientations from those of deconstructionists and post-structuralists by laying emphasis on contexts. In mapping out the tenets of New Historicism, Gallagher and Greenblatt put forth tendencies from which this theoretical approach dissociates itself explaining that,

> [the] ambition to specify the intriguing enigmas of particular times and places distinguishes our [the New Historicist] analyses from the contemporary pan-textualism of the deconstructionists, who have their own version of the proposition that a culture is a text. Stressing the slippages, aporias, and communicative failures at the heart of signifying systems, linguistics or otherwise, their textualism has no historicist ancestry. For them, written language is the paradigmatic form in which the problems of making meaning become manifest, and a culture may be said to be "textual" because its meaningful signs are inherently ambiguous, paradoxical, and undecidable…Hence, in addition to skipping the levels of analysis that interest us most – the culturally and historically specific – deconstructionism also seems to re-erect the hierarchical privileges of the literary. (14).

New Historicism, thus, does not remove either the author or the socio-political context of the text from the milieu of re-significations and neo-interpretations; in fact, it establishes a model of reiteration whereby authors as well as their eras become essential crevices, embrasures and tools through which meaning-making is facilitated. As Gallagher and Greenblatt emphasize,

…[t]he notion of a distinct culture, particularly a culture distant in time and space, as a text…is powerfully attractive for several reasons. It carries the core hermeneutical presumption that one can occupy a position from which one can discover meanings that those who left traces of themselves could not have articulated. Explication and paraphrase are not enough; we seek something more, something that the authors we study would not have had sufficient distance upon themselves and their own era to grasp. (8)

Superficially, then, New Historicism seems to once again endorse the paradigm of 'close readings' espoused by traditional formalistic criticisms. However, anticipating similar entanglements, Gallagher and Greenblatt draw crucial distinctions between conventional close-reading models and New Historicist motives and methodologies saying, "Where traditional "close readings" tended to build toward an intensified sense of wondering admiration, linked to the celebration of genius, new historicist readings are often skeptical, wary, demystifying, critical and even adversarial" (9).

The New Historicist model of operating through skepticism and possibly a well-intentioned aggression challenges the conventional view of viewing history as a solemn, sacrosanct, objectively-documented and chronologically-expounded discipline or body of work. It creates retrospective dents to interrogate the subconscious or the subsumed in textualities through a study of signs within and without. In doing so, New Historicism offers an approach that challenges hegemonies of material events as well as narratives. It brings to fore those perspectives that may have lain at the hinges of narratological politics and engages them in interfacial dialogues with dominant histories.

Critic Stephen Greenblatt has largely been credited with the coinage of the term 'New Historicism' in his work, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* published in 1980. In this sense, New Historicism is a relatively recent 'theory' and as such the 'theoretical perspectives' which emanate from it do not follow preordained rigidities in functionality. In fact, four decades after the formal coinage of the term too, one cannot speak of New Historicism as a single-body approach. Marked by various conceptual disagreements between its earliest proponents, New Historicism continues to map itself by what it *is not*, rather than by what it self-sufficiently *is*. However, its ability to push boundaries and endorse expansiveness in critique provides a conducive point of departure for any retrospective study. Moreover, the baseline

concepts and orientations from which New Historicism operates allows an easy expansion of analyses of 'past' phenomena through the vantage point of 'present'.

Firstly, New Historicism emphasizes upon the *parallel* reading of the texts and co-texts. The word 'parallel' is at the fulcrum of New Historicist analysis. Critic Louis Montrose refers to this phenomenon as the "combined interest in 'the textuality of history, the historicity of texts" (qtd in Barry 116). As opposed to the traditional privileging of the literary text as the central object of appreciation and subsequent marginalisation of non-literary co-texts as mere tools towards understanding the genius and/or inspirations that informed the creation of the literary piece, New Historicism facilitates an egalitarian, interanimated and conversational relationship between literary texts and co-texts. With the conscious annihilation of hierarchies, New Historicists proceed to study the text and the co-texts as 'representations-in-dialogue' rather than individual phenomenon yoked together by external literary or critical prowess. To clarify, it views literary texts and co-texts as representative signifiers of a historical 'moment' – in the context of New Historicist studies, the term 'moment' may include a single event (e.g., a battle) or an entire historical enterprise (e.g., colonialism). In his work, *The Modernist Shakespeare*, Hugh Grady explains this methodology employed by New Historicist Stephen Greenblatt in studying the plays of the Renaissance period in close juxtaposition with "the horrifying colonialist policies pursued by all the major European powers of the era" (116).

From its emphasis on 'moment', New Historicism tries to unspool the thread of 'archival continuum' causing conspicuous ruptures in traditional historical criticism. For New Historicists, a historical event is irretrievably lost except as 'in-text' where it has been rendered as a 'moment' bearing all the discursive patterns which a literary text carries. The past, then, does not exist as an imposing and authoritative entity *outside* textuality – it is one of the products of the textual process. Thus, texts entailing documentations of past do not become informative 'contexts'; they work as 'co-texts' creating relevant perforations within contemporary readings of literary texts and vice-versa. In this case, the 'text' and its 'textuality' supersedes the constructer – the historian or the author – and opens up crevices within itself for any new readings. Co-opting Derrida's post-structuralist notion that there's nothing outside the text, New Historicism bolsters the view that the past is accessible to present only in its textualized form and is willy-nilly, 'thrice-processed', "first through the ideology, or outlook, or discursive

practices of its own time, then through those of ours, and finally through the distorting web of language itself" (Barry 117). This concept of archival continuum offers a unique permutation in literary and cultural studies – the past is not 'retrieved' or 'recovered' for a superimposition on present readings. Its authoritativeness is punctured not to undermine its significance in analytical discourse but to instead expand the scope of its role in critical inquiries, especially those that arise from the constituted positioning of the author and the reader.

In negotiating the textual traces of the past, New Historicism invigorates the concept of an 'anecdote'. At the commencement of their critical reading of a literary text, New Historicists quote a single documentary narrative, termed as the 'anecdote'. The anecdote may range from being a historical record, political treatise, news report, journal account to penal or judicial measures, non-fictive travel narrations, image-archives, medical documentations and all kinds of tangible and intangible insignia documented and retrieved from the respective period in the past. This 'anecdote', then, serves as a point of departure for re-locating the text and its historicity within the interpretive framework of New Historicism. This line of New Historicist inquiry, however, is not arbitrary; it is driven by the motive and method of decoding pervasive structures of power, which New Historicism believes, is almost always embedded subconsciously, implicitly, implicatively or tangentially within the 'historicity' of the text. The critical decryption does not stop at this. It orients itself towards fingerprint-testing the cross-textuality of these hegemonic patterns (often discoursed within the text) and then further excavating subversive patterns in-texted within the narrative that seem to resist, oppose or reflect the dominant politic.

Much like their counterparts in cultural materialism and Marxism, New Historicists base their critical model on an anti-establishment stance. For New Historicists, the pervasiveness of politics is a given, as is its hegemony in State-operation. What it then proceeds to do is study the discursive patterns through which this pervasiveness and hegemony operates as well as the deviances and differences they generate as response(s). The term 'discursive' is a pivotal borrowing undertaken by New Historicism from paradigms put forth by cultural historian Michel Foucault through his insights into an all-seeing Panopticon State-model that explicitly and implicitly penetrates into and governs even the most personal or private lives of individuals. This imposing surveillance, however, does not always operate through coercion, intimidation

or tangible institutionalization. The basis of its power is in the inconspicuousness and underhandedness of its operatives. To extend upon this argument, Foucault builds upon the concept of 'discourse'. According to this model, discourse is an ideology or a set of ideologies that definitively inform State governance and encloses the thought-processes of all the members under the purview of the state. Discourse, then, is self-consciously pluralistic and polysemic. It entrenches itself in routine as well as extraordinary 'ways of life' i.e. the culture(s) of its people(s). For instance, the discourse of patriarchy in a gender-biased society may simultaneously operate its hegemony through family structures, public governance, institutionalized religions and/or literary production. In view of this, Foucault's theories on discourse and discursive patterns resonates largely with Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony as well as Louis Althusser's perspectives on interpellation. All three scaffolds call for a deconstruction of the forces that go into the establishment, consolidation and reinforcement of 'power' as a political tool as well as product. In emphasizing the ubiquity of State-power, they seek to also decode processualities by which its suppressive tendencies are assumed and internalized especially by those who are disempowered and disadvantaged by these hegemonies.

As mentioned in Chapter One of the present study, environmental issues are not recent phenomena; but the multilayered and multi-perspective attention being given to them is. The attention is urgent and by extension, the process of perusal often hurried leading to vicious blame-games and quick-fix solutions. The present study believes that the current environmental crisis is not just a geoecological entity but a politico-economic and sociocultural 'product' of a whole set of anthropogenic ideologies and actions that operate in a state of pervasive continuum. Moreover, this product has material bases rooted in irreversible but recoverable 'pasts' that can significantly impact and inform present and future action.

There is, therefore, a cogent need to revisit historicities of cultural texts in order to facilitate meaningful dialogues and interfaces with the material and ideological energies that went into producing them – through conscious subversion/representation or subconscious resistance/reinforcement. The present study locates the significance of New Historicism to Green Cultural Studies within this framework. Climate Change has bolstered the scientific need to study geological past as a prolongation informative of the present and indicative of the future, as opposed to an adjunctive plenum bound in time and space. There is, then, an imperative need to study the cultural past in a similar

manner. The proposition seems commonplace but a satellite topography of ecocritical engagements with cultural history reveal a jarring abyss. Michael Verderame's concern, expressed in his work, "The Shape of Ecocriticism to Come", point out at the symptomatic cause of this lacuna when he says,

> Anxious to avoid endorsing any form of environmental determinism with its sordid history of politicized and racialized misuse, most literary scholars and historians have downplayed, ignored, or denied the extent to which human history and culture has been shaped through our interaction with our physical environment…History can teach us valuable lessons, both positive and negative, about how we interact with our physical environment. While in the popular understanding climate change equates to late industrial global warming, in fact, throughout all of our existence as a species, we have adapted to a changing global climate. As William Ruddiman has recently argued…human beings have been exerting a pronounced and even decisive influence on the climate system since as long as human civilization has existed; atmospheric carbon levels began to rise as early civilizations converted forestland to agricultural use. So, the story of human civilization has, to a large extent, been the story of the ways in which we both *react to* and *help to* shape our changing climate. (Verderame; my emphasis)

The 'story' that Verderame speaks may prove to be a crucial concomitant to the scientific dialogues being advanced in the direction of understanding the present environmental crises. The present study invokes the paradigm of New Historicism in Green Cultural Studies to this effect. The same is attempted through the following modus operandi:

(i)   A crucial anecdote related to environment (public policy/scientific record/legal measures/non-fictive travel archives or journal accounts/news reports) will be recovered from the selected text's contemporary history and provisioned towards understanding whether the text responds to the anecdote through its conscious or subconscious thematic and/or stylistic matrices.

(ii)   The text and select co-texts will be read in close juxtaposition; this abrasive reading will be employed in drilling relevant perforations through the semantics of

'discourse' embedded with both the narratives which can prove revelatory in unspooling discursive cultural patterns/habits towards nature.

(iii)   The cross-textuality of dominant politics vis-à-vis environment will be analyzed through a polysemic reading of cultural production.

(iv)   The *ex machina* of State power will be examined for its influence in environmental policy-making and subsequent 'management' and 'control' of land and people(s).

The above-mentioned paradigm of Green New Historicism will be employed in reviewing select primary texts incorporated within the study.

2.5 Spatial Criticism in the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies

It is important to mention at the outset that the term 'Spatial Criticism' is not in wide and unanimously approved circulation in contemporary theory. In the present study, however, the term has been co-opted as an indicative sign exemplifying a subtle but patterned 'spatial turn' in literary and cultural discourses. For the longest time, the term 'space' was used as a signifier to denote, "the boundless three-dimensional extent in which objects and events have relative position and direction" ("Space"). 'Space', then, was seen as a container, imbued with meaning only when the 'objects' and 'events' positioned themselves or were located within contexts. The 'temporality' of the objects and events, thus, gained precedence over the spatiality of the unfolding. For a large part, the marginalization of space was probably facilitated by its willy-nilly omnipresence. It may have seemed circumlocutory or even redundant to outline a separate study for 'space' as part of theoretical deconstruction because it was assumed to be an axiomatic by-product of discourses in literature. However, the conceptual understanding that 'space' is an entity in itself independent of its attributed, designated or subsumed meaning in anthropocentric signification system, is surfacing tellingly in theoretical discussions. That, the said *attributed, designated* and *subsumed* meanings of 'space' have direct and variegated implications in the phenomenological world of humans and non-human living beings is also gaining widespread currency. Although it is difficult to locate and pin down one particular epiphanic moment of what has come to be known as the 'spatial turn' in literary and cultural studies (Tally *Spatiality* 11), a speech delivered

by Michel Foucault in 1967 is considered to have been influential in initiating a provocative dialogue in matters of 'space' and 'spatiality'. Foucault suggested,

> [t]he great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. […] The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (qtd. in Tally 22).

Foucault's announcement of the 'epoch of space' unspools intertextual dialogues with the burgeoning concept of Anthropocene that juxtaposes dimensions of time and space in defining the present era (time) as one where humans are inhabiting an Earth (physical space) radically realtered and reshaped by them. As representative embodiments of the human 'ways of life' then, literary and cultural studies have begun disinterring overt responsiveness towards issues of spatialities in an age of increasingly contentious human-environment encounters.

Although spatial critics locate traces of spatial deliberations in early human discourses upto their amplified stature in Romantic preoccupations, it would be more fitting to consider Industrial Revolution and the two World-Wars as crucial hinges around which criticality took its spatial turn. Driven by capitalistic aggrandizement and Benthamite values, Industrial Revolution imposed a paradigm in which space transitioned from being a 'source' to 'resource' – a raw material as well as by-product – of largely, if not solely, imperial motives. Almost congruously, the grand envisioning of 'history' and historical writing as a sacrosanct documentation of human civilization's journey towards social evolution and progress, suffered greatly at the hands of the Second World War. In his work, Robert J. Tally opines that the image of history "as a progressive movement towards ever greater freedom and enlightenment" (12) was undermined by the cataclysm that ensued during and post War(s). Marxist geographer Edward Soja traces an agenda-driven pattern in this demotion of space. His inductions put forth that a deliberate promotion of time-oriented discourse was used to eclipse spatial realities of the periods preceding the Wars. However, these spaces re-emerged

in critical consciousness through postwar narratives. In addition to this, the prescriptive edicts instituted as guidelines and signposts of human progression and supremacy, especially within Renaissance and the Enlightenment, came to be viewed with skepticism and indictment. All these led to a visible paradigmatic shift unfolding the rise of spatiality as an ontological, discursive and decisive dimension in critical analyses.

Moreover, the utilization of 'natural' spaces ('observation-trees' for faux wooden housing, etc.) as battle-zones and the creation of artificial spaces (concentration camps, gas-chambers etc.) as embodiments of torture, extermination and annihilation significantly whetted re-readings into ideological dimensions of physical place. The imagery of warfare representing the horrors of man-made physical spaces such as 'trenches' and 'no-man's land' suggestively bolstered popular attention towards spatiality in postwar narratives. That man could impose his will on environment was not unanimously looked upon as an indication of power or advancement. That politics could arbitrate significant control over physical nature began to be a source of collective anxiety rather than reassurance. As Tally puts it, "…the metaphor of time as a smoothly flowing river and the evolutionary theory of history as progressively moving from barbarism towards civilization could not be maintained in the aftermath of concentration camps and atomic bombs…" (13).

Human communities have always been in transit; their migration, then, is not a recent phenomenon. However, an exponential rise in multipronged migratory patterns was particularly witnessed in wake of the two World Wars, formation and dismantling of colonial empires, rise and fall of fascist projects, emergence of independent nations, reconfiguration of demographies through events such as Partition, seismic shifts in the centre of power from European nations to the United States of America, establishment of international bodies such as the United Nations and institution of 'globalization' as an inevitable human enterprise. As such, the 20th and 21st centuries have been eras of 'displacement'. As a concept, displacement has often been placed in the corridors of historicism with critical scrutiny often being directed towards the causes and effects of the phenomena. However, with physical mobility often being an inextricable part of displacement, the latter's spatial dimension can neither be overlooked nor devalued in literary and cultural studies. Displacement unfolds in physical spaces thereby often shaping both, points of departures as well as points of arrivals. Transatlantic slave trade,

for instance, which wrought displacement of millions of Africans, was facilitated by significant changes made in marine-space. The phenomenon, per se, onslaughted several changes in the physical spaces of the African continent, Atlantic Ocean, European conglomerations as well as America. Similarly, capitalist colonialism hinged on redefining and reshaping physical spaces of indigenous peoples. Present-day globalization anchors itself on control in air-space. Thus, most of present-day mobility is neither procedural nor climatic as it once was when nomadic ways of living entailed an inevitable migration from one physical 'space' to another for survival. Most of 20th and 21st century displacements have been informed by ideological conflicts, hegemonic forces, consensual and/or coercive political forces and self-driven movements informed by a desire for vertical mobility. When a human or non-human living entity is displaced, it moves geographically from one 'space' to another. The spatiality of the entity, then, is not a 'backdrop' to its experience – it is the fulcrum of it. Tally foregrounds this point when he says

> Certainly, the massive movements of populations – exiles, émigrés, refugees, soldiers, administrators, entrepreneurs, and explorers – disclosed a hitherto unthinkable level of mobility in the world, and such movement emphasized geographical difference; that is, one's *place* could not simply be taken for granted any longer. The traveler, whether forced into exile or willingly engaged in tourism, cannot help but be more aware of the distinctiveness of a given place, and of the remarkable differences between places…[d]isplacement, perhaps more than a homely rootedness in place, underscores the critical importance of spatial relations in our attempts to interpret, and change the world. (13).

One of the major catapulting forces behind the insistent emergence of spatial turn, especially in the 21st century, has been the proliferative growth of technology. The invention of steam engine, the advent of railways, growth of automobiles and exponential advancements made in air-travel brought forth significant interventions in the perceptions of spatio-temporality in the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the rise of the World Wide Web connectivity pan-globe, definitive strides in space travel and the ergonomic institution of a distinctive 'virtual' habitat through digital platforms brought in a new trajectory in spatiality. While physical distances were alarmingly bridged through synchronic and realtime communication systems, the illusory power of

being able to transcend one's corporeal 'space' and inhabit a space of virtual existence ushered a dialogue hitherto ungauged in geographic or cartographic studies. In the article, "From surfaces to networks", Barney Warf calls this phenomenon a 'surface-to-network' transition of spatiality in which, the enterprise of globalization is driven by "a vast web of telecommunications networks, which [are] crucial to the hegemony of increasingly information-intensive capitalism" (66). Spatiality in contemporary society, thus, cardinally expands to include a postmodern hyperspace where the interstices between palpable and abstract places have become textually subconscious but implicatively significant. The wiring of sociocultural spaces into electronic inscriptions has fundamentally shaped the formation and perception of individual and collective identities with an increased emphasis on fluidity and polysemy. Despite an intensified politico-economic penetration in reconstruction of geographies, borders and boundaries, there has been an increased emergence of, what Warf terms, 'communities without propinquity' that includes groups of netizens or social media users that share common interests/inclinations/orientations although belonging to physical places that are geographically apart. This phenomenon considerably disrupts rigid notions of ideological nationalism, geography-based cultural homogeneity and linguistic determination of identity.

While the technologically-driven enterprise of globalization problematizes the notion of nationalism of pre and post-colonial era, it also participates in the hegemonic matrixes tentacled within major and minor polities. The all-surveillance Panopticon models used explicitly or implicitly by nation-states, security-intelligence systems, non-ubiquitous fundamental organizations, sociopolitical federations and social-media systems continually interfere and alter spatialities of individuals as well as communities. Any form of Spatial Criticism, then, has to take a nuanced cognizance of these inherent paradoxes and operatives within space-related analyses.

As a phenomenon, the *Spatial Turn* has been genetically transdisciplinary. Incepted as a theoretical paradigm in Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), the movement towards spatial turn was essentially driven by borrowings from conceptual parapets established by Marxist philosopher and sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, historian and social theorist, Michel Foucault, philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari. These critics in turn drew from paradigmatic itineraries of Martin Heidegger, Baruch Spinoza, Gaston Bachelard, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Along the way, they traversed through and handpicked relevant signposts from theories such as Marxism (ideology and production), Structuralism and Post-structuralism (interanimated play of signs) and Feminism (constructed binaries and consciousness of bodily space and spatial body).

Henri Lefebvre's watershed launch *The Production of Space* (1989) introduced a distinct dialectical spatial thinking in contemporary literary theory, geography and sociology. His introduction of the triad model of 'space' as 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'representational spaces' correlatively operating through the three cognitive modes of the 'perceived', the 'conceived' and the 'lived' is a framework widely impacting contemporary green critical analyses. In Lefebvre's trialectics, spatial practice or 'perceived' space is connected to the material and experiential dimension of a place. Although not always logically comprehensible, spatial practice bases itself upon viscidity thereby leaving discernable footprints through its emergence and evolution. The conceptual matrices of spatial practice, thus, are especially useful in decoding impositions of ideology on a given place. Lefebvre suggests that a close study of spatial practice will enable one to chart the 'history of space' and its (social) production undertaken through "the study of natural rhythms, and of the modification of those rhythms and their inscription in space by means of human actions, especially work-related actions" (Lefebvre 117). In contrast, representations of space cognitively received as 'conceived' space is "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (Lefebvre 38). The conceived space is thus a space of ideations that assume manifest forms as maps, designs, models and plans. The reception of such representations is often informed by a misleading belief in their objectivity and scientific temperament. However, under Lefebvre's triad model, no production of space is quarantined from predetermined ideological *impositions*. In her work, "Chicago's Critical Mass and the transportation of everyday life", Hannah Andersen paraphrases Lefebvre's propositions to put forth the idea that

> …[the]histories of ideologies can be studied by examining how plans of space change over time. Features that are emphasized in such representations of space often serve as signifiers of prominent ideologies or representational spaces. [Thus] representations of space have a substantial role and specific influence in the production of space. (Andersen)

Of particular importance in Lefebvre's triad is the concept of representational space. Reproduced as 'spaces of representation' from the French term, 'les espaces de représentation' used originally by Lefebvre, the 'lived' space is one which people "produce, inhabit and act within" (Warf *Encyclopedia of Geography*). Simply put, it is the existential schemata that refers humans to the world – the physical and social landscape in which humans move and from which they derive their experiences. In mapping the dimensions of 'lived' space, Lefebvre chisels Structuralist notions of signification and Post-structuralist rhetoric on fluidities. The representational space is thus, embodied individuals' cultural experiences as they 'live' through natural environments, constructed social-scape, sensory simulations, multimedial signifiers and arbitrary/ideology-driven signifieds.

While, Lefebvre's triad spatial model has had significant impact on fields of phenomenology, geography and sociology his contribution to environmental criticism has often been overlooked probably due to enthusiastic preoccupations with the politico-economic implications of his propositions. Verena Andermatt Conley, in her work *Spatial Ecologies: Urban Sites, State and World-space in French Cultural Theory* traces a distinct ecocritical strain in Lefebvre's critique of (social) production of space. In fact, Lefebvre's critique echoes Romantic protests against devaluation of 'nature' as an independent entity in wake of Industrial Revolution. Concomitantly, it also provides an insightful prologue to contemporary anxieties of spatial alienation due to hyperactivity in virtual inhabitation. According to Andermatt, Lefebvre's discourse suggests that

> Nature is never a brute state of things but rather a force of awareness or consciousness that comes forward through the art of active and creative human intervention. Alienation appears with progressive abstraction, which results from a slow but inescapable separation of humans from the environment that nourishes them. With the rise of industrial capitalism, the process by which things are turned into coefficients of worth (use-value and exchange-value) abets separation and promotes a loss of dynamic harmony. Where signs quantify "input" and "output" they divide man from nature and cause human action to lose its living substance. As a result "everyday life" becomes visibly degraded. Yet even if it is proof of alienation, it is also…the remainder in and through which actions can produce something new. (Andermatt 14; my emphasis).

While Lefebvre's dialectical enjambment in spatial discourse unspools correlational interstices between geographical (also, cartographical), ecocritical, post-structural and psychoanalytical studies, Michel Foucault's interrogation of carceral networks in 'space' productions underpins the pervasiveness of politics in spatiotemporal genealogy. The focal text in this regard is *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* published in 1975 in which he puts forth the forbidding ubiquity of State-machinery through the process of 'surveillance'. Foucault's discourse is an attempt to decode power-mechanisms behind some of the most innocuous spatial embodiments erected as State institutions. In this sense, a semi-conspicuous connection can be traced between Foucauldian interrogation of institutionalized spatial machinery and Lefebvre's constitution of 'conceived' and 'lived' spaces. Lefebvre saw imprints of ideology in the 'production' of these spaces; Foucault connected State-ideology with State-hegemony showing the production and maintenance of 'power' in produced spaces. Foucault's propositions in space anticipate much of the postmodern forms of power where the "body itself is invested by power relations" and "society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance" (Foucault 24; 217). In order to substantiate this framework, Foucault investigates the operational vertices of the Panopticon model ideated by Jeremy Bentham in which a prison is placed in a position of permanent visibility under the unseen but pervasive gaze of authority. The Panopticon model anticipates the modern-day 'Big Brother' motif manifest in popular culture, social-credit systems in politics and 'unique identification number' structures as well as more clandestine activities such as shadow profiling and data-curation undertaken by social media platforms. Under the structure of the Panopticon, thus, spaces – physical as well as virtual – are under manipulation and reconstruction. Foucault explained the intrusive hegemonic presence of the Panopticon thus,

> the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any particular use. It is polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies

in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisoners. (125)

Foucault's insistence of the polyvalence of Panopticon is instrumental in understanding the multi-formed re-shapings and representations of spaces and their received impact in humans' lived spaces. Power, thus, operates through networks developed in spaces within physical 'places'. Functioning so, it is normalized within the embodied and perceptional spaces of individuals and communities within the modern nation-state.

The Spatial turn in contemporary theory also draws in from the distinct spatial consciousness and tributary conceptualizations put forth within the philosophical discourses of Gillis Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Contextually significant among these is the concept of 'mots d'ordre' or 'order-words' that Deleuze and Guattari employed to decode hegemonic communicative paradigms installed by State machineries to stratify and striate 'spaces' and by extension maintain power over the individuals occupying these spatialities. Like Lefebvre's and Foucault's, Deleuze's and Guattari's works also came as incriminations of capitalism but in doing so they differentiated between the operative spaces of the capitalistic model. While nation-state apparatus was the domineering model of Industrial capitalism (leading up to and well into the two World Wars), cities became sites of neo-capitalistic hegemony using processes of homogenization and globalization as tools towards normalizing power-hierarchies within worlds formed post-War. For Deleuze and Guattari, the world was an institutional network of locative coordinates that determined human behaviour to bring about an implicit docility. This network was formed by an elusive military-industrial-informational nexus that plotted axis points within conceived spaces in order to determine the perceived spaces. However, one of the greatest contributions of Deleuze and Guattari was their emphasis on the scope for 'becomings' or processes of subjectivation. While underpinning the authoritarian forces of politico-economic structures such as those pointed out by Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari also saw the possibility of new becomings through spaces of creative resistance. Writing in the aftermath of the May 1968 civil unrest in France against capitalistic agenda and American imperialism, their rhetoric envisaged discursive spaces where resistance was

made possible by creation of distinct spaces where one unit of the assemblage (a capitalistic structure, for instance) could be passed on into the 'territory' of another unit and bring about a new unity. This process of deterritorialization and subsequent synthesis (through means of influence, not imitation) was key to the transition from subjection to subjectivation. As Andermatt Conley explains in the article, "Deleuze and Guattari: Space and Becoming",

> Their "after-images" from other times and places gain importance in a post-69 world wherever worldwide resistance to capitalism and colonial policy is being revived. From Algeria to Vietnam, from Cuba to Civil Rights and the Black Panthers in the United States, resistance movements spring up quasi-spontaneously anywhere, but always against the *state* and its colonizing powers. To resist creatively, the opening of new spaces fosters the mobilization of other ways of thinking within and outside of given orders. (97).

For Deleuze and Guattari, striated spaces created by the State to keep its subjects in check and impose among them an implicit obedience had to be countered by the construction of 'smooth spaces'. These smooth spaces were those that allowed rhizomatic growth and scope for nomadism by inciting tactile-based or sensory responses rather than imposing framework-based thinking among individuals.

Deleuze and Guattari spoke of the need to create 'smooth spaces' as media of communication for the purpose of serving the State in order to maintain a perpetual mutative state within its structured assemblage. However, they did not live to see the permutations and changing implications of these smooth spaces in wake of the information-explosion through Internet and the World Wide Web. A renewed interest in Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, is centripetal not only to the spatial turn in contemporary theory but also in current ecological dialogues with a diversification in the spaces of creative resistance. The #climatestrike movement, for instance, has been instituted as an embodied space of protest against agenda-driven anti-sustainability policies and governances. It is being carried out in physical spaces which then become spatialities of tangible resistance and is also being juggernauted through digital spaces that foster deterritorialization by facilitating the process of 'becoming'. The #climatestrike movement then would be what Deleuze and Guattari would call an

'event' – not in the conventional sense of the term of an 'occurrence' but a process of simultaneous "objectivation and subjectivation of the world, a "nexus" of perceptions and of "prehensions" that the individual experiences in his or her heightened awareness of locale and of totality" (Deleuze qtd. in Conley).

The emphasis located by Deleuze and Guattari upon creation of spaces that provoke tactile and sensory 'affects' manifest largely in the form of graphic fiction in literature, three-dimensional motion picture in cinema and experiential simulations in digital media. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari anticipated a new turn in spatiality but never could gauge its full potentialities and implications not only as means of creative resistance but as objects of cultural production themselves. That these new spatialities could become movements of deterritorialization facilitating new 'becomings' through re-assemblages of epiphenomenological experiences and formation of new (sometimes 'assumed') identities was also eagerly antedated but underutilized in their works. However, the theoretical frameworks Deleuze and Guattari provided through reflective branches in philosophy and psychoanalysis offer pathways to paradigms that allow critical scrutiny of meta-realities that form, inform and influence ecological spatialities in the 21st century.

In their work, "Introduction: Ecocritical Geographies, Geocritical Ecologies and the Spaces of Modernity", Robert T. Tally Jr. and Christine M. Battista underline the need for assigning a non-negotiable relevance to 'space' and 'spatiality' in contemporary theory, saying,

> As the cartographic anxieties of modernity are compounded by ecological crises, spaces, places or territories are increasingly called into question. What once seemed to be fixed, stable, or at least reliable spatial or environmental markers, such as national boundaries, regional borders, public or private properties, and even identifiable climate zones are now threatened by the increasing volatility of both the social and natural worlds…Under present circumstances in an age of globalization and of an increasingly planetary frame of reference, critical theory and practice has disclosed the inherently artificial and unsustainable means by which humans have sought to organize the real-and-imagined spaces of the world in pursuit of individual, social and cultural development and progress. (03)

As mentioned earlier, the study of 'space' may seem indubitable in any study related to environment. After all, space is apparent; the phenomenological realities which humans inhabit and function within do not operate *without* some form of spatiality. And yet, its self-evidence may have been one of the key factors leading to its devaluation. This axiomatic presence of space is further problematized by the notions that overestimate human signification systems vis-à-vis physical spaces. That space exists *because* humans receive it, is a notion detrimental to spatial, especially environment issues, similar to relegating spaces as background settings which are tangential and a 'given' to human existence. At the same time, however, how humans receive, re-present and represent spaces in textualities are central to any enterprise that seeks to reinstate the discourses in spatiality orienting them towards addressing issues related to global environmental crises. David Harvey presents a symmetric argument iterating this view when he says,

> [b]eneath the veneer of common-sense and seemingly "natural" ideas about space and time, there lie hidden terrains of ambiguity, contradiction, and struggle. Conflicts arise not merely out of admittedly diverse subjective appreciations, but because different objective material qualities of time and space are deemed relevant to social life in different situations. Important battles likewise occur in the realms of scientific, social, and aesthetic theory, as well as in practice. How *we represent space and time in theory matters, because it affects how we and others interpret and then act* with respect to the world. (qtd in Tally 112; my emphasis)

The present study takes a cue from Harvey's insistence on spatial representations and their critical scrutiny in perceiving, critiquing and possibly *acting* towards environmental issues – with 'acting' referring to the process of taking preventive, proactive or reactive action for/against any issue(s). Working through the baseline of the spatial turn in contemporary theory discussed in this sub-section, Spatial Criticism in Green Cultural Studies is intended to operate upon and from the following verticals:

(i)   The 20th and 21st centuries (the periods under study) will be seen as eras of, what the present researcher terms, 'spatial anxieties'. The dynamics of these anxieties emerging out of an individual's (and by extension, community's) multiple spatial

identities – physical, digital, institutional et cetera, will be analyzed with a focus on how they affect and effect reception of ecological spaces in human representations.

(ii)   The representation of 'biotic' spaces within human literary and cultural discourses will be analyzed through the *res extensa/ res cogitans* paradigms to see how treatment of spatiality within a text may be informed by predetermined (conscious or subconscious) ideology.

(iii)   Spaces will be read as sites – not only of social, political and economic conflicts but also as the very 'things' that are fought over. In doing so, the study will interrogate Industrial Revolution bred capitalistic, consumeristic and colonial models of production and consumption.

(iv)   The influence of state-apparatus and machinations on land-management will be studied reasonably informed by Foucauldian concept of Panopticon and Lefebvre's idea of conceived spaces. At the same time, literary and cultural textualities will be studied as participants in the formation of 'lived spaces' of humans – as agents of hegemony as well as protest in conflicts over environment.

(v)   Through the baseline of Deleuze and Guattari's notions of 'becomings', 'event' and 'deterritorialization' and 'creative resistance' as well as present-day studies such as cognitive mapping, the dialogic intertextualities between physical and virtual spaces will be traced to excavate and re-present heterogeneities and homogeneities vis-à-vis ecological crises and trajectories towards or against mitigation of these crises. The study will also try to critique how select physical spaces are re-invented in human signification for ideological appropriation by the State as well as for subversive resistance and retaliation by select individuals/communities/groups.

The above-mentioned paradigm of Green Spatial Studies will be employed in reviewing select primary texts incorporated within the study.

2.6 Subaltern Criticism in the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies

An article in *The Economic Times* dated April 05, 2018 was emphatically titled, "How a committed and inspired Bishnoi community did Salman Khan in". The article then went on to assess the etymological values of ecological preservation on the basis of which the Bishnoi community, classified as a small subaltern group ethnic group residing in Rajasthan, India (Markose 90) pursued the conviction of actor Salman Khan

in the black-buck poaching case largely drawing from its belief system as part of which "killing animals and felling of trees are grave sins" (ET online).

The controversial case opened several vistas of investigation in the country of India and abroad largely because it brought to fore the unwavering commitment of a community towards ensuring ecological welfare and foregrounding justice *for* the environment at all costs. The paradigms offered by this case and other such, particularly a formidable list of grassroot ecological movements in India called for keener attention and reading into the interrelations between environment and 'subaltern groups' or what historians Frederique A. Marglin and Pramod Parajuli 'ecological ethnicities' (qtd. in Markose).

Such a reading, however, would call for pertinent qualifications of the term 'subaltern' and prominent theories formulated around its application in contemporary discourse. The present study, therefore, gleans relevant issues encircling the notion of 'subalternity' through selective readings from Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak. The selected oeuvre is not a holistic documentation of the vast (and rapidly expanding) area of subaltern studies. The selection, therefore, has been informed by the context and *raison d'etre* of the present study.

There is an oft-quoted legend among proponents of subalternity pertaining to the usage of the term 'subaltern', for the first time, in Antonio Gramsci's seminal work *Prison Notebooks*. Writing from the prison under the fascist Mussolini supremacy, it is believed that Gramsci used the term 'subaltern social groups' to refer to the proletariat in order to avoid prison censorship. The legend, however, is widely contested; not so much to question the factual accuracy of the censorship dimension as to critique the limitations upon the word 'subaltern' that the tale, willy-nilly, imposes. In a fervent rhetoric titled, "Introduction: Rethinking the subaltern and the question of censorship in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*", Marcus E Green calls for a disruptive intervention in interpreting the Gramscian model of subalternity, largely with the intention of broadening its scope in current deployment. He writes,

> …Gramsci's concept of the subaltern is not limited to class relations and [that] in fact subalternity in the Gramscian sense encompasses an intersectionality of race, class, gender, and religion. For Gramsci, subalternity is constituted through constructions of identity, otherness, and marginality that are reinforced within an ensemble of social, political and

economic relations…Gramsci's concept of the subaltern is more complex than often recognized and [that] his analysis of subalternity relates to the function of intellectuals, constructions of identity and otherness, historiography, representation, the national popular, coloniality, and political organization. (Green vol. 14)

Green's argument proves as an important point of departure to the present contextual study of subalternity. Essentially, the term 'subaltern' is constantly in a state of flux – it keeps evolving, shedding its skin at crucial junctures and taking on newer nuances as the socioeconomic, political, cultural, communal, racial as well as gendered frameworks within which it operates, change. Therefore, it is difficult to use the term 'subaltern' without qualifying its spatiotemporal contexts. Its application in an already fluid model of Green Cultural Studies, then, requires pertinent qualifications and well-mapped, although not rigid, definitions.

The field of subaltern studies has been fraught with tensions since its inceptive usages. In taking overtly invasive stances against capitalist, imperialist and colonialist models of political hegemony, subaltern studies have often developed paradigms of self-criticism and dissent within their evaluative discourse as well. Subalternity as a field of study, moreover, is inherently cross-sectional. Its locative coordinates function within and draw from Post-colonialism, Marxism, Postmodernism and most recently, Feminism. As an anti-essentialist and anti-establishment discourse, it's a voice from, of and sometimes (but not necessarily) by marginalities. Select sections of Subaltern studies, therefore, define themselves as movements of masses and other sections are skeptical of sweeping generalizations that erase differences and create the same webs of hegemony through which the colonial exercise once operated. As a theory, subalternity is rooted in praxis through its involvement in grassroot movements and therefore constitutes a critical juncture where theory and practice meet. The study of subalternity, therefore, entails entering all these complexities and decoding them. The present research, therein, keeps the myriad trajectories and tributary formations of Subalternity in view but brings into discussion and borrows contextually from select conceptual scaffolds that inform the purview and scope of the thesis.

At the First World Congress held in Naples in 1997, Joseph Buttigieg pointed out that the 'Subaltern Studies Group', led by critic Ranajit Guha, which disseminated

and widely circulated the notion of the 'Subaltern' through the baseline of Gramsci's notes on the concept, did so only with a partial knowledge of the Gramscian category (Green 118). They saw Gramsci's model as a framework drawn for Italian unification under a fascist Mussolini regime and as a deconstructive matrix that could be used to analyse the dichotomic interrelations between the leader and the led. They re-read (through translations of Gramsci's works) into the concept of the subaltern as referring to the 'proletariat' and gleaned from it his attempts to classify the proletariat as the 'true revolutionary mass' whose historiography had to be re-traced, foregrounded and even privileged above that of the dominant/ruling elite class(es). Critics like Guido Liguori and Marcus Green contest this as they perceive it to be a narrow-paneled approach to Gramscian rhetoric. Writing in the eye of the Italian fascist storm, Gramsci may have attempted to decode and decipher the complex processualities through which power is instituted and hegemonically maintained with his focus on the 'proletariat' as the subaltern being relative to the larger intellectual paradigms of analyses he was trying to install. In doing so, Gramsci opened up models of interrogative analysis that hold true of every society that is structured on power relations. Through a poststructuralist reading of the Gramscian model one may subject any living or bygone spatiotemporal 'society' or 'period' to scrutinies such as: how is the position of privilege *sanctioned* to the elite classes even by those who then, by default, become the insignificant 'other' in the process? If hegemonies are almost always constructed upon binaries, what are the tools deployed in this construction? Is consent – as a political tool of ideological domination – far more powerful than militarized/institutionalized coercion? What are the different agents that participate in the 'writing' of this hegemony? Are the invisible lines of class divisiveness drawn as much by seemingly innocuous and objective 'institutions' such as education and media as by extremist/authoritarian/fundamentalist agencies? Is hegemony breakable through counter processes such as resistance, representation and re-writing?

The Gramscian model thus becomes seminal to counter-narratives. Central to this line of study is bringing those from the hinges to the centre – with both 'hinges' and 'centre' being non-absolutist, non-definitive, non-rigid categories. Coopted in palimpsestic polities, then, subalternity, as will be explored in the later part of this subsection, becomes a flowing fluidity that calls for restructuration (often within itself too).

While Gramscian module of the 'subaltern' forms the crux the present study's preoccupations with centre-margin politics (vis-à-vis environment), the allied concepts in his works call for significant attention in the context. Some of the pertinent vertices to which the present study aligns itself are:

(i)   Cultural hegemony: The concept of cultural hegemony came as a counteractive fallout in understanding why the dominant hypothesis of Orthodox Marxism – that socialist revolutions are inevitable in capitalist, power-driven societies – had failed even at crucial turns in early 20th century. Prominent voices, including that of Gramsci, attributed the oppressed classes' failure to rise to the phenomena of diversified but all-pervasive cultural hegemony. Later developed as Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) as opposed to Repressive State Apparatus by Louis Althusser, the concept of cultural hegemony crucially exhumed instruments by which power is 'normalized' by socially dominant classes. That hierarchy is a construction is negated by a systematic establishment of norms and seemingly 'common sense' values which naturalize marginalization. Ideology, perpetrated through culture(s) and cultural institutions (including literature, art, cinema) is one of the key conduits in the formation and entrenched establishment of these power-structures. The counter-narrative, then, has to re-trace these faultlines and re-right them using the same cultural tools as those used by dominant-narratives. The story has to be told from the margins, from below, from the vantage point of 'disadvantage'. Gramsci highlighted the role of institutionalized religion as well as growing divisiveness in education as root causes of the perceived 'docility' of the working-classes in capitalist communities. Fracturing cultural hegemony is thus central to any tangible revolution against oppressive and/or ulterior class-interests and power-politics.

(ii)   'Organic intellectuals': The rise of the 'intellectual' is one of the key concepts explored in Gramsci's rhetoric and subsequently, the critiques that sought to apply his views to more contemporary frameworks of production, class relations and praxes. Gramsci's view that "All men are intellectuals", insofar as they all have a worldview, "…but not all of them have in society the function as intellectuals" (qtd. in Faber 31) is central to his critical analysis of hegemony-formation. Gramsci propounded that if a dominant class stops at the level of merely protecting and defending its own economic interests, it does not become 'hegemonic'; it merely becomes 'economic corporative'. However, its crucial turn towards hegemony manifests when, moving beyond intra-class cohesion, it begins to dictate, restructure, monitor and control other terrains (political,

social, cultural, environmental etc.) of collective human existence. This is achieved by making other classes align *their* interests with those of the dominant group for *their* 'benefit'. The seemingly arduous (and often, problematic) task is accomplished, not necessarily by strong-arming the other classes into compliance, but by creating conditional consents that enable the longevity of hegemony. It is this process that breeds a set of intellectuals whose function it is to broaden the base of consent and further the interests of the class that fosters them. This does not mean that these intellectuals are non-committal henchmen deployed by the dominant class; they are, in fact, ideologues participating in class dynamics and inter-class relations equipped with motives, tools and positions synchronous to the cause of hegemony. Christine Buci-Glucksmann best explains this process when she says,

> Every social group coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture…and an elite among entrepreneurs…must have the capacity to be an organiser of society in general including all the complex organism of services, right up to the state organism. Every new class, therefore, creates *'organic' intellectuals* to service the new class, to create the conditions of hegemony. (230; my emphasis).

Gramscian locus of the intellectual takes an interesting bifurcation in tracing the interstices between intellectual and hegemony. Exploring the same, critics Deidre O'Neill and Mike Wayne, in their essay, "On Intellectuals" speak of two categories of intellectuals as envisaged by Gramsci. The first – the traditional intellectuals – are those that are simply displaced from one mode of production and re-located in another (rising) mode of production. For instance,

> the intellectuals of the feudal mode of production (clerics, scholars, artists) had to be integrated and re-functioned according to the new practices and needs of the capitalist mode of production…Likewise, the intellectuals developed within capitalism would become the 'traditional' intellectuals vis-à-vis the development of a socialist mode of production, and again

would need to be assimilated into new social priorities and needs. (O'Neill and Wayne 171).

These traditional intellectuals neither embody the ideological commitments of the master class, significantly, nor assimilate all of its hegemonic or subversive values. The individuals who commit to the master-class ideology and further its interest is the second type – the organic intellectuals. The function of the organic intellectuals lies in the critical transition from economic-corporative to hegemony. Their role is to construct, develop and maintain frameworks through which consent is produced and conditionally administered. O'Neill and Wayne deduce that "[c]lassically, organic intellectuals would have been found in political parties, in the top most prestigious newspapers, in public relations and advertising and perhaps today also in think tanks" (172). Gramsci, however, had broadened the base of the organic intellectuals to include 'the scientist' or 'the engineer' – some of the core constructors of the 'conceived spaces' that Lefebvre spoke of. They are called 'organic' because they are naturally (organically) tied to the economic and political ideologies and/or needs of the master class. This has led some of the more recent criticism in Gramscian analyses to induce that organic intellectuals *for* a particular class must rise from within the *same* class.

Gramscian framework of intellectuals always gives scope for the rise of such organic intellectuals from the subaltern groups as well who then, willy-nilly take on roles as in furthering the cause of their specific group. O'Neill and Wayne, therefore, call them 'counter-hegemonic organic intellectuals' who "work to call the dominant frames of reference, the dominant assumptions and the dominant policy trends that favour capitalism into question…[and] develop from *within* the working classes and other subaltern groups (but who must resist assimilation and neutralization within the established institutions)" (173; original emphasis, my ellipsis). In foreseeing the rise of the 'organic intellectuals' within the subaltern classes, Gramsci foregrounded the need for an education that did not impose reactive paradigms as received truths upon individuals but rather facilitated critical 'activity' of producing alternatives of ideologies, histories, cultures, common-sense values and political structures that responded to particular status-quo within a system. The focus, thus, was on articulation – through counter-discourse or subversive movement.

Gramsci's focus on the 'intellectuals' paved way for critical scrutinies in the representational rhetoric of the dominant/subaltern paradigm. More recent critics, use

the paradigm to evaluate the role played by 'technocratic' intellectuals in mediating the interrelations between the traditional and the organic to create third-spaces, or even, hybrid spaces of hegemony as well as counter-hegemony.

(iii)   Position and Manoeuvre: Gramscian rhetoric envisaged the fight against capitalist hegemony through essentially two forms of 'war' – position and manoeuvre. The war of manoeuvre is a direct clash – a showdown of sorts – between, in Gramscian context, the revolutionary masses and the hegemonic classes. This method involves an overt, confrontational revolution, essential to reclamations of rights by explicitly attacking institutions that foster hierarchical oppressions. The war of position, though, is a more covert methodology whose aim is indicative assertions that delegitimize State control by resisting and retaliating against its apparatus. In the present researcher's understanding, while the war of manoeuvre manifests in the form of tangible revolutions, the war of position is often (although not always) fought through intangible schemata. These may include literary and cultural discourses such as poetry, theatre, popular fiction, graphic narratives, art, music, cinema or any other insignia created to facilitate epiphenomenological, creative and by extension reactive impact on individuals.

Although heavily informed by Gramscian models and Western (largely Marxian) discourses on proletariat representation, the critical frameworks of 'subalternity' in postcolonial and other branches of contemporary theory were developed by a group of South Asian scholars working under the umbrella term 'Subaltern Studies Group' (SSG) formed largely through the polemical rhetoric of Ranajit Guha. Guha and the scholars working through foundational basis of SSG, co-opted the subaltern narrative to study, locate and vitalize the historiography of peasant insurgencies in India. Largely through his seminal monograph, *The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, Guha disrupted the unidimensional linearity of official archives of history in order to situate the historiography of peasant rebellions undertaken in colonial India. For this, Guha employed the methodology of reading against the grain. Simply put, he was re-reading the documentations of officialdom for what *they were not* and what *they said not*. Dipesh Chakrabarty outlined this methodology by matching it with its central objective, saying,

> …[A]n explicit aim of *Subaltern Studies* was to write the subaltern classes
> into the history of nationalism and the nation, and to combat all elitist biases
> in the writing of history. To make the subaltern the sovereign of history, to

listen to their voices, to take their experiences and thought (and not just their material circumstances) seriously – these were the goals we *had* deliberately and publicly set ourselves. (102).

Guha and the subaltern studies scholars were acutely aware of the problems involved in simply reading reports and documents *about* peasant and tribal insurrections; all these were written from the point of view of the Raj – the colonial state, for which, these insurgencies were episodes of occasional disturbances in the long-standing all-powerful colonial saga. At best, the peasant insurgencies were 'objects' of analysis, fodder for off-handed analysis on 'mutinies' of the colonized masses which had to be quelled time and again for maintaining the sacrosanctity of the colonial enterprise. The re-presented (the peasants) themselves had no locus standi in this representational rhetoric. Guha, then, intentionally or otherwise, deployed a poststructuralist reading into the official documentation and reversed the critical paradigm offered by dominant discourse. The peasant became the 'subjects' – the protagonists of the historiography – whose voices and subsequently, narrative, could be exhumed and extracted out of the slippages, ruptures, silences, discords and notional grids formulated within the given archival document. In doing so, Guha essentially operates through a tripartite paradigm by,

(i)   Eschewing elitist (the colonialist as well as institutionalized nationalist) historiography.

(ii)   Providing a distinct agency of representation to the subaltern groups.

(iii)   Tracing in the peasant and tribal insurgencies a distinct negative consciousness in order to show that the subaltern narratives of protest (tangible and intangible) are neither spontaneous nor misdirected confusions; they are *conscious*, *thought-out* and *purpose-driven* anti-establishment movements that, if represented appropriately, can help fill some important missing blanks in historiographies, especially of erstwhile colonized nations.

Among several other issues, crucial to the rhetoric on 'subaltern consciousness' postulated through the contextual frames of reference of peasant insurgencies critiqued by Guha, is its implicit indication towards causality, reason, structure, belief system, a sense of *sahitya* (collective community-hood) and socioecological 'knowledge' that informed the seemingly 'mutinous' social movements of the subaltern. Non-representation or misrepresentation of the subaltern points of view, then, flattens out all

the afore-mentioned metrics of protest into oblivion suppressing much of the multifold agencies through which subversive narratives operate. Subaltern studies scholars propound that the historiography of 'convenience' was not only written by the colonial Raj but also by the sections of bourgeoise nationalists that arose in wake of India's struggle for independence. Partha Chatterjee, in the article "The Nation and Its Peasants", draws out these repressive tendencies saying,

> In the agrarian societies of the colonial East, peasants of course became the repositories of all of those cultural presuppositions that allegedly made those societies incapable of modern self-government and hence justified the paternal authoritarianism of Western colonial rule…In India, the colonial mind thought of peasants as simple, ignorant, exploited by landlords, traders and moneylenders, respectful of authority, grateful to those in power who cared for and protected them, but also volatile in temperament, superstitious and often fanatical, easily aroused by agitators and troublemakers from among the Indian elite who wanted to use them for their narrow political designs. Indian nationalists, not surprisingly, shared similar assumptions. (Chatterjee 09).

According to the Subaltern studies scholars, the Indian nationalist movement too imposed upon the subaltern peasants the same stereotypes as those by their colonial masters that to for reasons which weren't drastically dissimilar. The subaltern peasant group was important number-wise; they could contribute substantially in turning political struggles into mass movements if only their naivete could be tapped to support the cause of the (bourgeoise)nationalists. Both, the colonial as well as the nationalist segments viewed the subaltern-peasant class as the 'object of their strategies (Chatterjee 09) thereby distancing them from mainstream politics and representation.

The Post-structuralist methodology and frames of critical scrutiny put forth by the Subaltern Studies Group and critics in collateral studies offer crucial tools by which contemporary dominant political rhetoric can be punctured to assess its treatment of the subaltern-agency. The State and the 'community' (often, subaltern) have time and again been at loggerheads over several sociopolitical and economic but largely ecological issues. These spaces of conflict afford fresh insights into the concept of 'consciousness' implicitly operating through subaltern resistance and retaliation. They also provide perspectives into how bourgeoise nationalism, especially one driven by neo-capitalist

values, may seek to control 'land-management' in order to further economic interests at the cost of subaltern cultures and living.

In the recent period between June and November 2019, two events that occurred in close proximity and consequentiality deserve special mention in the context of present discussion. In June and July 2019, Brazil's INPE released reports of a prolonged rate of fires in the Amazon rainforest. The findings later corroborated by NASA raised considerable alarms at the fast-depleting state of the world's largest carbon sequestration sink. Five months into the catastrophe, on November 02, 2019, media reported the killing of Paulo Paulino Guajarara – a Guardian of the Amazon – by the illegal loggers in the rainforest (Karla Mendes). These two events have deeper intersections with the issues foregrounded by subalternity than those that may appear obvious. The Guajarara peoples (to which the 'Guardian' belonged) as well as the Awá who inhabit regions in the Amazon rainforests are uncontacted tribes classified by the Survival International as some of the most vulnerable and endangered communities in the world today. Although suffering from prolonged marginalization since a long time, the Guajarara and the Awá have been subjected to aggressive and fatal intrusions in their lands and lives in recent times. Critical investigations into the matter suggest that the escalating violence against these communities largely operate under the implicit ideological sanction provided by the 'far-right', aggressive-development policies of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's administration. While the protests staged by the Guajarara in wake of the Amazon rainforest received wide attention with renowned figures such as Leonardo de Caprio and Greta Thunberg standing up for the cause, and while the killing of Paul Paulino Guajarara has launched the 'Indigenous Blood: Not a Single Drop More' movement in Brazil, the fear that public attention to both – land as well as indigenous peoples – has been too late and too little (in comparison to what is at stake) looms larger than ever especially as their rights are directly connected to present-day issues of environmental crisis.

These events provide a crucial juncture from which one can revisit some of Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak's pertinent rhetoric presented in the much-critiqued essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?". Spivak starts off by deconstructing procedures of erasure, elimination and construction employed by the Western discourse in defining the 'Other' of Europe saying that, "great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary – not only by

the ideological and scientific production but also by the institution of the law…" (Spivak 24). Among the silent sufferers of this 'epistemic violence' as Spivak calls it, were the "illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (24) whose subjectivity in their own historiographies was annihilated by a conspicuous non-representation and/or misrepresentation. Spivakian polemics works through the Gramscian model of 'hegemony' and argumentative frameworks instituted by the Subaltern Studies Collective; however, she extends the argument through her rhetorical question, 'Can the Subaltern Speak'? The answer to the question is an obvious 'No' (as envisaged by Spivak) but this negation has often called for relevant qualification lest it is misunderstood as Spivak's attempt to further silence the subaltern and/or shun the possibility of their self-expression.

Born in 1942, Spivak grew up in one of the most tension-fraught periods of Indian history. The colonial British empire was losing its stronghold over India in the cataclysm that was the Second World War. The zestful possibilities of a 'freedom' from the colonial rule in near future was juxtaposed with extremely tangible realities of events such as the Bengal famine where forces of the self-centered British Raj as well as the inherently suppressive land-management systems of the *zamindari* paradigm (along with myriad other factors) operated simultaneously to reduce thousands of living human beings into skeletal bodies. The abstraction of 'epistemic violence' was translated into images of real 'physical violence'. Although its impossible to say whether Spivak's contemporary polemics on the subaltern were consciously informed by these memories, it is hard to deny that such experiences may have whetted a keener understanding of the position of disempowerment and its very palpable implications.

For Spivak, thus, the notion of the 'subaltern' is a negative space – a negative position within social relations. It is a circumstantial 'location' from where no speech is possible, simply because there is neither any socio-economic agency nor any politico-cultural identity through which such speech is made. This is largely because, even in the works of subaltern scholars, the enterprise of 'constructing' subaltern speech is essentially circumscribed by (neo)colonialist critical models.

The present study extracts from Spivak's essay, four conceptual parameters (which will be deployed in analysis in the later parts of the thesis). These are:

(i)   Production of knowledge: Postcolonial theories engaged in a radical scrutiny of all domains of cultural 'formations' and 're-formations' in colonized spatialities. One of the most devastating of the tools employed by the colonizers to perpetrate hegemony, they conclude, was the high-handedness of episteme. As a post-colonial critic, Spivak's theoretical reading into Eurocentric cultural spaces marks locative coordinates of knowledge-productions. The 'consciousness' of subservience is not created just politically; it is generated and planted discursively. According to Spivak, what was (and has been) passed down especially by Western academic thinking as 'knowledge' cannot be objectively received because, almost always, it is driven by the same capitalist agenda that informs trade-politics. Like any other commodity, knowledge too becomes a commodity exported from the West, thereby creating a dominant space where any opposing idea becomes a 'difference' either off-handedly patronized and/or rejected by the 'intellectuals'.

Spivak's focus on the 'production of knowledge' put forth in 1989, gains much more weightage and leverage in the present era of information explosion. With technology making pervasive inroads into the generation, dissemination as well as distribution of information, often dubbed as 'knowledge' the need to revisit the sites of production and consumption of intellectual activity becomes all the more relevant. The idea that knowledge is objective, naïve, unbiased and a reflection of the 'reality' *out there* is passé and in fact, fatalistic to common understanding. The present study asks, are the 'sites' of intellectual discourse *through* which subalternity and subaltern issues find re-presentation, produced by the subalterns themselves? If not, *which* other paradigm is being used and by whom? Can 'organic intellectuals' engaged in counter-hegemonic enterprises take it upon themselves to represent the subaltern? And what about the subaltern 'knowledge'? Is it heard, even when spoken?

(ii)   Agency and Power: The notion of agency and power flows from Spivak's perceptions on the production of knowledge. The Spivakian assertion that the subaltern cannot speak has often been subjected to misleading interpretations contending that the suppressed don't have the *ability* to speak. Spivak's maxim then, needs to be contextualized. As a post-colonial, post-structural, Marxist critic, Spivak saw the profound influence of 'discourse' in intellectual articulation. She, as several contemporary theorists, believes that knowledge flows in discursive patterns through which receives validation and recognition. This process of 'discourse', however, is neither smooth nor organic. It is heavily stated by checks and filters which ultimately

determine what becomes discourse and what doesn't. So, anyone can speak or write infinitely, but the question is whether that speech, writing or any form of self-expression will be accepted as discourse. The subalterns, then, are not those who cannot speak; but rather those who do not have the *agency* by which their articulation is understood. Spivak, in fact, provides an analogy for this supposition. She says that in a society where heteronormativity (reproduction through heterosexuality) is equated with normalcy, homosexuality becomes the differential 'other' which cannot 'speak' – not because it is unable to self-express but because its articulation will not be registered as discourse. In empowering the subaltern, then, the question to be asked is not just whether they are being represented; it is whether they are being provided the agency and power of representation.

(iii)   Writing the subaltern: In the essay, Spivak is markedly critical about the attempts to 'write the subaltern' from the vantage 'outside'. She notes two correlated problems in the area: firstly, the writing is informed by a logocentric assumption of a 'given' cultural solidarity among the heterogenous subalterns; secondly, such 'writings' are often essentialist, i.e. their narratology presumes that all the subalterns stand in the same position vis-à-vis dominant hegemonies. This kind of essentialism follows the same faulty (and ideological) framework practiced by colonial discourse. It erases differences and exigencies that are crucial to a palimpsestic understanding of subaltern experience. She says, "[i]n subaltern studies, because of the epistemic, social, and disciplinary inscription, a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practice of differences…[for] the colonized subaltern is irretrievably heterogenous" (qtd. in Mocombe et. al 59). The non-essentialist indicator leads to one of the most important conceptual paradigms of Spivakian theory (especially in the context of present study) and that is, double marginalization.

(iv)   Double marginalization: In "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak exhumes the need to trace marginalization within the marginalized – a phenomenon that has been referred to by Kyle Bishop as the 'sub subaltern' in her article, "The Sub Subaltern Monster: Imperialist Hegemony and the Cinematic Voodoo Zombie". Spivak routes the discussion of double marginalization through two nodal discussions – treatises on the British abolition of the practice of Sati and mis-readings of Bhubaneshwari Bhaduri's suicide note. She calls the abolition of the *sati* as 'white men saving brown women from brown men' (qtd in Lynsie Thompson vol.4) where, yet again, the direct receiver of the act (the woman) is denied any subjective identity. Similarly, in the aftermath of

Bhaduri's suicide, her suicide note was high-handedly misread as a testimony to 'love gone bad' rather than as an act of political resistance against the assassination that Bhaduri was deputed to commit. This, Spivak says, is because,

> [B]etween patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization. (qtd in Mocombe et. al 59).

The non-essentialist framework of sub subaltern not only opens up a multi-layered, inherently assorted and therefore assertive possibilities of subaltern experiences but rather saves counter-hegemony from becoming hegemonic in its attempt to employ a master-narrative strategy. In the context of present study, the arguments presented in Spivak's essay open up crucial crevices to examine such groups as the tribals, the neo-colonised natives, the women, the widows, the children, flora, fauna and such other categories. This does not mean that these groups will be studied as homogenous categories in themselves; rather, the focus would be in trying to excavate their experiences either by fracturing the semantics of dominant-narratives or by foregrounding works that bring the spatialities of the sub subaltern to the fore.

Through their seminal works in environmental criticism, Vandana Shiva and Ramachandra Guha have launched a wide range of ecological projects some of which make disruptive interventions into issues of subalternity. Shiva draws diagonal lines between nature/culture and woman/man binaries and focuses on their interstices. Guha undertakes a critique of the First World environmental conservation-models and its mindless superimpositions on Third World scenarios. A pattern of similarity runs through the distinct discourses of Shiva and Guha. Their theorization of the environmental issues are steeped in responsiveness towards the material unfolding of events impacting nature and the people (largely, indigenous groups) sharing close affinities with ecological spatialities. In this sense, Shiva's and Guha's theoretical frameworks are not mere sieving agents for textual perceptions; they are positions taken towards practical applications of theoretical postulations towards gleaning practical impacts. Their applicative model, thus, plays an important role in setting off an important discussion between theory-praxes interface in the Green Cultural Studies paradigm.

The present study, in a modest way, makes attempts to contribute towards discussions within these received frameworks while co-opting them for contextual reference. Apart from doing so, the present study also wishes to provide new modalities to address issues of 'ecological subalternity' in an era where global politico-economics can have the most tangible impact on local environments and peoples through unchecked hegemonic juggernauts. In view of this, the present study offers to channelize it's critique through the following iteratives:

(i)   With the view that ecology is in itself a 'subaltern' group, the 'otherization' of nature vis-á-vis concepts such as culture and civilization in the dominant discourses arising largely in the West in wake of Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment, the World-Wars and the Colonialism project will be critiqued through select texts in the purview of present research.

(ii)   According to the present research, the failure of the Kyoto Protocol, the Copenhagen summit and the recent Paris agreement is not only about nations' adjourning commitment to carbon-emission reduction. The narrative of non-compliance has deeper roots that are traceable through the paradigms of 'hegemony' and 'ideology' submitted by critics like Antonio Gramsci. The present study will therefore attempt to unspool threads of neo-capitalism and by extension, neo-colonialism that are, as yet, controlling meta-narratives through which worldviews are formed and received.

(iii)   Through the model of the subaltern counter-discourse provided by Subaltern Studies Collective in their confrontational re-readings of dominant narratives on peasant insurgencies, the present study will undertake re-reading of some master-narratives (through bodies of law, travel writing, political treatises) in hegemonizing environmental policies. It will also, then, re-read to foreground some protest narratives that lodged counter-discourses in tangible and intangible forms.

(iv)   Through a non-essential, deconstructionist model borrowed from Spivak, the study will re-consider 'production of knowledge' as a site, not for hegemony, but for dialogue where the emerging digital spaces play an important role. It will also revisit the notional domain of 'agency' that the subaltern classes can acquire through contemporary multimedial spaces.

(v)   The model of the 'sub subaltern' will be invoked via texts to foreground double, (sometimes, treble) marginalization of ecology and the 'subaltern'. In doing so, the

inherent heterogeneity entailed in the semiotics of the term 'subaltern' will be brought into brief discussion.

The above-mentioned paradigm of Green Subaltern Studies will be employed in reviewing select primary texts incorporated within the study.

2.7 Conclusion

In providing an 'Introduction' to the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, Irene Rima Makaryk draws attention to the paradoxes entailed in 'defining' theoretical frameworks. Most contemporary approaches to literature and culture, she says, defy classification and compartmentalization. Even while being sentient to central tenets, matrices and beliefs within their operations, they neither enclose themselves up in self-oriented readings nor isolate themselves from reactionary, opposing or bifurcative dialogues emerging from within or without. In fact, Makaryk contends that they attack "… 'magisterial' products, as well as presuppositions concerning the neutrality and disinterestedness of scholarship, the idea of literary canons, the transparency of language, and even the notion of clarity itself as a desirable or necessary feature of argument" (vii).

Reiterating Makaryk's viewpoint, the present study perceives 21st century as an era of 'post-theory-theory' – a non-essential, multimedial and potent hyperspace where thoughts become dialogues, tenets become conversations and frameworks become points for further departures.

It is in such hyperspaces that human worldviews are being constructed, received and consumed in contemporary times. Theory, thus, is no more under the ownership of intellectual theorists than politics under the ownership of politicians, history under the ownership of historians, and science under the ownership of scientists. Access to information via technology is gradually erasing off strictly drawn boundaries between knowledge-domains with more and more disciplines engaging in high-octane cross-textualities. Moreover newer mediums of self-expression have not only made articulation possible (in terms of making them 'visible' and 'audible') but also broken

the brick-walls of opaque inaccessibility to 'institutions' of power. The impact of such articulation, moreover, has not remained constrained to ambiguous abstractions but has started spewing out tangible changes of microscopic and macrocosmic relevance.

It is also in such hyperspaces that environment is being 're-discoursed' in contemporary times. The tangible manifestations of environmental catastrophes worldwide have forced inaugurations of inter-national and intercultural dialogues that either didn't exist traditionally or were carried out in more one-directional tonalities. In present times, the registers and tonalities of communication have been forced to self-rupture and accommodate multiple dimensions of vertical, horizontal and diagonal speeches.

The above-discussion may faultily convey an unrealistic idealism through which the present study perceives 21st century hyperspaces. While the present researcher believes that one is living in a world of possibilities hitherto unavailable, it is also true that the hyperspaces and possibilities themselves need to brought under critical scrutinies time and again. This is where the inherently defying, interrogative and disruptive 'nature' of theory comes into play.

In its bid for a 'post-theory-theory', the present study emphasizes on the need for paradigmatic shifts in conventional ways of perceiving theoretical perspectives in *specific response to global environmental crises*. Rather than superimposing the frameworks of theoretical approaches on texts, while treating the theories themselves as isolated gulags, the present study seeks to initiate meaningful dialogues between theoretical perspectives and texts towards the material unfolding of perceptions generated. The conventional method of using theory as an informed sieve through which the 'text' traffics its way towards making 'deeper' and/or alternative sense than what plain reading affords will be employed in present study too. However, in doing so, greater emphasis will be laid upon making theoretical approaches,

(i) **Intertextual:** towards fostering cross-textual and more importantly, cross-theoretical analyses vis-à-vis environmental representation. For instance, the eco-space of *maand* explored in one of the primary texts under study affords interfaces between the semiotic 're-invention' of spatiality among the subaltern in order to resist hegemonic anti-environment policies.

(ii)   **Polysemic:** towards assessing current modalities of information production, dissemination and consumption across multimedial platforms in order to make 'scrutiny' integral to the practice of 'reading'. The 'information' per se, may not necessarily be *about* environment but may impact it in other circumlocutory ways. For instance, the picture of an empty chair (which was supposed to be occupied by US President Donald Trump at the G-7 Summit held in Biarritz, France in 2019 for efforts against global warming) displayed as a headlining image on leading multimedial platforms will be 'read' as an 'anecdote' that serves as a representamen for multiple-levelled interpretants in analysing the effect of political-ideologies on environmental crises.

(iii)   **Pluralistic:** towards recognising that 21st century society cannot be understood in rigidities; what may work in one model, may not work in another. For instance, is the 'sustainability' paradigm of wildlife conservation adopted by the United States of America also applicable, verbatim and in toto, in regions of Asia or Africa? If not, then isn't 'sustainability' as a concept and practice subject to 'difference' and 'subversion' in its local manifestations? While engaging in such interrogations through the six theoretical perspectives adopted in the research, the present study will attempt to show that non-essentialist counter-hegemonic theoretical and textual discourses have to be plural, perhaps even paradoxical in nature, in order to re-assess human interrelations with environment.

(iv)   **Practice-oriented:** towards connecting theory with material unfolding at impact-levels that may be tangible or intangible. The word 'practice' or 'practical applications' is looked at with a lot of scepticism (even slight wariness) among receivers in humanities. Therefore, the term 'practice-oriented' warrants qualification. Practice is looked at as anything that is action-oriented and hence, a *practical application* of anything – theory, thought, study – is outcome-based. Outcome is often associated with systematized experimentation, methodology, results and conclusions based on evidences such as statistics, figures, test-scores et cetera. The present study, however, calls for a more fluid usage of the term 'practice-oriented' when applied in present context. This will perhaps be best understood through an illustration. As one of its pointers under the paradigm of 'Green Spatiality', the present study has focussed on a theoretic study of spaces reinvented – tangibly or intangibly – by people as a counter-discourse against spatial destruction through dominant anti-environment policies. One such 'reinvented space' is any web-based site/page/handle especially accessible through

social media that is committed towards addressing environmental challenges. Through the baseline of Green Spatiality, then, one could undertake the mapping of the effectiveness of digital spaces in mitigating environmental crises. Such an analysis may use as case-study the particular instance of fund-raising project initiated by welfare agency Earth Alliance with support from global celebrity Leonardo DiCaprio through their Instagram handles in order to invoke rehabilitative help to the indigenous communities that suffered in wake of Amazon rainforest burning. While the initiative created intangible impact through vocal support for the indigenous communities pan-globe, its tangible impact reinstated the potency of 'digital space' in a hypermediated world. Within 48 hours of DiCaprio's initial post seeking funds for the cause, the Earth Alliance had managed to raise "over $1 million in small donations from more than 22,000 individuals from 138 countries" (DiCaprio, "leonardodicaprio" *Instagram* August 28). For Green Spatiality, this tangible impact is a reading into the formation of 'networks', 'becomings', 'deterritorialization' and 'lived spaces' provided by modules in Spatial Studies. However, such analysis may be off-set by further implications. For instance, are these 'reinvented spaces' immune to incursion by hegemonic bodies? Are these 'reinvented spaces' privilege-driven? Do such spaces afford agencies for subaltern voices? In undertaking such interrogations, theory can not only assess existing (tangible) outcomes but also systematically trace eventual patterns within the studied modules to formulate causal postulations regarding future behaviour towards environment.

The next Chapter on 'Textual Perceptions' undertakes a detailed analysis of select texts through theoretical perspectives and modalities discussed above.

CHAPTER THREE

TEXTUAL PERCEPTIONS: A STUDY OF 'RE-PRESENTATION' AND 'REPRESENTATION' OF NATURE IN SELECT TEXTS.

3.1 Introduction

In the article titled, "Consilience, Ecocriticism and Ecological Destruction", Jerry Hoeg proposes that there is

> a narrative proclivity hard-wired into the human mind, waiting only to be triggered by exposure to the social world in infancy and then exploding when language becomes available…What has not been so easy to determine is how the adaptive function of narrative works in human cultures. We know…[however, that]… symbolic representation has historically been a means to control the relations within and between human societies, and also *to control relations between human societies and nature*. (*Politics and Culture*; my emphasis).

Hoeg's view serves as a significant locus from where the present study seeks to begin its discussion on 'Textual Perceptions'. However, it is relevant to qualify the usage of the terms 'texts' and 'textuality' in context of the present study. Conventionally, the term 'text' has been associated with the written and printed form of the 'word' that forms the body of any expression of knowledge and/or creativity. This 'text' is the privileged content – the vortex of everything layered and sub-layered that a given material has to offer. Anything allied to this text – images, appendices, notes, illustrations – are considered ancillary; they are treated as aids which help to understand the text and in doing so, they become supplementary. Therefore, it's essentially the text which needs to be 'read' for meaning-derivation from the given material. While keeping this conventional paradigm in sight, the present study moots an alternative viewpoint. It contends that the afore-discussed streamlined definition of the term 'text' has unduly privileged the 'written word' over all other forms of expressions. In academia, for instance, we read 'textbooks' as repositories of the human intellect and living testimonies of the vast pool of knowledge that has been produced and documented, in all optimism, for posterity. While this approach may be sound for the agency of learning, it can be gravely straight-jacketed. For instance, it risks the possibility of leaving out a

vast body of oral, visual, auditory, tactile and other forms of expression that constitute the human signification system. This system, while being in a state of flux carries an element of entelechy that can be extremely crucial in meaning-making. The present study, therefore, calls for an expansion in the scope of the term 'text' to include *any* form of expression that, once put *out there*, may be open for decipher at any given point in spatiotemporality. This line of thinking, in the present study, is largely developed within the Structuralist emphasis upon looking at the institution of human communication as a system of signs. Having said this, it is important to acknowledge that traditionally too, the emphasis upon the oral and visual renditions have been integral to ancient Indian discourses on *vāk*, Aboriginal art-documentations of living cultural stories as well as in 20th century avant-garde trajectories of Imagism, Surrealism and Dadaism, to name a few. Taking its cue from all these approaches, the present study builds the argument that any expression, even in its most fundamental form, is a 'sign' open for interpretation. Any 'sign' open for interpretation must be 'read'. Thus, any sign is a *text* which contains within itself sets of signifiers and signifieds. These sets of signifiers and signifieds which constantly permutate and interplay to 'create' meaning (*not* reflect it) form the 'textuality' of the text.

The present study believes that textuality – its production and consumption – is built into the everyday lives of humans especially in the contemporary world. Therefore, the deconstruction of these textualities is crucial in the present era of vast information-explosion and mediation especially with the onset of newer simulative spaces such as digital platforms. Whether in graphical, written or oral form, 'texts' construct and shape multiple realities. Very often, however, despite their entrenched presence in human discourse, texts are considered to be naïve artefacts floating in the realms of aesthetic ethers. Their significance in the process of ideology-building and perception-shaping is grossly undermined. They are compartmentalized into various categories and allotted unidimensional significance thereof. They are either considered as innocuous sources of entertainment or when studied, fixed in time and place within the paradigm of motives informing their inception and subsequent reception. The present study argues that texts and textuality are neither naïve cultural entities nor innocuous products of mass entertainment even when integrated in the most casual manner in human discourse. In the course of the present analysis, therefore, the study,

(i)   selects 'texts' treating them as 'cultural products' brought into the pool of human consumption through different media. In doing so, it picks texts from the areas of

written-fictional literature, illustrative literature, graphical literature, social-digital media, popular-cinematic media and folk-cultural media which, consciously or subconsciously, carry representations of environment that are crucial to the current discussion.

(ii)   employs the theoretical approaches discussed in Chapter Two to critically examine the representation(s) of environment in these texts in order to decode the significance of textualisation of nature and its impact on the practical action for or against it. To do this, the study does not treat these texts as plenums frozen in time, place, category or purpose; rather, it treats them as fluid, individual palimpsests which are continuously 'making' and 'producing' meanings in the larger human signification system. While the 'individuality' of these texts is considered, they are *not* treated as gulags quarantined from each other. In fact, the study hinges on the ubiquitous intertextuality of these texts which is often ignored in critical discourses.

(iii)   emphasizes on the role of texts in shaping critical socio-political dialogues at regional, national and global levels with regard to environment. Although often relegated as 'fictive', 'creative' and tertiary sources of data, these texts actually play a significant part in forming, changing and transmuting human processes of ideation and action. It is, therefore, of utmost significance to continuously and contiguously critique the processes of textualisation of environment if one were to participate in the larger political dialogues pertaining to nature. For the purpose of analytical cohesion, this Chapter is divided into five sub-sections: the first sub-section is the introduction that attempts to qualify the term 'text' in the present study; the second sub-section (3.2) will undertake a critique of texts categorised under 'literary-fiction' viz. *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton, *The Inheritors* by William Golding and *The Kiln* by Mahabaleshwar Sail; the third sub-section (3.3) will analyse the representation of environment in popular-culture and folk-culture through the cinematic text *Avatar* directed by James Cameron and the Goan folkloric practice of *Dhalo* performed by the womenfolk, respectively; the fourth sub-section (3.4) will attempt to foreground the power of 'visual' in environmental representation through an analysis of the illustrative textuality in *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* by Trupti Godbole, Govind Mukundan, Poonam Bir Kasturi and Ishan Ghosh, the graphical textuality in *Our Toxic World: A guide to hazardous substances in our everyday lives* by Aniruddha Sen Gupta and Priya Kuriyan and digital-image textuality in select cartoons from *Green Humour* by Rohan

Chakravarty; the fifth sub-section (3.5) will attempt to make concluding remarks on the analyses and foreground patterns of similitude exhumed through the study.

3.2 Literary Fiction

3.2.1. "Keep it, guard it, care for it": Land-management and hegemonic politic in *Cry, the Beloved Country*

A New Historicist, Semiotic, Post-structuralist, Spatial and Subaltern analysis.

In an attempt to sieve *Cry, the Beloved Country* through the framework of Green Cultural Studies, the present study, firstly, takes a recourse to New Historicism by recovering an 'anecdote'. However, rather than excavating the anecdote from the text's contemporary period, a 'moment' from current times is exhumed and instated. In doing so, an attempt is made to show an archival continuum that exists in issues that underlie present ecological crisis closely connected as they are with human political and economic enterprises.

In August 2019, global attention was drawn towards a deeply disconcerting phenomenon. The Amazon rainforest – the world's largest carbon-dioxide sink playing a key role in carbon sequestration and by extension, Climate Change mitigation, was burning. In June and July 2019, Brazil's INPE was the first to release reports detailing an alarmingly increased rate of these fires through its satellite monitoring system. However, the catastrophe claimed worldwide attention when NASA corroborated INPE's findings in August 2019. Visuals captured through satellite imaging along with a disturbing image of São Paulo darkened by the fires despite being approximately 2790 kilometres away from the Amazon rainforest, sent shockwaves across the globe through digital and television media platforms and raised fervent concerns among citizens. With an increased attention from the world, the issue of the rainforest-burning gained attention of governments world-wide leading to critical inquiries into the seemingly prolonged and highly catastrophic fires. While it was known that such fires in the Amazon rainforest were common phenomena due to the slash-and-burn technique used for blanket deforestation, the news reports derived through crucial investigations suggested that Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's aggressive pro-business policies had significantly decimated environmental protection in the land leading to an implicit

sanction to the deforestation of the Amazon. Persistent voices of dissent with regard to the rainforest-burning and its cataclysmic impact on global and local environments, however, did not disappear in virtual ethers. Subsequent to increased pressures from the international community at the 45th G7 summit, the Brazilian President not only dispatched troops to fight the fires but also signed a decree to prevent such fires for a sixty-day period.

The afore-discussed incident of the Amazon rainforest forms a significant point of departure for this study due to three reasons:

(i)   A closer analysis of the Amazon rainforest fires' catastrophic impact on Climate Change drew the attention of critical scrutiny towards the fate of roughly 306000 indigenous people residing within or near the rainforests whose lives could possibly have been irrevocably altered due to the burning. This incident, once again, brought to light the notion of 'selective' (as opposed to holistic) economic development – one that *chose* to ignore sections of society that it perceivably deemed insignificant and/or powerless.

(ii)   However, the occurrence also highlighted the relevance of protest narratives in tangible and virtual forms. As reported by Christian Poirier (2019), nearly 3000 women leaders of indigenous communities from across Brazil "staged a mobilization in the nation's capital as part of the country's first Indigenous Women's March. Entitled "Territory: our body, our spirit", this historic gathering was in response to escalating violations of indigenous rights under the Bolsonaro government, as native peoples and their lands fall increasingly under assault" (Poirier). Protests by these indigenous women resonated with world-wide agitations surfacing through digital media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram.

(iii)   The incident also reopened critical inquiries into notions of 'development' itself. As in the case of Amazon rainforest, there seems to a distinct difference in the conceptual perception of 'development' between the indigenous people and politico-economic lobbies that govern land-management. From a purely Structuralist point of view, the word 'development' is an arbitrary signifier for the meaning it generates within the received context. But the repercussions of the term in usage run deeper. Therefore, in contemporary times, there is a need to relook at the *process* of this meaning-making as well as the final productions emerging out of this meaning.

Through the conceptual scaffold of the above discussion, the present study argues that through the ages, 'land' (as a metonymic representation of environment in present context) has become more of a politico-economic entity rather than a socio-ecological entity. It's 'management', therefore, needs to be analysed vis-à-vis the modern jargon and juggernaut of 'civilization'. The implications of land-management by those in authority are borne not only by physical environment itself but also the life it supports which includes peoples, flora and fauna native to or settled in the land. Often considered powerless in sociocultural and political paradigms, voices as well as silences of the native communities as the subaltern become significant subversive narratives that need to be studied in close juxtaposition with the dominant ones.

This study argues that doing so is not only pertinent in deriving a greater understanding of issues such as social justice and equity but also in locating the symptomatic causes of several interconnected environmental issues. It also argues that this conflicting dichotomy between environmental sustainability and economic development was at the fulcrum of the colonialist model which superimposed its rhetoric of 'civilization' on the native land and people alike, rendering both the entities 'other-ed' subaltern. In continuum, the study puts forth that this dichotomic model continues to persist despite the end of the processuality that espoused it. The implications of the failure to respond to this lopsided, anti-sustainable version of 'development' are phenomenologically tangible and physically palpable. They carry the potential power to jeopardize the very survival of life-specie on the planet in a shorter run than one predicted. The present study revisits a 20th century subversive narrative which stages a formidable critique of and dissent against political structures that cause ecological damages through a systematic marginalization of both environmental as well as human rights. Working through the baseline of New Historicism, Semiotics, Post-Structuralism, Spatial Criticism and Subaltern Studies, the present study reads Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Published in 1955, Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* revolves around the story of Africa as it is caught in the turmoil of change in wake of foreign rule and expansion. At the centre of this narrative is a village priest, Stephen Kumalo, whose quest to bring his sister and son back to Ndotsheni takes him on a journey to Johannesburg. The labyrinth city of Johannesburg is a cruel juxtaposition – it thrives on kindness in face of the worst kind of greed, exploitation and corruption. The racial

divide is more conspicuous and sinister beset with violent actions that inform everyday lives of people belonging to the 'white-settler' and 'native African' communities. Enmeshed in this iniquitousness, Kumalo finds himself in further trouble when he learns of the deplorable lives of his sister, Gertrude and son, Absalom. The central conflict comes when Absalom is accused of the murder of Arthur Jarvis – a white man relentlessly working towards the upliftment and emancipation of the 'black community'. Ironically, the parents of Arthur Jarvis are the landed gentry of Ixopo and hence, well-known in the village of Ndotsheni. Assisted by the kindness of Father Msimangu, Father Vincent and Mrs. Lithebe, Stephen Kumalo manages to restore some hope in an otherwise devastated situation. Similarly, following Arthur Jarvis' death, his father James Jarvis gets influenced by his son's thoughts on the racial scenario in Africa which the former had analytically documented. Therefore, upon his return to Ixopo, James Jarvis facilitates the restoration of the Ndotsheni farmlands with the help of modern advancements in agriculture. He also initiates working with Stephen Kumalo towards the betterment of a deteriorating Ndotsheni community. The novel ends on a dualistic note of hopelessness and hope: while Absalom is executed for his crime of killing Arthur Jarvis, Stephen Kumalo hopes for a new dawn breaking for Africa with the likes of James Jarvis working towards the betterment of the natives.

Cry, the Beloved Country has often been analysed as a nodal work on apartheid which records finer nuances of social discrimination. The work engages itself in various dialogues concerning the laws that ensured the marginalization of native communities as they got displaced from their social structures and were rendered the 'weaker' class. *Cry, the Beloved Country* captures these dichotomies; it deconstructs the forces of coercion and consent which were used by the foreign powers to make natives internalise their discrimination. However, a pertinent issue discoursed in the text has received, at best, tertiary attention in popular critical inquiries into the narrative. While the text is explicitly on apartheid and the painfully devastating process of negative discrimination against the native communities, the entire narrative of *Cry, the Beloved Country* unfolds against the backdrop of an acute land-politic. Although environmental reorganization of Africa emerges as one of the work's central preoccupations, the theme per se, has not been fully explored or underlined in critical analyses. The present study makes select submissions by undertaking a socioecological critique of the colonial 'land-shaping' as reflected in the novel.

As discussed in Chapter Two, spatial approaches claim that traditional literary criticism has privileged the temporality of the narrative over its spatiality. It has critiqued and even celebrated the labyrinthine psychological portrayals of characters that respond to the socio-historic milieu of their times while capturing the entelechy of human existence. The 'space' which these portrayals inhabit has often come to be viewed as tangential to the main narrative. 'Space', thus, is decimated as a 'stage' subsumed within the larger temporal narrative. In recent critical theories, however, the marginalized position given to space has been called into question. In his work, *The Production of Space* (1974), spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre eschews what he believes to be anachronistic critical models of viewing space as "a pre-existing void, endowed with formal properties alone…a container waiting to be filled by a content – i.e. matter, or bodies" (170). 'Space', in fact, is as much a living entity as the characters represented. *Cry, the Beloved Country* unfolds in two pertinent 'spaces' – Ndotsheni and Johannesburg. Ndotsheni, a fictional village, is mapped as being situated in the Umzimkulu valley located in the province of Natal. Present-day 'Umzimkulu' is situated in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. P.E. Raper in his work, *Dictionary of South African Place Names* states that the term 'Umzimkulu' is derived from the Mzimkulu River on which it is situated to suggest a 'big place' or a 'large home' of the waters (446). In the novel, the village of Ndotsheni lies in close proximity with Ixopo, an actual town in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal, which in turn is named after the onomatopoeic term 'eXobo' used to describe the sound that cattle make as they squelch and drag their hooves through mud ("Ixopo"). The signifiers used to signify Umzimkulu and Ixopo stem from the indigenous languages of Xhosa and Zulu and are shaped extensively by the landscape they embody although they too bear consequences of colonial re-shaping. In stark contrast, however, the etymology of 'Johannesburg' – a city which is said to have been 'established' in 1886 after the discovery of Witwatersrand gold in 1884 – is informed by severe colonial matrices. Although the exact records for the choice of this name have been supposedly lost, critics conjecture that the name is associated with one and/or several people named 'Johannes' who were instrumental in early trajectories of the city. For instance, there was a surveyor general, *"*Hendrik Dercksen, Christiaan Johannes Joubert, who was a member of the Volksraad and was Republic's chief of mining" ("Johannesburg"). The city has also been supposedly named after Johannes Meyer, the first governmental official in the

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region. It is also hypothesized that since Johann and Johannes were common Dutch names, the term 'Johannesburg' was attributed to the place as a tool of ownership-appropriation by the colonials. Another theory claims that the name was essentially derived from the full name of Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, the president of SAR (South African Republic) from 1883-1900 ("Johannesburg").

All these possibilities give an insight into the impact of colonial imposition on the land and possibly map the role of cultural domination vis-à-vis political hegemony. Thus, the term Johannesburg signifies a physical landscape shaped by colonial rule and a politico-cultural landscape 'constructed' in colonial imagination as the land of promise. In Lefebvre's triad model of lived/perceived/conceived spatiality, Johannesburg is a clear 'conceived space' that is heavily agenda-driven. Dubbed as a 'land' of opportunities, Johannesburg becomes a crucial epicentre where people are categorized, communities compartmentalized and the politic of suppressive domination played out. As the narrative observes,

> [A]ll roads lead to Johannesburg. If you are white or if you are black, they lead to Johannesburg. If the crops fail , there is work in Johannesburg. If there are taxes to be paid, there is work in Johannesburg. If the farm is too small to be divided further, some must go to Johannesburg. (Paton 48).

The rise of Johannesburg as a colonial epicentre is willy-nilly accompanied by a decimation and devaluation of other lands, especially those 'set out' for the indigenous people as native reserves. A breakdown in traditional ecological practices further accentuates unnatural pressures levied on small patches of land thereby significantly deterring the soil-quality and, in turn, triggering its rapid deterioration. In consequence, the tribes which are heavily dependent upon the land for their livelihood are forced either to migrate to other places (in this case, Johannesburg) or depend upon the employment provided by the more-powerful white-settler communities of the region. Paton's visuo-spatial description of the landscape at once links the deterioration of the land with the degradation and displacement of the indigenous peoples. The narrator remarks,

> Where you stand the grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. But the rich green hills break down. They fall to the valley below, and falling, change their nature. For they grow red and bare; they cannot hold the rain and mist, and the streams are dry in the kloofs. Too many cattle feed upon

the grass, and too many fires have burned it. Stand shod upon it, for it is coarse and sharp, and the stones cut under the feet. It is not kept, or guarded, or cared for, it no longer keeps men, guards men, cares for men. The titihoya does not cry here any more. (Paton 07).

The 'land' appears before any character in the story. This establishes the fact that it is not a mere *res extensa* (an objective extension) to the main story but rather *res cogitans* (a subject) in the unfolding narrative. The identity of the land is drastically altered by the onset of colonialism as is that of the indigenous peoples of the colonized communities. In being severely altered by human actions that have turned rich green hills into lands 'red and bare', the land becomes a product severely *shaped by* human interference. Consequentially, in not being able to keep, guard or care for men, the land becomes a *shaper of* the lives of the indigenous peoples, imposing a forced migration. This process becomes a vicious cycle – land-deterioration leads to migration of native people, which, in turn, aggravates the neglect of land and brings about further deterioration.

The dominant rhetoric of colonial perspective, validated by 'history-texts' often relegates the blame of the deterioration of indigenous African land upon the natives' lack of sophisticated farming knowledge and/or their seemingly debauched need to migrate to larger cities developed by the colonizers. In models that are heavily agenda-driven, this rhetoric is dubbed as 'scientific truth' and passed on from one generation to another thereby conditioning natives to believe that they have been responsible for their own deplorable conditions. In the novel, James Jarvis represents this dominant rhetoric. But the rhetoric, unyielding as it seems, inflects into a more interrogative and introspective tone. Even while apparently blaming the natives, Jarvis' train of thought takes subtle cognizance of the disadvantageous position into which the natives are placed. Jarvis states,

Indeed they [the white communities] talked about it often, for when they visited one another and sat on the verandahs drinking their tea, they must need look out over the barren valleys and the bare hills that were stretched below them. Some of their labour was drawn from Ndotsheni, and they knew how year by year there was less food grown in these *reserves*. There were too many cattle there, and the fields were eroded and barren; each new field extended the devastation. Something might have been done if these people had only learned how to fight erosion, if they had built walls to save

the soil from washing, if they had ploughed the contours of the hills. But the hills were steep, and indeed some of them were never meant for ploughing. And the oxen were weak, so that it was easier to plough downwards. (113; my emphasis)

A semantic deconstruction of the passage shows that James Jarvis' worldview hinges on a distinct We/They binary which moreover seems integral to his assessment of the natives' social position. His discourse on the natives' situation, seemingly objective, is not only informed by predetermined notions about the 'other-ed' community but is also grossly deductive. It's more of a judgement rather than evaluation for although it speaks of native land reserves, it hardly assesses the deplorable, one-sided policies and legal measures undertaken by the colonizers that governed land-segregation. Through a New Historicist perspective, one needs to thus study the legal literature that governed land policies in colonial Africa during the novel's inception and publication.

In the article, "List of Laws on Land Dispossession and Segregation" (2013), the *South African History Online (SAHO): towards a people's history* states that, "while the process of colonial expansion and land dispossession in Southern Africa began in the Cape, over time as the white colonialist political hold over the new territories were established and structures of governance were set in place, laws or general rules regulating 'native' land ownership were established" (*SAHO*, 2013). The colonial authorities mapped and segregated what came to known as 'native reserves' - patches of land – thereby initiating the policy of rigid segregation. This act of blatant suppression of the natives' progress was validated by a series of laws and statutory measures that severely damaged the multi-layered bonds shared by natives with nature. WJ du Plessis in his work, *African Indigenous Land Rights in a Private Ownership Paradigm*, PER (2011) states, "By the time of the advent of the new South Africa, about 17,000 statutory measures had been issued to segregate and control land division, with 14 different land control systems in South Africa" (DuPlessis). Of these, the present study looks at some pertinent ones, relevant to the discussion of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Promulgated by the South African Republic, the ''Squatters Act" of 1887 turned natives into 'squatters' thereby rendering illegal (and by extension, criminalising) land-occupation by the indigenous people on what came to be termed as 'white-owned

farms'. In the article, "Claiming a Space in a Changing South Africa: The 'Squatters' of Marconi Beam, Cape Town", Grant Saff claimed that by the mid-1990s an estimated 7.7 million South Africans lived in informal settlements: a fifth of the country's population (235-255). Further, passed in 1903 in Transvaal, the Crown Land Disposal Ordinance (No 57) defined the term 'crown land' as constituting all unalienated land as well as all land that was the property of the government, irrespective of how it was acquisitioned. In 1912, the Parliament of South Africa passed the Land Settlement Act of 1912 thereby outlining the provisions for "the sale of state land to whites" (*SAHO*). Studies show that subsequent to the passing of this measure, "210 farms covering a total area of 168,636 hectares was given to white farmers over four years" (*SAHO*). Perhaps, one of the most devastating of these statutory measures was the Natives Land Act passed in 1913. Encyclopædia Britannica reinforces that the Natives Land Act of 1913 "defined less than one-tenth of South Africa as black "reserves" and prohibited any purchase or lease of land by blacks outside the reserves" (Bundy et al.). The disempowerment of the natives caused by these land acts were, moreover, deliberate and consciously integral to the dominant perception of 'progress'. Critical perforations made within the arguments which James Jarvis builds in justifying land-laws designed by (white) policy-makers facilitates insights into this the derogatory, but often self-contradictory, image-formation of the black peoples. James Jarvis polemizes,

> Some said there was too little land anyway, and that the natives could not support themselves on it, even with the most progressive methods of agriculture. But there were many sides to such a question. For if they got more land, and treated it as they treated what they had already, the country would turn into a desert. And where was the land to come from, and who would pay for it? *And indeed there was still another argument, for if they got more land, and if by some chance they could make a living from it, who would work on the white men's farms*? (113-114; my emphasis)

Thus, the machinery of 'justice' became a neatly devised and wielded instrument through which the colonizing community could control the entire land-politic in the African continent thereby systematically pushing the natives to the margins of the power-paradigm. These laws drastically reshaped the physical environment leading to commodification of land as a political tool not only to benefit a select section of people in power but to implicatively disadvantage the indigenous people by a systematic process of disengaging them socially, politically and even culturally from the land to

which they belonged. This process of land 'management' gave a legal sanction to acts such as mass deforestation, land clearing and indigenous habitat-displacement – all done so in the name of 'development'. James Jarvis argument is also fallacious due to its gross underestimation of the natives' knowledge of their ecology and land. He dismisses any possibility of the indigenous peoples' abilities to tend and utilise the land that they have received by virtue of being its inhabitants. This line of thinking is representative of the larger colonial rhetoric that justified the enterprise of imperialism under the aegis of the civilizing mission. In most cases, the colonizers tried to fit the *terra nova* within the framework of Western scientific and social episteme. As such, most lands of biodiverse existence were dubbed as plausible 'disease ecologies' (environments conducive for breeding of diseases) and hence tagged for blanket clearing. This informed some of the most pressing justifications of major land alterations particularly in the African subcontinent. In the colonial narratives, the colonizers were represented as icons of saviour who helped the 'dark continent' emancipate itself from the darkness of savagery. However, later studies pointedly fracture this argument and foreground means through which the institution of colonialism itself perpetrated the disease-culture. A point in case is Paul Richards study titled, "Ecological Change and Politics of African Land Use" published in the *African Studies Review* in which he reports that,

> [t]ropical Africa became a zone of exceptional health risk in large measure as a result of intensified contact with the rest of the world, especially during the period of slave trade. Major epidemic diseases – smallpox, venereal disease, influenza and cholera – were introduced through ports and spread subsequently along major trade routes. Colonialism continued unintentionally to facilitate the spread of such diseases by permitting or encouraging new patterns of population mobility e.g. long distance labor migration…Recent work by nationalist historians and dependency theorists has begun (quite legitimately) to reflect the African point of view that it is the outside world, not Africa, and to emphasize the *medical (and subsequent demographic) disasters resulting from the colonial embrace*. An example is to be found in current attempts to account for persistent pockets of underpopulation in the Zaire River basin and adjacent regions. Low fertility in this region is more probably the long term result of intense colonial exploitation, forced labour migration, consequent destabilization of family

life, and the rapid spread of venereal (and other epidemic) diseases, rather

than the result of inherent environmental poverty or hazards to health… (15,

18; my emphasis).

James Jarvis' under-evaluation of the natives' farming and land-'development' abilities, therefore, is heavily conditioned by the curated episteme produced by the colonial narratives about African land-management before the arrival of the colonizers. The Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) embedded within African management of lands were severely ruptured owing to superimposition of utility-intensive advancement modules prescribed by Western high-modernism. Similar to practices see in various indigenous and/or early-settler cultures, the native Africans too practiced non-utilization of select patches of land that served as traditional techniques of land-preservation and replenishment essential for sustainability. This practice helped in maintaining ecological balance by preventing undue pressures on the land. The territorial reorganization of Africa irreversible thwarted the indigenous model of land management. In its place, it superimposed a Western consumption model where land was nothing but a commodity which had to be utilised maximally for human (that is, colonial) benefit. Intensive cultivation, re-development of forested-areas as 'national parks' or 'reserves' leading to heavy displacement of native flora and fauna and blanket deforestation of regions termed as 'disease ecologies' leading to dislocation of indigenous people constituted the environmental reorganization of Africa. Paton's narrative captures this reality through the following words by a character,

It is wrong to say, as they do in remote places like Bloemfontein and

Grahamstown and Beaufort West, that Johannesburg thinks only of money.

We have as many good husbands and fathers, I think, as any town or city,

and some of our big men make great collections of dying out; and some

have great ranches in the North, *where they shoot game and feel at one with*

Nature. (148)

While James Jarvis' point of view employs a touch-and-go cognizance of this polarised schemata of development implemented by white-settlers, his son Arthur Jarvis' narrative neatly deconstructs the political tyranny behind the natives' deplorable socioecological conditions as he documents that,

[I]t is permissible to develop any resources if the labour is forthcoming. But

it is not permissible to develop any resources if they can be developed only

at the cost of the labour. It is not permissible to mine any gold, or

manufacture any product, or cultivate any land, if such mining and manufacture and cultivation depend for their success on a policy of keeping labour poor. It is not permissible to add to one's possessions if these things can only be done at the cost of other men. Such development has only one true name, and that is exploitation. It might have been permissible in the early days of our country, before we became aware of its cost, in the disintegration of native community life, in the deterioration of native family life, in poverty, slums and crime. But now that the cost is known, it is no longer permissible…It is true that we hoped to preserve the tribal system by a policy of segregation. This was permissible. But we never did it thoroughly or honestly. *We set aside one-tenth of the land for four-fifths of the people.* Thus we made it inevitable, and some say we did it knowingly, that labour would come to the towns. We are caught in the toils of our own selfishness. (126-127).

Arthur Jarvis' argument sharply pierces through the façade of 'development'. Acts that seemingly bring about 'progress' by perpetually deterring a section of population from upward social mobility, acts which seemingly contribute towards building a civilization by systematically oppressing a set of peoples, acts that deny equal rights and opportunities for some only to ensure the domination of select few, *cannot* be presented as models of advancement. These acts are informed by ideologies which are ulterior, vested and self-aggrandizing. Dubbed as truths, they often leave little room for subversive stances. Arthur Jarvis' rhetoric, then, is important not only because it presents a subversive stance but also because it attacks the sacrosanctity with which dominant ideologies are upheld.

In his work, "Language Goes Two Ways", Gary Snyder highlights the inscrutable appropriations and inherent fluidities employed by language(s) in re-presentations of ecological realities when he says,

[W]e can affirm that the natural world…is mannerly, shapely, coherent and patterned *according to its own devices*. Each of the four thousand or so languages of the world models reality in its own way, with patterns and syntaxes that were not devised by anyone. Languages were not the intellectual inventions of archaic schoolteachers, but are naturally evolved, wild systems whose complexity eludes the descriptive attempts of the rational mind. (qtd. in Coupe 127; original emphasis).

Through the paradigm of Structuralist and Semiotic analysis the present study highlights that beneath the quotidian innocuousness of language-usages in perceiving and delineating 'realities', there underlie scrutable and decipherable patterns that may be as informed by rationality as by agenda and as much by political hegemony as by cultural habit. In this argument, the present study garners support from the contention made by Ashcroft et al vis-à-vis the subjection of language to imperial constructivism as an aid in colonial subjugation in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. They claim that,

> [L]anguage is a fundamental site of struggle for postcolonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language. The control over language by the imperial centre – whether achieved by displacing native languages, by installing itself as a 'standard' against other variants which are constituted as 'impurities', or by planting the language of empire in a new place – remains the most potent instrument of cultural control. Language provides the terms by which reality may be constituted; it provides the names by which the world may be 'known'. Its system of values – its suppositions, its geography, its concept of history, of difference, its myriad gradations of distinction – becomes the system upon which social, economic and political discourses are grounded.

The present study reasserts that the control and manipulation of language emerges as one of the most potent tools used by any enterprise that seeks to construct meaning for predetermined, often vested, interests. In the case of colonial domination of the African land and by extension, subjugation of indigenous people(s), language played a crucial role. For instance, early explorers often termed lands which were unoccupied and unutilized by the indigenous tribes as *terres vacantes*, translated as vacant lands. The work *Land Tenure Lexicon: A glossary of terms from English and French speaking West Africa* compiled by Rebecca Leonard and Judy Longbottom, provides an insightful critique into the 'construction' of signifiers in order to manipulate the signified and thereby heavily control the process of meaning-making. In explaining the definition of the term 'mise en valeur', the work focusses on the different meanings which the signifying term was made to embody under the French colonial legislation,

> In economics, land that is *mise en valeur* (literally – 'put to valuable use') is land transformed into a means of production…This concept was introduced initially by colonial administrations as a means to bring more land into production by encouraging investment in land development, and

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was subsequently adopted by governments after independence. It stands in opposition to the traditional understanding of people's rights to land which requires the creation and maintenance of a special link between a group and an area of land. Thus, the cornerstone of the traditional relationship between people and land is eliminated by the concept of *mise en valeur*: customary norms are replaced by the state and by the ability to invest in land improvement…French colonial legislation held that any land not developed (*mise en valeur*) after ten years may be claimed by the state. (38)

The policy of *mise en valeur* espoused by the French colonial power uses a paradigm similar to the *terres vacantes et sans maître* (vacant land without owner) used by the Belgian colonizers under the reign of King Léopold II in the region of Congo. As part of the colonial enterprise, terms like *mise en valeur* and *terres vacantes et sans maître* embodied the conceptual significance of being essential drivers of the developmental process. Constructed thus, they assumed positive signification thereby undermining the destructive connotations they carried in the wake of their concretization. As Leonard and Longbottom proceed to point out,

> …this (*mise en valeur)* presented problems for farmers in areas of land abundance in which fields may be left fallow for more than ten years and created incentives to keep land in more intensive cultivation than was environmentally sound…A further problem is faced by herders…the implementation of the *mise en valeur* principle fails to recognise grazing as a productive use of land. In this way, large expanses of grazing land have been appropriated by the state and pastoral rights have often been systematically marginalised. (39).

Viewed in light of the land tenures afore-discussed as well as the deployment of concepts such as *mise en valeur* and *terres vacantes et sans maître* in colonial policymaking towards land-management, the rhetoric of native-land deterioration takes a paradigmatic shift than the one postulated by James Jarvis. Rendered 'squatters' on lands they had come to consider their home, conglomerated in 'reserves' which were heinously acute, severed from traditional connections with land due to a severe belittling of their indigenous knowledge as faulty, inadequate and non-conducive to development, the natives were not only made to bear the brunt of a short-sighted high-modernist governance espoused by colonialist powers but were also subsequently made to participate in and internalise their own degradation. The people of Ndotsheni, including

the Kumalo family, represent the subalterns who are on the receiving end of this developmental dichotomy. Forced to occupy a land that doesn't provide any yield, they are moreover blamed for their own deterioration. Unable to cope with the superimposition of the 'modern' techniques of farming to which they are not privy, they are compelled to undertake or witness rampant displacement. The shift, however, is not vertical. They move from one negative space to another with the ecological deterioration of the land closely related to their own political disempowerment. The narrator foregrounds this dual 'space' of native-nature disempowered subalternity when he says,

> The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth has torn away like flesh. The lightning flashes over them, the clouds pour down upon them, the dead streams come to life, full of the red blood of the earth. Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left, and the maize hardly reaches the height of a man. They are valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them any more. (Paton 07)

Despite the spatial shift being horizontal and disempowering as it were, the mass exodus of the 'black' peoples from villages such as Ndotsheni to centralised politico-economic places such as Johannesburg may be viewed as an act of resurgence – as ways in which the marginalized sections aim to grab 'agency' and have a say, at least in the trajectories of their own lives. It is their attempt to 'speak' in a society that is increasingly becoming deaf to their fundamental exigences of survival. This calls into interrogation and problematizes the entire rhetoric of 'violence' explored in the novel. Paton's depiction of the issue is sufficiently complex. Hinging on social realism of the times, the narrative tries to juxtapose and foreground the multidimensional intricacies embedded within the social restructuring of the time caused by political deterritorialization and spatial reconfiguration. It neither justifies nor condones the acts of violence perpetrated by the black peoples against the white communities. However, through Arthur Jarvis' journal entries, he positions this violence within the framework of institutionalized political hegemony enacted by the dominant colonizer-classes over the native masses. Viewed thus, the patterned violence undertaken by people from the black communities against the white-settlers in Johannesburg is a tool of subversion, or as Gramsci would see it, a confrontational revolution that calls for a physical showdown for vehement reclamation of rights. Arthur Jarvis identifies this

'war of position' as it is inextricably linked with crime and violence generated by those from the black communities as he notes,

> The old tribal system was, for all it violence and savagery, for all its superstition and witchcraft, a moral system. Our natives today produce criminals and prostitutes and drunkards, not because it is their nature to do so, but because their simple system of order and tradition and convention has been destroyed. It was destroyed by the impact of our own civilization. Our civilization has therefore an inescapable duty to set up another system of order and tradition and convention. (127)

Heavily underinformed as Arthur Jarvis' evaluation of tribal system may be, his postulation serves two important purposes: (a) it serves as a counter-narrative to dominant 'official records' which would appropriate terms such as 'crime', 'insurgence' and 'mutiny' to label any act of retaliation by black communities without taking any due appraisal of socioeconomic conditions causing them and (b) it underpins the hegemonic stronghold of the 'civilization' discourse in absolute annihilation of the indigenous 'ways of life'. The 'crime' or 'depravity' embodied in the ways of living of these black communities clustered in striated spaces of Johannesburg arises from a place of fear – a fear that colonial binaries have initiated and fuelled. Arthur Jarvis, in this sense, becomes a counter-hegemonic organic intellectual whose voice, although coming from the privileged 'class' position is appropriated for 'mass' revolution. Arthur Jarvis' death, at the hands of Absalom Kumalo, then, is ironic because both Arthur and Absalom are participants in the same processuality of agency-creation. They also, subsequently, become victims of the same systemic political hegemony against which they are trying to lodge protests in their distinct ways.

Post-structuralist readings of a text often interact with the spillages and fissures that the signs within offer after the surface veneer of any narrative is cracked. *Cry, the Beloved Country* offers two pertinent textual slips that the present study re-constructs and invokes for further socioecological critique. Against the backdrop of apartheid and acute racial discrimination, Paton presents the infrastructural marvels that were built through conduits of Western modernism. He juxtaposes it with the breaking of the 'African tribe' and their traditional socioecological systems and presses upon the dichotomic nature of this model of progression. Despite this, however, the narrative presented from the perspective of Stephen Kumalo sees the conceived spaces of

colonial-making as signifiers of Western high-intellectualism. Its tonality is one of wonder and awe at the numerous technological possibilities which opened up in the 'moment' when African land came in touch with European culture. The following passage extracted from the text reveals Stephan Kumalo's amazement of techniques of modernity of which the 'white man' is the central agent,

> -How does the rock come out? – We go down and dig it out, umfundisi. And when it is hard to dig, we go away, and *the white men* blow it out with the firesticks…- How does it go up? -It is wound up by a great wheel…He [Stephen Kumalo] is silent, and his heart beats a little faster, with excitement and fear. A great iron structure rearing into the air, and when above it, going so fast that spokes play tricks with the sight. Great buildings, and steam blowing out of pipes, and men hurrying about…And now the buildings are endless, the buildings, and the white hills, and the great wheels, and streets without number, and cars and lorries and buses…Railway lines, railway-lines, *it is a wonder*. (17; my emphasis)

The present study believes that the narrative's tonality gives way to a sense of admiration towards the jargon of Western civilization and subsequently, the native's internalisation of his own inferiority in the scheme of things – twin factors that played a crucial role in imperial hegemony's prolonged consolidation of rule in colonized societies. Instead of focusing on the infrastructural reconfiguration which fascinates Kumalo, the present study veers its attention towards spaces that existed before such 'development' and the dynamics that may have gone into radically altering them. For instance, what 'natural' entities must have existed in spaces that were then taken up by the State-apparatus for setting up of developmental machinery? Had there been forested lands? Had there been indigenous habitats (peoples, flora and fauna) dwelling in these spaces that had to be, then, severely dislocated? Had these spaces been locational coordinates of traditional ecological systems/knowledge? Had these spaces been strategically kept non-altered for spiritual, medicinal, cultural or eco-ethical uses? Had these spiritual/medicinal/cultural/eco-ethical systems been irretrievably lost in their drastic re-engineering? These questions may constitute the deep-seated textual subconscious of *Cry, the Beloved Country* especially in light of its later portrayals of native-land deterioration and breakdown of community values. However, this textual subconscious serves as an important interrogative modality for any contemporary receiver reading into narratives of 'development'. The monologues of State-apparatus,

often mediated through construed channels of information-dissemination – may have masses passively accept dominant versions of 'progress' touted to be in the 'best interest' of the public. The *a priori* signification of *Cry, the Beloved Country* may serve to remind well that no model of development is undertaken in a socioecological vacuum. And that, reading into pre-existing lived spaces is crucial in determining the sustainability quotient of that model. In order to solidify this argument, the present study invokes the silenced memory of the Cahora Bassa Dam – a Statist project on the Zambesi River Valley initiated by the Portuguese colonizers in the colonized state of Mozambique. This 'project' was staged as an exemplum of the colonizers' commitment to 'development' of Mozambique's population and their technological ability to bend nature for human benefit. Allen Isaacman in his study titled, "Displaced People, Displaced Energy, and Displaced Memories: The Case of Cahora Bassa, 1970-2004" records how the agenda-driven hydroelectric project, far from being an imperial triumph, became a spiralling failure under the Portuguese regime as well as the under the FRELIMO government of independent Mozambique. Touted as an embodiment of technological-powered high-development, the Cahora Bassa Dam narrative stands as a story of binaries that shows the sharp divisiveness upon which projects of capitalistic modernism operate; Isaacman notes,

> For those who held the reigns of state power the dam had become a potent symbol of the power of science, technology, and social engineering to master nature and insure human progress. It was *high modernism* at its best. A markedly different story about the Cahora Bassa has been silenced all too long. It is a story that riverine communities in the Zambesi Valley tell and one that needs to be heard. When peasants speak of the dam, they recall memories of forced eviction from their homeland, being herded into strategic hamlets, and the unpredictable discharges of water that destroyed their crops and flooded their fields. In short, they offer an alternative narrative of Cahora Bassa whose over-arching themes are about displaced people, displaced energy and displaced memories. (205; my emphasis)

Thus, the documentary record of geographical transformation of Africa registered in the fiction developed by Paton needs to be posited in the larger paradigm of 'civilization' and everything that this phenomenon has unfolded in its wake – especially ecological compromises.

The second perforation caused by the Post-structuralist reading of the text comes in the form of a code-unit slippage that serves as a point of interrogation. Paton's oft-quoted line from the work, "Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed" (07) is read as an epiphany of ecological caution. Through the story of a 'broken' Ndotsheni, the narrator gives insightful advice related to land-management and human-nature interrelations. But the code-unit that is exhumed in the present reading is the word 'men'. As a narratological slippage, the line represents predominance of male-centrism even in those narratives that criticize subjugatory social models and espouse equality. Even if one were to argue that the term 'men' stands as a metonymic code-unit for all of humanity, the 'givenness' in such a presumption is oppressive in itself as it takes away linguistic agency from other sexes and genders. But this deduction simply on the basis of one line may seem reductionist. Therefore, the present study revisits the narrative of *Cry, the Beloved Country* to briefly de-centre the (male) characters of Stephen Kumalo, Absalom Kumalo, James Jarvis and Arthur Jarvis and re-position the character of Gertrude. As Stephen Kumalo's sister, the character of Gertrude is easy to forget – the agency of 'forgetting' Gertrude is also symbolically deliberate. She is the quintessential 'fallen' woman who chooses the life of immorality versus austerity. In asserting this choice till the very end, she becomes a passive villain – an embodiment of everything that is wrong in a society where the 'tribe' breaks. But far from being a character to be read with conditioned judgement, the present study reads the case of Gertrude as a narrative of 'becoming' and 'reterritorialization' in face of dominant male suppressions. In his article on land-use in Africa, Richards notes that

> [I]n lineage society women…are the exploited classes. To maintain their
> privileges lineage elders control marriage exchanges and reproduction via
> ritual terrorism and sexual prohibitions against young people and, above all,
> pubescent women. Eventually lineage society gives way under the impact
> of the more progressive capitalist mode of production and a new
> demographic dynamic comes into play. [10].

This argument can be aptly connected to re-look at the case of Gertrude. As a tribal woman, her societal position in the colonial regime is one of double marginalization. The deterioration of land further accentuates this subalternity taking any natural agency away from her. Her 'movement' to Johannesburg in search of her husband is an attempt to reclaim her position – however marginalized it may be. But, the new conceived space

of Johannesburg offers the possibility of a social restructuration. Exploitative as it may be, the new space allows her a sense of becoming, a fluidity of sorts that stands in stark opposition to the rigid patterns of socioecological oppressions in Ndotsheni. Deleuze and Guattari's exposition on 'becomings' is useful in understanding the sentience in this self-affirming (but socially-condemned) shift made by Gertrude. The view postulated by them of "'becoming-in-the-world' (in contrast to a more fixed, being-in-the-world) incorporates structuralism (boundaries, limits, identities) with post-structuralism (transgressions, joyous confusions, protean fluctuations) into shape-shifting multiplicitous post-modernism" (qtd by Hochman in Coupe 191). Gertrude, thus, is a symbol of this postmodernist transgression and multiplicity. Her choice may be more informed by her reluctance to return to the brokenness of Ndotsheni rather than, as the narrative often leads readers into believing, her degenerative proclivity to live an immoral life. While bringing Gertrude's son and Absalom's wife back to Ndotsheni, Stephen Kumalo notes that the train passes,

> [b]lack slums, past Edendale, past Elandskop, and down into the great valley
> of Umkomaas, where the tribes live, and the soil is sick almost beyond
> healing. And the people tell Kumalo that the rains will not fall; they cannot
> plough or plant, and there will be hunger in this valley. (186),

It is to such a spatiality of sickness caused due to acute deterioration of land that Kumalo hopes to bring Gertrude. It is from such sickness that Gertrude escapes by not accompanying her brother back to the village. Read against the grain of institutionalized morality, Gertrude can be seen as an individual asserting her social position through her geographical relocation. The first round of her displacement was forced; the second is her choice. Can she, then, be judged for a perceived moral digression in light of the much graver socioecological crimes committed by others in the name of 'development' and 'progress'? The present study answer this question in the negative and looks at Gertrude as a member and agent of ecological reterritorialization.

In the Chapter titled "Dead Land, Dead Water" in her work titled *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in Global Economy*, Saskia Sassen reports,

> The biosphere's capacities to renew land, water, and air are remarkable. But
> they are predicated on specific temporalities and life cycles that our
> technical, chemical, and organizational innovations are rapidly outpacing.
> Industrialized economies have long done damage to the biosphere, but in at

least some of these cases, and with time on its side, the biosphere has brought land and water back to life. Existing data show that in specific zones these sorts of recoveries have failed, however. We now have vast stretches of land and water that are dead – land overwhelmed by the relentless use of chemicals and water dead from lack of oxygen due to pollution of all sorts. The surge of foreign land acquisitions by governments and firms…is one of many sources of this destruction. But the purchases are also partly a response to the crisis: more land and water need to be acquired to replace what has died. And if we take finance as a capability…we can see more grist for its mill in the most foundational elements – not only the commodification of land and water, but also the further financializing of the resulting commodities. (149).

Cry, the Beloved Country presents a veritable case study of the machinations employed in land segregation, division and reorganization. In this paradigm of anthropocentric and moreover, power-centric politic, 'land' ceases to be a geoecological entity; it becomes an object of utility-appropriation and subsequently, divisive-domination. The narrative is a significant contributor towards understanding contemporary aggrandizing policies that surround land-usage. It provides a model by which one can eschew the banality and blatant one-sidedness with which larger socio-political rhetoric views land-control and instead take into consideration the oft-ignored indigenous affiliations with land, including complex relations shared by women with ecology. In this sense, *Cry, the Beloved Country* is not just a postcolonial text describing the forbidding matrices of apartheid in colonial Africa. It is a protest narrative that asks dominant human 'culture(s)' to revisit their notions of advancement in order to keep in check, deconstruct and constantly raise voices of dissent against the binaries upon which these notions are built and against the environmental damages they cause.

3.2.2 Multispecies Ethnography and the OA principle in The Inheritors

Through the lens of Semiotics, Spatial Criticism and Subaltern Studies
In their article titled, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography" (2010), S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich track the inception and evolution of a 'new genre of writing and mode of research' (545) called multispecies ethnography, which, in its

arrival, has spaded important crevices in the dialogic areas of cultural anthropology, geography and ecology. This phenomenon has caused contemporary theory to revisit its material preoccupations and enter in a postmodern world of decentralities that is, at once, traceable and malleable. As part of this consilient approach, say Kirksey and Helmreich,

> [c]reatures previously appearing on the margins of anthropology – as part of the landscape, as food for humans, as symbols – have been pressed into the foreground in recent ethnographies. Animals, plants, fungi and microbes once confined in anthropological accounts to the realms of *zoe* or "bare life" – that which is killable – have started to appear alongside humans in the realm of *bios*, with legibly biographical and political lives…Amid apocalyptic tales about environmental destruction, anthropologists are beginning to find modest examples of biocultural hope – writing of insect love…of delectable mushrooms that flourish in the aftermath of ecological destruction…and of microbial cultures enlivening the politics and value of food. (545; my ellipsis).

Following the paradigm provided by this approach, ecocritics like Swarnalatha Rangarajan adopted the conceptual configuration of 'multispecies ethnography' to deconstruct popular cultural signifiers such as *Avatar* where the xenobotanist Grace Augustine engages in a world of "non-hierarchical alliances, symbiotic attachments, and the mingling of creative agents" i.e. the world of 'becomings' postulated by Deleuze and Guattari (*Eco Criticism…*ch.9). The interconnected neural networks in the Na'vi world, says Rangarajan, recognise the manifold selfhoods of nature and operate through animated biosemiotic processes that differ markedly from the monologic dystopia that Earth has been reduced to due to human-centred approaches.

The present study argues that yet another text of 20th century narratological discourse provides prescient insights into the concept of multispecies ethnography by engaging in an interrogation of human 'evolutionary' diktat in a context that can be called the early beginnings of the 'Anthropocene'. William Golding's novel *The Inheritors* published in post-War England in the year 1955, has been often reviewed and critiqued as a work of pre-historic fiction and/or an analogic critique of post-War disillusionment. The exhumations of textual subconscious conducted as part of the

present study, however, reveal distinctive coordinates of ecological critiques embedded within the palimpsest of the text.

Existing critical literature shows that *The Inheritors* shows has been analysed as a text which engages in reconstructing the encounter of the Neanderthals with the Homo Sapiens. Built on the system of OA, the Earth Goddess, the Neanderthal paradigm of life hinges on simple negotiations with nature that are factored into their day-to-day practices. The encounter with Homo Sapiens, therefore, brings in an alternate paradigm which is in stark opposition to the Neanderthal way of life. The Homo Sapiens in their wake bring notions, concepts and institutions which inform the modernist structure of contemporary society. They have a more determined and structured 'way of life' and their practices resonate with notions of 'civilization' that have informed the trajectories of human society over time. Fearing the Neanderthals as the significant 'other', the Homo Sapiens set about killing them one by one and build their own superiority over the destruction of difference. While all but one Neanderthal is annihilated, the Homo Sapiens, at the end of the novel, stand at the threshold of gaining complete superiority over their surroundings thereby placing themselves at the centre of their ecosystem.

Paul Crawford, in his work, *Politics and History in William Golding: The World Turned Upside Down* notes that

> In *The Inheritors*…Golding subverts certain cultural assumptions evident in
> H.G. Wells's *Outline of History* (1920) and "Grizzly Folk" (1927). In these
> writings, Wells projects a view of Neanderthal Man as an inferior wild beast
> and Cro-Magnon Man, his evolutionary supplanter (now questioned), as
> superior, intelligent and civilizing. But again, Golding is concerned to
> highlight the destructive quality that comes with intelligence. Furthermore,
> he portrays the Neanderthals as sensitive and gentle and bound to their kin
> by a collective consciousness. (69; my emphasis).

Golding's counter-narrative does not reject the Wellsian dichotomy; it punctures it sufficiently for pointed inspection and subsequent subversion opening up newer conversational zones in the ontological determinations of superiority and inferiority. That Golding specifically responded to Wellsian contentions is supported by evidence – in the letter Golding wrote to Charles Monteith, the Editor of 'Faber and Faber' he made it explicit that he found Wells' condescension of the Neanderthals 'uproariously

funny' (Carey ix). However, *The Inheritors* was not only about providing an alternative point of view that would read against the one provided by Wells. The purpose as well as the process of envisioning and crafting *The Inheritors*, claim critics may have been sharply triggered, if not completely conceived, by experiences of the holocaust and other devastations that the Second World War brought in its wake. In the fall of modernist foundations including those bolstered by institutionalised religion, science and technology and an inbuilt faith in human rationality, Golding must have seen an irrefutable rupture in the notion of 'civilization', 'progression' and 'evolution'. It does not mean that he entirely disputed the prowess of scientific knowledge, technological advancement or evolutionary life-force. In speaking with Canadian critic Virginia Tiger, Golding confides that he "wrote the first draft [of *The Inheritors*] as a rebuttal of the nineteenth-century doctrine of progress but, in the rewrite, stressed on the contrary, the evolutionary life-force which drives the new people upwards 'at a higher level of energy' than the Neanderthals possess" (Carey vii). But in this 'evolutionary life-force', Golding must have perceived an inherent defiance, a counteraction to co-existence, a sinister overapplication and also misappropriation of the 'survival of the fittest' polemic. His narrative crafts his intellectual inquiry of human 'civilization' around the contentious manoeuvres of *homo-sapiens* predecessors (hereafter, 'new people') but them, it places at the hinges while giving centre-stage to the Neanderthals. It juxtaposes the raucous energy of the (native) Neanderthal man with the perceived vulnerability of the (settling) 'new people' in territories of habitation. But then quickly, it builds a discourse of the 'vice-versa' where vulnerability turns into radical superiority while raucous energy subdues into confounded surrender. Civilizations, then, the narrative seems to say, are not products of amicable assimilations but those of political machinations and physical coercions. They are the result of cultural clashes where one culture succeeded in establishing its superiority as a 'way of life' over other culture(s). In *The Inheritors*, the Neanderthals' culture conflicts with the one which the new people bring in their wake. At the crux of this cultural clash, however, lies nature – in its manifold tangible and intangible manifestations. It's an entity *out there* belonging neither to Neanderthals nor the new people. And yet, it is the material and ideological discourse within and over which the clash unfolds. Envisaged largely by the 'new people', it is a site of exclusivity with no scope for dialogues of co-existence. Within the monology of cultural supremacy, then, nature is both a tool and a target, a receiving

subject as well as a conceived object. Human civilization, thus, is a process of spatial reimagination and ecological domination. The rest, is (constructed) history.

From this point of departure, the present study will analyse 'nature' as 'discoursed' within the textualities of Golding's interrogation in *The Inheritors*. In deconstructing the multiple ecological layering in the novel, the present study will employ the frameworks of Structuralism and Semiotics, Post-structuralism, Spatial Criticism and Subalternity. In doing so, the postcolonial preoccupation with contested spaces and postmodern fixations with re-evolving spatialities will also be invoked.

In his article, "The Cognition of *Homo neanderthalensis* and *H. sapiens*: Does the Use of Pigment Necessarily Imply Symbolic Thought?", Steven Mithen hypothesized that the Neanderthals "lacked compositional language – this involving a large lexicon and set of grammatical rules from which an infinite set of novel utterances could be made" (12). However, in his work *Singing Neanderthals*, he postulated that the minimalist proto-language capabilities of the Neanderthals does not necessarily mean they lacked cognitive fluidity – considered to be a product of spoken-language sophistication. In fact, it meant that rather than relying on compositional language, the Neanderthal communication system relied on a constant process of decodifying and resignification – a continual perceiving and determination of the external signs presented (Mithen 12). Through the narratological analysis of *The* Inheritors, the present study contends, that these external signs were largely ecology-generated. The Neanderthals' signification system evolved in its responses towards the natural environment in which their material lives unfolded. This signification system was informed by an inherent multispecies ethnographic model – the belief that all of nature participates in the unfolding of their existence. The Neanderthals' cognition, then, constantly decodes nature-signs but as represented in *The Inheritors*, it does so with an underlying langue of attachment and reverent subservience. It recognizes that all of nature, codified within their signification system as OA, operates with networked sentience – of which they are an integral part. Their survival, then, takes place by navigating through the conduits of these indiscernible neural networks not by severing them. This perception of their position within their spatiality is demonstrated through various manifest acts and unmanifest thoughts of the Neanderthals including their migratory and hunting patterns. This system of multispecies-ethnographic codification

becomes evident in the first seasonal migration presented in the novel where the Neanderthal group consisting of the old woman, Mal, Ha, Nil, Lok, Fa, Liku and the little one are confronted by the challenge of the missing 'log' while crossing a water-path. The absence of the log in a space conducive to their migration, complicates their cognitive perception informed as it is by biocentric semiology as reflected in the following passage,

> Ha pointed to the water.
> "I came quickly to see the log."
> "But the log has gone away."
> The three of them stood and looked at each other. Then, as so often happened with the people, there were feelings between them. Fa and Nil shared a picture of Ha thinking. He had thought that he must make sure the log was still in position because if the water had taken the log or if the log had crawled off on business of its own then the people would have to trek a day's journey round the swamp…(Golding 4).

The conundrum then, is solved, not by an appropriation of physical or 'technological' prowess over the ecological surroundings but by re-tracing the memory line of the sentient neural network with ecology, a task that Mal, by virtue of the being the oldest surviving member, undertakes, by re-invoking and rearranging the 'images' in his phenomenological repository thus,

> "Mal is not old but clinging to his mother's back. There is more water not only here but along the trail where we came. A man is wise. He makes men take a tree that has fallen and --------"… The old man sighed and took his hand away from his head. "Find a tree that has fallen." (5-6)

It is in such a conciliatory ethnographic set-up that the Neanderthals form their cultural perception. Ecology, thus, is in axiomatic centralities at both cognitive and material realities of the Neanderthals. In the Chapter titled "New Trajectories", Rangarajan speaks about the, "the idea of human embeddedness in multiple species communities" has led to the "critical re-thinking of human importance as a species" (ch.9). For Neanderthals, then, this embeddedness was a 'way of life' factored into the mediums

through which the world made sense to them and through which they participated in their own phenomenological realities. From the vantage point of this perception, nature, while being something *out there* is also something that is subsumed at metaphysical levels. As the 'people', the Neanderthal group, migrate from one habitat to another, their perception is marked by a 'fascination' with which they are received by the ecological surroundings. This is explicated in the following passage retrieved from the novel,

> "The stone is a good stone," said Lok. "It has not gone away. It has stayed by the fire until Mal came back to it." He stood up and peered over the earth and stones down the slope. The river had not gone away either or the mountains. The overhang had waited for them. Quite suddenly he was swept up by a tide of happiness and exultation. Everything had waited for them; Oa had waited for them. (21)

This semiotic processuality of the Neanderthals deeply informs their 'lived spaces' in which their material life unfolds. The governing code of this 'lived space' is the Oa – the female creator principle through which the Neanderthals locate their critical positions in their environment alongside every other entity that emerges out of the Oa. There are two material icons through which the Neanderthals' conception of Oa comes to fore in the novel – the first, as huge block of ice, known as the 'ice-woman' which is their perceived space of worship. The 'block of ice' here is a synecdochic signifier for the supranatural power that nature holds. Oa, as represented by the ice woman, simultaneously inspires awe and articulation among the Neanderthal tribe. The second material-signifier is represented in the form of a small mother-shaped doll that Liku carries as 'little Oa'. The 'little Oa' acquires multiple levels of meaning in Liku's and Lok's perception of the world. At the first level of signification, the 'little Oa' is an embodied ecological entity – something derived from nature which Liku recovers and decides to keep as talisman. But at the second-level of signification, its shape resembling that of a protruded belly, represents the maternal womb. For Liku and Lok, this representamen stands for the interpretant of the universal mother – Oa, where all the dualities and differences of the material world are reconciled by the unifying principle of creation. In her work, "A Reconsideration of Oa the Earth Goddess in William Golding's 'The Inheritors'", Yasunori Sugimura deconstructs the term Oa as a reconciliation of the particular and universal 'positive' – O and A – and connects it with

the evolution of human language by saying that "the distinction of the two phonemes 'O' and 'A' in the appellation of Oa, and the fact that they occasionally lose distinction and become the sound 'Aaaa', suggest…that human language develops through the process of articulating the maternal by means of the signifying system of 'O' and 'A'" (vol. 97, no. 2). The Neanderthal communication system, through forms of early articulation, is significantly informed by their interconnected thought with the creator principle of the Earth Goddess. This is validated when the unmapped emotion of 'fear' enters the consciousness of the Neanderthals with the arrival of the 'new people'.

This spirituo-linguistic conception informs the Neanderthals' spatial practices. Whether Golding's re-presentation of the Neanderthal way of life has scientific and anthropological accuracy is a matter highly debated. John Carey, for instance, points out that, "Neanderthals were hunter-gatherers, but Golding's are different. They gather the fruits of the forest but, because they have a sense that killing is 'wickedness', they depend on what that can guiltily scavenge from kills made by big carnivores" (x). Golding's poetic liberty, then, may have been oriented towards capturing the crucial transition of nature from being a *source* to being a *resource*. For the Neanderthals, nature is a source – of food, shelter and sustenance. But it is also something more; it is the metaphoric conduit through which they connect with the higher power and the synergetic energy within which their own lives unfold. They don't fell trees, they don't kill unless motivated by fundamental needs relying instead on roots, which they believe, are offered by Oa. For meat, they largely rely on quarry that has already been killed so that the culpability of harming a co-existing entity does not befall them. Lok explains this process by forming, retrieving and conjoining images in his mind saying,

> "Now I have a picture in my head. Lok is coming back to the fall. He runs
> along the side of the mountain. He carries a deer. A cat has killed the deer
> and sucked its blood, *so there is no blame*. (27; my emphasis)

The argument of 'no-blame' occurs repeatedly in the narrative as though foreshadowing the seemingly unmotivated killing that the new people undertake in the wake of their arrival. The consciousness of co-existence informs the food-gathering routine of the Neanderthals; in Lok, it is manifestly more than the others as is evident in his hesitations to carry a doe back from one such venture,

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Lok spoke loudly, acknowledging the darkness. "This is very bad. Oa brought the doe out of her belly." Fa muttered through her clenched teeth as her hands tore. "Do not speak of that one."…After Fa's rebuke, Lok no longer chattered but muttered instead. "This is bad. *But a cat killed you so there is no blame*." (44)

The Neanderthal perception of nature is largely synecdochic and metonymic – both these literary devices, according to the Peircean model, imbue a sign with multiple levels of gradation. For them, the particular represents the universal and the universal is embedded within the particular vis-à-vis the concept of Oa. The spaces which they inhabit, within which they move and through which they make meaning of their material existence are external as well as internal manifests of the Oa – the underlying principle that governs all aspects of 'life'. An exemplum of this is presented through the old woman's attempts to administer medication to Mal. She asks the younger ones to "[B]ring earth" and tear out "lumps of coarse grass with the earth still hanging to them" (49).

Thus, the Neanderthals occupy a 'life-place' – a concept proposed by Robert Thayer in his work, *Lifeplace: Bioregional Thought and Practice*. Thayer differentiates life-place from conceived-space, defining it as,

a unique region definable by natural (rather than political) boundaries with a geographic, climatic, hydrological, and ecological character capable of supporting unique human and nonhuman living communities. Bioregions can be variously defined by geography of watersheds, similar plant and animal ecosystems, and related, identifiable landforms…and by the unique human cultures that grow from natural limits and potentials of the region. (3).

It is within the spatiotemporality of this axiomatically formed ecological balance that the Neanderthal life unfolds. Despite seasonal migrations and fallacies committed in reading the dynamics of manifest nature, the Neanderthals keenly participate in the ethnographic plurality of their material world with their spatial anxieties largely allayed by an essential sense of oneness which they feel with Oa. Oa, then, becomes the underlying langue through which the Neanderthals shape everyday parole. Space for

them is not an 'empty container' of Lefebvre's fears but a cultural structure which determines their ways of life and the meaning derived therein as is evidenced by the following passage that immediately precedes the major rupture that disrupts the Neanderthal narratology,

> The people [Neanderthals] were silent. Life was fulfilled, there was no need to look farther for food, to-morrow was secure and the day after that so remote that no one would bother to think of it. Life was exquisitely allayed hunger. Soon Mal would eat of the soft brain. The strength and fleetness of the doe would begin to grow in him. With the wonder of this gift present in their minds, they felt no need of speech. They sank then into a settled silence that might have been mistaken for abstracted melancholy, were it not for the steady movement of the muscles that ran up from their jaws and moved the curls gently on the sides of their vaulted heads. (52)

It is within this consilient eco-textualized world of the Neanderthals that the new people arrive in discernibly antagonistic difference. Their onset is onslaught causing the disappearance and subsequent death of Ha in its wake. They are the explicit evolutionary forces – agents of 'neo-worldviews' and hence, strategically nomenclatured, the 'new people'. As opposed to the Neanderthals' locus of 'biophilia' – the sense of oneness with all life forms – and 'topophilia' – the 'attachment between a set of peoples and the spaces they occupy – the new people's worldview is driven by the jargon of utilitarianism. Their arrival and subsequent colonization of the forested land is accompanied by a willy-nilly reorganization of spatiality. The new people are perhaps the earliest institutors of conceived spaces – a job which is attributed to scientists, urban planners, architects and engineers in contemporary times. This is the first fundamental binary between the Neanderthals and the new people – the former are receivers and subsequent interpreters of space; the latter are conceivers of it. Lok and Fa fathom the spatial-difference but the limitations imposed by their signification system restrain them from perceiving the new people as agents behind the transfigured spaces. For them, nature is not a mute receiver of extrinsic (human) activity; it is a self-ordinating, all-powerful physico-spiritual entity that participates within the transitional dynamics (as it does during the seasonal migrations of the Neanderthals). This perception of Lok and Fa is evident in the following passage from the novel,

They [Lok and Fa] could just see over into the patch of open ground that the people had chosen. There were too many things to see at once. To begin with, the trees had *reorganized themselves*. They had crouched down and woven their branches closely so that they made caverns of darkness on either side of the fire…beyond the fire, he [Lok] could see the ends of the pile of logs that was waiting to be burnet and for all their weight the light seemed to make them move. (118; my emphasis).

The new people, thus, are the disruptive forces presaging and embodying what Carolyn Merchant in her work *The Death of Nature* (1980) traces as "the shift in perspective from the premodern perception of the earth as a living organism to the contemporary technocratic worldview of the earth as a resource that can be manipulated and modified to suit the demands of [contemporary] global capitalism" (Rangarajan ch.9). Their perceived space is markedly different from the one that informs the spatial practices of the Neanderthals. They usher what Lefebvre calls the 'social' production of 'social' space; the territory of the 'new people' is a site of manipulation and distinct homogeneity indicated by systemic clearings and reorganizations. In their pursuit of Liku, who is in custody of the new people, Fa and Lok perceive these spatial changes and immediately position their difference vis-à-vis the new people. They registered the patterned wreckage that the new people leave in their wake as they move through Oa,

There were no people in sight but he could see where the bushes had been broken and a track of torn earth had been made between the shore and the open space. At the inner end of this track, tree-trunks, huge, dead things with the decay of years about them, had gathered themselves together. He inspected the logs, his mouth hanging open and a free hand pressed flat on top of his head. Why should the people bring all this food… and the useless wood with it? They were people without pictures in their heads. Then he saw that there was a dirty smudge in the earth where the fire had been and logs as huge had been used to build it…And because he was one of the people, tied to them with a thousand invisible strings, his fear was for the people. (93-94)

Golding's description of an environment significantly disrupted by predecessors of the 'modern man', foreshadows the concepts of 'dead land' and 'dead water' that Sassen speaks of. She calls these damages 'holes' that are formed in the tissue of the biosphere. Sassen regards these holes as "sites marked by the expulsion of biospheric elements from their life space, and as the surface expressions of deeper subterranean trends that are cutting across the world, regardless of the local politico-economic organization or mode of environmental destruction" (150). Sassen's argument sees a distinct pattern in humankind's incursions into eco-spheres, similar to those that Lok sees in the intrusions made by the new people within Oa. So distinct is their pattern of disruption that Lok begins to trace marks of their identity through these incursive tropes. But he doesn't see them as the 'other'. Lok's assimilation of the multispecies palimpsest within Oa is so absolute that he sees the new people as part of himself. Therefore, he attributes their seemingly mindless inflictions upon Oa as a product of their lack of 'pictures', an acute inadequacy of ecological 'experience' which defines the lives of the Neanderthals. His spatial anxiety is as much for Oa as it is for the new people because he considers himself tied to them through 'a thousand invisible strings' – the underlying neural network – that binds all of Oa. It is through their treatment of Oa, then, that Lok begins to register their difference – their dislocated 'other' space from the rest of bioregion. But even these differences are registered by Lok within the textuality of bio-semiology; he employs tropes and symbols from nature to record and express his perceptions of the new people; he calls them "…wolf and honey, rotten honey and the river…like a fire in the forest" (Golding 187).

In outlining what he considered to be the greatness of *The Inheritors* as a narrative, John Carey underpinned the significance of Golding's language in presenting a worldview that required a diametrically different syntactical and lexical specificity than one afforded by contemporary mediums of communication. Carey contends that by presenting the narratology largely from the Neanderthal point of view, Golding achieves,

> feats of language that are at first bewildering [as] he takes us inside a being
> whose senses, especially smell and hearing, are acute but who cannot
> connect sensations into a train of thought. This is a being whose awareness
> is a stream of metaphors and for whom everything is alive. (xi)

This perception is truer in view of Lok's perception and 'articulation' regarding the new people. The metaphors that Lok deploys in describing and defining them indicate the

vortex of vulnerable energy that the new people bring along with them. Their disruption of nature is not marked by confidence in their prowess but by a distinct susceptibility to the 'given' idea of supremacy – a logic of domination that nullifies scope for co-existence. Their violence, a scandalized Lok discerns, does not come from a place of 'power' or even 'knowledge' but from a realm of fear. Noting their destructive value within the biospheric sacrosanctity of Oa that he has been born into, Lok realises that the new people bring an unmapped topographical dichotomy with them – they are scared of the surroundings which they seek to conquer and vice-versa, they seek to conquer the surroundings that they are scared of. Lok relates the binary thus,

> I went to see the new people. Their hollow logs have moved up the slope. The new people are frightened. They stand and move like people who are frightened. They heave and sweat and watch the forest over their backs. But there is no danger in the forest. They are frightened of the air where there is nothing. (Golding 196).

Lok does not relate with this space of 'fear'; he merely recognises it as a place of danger into which Liku and the new one are trapped. He begins to see the hazardous potentialities of Liku and the new one being in the custody of the new people who, he realises, are capable of motivated and impenetrable destruction. So penetrative and disturbing is Lok's understanding of this difference that he pronounces with finality that "[T]hey are frightened of the air" (199).

In continuum to his argument about the co-existence of good and evil within human beings and their circumstantial manifestations in the world of exteriors thereof, Golding visibly continued his deconstruction of long-held 'totalizing' beliefs about human progression and superiority by problematizing the notions of savagery and civilization in *The Inheritors*. Years after the publication of the novel, while speaking to Indian students, Golding explicated that the Neanderthals are 'unfallen' because as opposed to the 'new people', they cannot think: the conclusion therefore is that, "The Fall is thought" (Carey v). This significant extrapolation within the reading of the novel's textuality lends support to the idea that *The Inheritors* serves as an interrogation of the unflinching belief in man's 'thought' and rationality – the fulcrum of Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment trajectories. The years during which *The Inheritors* came into conception and subsequent publication as well as the biographical details of its author have played a crucial role in producing multiple interpretants of the signs

embedded within the text of the novel. That the novel was written in the years when the world was still reeling under the devastations of the Second World War as well as Golding's own participation in the wars as part of the British Royal Navy, have often afforded historicist and structuralist interpretations of the text as a signifier of post-war guilt in human discourse and subsequently, a signified of the redemptive conduit which the 'going-back-to-nature' paradigm afforded to humankind in the midst of its self-inflicted wreckage. In addition to this, a 2015 article titled, "The Inheritors: the intimate secrets in William Golding's Neanderthal tale" by William Golding's daughter Judy Golding, significantly added mileage to reinterpretations of the text's post-war critique stating that,

> He [Golding] always maintained he could have been a Nazi if he'd been born in Germany – he believed being on the right side was for him a result of *geography* rather than morality. I'm not sure he was fair to himself here but none of us can know. It is clear that he was hugely relieved by the Allied victory, but he didn't confuse that victory with absolution. He felt guilt, not only over the people that he himself had killed during the war…but also for the role of his species in creating the *whole machinery of war*. This conviction…finds expression in the cry from one of the New People at the end of the novel: "What else could we have done? My father felt the excuse was insufficient, and recognised his own share in it. (Judy Golding)

The narratology of *The Inheritors* offers several textual slippages such as the line "What else could we have done?" mentioned above. These slippages render a distinct polysemy to the text. They occur largely through ambivalent tropes, terminologies and shifting subsumptions of words as signs within specific contexts of readers. One such pertinent textual fissure lands the text in the distinct paradigm of postcolonial critique. A point in case is the usage of the term, 'devil' in the text. In the second half of the novel, the narratology undergoes a drastic shift of narrative presenting the new people's point of view to the readers. As part of this, the new people's perception of their surroundings as well as the 'other' people comes to fore. The new people do not call the Neanderthals 'people'. Instead, they call them the 'devils' as reflected in the passage below that unfolds after the new people kill Liku,

> Marlan spoke from deep inside his body. "The *devils* do not like the water."
> That was true, that was comfort. The water was miles wide and bright.

Tuami looked imploringly at Marlan out of his pool. He forgot the dagger that was so nearly ground to a point. "If we had not we should have died."…Twal bent over Tanakil and kissed her and murmured to her. Tanakil's lips parted. Her voice was harsh and came from far away in the night. "Liku!" Tuami heard Marlan whisper to him from by the mast. "That is the *devil's* name. Only she may speak it."… (Golding 218).

Whether Golding intended the text to be an indictment or even an objective documentation of colonial processualities is debatable; the idea, at best, is derivative informed by Golding's overall disillusionment with humanity's condition during the time. However, a Post-structuralist framework opens up crucial re-readings of matrices embedded with the text that unfold pertinent imperial hegemonies. In order to substantiate such a reading, the present study exhumes a travel account by the 17th century explorer George Percy who meets the natives during the first voyage to Virginia in 1607 and delineates them thus,

They are continually in warres, and will eate their enemies when they kill them or any stranger if they take them. They will lap vp mans spittle, while one spits in their mouthes in a barbarous fashion like Dogges. These people and the rest of the Ilands in the West Indies, and Brasill, are called by the names of Canibals, that will eate mans flesh…: they worship the *Deuill* for their God, and have no other beliefe" (qtd in Sheehan 39; my emphasis).

The trope of describing the 'other' (anyone different from the 'self') as having affinities with or being incarnates of the 'devil' seems to have been axiomatically built into the Eurocentric rhetoric that largely informed colonisation and conquest. The subsequent 'necessity' to then tame the other, conquer them or exterminate them proves to be a justification for the colonial enterprise and the physical violence which it brings in its wake. Richard Bailey's contention in the article, "When Image Unmakes The Man" in the work, *Race and Redemption in Puritan New England* validates the pervasive presence of this homogenous trope within diverse colonial agenda in different regions. Bailey writes that the,

puritan missionaries saw New England's Indians as children of the devil. Of course, to be fair, they saw anyone who was not a believer, regardless of the color of the person's skin, as a child of the devil. But for red, as well as black, New Englanders, this applied beyond their spiritual

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natures…unconverted whites were children of the devil only because of tangible evidence they displayed or did not display. *Indians, however, did not benefit from such a covenant relationship. Instead, they were viewed both spiritually and literally as the devil's offspring.* (49-50; my emphasis).

The association of the indigenous people as 'devil' carries an inherent disregard and diabolical suppression of their 'ways of life'. Therefore, when the indigenous ways of life are ones closely affiliated with nature, politico-cultural structures informed by hegemonic associations often seek to tame (destroy) nature to tame (destroy) the native. This association stands at the fulcrum of the nature/civilization binary with the latter denoting a movement away from the perceived barbarity and savagery of nature. Nature, along with the 'natives' inhabiting the land (the term 'native' here being relative referring to those inhabiting the land before the arrival of the 'settlers') are subsumed as the referential other who can be conquered, propertied and appropriated largely by coercion. In her article titled, "Colonist and Settler Narratives", Jennifer Speake traces this process when she says,

> For colonists and settlers, who tended to see their colonial activities and the act of writing itself as justified within their own established ethnocentric or nationalistic traditions and frameworks, writing became a way of mediating between past and present and between subject and the other. The *unfamiliar colonial landscapes and peoples* are consequently described and viewed through preconceived belief systems that fit poorly with indigenous landscapes and peoples. (Speake 266-67)

This 'view' is built into the textual subconscious of *The Inheritors*. For the new people, the landscape which they enter is *terra nova* – 'a new land' but not *terra nullis* – 'an empty land'. The 'others' that they encounter in the spatiality they arrive into are 'ecosystem people' – people who, presumably, belong to the land. Their survival strategy within this region, then, is to rewrite the space by positing themselves at the centre of it. To accomplish this, they exert physical as well as epistemic violence as is evidenced in their branding the encountered biozone as 'darkness' and its living inhabitants as 'devils'. Despite having drastically altered the ecological space around them, the new people are not at harmony – the trace of belongingness with nature

conspicuous in the Neanderthal phenomenological perception, is notedly absent in the discourse of the new people. They are confused in the labyrinth of their own wreckage and this confusion informs their semiotics. As opposed to the perception of the teeming wilderness in Oa as representation of multispecies ethnography and co-existence, the new people receive the dense bioregion as 'darkness'. Tuami's reflections upon the matter are revelatory when he observes that,

> In this upland country, safe from the pursuit by the tribe but shut off from men by the devil-haunted mountains, what sacrifice would they be forced to perform to a world of confusion? They were as different from the group of bold hunters and magicians who had sailed up the river towards the fall as a soaked feather is from a dry one. Restlessly he turned the ivory in his hands. What was the use if sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world? Marlan spoken hoarsely out of some meditation. "They keep to the mountains or the darkness under the trees. We will keep to the water and the plains. We shall be safe from the *tree-darkness*". (221; my emphasis).

It may be unduly overplaying to the displaced jargon of gender-fixation to read *The Inheritors* as an exclusively ecofeminist text. If anything, the present study contends, *The Inheritors* outlines a site of positional fluidities vis-à-vis gender. In an abrupt collapse of their known worldviews in wake of the new people's arrival, there is a visible reversal of received gender roles – Fa takes over as the retriever and even interpreter of 'pictures' owing to a seemingly more nuanced intellectual prowess than that of Lok; it is she, who perceives keenly, the differential dichotomy with which the new people operate as evidenced in her proclamation that, "Oa did not bring them [the new people] out of her belly" (163). It is she who anticipates their destructive potentialities with regard to her tribe as well as with regard to Oa when she says that the new people "are like a fire in the forest" (187). It is she, who against Lok's increasing incomprehension, strategizes their survival amid the unfamiliar hostility brought in by the new people. Lok concomitantly accepts her authority positioning himself as a recipient of instructions and relying largely on Fa's signification system in the midst of a changing Oa as testified in the following passage from the novel,

> Fa stood up and ran round the clearing. She came back and looked down at him. He got up carefully. "Fa says 'Do this!'". He waited obediently. Mal had gone out of his head. "Here is a picture. Lok goes up the path by the cliff where the people cannot see him. Fa goes round and climbs to the mountain above the people. They will follow. The men will follow. Then Lok takes the new one from the fat woman and runs." She took hold of him by the arms and looked imploringly into his face. "There will be a fire again. And I shall have children". (196-197).

Lok, on the other hand, is not the quintessential 'rational' located in Western discourses of modernity. He is, as Golding states, 'the pre-fall man' of pre-thought. His guiding forces are his senses. Perhaps this is the reason why he is the keenest discerner of Oa's biodiverse palimpsest– its manifold manifestations – in the form of the 'earth goddess', the 'all-pervading nature' and the 'woman'. He doesn't see these embodiments as the significant other. For Lok, these representamens collectively indicate the supranatural forces within which his material existence unfolds and within which his mind creates and re-creates images of survival and resilience. Therefore, it is essentially through Lok that the text expresses nature tropes, metaphors and semantics. It is Lok who develops the synecdochic icon of the 'little Oa' and relates it with the feminine creator principle as represented thus,

> Fantastically the old root was twisted and bulged and smoothed away by age into the likeness of a great-bellied woman. "‒ I am standing among the trees. I feel. With this foot I feel ----" He mimed for them…"What do I feel? A bulb? A stick? A bone?"… "It is the little Oa!" Triumphantly he sunned himself before them. "And now where Liku is there is the little Oa." (23).

The most powerful associative metaphor employed to develop interanimating relations between ecology and women is the female creator principle of Oa. The Oa representamen is a multi-level signifier whose decodification is allied with the deconstruction of the Neanderthal semiology. Ecocritics often protest against the over-subsumption of 'nature' as a linguistic and by extension, mental construct within the human signification system. Superficially, the concept of Oa seems guilty of this construction. However, a keener observation suggests that the signifier of Oa is at once

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dualistic and integrated. It refers at once to the external manifest of nature in its prolific multiplicity and plurality. But its internal manifest is within the spiritual encoding of the Neanderthals. This creator principle, however, is not based upon arbitration. The Neanderthals are perceptive about the neural network of multispecies ethnography of which they are a part. The signifier of Oa for them, therefore, is both physical as well as transcendental. In the Foreword to Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, Rajni Kothari relates this creator principle with the fight for "*endogeneity* in a world threatened by the homogenising thrust of modernity" (viii). She further explains,

> The holism implied in the feminine principle must be distinguished from the universalism of the modern scientific era. The former respects and nurtures diversity; the latter undermines it under its homogenising and centralising thrust and, in the end, destroys diversity (viii).

In her work, Shiva connects the homogenising rhetoric of modernity with politico-cultural hegemony and subsequent subalternity of the indigenous and the sub-subalternity of women within the indigenous. In the context of *The Inheritors*, the Neanderthals as well as Oa go into the negative position of disempowerment in wake of the dominant incursion of the 'new people'. This is apparent in the code-units which the textuality of *The Inheritors* employs; terms such as 'bent', 'shattered', 'came smashing down' deployed in the delineations of nature, as represented in the passage below, reveal a distinct passivity and surrender to an oppressive poetic which the 'new people' spearhead,

> In front of him he [Lok] saw Tuami's head and shoulders move quickly aside and then a whole tree with arms that bent and shattered in a mass of greenery came smashing down. As the green of the tree swept side-ways he could see the clearing again for the thorn bushes had been torn down and the hollow logs were coming through. The people were heaving at the logs, inching them forward. (181-182).

It is problematic to fit the Neanderthals and Oa herself within the paradigm of subalternity in the absence of a mapped polity. However, their marginalization and

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subsequent subjugation in wake of imposed confrontation with the new people and the relatively advanced 'skill' and civilizational discourse they come with serves as a reiterative signifier for re-reading the processes of contemporary capitalist and technocratic hegemonies that operate on an inherent disregard for multispecies ethnography.

The textual selection of *The Inheritors* as part of this study and the subsequent discussion undertaken above may warrant the question as to why the extinction of the Neanderthals species is relevant to Green Cultural Studies? The present research attempts to answer this question by unspooling the perceived logic behind the same by drawing correlations between four distinct vantage arguments.

The study titled, "The Quaternary megafungal extinction and the fate of Neanderthals: An integrative working hypothesis" published by P. Hortolà and B. Martinez-Navarro in *Quaternary International* as well as a report titled, "Ancient gene flow from early modern humans into Eastern Neanderthals" published in *Nature* by M. Kuhlwilm et al suggested that the Neanderthal extinction was caused by a number of factors including the advent of cognitively superior 'modern' homo sapiens, competitive replacement, competitive exclusion, interbreeding with early modern human populations, natural calamities and a continual inability to adapt to variations in climate (69-72; 429-433). Reinforcing these views, Kim Sterelny's postulations which speak of a negative feedback relationship with the environment that came in the lives of the Neanderthals largely in wake of the arrival of cognitively (and anatomically) superior homo sapiens also emphasize upon the dependence of the living inhabitants on the non-human material world around them. In the article, "Consilience, Ecocriticism and Ecological Destruction", Hoeg reminds the readers that, "[N]either the [human] brain nor the environment are blank slates, but rather the interrelated product of millions of years of evolution, both full of adaptations produced by natural selection. The stories we tell about our environment shape the way we treat it, and the way we tell stories has been shaped by millions of years of environment" (*Politics and Culture*). Lastly, borrowing from Jacques Derrida, New Historicism, reinforces that nothing is *outside the text* and that every text is *thrice-processed*, "first through the ideology, or outlook or discursive patterns of its own time, then through those of ours, and finally through the distorting web of language itself" (Barry 175).

Yoking these arguments together, the present study reiterates the idea that the current environmental crises are a collective result of anthropogenic activities that, although unfolding in different spatiotemporalities, are connected by an 'archival continuum' of impactful footprint. This is to suggest that there may be a distinct but traceable pattern in human ideology and action, as represented in its cultural expressions, to which present sensibilities may have been numbed owing to overfamiliarization of routine. A cultural signifier that provides an alternative paradigm, albeit imaginative and/or based on disputed studies, may offer a much-needed ostranenie – a vantage defamiliarized perspective through which humankind can assess the present environmental situation that it finds itself in. *The Inheritors* is an important text in this sense. It ruptures the essentialities of 'human nature' by engaging in differences; these differences and non-fixations are celebrated using the narratological tool of subversion. The Neanderthal signification system makes them perceive nature markedly different than the one normalized by most technocratic, capitalist, economy-driven frameworks. It fractures the notion that language reflects reality and reinforces the structuralist notion that language, in fact, shapes reality. By virtue of this, a language system where code-units promote ecological sustainability can serve as significant antidotes to some of nodal environmental damages caused by an inherent validation provided by utilitarian and hegemonic jargon. Through the concept of Oa, it reinforces the notion of the interrelations between multispecies in bioregions – of which humans are an integral, if not central, part. By interrogating the evolutionary force of the 'new people', it sufficiently diffuses received perspectives on civilization and progression; through the crevices that subsequently open, one is able to analyse the crucial relationship between these sociopolitical constructions and environmental deterioration. It traces the politics behind binary-formations, willful otherizations and consequential disempowerment of the 'ecosystem peoples' – indigenous and/or immigrated communities that depend upon nature for their livelihood. In subjugating nature, the politic of domination also subjugates these peoples who are then made to internalise their own marginality the way Lok does in *The Inheritors*. Thus, although written as a postwar narrative of disillusioned introspection of human institutions and faculties, *The Inheritors* re-reads as a nodal green cultural text that reinstates the need to adopt a multispecies ethnographic paradigm in addressing some of the key environmental issues of present times.

3.2.3 Interrogating 'development' in The Kiln

Through the framework of New Historicism, Spatial Criticism, Subaltern Studies, Structuralism and Semiotics.

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The potters were just getting up and cleaning their teeth that morning when they heard loud whirring sounds from the foot of the hills and the area by the lake. They saw some twenty men and women carrying baskets and swords and pickaxes cutting through the dew-drenched fields. The potters stared after them with fear, who were they going to cut down with these implements?

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In December 2015, the villagers of Amdai woke up to bulldozers clearing over 100,000 square metres of orchard land with at least 1000 coconut trees in their backyard. It is only then that they became aware of the fact that [an] Agro Farms…[was] to construct a brewery and distillery there.

Newslaundry.com May 05, 2017

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<tr>
<td style="text-align:center">Box 3.2.3.1</td>
<td style="text-align:center">Box 3.2.3.2</td>
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Literary fiction, more often than not, mirrors reality in some way or the other. At times, it also presages reality that may occur in future time (possibly owing to a nuanced underpinning of causal relations in events). It happens but rarely, however, that literary vision is so cogent and responsive to (future) realism that one is forced to take cognizance of this epiphenomenal prophetic quality of a piece of literature and trace the crucial interlinkages that shape the narratives of reality and fiction. A case in point is the primary text under discussion – *The Kiln* by Mahabaleshwar Sail. As the translation of Sail's original work *Hawthan*, *The Kiln* published in 2011 brought to fore a fictional story entailing the predicament of a potters' community in face of the 'developmental' project of building a dam initiated by the State-apparatus. This *machina* of perceived 'advancement' spelt doom for the potters as it would completely annihilate the source of their livelihood – the clay that would form on the river bed as it dried out in the summer season. The novella went on to exhume and ferret out entrenched patterns of marginalization and oppression that operate even in the most innocuous-seeming capital-intensive projects. Box 3.2.3.1 entails lines extracted from the text that depict the absolute horror and premonition of doom with which the villagers behold the

'demonic' tonality of machinery that has been recruited in the execution of devastating development. With this text, the present study juxtaposes a co-text: an actual event recovered as an anecdote for further analysis. Box 3.2.3.2 carries a news report by Madhura Chakrobarty that featured in Newslaundry.com. It forefronts the predicament faced by the inhabitants of Amdai – a village located in the Sanguem taluka of South Goa – in face of the 'economy-intensive' project of building a brewery and distillery that had received approval. This initiative of perceived 'capital growth' spelt doom for the villagers who would be compelled to share their common (and only nearby) water source with an industry that had "a daily requirement of 506 cubic metres of water" (Chakraborty "The Green Guardians of Goa: A Citizens' Movement Against a brewery). The present study deliberately places the two content-frameworks parallel to one another. A keen reading of both is crucial towards unearthing some very critical locative coordinates between the fictional account and the real event (that followed). For instance, both these narratives present the view *from below* - the central characters represented in *The Kiln* are the sociocultural subalterns – the potters' community; the villagers of Amdai, represented in the news report by Chakraborty are also the indigenous marginalized. Both the narratives present the conflict between these communities and the state-apparatus. And lastly, both – the text and the co-text – foreground, for the purpose of interrogation, the conceptual paradigms of (selective) development canalised through political hegemony even in seemingly egalitarian set-ups.

Published in 2009 as *Hawthan* in Konkani, Mahabaleshwar Sail's work was subsequently translated as *The Kiln* in English by Vidya Pai and published in 2011 by World Konkani Centre, Mangaluru. The novella portrays the acute trials and tribulations of an economically, and by extension, politically as well as socially marginalized community of potters. As the novel opens, we are introduced to the impending crisis that the community may plausibly face due to the 'development' project likely to be undertaken by the government – the building of a dam over the lake. No doubt, the dam would ensure a continuous flow of water throughout the year. This would be a blessing for the agrarian community but a portent of doom for the potters who depend upon the dry clay of the lake to shape their livelihood. The lake was a source of survival for two communities – the agrarian as well as the potters'. In its abundance, the lake ensured greenery; in drying up, it offered the clay which had enticed the ancestors of the potters'

community to settle there. This delicate balance of sustenance amidst conflicting interests is ensured by nature; but gradually, the changing economic structures begin to intervene in this natural harmony of co-existence. Earthen pots, used traditionally for all festivities as well as domestic activities begin to find their utility only in funeral rites. Availability of ready and durable substitutes in plastic leads to an indifference to the potters' art – day after day of tedious work manages to procure only meagre income barely supporting a hand-to-mouth existence. Economic degradation gradually paves way for the weakening of societal structures and bonds within the community. At the commencement of the novella, the readers are told that the potters' community is tightly knit. Yet, it had never been a self-enclosed entity; on the contrary, it had always accepted and assimilated people from different social backgrounds. However, the intricately-knit fabrics of society begin to rip apart with the augmentation of poverty, the acute knowledge of their helplessness in larger socio-economic set-up and the news of the anticipated building of the dam. Intra-community quarrels begin to turn into bitter-fights; the younger generation, seeking better prospects, abandons the village after forsaking its profession leading to individual alienation and the breakdown of clan bonds. Interestingly, this is depicted through the compelling trope of a mango tree selflessly loved by the community. Any proposal made by the fisher-community to chop the tree off would be enough to provoke the potters into violent opposition initially; the tree was an inextricable member of their daily life. But in the course of dire poverty, the potters are forced to give in – the mango tree is cut for procuring twenty-four thousand rupees. Devoid of any alternate source of income and space, either in precept or in practice, the potters' community loses its societal hold; crimes set in, marriage alliances are either broken or severed, the institution of family is ripped apart with bitter feuds and, at the end of the novella, the community remains a mere semblance and a spectre of its former self. While being a fictional account, the narrative of *The Kiln* unspools several ecocultural matrices that are crucial to contemporary dialogues on environmental crises. Apart from the New Historicist analysis of text/co-text juxtaposition undertaken at the outset of this section, the present study will deploy approaches of Spatial Criticism, New Historicism, Semiotics and Subaltern Studies in situating *The Kiln's* textuality in the green cultural purview.

In his report titled, "Socio-Ecological Research in India: A 'Status' Report", Guha argues that there are two distinct categories of people(s) who rely on nature for their

survival, sustenance and growth. The first are omnivores; in this category, Guha includes, "industrialists, rich farmers, state officials, and the growing middle class based cities (estimated at in excess of 100 million) [who] have the capability to draw upon the natural resources of the whole of India to maintain their lifestyles" (348). Guha's argument, informed by empirical data, carries a subtle indictment of this category of people who drain the resources of the environment and force the 'other' category into the disadvantageous end of the binary. Guha terms this second category, 'the ecosystem people' and includes among them, "small and marginal farmers in rain-fed tracts, the landless labourers, and also the heavily resource-dependent communities of hunter-gatherers, swidden agriculturalists, animal herders and wood-working artisans, all stubborn 'pre-modern' survivals in an increasingly 'post-modern' landscape" (348). To Guha's category of ecosystem people, the present study adds the community of potters as represented in *The Kiln*. Residing in a hamlet of Majale, larger quarantined from the jargon of high-modernism, the potters are custodians of an age-old tradition that defines their identity. Despite living a largely hand-to-mouth existence, they work in the spirit of need-based acquisition of natural sources without over-straining their ecology. An unwritten but omnipresent symbiosis with nature is ciphered in their daily existence – the potters follow these codes strictly fearing the wrath of nature if one were to treat the intricately woven interanimated relationship with frivolity. The river, therefore, is a sacrosanct lived space of their reality not only because it provides them with the means of their livelihood ("smooth, buttery clay") but also ensures peaceful coexistence between various constituents residing therein. The narrative foregrounds this self-sustaining model embodied within the natural ecosystem thus,

> A low dam on the southern flank directed the water into a little stream that
> flowed westwards towards the village. As a result, the water level would
> begin to sink in the month of *Magh*, and by the end of *Phalgun*, the cracks
> and fissures on its dry bed would be exposed. The farmers and their herds
> of cattle would move away and the potters would have access to the clay.
> (06).

In this model of multispecies sustainability, no group is marginalised towards spiralling disadvantage. The cycle of seasons ensures a well-demarcated wherewithal which does not necessarily translate to monetary advantage but helps the community of potters

retain the collective socioecological consciousness which they have crafted around their entrenched downtroddeness. The strength which they derive from their lived space makes them an assimilative peoples defying divisive self-enclosures that are usually quintessential to power-driven materialistic economies. As the narrator poignantly notes,

> The families in the potter's colony pay no attention to these caste distinctions today and an outsider observing the community's activities would believe that they were a large extended family sharing the same roots. They do not rake up these distinctions even during the most vehement quarrels and fights…[T]hey share their joys and sorrows and draw strength from their shared experience to face the stark poverty that is their lot. (07).

An interesting study made by folklore critic Vinayak Khedekar on the ecocultures of Goa recouped by the present study may provide an explanatory insight into this peculiar collective consciousness shown by the potters' community. Khedekar focuses on the unsung role played by the traditional Ganvkari system in ensuring eco-sustainability models in the state. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, under the aegis of the Ganvkari tradition, "[t]he villagers used to maintain water resources and repair the bunds by cooperative efforts [and] [t]he maintenance of larger lakes and ponds was the responsibility of the *Ganvkari*" (*Eco Culture* 112). This form of governance was informed by a spirit of community responsibility that sought to take the inherent biodiversity of regional spaces into consideration. The subsequent models of high-modernism that came in wake of colonisation and its aftermath, continuing upto present times, display an acute disregard for such consciousness for regional specificities. The notional jargon of 'development' touted by dominant economies is emulated to fit into a global grammar that eschews regional/local peculiarities. Guha's argument in "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique" puts this tangible disparity between the Western and Indian approaches to environmental problems into perspective when it notes that,

> Two features distinguish these [Indian] environmental movements from their Western counterparts. First, for the sections of society most critically affected by environmental degradation – poor and landless peasants,

women, and tribals – it is a question of sheer survival, not of enhancing the quality of life. Second, and as a consequence, the environmental solutions they articulate deeply involve questions of *equity as well as economic and political redistribution*. (05).

The deep-seated consternation felt by the potters of Majale village, upon abruptly receiving the news of the dam to be built by the government, must be understood within the context put forth by Guha. It is important to recognize here that infrastructural drives such as dams – even those epitomizing feats of prodigious engineering – are *not* objective and ontological signifiers of 'development'. Such drives can signify the notion of advancement only when they foster collective and holistic growth of populations affected by them. If not, they transmute into being indices of irreversible displacement and dislocation as in the case of the Cahora Bassa Dam in the Zambesi Valley discussed in sub-section 3.3.2 of the present study. For the potters in *The Kiln*, the dam signifies a cruel reinforcement of their marginalized position in the socio-political framework. They know that in being an unequivocal advantage to the farmers, the dam puts them in a place of double subservience; not only are they shoved to hinges in the larger partisan framework but are also rendered vulnerable within their own socioecological habitat due to a radical shift of power in the hands of the farmers. Their acute awareness of their unpropitious position becomes palpable in their interactions as reflected in the passage below,

> 'We're potters. The clay at the bottom of the lake is our greatest wealth. How will we survive without it?' …Shivram's face reflected his worry… 'You should have spoken to the local administrators and the Ministers.' 'Who'll listen to *unimportant people like us*? We're potters, they can knead us like lumps of clay'. (*The Kiln* 07; my emphasis).

The potters thus become receivers of a vicious hegemonic cycle that compels select sections of society to internalise their own disempowered position. In the jargon of policy-governance, these sections are labelled 'weaker' or 'backward' – paradigms that pave way for further deployments of 'developmental' and/or 'emancipatory' schemes that seek to alleviate these peoples from their 'underprivileged' backgrounds. Moreover, most of the policies are arbitrated superficially and loosely without undertaking a

methodical analysis of socio-political circumstances that placed these groups into positions of disadvantage in the first place.

In his Introduction to *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory*, John Beverly points out that,

> Subaltern studies is about power, who has it and who doesn't, who is gaining it and who is losing it. Power is related to representation: which representations have cognitive authority or can secure hegemony, which do not have authority or are not hegemonic. (01)

In documenting the tribulations of the potters' community of Majale, *The Kiln* becomes a representation of a subaltern group that constantly finds itself at the periphery of the centre-margin paradigm. Seen from a polarised political angle, the potters are a relatively smaller demographic entity and by default a less advantageous (perhaps even negligible) vote-bank. The government's 'developmental drive' of revoking the construction of a dam – a project that has been lying dormant – to help a relatively larger community of farmers seems like a calculated move. Moreover, far from being represented in the decision-making process, the potters are not even kept privy to the information. The narrative subtly interweaves these political discrepancies within the larger focus of the impending cataclysm awaiting the potters' community. A community cannot be in positions of 'natural' disadvantage in the absence of striated spaces of vested hegemony that normalizes one way of life over the other. The potters are the victims of an underlying nexus between economic, political and cultural forces, each menacingly bound to the other, that ensures a self-defeatist doom of the community which it strategically disregards. The construction of the dam signifies social and *legal* injustice done towards the potters by the state machina. As is seen in the case of the native communities of Africa analysed through the textuality of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in the present study, the apparatus of 'law' is usually constructed with surreptitious political and economic motives. The machinery of legality, therefore, also needs to be revaluated critically in order to keep a check upon its susceptibility to hegemonic manoeuvres. In this regard, the five-pointer observation on the 'developmental' projects entailing construction of dams in the state of Goa, outlined by

advocate Sangeeta Sonak in her work, *Environment and Development: Goa at Crossroads* is especially useful to the present context. She emphasizes upon,

> The need for more sustainable and appropriate alternatives to dams; [T]he imperative for improved transparency, accountability and public participation in the planning of water and energy projects; [T]he importance of prior project approval by potentially affected groups; [T]he need for protecting and promoting the rights of potentially affected peoples, and for setting in place measures to reduce inequities and [T]he necessity of reparation measures to address the legacy of unfulfilled commitments and unresolved problems (7).

None of these measures are taken into cognizance in the statist project of dam-construction presented in *The Kiln*. With the building of the dam, the lake would never dry up and consequently, the potters would not be able to make any pots. This would mean the ultimate annihilation not only of a long-standing community but of its identity. On the other hand, the farmers' community would reap multiple harvests in a year and earn greater economic power as well as social advantage. Concomitantly, the negative space of disempowerment occupied by the subaltern potters' community would be further aggravated and make the group vulnerable subjects in the socioeconomic equation between the two communities. The potters are well-aware of the repercussions of such an occurrence and its willy-nilly ability to breed hegemonic patterns among previously co-existing communities. One of the potters, therefore, remarks,

> They [the farmers] know that if the lake remains full the potters will be forced to work in their fields. That's why they're delighted. When our women go to hoe and weed and work in their fields they make them toil without rest and then they abuse them too! (*The Kiln* 31).

The Kiln, thus, gives an insight into how the smooth spaces of sociocultural harmony transition into stratified spaces of power-relations. A capital-driven rhetoric of demographic dividend, then, is grossly discriminating. In reconfiguring environmental spatialities, it regroups social categories and vice-versa. This is how the degeneration of an ecological space is directly connected to the deterioration of inhabitants (ecosystem

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population) dependent upon it. The epoch of the Anthropocene is driven more by constructed anthropogenic (and selective anthropocentric) forces than biogenic factors. Viewed thus, *The Kiln* deftly fractures the present-day natural-versus-man-made debates invoked in high-handed conversations on Climate Change and environmental crisis. *The Kiln* goes on to show us that acts of self-serving hegemony and violence perpetrated even at microcosmic levels can lead to or indicators of massive disruptions caused at macroscopic levels.

At the start of *The Kiln*, Sail consciously crafts the natural environment of Majale as a 'life-place' that evokes and embodies innate feelings of topophilia among its inhabitants. Sail's descriptions of nature, expressed in the original, are conspicuously eco-conscious. This 'space', is not an 'empty container' of Lefebvre's anxieties. It is a repository of biophilic interconnections which shapes the material unfolding of everyday realities. In the original text *Hawthan* written in Konkani, the writer unearths the semiotic prowess of stylistic devices such as personification and onomatopoeia in the description of the natural elements thus,

> रोयणी नक्षत्राक अजून बरोच कळाव आसलो आनी हो कसलो घुसमटमार चलला मळबांत! वाऱ्याक वोतान जशें अंदून धल्लां ... दनपार देंवली आनी खंय तरी कितें तरी हाललें. माडार चुडत सरसरलें. वाड्यार मद्दीं उबो आशिल्ल्या आमले रूखाचो शेंडो एके वटेसान लखलखत दुसरे वटेन पावलो. ताचो सों ...आवाज येयलो. (Sail *Hawthan* 01).

In an attempt to carry the palpable sense of green consciousness in the target text reproduced in English, the translator Vidya Pai undertakes a semiological translation of the source text re-rendering much of the ecocultural nuances and literary stylistics foregrounded by the original. The translation reads,

> …there was quite some time before the Roini nakshatra, the star that heralded the rains would appear in the sky. But what was this strange tussle that was going on in the heavens, the sun seemed to hold the wind on a tight leash…! The sun began to wane and something moved. A palm frond rustled. The leafy canopy of the mango tree in the middle of the settlement swished loudly as it swayed from side to side. (*The Kiln* 01).

It is in such non-hyphenated spaces of 'topo' and biophilia that the potters' collective consciousness unfolds. However the ploy of the dam considerably ruptures the optimistic textual conscious to reveal underlying anxieties associated with infrastructural reconfigurations of ecological spaces. For the potters, their palpable environment transmutes from being a lived space of coexisting congenialities to becoming a 'site of struggle and conflict'. As propounded by theorists such as Yi-Fu Tuan, Edward Relph and Robert David Sack, development act(s) such as the one highlighted by *The Kiln*, reinforce the "role of humans as geographical agents who have the power to transform the earth" (Rangarajan ch. 5). In wake of transforming the earth, humans, as geographical agents can radically (and adversely) distort social structures too creating uneven and oppositional spaces of growth and progression. In view of the impending crisis of the dam that threatens their livelihood, the potters turn antagonistic not only towards people outside their community but also towards those within. Initially, despite their compelling trials, the potters show a deep sense of empathy – a nuance that is brought out pertinently in the source text, *Hawthan*. When the potters are advised to leave Majale and seek sustenance near some other river-bed, one of them laments,

> माती आसूंक जाय न्ही? आनी आख्खो वाडो उखलून घेवन खंय वयतलो? कोणाल्या पोटार पांय दिवंक? आदीच सगळीकडेच कुंबार तेंकलांत. (Sail, *Hawthan* 8)
>
> Where will we get mud like this? And how can the whole potters colony just move into another village, as it is potters are facing such hard times…(*The Kiln* 07).
>
> There should be mud like this, no? And how can we uproot an entire colony and take it somewhere else? *Won't we jeopardise someone else's livelihood?* As it is, the potters everywhere are facing hardships. (my trans; my emphasis).

The empathetic tonality of the potter's concerns not only reveals a deeply entrenched collective consciousness but also provides an alternative rhetoric to the self-serving tenor of high-modernism. However, such matrices of a symbolic *sahitya* begin to wither in face of mounting adversities. Internal squabbles increase as the potters try to reconcile with the rapid deterioration of their age-old occupation. While attempting to tenaciously hold on to their collective identity, they envision a different future for their children in order to mitigate the menacing impact of intergenerational inequity perpetrated by

hegemonic models of environmental domination. This binary turmoil is evident in the helpless pleas made by one of the strongest (female) characters of the novella – Sitai – to Sadanand (a village youngster who procures a job outside the potters' community). Sitai exclaims,

> Forget about us, old people. We'll die, anyway. Youngsters like you will move out and settle down elsewhere. Your wings are fresh and strong. But what about those middle-aged people who can only earn a living by shaping clay? I tell you, Sadanand, if they build a dam here and the lake becomes wide and deep, each man in the potter's colony will jump into the water and give up his life […] *Sadanand, try and get my grandson a job*. (*The Kiln* 110; my emphasis).

This dualistic tonality reflected in Sitai's appeal is also suggestive of the oppositional role she occupies within the macrocosmic and microcosmic power-structuration presented within *The Kiln*. Subaltern critics such as Spivak and Shiva have often decried the pervasive androcentric privileging prevalent in subaltern criticisms which embody self-negating matrices of inequitable representations. In her article, "Green Indigeneity: Forest Gynocracies and Subaltern Eco-masculinities, Arunabha Bose foregrounds the need to represent female subjectivities as "enfleshed, corporeal and ecologically embodied", in view of a severe erasure/absence of "women's histories and indigenous histories" (48) in androcentric postcolonial historiographies. The present study believes that, in many ways, the intricate narrative of *The Kiln* manages to accomplish the task set by Bose by multi-layering the character of Sitai. She is undoubtedly, what Spivakian terminology would locate as the triply-marginalized – the 'sub sub-subaltern'; Sitai has no agency owing to the triad model of suppression; she suffers oppression not only as an individual belonging to the potters' community, but also as a woman and additionally, a widow. Her position, therefore, is problematic. She occupies the conventional hinges of an already de-centred social system, never once transgressing the unseen but ubiquitously demarcated lines of constructed propriety. And yet, she is not voiceless. This is not to say that she can speak in the Spivakian sense; she can't, largely because her voice, though important and loud, is not discoursed and hence, not heard. However, in emphasizing her crucial role as the conscience keeper of a rapidly-degenerating community, the narrative makes it a point to give Sitai her due agency. Despite passively accepting the oppressive norms that her community places upon her position, she vents out against the debilitating effects of an unnatural severance

of relationship between herself and the 'Earth' as widows were not allowed to mould clay. This imposition, more than anything else, is an undermining of the reproductive neural network that connects her with the nature and makes her a symbol of the female creator principle. Inertly genuflecting to this age-old prescriptive structure, she pointedly criticizes its anachronism as she states,

> A widow must not mould a lump of clay on the potter's wheel, she must not beat a pot into shape. Throwing clay on the wheel and giving it shape is like giving birth to a child, they say. They've tied our hands and feet with restrictions like these, but we followed the ancestor's dictates…We only fashion rim-less earthen vessels that do not need to be thrown on the wheel. (*The Kiln* 12).

Sitai's voice is thus a poignant critique of all androcentric feudal and non-feudal systems that despite their fundamental contradictions, bear similitudes of systemic marginalization of womenfolk. As a wizened adhesive force of the potters' community, then, Sitai may be seen reasserting her position of eternal maternity that derives its strength from the resilient spirit of nature subjected to similar masculinist dominations.

The reader meets the character of Sitai as an important albeit drifting entity of community psyche. She is, in several ways, a lore in herself – a repository of the story of the genesis, the rise and fall, the idiosyncratic transformations and the syncretic metamorphosis of the potters' community. She is also the keeper of their mythopoeic fables, especially those that connect the community with its socioecological historicities. As such, she becomes the locus of reclaiming the distinct specificities of a community which is losing its firm grounds of existence in face of politico-economic violence. She becomes the point through which the community can re-trace its identity and moreover, salvage its ecology from the debauched usufruct that it would come to bear in face of decimation. Despite carrying the dense grief of her son's death, she embodies the ecocentric maternal. Sitai is a self-proclaimed but community-approved 'protector of the realm'. In spite of her position of marginality, she holds the threads of the community's social fabric even as they threaten to loosen and tear in her tenuous grip. In being the afore-mentioned, her representamen gains greater signification within the larger structure of the 'ecosystem woman'. Bose summons Vandana Shiva's and Maria Mies' contention in reasserting the identity of the

> [T]hird World woman as a custodian of indigenous knowledge and biodiversity, whose non-dominant, alternative and culturally embedded practice of bio-conservation differ from the androcentric, masculinist, monocultural, Eurocentric and dominant model. *The indigenous woman and the indigenous flora/fauna are both objects of genocidal violence, identity dissolution and cultural extinction*. (49; my emphasis).

Sitai represents this 'Third World' woman of dichotomic cultural position. While being the victim of oppressive rigidities of social-systems, she is also the *sui generis* epithet of intersubjectivities within the ecosystem. And therefore, perhaps, any threat to the ecological identity of her lived space is a direct threat to her own perceived space. The unseen but pertinent synaptic bond she shares with nature is evident through her relationship with the mango tree in the community. The narrative characteristically inserts the trope of the mango tree in its schemata of documentation and critique; as a metaphor imbued with ethnocentric semiology, the mango tree plays an important role in contouring and accentuating the interstices between all living beings and the axiomatic symbiosis in which such connections foster. The multispecies ethnography which can be traced in *The Inheritors* through the icon of OA, is represented in *The Kiln* through the synecdochic figuration of the mango tree. Standing at the fulcrum of the community's physical spatiality as well as forming a significant part of their textual subconscious, the tree,

> …[c]ast its cool shade over the potter's colony and people's hearts were gratified by the profusion of mangos that hung from every bough. This whole area would soon take on the appearance of a festival as birds and insects, squirrels and crows would begin to scamper about its boughs…Hordes of children would gather under the tree…[T]he women would prowl about at dusk gathering the fallen fruit. (*The Kiln* 42).

At the first-level meaning gradation, its visual representamen is that of a corporeal natural entity – a point the narrative ensures to foreground. The tree exists despite and irrespective of the human capacity of its subsumption at linguistic and metalinguistic levels. However, at the second-level meaning gradation, the first-level interpretant of a corporal entity attains more meta-physical connotations. The tree, for instance, is like

Sitai – a living embodiment of the inconspicuous affiliations that connect individuals from the community with each other as well as with nature. In that, it is a reflection of their *sui generis* identity as a community that draws its everyday inspiration from ecology. This is an abrasive alternative paradigm to the technocratic jargon of viewing nature as a raw resource whose importance is determined by its utility in the finished product. Khedekar unspools the multidimensional relevance of the mango tree in the socio-spiritual psyche of ecocultural Goan folklore by emphasizing that,

> For centuries together, folklore describes the immense use of mango leaves. The convention of using only the leaves of the naturally grown tree, locally known as *Amulli* is strictly followed; not a single leaf of a grafted mango tree can be used for any rituals. A number of religious observances entail these leaves, which are placed in a copper or earthen pot – *Taamyo*, containing water, as well as a coconut placed on it in an upright position…A bunch of mango leaves – *Aambyaa Taalo* is prominently used in marriage ceremonies. In the women's annual festival Dhaalo, an important song says "Aambyaa tuzo taalo, taalo modun rath ghadielo. Saateri maayecho, rath ghadielo"…"O Mango tree, your small branch is broken to make a chariot. A chariot for the Goddess Saanteri is made by your mango branch. (*Eco culture* 140; original trans.)

Sail's installation of the mango tree as a sign of the community's collective consciousness, may be a strategic move towards reminding the Goan society at large of its deeply rooted associations with environment in face of the capitalistic onslaughts that the state has been facing time and again from internal and external forces. A perceptive interpreter, then, would be able to trace lines of cultural palimpsests within the semiological fluidities of the mango tree. The narrative does not make this multi-layered embodiment of the mango tree reductionist by placing it in the symbolic vicissitudes of intangible signification. It highlights the ethnobotanical relevance of the tree in its tangible form. The tree is a 'natural' way of maintaining the delicate balance of the ecosystem upon which the potters' community hinges. Studies undertaken in the Konkan belt on the benefits of anthropogenically cultivated mango-orchards and polyembryonic mango-trees grown in the wild have reinforced the carbon-sequestration potentialities of mango trees in the Konkan region (Ganeshamurthy et al 1417-1423).

As such, when the narrative speaks of the 'cool shade' that the tree casts over the potters' community, it does not mean so only in a symbolic or metaphoric sense. The mango tree stands at the epicentre of the bioregion – the physical and symbolic 'life-place' that supports a community in its continued socioeconomic battles. The 'fall' of this mango tree, then, is a representative fall of the community. The community tenuously holds on to the mango-tree as it holds on to its collapsing identity; any (lucrative) proposal made by the fisherfolk to fell the tree in return for substantial monetary compensation is met with violent opposition by the potters for whom the tree is polyvalent in its sacrosanctity. However, in face of dire poverty, the potters are compelled to give in – the mango tree is felled for procuring a sum of twenty-four thousand rupees. The felling of the tree, thus, has poly-semiotic significance. Firstly, it portrays the anthropocentric processualities that determine life-patterns and cycles of other living beings. It is humans (the potters and fisherfolk, in this case) who determine the fate of a tree and all other non-human life dependent on it. Secondly, it forefronts the viciousness of oppressive-circles – the socioeconomic disintegration of the ecosystem people paves way for the destruction of their ecosystem thereby furthering their socioeconomic disintegration. The only way out of this circle is a deliberate rejection of one's identity and migration into other-ed spatialities that may or may not be spaces of empowerment. Thirdly, it represents the helpless genuflection of ecosubjectivity before technosubjectivity. Quarantined as they are from the striated urban and semi-rural spaces of hegemonic predominance, the potters (representing the ecosystem people) are not free from the clutches pervasive capitalism. The felling of the tree, that constituted a huge part of their lived and perceived space, unfolds a sense of metaphoric displacement for the potters. They are suddenly left in an unhinged space governed by forces that have made them internalise their subjugated stratum. Fourthly, it posits the feminist ethnocentricity (as embodied by Sitai and the mango tree) vis-à-vis self-serving androcentricity (represented by the State-apparatus, the relatively dominant (male) peasant class and the dam). In doing so it brings out the willy-nilly subjugation of the former by the latter. Sara Ruddick, in her work *Maternal Thinking*: *Toward a Politics of Peace* identifies "a correlation between maternity, preservation, conservation and peace…[and] a matricentric epistemological practice or Maternal Thinking as a Feminist Standpoint governed by the ethical imperative to preserve/conserve the vulnerable "other"" (50). In the novel, Sitai, occupying a marginal position herself, recognizes the position of vulnerability that befalls the mango tree in face of the potters

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damnation. Since her own becoming and territorialisation is connected closely with the mango tree, she becomes a symbolic embodiment of the trauma that its felling brings about. As part of the gynocentric reciprocity that ecosystems such as those of the potters community nurture, Sitai comes to exemplify the pain that the tree feels owing to a sense of ecological synapses (as also represented in the OA concept promulgated in the narrative of *The Inheritors*). The semiotic signs of the mango tree and Sitai become polymorphous fluidities that are based on eco-genealogical semantics of reproductivity (and the creator principle) as well as by the subversive processes of naturalisation that are constantly battling dominant acculturations. The narrative brings about this organic, naturalised affinities by highlighting the aspect of physical 'violence' in the compositional framework of the textual imagery of felling. It reads,

> The mango tree in the settlement continued to flower and bear fruit every year, but they cut it down and pulled out the roots. A vast quantity of sap trickled out of these roots, who did that tree weep for? Who did it curse? (*The Kiln* 127).

Transcending beyond the ecofeminist poignancy of tree-felling routed through the character of Sitai, the act has other deep-seated implications within the protest-voice staged by the narrative. Relevant perforations made within the narratology reveal the semiological analogy between the mango tree and the potters' community. As mentioned earlier, in the schemata of a political-paradigm that bases itself upon enfranchisement, the potters' are a unique disenfranchised group in being a smaller community and therefore, collectively, a less valuable vote-bank. The module of selective development, therefore, can afford to leave them out just as it can leave out the larger well-being of nature once its anthropocentric utility is met. Such political machinations work through the baseline of quick-fix solutions without bearing in mind long-term implications of their actions. The present study once again foregrounds that short-sighted policies that perpetrate severing of human ties with nature for the sake of 'economic viability'; rather than forging those ties on the foundation of 'ecological sustainability' are some of the major factors responsible for the present-day environmental crisis that has emerged as a global problem through multitudes of microscopic, seemingly trivial, political misgivings.

In stating the plight of the villagers of Amdai who stood at the brink of bearing the cruel brunt of water shortage owing to the governmental sanction provided to the private-owned brewery, the news feature published in 2017 (cited in Box 3.2.3.2) reported,

> The residents of the village, indigenous people, use the water to cultivate crops like coconut, kokum, areca nut and cashew. Uguem [river] is fed by the monsoon and is not a perennial river. In summer months, there is often not enough water to be distributed through the lift irrigation system for the orchards and farms. *How then, does the government expect there to be enough water to meet the requirements of a brewery, the villagers ask.* (Chakraborty Madhura; my emphasis)

Published roughly six years prior to the issue cited above, Mahabaleshwar Sail's *The Kiln* underscores a similar concerns in wake of the imminent destruction of potters' occupational identity in Majale. One of the characters remarks,

> [T]hey will dig up our mud and use it to build a dam…There'll be enough water in the lake for someone to down even in the month of May…They'll water their fields and their orchards throughout the year. They'll be happy and contended. But we won't get a basket of clay for our pots. *Where will we go and beg for mud?* (*The Kiln* 132; my emphasis)

The text and the co-text exhumed and juxtaposed in the present study, as illustrated above, seem to use the same syntactical semiotic of rhetorical questioning and interrogation in underpinning the helplessness of the marginalised subjects. Both cases point out that any act assuming nomenclatures of 'development', 'growth', 'advancement' or 'progress' cannot and should not be passively received. What the Amdai case embodies, *The Kiln* delineates and forewarns against. All aspects of cultural production – consumed actively and passively – therefore, should come under the purview of green cultural analysis for understanding and initiating sounder practices towards sustainable futures.

3.3 Popular Culture and Folk Culture

3.3.1 Ecological Becomings in Avatar

Through the framework of Spatial Criticism, Subaltern Studies, Post-structuralism, Structuralism and Semiotics

In Chapter One of the present study, the researcher underpins that one of the major pitfalls of environmental dialogues in scientific and/or academic discourses is the heavy jargonising and oft-times instructional policing that accompanies it. For want of a better term, rhetoric in ecological sustainability is labelled as a 'niche area' developed by people who seem to know-it-all, who seem to have grasped the problem in its complex totality and having done so, ideate solutions entailing a set of guidelines that have to be followed *de facto* if humanity is to march towards a better future. Even in the best of its intentions, iterative models of green-consciousness pitched from elevated scaffolds of prescriptive perspicacity or sterilized objectivity can often lead to enervating results through passive resistance or subversive counteractivity. Such methods, moreover, can also fall victim to the agenda-driven accusations of being exaggeratedly 'alarmist' by espousing cultures of guilt and austerity among the masses. Contemporary world, as the present study perceives, is caught up in this unique conundrum. That, the present environmental crises call for collective action has been foregrounded by several empirical and factual studies published by bodies such as IPCC. That, Climate Change and Global Warming are not mythopoeic figments of dystopic imagination but realities that are gradually surfacing in the form of irreversible damages is being proven time and again through pan-globe disasters. And yet, how does one disseminate, mobilize and sustain mass involvement in the cause for environment? This remains a confounding question. The current times, however, seem to have shown some locative coordinates that the present study traces through the locus of popular culture via relevant conduits of mass media. In order to do so, it chooses the film, *Avatar* and recovers its multi-layered ecological textuality so as to de-territorialize it as a mere cinematic icon and re-territorialize it as a cultural product of eco-ethnographical conversation.

Avatar is a 2009 epic science fiction film "directed, written, produced and co-edited by James Cameron" ("Avatar"). Located in a futuristic setting, the film is set in the mid-22nd century, i.e. the year 2154 when humans are colonising a heavily forested

habitable moon of a gas giant in the Alpha Centauri star system called Pandora with the commercial interest of mining and obtaining a room-temperature super conductor mineral unobtanium which lies in abundance under the biologically rich terrains of the place. Pandora, however, is not *terra nulis*. As most colonised nations were, Pandora is also inhabited by indigenous population called Na'vi which is a distinct species of 10-foot tall, blue-skinned sapient humanoids. The tribe of Na'vi is heavily governed by bonds of close kinship and its relationship with the all-encompassing Nature-mother goddess called Eywa. In order to establish monopoly over the mineral unobtanium, the humans led by the Resource Development Administration (henceforth RDA) – a quasi-governmental organization – have to oust the natives either by coercion or consent. Therefore they start a massive project as part of which scientists use Na'vi human hybrids called "avatars" operated by genetically matched humans. These hybrids are designed to assume the form and bodily composition of the Na'vi to explore their land the atmosphere of which contains a gas heavily poisonous to humans. The main plot of the story peaks when the interests of one of the hybrids – Jake Sully a paraplegic former Marine who replaces his deceased identical twin brother as an operator of an avatar – start conflicting with the heavily commercial, colonial and destructive interests of the RDA's private security forces. On one of his explorations of the Na'vi land with the avatars of Dr. Grace Augustine, head of the Avatar program and fellow scientist, Dr. Norm Spellman to collect biological data, Sully is attacked by a thanator – a large hexapodal land predator. He is saved by Neytiri, a female Na'vi with whom Sully's avatar falls in love. The tribe is essentially wary of outsiders especially the humans whom they call the 'sky people'. But following an auspicious sign from the woodsprites, Sully's avatar is initiated into the ways of the Na'vi. As Sully gets to study the Na'vi ways, he begins to realise that their ways of life, their community bonds as well as their keen relationship with Nature is strong and rich absolutely antithetical to the energy-deficient exploitative human land which he comes from. Sully immediately realises the imminent danger which awaits the Na'vi as the RDA's private security forces seek to mine out unobtanium by destroying the Tree of Souls – a tree which is extremely sacred and significant to the Na'vi way of life. In the story that ensues, Sully along with the Na'vi and a few scientists from the avatar project strive to protect the Na'vi land, The People and their Eywa from the destruction caused by humans. Na'vi's fight is a difficult one as they confront the advanced ammunition and fighting mechanisms of the human species. But their biggest strength comes from Eywa – a guiding force that acts

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to keep the ecosystem in perfect equilibrium. Facing the external threat, the Eywa unites the whole of Na'vi – The People, their ancestors, the flora and the fauna – who together fight the outsiders and reclaim their land.

In the Chapter misleadingly titled, "Other Spaces" in the work *Spatiality*, Robert T. Tally actually *highlights* the role of alternate spaces created in fantasies and fiction, spaces conceived out of utopic or dystopic imaginations and those largely disassociated with the realms of mimesis or realism, in shaping the 'real' actions of the human world. He locates their crucial position in influencing areas of cartography and geography and pertinently underpins that the distinction between 'real' and 'imaginary' spaces can often blur due to their instabilities, subjection to reversals and proneness to oscillations. More significantly, he invokes the view by theorist China Miéville that serves as a crucial juncture from which the relevance of these spaces can be re-examined within the ambit of popular culture in present study. Tally cites that,

> (i)n a fantastic cultural work, the artist pretends that things known to be impossible are not possible but real, which creates mental space redefining – or pretending to redefine – the impossible. This is sleight of mind, altering the categories of the not-real. Bearing in mind Marx's point that *the real and the not-real are constantly cross-referenced in productive activity by which humans interact with the world, changing the not-real allows one to think differently about the real, its possibilities and its actualities.* (147).

The present study contextually recasts the contention made by Miéville to argue that "the real and the not-real are constantly cross-referenced in productive activity by which humans interact with the *ecological* world" (147; my addition; my emphasis). Even in a strictly phenomenological world that unfolds in Lefebvre's triad of lived/perceived/conceived there is room for a whole new 'imagined' space through which humans can (re)think their assimilation and alterity. The present study argues that such re-imaginings of spatialities especially occur in moments of intense flux, transition and/or striation. Such re-imaginings may be fuelled purely by the pursuit of an alternate aesthetic, or by the spirit of meta-physical and meta-linguistic exploration, or even by the need to extend the scope of anthropological historiography. However, oft-times, such re-imaginings are intentional or subconscious flight-response evoked by the realities of contemporary world(s) that are difficult to fathom and reconcile with. Such

re-created spaces, then, may take the form of crucial metaphors imbued within narratives of utopia or dystopia that seek panacea from the sinister superimpositions of 'real' spaces and/or desperately envision an alternative paradigm that can plausibly salvage humankind from perceived self-destruction. Such narratives of alterity are not a rare phenomenon in human literary and cultural history. Responding to the compelling thrust of Industrial Revolution and its juggernauted progress, D.H. Lawrence drew up an idyllic, mytho-poetic ecological past by unearthing the Greek God of the wild, Pan. He proclaimed that 'Pan is dead', where Pan becomes the metonymic sign for all of Nature that died (was getting destroyed) in wake of Industrialization. And yet, humankind, busy moving from one phase of material living to another, hardly noticed. Lawrence, in critiquing man's trajectory *away* from nature, foregrounded the menacing nature of this exodus by illustrating that,

> …[t]he nymphs, running among the trees and curling to sleep under the bushes, made the myrtles blossom more gaily, and the spring bubble up with greater urge, and the birds splash with a strength of life. And the lithe flanks of the faun gave life to the oak-groves, the vast trees hummed with energy…[But] [g]radually men moved into cities. And they loved the display of people better than the display of a tree. They liked the glory they got of overpowering one another in war. And, above all, they loved the vainglory of their own words, the pomp of argument and the vanity of ideas. (qtd. in Coupe 71).

In Lawrence's analogical argument, it was the self-serving greed-induced transgression of man that led to the fall of the natural world. From the position of vantage hindsight, informed by present-day scientific and cultural discourses, Lawrence's view may be received with more concurrence today than it did in his own times. Lawrence, was also, after all, condemned as the 20th century 'alarmist' – one who did not fully gauge the superlative highpoint of human technological progress. Subsequently however, more and more narratives started sharing the vision presented by Lawrence. For instance, E.M. Forster's short story, "The Machine Stops" published at the start of the 20th century, is a narrative which presents the whole of humanity living underground and relying on a giant machine to fulfil their needs. The story has been hailed for predicting technological and virtual-world boom of the 21st century where artificial intelligence has indeed become a dominant force. However, it is hard to miss the inherently

foreboding message of the work; humans are living in the under-world because of atmospheric contamination on the surface. Devoid of a natural environment, the whole community is controlled by a man-made Machine which gradually surpasses human-power and begins to hegemonically govern their movements. It is interesting to note that the short story was published in 1909 – a decade that saw landmark innovations in wireless signalling and airplane engineering. Similarly, in section 3.3.2, the present study analyses the textual subconscious of *The Inheritors* as a response to the ecological degradation which ensued in wake of the two World Wars. The present study, then, subjects *Avatar* too as a responsive product of 21st century climatic crisis and a text exploring and re-conceiving spaces of consilient ecologies. This layer of *Avatar*'s textuality, however, is not subconscious. Despite being marketed largely for its cutting-edge innovations in cinematography and high-definition simulations, the narrative has been clear of its core message. This conviction is validated by James Cameron's interview to *Telegraph* on 11th December 2009 in which he explicitly claims that,

> I see it [Avatar] as a broader metaphor, not so intensely politicised as some would make it, but rather that's how we treat the natural world as well...There's a sense of entitlement - 'We're here, we're big, we've got the guns, we've got the technology, we've got the brains, we therefore are entitled to every damn thing on this planet. That's not how it works and we're going to find out the hard way if we don't wise up and start seeking a life that's in balance with the natural cycles of life on earth. (qtd. in Hiscock).

In sieving *Avatar* through Green Cultural Studies, then, the present study locates and reinforces its intertextuality and polysemy in the ambit of theoretical approaches foregrounded in this study. This loop is then merged into the paradigm of convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence forwarded by Henry Jenkins in the study of contemporary mass media as (popular) cultural product.

As a text, *Avatar* is a self-conscious experimentation in alternative spatiality. The narrative takes its cue from an inherent affirmation of humanity's imminent destruction in face of acute environmental crisis. As such, it juxtaposes two cogently dissimilar worlds for semiotic re-readings. The 'dying' Earth never makes a tangible appearance but its representatives – the entire RDA team – are forbidding reflections of what may have become of the planet owing to unprecedented acts of human

interference. As the film opens, there is an overview of verdant abundance; this idyllic space is *not* the Earth. It is the Pandoran land defined by dense forestation and multispecies ethnography. Dominated by hues of deep green and blue, the bioluminescent world of Pandora is polychromatic representing the life-affirming vitality it holds. In stark opposition, the base camp set up by the anthropocentric RDA is formidably monochromatic rendered in hues of brown and grey. The physicality of the space and the corporeality of the humans leading the project reek of aggressive militarisation; this superimposed spatiality of neo-Anthropocene on the Pandoran land can almost pass off as a menacing facsimile of the holocaust. It is a space that is wilfully economy-driven. The entire project of obtaining the mineral 'unobtanium' from Pandoran reservoirs is a capitalistic enterprise (led by the 'passive-aggressive' Parker Selfridge) whose operations are carried out by paramilitary regiments instituted for the purpose (led by the outrightly brutal Colonel Quaritch). Interestingly, although bioscience forms the foundation of RDA's project, not only are the finer nuances of scientific episteme blatantly eschewed in favour of the self-serving interests of capitalist institution but scientists central to the 'avatar' project – Grace Augustine and Max Patel – are barely given any agency in the macro-management of the enterprise. Hinging on rigid striation in its everyday functionality, the base-camp of the RDA becomes a space Deleuze and Guattari would warn of. It annihilates any scope for counter-hegemonic subjectivations. Moreover, despite being equipped with 'sophisticated' knowledge and technocratic prowess, it is a space of palpable anxiety where voices of dissent, as those raised by Grace Augustine and Jake Sully against the unwarranted violence perpetrated by Parker Selfridge and Colonel Quaritch, are coercively quelled. The authoritarian set-up gives a tangential view into the hegemonic processes that may have gone into the near-annihilation of planet Earth – an event that has prompted the Pandoran project. These spatial anxieties (and subsequent violence) displayed by the humans comes from a place of deep-seated fear of their own conceived spatiality – a causal emotion Lok associates with the 'new people' in *The Inheritors*. Devoid of the stability of their own land, the domination of the Pandoran land may be seen as a medium used by the humans to re-assert their own supremacy. This medium, however, is not one of redemption but of cataclysmic destruction that follows the same processuality which, as the narrative suggests, destroyed sustainable life-force on the Earth. The avatar of Jake Sully, while praying to the all-powerful Eywa of Pandora underpins this point when he says, "See

the world we come from. There's no *green* there. They have killed their Mother" (*Avatar* 2.03.28 – 2.03.35; my emphasis).

As opposed to this, the Pandoran land is a biocentric rhizome. It is everything that the 'dying' Earth is not. It is a non-hierarchical smooth space of Deleuze and Guattari's imagination – a space where biophilia is a spiritual norm, not an *alternative* view of life. Genealogically matrilineal, it adheres to the paradigm of female creator principle and posits 'Eywa' – an all-encompassing mother goddess who is a guiding force in maintaining the equilibrium of the ecosystem – at the centre of their ethno-spirituality. More pertinently, Eywa is not just a notional abstraction of Pandoran culturation. It is the foundation of their bio-scientific episteme, a living reservoir of their historicity, the fulcrum of their distinct identity as well as the palpable embodiment of their collective consciousness. As the character Norm Spellman explains, "Who's Eywa? ...Their goddess, made up of all living things. Everything they know!" (0.51.32-0.51.35). As opposed to the hegemonic stratifications into and upon which the anthropocened RDA base-camp is built, the Pandoran land is a life-place of "symbiotic attachments and the mingling of creative agents" (Deleuze and Guattari 241-42). Moreover, this rhizomatic model is patterned as a bio-scientific neural network of synaptic bonds made up of concrete interlinkages between all living species. Thus, what is notional in the way of life of the Neanderthals as exhumed in *The Inheritors* acquires a nuanced epistemological base in *Avatar*. Chris Klassen, in his work "Becoming the 'Noble Savage'" Nature Religion and the 'Other' in Avatar" equates the concept of Eywa with Bron Taylor's postulation of a 'dark green religion' which stands for "a deep sense of belonging to and connectedness in nature, while perceiving the earth and its living systems to be sacred and interconnected" (144). While the semiotic scope of the term 'religion', imbued as it is with connotations of prescriptive institutionalization, is limiting in the present context, the semantic proposed by Taylor captures the distinct spatiality of Pandoran Eywa. Interestingly, this notion also resonates with the conceptualization of *Prakriti* in Indian spirituo-ecological thought and way of life. As Vandana Shiva outlines, "[N]ature as Prakriti is inherently active, a powerful, productive force in the dialectic of the creation, renewal and sustenance of *all* life. In *Kulacudamim Nigama*, Prakriti says, '*There is none but Myself; Who is the Mother to create*'" (*Staying Alive* 38; original italics). This biophilic spatiality of the Pandoran land is vehemently dichotomic to the anthropocentrically-constructed perceived space

of the RDA. Parker Selfridge, therefore, calls the Na'vi the "fly-bitten savages that live in a tree" (*Avatar* 1.35.15). Interestingly, there are only two humans who fully *realise* the biophilic ethno-spirituality of the Eywa – Grace Augustine and Jake Sully. For Grace, the realisation comes via the conduit of scientific possibility. She is the first one to locate that there is "something interesting going on there [the Pandoran land] biologically" (*Avatar* 1.14.52) and hypothesizes the possibility of a signal transduction between the root of one tree with that of another. For Sully, however, the actualisation is more experiential in nature facilitated by his close connection with a synecdochic representation of the female principle, Neytiri. As a human conditioned by the utilitarian matrices of the space he comes from, Sully is boggled by the convergent fluidities by which the ecological-ethnicity of the Na'vi is defined. He says, "I'm trying to understand this deep connection people have to the forest. Neytiri talks about a network of energy that flows through all living things. She says all energy is only borrowed and one day you have to give it back" (*Avatar* 1.04.04). After being assimilated into the Na'vi clan, however, Sully begins to understand the relevance of the 'bond' – the *Shahaylu* – that connects each being with the other and ultimately everything with Eywa. It is this *Shahaylu*, then, that he calls upon when faced with the challenge of fighting against the destructive anthropogenic ammunition.

Informed by the motive of ecological preservation as it may be, the Pandoran spatiality sketched in *Avatar* is neither a eulogistic fantasy nor an exaggerated utopia. As Stephen Baxter in his work *The Science of Avatar* deduces,

> [t]he ecosphere we see on Pandora is evidently a kind of rainforest, dominated by the tremendous trees that are so important to the Na'vi. Various other flora include what look like Earth's ferns, palms, bamboos and grasses. Pandora is evidently an environment as rich in resources and energy flows as tropical Earth, and natural selection has produced an ecology as diverse and complex as anything on Earth. (ch. 21)

The call for a Pandoran land, therefore, is not necessarily a call for another space altogether as may be suggestive of the human expedition to the Centauri star system. It is, in fact, a call to revitalise and protect the Pandoran-like spatialities within planet Earth. It is a call for an alternative paradigm vis-à-vis the paramilitary, technocentric and industry-intensive modalities subscribed to by modern polities. The textuality of

Avatar bases the construction of this alternate spatiality on the fundamental ethic of maintaining ecological balance – a postulation reinforced by several scientific studies and foregrounded by the present study through analytical deductions made in section 3.2. There is an urgent need to understand that unchecked environment damage committed even at the most microscopic levels can contribute to global environmental crisis through ripple and butterfly effects. In underscoring the consilient multispecies coexistence of Pandora, the narrative of *Avatar* interrogates economic models which seem to self-validate anti-ecological productions by claiming the inevitability of the process for greater human advancement. The dystopic Earth conspicuous in its absentia in *Avatar* is a reminder as well as forewarning that severe wreckages to natural balance will invariably bode annihilation for the human-species as it is already spelling out for other living beings.

At the outset of *Avatar*'s narrative, an outrightly capitalistic Parker Selfridge instructs Jake Sully with a matter-of-fact high-handedness,

> Look, look, you're supposed to be winning the hearts and the minds of the natives. Isn't that the whole point of your puppet show, you look like them and you talk like them so that they start to trust you. We build them a school; we start to teach them English but after how many years…the relations with the indigenous are only getting worse. (*Avatar* 0.13.12 – 0.13.24).

Selfridge's monologue unfolds the RDA's desire to 'understand' the natives by 'educating' them. An informed insight into his rhetoric, however, suggests that such an enterprise is bound to be a ricocheting failure mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, the RDA's process of 'knowing' the natives is driven solely by their agendum of displacing the indigenous peoples from their land through non-coercive (but hegemonic) means. Secondly, the language of the Na'vi and the language of the Anthropocene-RDA led by the likes of Parker Selfridge and Colonel Quaritch are based on fundamentally oppositional signification systems. The language of the RDA is heavily androcentric, technocratic and utility-oriented. In stark opposition, the Na'vi signification is gynocentric, biosemiotic and assimilative (in relation to its affiliations with other life-forms on Pandora). Post-structuralist perforations made in the textuality of *Avatar* uncover traces of colonial processuality in RDA's appropriation of language in the colonisation of Pandora. The syntactical discourses of the RDA are not only informed

by the differential binaries but also by an inherently condescending attitude towards and a smug condemnation of the Na'vi way of life. The paroles of linguistic and cultural praxes of the Na'vi are unfathomable and even ridiculous to Selfridge and Quaritch because they have no access to the indigenous langue as it happen in the colonizer/colonized construct. Grace Augustine understands the ways of Pandora because, through closer and more sensitized readings, she has forged relevant accesses to their interior langue. For instance, when Jake Sully is threatened by the hexapedal bio-species of Pandoran land, Augustine points out that the attack-stance adopted by the creature is merely a defence mechanism - an organic 'territorial threat display' when faced with unfamiliar 'outsiders'. This tendency, however, is dubbed as 'savagery' in the colonial jargon. This is illustrated in Colonel Quaritch's opening speech to the newly-recruited paramilitary troops as he warns them that,

> [I]f there's a hell, you might want to go there for an hour and hour after a tour on Pandora. Out there beyond that fence every living thing that sleeps, crawls or squats in the mud wants to kill you. (*Avatar* 0.06.45 – 0.07.01).

The process of 'knowing', thus, is never complete because it is situated in preconceived stereotyping. The biosemiotic language of the Na'vi contain signifiers which have no direct equivalents in the anthropocentric lexicon of the RDA. Moreover, each of these signifiers are imbued with multiple semiosis accessible only to those who become privy to the Na'vi way of life. *Shahaylu* – for instance – is not just any bond. It is the sacred bond which a Na'vi forms with all living forms of the Eywa through the synaptic network. The Na'vi phrase, 'Oel ngati kamaie' roughly translated as 'I see you' is not merely the physical act of seeing but the meta-physical and meta-linguistic act of *knowing*, *understanding* and *assimilating* another within one's own being. Their term for the clan leader, 'olo'eyktan' and spiritual leader, 'tsahìk' are non-hierarchical signifiers that stand for those endowed with the duty of protecting and interpreting the multiple-realms of Eywa. The misogyny-ridden linguistic registers of Selfridge and Quaritch are unable to comprehend these significations which are ciphered in gynocentric semiology. Sully, however, learns to access the semiology by seeing the forest through Neytiri's eyes, as Grace Augustine advises him to. Therefore, he is able to unspool the layered-interpretants within the culture of Eywa. This concept, however, is lost upon Parker Selfridge as is evident from his conversation with Grace Augustine cited below,

- *PS:* No, you know what? You throw a stick in the air around here it's gonna land on some sacred fern for Christ's sake.

- *GA:* I'm not talking about some kind of pagan voodoo here. I'm talking about something real, something measurable in the biology of the forest.

- *PS:* Which is what exactly?

- *GA:* What we think we know it that there's some kind of electro-chemical communication between the roots of the trees like the synapses between neurons. And each tree has 10-to-the-fourth connections to the trees around it. And there are 10-to-the-twelfth trees on Pandora. It's more connections than the human brain. It's a global network ... memories like the one you just destroyed.

- *PS:* (laughs) What the hell have you been smoking up there? They are just *goddamned trees*. (*Avatar* 1:28:11-1:29:08; my emphasis).

The self-serving semiology followed by Selfridge's syntax is indicative of the overemphasis on human signification systems that environmentalists rally against. Albeit represented within the cultural discourse of humans, nature (constitutive of all living forms) is *not* a theoretical or abstractional concept. It is a palpable, corporeal manifestation that exists beyond human capacities of signification. Erasures of this fact occur under purviews of aggressive technocratic paradigms that posit man at the centre of Life with his ability to create, procreate and destroy. The biosemiotic cultural model of the Na'vi provides this agency to Eywa of which 'the people' are a *part*. Intensive capitalism (represented by Selfridge) and military-aggression (represented by Quaritch) are appositional yardsticks by which contemporary notions of 'development' are measured. By positing a dying index of planet Earth with the Pandoran iconoclasm of biodiversity, the narrative of *Avatar* calls upon humans to interrogate pervasive semiotics in which 'meanings' of terms such as 'advancement', 'social progress' and 'equity' are construed.

Often, critical discourses – even those that take empathetic stances – speak of subalternity as a pre-existing plenum formed in a naturally disempowered space of negative representation. The fact that 'subaltern' is a position formed out of the same political forces that launch the axiomatic 'centre' in a given spatiotemporality is a notion frequently ignored. That, 'subalternity' in itself is a non-essentialist heterogeneity where power-paradigms can undergo seismic shifts is also a feature characteristically

overlooked. Lastly, the idea that 'articulation' as agency of self-assertion can be foregrounded as much by active resistance as by more tangible manifestations of counter-violence is also an aspect that calls for careful attention. The present study explores these matrices in deconstructing subalternity within *Avatar*.

There are two distinct and deliberately adversarial groups presented in *Avatar* – the Na'vi (and other Pandoran life-forms) and the humans. Neither, to begin with, is a subalterned space. The humans' supremacy is propelled by their technological prowess while the Na'vi's collective empowerment lies in the entrenched ecocultural consciousness deposited in the knowledge of Eywa. Both groups execute the discourse of Self and Other in asserting their own identity in face of perceived distinctness and unfamiliarity. But while the humans' articulation is informed by motives of oppression towards self-serving interests, the Na'vi resistance is a response to explicit threats posed by the 'sky people' and their demonic ammunition. One is given to understand that the Na'vi, initially, extended reciprocity towards the RDA's 'enterprise' of intermingling. After all, the humans manage to build schools and 'educate' Pandora's peoples in anthropocentric ways. The Na'vi's discernment of the human agendum of dislocating them may have subsequently wrecked their multicultural optimism. The fence set up by Quaritch-led RDA, then, is a physical installation of the We/Other and by extension, Dominant/Peripheral paradigm. The humans' deliberate manoeuvres to otherize and concomitantly disempower the indigenous population is a result of their imperialist leitmotif. The human discourse creates the space of the 'subaltern' and routes it via the war of position and war of manoeuvre in its language, episteme and military actions. Their enterprise begins on the presumptuous validity of high-modernism. Selfridge displays this anthropocentric arrogance when he says,

> Look Sully, just find out what the blue monkeys want. I mean *we tried to give them medicine, education, the roads*…but no, no, no…they like mud and that wouldn't bother me, it's just that their damn village happens to be resting on the richest unobtanium deposit…(*Avatar* 0.49.57 – 0.50.25; my emphasis).

Interestingly, the developmental model superimposed on the Na'vi by humans is significantly similar to the one juggernauted by the white-settlers upon native communities in the African subcontinent as analysed in section 3.2.1 of the present

study. Therefore, while subaltern spaces may be non-essentialist in nature, the processualism of 'forming' the subaltern may follow analogous discursive patterns.

The RDA private security forces in *Avatar* locate the need to 'learn' the Na'vi only insofar as this knowledge helps them bring about the natives' displacement from the unobtanium-rich land. This is illustrated in Colonel Quaritch's instructions to Jake before he takes on the humanoid form when he says, "Look Sully, I want you to learn these savages from the inside. I want you to gain their trust. I need to know how to *force their cooperation* or *hammer their hand if they won't*" (0.22.43, my emphasis). When the hegemonically constructed 'diplomatic solution' fails, the paramilitary and corporative forces of RDA quickly resort to coercion. The 'bulldozer' which appears to uproot the 'hometree' (1.24.54) is deployed as a signifier of human technocracy. However, perceived from the biosemiotic sentience of the Na'vi it becomes a representamen of demonic violence (as it did in the narrative of *The Kiln* analysed in section 3.3.4). In face of the hyper-aggression posed by human military force, the Na'vi lose their firm ground – literally and figuratively. The 'olo'eyktan' dies and the 'tsahìk's' spiritual locus deteriorates due to the destruction of synaptic bonds within Eywa. Ironically, the humanoid forms – avatars – of Jake Sully and Grace Augustine become crucial conduits through which Eywa's agency is reinforced. This is possibly because they occupy an advantageous *hybrid space* – a space that is neither hegemonic nor naïve; where scientific episteme and ecological consciousness meet in creative and life-affirming confluence; where development is understood in terms of collectivism and coexistence rather than self-aggrandization and subjugation. This is probably the space of organic intellectuals within or outside any subaltern group. It is a discourse of information and actualisation; one which recognises difference and addresses its hegemony without necessarily furthering it. It's a counter-hegemonic tool that may be looked upon by conventional Subaltern Studies as an external onslaught. However, the viability of such hybrid spaces where subversive discourses can foster may be more pertinent in contemporary frameworks of rigid imbrications. It may also be a space through which present-day ecosystem people, rendered subaltern in larger politics, can pitch models of sustainable living as effective antidotes to current environmental crisis.

The present study started this sub-section with a take on analysing representations of environment in signifiers of popular culture that percolate through conduits of contemporary media for mass consumption. The need for this seemingly

emphatic emphasis has to be elaborated further in the context of *Avatar*. But before doing so, it is important to qualify the term 'popular culture' in present contextual analysis. In the theoretical purview of this study, the term 'popular culture' has been used to denote mass communication – either written, broadcast or spoken – through mediums such as television, radio, cinema, advertising, the Internet and its various manifestations such as social media and personal blogging sites as well as newspapers and magazines. The present study believes that conventional academia shares a colloquial 'love-hate' relationship with popular culture. With the former often coming to engage with 'the best that is thought and said' in the world, the latter becomes a contentious and confounding space. Products of popular culture are, after all, produced for mass-perception and consumption. Therefore, is it necessary to deconstruct them through the gaze of academic criticality? What role does theoretical scrutiny play in unspooling the various threads that make-up the fabric of these popular-culture productions, especially in their relation or response to environment? In his article 'Teaching Green Cultural Studies and New Media' Anthony Lioi tries to address this 'popular-culture' perplexity within academia and uncover its causes saying that environmental criticism in major theoretical circles largely,

> [b]egan by defending a related set of genres – nature writing, wilderness literature and natural history – as well as a kind of ethical and political engagement, as well as a group of regional loyalties – to the West, to the countryside, to farming and mining communities – against an urban, Eastern elite that believed these concerns were beneath its notice, if not antithetical to the project of modernity. An effort was necessary to defend 'the best of what has been thought and said' – Mathew Arnold's definition of culture – about the environment…[environmental criticism] therefore inserted itself into an argument about major and minor literary materials, canonical worth and universal culture that it is still fighting. This is an honourable conflict, but by operating in an Arnoldian mode, ecocriticism committed itself to the defence of its own version of high culture. As a result, *new media and popular culture* have been given scant attention because it is impossible

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to defend even the best video game against the charge that it is respectable, in traditional aesthetic terms, than Dostoyevsky, Woolf and Stendhal" (135; my emphasis).

The exclusivity which Lioi speaks of has come to embody the folly in dismissing an area of cultural production that is now flooded with environment discourse, rhetoric and politics. According to Lioi, "In the name of high ground, we [green cultural theorists and academicians] have sacrificed a terrain in which our concerns are actually winning" (135).

The present study attempts to reinforce Lioi's view but takes a different dimension in doing so. The 2013 film *Hangover III* (a product of popular culture) was a much anticipated comedy of the franchise. While the movie itself received mixed response, one pertinent scene from its cinematic unfolding remain etched in popular perception; in the said scene, a giraffe gets 'casually' decapitated on the highway and the entire event is brushed off with a laugh line about PETA. The fact that an image of animal-death could be designed and produced to elicit 'laughter' did not go unscathed. Jason Bailey, writing a piece titled, "The Sad, Desperate Cruelty of 'The Hangover Part III' called it a 'worrisome' sign signifying a warped sense of comedy that is imbued with inherent insensitivity towards living beings (Bailey, *Flavorwire*). The issue became far more potent when roughly a year later the *Newstalk* reported the death of a giraffe "after it struck its head on a low overpass while being transported in an open truck in South Africa" (McKay) – an image gruesomely similar to the one presented by the movie. Green Cultural Studies often foregrounds the need to *represent* nature (landscape, flora, fauna) in human culture. But the incident of *Hangover III* adds an important adjunctive to this investigation – the need to *critically* examine *how* nature and its constitutive elements are represented in human culture. This belief is informed by the view that textual representations of the ecological world reflect, record, shape and ultimately, direct our actions towards nature. Since popular culture – in its diverse manifestations as social phenomenon – is expansive in outreach, entrenched in penetration, easily accessible and cross-communicative in its unfolding, the need to evaluate its engagement with environment becomes invariable. Green theorist Jhan Hochman's view that, "[i]n the territory of Postmodernity, nature, probably due to its rapid decimation, emerges as a politico-cultural object, one which is no longer restricted to literature, "fine art", and formalist [niche] cinema and video, but also has starring roles

in commercials, photos and [popular] movies" (*Teaching* 135) reinforces the postulation of the present study.

In light of the preceding discussion as well as the theoretical analyses of the film undertaken through approaches of Spatial Criticism, Subaltern Studies, Post-structuralism and Semiotics, the present study will posit *Avatar* as a relevant ecological agent exemplifying the combined forces of popular culture and contemporary media. In order to do so, it adopts the framework of convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence provided by Henry Jenkins in his work, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. Convergence, in contemporary popular culture is "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kind of entertainment experiences they want" (Jenkins 2). This idea is close to the contemporary cross-media dynamics where a television series adapted from a book – such as *Game of Thrones* – also streams online and further generates visibility on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram or various independent blogging sites. Participatory culture, then, is "the transformation of older modes of passive spectatorship into modes of audience participation, judgement and world-building" (2-3). This can largely be seen through the burgeoning of the fan-fiction culture – especially in the aftermath of the Harry Potter series or the more contemporary cultural trend of organising Conventions and Cosplays such as ComicCon India where audiences and readers become participants in literary and cultural production. Consequentially, collective intelligence, refers to "the way consumers of media pool their knowledge and skills to create greater understanding and influence over media production itself" (03). This could come in the more tangible forms such as reviews of a book, a television show or a film uploaded on open source channels and voting on popular review sites or through more intangible forms such as creation and consumption of merchandise related to the product. Thus, human responses towards and participation in various forms of contemporary media other than literature – such as films, webseries, cartooning, memes, Facebook pages and blogs – can also be reflective of postmodern preoccupations and concerns. Moreover, they can be means of both understanding and influencing perceptions, shaping realities as well as highlighting intra-global concerns which largely arise out of and are impacted by living cultures across the world.

In this sense, *Avatar* is crucial text for studying the paradigm of 'convergence, participatory culture, collective intelligence' from a green cultural point of view. First of all, *Avatar* is part of the mainstream commercial cinema under the genre of epic science fiction fantasy screened across the globe in 3D format. Hence, its marketing largely concentrated on the special effects such as the "photorealistic computer-generated characters" or "motion-capture stage – a computer-induced innovation to light up massive areas like Pandora" ("Avatar") which the film was experimenting with in the domain of CGI. The movie, therefore, was made largely for the masses and did not necessarily call for people to have a *specific* ecological orientation. The movie's anxieties about imminent dystopia in light of rampant technocracies and paramilitary aggressions ravaging Earth's ecological harmony, is a message which comes to light *after* one watches the movie. Moreover, as opposed to a documentary film about environment even a massive one like *An Inconvenient Truth* which premiered in four screens in the US on the day of its release, *Avatar* premiered in a total of "3,457 theatres in the US, of which 2,032 theatres ran it in 3D. Internationally, *Avatar* opened on a total of 14,604 screens in 106 territories, of which 3,671 were showing the film in 3D" (The Numbers by Nash Information Services) thereby increasing the movie's outreach to the audiences. From a cultural point of view, therefore, *Avatar* was produced for the consumption of a mass audience. While its special effects may have triggered greater audience participation, its thematic concerns formed the fulcrum of the intended experience.

Avatar didn't directly release in the theatres. For its trailer premiere, the team of producers chose the San Diego Comic-Con on August 14 2009 where they could directly interact with fans, especially sci-fi enthusiasts, in order to prepare the ground for the cultural experiences which the movie was heralding. Exactly six days later, the trailer of the movie was released online. Apart from online media promotions, *Avatar* was also transmuted into literary manifestations with the publication of *Avatar: A Confidential Report on the Biological and Social History of Pandora*, "a 224-page book in the form of a field guide to the film's fictional setting of the planet of Pandora, was released by Harper Entertainment on November 24, 2009" ("Avatar"). This semi-fictional work presented as "the data collected by the humans about the Pandoran land" ("Avatar"). Subsequently books such as *James Cameron's Avatar: The Reusable Scrapbook* for children, *The Art of Avatar and The Making of Avatar* were published in

an attempt to converge and carry the flow of the Avatar cultural experience across media forms. James Cameron also declared 21st August 2009 as the 'Avatar Day' in order to promote participatory culture among the audiences. However, the most important aspect of *Avatar* as a cultural product comes in the form of the collective intelligence it generated through audiences responses. While it has not been possible to holistically and definitively record the influence of *Avatar*'s ecological message on present-day responsiveness towards global environmental crisis and the study identifies this as one of the limitations of analysing contemporary media as a field of continuity, it has been possible to document some perceptions to *Avatar*. In 2010 in an article titled "Audience Experience Avatar Blue', *CNN* reported that Avatar's universe had had a profound effect on the audience over their perception of Earth, its deteriorating sustainability as well as the increasing non-accessibility to Pandora-like lands. The study reported that Avatar Forums posted a topic thread entitled "Ways to cope with the depression of the dream of Pandora being intangible" which received "1,000 posts from people experiencing depression and fans trying to help them cope". Philippe Baghdassarian, the site administrator, commented that, "I wasn't depressed myself. In fact, the movie made me happy, but I can understand why it made people depressed. The movie was so beautiful and it showed something we don't have here on Earth. I think people saw we could be living in a completely different world" (Lester Haines, *The Register*).

Thus, in presenting an alternative paradigm to the failing socio-ecological system of present times, *Avatar*, in a sense, deconstructed and defied fatal assumptions of human-technology superiority which is often seen as one of the root causes of present-day environmental crisis. Moreover, as a polysemic product of popular culture, it carried the message of biocentric consciousness into mainstream episteme towards facilitating a subconscious consumption of eco-ethical paradigms. It opened up models of interrogative self-studies foregrounded by modern-day technology-mediated flipped pedagogies. Lastly, by routing its textuality through the 'convergence, participatory culture, collective intelligence' paradigm, *Avatar* foregrounded the relevance of bringing about immersive and heightened green-cultural experiences in the hyperspatiality of the 21st century.

In the General Introduction to *The Green Studies Reader*, Coupe emphasizes the importance of green studies by saying,

The focus of any praxis is on the future; with green studies what is at stake is the future of the planet itself. In that sense, it is the most radical of critical activities. Class, race and gender are important dimensions of both literary and cultural studies; but the survival of the biosphere must surely rank as even more important, since without it there are no issues worth addressing. Paul Virilio might be accused of hyperbole when he declares that the ecological battle is 'the only one worth fighting', but one sees what he means. With no planet, there is no future" (05).

In light of Coupe's statement, *Avatar* takes the theoretic concerns of ecocriticism to more practical expressions. Eco-cultures, thus, cannot remain restricted to select sections of theoretical analysis; they have to be made an integral part of contemporary realities which have a direct bearing upon not just the social, political as well as economic lives of the present world but also on the sustenance of the human race in future time.

3.3.2 Folklore as a Green Culture Signifier: Dhalo

Through Spatial Criticism, Subaltern Studies, Structuralism and Semiotics

In the Chapter titled, "Enhancing the Impact", in the work, *The Design of Protest: Choreographing Political Demonstrations in Public Space*, Tali Hatuka quotes Doreen Massey to emphasize upon the notion of '[re]thinking the spatial' as an inventive measure of discourses that 'talk back to' or 'subvert' dominant politics and poetics. Massey opines that,

Thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, can contribute to political arguments already under way, and – most deeply – can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political. (qtd. in Hatuka 50)

Massey's contention reinforces the baseline of space reconfigurations along which the present study has been channelizing its arguments. The present research believes that 'nature' as a physical (material) and a meta-physical (symbolic/spiritual) entity unfolds in vivid spatial, semiotic and historical choreographies all of which play a role in the dialogues of environmental crises confronting scientific and cultural discourse today.

Moreover, the present study also contends that these physical and meta-physical unfolding of 'nature' are demarcated neither by geographical nor by discursive rigidities. The *narratives* of environment are places and movements of inherent fluidities and pluralities. A study of these narratives, then, has to perform a twin role of recognising these liquified pluralities (even polarities) while simultaneously tracing patterns of similitude in order to converge their cadences into mainstream episteme of Green Cultural Studies. An attempt towards the same is the present analysis of the folkloric art-form *Dhalo*.

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines 'folklore' as "traditional customs, tales, sayings, dances, or art forms among a people" ("Folklore") and Oxford Learner's Dictionary, taking a similar view, defines it as "the traditions and stories of a country or community" ("Folklore"). However, the appropriation of the term 'folklore' in cultural, anthropological and ethnographical studies has been far more nuanced than those offered by generic lexicon. Folklore, for instance, has often surfaced as an archival continuum of cultural knowledge – a repository of traditional 'ways of life' that function either in holistic, syncretic or fragmentary modalities in face of dominant ('civilized') cultures and historical dynamisms within. Scholars of burgeoning folkloric studies posit the rise of folklore with the twin movements of 'detraditionalization and retraditionalization' of communities as a given society's cognizance of its progression forward in face of rampant industrialization (*A Companion to Folklore* 02). However, in the present cultural poly-systems which witness the unfolding of multiple modernities, folklore is being constantly interrogated as a narrative of uprooting and regrounding. Folklore has also often been seen as a community's recourse to cultural lineage in view of external onslaughts by any kind of 'foreign' rule opening up the vista of indigenous/settler debates. Its manifestations have been deployed as tools of socio-literary renaissance in political struggles of freedom, independence and liberation across the world. In this vein, folklore is often posited as the dichotomic 'other' of mainstream culture invoked as an instrument of subversion and a medium of resistance against forced acculturations in processes of political, social and cultural conflicts. Iterating this view in the work, *A Companion to Folklore*, Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Roken analyse this strategic locus of folklore propounding that,

> [t]he "discovery" of the expressive power of group cultures has almost
> always occurred at moments of political transformation in territorial

histories. Such discovery has been a part of firming and defining identities, often vis-à-vis other groups vying for space and control. It is not just during the often mentioned period of Romantic nationalism that this can be observed in liberation movements, especially in postcolonial situations, but also other subaltern assertions such as ethnic or social minority group rights' struggles, show this propensity to mobilize via taking recourse to expressive traditions (4).

The present study hinges its argument upon a proposed [re]discovery of the textuality of 'folklore' as manifested in its myriad expressions [songs, dances, paintings, proverbs, tales, oral literature et cetera] in view of what appears to be one of *the* most prominent political 'events' of the time – ecological crises. Preliminary research as part of this study has indicated a noted resurgence in this area of inquiry. Apart from occasional articles and posts featuring in newspapers, magazines and social media that have tried to trace the combined vulnerability of indigenous peoples and natural ecologies in face of modernist notions of 'development', a concerted approach in discoursing such epistemological and critical modalities with theory, academia and/or 'popular' media is also gaining sustained mileage fuelled by the desperate needs to relocate alternative paradigms of sustainability. Folklore has often been invoked towards this purpose.

Jessica Schmonksy, in the article, "The Ecological Importance of Folklore" roots the importance of locating folkloric belief-systems within environmental dialogues by citing the Jungian analysis of 'collective unconscious' which proclaims that,

> While the personal unconscious is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been unconscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity […] the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of archetypes. ("The Ecological Importance of Folklore" 2017)

Schmonksy's argument grounds the *collective unconscious* within what she calls 'partnership cultures' that operate alongside 'dominator cultures'. These partnership cultures constitute indigenous and largely marginalized or subalterned groups which

carry inherited patterns of close affinities with nature. Josephine Langley adds the integral component of 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge' (henceforth TEK) to this model saying that folklore often embodies, "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission about the relationships of living beings (including humans) with one another *and with their environment*" (my emphasis). This idea axiomatically resonates with the paradigm of 'multispecies ethnography' through the framework of which the present study engaged in green cultural analysis of nature-people(s) neural networks as embedded in *The Inheritors*. A topographic resourcing of some of the TEK embedded within indigenous and/or traditional (but not necessarily 'subaltern') cultures reveal distinct similitudes. For instance, the concept of 'kaitiakitanga' practiced by the Maori people in New Zealand as a tradition of safeguarding forested lands as well as the traditional practice of "encouraging old-growth forest" to enhance "species diversity" followed by the Ka'apor tribe of Brazil in the Amazonian rainforest resonates resemblances with the spatial configuration of the *Devraai*, *Devarakadu*, *Pavitraskhetralu* and *Kavu* forest-traditions followed in the Indian regions of Goa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala respectively (Gadgil et al; Malhotra et al; M. Jayarajan) . Many such sacred-grove traditions spread across the Indian sub-continent are considered to be repositories of biodiverse species with most of them concomitantly acting as carbon-sequestration sinks that aid in mitigating Climate Change and Global Warming (Hangarge et al). The present researcher believes that a deeper analysis of such similarities between TEK across living world-cultures may reveal the presence of a trans-spatiotemporal signification system structured and appropriated for ecological conservation across communities, especially those that at one point of time in political history or the other, felt threatened by 'dominant' and/or invader-forces. The present study, however, will redirect its focus towards analysing the palimpsestic ecological consciousness embedded within the 'text' chosen for present study – the folk-art form of *Dhalo*. It is important to mention here that in its unspooling of the *Dhalo*-narrative, the present study orients itself towards hermeneutically deconstructing the emic, semiotic and spatial threads through which the art-form foregrounds green-dialogues. For this, the present study resources select songs of *Dhalo* as documented in Jayanti Naik's work, *Ratha Tujeo Ghuddio*. It is also important to mention, however, that while resourcing from important secondary texts such as Pandurang Phaldesai's *Goa: Folkloric* Studies and Vinayak Khedekar's *Folk Dances of Goa*, the description of the

performance explicated in the next paragraph as well as observations made in analysis have been sourced from the present researcher's witnessing of *Dhalo* performed by the women of Mauswada (Pedne taluka) as part of field study.

In the Introduction to the compilation, *Ratha Tujeo Ghudyo*, Naik makes clear that the term 'Dhalo' collectively stands as a signifier for the songs, the dance as well as the festival which is largely celebrated during the Hindu calendar months of *Pausha* (December-January) and *Maagha* (January-February) by the womenfolk in Goa. These performances unfold in an auspicious courtyard – the sacred *maand* – that is imbued with semiotic relevance in the textuality and materiality of this folk-form and the collective consciousness it embodies. *Dhalo* is performed by women from non-Brahmin communities. Womenfolk from every house or *vaado* (ward) gather at the *maand* and smear the floor with cow-dung paste – a traditional signifier for purity. An oil lamp is lit near the *tulsi vrindavan* (*Ocium sanctum* also known as the 'holy basil') or alternatively a heap of mud which serve as essential ecological tropes in the ritual. In select performances, a water-container made of copper (or brass) is placed at the fulcrum of the designated space. This is followed by the most important element in the performance of the *Dhalo* – invocation to धर्तरीमाय (*Dhartarimāy*), the Earth Goddess. This invocation is a salutation to the mother as *she* is one from whom everything comes forth and unto whom everything eventually goes. It is performed by the chief lady – known as the 'maandkann' – from among the womenfolk who gathered to perform *Dhalo*. The invocation seeks blessings for the entire village community or vaado and asks the Goddess to ensure a timely completion of the festival without any undue encumbrances. After this, the collective performance of *Dhalo* begins – the assembled women sing the *dhalo-geetam* as they perform it in the form of a dance. Forming two rows that face one another, the women in each row hold themselves with arms intertwined around one another. The dance movements entail swaying and bending as each row moves forward and backward while singing the sequenced *dhalo-geetam* in unison. After invoking the blessings of *Dhartarimāta*, the songs proceed to offer prayers and invitation to "all the village gods and goddesses, the sylvan deity and [the] family deities" (Phaldesai 14). The festival of *Dhalo* continues for either five, seven, nine or eleven nights based upon the verve of the womenfolk participating in it and also by the day of the week on which it would conclude since, ritualistically, the *Dhalo*

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should end either on a Tuesday or a Saturday. During the course of these days, the womenfolk continue the ritualistic song and dance with the performance culminating in a circular movement while keeping the original formation of the rows intact. Embedded with intricate rituals, performative caricatures and thematic matrices, the concluding part of the *Dhalo* is of primary importance. The caricatures of men, animals as well as birds is followed by the arrival of the 'Rambha'. According to folklore critic, Pandurang Phaldesai, the 'Rambha' is the most mysterious segment of the entire performance but also one imbued with important ecological metaphors since, "[t]he 21 Rambha sisters [who] yearn to meet their only brother, Pundarika or Bandhav…include – Chakravant, Onvalavant, Surangayerant, Shekarayevant, Kukumayevant, Kesarayevant and Tulasayevant which depict the spirit of water and vegetation and *ultimately mother nature*" (15-16).

The Rambha sisters that Phaldesai speaks about belong to a rather wide age-group of 14-65 years. During the performance, the Rambha go into a trance and keep calling out to their brother while slowly emerging from the trance. This segment is followed by a performance of mock-hunting and killing of a wild-bore whose meat is then shared. The dance performance concludes with the appearance of a character called *pinghi* after which the courtyard is cleaned again with water and cow dung. Performed largely by the indigenous tribe of Gawda, *Dhalo* is notedly celebrated distinctly by both Hindu as well as Christian women. While there are well-documented variations in the emic, lyric and sartorial manifestations of the performance in both the communities, the essence of the performance – as song and dance – and also its ritualistic significance as a celebration of *Dhartarim*āy remains the same. The present study, therefore, does not take these variations into consideration while analysing the textuality of the folk-form through the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies.

In explicating the 'idea' of nature embedded within the discourse of human-environment interactions, Kate Soper offers a triad model which, much like Lefebvre's tripartite modality of lived/conceived/perceived space directly links and associates the material reconfigurations of (ecological) spatialities with the abstractional but highly influential 'conceptualizations' of nature within anthropocened discourses. She states that,

(e)mployed as a metaphysical concept, which it mainly is in the argument of philosophy, 'nature' is the concept through which humanity thinks its difference and specificity. It is the concept of the non-human, even if…the absoluteness of the humanity-nature demarcation has been disputed, and our ideas about what falls to the side of 'nature' have been continuously revised in the light of changing perceptions of what counts as 'human'…Employed as a realist concept, 'nature' refers to the structures, processes and causal powers that are constantly operative within the physical world, that provide the objects of study of the natural sciences, and condition the possible forms of human intervention in biology or interaction with the environment. It is nature to whose laws we are always subject, even as we harness them to human purposes, and whose processes we can neither escape nor destroy. Employed as a 'lay' or 'surface' concept, as it is in much every day, literary and theoretical discourse, 'nature' is used in reference to ordinarily observational features of the world: the 'natural' as opposed to the urban or industrial environment ('landscape', 'wilderness', 'countryside', 'rurality'), animals, domestic and wild, the physical body in space and raw materials. This is the nature of immediate experience and aesthetic appreciation…(*Feminism* 319-320).

The present study argues that the *eco-centric* textuality embedded within *Dhalo* can be analysed by invoking all three aspects foregrounded by Soper's paradigm with specific distinctness that may be fundamental to the understanding of folklore's emphasis upon the 'holistic' integration of ecology within everyday cultural unfolding. *Dhalo* unfolds in spaces that are geographically and demographically classified as 'rural' or 'countryside' landscapes within Goa and serve as spatialities of ecological preservation. Rajendra Kerkar in his work, *Natural Heritage of Goa* maps the geographical spatiality where the practice of *Dhalo unfolds*. He states,

(i)n Sattari (taluka) there are many folk tales related to Dhalo…On the border of Coparde and Naneli, there is a hill and a sacred grove dedicated to the goddess Vandevata. Both these villages have the tradition of the Dhalo. Keri, which is situated at the foothills of Vagheri and Morlegad mountain peaks of Sahyadri, is known for sacred groves and has seven sacred *Dhalo* sites. These sacred places known as "Mand" were situated in the company of *large indigenous trees*. (10-11)

The concept of a 'maand' as rendered in Dhalo-textualities exists and functions within these socioecological spaces. Concurrent with the third conceptual rostrum provided by Soper, the songs of *Dhalo* connote an inherent sense of appreciation (experiential and aesthetic) which the womenfolk feel towards the natural environment – its physically manifest tropes – that are witness to their everyday existential matrices. These matrices may include narratives of suppressions, silences, subjugations, sentience and transcendence. As a 'lay' or 'surface' concept, therefore, 'nature' becomes an integral part of their lives. Located as 'surface' representamens in songs that embody the everyday reality of the womenfolk who perform it, the ecological tropes embedded within *Dhalo* become palimpsestic interpretants as signifiers of the sociocultural exigencies through which the women chart their lives. Despite variations in performative renditions of the art across the state, its inextricable association with ecology remains intact and unchanged. Kerkar notes this pertinent presence of nature-tropes that carry physical and figurative embodiments in the practice of *Dhalo* by documenting that,

> (i)n Tiswadi, Bardez and Pernem [talukas] there is a folk deity called Rashtroli who is associated with the cult of tree worship. The Mands of Dhalo are close to these sacred groves. In Dandoswada of Mandre, these are the mango and ovali trees, in Naikwada in Palye, it is the banyan tree; and in Deulwado in Vazri, also banyan tree. (11)

In fact, the term 'Dhalo' itself carries these interanimating nuances. Folklore critic Pandurang Bhangui in his work, *Dhalo – Ek Vichar* states that while scholars like Anant Dhume believe that the word 'Dhalo' has its etymologies in the Mundari language, no such term *per se* can be found in the Mundari language-dictionaries. Therefore, in all likelihood, the term is a substrative adaptation from the Konkani signifier 'Dhal' (धाल) which means 'swaying to the rhythm of the breeze' that further signifies that just as the crops (plants) in the fields and meadows sway to the rhythm of the breeze, women too sway to the rhythmic movements and patterns of *Dhalo* songs either while performing daily chores or as a break from the routine. This is reflected in the song that juxtaposes the trope of खुंटीमाया

(Mother-millstone) with that of धर्तरीमाया (Mother-Earth) and वनदेवतामाया (Forest-mother) thus,

वोळी बाये वोळी गे, ह्यो नक्षत्रांच्यो वोळी.

खुंटीमाया भोळी गे, आमकां खेळूक दिल्यो वोळी

वोळी बाये वोळी गे, ह्यो नक्षत्रांच्यो वोळी.

धर्तरीमाया भोळी गे, आमकां खेळूक दिल्यो वोळी

वोळी बाये वोळी गे, ह्यो नक्षत्रांच्यो वोळी.

वनदेवतामाया भोळी गे, आमकां खेळूक दिल्यो वोळी (Naik 15)

As a realist concept, the songs of *Dhalo* evoke biocentric cadences of 'knowing' nature as an independent, ontological entity and not objectively 'subsuming' its existence within the ambit of (limited) human knowledge-base. Vandana Shiva, in fact, calls women

> [the] natural custodians of indigenous earth wisdom that has been passed
> down orally from generation to generation…[M]onoculture schemes fuelled
> by capitalist economies have disastrous effects on these 'keepers of sacred
> diversity' from the agrarian Global South pockets. (Rangarajan ch.8).

In face of the increasing threat of 'erasures' of biological episteme due to superimpositions of non-contextualized (often, dominant) frameworks of collecting, documenting and more importantly, validating 'knowledge', folklore can serve as a pivotal repository of TEK that may, in fact, tangibly contribute towards addressing the challenges carried by Climate Change in its multilayered fold. For instance, in registering the variety of flora that form a part of their immediate phenomenological (natural) world, the songs of *Dhalo* document the biodiversity within the ecology of a specific region thus contributing to biosystemic episteme as well as biophilic axiology. These documentations become essential constituents of TEK in mapping and analyzing a wide-range of scientific, medicinal, geographical and historical significances of a given spatiality. One such song enlists and axiomatically integrates a variegated range of flora within which the 'Rambha' unfurl their feminine principle.

मळणीच्या मळ्यांत फुल एक केंसर *(flower saffron)*

मळणीच्या मळ्यांत फुल एक केंसर

केंस वळोवंक लागल्यो त्यो रंभाबायो गे, (*Rambha* leitmotif)

केंस वळोवंक लागल्यो त्यो रंभाबायो.

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक बुतांव (*globe amaranth*)

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक बुतांव

थंय बुध करी त्यो रंभाबायो गे (*Rambha coming to chit-chat/have a conversation*)

थंय बुध करी त्यो रंभाबायो.

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक अंत (*moonbeam flower*)

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक अंत

कापड-चोळी न्हेसता रंभा रात जाली गे (*porcupine flower*)

कापड-चोळी न्हेसता रंभा रात जाली गे.

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक गोटूल

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक गोटूल

थंय गोंटाळल्यो त्यो रंभाबायो गे,

थंय गोंटाळल्यो त्यो रंभाबायो.

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक दसण (*hibiscus*)

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक दसण.

मानेर केलां खसण तें रंभाबायो गे

मानेर केलां खसण तें रंभाबायो.

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक हात.

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक हात.

थंय मत्त करी त्यो रंभाबायो गे (the *Rambha* counsel and speak)

थंय मत्त करी त्यो रंभाबायो.

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक शंख (*conch flower*)

मळणीच्या मव्यांत फुल एक शंख

शंखनाद करी त्यो रंभाबायो गे

शंखनाद करी त्यो रंभाबायो. (Naik 10-11)

In analysing the manifestation of the 'meta-physical' within *Dhalo*, the present study veers away from the differential dimension proffered by Soper to insert the distinctive

notion of seamless integration and continuity between nature and women. In fact, Phaldesai locates the performance of *Dhalo* as a poignant representative concept of worshipping the Earth Goddess within the larger principle of the female creator principle prevalent in Indian thought and philosophy. He opines,

> From time immemorial, two currents of thought have prevailed across India about the aspect of creation of the Srishti (Nature). One is based on the male-centred principle, and the other is based on the recognition of woman as the original creator; the female principle traces its origin to Adi-shakti or Adi-maya, the first woman creator. Shakti refers to the sacred force or empowerment. It is the primordial cosmic energy and represents the dynamic forces that are thought to move through the entire universe…Shakti is the concept, or the personification of the divine feminine crearive power, sometimes referred to as 'the Great Divine Mother' (*Eco Cultural: Folklore Studies* 13)

In this sense, the present study argues that *Dhalo* essentially embodies an 'archival continuum' of an underlying langue that engages the phenomena of 'Nature' as the 'creator' and subsequently, also the 'destroyer'. She is the centre through which human action is shaped, *not* the vice-versa. She is a *way of life*, not a contradictory force to it. She regulates the cycle of seasons, controls 'reproduction' through agriculture, nurtures existence and protects all beings under her fold. She is, therefore, a force that is deified, revered and appeased with these acts of deification, worship and appeasement being important cultural code-units towards efforts that are made (or are required to be made) to sustain, maintain and restore ecological balance. There is a keen understanding that humans are a *part* of ecological paradigm connected intricately to larger processes that determine their place within the biosystem. Undue interferences in biological spaces and damage caused to other non-human living species will inadvertently bring about the deterioration of human life – a rhetoric put forth in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, *The Inheritors* as well as *Avatar* discussed earlier in the study. Such keen perceptions, excavated through the intricacies in practices such as *Dhalo*, emphatically challenges the utilitarian notions of nature as a 'resource' that feature in dominant capitalism. Concomitantly, they also challenges the Cartesian notion of environment as *res extensa* by positing it as a distinct *res cogitans* – a space which is not only a palpable subject in

itself but also a spatiality that provides subjectivity to the life it supports. The *maand* is not an empty space that assumes meaning *only* through human signification and semiotic meaning-making. Even while being attributed a spiritual dimension through which humankind, in this case women, realise their becomings in the meta-physical realms, it is a physical embodiment in itself that essentially precedes any of its human receptions at the conceived, perceived or lived levels of consumption. Thus, practices such as *Dhalo* that operate in close affinities with nature act as counteractive forces to clandestine discourses of cultural hegemony that Gramsci warns about. They provide an alternative 'way of life' where the materiality of human culture is placed not in a dichotomic but rather a symbiotic relationship with nature. Locating this unique feature in the practice of *Dhalo*, Bhangui reiterates the motif of the all-encompassing, all-powerful 'Earth Goddess'; it is a motif that is as scientific as it is spiritual asserting at once the creational and destructive powers of nature within which humanity needs to rethink its existentiality. He iterates this thematic proposition in *Dhalo* by saying that,

> पृथ्वी ही महामाता. पृथ्वीच दिता. पृथ्वीच घेता. सगळी जिवावळ अखेरचो विसव पृथ्विंतच घेता. पृथ्वीक एक यात्विक बळगे आसा. त्या बळग्याक लागून ती संसाराची निर्मणी करता...धर्तरी ही भूंय आशिल्ल्यान भूंय देवतांची कल्पना उदेवाक आयली. (धालो - एक विचार)

> Earth is the Supreme Mother. She is the one who gives. [And] she is the one who takes back too. All living beings ultimately take repose in the Earth itself. she has the reproductive power [and] because of this power she can create Life…Since Earth is land, the concept of land-worship comes into being. (my trans)

The practice of *Dhalo* is laden with a variety of ecological metonymies, metaphors and tropes whose roles as signs allude to a deeper structural langue than is perceivable *prima facie*. For instance, the worship of the *tulsi* plant is fundamental to the unfolding of *Dhalo* – it is an important ritualistic and performative proceeding without which its material and spiritual manifest is incomplete. This trope, however, is not an off-handed act of obeisance or imposed docility. It embodies a textual subconscious – a *sahitya* – that posits it within the palimpsestic tradition of embodying science and spirituality in tandem and totality. Vandana Shiva explains the significance

of the trope of *tulsi-worship* in the context of such reverence (largely) in rural India by foregrounding that,

> Tulsi (Ocimum sanctum) is a little herb planted in every home, and worshipped daily. It has been used in Ayurveda for more than 3000 years, and is now also being legitimised as a source of diverse healing powers by western medicine. However, all this is incidental to its worship. The tulsi is sacred not merely as a plant with beneficial properties but as Brindavan, the symbol of the cosmos…[Thus] nature as a creative expression of the feminine principle is both in *ontological continuity* with humans as well as above them. (38; my emphasis).

Thus, the worship of the *maand*, the *tulsi* and myriad other manifests of nature in *Dhalo* is not an esoteric abstraction embedded within the songs for the purpose of 'entertainment'. These creative expressions are active engagements with the knowledge of *Prakriti* that harbours what Shiva terms as the 'ontological continuity' between all beings – woman, man, flora, fauna and nature. Interestingly, through his commentary on *Dhalo* as a folkloric art form, critic Shyam Verekar *Goenchya Lokvedacho Rupkaar* highlights the seamless integration of women and nature with the ontological and meta-physical perception of one another by emphasizing that,

> पौष म्हन्यांत चान्त्रे रातीं, शिंया कडाक्यार धालो जातात. सैमाचो साद फुलां-पांनातल्यान सळसळदा. कांदळां ओंवळां, शेंवती, आबोलीं, मोगरीं, चांफीं वावराक धमधमाट सोडटात. आंबे चंवरांनी उलयतात. पणस, भिरंण्ड, जांब, काजीक धुवाळे लागतात. धालांच्या मांडार सवाशिणी आनी आक्रान्त्री पदर खोयतात आनी पोट खोसायेन नाचतात. (12)

> On a moonlit night of the cold wintry month of Paush, *Dhalo* is performed. Flowers such as mangrove*,* medlar, chrysanthemum, crossandra, jasmine, champaca emanate their fragrance in the air. The mangosteen speaks in blossoms. The jackfruit, mangosteen, jamun and cashew begin their bloom. and on the maand of *Dhalo*, married women and spinster girls tuck in the border of their saree and dance with abundant joy. (12; my trans).

Verekar's poetic exposition of the nature-woman internanimation is similar to the theoretical concept of 'integrated oikos' of anthropo-ecological non-differential unity suggested by Selvamony as well as Shiva in the notions of *tinai* as well as *Prakriti* of the Indian nature-traditions respectively.

Dhalo, stands unique in the Goan folkloric tradition for being one of the select folk forms that are performed *only* by women. Moreover, women from both Hindu and Christian communities of the place perform distinct renditions of the practice informed by socio-historical changes; the underlying thematic matrix of nature-worship remains the same. Seemingly insignificant in the larger gamut of ethnographical episteme, the present study sees this phenomenon of performance *only* by women as an important signifier of 'agency' of knowledge, creative expression and self-assertion among the historically marginalized communities. *Dhalo* is largely performed by women from communities which are the early settlers of the state. Largely occupying a lower socioeconomic stratum, these communities have, throughout history, faced onslaughts of invasions from several foreign powers. In contemporary society, they continue to battle the intrusive forces of modernity that threaten to render their ways of life obsolete. The present study, therefore, views *Dhalo* as an ecofeminist proclamation of counter-discourse to narratives of patriarchy as well as capitalism. It is a conversational space where women and ecology engage in a dialogue with one another – 'nature' is not a passive recipient of the performing women's reverence; the recurrent invocations made to it are testimonies to the everyday-dialogic interrelations which women share with the environment around them. The trope of 'Rambha' can be seen as conduit that allows a complete embodiment of eco-spiritual forces that women interact with as well as inherently embody by carrying the same power of reproduction through which the Earth-Goddess derives its supremacy of being the highest divine principle. Additionally, *Dhalo* is also a voice planked towards an assertion of female energy flowing through creative expressions where the physical body of the woman (individually as well as collectively through the intertwined patterns of dancing) symbolizes the energy of the ecological space (the *maand*, the forest, the fields) within which it unfolds. Lastly, it is a voice from a traditionally disempowered space. Performed by women whose identities are traditionally relegated to the annals of 'domesticated' (often, secondary spaces), *Dhalo* forms an important signifier of these women 'coming out', occupying centre-stage and speaking up. To the question, "can the subaltern speak?" *Dhalo* could be a plausible answer; "can they be heard?", however, is a more complex issue. It is important to mention here that sustained efforts are being made to document and aptly represent folkloric traditions such as Dhalo in academic and sociological research. Compilations of *Dhalo* folk songs by Jayanti Naik, Joao Fernandes and Soniya Asnodkar provide due cognizance to the orality of this tradition and duly register the

emic dialectic variations embedded within the songs. Folklore critics such as Pandurang Phaldesai, Vinayak Khedekar, Pandurang Bhangui, Rajendra Kerkar and Shyam Verekar have attempted to locate the practice in socioecological discussions in reinstating the significance of Goa's natural heritage. Moreover, newly burgeoning groups such as 'Soul-Travelling' and 'Exclamations Goa' are emphatically subverting the stereotypical narratives of 'sun-sand-sea' representations of Goa in popular tourism by instating distinct threads of hinterland tourism through walks, visits, trails and stays in places that embody the state's palimpsestic ecological and cultural distinctiveness. As such, folk-practices such as *Dhalo* – that are susceptible to extinction owing to complete marginalization by dominant discourses – are being engaged in mainstream narratives. However, whether such resurgences of traditional ecological knowledge and practice, as embodied by *Dhalo*, will lodge more tangible protests against environmental deterioration owing to 'developmental' juggernauts if and when, remains a question significantly mooted, the answer to which may be exhumed through the unfolding of future time.

The *maand* occupies two vertical parallels of semiotic significance in the practice of *Dhalo* both of which are layered within the cultural epistemes of the communities performing it. These layered levels of meaning-gradation are extremely important in locating *Dhalo* as an ecofeminist text. For the uninitiated, the *maand* is just a representamen indicating a natural or even 'empty' place – a *terra nullis*. Therefore, if the code-unit of 'maand' is translated in another language-culture verbatim, without its ecocultural nuance, then it may be rendered as simply a 'space' in target texts. Such a space, by extension, may become an index of under-utility or non-utility which has to be put to further use.The prefix 'sacred' excavated through the multilayered original code-unit of 'maand' in the source language plays a very important role. As *Dhaalam maand* (a maand for *Dhalo*) it is a space imbued with ritualistic and performative significance as a place specifically reserved for women. Its exclusivity is its sacredness – the present study reads this assertion of spatial identity as a re-assertion of gender identity. As simply, the *maand*, it is a symbol of community consciousness, its historical lineage, its value-systems, its heteroglossic heritage all of which are closely associated with nature. For an interpreter (reader/receiver) unfamiliar with these cultural nuances, the process of meaning-making of an icon of *maand* may stop at the first-level of gradation. However, an acquaintance with and immersion into living folk-cultures (in

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this case of specific communities as well as women from other groups) may start a processuality of *infinitum* submitted by Charles Sanders Peirce in Semiotic studies. At the first-level, the icon of the maand may invoke the embodiment of a physical space – an open place (smeared with cow-dung or made of clay), a specific kind of tree or a tulsi vrindavan. At the second level, this interpretant of the icon will spill on to become an index of a living folk/community culture – with the term 'living' opening up further interrogations and verifications. At the third-level of gradation it may serve as an indicator of the community's territorialization in face of changing spatialities and demographies. At the fourth-level of meaning-making, it may further symbolize the community's ecoethical consciousness, its creative expressions, its tangible and intangible *sahitya* and a further etic and dialectic relationship with the larger langue of female creator principle and/or human-nature interrelations. Further, in a non-reductionist manner, it may exhume an underlying subconscious of the non-palpable neural networks that exist between humans and ecology thereby presenting an alternative, more sustainable way of life in face of the current climactic crisis induced by overconsumptive modes of living that often lead to undue destruction of nature.

Since *Dhalo* largely emerges as a salutation to mother Earth, any direct threat to land (and ecology) places the performances of the art-form and/or its ecoconscious spirit in jeopardy. As such, one of the major challenges faced by folk-forms such as *Dhalo* is the destruction of forest-covers leading to willy-nilly changes in agricultural patterns and subsequently, cultural cycles. *Dhalo* is, in this sense, most suscepticle to forces of timber lobbying (Kerkar 11) as a result of which original ecological maand-sites are replaced by concrete stages thereby severely undermining the oikic relevance of the performance. Often dubbed as responses to inevitable forces of 'development' and 'advancement', these changes are representative of a surrender to the pervasive powers of high modernism that are often routed through dominant cultural superimposition. In recent times, however, the counter-narrative forces have proven to be stronger in the Goan context. In March 2018, the Ministry of Art and Culture, Government of Goa announced that a financial scheme for the revival of the maand that entailed special scope for preservation of folk-art through economic emancipation of folk-artists whose art serves to protect *maand* sites and the distinct ecocultural heritage of Goa (Gomes). In face of several ongoing environmental-protection-versus-economic development debates confronting Goan collective psyche today, such interventions can provide an

impetus to ecocultural expressions (especially of subaltern counter-discourses) that can often slip into silent oblivion or spiralling deterioration owing to sustained marginalization.

In the course of the research undertaken above, the present study has sought to show that all the texts under analysis, either implicitly or explicitly, try to construct an alternative paradigm in subversion to what they see as an anti-sustainable, eco-hazardous and unscrupulous model of overconsumption, domination and untenable 'development' that is causing irreversible damages to environment and contributing adversely to Climate Change. When such an argument informs any discourse in Green Cultural Studies, one cannot overlook the existence of folk-culture. The term 'folk' has conventionally carried connotations suggestive of references to an 'illiterate' or 'non-advanced' community. However, the study examines that in recent times in folkloric studies there has been a transition towards understanding 'folk' as a denotation to those communities that follow a distinct way of life informed mainly by a close affiliation to nature and a shared cultural heritage. As such, the present study argues, this mode of 'culture' is an important signification system that has been marginalized in larger literary and theoretical discourses. The present study, therefore, incorporates a representation from the folk-culture form in order to underline the inherent ecological consciousness prevalent in the *sahitya* of the peoples participating in the tangible and intangible performance of the signifier under study.

By being a direct homage to the Earth-goddess and nature in various forms as well as an indirect celebration of woman-ecology interrelations, the practice of Dhalo radically challenges the concept of land being appropriated as a 'political tool' of usurpation and consumption. In contradiction to this paradigm, land appropriated as a cultural tool has paved way for the preservation and sustainability of that land. The present study also points out that the folk-form of Dhalo actualises the concept of ecological footprint since it calls for preserving spaces such as the sacred *maand* not for utility but for the replenishment of the land itself. This, in turn, challenges the high modernist concepts of 'terra vacantes' and '*mise en valeur'* that seeks to possess and 'productively' utilise every piece of land to make it fit for human benefit. In this sense, the prevalent, *maand* sites in Goa are thriving despite the consumeristic models which view land as a commodity of consumption. The study also uses the Structuralist and

Semiotic approach to assert that rather than supporting the view that everything derives meaning through the ability of subsumption that language provides, the tools provided by language can be used to shape perceptions befitting models of environmental sustainability. Lastly, the analysis also postulates that folk practices as important texts of human signification systems, far from being 'voiceless', should be considered as crucial signifiers initiating critical dialogues into mainstream discourses on the environment.

3.4 'Visual' Culture

3.4.1. Interanimations in The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book

A study of through Spatial Criticism , Structuralism and Semiotics

In August 2018, a 15-year old Swedish girl, Greta Thunberg. decided to 'skip' school and spend the day, instead, outside the Swedish Parliament calling for more impactful cognizance and reactive action towards mitigating global warming and climate change. The sign she was holding up read (in Swedish) 'School strike for Climate Change'. Seemingly uneventful then, this 'visual' became the starting point of what appears to be one of the most compelling protest narratives of the 21st century against inadequate political responsiveness towards environmental crises with events such as 'Climate Strikes' and 'Fridays for Future' gaining mileage in contemporary cultural parlance. The 'Thunberg-phenomenon', as the present study terms this burgeoning movement, serves as an important text of ecological engagement in Green Cultural Studies largely due to two significant reasons, as identified by the present researcher:

(i)   It spews out, rather dramatically, the power of the 'visual' in contemporary modes of information-production, processing and reception. The 'visual' does not remain quarantined as a tool in a text anymore, it has become *the* text containing potentialities of massive disruptions in linear narratology.

(ii)   It brings to fore voices from the 'mainstream margins' – the children. In this category, the present study considers all those individuals who fall below the set-age of political enfranchisement pan-globe. It may be exaggerative to call this category the 'subaltern' – the present study contends that the term 'subaltern' is complex in its

nuances and applying it to any and all disenfranchised groups may amount to undermining its socio-political implications. However, the study does not intend to homogenise the category of 'children'. It recognises the fact that an individual child's 'position' in society is also widely heterogenous depending upon the diverse 'background(s)' with which s/he/they may be associated. But, for the purpose of present discussion, the study considers 'children' to be the willy-nilly margin-group whose participation in the larger political movements is routed through the more conditioned and at times, curated conduits devised by adults. In this sense, a movement that is heralded by children which then expands its scope for adult participation is emphatically subversive and piercingly telling. This makes one call into discussion the *conduits* through which children receive phenomenological, in the context of present study, ecological knowledge.

In his final section of the seminal work, *The future of environmental criticism: Environmental crisis and literary imagination* (2005), Lawrence Buell locates three challenges that confront the future of environmental criticism, these being, "[t]he challenge of organization, the challenge of defining distinctive models of inquiry, and the challenge of establishing their significance beyond the academy" (128). The subtextual nuance of Buell's contention is the development of techniques and methodologies through which environment criticism can respond to changing modes of information dissemination and distribution especially in an era of the hyper-spatial and multimedial. To this re-thought function of environmental criticism, Sidney I. Dobrin, in the article, "Through green eyes: complex visual culture and post-literacy" adds two conjoined categories: children's literature and visual rhetorics. She proposes a reinvigoration of the metaphor 'green' represented as a visual signifier in the

> textual *production* alongside textual interpretation as central to examining
> how literatures contribute to both child subject formation and the
> relationship between child subjects and environment/place…[in view of]
> the complexity of network societies and the (hyper)circulation and velocity
> of information and text in the network [as well as] a more complex notion
> of ecology [in contemporary times]. (265-266).

Buell's proposition of (re)invigorating environmental criticism and Dobrin's emphasis on extending its scope to the visual-semiology of children's literature opens up a niche

paradigm in Green Cultural Studies. If environment is something *out there* but also something that one *perceives* and subsequently *defines* then there is a need to engage in two distinct modalities of critique:

(i)   Recognize that the process of perception and definition of environment (and action *towards* it thereof) unfolds in a semiological and symbiological continuum which is substantially shaped by experiences and 'moments' registered in early stages of cognition.

(ii)   Re-examine the extrinsic milieus, tropes and signification systems within which this semiological and symbiological continuum unfolds especially via cultural production of which literature is an important part.

Within this paradigm of critical reclamation of visual narratology for children vis-à-vis ecological consciousness, the present study brings into discussion the analysis of the text *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book*.

In order to understand the pertinent locus of *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* within the context of present study, the current discussion delves into its production, under the aegis of Daily Dump, as a cultural agent of awareness and meaning-constitution via a polysemous engagement and interplay of visual and verbal signs. Daily Dump is fundamentally a design-led company committed to imagine alternative paradigms of human-environment interface with a view of developing a more synergy-based socioecological communication. In the home page of its website dailydump.org, the company defines its objective as one which seeks to re-envisage scenarios "that can help change behaviour" (Daily Dump). Its converging values of ecological commitment are largely canalised through six core values namely: 'Thinking in whole systems', 'Change', 'Heroes', 'Relationships', 'Imagining Alternatives' and 'The Indian Context' as featuring in the concept-map given below.
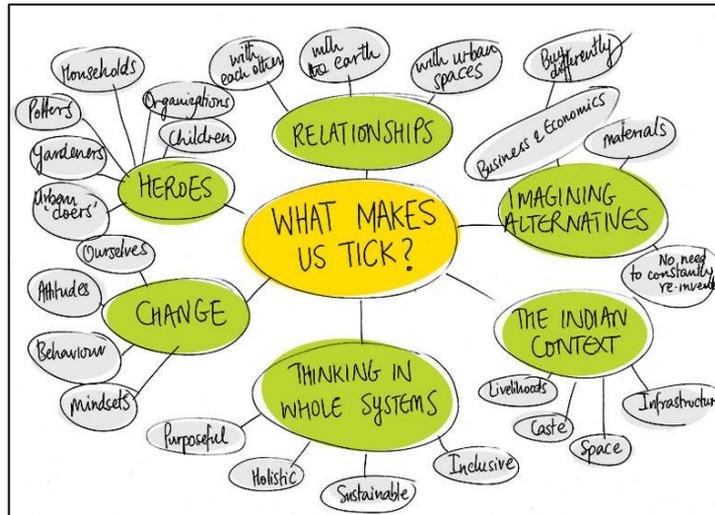
Fig. 3.4.1.1 'What makes us tick' (www.dailydump.org/about-us/)

Started in 2006, the projects of Daily Dump primarily engage in urban spatialities by initiating critical interrogations of conceived spaces through largely biocentric modalities. In doing so, their principal prototyping focuses upon rethinking waste-management and re-shaping marginal livelihoods to promote holistic environmental cultures as a counternarrative to the Anthropocene.

Within the paradigm of this modus operandi, Daily Dump published *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* in 2010. Jointly authored by Trupti Godbole, Govind Mukundan and Poonam Bir Kasturi with illustrations from Ishan Ghosh, *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* is a short illustrative book designed, as the work claims, for children in the age group of four-to-eight years. The work is polysemic and evidently seeks to educate readers while engaging them in the visual grammar of illustrative signification juxtaposed with minimal verbal text.

As an environmental text for children *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* fixates upon invigorating a green-semiotic experientiality by re-instating analytical reasoning through interactive visual interfaces. In the *Handbook of Narratology* edited by Peter Hühn et al., Marco Caracciolo defines 'experientiality' as "the ways in which narrative taps into readers' familiarity with experience through the activation of "natural" cognitive parameters… and particularly *the embodiment of cognitive faculties, the understanding of intentional action, the perception of temporality, and the emotional evaluation of experience*" (149). To Caracciolo's four-fold cognitive parametric design, the present study adds a fifth – *the reception of spatiality*. This addition is essentially informed by

the belief that in order to (re)stimulate ecological experientiality, a text cannot undermine either the physical or the representational spaces that environment occupies within and outside cultural productions. *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* engages in dialoguing the green-semiotic experientiality by foregrounding the spatial dimension through an interfacial web of images. Emphasizing upon the need for such revertive models of image-foregrounding in children's narratives, Dorbin puts forth that,

> Within the networks of contemporary information and cultural circulation then, we are witnessing a (re)turn to the image as the dominant means of information conveyance. As literary theorists, including Gunther Kress (2003), have noted, while 'language-as-speech' is likely to remain the primary mode of human communication, 'language-as-writing' is rapidly being displaced by image in public communication. This shift, Kress argues, has profound effects on how we engage the world: '*The world told is a different world to the world shown*'. (270)

The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book engages in this 'showing' of the world rather than relating it. It essentially does this to convey a three-fold interlinked message: (i) the harmful effects of plastic on animals, (ii) the detrimental effects of plastic on human health and (iii) the need for operative segregation and disposal of plastic for environmentally sustainable waste-management. Considered to be crucial to contemporary environment conversations, the prevention of single-use plastic, its re-use and effective disposal is a recurrent motif in narratives of ecological commitment. *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* introduces this conversation to the young readers in early-literate age groups largely by designing causal linkages in image-presentations.

A semiotic analysis of *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* conveys that the narrative devises its visual-textual signification system on the modality of image structure signs. In the section speaking about 'Image reading' in their work, *More than words: An Introduction to Communication*, Richard Dimbleby and Graeme Burton put forth eight elements through which images are put together in a narratology for polysemic reading. Of which,

> *Composition* is about where items are placed in the frame. *Framing* is about the border, what it encloses, what it excludes. *Colour* is about overall hues, or the selective placing of colour within the frame. *Foregrounding* is about

placing in front of the frame, and so making them larger (this is also a sign of the supposed three-dimensionality of an image – a visual 'trick'). *Middleground* and *Background* is about placing objects in relation to foreground, and also saying something about their importance. *Lighting* is about things like picking out or diminishing objects according to how well-lit they are. It is also about ideas of style. *Focus* is about what is made clear or unclear through choice and use of camera lens. This also may sign to us to direct our attention towards a certain object. Or it could sign something like, this is a dream or fantasy picture. *Perspective devices* (relative size of objects – lines of ceiling or floor) are the illusion of depth in an image. We learn to read such signs as 'depth'. (196-197)

An analytic deconstruction of structural dialectics employed in centering ecological consciousness in *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* reveals a combination of two or more of the elements outlined by Dimbleby and Burton. At the centre of the narrative is a cow who lives down the street – a quasi-familiar image in select urbanities of India. Situated largely in the conceived urban spaces of constructed builds and streets, the icon of the cow is strategically *foregrounded* – it is presented larger in size while the urban spatialities of human conception are pushed to the background as represented in Figure 3.4.1.2

Fig. 3.4.1.2 Godbole, Trupti et.al *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book.* Daily Dump.

This technique functions as an operational semantic of biocentrism in the narrative. Foregrounding a bio-specie in a concretized urban place is also spatially subversive. As mentioned earlier, green cultural theorists often decry the marginalised 'background' position accorded to environment in human cultural production, especially the literary text. *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book*, then, reverses the paradigm. The conceived space becomes the backdrop – concomitant but not central – to the main story. The deployment of this device may be to reinstate the presence of biodiverse species in the purview of 'lived spaces' of human beings where nature – flora and fauna, often occupy an axiomatic inconspicuousness. The cow is qualified as 'friendly' in an attempt to establish it as the protagonist of this story towards whom the faculty of invoked empathy is oriented. Juxtaposed with the icon of the cow, the text of the narrative employs the gender-specific code-unit 'she' to refer to the cow as opposed to the otherwise common practice of employing the gender-neutral code-unit 'it' for flora and fauna. Although defined in anthropomorphic grammar, the usage of code-unit 'she' markedly shifts the thrust of the narrative by positing the cow as the *res cogitans* as opposed to the *res extensa* of the phenomenological world. The narrative also employs the stylistic device of rhyme to reinforce narratological continuity and message-retention especially among the target reader group. Moreover, the unfolding story is embedded with tactical questions that serve to initiate an ecological inquiry among receivers. The text placed outside the frame of Fig. 3.4.1.2, for instance, asks the question, "What can the cow eat on this street?" (1). The question is direct demanding answers from the reader through visual clues provided in the image. But at the second-level of meaning-gradation, it is also rhetoric because the (human) street contains an assortment of items that may/may not be fit for consumption. The second-level of gradation is achieved in the fourth panel of the narrative by using the technique of *Composition* as featured in Fig 3.4.1.3

Middlegrounding plastic-icons to show their pervasive presence in nature
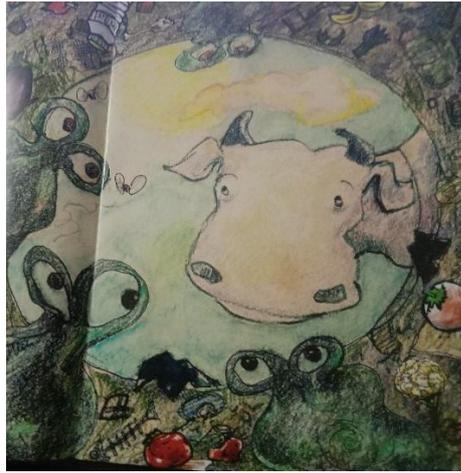
Compositional framework of juxtaposed biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste indicating non-segregation

Fig. 3.4.1.3 Godbole, Trupti et. al *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book*. Daily Dump.

The image is presented from the perspective of the now-established naïve protagonist 'friendly cow'. In the sprawling space of human conceptuality, the cow seeks food in a waste-bin that contains a cornucopia of discarded items positioned next to one another. The compositional frame of the panel posits the items which the cow can consume (banana peel and other biomatter) with items that the cow *should not* consume – such as the antagonistically designed plastic, which again, is anthropomorphized for dramatic and cognitive effect. The causal reasoning provoked in the fourth panel is invoked through the epistemological knowledge expected to be obtained through the question, "What can the cow eat on the street?" (1) of the first panel. The waste that the cow encounters is irresponsibly non-segregated and the cow does not have pre-acquired knowledge that plastic is unfit for her consumption. She realizes it only when "her tummy goes sad" and subsequently says "Ouch" (9) as shown in Figure 3.3.1.4

Repetition of the 'ouch' refrain'
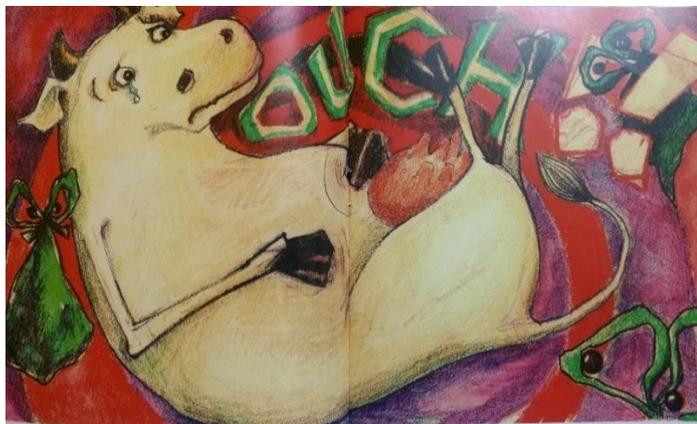
Fig. 3.4.1.4 Godbole, Trupti et. al *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book*. Daily Dump

The exclamation 'Ouch' posits the pain of the cow within the human semantics. While the cow is still foregrounded in the image, the icons of plastic are placed in strategic middleground to show their causal relation to the suffering of the cow. If the cow is the protagonist-subject, plastic is the antagonist-other. While occupying seemingly innocuous hinges in the spatiality of biodiversity, plastic causes long-term damage because it 'stays' and doesn't biodegrade. In the unfolding story, the sick cow learns from its mummy and daddy that "Plastics are Ouch" and "Bananas are Moo". The "Plastics are Ouch" refrain recurs in the subsequent image-sequencing and forms a cognitive map of causal interlinkages. The interjection 'Ouch' becomes a metaphor for the detrimental effects that plastic can have upon the biodiverse species and by extension, nature itself. In the ninth panel, this episteme is foregrounded by heightening the size of the term 'Ouch' and embedding it within the icon of the plastic as demonstrated in Figure 3.4.1.5
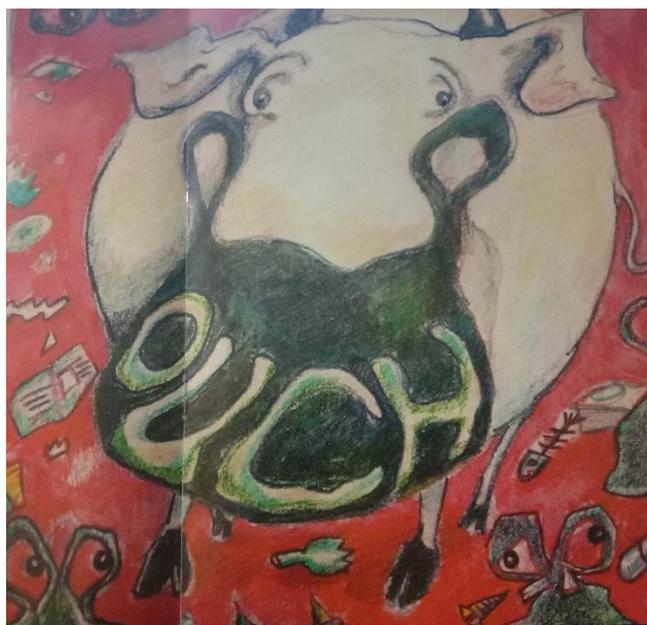
Cognitive mapping through correlational emphasis

Figure 3.4.1.5 Godbole, Trupti et. al *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book*. Daily Dump.

In the eleventh panel of the story-sequence, the narrative brings the human-icon into the narrative thereby creating an important index of ecology-human interrelations. The human-icon is that of a boy who is confronted with a plastic-icon on his plate at the breakfast table. The narrative intersperses the visuals in panel eleven and twelve with a pertinent causal link based upon the *a priori* knowledge derived through the story of the cow. The human-icon deduces that if he eats plastic, he too would say, 'Ouch' (depicted in Figure 3.4.1.6), just like the cow did.
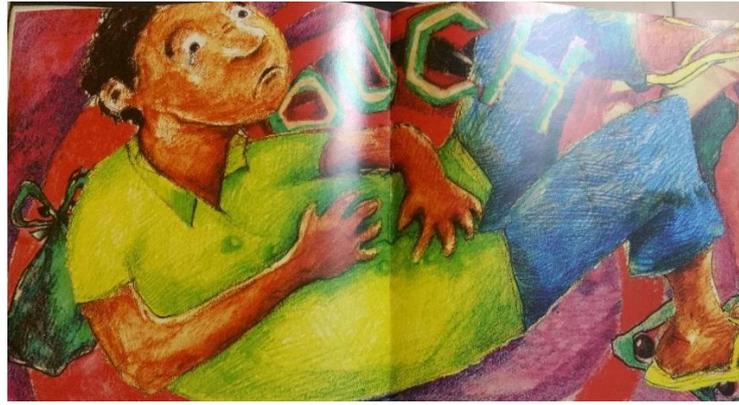
Foregrounding ecological interlinkage through the 'Ouch' refrain

Fig. 3.4.1.6 Godbole, Trupti et. al *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book*. Daily Dump.

In the post-narrative segment, the book draws cognitive maps indicating why Plastic is 'Ouch' whereas elements such as 'Banana' (deployed as metonymy for biodegradable matter) is 'Moo'. Using the gamification model of contemporary narratology, it employs tools such as 'Snakes and Ladders' and 'Labyrinth game' to help target readers differentiate between biodegradable and non-biodegradable products. In the final segment, the book integrates the 'learning-by-doing' paradigm through the sub-sections of 'What you can do with "Ouch" stuff every day" and 'What you can do with "Moo" stuff everyday" where the compositional framework engages a human-icon in suggestive actions of appropriate waste-segregation in every day lived spaces of production and consumption.

In analysing the relevance of the visual in foregrounding ecology as a significant thematic preoccupation in children's literature, Dorbin assesses the potentialities of contemporary hyperspaces in re-turning to the 'image' saying,

> Conventional wisdom suggests that visual texts are pre-literate, designed to convey information to subjects not yet imbued with the experiences necessary to interpret written-textual information. Visual texts are naïve texts intended for green readers. Yet, the turn from page to screen has caused a re-questioning of this traditional position of the visual. As visuals become a dominant form of information-conveyance – or more accurately, as they become a more immediate form of information conveyance – they are cast not as pre-literate forms of communication, but post-literate forms…a dominant mode of textual representation. (271)

Dorbin's assertion of the visual rhetoric discussed mainly in terms of its relevance on electronic and digital spatialities can be indicatively applied to the relevance of illustrative and graphic fiction as well especially those designed for children. The present study contends that as a sign participating in the process of meaning production and derivation, visual and graphical literature has begun to play a very prominent role in contemporary literary studies. In present times, it takes the form of any text in the form of print, electronic or digital media which places the literary text parallel with enhanced visual code-units. The term 'illustrative literature' commonly used to denote these graphical-visual literatures refers to works that have resulted from a shift in the trajectory of literary production since they emerge *from* readers' demands. As such, visual-illustrative literature is seeping into the collective consciousness of popular culture through events such as Comic Cons, social media platforms such as Instagram, ventures such as "Happiness Illustrations" and burgeoning merchandise-culture. The most evolving form of visual-illustrative literature is the short fiction form. Largely associated with the superhero thematic motif, today, illustrative literature has forayed into a vast array of content(s) and issue(s). However, preliminary research shows that its extension of thematic preoccupation with environmental issues is as yet meagre and inadequate despite the time-tested popularity of Eric Carle's noted work *The Hungry Caterpillar* which foregrounded an important environmental motif of natural processes and balance in the ecosystem. However, the visual-illustrative field is sprouting significantly in India. A representation of the same is the children's book titled *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book.*

In exploring the potentialities of the 'visual' in initiating ecological consciousness in narratives for children, the present study operated through the baseline of Structuralist-Semiotic approaches and Spatial Studies perspectives. Through the same, the present study drew the following inductive points:

(i)   Firstly the text *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* serves as a testimonial to the postulation that rather than looking at Structuralist approach and language-theory as undermining the exclusive identity of biotic community, language can be used to shape ecologically-sound attitudes and perceptions. This text may also serve to re-model the signification systems, especially those produced for children, to shape positive attitudes towards the environment. By placing the code-unit cow at the centre and giving it a non-neuter identity, the text shows that nature – its flora and fauna – are not merely referents

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subsumed within the human mind. They are subjects who are affected by the everyday actions and practices of human beings.

(ii)   Secondly, the text provided a medium to explore the concept of cognitive mapping in re-creating environmental geography. As a pedagogical tool, especially for children, cognitive mapping can be used to "acquire, code, store, recall, and decode information" ("Cognitive map") about relative locations and attributes of ecological phenomena in their everyday or metaphorical spatial environment. Since illustrative works use mental modes of space and visual representation, they can help to create environmental cognitive maps where textual information about space is juxtaposed with visual images enabling the formation of a cause-and-effect map. Thus, spaces can be re-created by highlighting their palpability and amalgamating pedagogical scientific knowledge with everyday phenomena. In this way, environmental cognitive maps can facilitate the transition from 'knowing to doing'.

In the Introduction to the work, *Ecocritical Perspectives on Children's Texts and Cultures: Nordic Dialogues*, Nina Goga et al. cite the 2011 study by Geraldine Massey and Clare Bradford to put forth that "Nature, as presented to children and young adults (YAs) in literary texts, images, films, games, apps and in outdoor and educational activities, may influence the way young people understand and cope with the actual environmental challenges and concerns in immediate surroundings" (01-02). While the widespread viabilities and validations of such claims are yet to be firmly grounded in scientific and/or suggestive results, the present study contends that the positional role of children as the 'inheritors' of the earth (which the adults are largely, if not solely, shaping) makes their participation in ecological dialogues essential and inevitable. Moreover, since the 21st century children are born into the world as 'digital natives', the 'visual' may axiomatically occupy a heightened space in their processuality of their cognitive-development. The tool of the visual, then, can be co-adapted into print to create simulative hyperspaces of ecological knowledge and practice(s) to bring about long-term environmental consciousness that integrates a heightened sense of biophilia and the metaphoric spirit of green as a counternarrative to received patterns of anthropocentric domination of the world.

3.4.2 Constructed Striations and Alternative Paradigm in Our Toxic World

A topographical analysis of critical trajectories in literary rethinking suggest an increased preoccupation with the *role* of 'literature', particularly fiction, in yielding meaningful human responsiveness, tangible and intangible, towards the manifold phenomena of environmental crises unfolding in wake of the Anthropocene. Richard Klein, for instance, suggests in his article, "Climate Change through the Lens of Nuclear Criticism" that literary fiction may be the only medium to represent a post-civilizational and post-humanity future by imagining and reconstructing spatialities after the imminent apocalypse (84). Such re-imaginings may subsequently impact present actions towards mitigating further anthropogenic damages to the environment. Monique Allewaert and Michael Ziser in "Preface: Under Water" lay the thrust of literature's impact on its ability to act as a 'snapshot of the anxious effect of the modern world as it destroys itself – and then denies even its own traces" (235). Laura Perry, in the article, "Anthroposcenes: Towards an Environmental Graphic Novel" resources and cites two important vantage junctures from which the role of literary fiction is revaluated in contemporary environmental dialogues stating that,

> …[l]iterature and theory bring a critical discourse supposedly missing from the sciences, allowing a self-examination of what is 'at stake in the self-naming by a species of an epoch of geologic time' …[and as a] scaling or focusing device, whereby the very large can be shown intersecting with the comparatively very small or whereby the imperceptible can be made 'visceral' by coming into contact with human characters. (Perry)

These analytical reinforcements of literature (in its pluralistic forms and renditions) spurt neither from places of agenda-driven patronisations of the 'word' nor from the oft-compelling desire to escape from adverse realities into abstract realms created by imaginative force. The new role that literature, as a significant manifestation of human cultural production, has come to bear is informed by an urgent reawakening that informs human anxieties about and towards environmental issues. The present study contends that, in the era of the Anthropocene, the *purpose* of literature has shifted from that of being an agent of instruction and/or entertainment to being a facilitator of 'engagement'. Through its stylistic, syntactic and semantic devices, literature can puncture the forbidding veneer of phenomenological routine and create crevices that render heightened physical and metaphysical (re)engagements of humans with their ecological world. In order to do this, however, literature itself has had to trajectory away from

conventional chiaroscuros of 'written' signifiers to pool in other polysemic signs that can respond to the hyperspaces of contemporary culture(s). One such polysemic sign deployed in current literary production is that of an 'image'. The omnipresence of the 'visual' in present-day multimedial world, as discussed in section 3.4. of this Chapter, has seen a transition of the 'image' from being a static, one-dimensional, unilateral *entity* to being a dynamic, multidimensional, polytextual sign that can unravel newer significations in the semiological processualities. This transition of the 'image' has largely come through a new form of literary rendering – the graphic narrative.

Simply defined, a graphic narrative is the juxtaposition of images and text to tell a meaningful story. As a tool in itself, juxtaposition is achieved through single-panelling, sequencing, mise-è-scene, blank-spaces, gutters, dialogue/thought clouds, pictograms, textboxes and other signifying aids. The power of a graphic narrative, however, is in being an inherently collaborative medium in which, "the creator reduces the ideas which the creator wants to communicate into a finite set of symbols and the reader adds in additional information in the process of decoding the presentation" (Duncan and Smith 15). Graphic narratives thus are both reductive and additive (15) where both the author and the receiver participate in the process of meaning-making.

It is perhaps due to this conversational and multi-semiotic fluidity that graphic narratives are considered to be one of the most effective mediums of routing human engagements with environment. For instance, in his work, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Amitav Ghosh puts forth that "to think about the Anthropocene will be to think in images, [and] will require a departure from our accustomed logocentrism" (qtd. in Perry). The potentialities of graphic narrative, therefore, are being explored in foregrounding the often problematic and pluralistic complexities of environmental issues that require a heightened re-telling, re-scaling and re-focusing especially in projects that are impact-driven. It is within this paradigmatic framework that the present study brings into discussion the text, *Our Toxic World: A guide to hazardous substances in our everyday lives* (henceforth *Our Toxic World* or *OTW*).

Published in 2010 by SAGE Publications and Toxics Link, *Our Toxic World* is a form of graphic narrative written by Anirudha Sen Gupta – a Goan-based writer and content-creator for 'Down to Earth' and noted illustrator, Priya Kuriyan. Juxtaposing

fiction with non-fiction, the work takes a series of peeks into the lives of the fictitious Sachdeva family along with the other characters they come into contact with. In doing so, the work examines the hazardous substances (tangible and intangible) that are integrated into our daily lives which willy-nilly, and sometimes irreversibly so, impact the environment, and by extension, the life that depends on it. While doing so, the text also offers solutions and alternative paradigms which may be used in order to internalise a sustainable way of life as opposed to the burgeoning, anti-sustainability consumptive model. The locus of the work is positioned in the urban metropolis of Delhi, India but the ecological trajectories it pursues locate it in the crux of global environmental crisis. In unravelling inherent socio-political linkages between 'past' and 'present' tractions of material unfolding, the work exhumes the role of discourse and hegemony in realtering human approaches to ecology. While reiterating the pandemic stature of environmental problems and the vicious chains in which they mete out damages, the work forefronts the undue brunt borne by the 'subaltern' communities owing to the capitalist overconsumption-models adopted by the dominant classes. Finally, the work emphatically interrogates the term 'development' fracturing its present day 'meaning' in constructed and construed signification of vested and polarised interests. The work, therefore, opens itself up for Spatial, New Historicist, Structuralist and Subaltern analysis within the purview of Green Cultural Studies.

In the work, *Endangered World* (2001), Lawrence Buell inserts the paradigm of 'second nature' within contemporary socio-culture pointing out, as frameworks of Anthropocene do, that ecology as one receives it today has been almost irreversibly processed and modified by human 'labour'. In fact, the word 'environmental' itself signifies the 'natural' as well as 'human built' dimensionality of the tangible phenomenological world. The development of the 'city', however, severely problematizes this notion. Seen largely as a construct of the sophisticated human mind and method, the city is often conceived as a 'success-story' of civilizational and in present times, technological progress removed from the pre-developmental 'natural' stage of human existence. That any given city is located within an ecological space which wasn't an empty container but a living landscape is a notion often overlooked in the material unfolding of every day production and consumption of the 'city-narrative'. Rangarajan re-locates the role of literature in disrupting the opaqueness of such 'givens' in spatial-receptions by stating that,

Literature that evokes the banality of prefabricated structures and engineered environments in urban spaces like malls can activate what Buell refers to as 'the environmental unconscious' – our embeddedness in the spatio-physical context that constitutes our personal and social identity – which most people ignore. This is because an intense engagement with the complexity of the physical environment can invite deep questions about basic physical conditions like hydrology, geology and toxicity and as a result produce a *sensory overload*, since it leads to a vision of the multiple imbrications that a 'place' is located in. (ch.6).

Our Toxic World works towards the evocation of this 'sensory overload' in presenting the urban spatiality of the representative city of Delhi. *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* backgrounds conceived spaces and foregrounds the biodiversity within to form impactful cognitive maps of ecological centricity. *Our Toxic World* reverses this technique: it foregrounds the conceived spaces –metro-stations, construction-sites, high-rise buildings and tarred roads; all the 'images' of the city that permeate into the perceived space of the human mind and dwell thereunto with complacent familiarity are revoked and re-presented. This re-presentation, however, is not celebratory; the larger-than-life spatiality of the city-narrative is deflected by its macabre appearance – it's a 'City of Bones', grotesquely dystopic, bearing upon the being of its dwellers tangibly and intangibly. As the character from the narrative, an architecture apprentice, Prasad, navigates his way through these city-spaces, he takes in their forbidding implications upon the lives of its citizens as seen in Figure 3.4.2.1

Fig. 3.4.2.1 Sen Gupta, Aniruddha, author, Priya Kuriyan, illustrator. "City of Bones".
Our Toxic World. Sage Publications/Toxics Link 03

The repetitive refrain of 'Under-Construction' boards, barbed-wire fencing, boulder-heaps and enveloping fumes act as disruptors to the dominant narrative which equates cityscape with 'development'. The counternarrative of *Our Toxic World* re-renders icons which are pervasive in the everyday spatiality of the 'metropolis'-paradigm. However, the commonality of their appearance coupled with a hegemonic overemphasis on their 'necessity' in the civilizational model severely normalizes their presence and further, undermines their potential hazards. It also, by consequence, normalizes the absence of natural ecology – trees, flora and fauna are conspicuously absent in the iconography and composition of Figure 3.5.1. suggestive of the fact that nature is often marginalized and/or completely destroyed in the upscaled rhetoric of the developmental model. In doing so, *Our Toxic World* essentially reiterates the concerns of postmodern Spatial theorists such as Edward Soja, David Harvey and Fredric Jameson whose interrogations outline the "cartographic configurations of place and space – the real and imagined spaces in which repressed narratives are revealed of how individual and societal progress is relentlessly pursued, unmindful of the huge cost to the environment" (Rangarajan ch.6). Prasad's perspective is a tool of ostranenie informed by the knowledge of an alternative paradigm of green-spatiality. This alternative paradigm changes his reception of conceived spaces of 'brown' architectural imagination – he

views them as signs of oppression and ghoul where the place becomes a "City of Skeletons…[and]…[A]ll this new construction – the empty shells, the sariyas and scaffolding – like the bones of some monster" (*OTW* 03). The narrative also employs the technique of anticlimactic thrill and metaphoric emphasis through deceptive iconography. In sequential panels three and four, Prasad's asthma-inhaler is contoured like a gun while his storage tubes take the outline of ammunition respectively. Metaphorically, Prasad's alternative view is an index of axiomatic protest against the imposing spatiality of capitalist urban imagination. But Prasad is at the receiving end of this oppression at both physical and psychological levels – the increased pollution caused by the 'developmental' modules is not just intangibly affecting his visceral perceptions but also wreaking tangible impacts on his physiological health. In following a particular-to-universal and microscopic-to-macroscopic module of narratology, the narrative posits a panel entailing a news item carrying a report on Emphysema cases which are on a rise in the city. The problem Prasad faces is a pandemic one penetrating into different strata of society.

In his work, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of Social Environment*, Paul Rabinow takes a view more divergent than the one informed by urban spatial anxieties and institutes the progressive possibilities in contemporary space-(re)productions. He, alongside Foucault, acknowledges that "if social and cultural spaces, including the body, are indeed the product of human actions, there is the possibility of our reconstituting human spaces, and hence human being-in-the-world as well" (Wegner ch.12). Rabinow's view carries subtextual resonances with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becomings'. *Our Toxic World* explores these combined plausibilities through a backstep-approach. In a scenario of (social) production of (social) space, the narrative instates the social production of ecological space. The architectural firm Prasad works for, helms projects of green architecture that introduce the sustainability model of construction as opposed to the capitalistic one. Against the technocratic paradigm of high-modernism, then, *Our Toxic World* foregrounds the icon of spatial reorganization within an eco-conscious framework as represented in Figure 3.4.2.2. The verbal text is inset within the image-panel to enable receivers visualize the assimilative possibilities of re-altered habitats.

Green versus conventional building techniques

Green Building > Conventional Building

1. Preserves and protects existing landscape features > Disturbs natural ecosystem by exploiting site resources
2. Employs erosion and sedimentation control techniques > Damages topsoil and landscape vegetation
3. Prevents storm water run-off > Impervious surfaces like hard paving with no storm water management
4. Location of buildings with easy public transportation access > Huge dependence on private vehicles
5. Uses low energy materials and regionally available materials > Uses energy intensive materials
6. Uses salvaged building products and renewable materials > Exploits energy by using non-renewable materials
7. Uses materials with high recycled content > Perpetuates solid waste problems by using materials with little or no recycled content
8. Safely disposes of construction waste and recycles debris to other sites > No management for construction waste, increasing landfill pressure

9. Low water consumption with water efficient equipments and drought-resistant vegetation > High water consumption for landscaping and general use
10. Treated wastewater used for irrigation and flushing > No treatment facility for wastewater
11. Rooftop catchment areas harvest rainwater to be reused > No rainwater harvesting practised
12. Climate responsive design and energy-efficient heating, ventilation and air-conditioning equipment (HVAC) used > High-energy consumption in HVAC appliances
13. Uses CFC- and HCFC-free HVAC and refrigeration equipment > No efforts at minimizing ozone-depleting substances
14. Paints, adhesives and sealants used do not emit Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) > Endangers occupants' health and perpetuates pollution by using products which release VOCs
15. Renewable energy sources such as solar water heating, photovoltaic cells > No renewable energy sources used
16. High insulation, day lighting or natural cooling systems adopted, lowering power loads > Very high space conditioning and lighting loads
17. Reduced noise pollution, proper ventilation, daylight and views for all the occupied areas > Poor indoor environmental quality — no noise pollution control, artificial lighting used in the day due to poor ventilation

Fig. 3.4.2.2. Sen Gupta, Aniruddha, author, Priya Kuriyan, illustrator. "City of Bones". *Our Toxic World.* Sage Publications/Toxics Link. 15

The narrative, however, forefronts the possibility of neocapitalist usurpations of the sustainability jargon. It does not undermine the fact that the metaphor green can be co-adopted into new forms of overconsumption modules thereby rendering the alternative paradigm redundant in its subversive stance. Therefore, the narrative posits the adoption of green architecture within developing countries like not merely as a superimposition of a neo-Western sustainability standard but as a return to traditional 'ways of life' that carried in-built consciousness of holistic development and co-existence. In explaining this re-shift, the character Sridhar Kamat, in the narrative, explains that the adoption of green technology in construction entails reverting to "[S]imple techniques that Indian houses have used for a long time…A high ceiling, a double-layer roof with a gap for insulation, porous clay tiles, some strategically placed vegetation…[T]hings we seem to have forgotten about" (13). In the article, "Strategies of a Green Economy, contours of a Green Capitalism", Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen underpin the dangers of superimposing strategies of 'ecological commitment' homogenously without acknowledging that the chief actors in sustainability dialogues can also be "state apparatuses, scientific institutions and private companies" (508) with vested interests. Subsequently then,

> [f]ar from representing an isolated sub-section of society, the re-politicization of the ecological crisis reveals a comprehensive quest to reorient the existing production and consumption patterns in their entirety, in the context of a transformation towards a Green Economy… [which is]…in the process of establishing what may develop into a new capitalist formation, potentially taking the place of the crisis-ridden post-Fordist-neoliberal formation. (Brand and Wissen 508-509).

Our Toxic World, too, traces the hegemonic ubiquity of such superimpositions of the 'Green' paradigms. Emulating standards set by the West (referred to as the Global North by Brand and Wissen) without taking geo-regional, demographical and sociocultural heterogeneities into consideration can be as fatal as adhering to dominant models of capitalism. In the textual emphasis of *Our Toxic World*, Sen Gupta propounds that the verbatim adoption of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system designed by the United State Green Building Council (USGBS) for determining green policies and practices, in developing countries (like India) is

> …[j]ust turning into another route for the West to dump unnecessary and expensive technologies. This viewpoint [of the critics of such systems] holds that India, and most cultures with a long history, have traditionally taken low-energy approaches to architecture and construction, using locally-available materials and resources. (16).

Sen Gupta thus indicates that several eco-conscious architects and builders, rather than conforming to Western standards, are undertaking a recourse to traditional methodologies of construction as an 'already existing India-specific green building mechanism' (16).

This recursive and alternative developmental paradigm which *Our Toxic World* puts forth, takes into consideration the entrenched demographic inequities which developing countries like India face. In her article, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism", Ananya Roy institutes the phenomenon of the 'megacity' and provides agency to this discursive space that significantly fractures the dominant norm of the 'global city'. She markedly sees the megacity as a space of the subaltern as well as a subalterned space which points to the "limits of archival and ethnographic recognition" (224) of fragmentary socio-spatial crevices in the mainstream episteme of

urban theory. The present study contends that in highlighting the disparities within the cityscapes, *Our Toxic World* does not represent the 'megacity' as the "constitutive other" within the grammar of globalisation but as a nodal point of dialectical hegemonic convergences through which differential spatialities are appropriated. It achieves this by providing representational agency to the 'urban subalterns' – marginalised groups functioning on the peripheries of dominant social apparatus largely perpetrated by divisive and sectional policies in politics and industry. It largely does this through three characters – Bindu Malhar (the maid at Sachdeva household), Imtiaz Ali (an auto-driver in Delhi) and Shankar (a street child).

The contaminating emanations from construction sites which affect Prasad Sachdev at the physiological and psychological level, penetrate fatalistically in the life of Bindu Malhar as she loses her husband to chronic lung illness from overexposure to dust. And yet, the dust stays with her as a metonymic reminder of her marginality. Through the metaphor of the dust, she situates the vicious circle of marginalization which she cannot get out of.
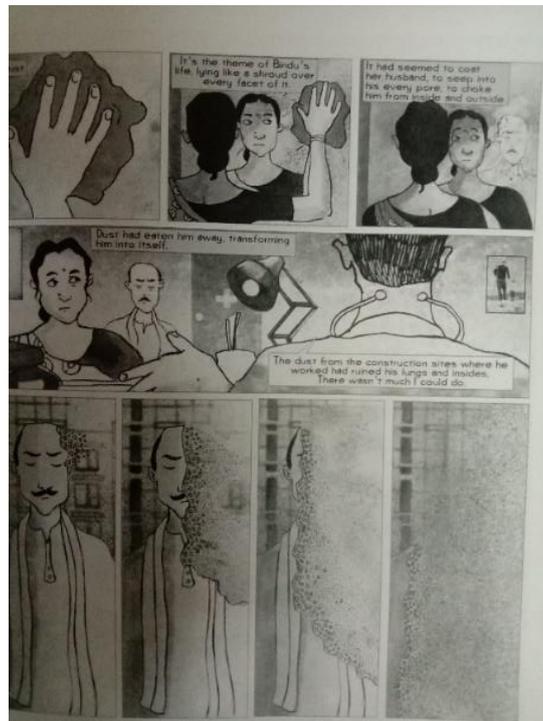

Fig. 3.4.2.3. Sen Gupta, Aniruddha, Author), Kuriyan, Priya (Illustrator). "City of Bones". *Our Toxic World*. Sage Publications/ Toxics Link. 05

As emphasized in the sequencing of the third horizontal panel of Figure 3.4.2.3, the oppression of dust envelopes the life of the character in its entirety, annihilating it

in the bargain. Bindu Malhar's husband starts off as an icon of physical suffering in the first multiple-panel of the sequence; panel two serves as relevant index pointing to the irreversibility of the process while the third panel imposes the inset of finality of such oppression. A Poststructuralist reading of the panel further points out that the image can be read not just as a representation of physical suffering through the agency of 'dust' but as a signifier of all processualities of socio-political subjugation that render a finality to the marginalised condition. Urban subalterns such as Bindu Malhar and her husband, moreover, are made to participate in their own oppressive machinery that determines their livelihood. For the urban subaltern like Bindu Malhar, there is no visible way out because a capital-driven State apparatus not only restricts the possibilities of their vertical mobility through economic hegemonies but restricts horizontal sustenance through spatial domination.

Fig. 3.4.2.4 Sen Gupta, Aniruddha, author, Kuriyan, Priya illustrator. "Industrial Pollution: Poisonous Development". *Our Toxic World*. Sage Publications/Toxics Link 46-47

In the section titled, "Poisonous Development", in which the image appears, *Our Toxic World* explores the capitalistic politics behind spatial reorganization. A Compliance Inspector of Boilers and Factories, Mohanlal Sachdeva – one of the characters in the narrative – denies clearance to a factory for rampant non-conformities to clean operations and violations of environment-safety procedures. Recovering the forbidding memory of the Bhopal gas tragedy, Sachdeva emphatically forefronts these ethical abuses in factory-mechanisms that can have disastrous microcosmic and macrocosmic impacts while informing the manager of the factory under inspection that,

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[t]he whole set-up is very shoddy. Two of your three ESPs are not functioning, the waste water treatment facility is defunct, even the hazardous waste management systems are dangerously inefficient. This place is a disaster waiting to happen. I don't know how you got your factory operational with such tardy measures. (45)

The implications of this co-textual memory of historicity are, however, lost upon the factory manager Kukreja – a symbol who can be read as metonymic index of capitalistic agencies that jointly participate in the functioning of dominant hegemony. As represented in Figure 3.4.2.4 of the study, the imagery of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, foregrounded within the panel with graphic compositioning, serves as an important 'anecdote' recovered by the narrative to critically highlight the coercive continuum of vested ideologies that otherize the interests of environment and subaltern alike. By juxtaposing the Bhopal Gas Tragedy as a co-text in reading the central textuality of *Our Toxic World*, the narrative highlights agencies behind the construed suppression of historicity and/or a calibrated re-reading of it as a close-ended singularity. Mohanlal Sachdeva acts as a subversive agency to this streamlined epistemic violence. He attempts to insert the co-textual memory within the present discourse of legal policies (which Kukreja attempts to flout). His refusal to provide clearance to Kukreja's factory, then, is not just an act of authoritative power-wielding. It is a response to history and the discursive patterns it reveals upon close re-readings. Mohanlal Sachdeva is aware of the repercussions of his subversive protests within systemic agencies that are controlled by dominant politics. But the co-text of Bhopal Gas Tragedy is an integral part of his collective consciousness and thereby an important informant in his decision-making processuality.

As Mohanlal Sachdeva returns from the factory anticipating bureaucratic repercussions of his refusal to provide clearance, he re-positions his decision within the spatial overhaul of the 'megacity' of which he is a part and yet apart. His reception of these spatialities registers the fragmentations that lie within polemics of the urban-narrative. He realises that the territorial reorganization of urban spatiality is not naïve; the industrial waste dumped by factories like those of Kukreja's are canalised in such a way that most of their devastating impacts are borne by the urban subaltern who, physically and figuratively, occupy the striated spaces (demonstrated in Figure 3.4.2.5) that Deleuze and Guattari spoke about. Mohanlal Sachdeva realises that the 'slum'- a

signifier of the 'megacity' which, Roy suggests has become a "shorthand for the human condition of the global South" (224), is a deliberate by-product of territorial manoeuvring.
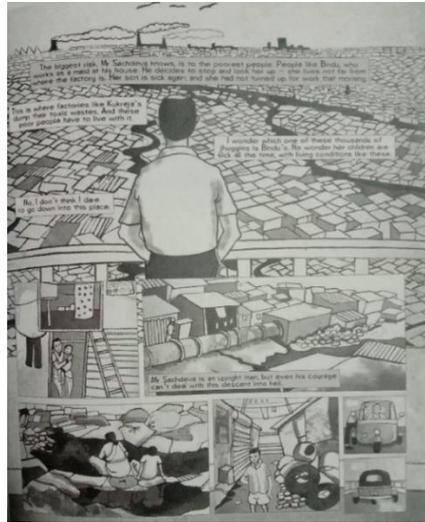

Fig. 3.4.2.5 Sen Gupta, Aniruddha, author, Kuriyan, Priya, illustrator. "Industrial Pollution: Poisonous Development". *Our Toxic World*. Sage Publications/ Toxics Link 49

The penetrative patterns of capitalistic hegemonies within postmodern geographies and their key role in issues of coercive migration, displacement and exclusionist-fundamentalism is explored through the character of Imtiaz Sheikh – an autorickshaw driver in *Our Toxic World*. Overexposure to the contaminated air of the city is part of Imtiaz's occupational hazard, one that he willy-nilly comes to bear but not without informed interrogation of the larger political paradigms which are imposing such hazards on working masses like himself. He questions the modern notion of, what Jennifer Robinson in her work *Global and world cities: a view from off the map* calls 'developmentalism' (531) of spaces. As a direct observer of hegemonic strongarming, he records and relates the tentacled establishment of factories in his home-village (classified as 'the rural' in political geography) which has drastically disrupted natural balances of the village ecosystem thereby adversely affecting local agricultural practices and willy-nilly causing forced rural-to-urban migrations.

Fig. 3.4.2.6 Sen Gupta, Aniruddha, author, Priya Kuriyan, illustrator. "Industrial Pollution: Poisonous Development". *Our Toxic World*. Sage Publications/Toxics Link 40

Imtiaz questions the pervasive entrenchment of the industrial modality within contemporary civilizational jargon despite its visible contribution to poverty, environmental toxicity and disease thus,

> A big chemicals factory has come up close to our village. All day, smoke pours from its chimneys, and the village is right in the smoke's path. The worst is, though, that all kinds of chemical waste gets into the water and the fields. Our crops are starting to die off, our buffaloes are falling sick and not giving milk. Even people are beginning to fall ill a lot more nowadays. I'm not sure how much longer our village can survive. *We often wonder why all the factories are necessary…at least, sarkar should see that the factories work in a cleaner manner.* (41)

In this sense, Imtiaz shows signs of an early organic intellectual – in questioning dominant narratives rather than mutely accepting them, he displays a rhetoric of resistance which the narrative abruptly stunts without translating the said resistance into retaliation. However, Imtiaz's questions play a crucial role in deconstructing the rigid polarities appropriated in rural/urban subaltern and spatial analysis. His perceptions

draw attention to the underlying nexus of capitalist agencies that pervade urban and rural alike while pitching each as the dichotomised other.

Our Toxic World also presents the case of the sub-subaltern of Spivakian double-marginalization that unfold in the heterogenous polarity of urban spaces through the character of Shankar. Shankar is a 'street' child – with the term 'street', here, appropriated as a jargonised signifier for humans dwelling in spatial uncertainties and hinges. In her work, *Children and Media in India: Narratives of Class, Agency and Social Change*, Shakuntala Banaji states that not only are discussions on the subalternity of children rare and inadequate but most of them, especially those leaning towards

> [M]arxist and feminist analyses of social relationships…[tend to see] that children's oppression is a feature of and contingent on the oppression of adulty members of these groups…[However] many studies of street children, child labourers or those in the juvenile justice system use language suggesting that these children might be considered as *constituting subaltern populations* their own right rather than as subsections of adult subaltern groups. (Banaji).

In this context, Shankar's constitution as a doubly marginalized subaltern emerges from his socially vulnerable positioning in politicised demography. He is a 'child', below the age of legal enfranchisement and in addition, an unhinged street-dwelling ragpicker. His existence is operative through a fundamental non-agency; Shankar belongs to a non-class and a non-class barely warrants representation in dominant cultural production. However, *Our Toxic World* brings the character of Shankar into disruptive agency through the character of environmental activist Madhavi Kulkarni. As a campaigner for socioecological rights, Madhavi, while protesting against systemic politico-economic failures that do not ensure equal educational opportunities for all children, acknowledges the 'cog-in-the-wheel' role played by street-children like Shankar who become important articulators of sustainable measures. As ragpickers, they sort out the dumped wastage to pick items that can be recycled thereby substantially mitigating damages caused by unchecked disposals of mixed waste. While recognising their crucial contribution in pro-environment praxis, the narrative critically denounces hegemonic socio-political practices that force children like Shankar into doubly disempowered spaces – inherently negative positions that nullify growth-models of progressive

economies. The character of Madhavi Kulkarni highlights this palimpsestic suppression of children like Shankar critically underscoring that,

> [t]hey (children like Shankar) are a vital cog in the waste management machine… Ragpickers like these children sort much of the recyclable materials from the mixed garbage that collects in these bins. Without them, even the paltry amount of recycling that we manage with our waste wouldn't happen. And in return for this vital service to society, they get the abhorrence of most people, the physical and sometimes sexual harassment of the police and other authorities, and a few measly rupees to live their lives on. (127).

Through discourses such as the above, the narrative of *Our Toxic World* lodges a salient protest against exploitative measures that install and further the degradation of ecology as well as marginalized groups. Unlike Bindu and Imtiaz, Shankar has been suggestively given no dialogue in the narrative – a technique that goes onto underpin his likeness with nature; both are mute receivers of binary-appropriations where their identity and articulation is defined by negative space.

In 2016, Vandana Shiva's work, *The Violence of Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics* was received with much tension owing to its vehement criticism of, what Shiva believed to be, undercover politicisation of the Green Revolution model. The model, she argued, employs the rhetoric of 'development' to, "combat scarcity and dominate nature to generate material abundance" – a view of shared by the right and left-wing political paradigms (14). The operation of such frameworks, she insisted, is based upon a constructed sacrosanctity and neutrality of science and scientific findings. Science and its applications are considered to be unquestioningly depoliticised and objective. The authenticity of scientific episteme, therefore, can be strategically invoked in furthering self-interests while making the agenda seem non-polarised and non-hegemonic. Shiva's arguments pierce perforations within this received sacrosanctity in order to uncover the self-serving models of consumptive capitalism embedded within it. She delineates this arguments thus,

> On the one hand, contemporary society perceives itself as a science-based civilisation, with science providing both the logic as well as propulsion for social transformation. In this aspect science is self-consciously embedded

in society. On the other hand, unlike all other forms of social organisation and social production, science is placed **above** society. It cannot be judged, it cannot be questioned, it cannot be evaluated in the public domain. …[However] science itself is a product of social forces, and has a social agenda determined by those who can mobilise scientific production…(20-21, original bold)

Shiva goes on to deconstruct and critique political invasiveness in agricultural models that cater to vested self-interests of economic stranglehold while degrading both, the environment as well as the peoples who participate in the consumption of such models. Shiva's voice is not singular in such deductions. In 1962, Rachel Carson's fervent criticism of the indiscriminate use of pesticides uncovered the fatalistic implications of self-serving anthropocentric overapplications of scientific episteme. In 2009, Malayalam novelist Ambikasutan Mangad wrote an explicit protest-novel against the use of pesticide 'endosulfan' and its adverse impacts on consumers in face of aggressive productivity-modules. While panning geopolitical, historical and even literary references in their narrative of retaliation, these works employ scientific logic itself to disrupt (one-sided) scientific episteme. *Our Toxic World* joins this protestive bandwagon. Through the Chapter "Chemicals: Killer Cocktail", the narrative explores the pervasively damaging implications of using pesticides such as Dieldrin in contemporary farming activities. India's growing population places massive demands on the agricultural sector – a scenario that paves way for several quick-fix measures to increase land-yield; one such means is a bellicose usage of pesticides.
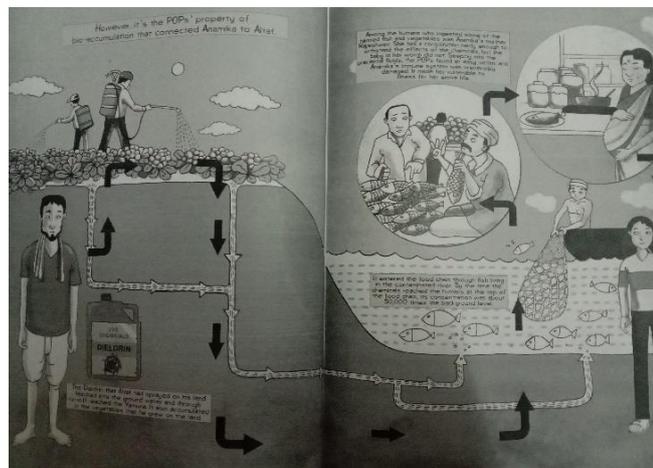

Fig. 3.4.2.7 Sen Gupta, Aniruddha, author, Priya Kuriyan, illustrator. "Chemicals: Killer Cocktail". *Our Toxic World*. Sage Publications/ Toxics Link 58-59

The narrative of *Our Toxic World* critically points out that while the usage of Dieldrin in increasing food-production by enhancing yield may be driven by scientific epistemology and demographic demand, the undermining of the ill-impacts of such usages may be discursively agenda-driven. Such deflation of full-knowledge, again, is a form of 'epistemic violence' which Gramsci speaks of. This form of violence often turns naïve victims into inadvertent perpetrators or agents of pervasive damage. The narrative employs the character of Altaf Mohammad – a farmer – to foreground the viciousness of such double-edged practices. Altaf uses the chemical Dieldrin to improve yield unaware of the full-impact of its hazards. Within the context of Altaf's naivety, the narrative juxtaposes a parallel text of scientific factuality in explicating the phenomenon of "The Grasshopper Effect" in instating long-term environmental and physiological damages upon active and passive consumers. The text explains that Persistent Organic Pollutants or POPs such as Dieldrin are,

> …circulated globally through a process known as the "grasshopper effect" which sees them hop from one point to another. Each hop has three stages: first, the pollutants evaporate from soils in warm areas like India; they are then transported by air currents as vapor around the globe; and finally they condense in colder regions where they fall as toxic rain or snow. This method of propagation and the persistence of these chemicals has led to a situation where traces of these toxins have even been found in the breast milk of Eskimo mothers, as far removed as possible from the "civilized world" which produces these chemicals. (57).

The co-textual factuality of the "grasshopper effect" juxtaposed with the panel portraying intensive agricultural activity with the foregrounded icon of Altaf Mohammad as seen in Fig. 3.4.2.7 significantly fractures the naïve overapplication of artificial 'solutions' backed by constructed scientific sacrosanctity. In addition, it also highlights the menacing interlinkages through which ecological degradation unfolds disrupting human-made regional/global rigidities. Ironically, environmental crisis is the new 'global' encompassing within itself several causal patterns and discursive dialectics across spatiotemporalities.

In his work, *"Greening" Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives*, Graham Huggan puts forth the urgent need for discussing colonialism and modern imperialism with

reference to the inevitable ecological destruction these twin processes brought in their wake to understand contemporary environmental crisis. To this line of spatial enquiry, Edward Said added the trope of neocolonial globalisation as a new functionary of the same hegemonic bodies that operate dominant geo-ecological politics (*Culture and Imperialism* 6). Rangarajan carries these postcolonial perspectives of environmental criticism forward with a view to deconstruct, "cartographic boundary-setting practices, both geographical as well as epistemic, that are instilled by colonialism and which continue to be perpetuated through neocolonial modes of enclosure such as the 'Third' and the 'Fourth' Worlds (ch.6). In interrogating politico-economic practices that render the environmental susceptible to percolative damage within a developing country like India, *Our Toxic World* takes a more direct approach and attacks acts of polarised global politics indicative of rampant neo-colonialism. In the Chapter, "Electronic Waste: System Failure Imminent", the text forefronts the sinister operatives functional within contemporary politics that are adjunct within the authoritarian discourse of 'technological advancement'. The narrative contents that,

> A much greater danger than local e-waste generation lies in the dumping of e-waste in the country [India] by western countries. Economic benefits combined with the absence of proper import regulations have made India a favoured destination for e-waste dumping by the developed world. The movement of hazardous waste of all kinds is supposed to be controlled or prohibited under the terms of the Basel Convention – an international treaty under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme. However, *with e-waste labelled as "metal scrap" and end-of-life products as "second-hand goods",* huge quantities find their way illegally into India from the USA and Europe. In 2004, a report by Britain's Environmental Agency revealed that around 23,000 tonnes of e-waste was finding its way annually to countries such as India and China without proper authorization. It is estimated that, by 2010, more than 1.3 billion computers will be in use around the world, and most of these will be shipped to Africa, India and China for disposal. (83, my emphasis).

The critique presented by *Our Toxic World* poignantly points out to two correlative aspects of contemporary geopolitics:

(i) That, 'spaces' are constantly reorganized for selective ecological oppression not only by powerful agents within nation-states but also by global forces transcending limitations of perceptual polities.

(ii) That, language, as highlighted through emphasis in the above quote, is arbitrated and appropriated as a tool of masquerade in diminishing the inherent culpability of acts perpetrated by such global forces.

In Figure 3.4.2.8, the narrative carries forward its technique of the 'macabre' in re-postulating the ideological tyrannies hidden within the subsumed 'neutrality' and 'sacrosanctity' with which technology is received. The first-level meaning-gradation of the image suggests a plausible 'Frankenstein' phenomenon where technological troops driven by artificial intelligence may take complete control of the human-race in wake of total annihilation of the natural environment – a recurrent leitmotif configured with fiction of dystopia. The second-level semiotic layer represents the already-entrenched technocratic paradigm overpowering of human socioecological and spatial life. The third-level interpretant is signified through a post-structural reading of the image – a First-World neocolonial usurpation (iconographed in the pictogram of the machine-monster) of 'Third-World' knowledge-domain and physical environment.
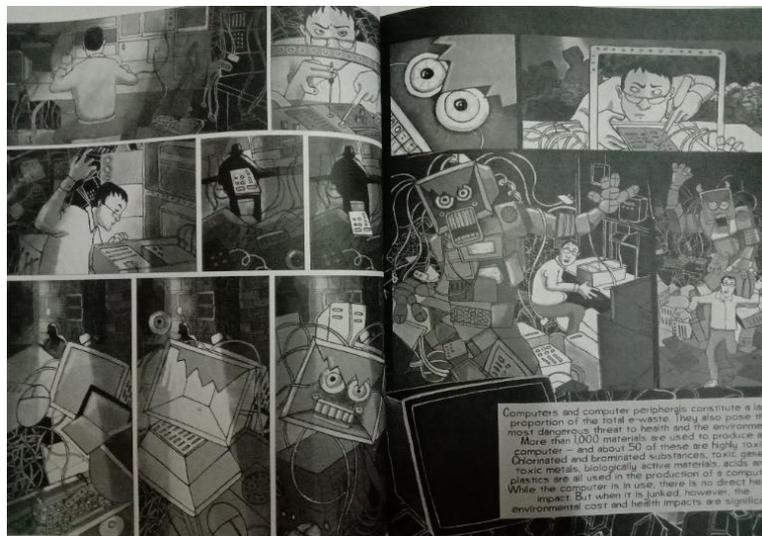

Fig 3.4.2.8 Sen Gupta, Aniruddha (Author), Kuriyan, Priya (Illustrator). "Electronic Waste: System Failure Imminent". *Our Toxic World*. Sage Publications/ Toxics Link 78-79

The narrative of *Our Toxic World* further calls for a deconstructionist approach in analysing the semiosis of terms such as "Responsible Care", "Corporate Social

Responsibility" and "Global Compact" – linguistic tropes often employed in the capitalistic jargon. The narrative contends that,

> As corporates become more global and enter newer developing country markets, such as in India and China, these terms are widely used on websites, in corporate literature and in presentations, evidently to convince people that things have changed and that a new ethical global business regime is in place. However, the *nature* of engagement in the ground leaves a lot to be desired (54; my emphasis).

It highlights the politico-spatial disparities that exist in the conceptual and practical application of these terms in First World nations vis-à-vis Third World countries. For instance,

> Many countries in Europe, including Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, etc. by law need companies to collect used cars, television sets, computers and batteries and to dispose of them. It is another matter that much of this is often collected and exported to the South! However these "responsible" models work in the given legal and social milieu. The same companies do not show such 'enlightened' behaviour in India and in fact often resist the setting up of such systems through their immense lobbying powers within governments. It would be futile to expect *CSR* to work in such an environment. (54; my emphasis).

In such instances, terms such as 'CSR' becomes nominal codes which embody the redundancy of meaning invested in them. Furthermore, they become strategic ploys through a given entity may absolve itself completely from any real commitment to society.

In her work, *5 Questions for Great Presentation Visuals*, Wendy Gates Corbett resources studies in brain physiology in order to postulate that the human brain can process the "image+words" module better than only either citing that,

> In their book, *Basic Vision: An Introduction to Visual Perception*, psychologists Robert Snowden, Peter Thompson, and Tom Troscianko assert that at least 50 percent of the cortex is used for visual processing and only around 10 percent is used for auditory processing. Adding a visual

component to your message takes advantage of that 50 percent and puts it to use on your behalf. Furthermore, according to Ann-Herrmann Nehdi…[u]sing words and images to help convey your message actively engages both hemispheres and multiple quadrants. For example, words are processed primarily in the left-frontal lobe, left-temporal lobe, and prefrontal cortex. Images, however, are processed primarily in the visual cortex in the occipital lobe. Activating multiple areas of the brain means your message is being absorbed by more of your brain. (02).

The database provided by Corbett's study compellingly re-positions the significance of semiotics in analysing multimedial productive and consumptive forms of meaning-making prevalent in the contemporary world of information-explosion. The present study contends that there is a need to meaningfully re-project ecology and ecological concerns in textual (verbal+visual) spatiality especially in those perceived spaces where physical environment is undergoing rapid deterioration. Simultaneously, there is also a need to re-locate the role of the 'individual' vis-à-vis ongoing dialogues of a '*universal global*' (with universal standing for an emphasis on homogenic patterns of globalisation). *Our Toxic World* combines the multi-semiological significations allowed by graphic narratology with the collateral compositional techniques of visual-art to heighten the role of individual contributions in addressing issues of environmental crisis. Strategically, human-icons are foregrounded in panels with a focus on the semantic, "What You Can Do" used as a refrain index as demonstrated in figures 3.4.2.9, 3.4.2.10 and 3.4.2.11. This technique can effectively heighten cognition of and within 'lived spaces' of receiving readers through a parallel use of verbal-text and images.
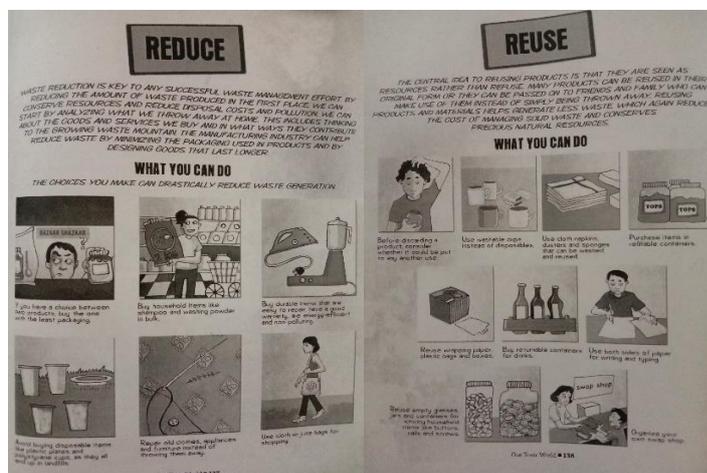

Fig. 3.4.2.9   Fig. 3.4.2.10

Fig. 3.4.2.11

Sen Gupta, Aniruddha, author, Priya, Kuriyan, illustrator. "Recycling: The Right Stuff". *Our Toxic World*. Sage Publications/Toxics Link 138, 139, 140

In the Introduction to *Our Toxic World*, writer Aniurddha Sen Gupta quotes a statement by Victor Lebeau, a top analyst of the post Second World War era which follows thus,

> Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption … we need things consumed, burned up, replaced and discarded at an ever accelerating rate. (qtd in Sen Gupta xi).

This statement serves as a point of interrogative departure for the creators of *Our Toxic World*. While putting forth the crucial role of over-consumeristic patterns perpetrated by dominant politico-economic forces upon rhetorics of 'global development', the narrative does not discount the instrument of 'individual choices' in contributing to ecological challenges. It signifies that everyday praxes are critical discourses which determine larger planetary trajectories. In doing so, *Our Toxic World* foregrounds code-units imbued with sub-textual references to the most microscopic as well as macroscopic damage caused to environment due to the ulterior actions of humankind. It also brings spatial reality to the forefront by using the literary ploys of 'ostranenie' and 'emphasis'.

It reconstructs spaces that are deliberately grotesque and devoid of any evident biotic element. The cities spaces reconstructed textually are seen coating the ground with concrete, squeezing out the life breath of plants and wildlife that once *shared* the *space*. While highlighting the adverse implications of the present paradigm of living, the text also offers insights into plausible alternative paradigms led by spatial choices that are committed to the environmental cause. The text juxtaposes fiction with non-fiction by significantly bringing in reports of India's forgotten stories of environmental hazard such as the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. These non-fictive facts are embedded within the insights provided by fiction in order to interrogate India's 'development' models hinging on a non-indigenous high modernism. In doing so, the text also brings to fore a significant demographic divide to show that although environmental issues don't necessarily obey class-boundaries, Climate Change does affect the economically weaker sections in more adverse ways than it does the economically empowered classes. It subverts the narrative of high rhetoric on environmental issues by bringing in stories of the marginalized sections of society such as ragpickers, construction-site workers, traffic sentinels and house-helps to show how their lives deteriorate owing to lifestyle choices made by society at large in which they are forced to become mute participants. The text also poignantly highlights the interlink that exists between all of modern human machinery which indicates that the damage of one link in the biotic community may indirectly impact the well-being of another.

In doing so, the text provides, as Allewaert and Ziser assert, a "snapshot" of contemporary environmental anxieties connecting essential similarities while underpinning relevant heterogeneities. Its locus standi on the issue, however, is not one of passive acceptance. By providing the 'alternative' paradigm, the text lays thrust on choices which individuals – as independent entities and/or collective institutions – can wield in arresting rapid disintegrations of ecology-led human environments.

3.4.3. Environmental messaging on digital spaces: Select images in Green Humour

Through the framework of Spatial Criticism, Subaltern Studies, Structuralism and Semiotics

Merriam-Webster dictionary gives nine nuanced definitions of the term 'image' three of which are of relevance to the present study. These entail the image as,

a visual representation of something such as a likeness of an object produced on a photographic material [and/or] a picture produced on an electronic display (such as a lens or mirror) or an electronic device.

a mental picture or impression of something [and/or] a mental conception held in common by members of a group and symbolic of a basic attitude and orientation.

[and] a popular conception (as a person, institution, or nation) projected especially through mass media. ("Image").

Images have been an integral part of the human system of perception and signification. Largely, human beings make sense of the world around them by receiving images and then interpreting them within their body of 'knowledge' developed through internal cognition and/or external convention. For Lok, in *The Inheritors*, the dead log that stayed where it had fallen is not a physical embodiment of 'death' in environment but rather a metaphor of sacrifice in the all-benevolent OA. In *The Kiln*, the image of the tangible mango tree is a reassuring consciousness for the potters' community amidst a fast-deteriorating socioecological fabric. Human beings, thus, do not merely *see* images when they see images. An image, willy-nilly, sets off a series a cognitive matrices that significantly impact the process of meaning-making, meaning-retention and possibly, meaning-driven action.

In the 21st century, the value of an 'image' has assumed manifold significance. With the insertion of technocratic paradigm in everyday mediation, the (over)emphasis on 'brand' culture, the integration of 'curation' in routine communication in seemingly nonchalant ways and the reinvention of spaces of digital media for exclusive visual-schemas have catapulted the role and rubric of an 'image' to the dynamic centre of cultural production and consumption. In the most overt or, more importantly, surreptitious ways, images can cause major disruptions in the way humans think, act and react in their worlds. Therefore the textuality of an 'image' and its subsequent role in human signification cannot be overlooked. While processing the 'meaning' which the image is trying to convey to its 'target' receiver, there are some pertinent questions that erupt in critical theory. For instance: what 'agency' does the image represent? Is its creation informed by specific socio-political agenda? Do differences in spatiotemporality recreate, reinforce or erase meanings in an image? Is the author 'dead' in the image, in the sense that, can signs with a panel interplay to create more/alternative meanings than originally intended? These will mark some poignant points of departure

for any study that undertakes textual analysis of images. A literary text of printed words in chiaroscuro may drive the reader to conjure up images – to 'imagine'. A literary text, therefore, may take one from the narrative to the imaginative. Visuals, however, more oftener than not, subvert this process. They present a set of manifestations yielded out of imagination – but a closer analysis at their patterns, matrices, layers, interplays and juxtapositions reveal the 'narrative'. It is this 'narrative' towards which the present study veers its interest.

A commitment to reinstate the 'image' of nature in collective consciousness did not debut in 21st century itself. Archaeological, anthropological and allied cultural studies continue to excavate evidences of environmental representation in art in some of earliest human-expressions. A systematic and moreover, somewhat recalcitrant attempt to reinstate nature in popular imagination of the Western cultural discourse was undertaken by Romanticism with its visual artists such as Caspar David Friedrich, J.M.W Turner, John Constable and Salvator Rosa invoking nature in its various forms – chaotic, pastoral, naïve, utopian and healing – against the formidable infiltration of Industrial Revolution.

The 21st century, however, has inserted a distinct semiology of environmental representation in visual topography. Technology has allowed such tools as animation and multiple-panel sequences on screen-spaces for enhanced interfacial experience between the image and the receiver. Artists, then, can explore spaces where nature can be reincarnated suggestively by drawing locative coordinates through visual metaphors, hyperboles, tropes, caricatures, dialogue clouds, punctuations, ellipsis, illustrative breaks and blank space. Artists can provocatively render environment animated or mute through single or multiple-panel sequences thereby drafting narratives without *actually saying* anything that might impose censorship on them. Social media, while being privy as well as party to hegemonic practices, has also allowed the creation of subversive spaces of impact by birthing a breed of digital-media freelancers who are using online platforms to initiate protests as well as conversations on issues of increasing social relevance, prominent among which is environment. Since web-spaces provide opportunities for self-publishing, the output is largely uncensored although panopticon surveillance is at times discernible. Some of the commonest means through which artists are producing their works are interactive blogs, simulated websites, Instagram accounts

and Facebook pages. The re-appropriation of environment on these new spatialities opens up a critical window for Green Cultural Studies to deconstruct interstices between *actual* and *virtual* re-presentations of environment and their crucial connections with monologues of destruction and dialogues of conservation.

It is in such a spatiality that Rohan Chakravarty's *Green Humour* may be situated. A cartoonist, illustrator and curator of *Green Humour,* Chakravarty has published a series of illustrations and cartoons on ecological issues ranging from wildlife conservation, irresponsible environmental policies, dangers of extinction and such in order to continually keep human consciousness engaged with nature. Often at loggerheads with the short-sightedness of devolved ideologies and quick-fix 'developmental solutions' at the cost of environmental sustainability, Chakravarty's oeuvre deploys the means of Environmental Humour to challenge dominant anthropocentric politics and poetics that do not take the singularities and rights of biocentrism into perspective.

Traditionally considered to be one of the best ploys of whetting blunted or cauterized mind-sets or systems, humour has served to initiate significant dialogues in society with its usage of effective sub-texts. A work that uses humour as a stylistic device in order to critique or represent environmental issues may be categorised as a work of environmental humour. The purpose of using this tool may be to point out a fallacy, hurl invectives to draw attention to a particular issue and/or stimulate thought. In the article, "Green Comedy: The Importance of Being Elastic", of the work *Green Media and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, John Parham explores the possibilities of environmental humour through the works of Kenneth Burke; in propounding Burke's preferences in the use the comic frame vis-à-vis the referential boards of tragedy, Parham contends that

> [F]ar from being governed by any constant law, environmental evolution is
> a series of interlocked mutations, much as emphasised in emergence theory:
> the actions of any one organism modifies the environment which, in turn,
> causes subsequent modifications in the other species populating it.
> *Moreover, the environment has a different meaning, function, and a set of*
> *properties for each species*…human well-being [thus]…rests in an enduring

principle of 'permanence and change': permanent adherence to the truth of our existence within a broader ecology, but also an understanding that the grounds of this co-existence are forever changing and evolving, thus dictating a principle of perpetual adaptation and 'reorientation'. (136; my emphasis).

Parham's paraphrasing of Burke's prominent 'conviction' in the entelechy of human existence and behaviour informs some of the key coding that goes into modern-day environmental narrative. The responsiveness to environmental crises has bolstered the need to formulate metabiological approaches which in turn call for dexterous use of art and language as tools of communication. The ludic engagement of humour with the more serious issues that perturb humankind is thus considered to be one of the most effective means of marshalling messages through channels of collective consciousness. Parham emphasizes that the comic frame's "emphasis on humanity's ignorance, mistakenness, and propensity to play the 'Fool'" was centripetal to social environmental thought and action as

> [t]he comic frame [enables] people to be *observers of themselves*, *while acting*. Its ultimate would not be *passiveness*, but *maximum consciousness.* One would 'transcend' himself by noting his own foibles […] [the comic frame] considers human life as a project in 'composition', where the poet works with the materials of social relationships. (Burke qtd in Parham 138; original emphasis; original ellipsis).

Chakravarty's cartoons fit the paradigm that Burke and Parham emphasize upon for the effectiveness of employing defiance in narratology to highlight the complexity of human 'space' in the larger ecology and subsequently foreground the relevance of cultural elasticity in re-negotiating these spaces for co-existence. Started in January 2009, *Green Humour* as of 7th February 2019 has more than 500 cartoons on the blog alone, with some also featuring on diverse multimedial platforms. In 2017, the artist Rohan Chakravarty was awarded the International President Award which is the highest award given by World Wildlife Fund (WWF). As of present times, it is one of the largest online repositories on green comics. All images used in this section have been downloaded from *Green Humour* by Rohan Chakraborty – a webpage licensed under Creative Commons Non-Commercial No-Derivatives with permission from the creator.

A considerable amount of material on *Green Humour* takes a distinct biocentric approach in re-telling stories of the environment. In doing so, although endowing non-human entities with anthropomorphic qualities, Chakravarty emphasizes upon bringing the distinctness of the natural specie to fore in an attempt not only to educate the receivers with pertinent ecological knowledge, but also to draw keener interconnections between the existence of humans and other forms of biodiversity. These interconnections largely operate through strategic juxtapositions of human impact on other species and a suggestive vice-versa. In analysing Michel Foucault's emphasis on the 'freedom of language' within his frameworks of the 'order of things' and 'archaeology of knowledge', Johanna Oksala opines that,

> Foucault not only gives language a regulative role in the mode of scientific discourse, but allows that it demarcates a domain of freedom in the mode of literature. While scientific discourses form an ontological order of things that is implicit in their theories and practices, language in the form of literature is capable of forming alternative, unscientific and irrational ontological realms: differences in experiences of order on the basis of which different perceptual and practical grids become possible, and hence new ways of seeing and experience emerge. (81-82).

Chakravarty's art, in this sense, deploys a unique form of language of narratology that is reiteratively scientific and performatively alternative: non-human elements are personified with anthropomorphic qualities to act as whetstones to larger scientific truths about environmental crisis that are being consciously bypassed by detrimental human policies and civilizational jargons. Usually formed as responses to current 'moments' in 21st century hyperspaces, Chakravarty's illustrations puncture the normality of accepted 'truths' by presenting seemingly anomalous perceptual grids, which, on closer observation open crevices towards alternative, often systematically repressed, 'truths'.

Since Chakravarty's cartoons are usually responses to major politico-economic and social 'events' that carry penetrative repercussions on physical environment, the semantic layer(s) of the images often call for a 'recovery' of the co-text sieved through which the image makes 'meaning' for the receivers; at times, Chakravarty provides specific contexts as footnotes for the image-posts; the same on his social media platform

are accompanied by hashtags for greater visibility. However, at other times the footnotes are strategically missing or pointedly fractional largely challenging the receiver to connect suggestive dots within image-tropes to extract representative meaning through re-presented signs. Chakravarty himself doesn't juxtapose the actual co-text with the main text; he embeds it through a wide range of literary devices such as pun, neologistic rhymes, portmanteaus, synecdoche, metaphor and metonymy while also relying on allusions to popular culture and imagination. The present study attempts to re-read some of the images by de-codifying signifiers as icons, indices and symbols that assume roles of representamen and interpretant for multiple-levels of meaning-gradation. It also invokes 'events' that formed the co-text(s) of Chakravarty's illustrations; in doing so, the study emphasizes upon the archival continuum in dominant human ideologies and actions towards environment while also tracing Chakravarty's jagged attacks on discursive patterns of dominant politics that often taken the form of normality in sociocultural strata.

Fig. 3.4.3.1 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Copenhagen Chronicles" *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2009/12

On December 22, 2009, the online portal of BBC news carried the headline: 'Why did Copenhagen fail to deliver a climate deal?'. In systematically enlisting eight key causes of the perceived failure, the article featured the reluctance of key governments to strike

a global deal and the inherent power-play in the US governmental system as the main causes of the dialogic dead-end. The article read,

> Implicit in the convention, though, is the idea that the governments take account of each other's positions and actually negotiate…In Copenhagen, everyone talked; but no one really listened…The logical conclusion is that this is the arrangement that the big players now prefer – an informal setting, where each country says what it is prepared to do – where nothing is negotiated and nothing is legally binding. (Black)

The second reason listed by the article, however, is more relevant in the context of Chakravarty's image. The then US President Barack Obama had been elected to presidency since November 2008; the year in which Copenhagen Summit was held, Obama was only one year into Presidency and seemingly not in a position to pledge commitment to reduction in carbon-emissions having to comply to consultancies from the Congress of the USA. This dual chain of command, the article went on to say, proved to be "a nightmare for other countries' negotiators" as the USA's hesitations to commit to carbon-emission reductions heavily polarised the developmental paradigm that is central to environmental negotiations. The key role played by the USA in ecological negotiations by being the second-largest carbon emitter after China, has been a matter of growing concern in global environmental dialogues. Its foot-dragging to commit to tone-down the aggressive developmental model at the cost of heavy carbon foot-printing not only threatens to nullify the efforts of the other nations but also creates a framework of default disadvantage particularly for developing and underdeveloped countries. In the image, Chakravarty essentially highlights this polarised predominance. The metaphor of the earth used as a volleyball shuttling back and forth two sides of the net between synecdochic Obama-icons on either side may signify the government of the United States of America and/or by extension, dominant political hegemonies whose authoritarian discourses take precedence over dialogues. Subsequently, however, the US government, under President Obama extended ratification to the Paris Agreement which called for reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 195 nations that participated in the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) held in France in December 2015. The approvals suggested victory for global environmental sustainability with major countries helming the project; but on November 8, 2016,

Donald Trump's election to Presidency changed the narrative once again due to his heavy pro-development policies.

Ironically, therefore, the signifiers embedded within Figure 3.4.3.1, assume greater meaning eight years after the first publication of the image, when, on June 01, 2017, Trump announced that the USA would cease all participation in the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate-Change mitigation, citing that "The Paris accord will undermine the (US) economy…[and] put (the US) at a permanent disadvantage" (Chakraborty Barnini). The USA's withdrawal once again brought to fore the discursive patterns in which hegemonies function to drive the economic development versus environmental sustainability dichotomy forward by privileging the former over the latter. Per this, the Obama-icons self-rupture and unspool to become indices suggesting dominant ideologies embedded within the 'America First policy' propounded by the Trump-regime in its bid for juggernauting economic growth irrespective of its toll on ecology.

Chakravarty's attack on the tentacled power-politics at the Copenhagen Summit point out to the growing indignation against the inability of global political leaders to hasten remediating measures against environmental crisis. The fact that conversations on ecology are not treated with the kind of urgency they warrant and are off-set instead by concerns of vested economic growth indicatively advocate the inherent high-handedness and subsequent futility of such practices. Chakravarty's rhetoric underpins the essential superficiality by highlighting the apparent contradictions and hypocrisies within the framework of such global platforms as reflected in Figure 3.4.3.2.
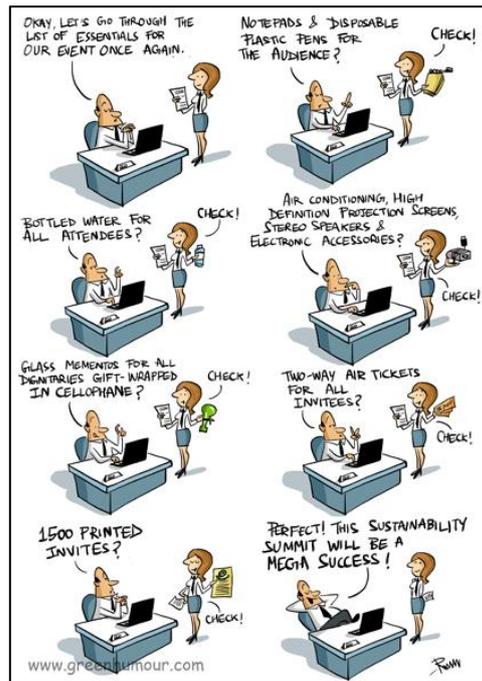
Fig. 3.4.3.2 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Sustainability Summit" *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2015/08

This vehemently attacks the incongruencies perpetrated via fora that willy-nilly participate in the same damaging processualities that they seek to mitigate. The external semiotic coding presents the superficial interpretant – an office set-up that is preparing for an upcoming sustainability summit. Chakravarty refrains from putting the word 'sustainability' into implicative inverted-commas. Instead, it is irony that cuts through the first-level of gradation in meaning to form another level of interpretant where the first interpretant (an office set-up preparing for an upcoming sustainability summit) ruptures and becomes a representamen instead. Chakravarty uses the multiple-panel sequencing with white gutters as in-between spaces and fissures which add to the sterility of the tone. The list of essentials cited by the icon of a white-collared official includes notepads, disposable plastic pens, bottled water, air-conditioning, high-definition projection screens, stereo speakers, electronic accessories, cellophane gift-wrap, airplane tickets for invitees and printed invites – all of which are major contributors to carbon-footprinting with the aviation industry being one of the major emitters of carbon dioxide leading to Climate Change and global dimming. The paradoxical quality embedded in the efforts towards attaining sustainability brings to the forefront capitalistic undercurrents that often belie what they proffer building a network of illusion among receiving masses. Chakravarty's illustration unwinds the

concept of 'high modernism' that Subalternity and Spatiality deconstruct. Cultural productions informed by high modernism reorder spaces to form hierarchical paradigms defined by difference. With environment 'trending' as a popular concept on social media, the fear that 'sustainability' will be turned into a 'product' marketed by elitist capitalism for self-aggrandizement looms large among environmentalists. Figure 3.4.3.2 highlights these anxieties while simultaneously emphasizing the role of counter-hegemonic organic intellectuals and disruptive literary devices in fissuring such constructions.
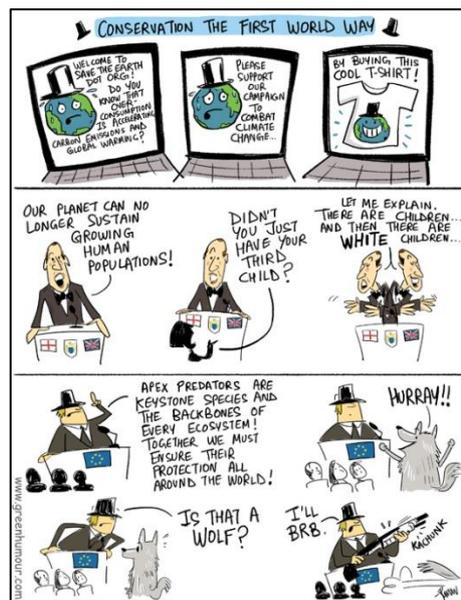

Fig. 3.4.3.3 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Conservation the First World Way". *Green Humour*
www.greenhumour.com/2018/05/conservation-first-world-way.html

Implicit attacks made on First-World hegemonic strongholds in global environmental dialogues as well as capitalist models of induced overconsumption are explicitly centralized by Chakravarty in the images depicted as Figure 3.4.3.3 and Figure 3.4.3.4 respectively. Figure 3 represents three strips with the first two entailing three single panels and the third entailing four single panels. In all three strips, the technique of 'deception' is used to foreground duplicity in the production of 'environmental sustainability' of capitalist imagination.

The first panel of strip-one shows a website that perceivably warns viewers against the pitfalls of overconsumption as an accelerator of Climate Change. The text is juxtaposed with icon of planet Earth apposed with inset text. Pertinent in the icon of

planet Earth is the symbol of the top-hat that presents multiple levels of meaning. At first, it is a representamen that invokes the interpretant of an actual top-hat as a fashion accessory. But then, the interpretant of a top-hat as a fashion accessory becomes a second-level representamen to signify the upper class and also the middle classes in the late 19th and 20th centuries, ("Top hat"). In fact, the top-hat was usually seen by the social critics "as a symbol of capitalism or the world of business" ("Top hat"). The third single-panel cuts through the veneer of façade constructed by the first two single panels – the website turns out to be an online shopping portal that capitalizes on the dominant poetics of environmental sustainability to perpetrate the same overconsumption that it seeks to penalize. Strip-two depicts a First-World representative presumably at an environmental summit rallying against suggested (Third-World) population explosion as one of the major criminals of environmental crises. The fascia of blame-game is splintered by a question from the audience pertaining to the speaker having three children. The answer to which, as ludicrous as it may seem, hinges on the Us/Them binary that drove the imperialist agenda forward for more than seven centuries. The word, 'White' appears in a bolder font than the rest of the text for suggestive emphasis and the icon signifying the speaker becomes double and meaningfully dual highlighting the double-standards deeply entrenched in dominant Western/privileged discourses on environmental crises. As seen in the previous sections in the Chapter, although seemingly innocuous, it is these dichotomies that negatively diffuse positive global solutions towards Climate Change mitigation. Strip-three uses the same technique of deception, albeit, to underline the growing abyss between political *manifesto* and political *action*. The symbol of the 'top hat' reappears but takes on a more menacing nuance. The strip foregrounds the sinister undercurrents between epistemic overhaul and physical violence. The speaker's epistemic policy suggests a keen protection of biodiverse specie, in this case, the apex predators. The episteme, however, is only a ploy for political motivation and manipulation. As soon as the speaker spots a wolf, he shoots it displaying humankind's self-proclaimed superiority over other non-human species. In this discourse thus, all of humankind becomes the hegemonic 'master' while the flora-fauna (represented by the synecdoche of a 'wolf') become the marginalized subaltern – the othered species standing at the receiving end of human 'knowledge' and action.

Figure 3.4.3.4 depicts the impact of 'conceived spaces' upon the atmosphere. The propulsion of aviation industry in wake of the two World-Wars and subsequent

expansion of air-travel market has severely realtered atmospheric spatiality thereby significantly contributing towards the environmental crises of Climate Change and global dimming. In 1999, the IPCC released a report titled *Aviation and the Global Atmosphere*: *A Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* which estimated that "aviation is responsible for around 3.5 percent of anthropogenic climate change, a figure which includes both CO_2 and non-CO_2 induced effects" (as qtd in "Environmental impact of aviation"). Subsequently, reports speculating a considerable rise in atmospheric disturbances owing to increased aviation activity continue to erupt.

Fig. 3.4.3.4 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Flying Clubs in 2020" *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2011/12/

Chakravarty presents an illustration where the 'conceived space' of human technological advancement has debunked due to exhaustion of fuel. The anxiety of dystopia is seemingly relieved by the comic effect of human beings trying to acquire the skill of flying through the trope of artificial wings.

Chakravarty builds on the argument of 'agenda-driven environmentalism' in a series of images titled 'Sustainuisance' using a portmanteau to crack the veneer prevailing atop seemingly sustainable policies that breed non-sustainable practices.

Building upon the Poststructuralist skepticism on the 'certainties' of language, Foucault reminds the readers of *The Order of Things* that,

> [L]anguage is no longer one of the figurations of the world, or a signature stamped upon things since the beginning of time. The manifestation and sign of truth are to be found in evident and distinct perception. It is the task of words to translate the truth if they can; but they no longer have the right to be considered the mark of it. Language has withdrawn from the midst of things themselves and entered a period of transparency and neutrality (56).

Figures 3.4.3.5 and 3.4.3.6 bring the inbuilt polarities in overlaid adaptations of sustainability where linguistic 'jargon' is often used to construct realities that belie the truth of praxis.

Fig. 3.4.3.5 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Earth Hour – you're doing it wrong". *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2013/03/

Fig. 3.4.3.6 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Sustainuisance" *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2012/11/

In Figure 3.4.3.5, the term 'Earth Hour' is appropriated in order to serve the interest of neocapitalist preoccupation with 'green' narratology for the purpose of furthering self-interests. The concept of 'Earth Hour' has been introduced in everyday

phenomenological unfolding not only for the purpose mitigating energy-overconsumption but to initiate the 'culture' of responding to environmental crises in routine lived spatialities of individuals and communities. However, the conceptual matrix is employed as nothing more than a ploy in superficially participating in the process without understanding the spirit of commitment towards addressing Climate Change. The printing of infographic content on paper for distribution is a corporation-redundancy that has a tangible impact on environment due to (i) felling of trees for paper (ii) energy consumption utilized in printing. And yet, doing so under the structural aegis of 'Earth Hour' seems to grossly undermine and overlook the concrete pitfalls of such acts. A similar misappropriation of language for vested self-exemption from commitment to environmental sustainability is forefronted through the technique of hyperbole and burlesque in Figure 3.4.3.2. As mentioned in Chapter One of present study, the term 'green' is being employed as a metaphor towards commitment to environmental sustainability. Although originating as a metonymy equating the colour green to all of biotic nature, linguistic convention has formed meaning-associations between the word and an ideological commitment towards environmentally beneficial practices. Often, however, the commitment is adopted in principle to undermine the lack of it in practice. A titular 'Green Company' shoulders the responsibility of palliating the harmful effects of industrial effluents released into the environment through variegated mediums. However, such treatments are often bypassed owing to the financial liability associated with it. The term 'green', then, remains a mere linguistic construct exempting a company from obligations towards nature. In Figure 3.4.3.6, the industrialist paints his company 'green' in order to make it fit into the paradigm of a 'Green Company'. Seemingly exaggerative, the image points out to inconsistences in human perceptions and appropriations of cultural tools, including language, towards vested self-interest.

Appearing in different temporalities on the webpage of *Green* Humour, Figures 3.4.3.4, 3.4.3.5 and 3.4.3.6 nevertheless follow a thematic refrain. They underpin the role of human conception of progress in sustained environmental damage and in doing so, employ the semiotic strategic of paradox in alternative meaning-making. Specific anecdotes recovered through events of farther and recent past indicate the construction of 'civilization' upon a forced subordination of nature for human benefit – a patterned discourse explored in William Golding's *The Inheritors* too. But while most polemics on the nature/culture dichotomy, even those that advocate environmental justice, do so

from an inherent anthropocentric perspective characteristically subsuming nature within human imagination and expression, Chakravarty subverts this model by foregrounding biocentric gaze in decoding the binary.

Fig. 3.4.3.7 Chakravarty, Rohan. "De-afforestation". *The Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2011/09

Intensive agriculture, logging, mining and real-estate 'development' are considered to be predominant causes for blanket deforestations. Since forest-covers world-over serve as major carbon-sequestration sinks, their depletion is directly connected with the environmental crises manifesting in the form of toxic pollution, global warming due to increased carbon concentration and subsequent Climate Change. Despite an acute awareness of this scientific factuality, the rhetoric of 'development' continues to be antiseptically quarantined from ecological sustainability. This rhetoric, constructed within the corridors of dominant politics, is built into the 'perceived spaces' of human cognition while being marshalled into the 'lived spaces' through mainstream episteme and cultural productions. While Structuralism and Semiotics emphasize the role of convention in attributing signifiers to particular signifieds, Subalternity tries to deconstruct the role of hegemony and agenda within the 'convention' by interrogating the validity of the term 'convention' itself in cauterizing differences to create one dominant normality. Chakravarty's images do both while interweaving within these interrogations the glaring, self-destructive fallacies of human beings.

On August 09, 2019, the Vice Chair of IPCC reported the conclusions made by the UN gleaned from 7000 scientific reports stating that emissions from

land use, largely agriculture, forestry and land clearing, make up some 22 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Counting the entire food chain (including fertilizer, transport processing and sale) takes this contribution up to 29 percent…there is no way to keep global warming under 2° C without significant reductions in land sector emissions. (Howden)

The rhetoric of compulsory clearing of forested lands for agricultural use in order to meet growing demands for food becomes a self-defeating argument for it re-dubs symptomatic causes – overpopulation and overconsumption – as 'realities' towards which (capitalist) economy must direct its efforts. The continual land-degradation that accompanies such clearings especially through the use of non-sustainable methodologies such as slash-and-burn reveal visible dents in the demand-supply argument depicted in Figure 3.4.3.7. At second-level signification, the image of a brown-land foregrounds an erstwhile green cover rendered barren due to methodical felling of trees leading to further deterioration in land-quality exemplified by the 'frustrated' exclamation "Grow, Damn It, Grow". Counter-hegemonic discourses would employ the image to trace entrenched similarities between a similar (anti)development model imposed upon the subalterns (indigenous communities, tribals) of the land whose organic means of sustenance are destroyed to be replaced with superficial modalities of high-modernism thereby forcing them to participate in the internalisation of their own subordination and deterioration as evidenced in Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* and Mahabaleshwar Sail's *The Kiln* analysed under present study. Figure 3.4.3.8 places fauna at the centre of commentary strategically perched above the human activity undertaken below.

Fig. 3.4.3.8 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Coal Mines in Tadoba". *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2009/01

The broader view that the fauna's position affords is juxtaposed with the literary device of word-play where the word 'grave' symbolizes the ominous self-destructive logic upon which human domination of earth is built. Mining accounts for major realterations in physical spatialities unspool long-term impact on land-quality. The literal digging for ore and other matter assumes the metaphoric meaning of mankind digging its grave of its own annihilation by unprecedented reshaping of land for short-sighted motives.

Fig. 3.4.3.9 Chakravarty, Rohan. "the 1411th" *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2010/03

The text of Figure 3.4.3.9 has to be read parallel with the co-text that stands at the fulcrum of understanding the in-built protest narrative with the combination of icons. In June 2018, the Government of Delhi decided to undertake a 'redevelopmental' drive of "seven General Pool Residential Accommodation Colonies (GPRA) for government officials" (Aggarwal). The redevelopment project which would bring in its wake a projected felling of 16500 trees received clearing from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The narratives of the social development versus environmental destruction are not singular. Dubbed as means of civilizational advancement, such drives reveal a distinct discursive pattern of selective marginalization. The seeming development of one community comes at the cost of the 'othered' by differential domination. In case of forested land-clearing, the indigenous – peoples, flora and fauna – are displaced and relocated in alienated spatialities of imposed

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subservience. Chakravarty's image, then, denotes the possibilities of counter-discourse by the provision of 'agency' to the dislocated populations in portraying the icon of a tiger to interrogate the biased politics through which developmental frameworks are crafted.

Political models of aggressive industrial advancement further the normalcy of environmental destruction as 'necessity' for socioeconomic advancement and upward mobility in global vertices of progression. Political and cultural matrices, then, often merge to further these modalities through higher production and consumption patterns. Any plea to 'check' such practices then, especially those emanating from hinges of sociopolitical centres, often get redubbed as anti-narratives to growth and welfare. Figure 3.4.3.10, then, presents a counter-discourse. It shows that the green movement is *not* a movement of anti-development. It is merely a reminder that development must be sustainable because anything otherwise is *not* an alternative in the long run. The icon of planet-earth is presented in the form of a vase that has been filled with excessive clutter; the fumes emanating from the 'clutter', however, may be indices of over-dependence on coal and fossil-fuel burning as sources of energy. Drained of its resources, the earth-icon depicts atrophy indicated by the scars it carries. A switch to cleaner energies (depicted through icons of the windmill, solar panel and green plants depicts a rapid reinvigoration of the earth. This form of alternative and renewable energy-sourcing that does not over-exhaust could be the developmental formula world-governments adopt if the concept of 'advancement' is to sustain in the long run.

Fig. 3.4.3.10 Chakravarty, Rohan.
"The Vase Case". *Green Humour*
http://www.greenhumour.com/2009/09
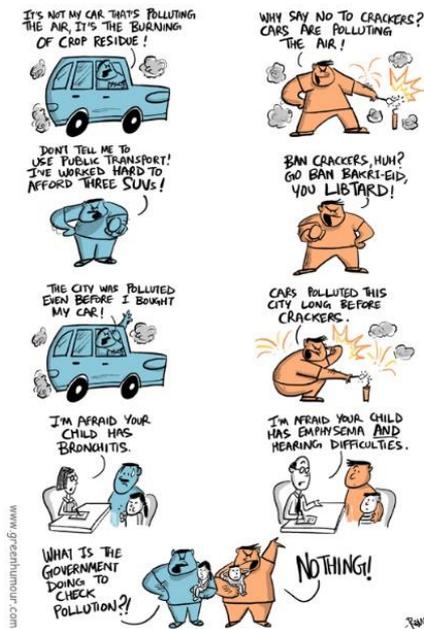
Fig. 3.4.3.11 Chakravarty, Rohan.
"Cars, Crackers and Courts". *The Green Humour/Mid-Day*
http://www.greenhumour.com/2017/10

Figure 3.4.3.11 highlights that the onus of switching to cleaner energies is not merely upon governing bodies. The movement towards environmental sustainability is as much an individual movement as a collective one. Such movements, then, are often defeated by models of mass consumption and the vitriolic blame-game that is yoked with it. The image contains two distinct episodic strips to be read vertically downwards until they confluence to form one narrative towards the end. The central icon in the first strip is that of a man levying the blame of toxic air-pollution upon the presumed larger issue of crop-burning. The gaseous fumes emanating from his car, however, signify an alternative story. Read downwards, the second single-panel in the strip provides the perceived validation of bourgeoisie capitalism because it based on a principle central to its essentiality – hard labour. The character in the icon claims to have earned the right to buy three SUVs, a justification for overconsumption in cultural hegemonic rhetoric. The car itself fits in the paradigm of conceived spatiality designed as an object of utility but signified as a representation of upward social mobility – a driving force in consumerist marketing. The narrative of the strip fractures abruptly towards the end of the third single panel unspooling the menacing, self-invasive nature of such over-consumptive patterns leading to toxicities in environment that ultimately impact its inhabitants.

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The second strip confronts cultural hegemony that often constructs divisive and communal patterns in collective consciousness in order to further its ideologies of vested interests. The fumes emanating from fire-crackers have proven to substantially accentuate atmospheric pollution fueling long-term damages on environment and the biodiversity it constitutes. The third panel hints at the circumlocutory illogicality of the 'blame-game' syndrome as the character in the icon blames the consumptive models suggested in strip-one to be the cause of toxic pollution and uses it as justification for his anti-sustainable actions. Strip two also ruptures at the end of the third single-panel to reveal the tangible effects of socially subsumed sacrosanctity of cultural practices on physical well-being of individuals. The end of the panel, however, attempts to reveal the visceral realities of such routine misgivings; instead of recognizing the impact of individual contributions in collective carbon-footprinting, consumeristic cultural patterns impose the onus of catastrophe-mitigation on State machina thereby steering clear of active involvement. Irrespective of palpable damages in perceived spatialities, societies continue to be driven by ideological politics that is often self-consuming in its resistance to change and adoption of alternative realities.

Fig. 3.4.3.12 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Forests and Rivers" *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2017/10

In Figure 3.4.3.12, Chakravarty once again foregrounds biocentrism to show the intrinsic hamartia entailed in such human foibles. Invectives hurled through icons representing flora and fauna, not only reinforce their centrality in the counter-hegemonic environmental discourse through the textual subconscious but also construct a vantage distance which, in reading the image, can be invested in introspective reasoning rather than impetuous defensiveness. In the figure, the icons of fauna represented are endowed not only with the anthropomorphic ability of reading but also of rationalizing which has, in wake of the Enlightenment, been considered the prerogative of mankind. Two headlines in the same newspaper juxtapose human *action* with human *anxiety* – both of which are correlated. Chakravarty uses the strategic signifiers "diverted" (the term 'diverted + quotation marks "") in the headline to underscore political appropriation of language in defining State practices. The signifier 'diverted' reads innocuously at the first-level of signification, especially since it is instated along with the term development. However, the second-level of signification is set-off by the suggestive quotation marks that the headline employs. John Haiman calls the deployment of quotation marks to denote sarcasm, an orthographic practice, which, "confirms that claim that pretense and quotation are intimately related; one may view the several functions of quotation marks as an example of motivated polysemy – the recurrent representation of related meanings through a single formal device…the related meanings are those of pretense and quotation" (51). The quotation marks, then, becomes representamens of a meaning other than the icon permits. The 'diversion' that the headline speaks about (perhaps strategically quoting the environmental policy verbatim) is essentially destruction coded euphemistically in a meta-signifier. The decoding of the meta-signifier, then, is facilitated by the tactical usage of quotation marks. The same newspaper carries another headline expressing the government's cluelessness about reasons behind 'rivers running dry' – the collocation of the two underpins a concomitant interconnectedness; but the policymakers' (deliberate) oversights highlight the need for continual intertextual readings of cultural discourses vis-à-vis environmental practices.

In his work, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Foucault outlines a new framework of episteme termed 'subjugated knowledge' to denote all historical knowledge that has been rejected by the mainstream discourse or which has been deemed too 'local' to be of any pertinent significance. He highlights,

[o]n the one hand,…the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence of formal systemization…those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematized theory…on the other hand…a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. (81-2)

Postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak and Edward Said variedly invoke the concept to highlight the role of epistemic violence in such subjugation of knowledge as part of larger imperial projects that reinforced self-epistemic justificatory schemas to iniquitously counter resistance among the subjects. The epistemic violence was appropriated through means that were subtler than means of coercion – suppression of native languages, belittling of indigenous knowledge by superimposing models of high modernism through which traditional (largely sustainable) patterns were rendered differentially other and/or measuring the efficacy of local knowledge vis-à-vis the quick-fix technocratic modalities of Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment. As mentioned earlier in the study, although the projects of colonialism and imperialism that iterated these machiavellian models into practice may have ended, their processualities have been coopted in contemporary capitalist monologues. A counter-discourse to such codified systems of knowledge-production comes in the form of exhuming and foregrounding local (traditional/indigenous) knowledge through narratives that penetrate into new media and popular culture.

Chakravarty's illustrations constantly confront the iniquitousness of dominant politics vis-à-vis ecological preservation by reinstating local and/or native knowledge. Figure 3.4.3.13 is a case in point.
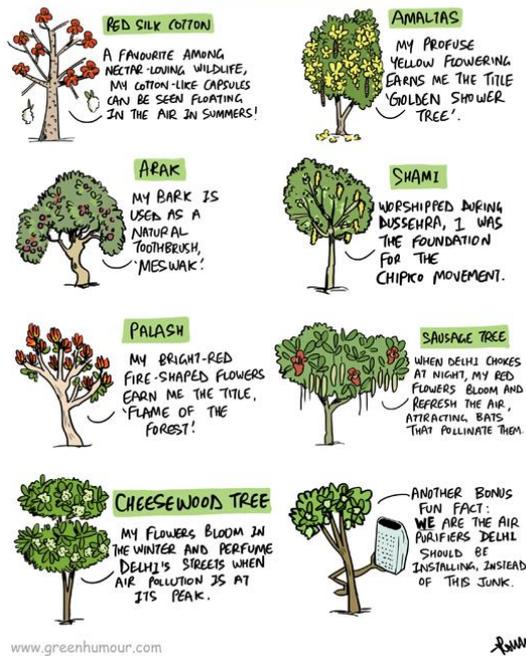
Fig. 3.4.3.13 Chakravarty, Rohan.

Some Common Neighbourhood Trees of Delhi and their Specialities.

Green Humour www.greenhumour.com/2018/11/neighbourhood-trees-of-delhi.html

There are two distinct modalities through which the Figure may be deconstructed: (i) a critique of deforestation of urban green-covers for 'developmental-drives' and (ii) underhanded environmental-capitalism that initiates consumption of artificial and largely unsustainable means of mitigating pollution challenges. The audience is introduced to the 'common neighbourhood trees of Delhi' with each one distinctly discoursing its inherent existential benefit to humankind. Chakravarty does not introduce an omniscient (human) narrator in the panel which could be a strategic move not only to render the icons of trees perceptually palpable in the receiver's subconscious but also to counter the rubrics of ecological-utilitarianism by underscoring the organic, interanimated human-nature interrelations. The icon of 'Shami tree' strategically informs the audience of its relevance in the Chipko movement highlighting the need for environmental historiography in mainstream historical episteme. The last single-panel in the A-Z reading schemata hurls a vitriolic diatribe at the increasing entrenchment of consumerism in urban spaces which rely on artificially manufactured products for air purification by overlooking and in fact, destroying the natural ones. The masses may not deliberately participate in the agenda-driven overproduction; however, their ignorance of local episteme may often provide an implicit sanction to short-sighted

policies that are self-immolating. Chakravarty's images, then, become functionaries of rehauling local ecological knowledge by making receivers rethink 'perceived' and 'lived' spaces and thereby participate in the formations of 'conceived' spaces.

Concomitant to this, *Green Humour* also points out that scientific, sociological and investigative knowledge that does not support dominant rhetoric can also be undercut, interrogated and suspended by aggressive economy-driven markets. Such machinations as terming the Climate Change 'hoax', a cautionary scientific report 'alarmist' and global warming 'inevitable' proverbially claw their way through scientific as well as common-sense discursive patterns in order to craft a reception-model of deliberate misbelief and manipulation. With environmental crises making itself self-evident through global, albeit interconnected, catastrophes with proliferative frequency, the significance of urgently deconstructing contrived cultural registers becomes urgent. The role of Green Semiotics in literary studies is to cut through layers of such meaning-gradations by deconstructing the representamens and interpretants and also by locating indices and symbols in icons. In Figure 3.4.3.14, Chakraborty demonstrates this process.

Fig. 3.4.3.14 Chakravarty, Rohan.

"Short-'CITE'd" *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2012/07/

The figure alludes to multilateral environmental agreements made by countries in response to large-scale dwindling of species of wild flora and fauna. Instituted as a part

of these agreements, The CITES – Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna is an "international agreement between governments to reduce the international trade of threatened species to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival" (Saxena). In response to investigative evidence, at the 62nd Convention meet held in 2012, a considerable amount of international pressure, mainly from the UK and India, was levied on China to check and mitigate poaching of tigers on "tiger farms" for purposes of illegal trade. Representatives of the Chinese government including China's Cites delegate Wan Ziming, however, denied any such incursive activity. A report published in *The Guardian* in 2012 quoted the said denial in its report,

> There are thought to be around 3,000 tigers remaining in the wild, reduced from a population of 100,000 in 1900. Conservationists warn that they may become extinct in the wild in the next 20 years… But China responded strongly at the meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) in Geneva, challenging delegates to "show us the evidence that [tiger farms] encourage poaching of wild tigers". (Vince)

Although representatives of the Chinese government denied these possibilities, the implied nexus between tiger farms and black-market towards trading of skins, bones and other parts, continued to make headlines. Chakravarty's illustration satirically points out at the inherent binary employed in the Chinese rhetoric through indicative caricature. The suggested duplicity in China's claims is shown through the literary device of 'burlesque' employed in illustrating China's Cites delegate who claims that there is no evidence of tiger poaching on tiger farms while wearing tiger-skin and drinking tiger port wine. In the image, the literary device of burlesque turns a first-level interpretant into second-level representamen leading to a perceived infinitum of meanings – hypocrisies and violations in illegal trade, glaring contradictions and misgivings in environmental commitments as well as humankind's off-handed attitude towards extinction of species. The present study recovered a news report by Rachael Bale featured in National Geographic four years after the 62nd convention published ahead of the 17th conference of CITES in Johannesburg reporting that the "The World Is Finally Getting Serious About Tiger Farms" citing that,

China came under pressure today for allowing the intensive breeding and sale of tiger parts, in violation of an international decision. The country has an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 tigers on "farms," facilities that breed the animals for tourist entertainment while they're alive, and for the luxury and medicinal markets after they're slaughtered. (Bale)

This anecdote exhumed from recent past fractures the sacrosanctity of multilateral agreements in global ecological conventions thereby portraying an archival continuum in dominant human discourse that continue to determine survival-trajectories of other-ed biodiverse species. Figure 3.4.3.15, for instance, depicts the continuity of illegal poaching indicating that an epistemic presumption of human centrality in Enlightenment models has given implicit sanction to physical violence upon other species.

Fig. 3.4.3.15 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Black Panther" *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2011/03/

On 23rd March 2016, in an illegal act of human interference, a leopard was burnt alive raking in its wake varied debates on wildlife criminals and visible untruths built into human commitment towards conservation of wild species. The morbid humour entailed in the illustration fissures out to divulge deeper anxieties that disrupt conservatory efforts. The icons of an elephant and a tiger are representamens signifying the first-level interpretant of an actual elephant and a tiger. But within the correlative text of the lynched leopard, the icons become symbols of human violence upon wildlife as species of elephant and tiger have also been at the receiving end of

environmental crimes such as poaching. The icon of the leopard singed dark makes the tiger call it a melanistic black panther; but the truth is otherwise. In critical frameworks of centre-margin arguments, the term subaltern is equated largely with *humans* who are placed at a political, social, economic and cultural disadvantage in State-hierarchies thereby having no agency for reclamation of fundamental rights. Chakravarty's illustration provides agency to the sub-subaltern, the fauna, in their call for the most elementary right to survive and co-exist with human species.

A significant conceptual parapet planked in Spatiality is that of a cognitive map. Which is "a type of mental representation which serves an individual to acquire, code, store, recall, and decode information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in their everyday or metaphorical spatial environment" (Tolman 189-208). Deployed in a wide range of diversified analysis in psychology, cartography, architecture, urban planning and management, cognitive maps sieved through Structuralism and Semiotics can help to formulate, deconstruct, trace or reiterate textual trajectories in communication through indices such as sociograms, schemata and semantic networks. Such cognitive maps operating through digital spaces can effectively impact the reception and subsequent production of 'conceived spaces'. In foregrounding the centrality of planetary crises through his cartoons, Chakravarty constructs a standard pictogram for representing Earth that serves to form a cognitive map as represented in Figure 3.4.3.16 and 3.4.3.17. He represents it through the dual colour-coding of blue and green standing as metonymic references for green covers and aquatic life. The repetitive use of this code-unit serves to reinforce the idea of Earth as a planet of ecological vitality over and above man-made constructs. Occasionally however, he fractures the image by presenting a dystopic icon with a single colour-coding of brown indicative of a time when green-covers will have been cleared and aquatic life polluted thereby rendering the planet inhabitable if unchecked and uninformed adversities against nature continue through collective interference or individual action.

Fig. 3.4.3.16
Chakravarty, Rohan.
"O-gone". *Green
Humour*
www.greenhumour.com
/2011/09

Fig. 3.4.3.17 Chakravarty,
Rohan. "Vanishing Colours
Green Humour
www.greenhumour.com/2009
/01

In Figure 3.4.3.18, Chakravarty plays with the semiotic signification of the term 'terrorist' in the contemporary political production and military litigation. The term 'terrorist' is used as an objective ontological attribution to all those individual/organisational agencies that inflict physical violence upon perceived 'others' through the baseline of radical, extremist and communist agenda. Chakravarty's employment of the term in the text of Figure 3.4.3.18 apertures into a Poststructuralist slippage interplaying with the tropes of 'explosions' indicated by the icons – 'Bang' and 'Boom' – that metamorphose into indices, not of atomic blasts but those of firecracker outbursts during 'festive' activities – a marker of celebration in popular culture. The clefts within the image are formed when these indicators are posited with the pictogram of planet Earth palpably suffering through platitudes of approved cultural acts that released unchecked terror against nature.

Fig. 3.4.3.18 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Pronounced Guilty". *Green Humour*
www.greenhumour.com/2010/10

Marine spatiality has been closely linked to human history in trajectories of seasonal migration, purpose-driven exploration as well as subsequent trade, conquest, war,

escape and ensuing globalization. In non-fictive Western travel discourse, marine spaces have featured as embodied mediums – conceived spaces of systemic human efforts to map and define the natural world that they inhabit. In fiction, they have often been departure points for metaphysical, philosophical and ideological moorings often participating within the discourse as textual subconscious. In the Introduction to the work, *Maritime Spatial Planning: Past, Present and Future*, Jacek Zaucha and Kira Gee proffer that oceans are "social spaces, communication spaces, and cultural spaces – and they play an important role in how we as humans understand ourselves as communities and individuals" (24). They delineate a fundamental duality in the conceptualisation of the marine spatiality in the Western world – one is the "industrial, exploitative perspective (often labelled "blue growth") on the one hand and the environmental perspective on the other" (24). In her essay "Undersea" (1937), Rachel Carson essentially tried to capture this duality while also underpinning the view that repeated human incursions in ocean-spaces are reflective of the humans' apathy and ignorance of important interlinkages within and outside marine spatialities when she says,

> Who has known the ocean? Neither you nor I, with our earth-bound senses, know the foam and surge of the tide that beats over the crab hiding under the seaweed of his tide pool home; or the lilt of the long, slow swells of mid-ocean, where shoals of wandering fish prey and are preyed upon, and the dolphin breaks the waves to breathe the upper atmosphere. (…) To sense this world of waters known to the creatures of the sea, we must shed our human perceptions of length and breadth and time and place, and enter vicariously into a universe of all-pervading water. For to the sea's children nothing is so important as the fluidity of the world. (qtd in Ferrera 62).

Carson's proposition vectors human engagements with marine spaces into a vantage point of 'not knowing' and therefore, through axiomatic marginalities, understand the inherent semantic networks that define these spatialities. Any human interference in water-bodies, thereof, need to centrally keep these semantic interconnections in view – a thought she elaborately explores in her work, *Silent Spring*. Despite the dissemination and promulgation of such epistemes, however, aquatic life has often occupied a negative space of disempowered under-representation often backed by ideological politico-

economic lobbies. *Green Humour* often draws attention to the subalterned marine spatiality that bears the brunt of anthropogenic incursions regularly.

Fig. 3.4.3.19 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Sea Otter Fur" *Green Humour/Hindu's Blink* www.greenhumour.com/2014/11/sea-otter-fur.html

Figure 3.4.3.19 suggestively points out that human process of 'knowing' the marine species (just like the Eurocentric mission of 'knowing' the other) is marked by a subsumed supremacy of the Self through which the resulting shadow is (re)defined. Such processes of 'knowing' are rarely naïve; more often than not, they are marked by the rhetoric of utilitarianism that decides which 'others' can be lived with measured on the basis of their utility to human consumption and advancement. The Figure employs the indices of contemporary media's preoccupations with exhuming knowledge about other specie by exoticizing them and grading their existence in a constructional anthropocentric paradigm. Seemingly innocuous, such 'trivia' is transmogrified into meaning-making models within consumerist industries bearing direct implications on the subjects of study. The entities re-presented within these knowledge modalities are not represented; their subjectivation is based on the disseminator's capacity to codify the knowledge derived and/or in the slippages and fissures which re-presentations offer when put in larger signification systems. The Figure points out the haplessness with which the otters try to define themselves *against themselves* so as not to be identified as the otters with the "finest fur in the animal kingdom" as such identifications are seepages

through exploitative machinations make their way into adversely affecting the biotic specie.

On 25th June 2018, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (U.S. Department of Commerce) published a report on the ill-effects of oil spills on delineating the adversities faced by water-spatialities and ecosystems such man-made disasters. Preceding and following the said report, scientific and investigative studies have often reported the long-term damages caused by oil-spills on the interlinkages (the co-survival networks) in aquatic life. Such oil-spills call for immediate remediation and damage-mitigation. However, the dilatory approaches often taken by authorities indicate counter-forces to scientific truth playing a key role in political decision-making. Chakravarty points out at the off-handed treatment that marine-catastrophes often receive through Figures 3.4.3.20 and 3.4.3.20 which both make critical comments on aftermaths of oil-spills on marine ecosystems.
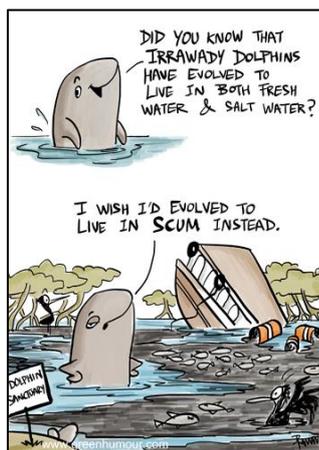
Fig. 3.4.3.20 Chakravarty, Rohan. "The Sunderban Oil Spill". *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com /2014/12/the-sunderban-oil-spill.html

Fig. 3.4.3.21 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Crying over spilt oil". *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2010/08

Figure 3.4.3.20 juxtaposes the first single-panel containing an icon of a dolphin (the 'Irrawady' dolphin, as the text explains) which is seemingly pleased with its organic adaptability to fresh and salt water for survival with a second single-panel that onslaughts the dolphin's natural sustainability by making adverse inroads into its natural

habitats. Marine species are continually expected to adapt and adhere to the changing ecosystems leveraged by human actions, failing which, they perish. The rhetoric of high-modernism, interestingly, operates on the same mechanism – as seen in the 'developmental' dichotomy imposed on the potters' community in Mahabaleshwar Sail's *The Kiln* analysed in the study. Communities unable to adapt to the dominant economic models are made to internalise their own subordination and ultimate The illustration also employs irony in deconstructing the 'act' of semiology in human activity towards environment. The region termed 'Dolphin sanctuary' is barely a 'sanctuary'; it is, in all possibilities, a spatial hazard for the inhabitants (native or migrated) thus point out that nomenclature are constructed not to reflect reality but to construct them – in this case, to form an illusion. Figure 3.4.3.21 highlights the pervasiveness of the damage by juxtaposing the gory image of shoals of fish swimming in oil-spill leakages with those of predatory birds sustaining on aquatic life whose sustenance is also endangered through chain food reaction. The textual silence on the impact of such an oil-spill on human life may be intentional, in an attempt to undermine the 'anthropocentric' perspective (only) in dialogues of environmental catastrophe. The slippage of the text, however, affords an interpreter's extrapolation – human life is not quarantined from the ill-effects of aquatic pollution. Although a human icon is absent in the image, the interplay of signs afford a layer of semantic semiology indicating that humans, if not the centre, are yet a part of the same food chain that their actions seem to destroy. The hypertextuality of the image, then, spews out the inevitable question – are humans oblivious to the self-destructive model upon which they are driving the juggernaut of civilization?

In the Preface to the research featuring in Chapter One, the present study foregrounded a visible abyss between human re-presentation of nature within its cultural discourses and changing environmental realities due to anthropogenic interference. The motifs of the skylark and the sparrow, the Preface noted, continued to dote human narratology seemingly oblivious to the depletion of the species due to sustained incursive activities. Chakravarty's images highlight these undercurrents thereby calling for an interrogative exegetics of perceived and conceived spaces as well as signs to decodify axiomatic subsumption of environment within human discourses. Figure 22 and 23 denotatively reiterate the need for interrogation of environmental seminuria represented within sociocultural tropes.

In 2003, Indian Railways decided to permanently retain the icon of 'Bholu' – the elephant – as its official mascot. The icon was adopted by the Indian Railways to be a representative symbol for expositioning the 'image' of the rail workforce as "ethical, responsible, sincere and cheerful" The grim ironies entailed in the decision started coming to fore when the number of elephant-deaths on railway tracks showed a considerable rise

A critical investigation into the matter spews out glaring misgivings of the 'developmental' model as perceived in contemporary modality. Railway, a medium facilitating intranational interconnectivity, has become an important index and signifier of India's technological prowess and socioeconomic advancement. The positivity associated with its sustained growth, however, often obscures the environmental cost at which such human developments are achieved. Per a study conducted by Mukti Roy and Raman Sukumar titled, "Railways and Wildlife: A Case Study of Train-Elephant Collisions in Northern West Bengal, India", the reasons for frequent collisions between trains and wildlife are "the expansion of the rail network, gauge conversion, and increases in frequency and speed of trains to meet the needs of a modernizing society and an increasing population" (152). Figure 22 highlights the sinister nature of the situation, once again, by the ironic usage of the term 'sanctuary'. Frequently cutting through regions deemed as elephant-corridors, the railways, markers of human efficiency, become propellers of catastrophe for the animals. The repositioning of railway lines to depict death-traps underpins the devastating models of conceived spaces that frequently marginalize wildlife and other environmental considerations.

Fig. 3.4.3.22 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Jumbled Jumbo". *Green Humour/Sanctuary Asia*
www.greenhumour.com/2010/09

Burgeoning mobile-towers in physical locations are also crucial indices of contemporary high-modernism that embody human advancement in telecommunication. Their induction in perceived spaces, therefore, has been normalised by the same jargon of development that discourses through governmental reports on vertical and linear infrastructure, from which, a cognizance of the damage caused to environments thereof is conspicuously absent. As discussed in the Preface of the present research in Chapter One, one such fundamental dichotomy between human progression and environmental deterioration has come to fore through the near-extinction of the species of house-sparrows. Chakravarty features this in the image as featured in Figure 3.4.3.23. The icons re-present house-sparrows taking agency to destroy one of the sources of their near-destruction – the microwave signals released from the mobile-towers. Although hypothetical, the textual slippage transcending its contextual semiology denotes the process by which those at the receiving end of central domination can claim agencies through protest narratives of organised retaliation.
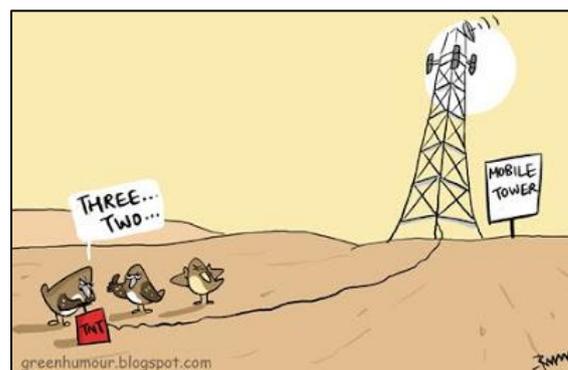
Fig. 3.4.3.23 Chakravarty, Rohan.

"Sparrow Conservation Cartoons". *Green Humour*

www.greenhumour.com/2010/03

Illustrative patterns in *Green Humour* reveal an assertive position against dominant politics and poetics which define their ideologies in gross disregard for environment and all life dependent upon it. Willy-nilly then, this position bolsters causes that reinstate the position of nature in its fight against anthropogenic oppression. In doing so, it embodies a distinct agency of 'speech' that pivots marginal concerns to centralities of digital visibility. A recurrent theme in the textuality of *Green Humour* is a cross-examination of development policies that displace indigenous populations from their natural habitat in the process of altering environmental spatialities. Irrespective of whether the displacement brings about meaningful reinstation and assimilation of such

communities in socioeconomic mainstream or not, such dislocations effect an acute severing of manifold interrelations between ecology and inhabiting indigenous. Two interconnected indices are connected in the single-panel of Figure 3.4.3.24. As depicted on the left-hand side of the panel, projects of civilizational progression are cutting through an ecological cover while the indigenous/local peoples settled within it are being dislocated either through physical or circumstantial coercion. The icon of a tiger tells viewers that the dislocation is actually eviction: the developmental projects have made literal and figurative inroads into the lives of the indigenous/local people forcing them to leave behind their ways of life in close affinities with nature. The icon of the tiger perceives a tangible difference between the indigenous/local perception of nature vis-à-vis the one fuelling acts of incursions. The position of the dislocated, however, as represented through their hunched stances, is defeatist. Possibly made to internalise their own eviction, they leave behind the lived spaces of their realities in the power of those set to annihilate those spaces. Therefore, while the indigenous may be the subaltern in high-capitalist politico-economic paradigms, ecology itself becomes the sub-subaltern in neocapitalist imagination. In close conjunction to this rhetoric, Figure 3.4.3.25 depicts that the marginal position of nature, enforced by State machina, may be reinforced by a conspicuous absence of the environmental discourse in expressions of collective consciousness. In human history, narratives of protest have centre-staged a wide variety of issues that have risen out of social, political, economic and cultural conflicts between peoples. While the gravity of these conflicts cannot be undermined, a substantially higher representation has been afforded to these 'events' within human narratives as opposed to those that fulcrum nature. Figure 3.4.3.25 demonstrates the same in the context of, perceivably, the Indian nation-state. Demands pertaining to political, economic and social justice grossly outweigh those that rally for protection of environment depicted by a literal stampede of the protester carrying a 'Protect Nature' placard.

Fig. 3.4.3.24 Chakravarty, Rohan. "Tribal Eviction from Forest Land". *Green Humour* www.greenhumour.com/2019/02/tribal-eviction-from-forest-land.html
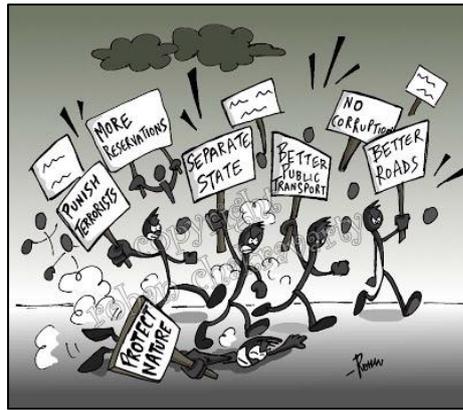

Fig. 3.4.3.25 Chakravarty, Rohan. "An issue here, a problem there". *Green Humour* www.greenhumour.com/2009/12

Yellow Ouch and Moo Book, *Our Toxic world* and *Green Humour* are cases in point. In these, the archetypic spatiality of compositional framework is brought in engagement with meta-linguistic signs (through illustrations, words or juxtapositions of both) that can permutate and combine in a multi-semiotic process of *infinitum*. Going by the baseline of Peirce's belief that every sign in the human system is an icon, an index or a symbol, the present study explored the capacity of the visual to interplay, signify and encode messages of environmental significance. Even the most obvious images, call for the receiver's participation by triggering a sensory-perception-to-cognitive-decryption process. Therefore, in one of the subtlest ways, they allow visual-readers to understand their own specificity in and relationality to the ecological world they inhabit. Moreover, even in its most fundamental form, visual imagery is shaped by and responsive to historicity, socio-culturalism and contemporaneity. As such, it can be a record of existing ideological/epistemological/behavioural systems or ruptures of it. As such, visual spaces create relevant sites of interrogation and discussion of environmental issues – even those that don't make it to mainstream verbal episteme. The present study therefore believes that environmental representation in visuality warrants special attention and critique as a propeller of cultural negotiation and influence.

3.5 Conclusion to the Chapter: Tying the Textual Threads

Forming the focal thrust of the present study, this Chapter on Textual Perceptions is key to reinforcing of the fundamental arguments of the thesis statement.

'Texts', as foregrounded in section 3.1., are important embodiments of cultural production and consumption. They are, however, strategically or otherwise, relegated to the peripheries of streamlined and formalised knowledge-pursuits. The fields of criticalities in humanities have been largely instituted to counter such judgements and rightly so, the present study utilizes these models. In doing this, it makes a humble attempt of deconstructing the built-in textualities of select pieces. The approach, however, has been towards analysing these texts *not* as frozen assemblages of authorial intent but rather treat them as free-floating gestalts transcending fixations. The obvious question here would be, is such an approach useful in studying (or speaking for) a topic that is as grounded and concrete as environmental crisis? The present study nods in affirmation and believes that an active and collective engagement in present day ecological consciousness can come through conversations more than a sterile imposition of rules and restrictions. The potency of texts, therefore, cannot be overlooked. A critical reading of texts, moreover, can unravel a pattern of stylistic and thematic convergences that may be useful in understanding their role in the above-mentioned green-dialogues. Five matrices of such convergences are exhumed through present study; these are:

(i)   **Trans-spatiotemporality:** One of the most crucial debates within discourses of environmental crises is the global-versus-local issue. While some tractions of the argument pursuing the global impact of Climate Change and allied problems prescribe essentialist models of solutions, others endorse an appraisal of local specificities and design mitigative measures accordingly. As simplistic as this may sound, this debate is crucial to dialogues undertaken and trajectories decided by world-governments via international forums such as Kyoto Protocol, Copenhagen Summit, Paris Agreement, UN Climate Change Conferences (such as COP25) and the like. The cogent distinctions in spatialities and demographies mainly between the regions in the West and the East or the Global North and the Global South are proving instrumental to key ecological decisions. Coupled with this is the intangible but highly pervasive presence of colonialism and recent forms of neo-imperialism perceivably perpetrated by the dominant Western factions and industrial elites of the developing nations. Such a scenario, backed by politico-economic agendas, have kept some viable remediations in suspension thereby further aggravating environmental cataclysm.

Texts can play a pertinent role in these situations. They can be the crucial 'missing pieces' that can underpin the entelechy and the particular-to-universal/universal-to-particular paradigms built into the dialectics of human culture thereby revealing patterns and distinctions of anthropogenic relations with ecology across time and geography. The colonial policy of legal land-segregation that leads to environmental deterioration in Africa as depicted in Paton's 1948 novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* echoes similitudes with the more clandestine processualism that goes into striating spaces for selective development as depicted in Sail's 2001 narrative, *The Kiln*. The palimpsestic imagery of *Green Humour* interrogates the civilization/sustainability binary in the contemporary society while *The Inheritors* does so by taking a retrospective leap into human history. *Avatar* presents its biocentric view through the lens of dystopia and in doing so, builds a crucial causation relation between human actions and ecological disasters. *Our toxic world* and *The Yellow Ouch and Moo book* pursue the same line of inquiry and deduction but root their reasoning in deconstructed contemporary realism. In being a representation of indigenous gynocentricism, *Dhalo* unspools issues of agency, becomings and preservation of biodiversity – themes that find resonances in the textualities of *The Inheritors* as well as *Avatar*. Therefore, while directing a reader's attention to spatiotemporal specificities that shaped and produced them, these texts also carry 'trans-spatiotemporal' patterns of continuity and causality that is crucial in understanding the complexities enmeshed within environment-related problems. Reading human culture, as one would read texts, thus, may be one of the key tools in initiating more cooperative global exchanges between nation-states.

(ii)   **Intertextuality:** In his *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), Bruno Latour contends that "the discourse of the ecosphere is a complex task that demands analysis of multiple networks and their singular as well as collective realities and narrativities" (qtd. in Rangarajan ch.9). The present study agrees with Latour's viewpoint and proposes an emphasis on the postmodern technique of intertextuality in 'reading' discourses related to environment appearing within domains as well as across the domains of science, social studies, histories, literature as well as political episteme which otherwise tend to operate as self-enclosed entities of mutual distrust. *Dhalo*, for instance, is an indigenous form of documenting seasonal biodiversity – a practice that may be of specific interest to botanical studies. *Avatar* as well as *Our Toxic World* foreground the interconnectedness between human and other living organisms through

the metaphor of networks; this, invariably, resonates with concepts of 'obligate and facultative' symbiosis being studied by modern sciences. *Cry, the Beloved Country* emphasizes that environmental dislocations can bring about irreversible social disorders; this is also a condition *Green Humour* warns about through images entailing hypothetical (but cautionary) retaliations by fauna and flora. *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* suggests re-arranging lived spatialities for a heightened interanimation between human and nature while *Dhalo* embodies this practice through its traditional signification of the *maand*. As a subversion of Wellsian as well as Cartesian theories on evolution and place, *The Inheritors* compels readers to interrogate received notions in cultural anthropology and fracture the givenness of concepts such as 'civilization', 'progress' and 'advancement'. *The Kiln* follows a similar trajectory through the view of 'ecosystem people' and questions the dimension hegemonic selectivity entailed in all these conceptualizations. The present study, thus, believes that the technique of intertextuality, when applied to cultural readings, can reveal patterns of individual and collective conscious and subconscious which impact human actions towards environment.

(iii) **Performativity:** The performative aspect of texts needs to be brought to bear in three aspects. Firstly, it is important to know that a text, in being incepted within specific socio-political historicity and materiality can very well be an agenda-driven 'production' of intent. Its analysis, then, cannot ignore this module; however, upon consideration, eschew it in the best interest of critique. The second aspect is the text's ability to 'perform' beyond its original/ intended functionality due to an interplay of signs. Almost all schools of contemporary theory, including those incorporated in present study, emphasize upon the latter aspect. The third aspect connects the notation of 'performativity' within its formalized meaning in modern discourse. Jillian Cavanaugh calls performativity, "a complex concept that can be thought of as a language which functions as a form of social action and has the effect of change" (Cavanaugh) – a rhetoric that immediately brings into discussion a text's ability to carry potential for social transformation in tangible and intangible forms. In analysing texts, Green Cultural Studies takes cognizance of all these aspects. For instance, in the present study, *Cry, the Beloved Country* has been critiqued for its androcentric performance vis-à-vis environmental representation. *The Inheritors* performs beyond its socio-political specificity to interrogate models of cultural neo-imperialism that follows

methodical patterns of hegemonic subjugation. In *Dhalo*, the performative aspect is both physical and metaphorical. By being an art form entailing music, dance and worship revolving around tangible configurations of environmental spaces such as *maand* and *tulsi vrindavan*, *Dhalo* foregrounds the palpability of human-nature interdependence. Metaphorically, it performs ecocultural messages which are alternative paradigms to modern-day technocracy that tends to distance humans from physical spaces through online simulations of corporeality. In a pertinent sub-section of his work on Green Cultural Studies, Jhan Hochman addresses the question 'Who Speaks for Nature' using the 'jaguar' as a synecdochic representative. He opines,

> I believe or at least hope that most environmentalists and animal-rights advocates…do not think of themselves as ventriloquists putting words into the mouths of (dumb) animals. Environmentalists and animal-rights advacoates might be better characterized as *representing* jaguars or…speaking for *the survival and the continued well-being* of the jaguar, which, with or without a jaguar's sanction is less problematic than not representing them at all. (*The Green Studies Reader* 190; my ellipsis; original emphasis).

While Hochman sees such representations of nature presented by humans *on behalf of it* as an obvious inevitability, critics like John Ruskin and Donna Haraway point out to the pathetic fallacies and reductionist anthropomorphism involved in such acts. Within the purview of these arguments, the visual illustrations of flora-fauna foregrounded in select images of *Green Humour* and *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* attain sharpened relevance. Both tread in the tricky waters of representing the environment in the 'language' of humans without making the view anthropocentric. While Haraway would probably question the ethicality of such representations, the present study concurs with Hochman's view that performances on behalf of nature is invariably necessary if one were to convey not just the interconnectedness between all living organisms but also reinforce the message that anthropogenic actions are directly impinging upon the survival of flora and fauna.

Although the performativity of these select literatures in terms of bringing about tangible change calls for a more formalized mode of field and statistical evaluation outside the purview of present study, it is believed that by virtue of being conduits of

ecological thought within human culture, these texts carry potentialities of invoking sociocultural transformations at individual and collective levels.

(iv) **Apocalyptic tonality:** Contemporary movements towards mitigations of Climate Change and allied environmental issues are often accused of being unduly 'alarmist' and falsely imperative in their approaches. Such accusations frequently adopt tonalities of off-handed dismissal of ecological urgencies and/or strong-armed suppressions of collective concerns. Cultural texts, however, consciously or subconsciously postulate messages of ecological threat either explicitly or suggestively. *The Kiln* foregrounds this using the metaphor of the bulldozer that threatens to annihilate the livelihood of the potters' community and by extension, the ecocultural spirit of coexistence. *The Inheritors* records the 'arrival' of *homo sapiens* but posits them in antagonistic dichotomy with the Neanderthals and their consilient ecoculture. The early 'civilizational' indicators embedded in the *homo sapiens* way of life are encoded in imagery of ecological manipulation and violent annihilation of the 'other-ed' species. The sites created by the *homo sapiens*, far from being reassuring, carry notations of dangerous supremacy where man stands alienated from the spatiality he inhabits. *Avatar* hinges its plot upon a perceived apocalypse brought about my the unprecedented 'green fatigue' (a fatal exhaustion of planetary resources). It pitches a dystopic Earth with the utopic Pandoran land which is a counter-narration to anthropocentric values of self-aggrandizement, corruption and authoritarianism. *Our toxic world* brings about the 'everyday' pervasiveness of actions that may lead to an ecological apocalypse that will potentially afflict all life-forms. In sketching images that portray sterility, non-vitality and socioecological dysfunction, *Green Humour* traces locative coordinates in anthropogenic behaviour that can lead to apocalyptic self-destruction of humans. In reasserting a language of gynocentric assimilation of ecology within the way of life, *Dhalo* provides an alternative perspective through practices that can possibly allay the dangers of environmental crisis through emphasis on symbiosis.

The apocalyptic tonality embedded within these textualities can be exhumed in Green Cultural Studies not only to reassert the cyclic mechanism of ecological destruction that also threatens human existence in its wake but also to re-emphasize the role of humanity in mitigating such damages. Conditions of ecological catastrophe are not contained merely in biogenic changes but in tangible human actions. Hence, much

of the distortions done by the latter can be checked, addressed and deterred with a sense of urgency that these textualities imply in their contextual signification.

(v) **Counter-normativity:** The term 'normativity' in the present context stands to signify the 'normalising' agenda of dominant (often, hegemonic) politics that frequently deploy systemic institutions through which *their* worldview can percolate into *mass* worldview and receive ideological sanction. Subaltern theorists, particularly Spivak, warn against such powers where 'difference' is equated with 'deviance' and subjected to oppressive quelling. Literature, equipped with the technique of ostranenie (the power to 'defamiliarize') can launch counter-normativity movements that fracture the complacency of the 'given'. For instance, the texts undertaken for analysis in the present study disrupt the normalised jargon of 'development'. A semiotic deconstruction of their textualities reveals patterns of 'discourse' that are embedded in processes of normativity. *Cry, the Beloved Country* uses Ndotsheni and Johannesburg as spatial signifiers both of which indicate the dark side of developmental models that operate on environmental dislocation and social divisiveness. *The Kiln* critiques social progression determined by political manoeuvres that normalise segregation and marginalisation of sections deemed economically unimportant. In doing so, it brings into discussion the notion of equity and justice for ecosystem people and their affinities with environment. *Our Toxic World* breaks through spaces of striation in urban and rural sites. It digs up archives of socioecological disasters caused by aggressive industrial models that promised 'development' but unfolded irreversible destructions in their wake instead. *Avatar* attacks the nexus between economic big-leagues and paramilitary aggression both of which drive juggernauts of self-aggrandizement that often intrude in environmental sustainability. *Green Humour* cracks the veneer off neocapitalist modalities of development that pervade through seemingly pro-environment installations such as 'Earth Day' and 'Green Industry'.

Dominant normativity is ruptured through other means too. *Dhalo* intervenes in the normalising power of androcentric signification by presenting a completely gynocentric embodiment of an ecocultural folk-form. *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* furthers an active engagement of cognitive mapping to heighten humanity's awareness towards ecological beings within their lived spaces. *The Inheritors* questions the very

notion of the Anthropocene and its hyper-normativity in present-day politico-cultural discourses by emphasizing upon humankind's alterity in a pre-existing ecology.

The present study outlines the above-mentioned quintuple model of textual value as plausible points of departures through which texts, as cultural signifiers, can be brought into discussions of ecological relevance. This is informed by the belief that the role of textuality – in theory and practice – cannot be undermined in bringing about perceptible changes in material, socio-political realities. The next Chapter on 'Practical Applications' provides two cases in point for this argument.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOCATING THE THEORETICAL AND TEXTUAL PATTERNS IN 'PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS': NARRATIVE AS MOVEMENT AND MOVEMENT AS NARRATIVE

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, the study has sought to exhume, examine and [re]instate theoretical perspectives and textual perceptions through select 'textualities' in an attempt to uncover, understand and underpin patterns of environmental subsumption, refiguration and representation within them. This line of inquiry built on the hypothesis of underlying intertextuality in human cultural engagement with environment, went on to reveal imbricated patterns of impositions and counteractions, derivations and subversions, disruptions and reiterations as well as documentations and predictions. Theory and Text proved to be fluid entities interplaying with possibilities of permutations in 'smooth spatialities' envisioned by Deleuze and Guattari – they became creative agents of independent and collective selfhoods that could embody environmental concerns with-in and with-out them by foregrounding relevant hyphenated-spaces that could be ruptured and scooped for methodical reading.

The theoretical approaches co-opted in Chapter Two which informed analyses of selected texts of Chapter Three have lent support to one of the primary arguments of the present study that human cultural manifestations, even those that are cast in the most minutiae and seemingly unrealistic forms, can have a significant influence in understanding the complexities of the unfolding environmental crisis. The study believes that this trajectory of perceiving culture and its forms and products is of extreme relevance especially when confronted with, as mentioned in Chapter One, the heavy jargonising of ecological issues in scientific and/or allied discourses. Contiguous to this, it is also befitting to remind humanity of its place in the current crisis and also that, anthropogenic intrusions – in thought and action (being carried out in discursive modalities of intent or ignorance) – *are* in fact triggering ecological disharmonies leading to greater catastrophes no matter their magnitude in comparison to biogenic factors.

In locating the significance of Green Cultural Studies as a holistic approach to the complex human-environment interrelationship, the proposed study had explicated in one of its objectives that this line of study serves to be the vantage point where theoretical perspectives and textual perceptions postulated by green studies and the practical implications of their postulations meet. Yet, practical applicability is a term which often seems like a misfit in literary/cultural studies. The valid question is, can one quantify or tangibly measure the impact of a literary text or cultural signifier within a time-frame? Can one perceptibly interlink radical socio-political modifications made in the aftermath of literary-cultural expressions regarding a cause of set of causes. In order to answer this question, one perhaps needs to look at a parallel example for analogical deduction. In November 1907, *The New York Times* published a drawn-out assessment of Elizabeth Robins' novel *The Convert*. As a work of fiction which documents the story of a woman who goes on to become a key figure in the London suffrage movement, *The Convert* was an important 'against-the-grain' cultural product that didn't play to galleries and in fact, raised a voice of counter-discourse to dominant ideology. The review, however, attacked the work with vitiation. Titled, "Tract in Fiction" this piece went on to call Robins "[t]he romancer who writes for a purpose and who uses the art of fiction merely as a medium for political propaganda [who] cannot expect work so produced to measure up to standards set by the impartial canons of literature" (Delahaye; para 1). It called the novel a 'doctrinaire' and condemned its 'misappropriation' of fiction for overtly political agenda. But while the relevance and *impact* of Robins' work could be dismissed by a short-sighted peer-perception, the long-term disruptions which *The Convert* and similar works on women-suffrage caused in enfranchisement movements that unfolded world-over can hardly be eschewed. Tracking the intangible lines of this impact, Claire Delahaye develops poignant arguments of literary linkages with larger political policy-making. She traces that,

> [The] articulation between art and politics is of particular significance to the historian as it can give insight into suffragists' strategies to win the vote and into the context of the movement in relation to the issue of ideas and representations. Suffrage literary productions helped to negotiate conditions of existence and were forms of empowerment, resting on the belief that literature could change the world, from the perspective of women as a subordinate group. This conviction attests to suffragists' confidence in the

power of words and it provides a *"missing piece"* in the history of the suffrage movement's relation to popular culture. (para. 4; my emphasis)

Robins' work, as Delahaye's study shows, joined the significant oeuvre of suffragist literature which went on bring about one of the most seismic changes in American modern society – the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920 which granted women the power to vote significantly altering the course of social trajectory thereon.

While suffragette literature may have been an iconoclastic model for winning enfranchisement rights, the same cannot be said of all literary endeavours. In fact, at times the scissions between literary (theoretical and textual) exegeses and material unfolding are so wide that any attempt at connecting the two and bridging the perceived gaps calls for an abrasive re-reading of both the domains. Environmental-ism is one such field. Any preoccupation with environmental issues, even at the most notional and abstractional levels, calls for a cognizance of the practical rootedness of the phenomena. And yet, green theorists largely concur, that responses in contemporary literary theory have been defeatist in the cause for nature in trying to overemphasize the linguistic dimension of textuality as opposed to its referential dimension. Lawrence Buell, however, presents a differing opinion in saying that, "…over the past few decades we [green critics] have ranged freely across the human sciences, subjecting ethnography and phenomenology and even scientific monographs to literary analysis almost as readily as sonnets and short stories" (qtd. in Coupe 178). Buell's optimism is met with gripping concerns regarding the nature of such 'literary analysis'. Sometimes, green analyses of 'texts' can be painfully reductionist; any piece presenting descriptions of environment is eulogized or romanticized as an ecocritical work or the piece itself is studied as an individual plenum embodying a set of thematic concerns regarding ecology, which, by virtue of existing, make the work relevant to the current crisis. The fact that environmental theory, textuality and practicality need to be invoked in amalgamation and engaged in proactive dialogues is a trajectory often undermined with preconceived scepticism. The present Chapter attempts to counter these concerns by linking germane interstices. In order to do so, it keeps the patterns drawn up in Chapter Two and Three in sight; while doing this, it foregrounds two cases: *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* – a citizens' environmental movement of Goa. Both, in their distinct ways, launched discourses that went on to directly impact environmental policy-making. Carson's *Silent Spring* brought to bear the

irresponsibility of the chemical industry in polluting the environment and compelled policy-makers, the then US government led by President John Kennedy, to introduce redressal and preventive measures. The edition of *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* under study initiated sustained protests against the Regional Plan 2011 and led to its scrapping.

In doing so, the present study will adopt a slightly different schemata than the one assumed in Chapter Three. In uncovering the distinct cross-referential, sub-textured and multi-layered matrices of textualities in Chapter Three, it was deemed necessary to undertake a text-wise analysis of primary literature chosen while simultaneously foregrounding their intertextual and polysemic connectedness. The methodology helped in positing the textuality in its times and simultaneously recovering it out of it for trans-spatiotemporal analysis. It also enabled to locate the significance of these texts in terms of the divergent mediations they incarnated while also deconstructing their collective convergences in the conclusion. However, in the present Chapter, the focus veers itself towards redefining the 'practical' dimensionality of Green Cultural Studies in tandem with the present study's preoccupation of developing paradigmatic patterns of reading connections and clefts between seemingly diverse range of cultural products. Therefore, the present study juxtaposes the two 'texts' under analysis. While recording their regional specificities, it dislocates their textuality to foreground vortices of similitude. Thus, it sieves *Silent Spring* and selected events of *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* through the framework of analytical and critical verticals developed in Chapter Two and Three in an attempt to (re)locate theoretical and textual patterns in 'practical applications' by studying the narrative of *Silent Spring* as movement and the movement of *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* as narrative.

Before delving into the four-fold processual analysis within which the present study posits *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan*, it is pertinent to provide brief introductions to each of these textual movements. The present study believes that while it is categorized as an 'environmental science book', Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is one of the earliest formalized cases of public humanities. The work, a product of Carson's research of several years, was published in 1962. The focus of the work is on the devastating impacts of synthetic pesticides which, once inserted in the biosphere, move up the food chain thereby affecting all life forms that come in contact with them directly or indirectly. The study was largely prompted by a letter written to *The Boston Herald* by Carson's friend Olga Owens Huckins delineating the death of local birds

plausibly due to the aerial spraying of DDT in her locality to kill mosquitoes. Following this, Carson commenced her research-based project that continued for four years and finally culminated in the form of *Silent Spring*. Linda Lear, in her work, *Rachel Carson: Witness for nature* claims that in the course of her research, Carson resourced information, some of which was highly confidential, from government scientists (313). Carson perhaps was well-aware that the findings of her research would directly posit her at loggerheads with some of the most powerful lobbies in chemical industry. The problem that Carson located, after all, was not merely in the 'side-effects' of pesticides but rather in their unchecked (implicatively capitalistic) usage. Carson's narrative, thus, was not meant for niche or 'elitist' academic consumption for she was essentially reiterating scientific facts that had been studied and promulgated before. Instead, *Silent Spring* attempted to glean the 'common' out of scientific jargon and shift the spatiality of episteme. As Carson mentioned in her letter to Dorothy Freeman, her aim was no less than to carry the content of the book to "farms and hamlets all over that country that don't know what a bookstore looks like" (Lear 408). The modus operandi of calling out to the nexus between capitalistic chemical industries and ignorant and/or short-sighted governing authorities was to launch a narratological movement that would assume public space and engage diverse reader-groups. Carson did so and the publication of *Silent Spring* began appearing in a serialized form in a seemingly audacious move by *The New Yorker*. As could be expected, its reception was highly bipolar. While the public was largely shocked by the revelations and their implications, key industries such as DuPont and Velsicol Chemical Company launched an attack of derogation on Carson's credentials and character. Biochemist Robert White-Stevens went on to accuse Carson of being, "a fanatic defender of the cult of balance of nature" (Lear 434). But the real narrative of *Silent Spring*, the one of interest to the present study, happened in the aftermath of these turbulences. The same year as the book's publication, following the mass furore it generated, the USA government led by John F. Kennedy responded to the environmental zeitgeist. The Science Advisory Committee set up by the President (PSAC) to look into the validity of Carson's claims, released its report on *Silent Spring* on May 15, 1963 largely supporting postulations made in the work. While taking cognizance of the indispensable role played by pesticides in modern agriculture, the PSAC report made it cogent to the public and authorities concerned that the claims of environmental cataclysms made by Carson weren't, after all, exaggerated. On June 04, 1963, Carson saw herself participating in federal policy changes which

ultimately led to such tangible changes as the constitution of Environmental Defense Fund and ultimately, "a phase-out of DDT in the United States, except in emergency cases" (Hynes 46).

Several books (categorized in the domain of sciences as well as literary fiction) published before and after *Silent Spring* have put forth environmental concerns of the kind Carson's work highlighted. Yet, not many can be directly associated with concrete impacts. Not many, moreover, transmute into becoming metaphors for environmental movements. What then could have led to the percolation of *Silent Spring* in collective psyches of generations across spatiotemporalities?

Roughly 46 years after Carson's *narrative* launched a movement through its textuality, a *movement* in Goa was writing a narrative. *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* (GBA) started as a people's movement in 2006 as a retaliatory response to 'Regional Plan 2011' drafted for implementation by the then state government. GBA's website established after the full-fledged launch of the ground-movement defined its identity as "a non-politically affiliated and virtual collective body that represents every Goan and non-Goan alike, who believe in the development and preservation of their social, cultural, and economic fabric" (Coelho 105). As a movement led from the front by citizens from different strata of Goan society, GBA's institution and subsequent trajectory as a network of nodes emulsifying through a common motive of safeguarding ecology made it a standout peculiarity. In an interview with the present researcher, historian Prajal Sakhardande states that as many as 16 different organizations blended within the modality of the GBA (Personal Interview). GBA, then, couldn't be offhandedly abnegated as a peripheral voice of oppositional sentiment. It became a thrust of disruption, one that went on to carve a distinct narratology of ecological tenor in the state. The origin of GBA is traced to the year 2000 when concerned environmentalists started pointedly following the dynamics of land-use and management in Goa using hypermedia technologies such as Google Earth. Six years later, architect Dean D'Cruz was informed of hill-cutting at the coastal area of Baga; insights into the issue unspooled through the episteme of architecture forefronted rampant discrepancies in the project. Sakhardande recalls the urgencies that ensued with the realization that pre-emptive measures needed to be taken if irreversible damage to ecology was to be forestalled. Regular meetings were called and it was deemed necessary to bring the underlying implications of the Regional Plan in the public

domain. GBA worked through the single-point agendum of the 'de-notification of Regional Plan 2011'. In the rally held on 18th December 2006, support for the movement was galvanized and concretised by obtaining signatures of participating citizens on a Memorandum devised for the state government. After a month of sustained protest-narratology ciphered and channelized through multimedial platforms including visual imagery, GBA accomplished its objective when the state government announced its decision to de-notify the Regional Plan 2011 in compliance to public exigencies. Coelho points out that the emergence of GBA as an epiphenomenon was so strong in the course which followed that, "even the nomenclature[s] of new environmental movements [in Goa] is similar to GBA" (105).

While several socio-political factors may have contributed towards the practical bearing of *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan*, the present study traces a few trajectories hitherto unexplored that can possibly locate the works in larger narratological patterns of shared consciousness and exemplify distinctions leading to their perceivable outcomes in the material unfolding of policymaking. The same have been routed through the quadruple model of analysis undertaken below.

4.2 Narrative as 'movement', movement as 'narrative': A study

(i)   Insertion of 'narrative' and 'textual subconscious': Structuralist, Semiotic and Post-structuralist readings of ecocultural significations.

Structuralist David Émile Durkheim argued that the sociality of society largely depends on "[t]he collective *symbolic, cognitive* and moral ordering of social life i.e. a collective consciousness and collective representations of society and the world through which it is understandable, experienceable and organizable in communal terms" (qtd. in Walsh 201; my emphasis). The symbolic and cognitive ordering that Durkheim speaks of, comes from a given society's collective exposure to products of culture and processes of 'culturation' over a period of time that, through processes of contextual signification, form a 'memory' to which human beings keep reverting, consciously or subconsciously. One of the most instrumental means of developing this collective memory is literature. Through its stylistic deployment of language, literature sets off a process of semiotic infinitum (as suggested by the Peircean model) through which meanings can be extracted via access to the linguistic codes that facilitate the process of meaning-making. These codes (metaphors, metonymies, synecdoche, objective

correlatives and the like) carry within themselves newer ways of creating experiential percepts and thereby emanate multiple 'affects'. Simplistic as this may seem, allusion and access to this collective memory are considered to be of great importance in present-day processes not just of meaning-making but also foreseeing futuristic patterns based on such meanings. Ernst Wolfgang in his work, " 'Electrified Voices': Non-Human Agencies of Socio-Cultural Memory" emphasizes this point when he says, "Collective memory is thus no longer a reference to a remembered past but a way of analysing the present as a collection of big (meta-) data in real-time for future prediction" (55). Of course, Wolfgang suggested such analysis in terms of archiving internet feedback. However, one may see that prominent movements in the past have juxtaposed the twin processes that he speaks of in an attempt to mobilize mass participations in events of historic importance. The Irish Renaissance created the affect through invocation of folklore and metaphor-izing contemporary struggle for independence by an appeal to collective memory. The Indian concept of *sahitya* deployed in the Indian literary renaissance which Aurobindo Ghose speaks of in his essay "The Renaissance in India" was not very different. It re-invigorated contemporary consciousness by forming affective interanimation with cultural reservoirs of the past/present literatures to galvanize support for the larger freedom movement and to endorse the *idea* of an independent India.

In distinctly subtle ways, *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* follow this narratological structuration. The consciousness that *Silent Spring* attempts to build comes to form in the metaphor of 'America' – a reference to an ecological past of Henry David Thoreau's Romantic imagination. This semiotic encoding significantly alters her style of relating scientific facts thereby giving it a form of a '*narrative of affects*'. In inserting this tenor and system of literary semiology, *Silent Spring* juxtaposes personal with objective, cultural with socio-political and poetic with scientific. It, in fact, treads between fictional eulogies to lost biotic lands and non-fictional accounts of human intrusions which are altering the biosphere bringing about serious consequences. In shattering the constructed walls between the objectivity associated with science and the uncertainty associated with nature, the narrative employs the semiotic code of simile used by Carl P. Swanson to claim that science, like a river, has,

> [i]ts obscure and unpretentious beginning; its quiet stretches as well as its
>
> rapids; its periods of drought as well as of fullness. It gathers momentum

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with the work of many investigators and as it is fed by other streams of
thought; it is deepened and broadened by the concepts and generalizations
that are gradually evolved. (*Silent Spring* 144).

Thus, while working through the framework of scientific research, Carson presents
prose that lies at the intersection of science and human experience within natural
surroundings. In the Chapter, "A Fable for Tomorrow", the 'affect' of narratology is
achieved through the literary device of foregrounding and compositional imagery as
Carson writes,

There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live
in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a
checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of
orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green
fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed
and flickered across a backdrop of pines. The foxes barked in the hills and
deer silently crossed the field, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings...
Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change.
Some evil spell had settled on the community...everywhere was a shadow
of death...there was a strange stillness...No witchcraft, no enemy action had
silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done
it themselves (10).

Semiotician Gary Genosko suggests that literary meaning-formation often brings the
human and non-human into interaction in order to 'recover' codes and make new
communication possible. In the passage above, *Silent Spring* seems to follow a similar
procedure. The paradigmatic shift in focus from a biophilic world to an anthropocentric
one as indicated by the last line not only suggests a spatial striation but also facilitates
a renewed acknowledgment of changes in cognitive perceptions of physical (ecological)
spaces. The title indicates invocation to an underlying langue – a collective memory of
the 'fable' of America determined by values of thriving co-existence. But the narrative
immediately ruptures the image it creates and slips into, as Derrida would call it, a 'non-
reference'. This non-reference, however, is not an indicator of falsity but rather of a
meta-reality which is more *actual* than that which meets the uninitiated eye. The textual
slippage is used to uncover the universal located in the particular as Carson claims that

the image she has created belongs to 'no land' and yet (in fact, *therefore*), can belong to 'any land' where humans have intruded indiscriminately. She says,

> This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know of no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them. (10-11).

The statement simultaneously brings out the non-fixations of textual spaces and spatial textuality. While being rooted in the record of micro-scale transformations, the metaphor of 'a town in the heart of America' adopted by *Silent Spring* is also communicable at global levels due to etic references to 'any land' which has been similarly altered. *Silent Spring*, thus, can be read as a parole of an underlying structure that is built in the form of a network of collective consciousness entailing human interrelations with ecology as is evidenced from *Avatar* and *Our Toxic World* revisiting the same symbol of 'network' to speak about broader issues germane to ecological denigration almost five decades after the publication of Carson's work.

At multiple points in the narrative, intertextuality and allusion are deployed as performative codes for illocutionary force. For instance, while bringing to fore the 'web' through which the harmful side-effects of pesticides penetrate through all living organisms, including humans, Carson uses the magic realism of Grimm brothers' stories for thrust by saying,

> The world of systemic insecticides is a weird world, surpassing the imaginings of the brothers Grimm—perhaps most closely akin to the cartoon world of Charles Addams. It is a world where the enchanted forest of the fairy tales has become the poisonous forest in which an insect that chews a leaf or sucks the sap of a plant is doomed. It is a world where a flea bites a dog, and dies because the dog's blood has been made poisonous, where an insect may die from vapors emanating from a plant it has never touched, where a bee may carry poisonous nectar back to its hive and presently produce poisonous honey. (26)

The intertextuality is not just an appeal to collective cultural consciousness but also an analogy for emphasis and affect. Scientific discourses often become susceptible to

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tonalities of sterility or alarmism. A scientific concept foregrounded through literary allusion, thus, becomes a useful 'third' space of non-prescription. It can drive home a point with the informational locus of content intact even while it tries to evoke an interanimated conversation.

Moreover, the title of *Silent Spring*, in itself, is a representation of the Peircean icon-index-symbol model. Carson uses the icon of the word 'spring' and its prefix-code 'silent' as indices to the deterioration in population of the bird 'robin'. She locates the relevance of the 'robin-metaphor' in a gynocentric view of the bioregion expressed in a letter featured by a Wisconsin woman where she lamented the loss of the bird thus,

> I have always loved our elm trees which seemed like trademarks on our landscape …But there are many kinds of trees...We must save our birds, too. Can anyone imagine anything so cheerless and dreary as a springtime without a robin's song?' (65)

The robin usually appears towards the end of winter and biologically signifies the beginning of spring. The usage of pesticides in increased concentration and its subsequent pervasion led to the death of robins leading to a significant diminution in their population. In fact, the semiotic encoding of ecological messaging using antithesis, metaphor and symbolism reflected in the title penetrated so much in cultural consciousness that subsequently several texts written on environmental issues began adopting titles adhering to the *Silent Spring*'s textual subconscious of 'icon-index-symbol' modelling. There was, for instance, Adam Curtis' 1992 publication, *Pandora's Box*, Theo Colburn's 1996 work *Our Stolen Future* and Paul Hawken's 2007 book, *Blessed Unrest*. As a narrative, the title of *Silent Spring* contains an implicit indication to multi-level meaning gradation involved in the 'scientific' book as well as the subject matter it deals with. Such codification calls for instantaneous receiver participation rather than a passive acceptance or rejection of information entailed within the work. The present study therefore believes that the sustained influence of *Silent Spring* has been partly due to its ability of being an advanced interpretant for future socio-cultural groups owing to the trans-spatiotemporal value of its text. As such *Silent Spring* is a case in point for studies in cultural green-semiotics in order to trace the role played by structural meaning-making as well as collective consciousness in contemporary perceptions and receptions of ecological messages.

Interestingly, the movement of *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* was also re-incarnating a form of collective consciousness in launching its narrative of protest against the Regional Plan 2011. But to understand the reference to this consciousness in an enhanced manner, the present study would revert to and exhume a seemingly simplistic statement from *Avatar*. In misleadingly conveying her allegiance to the Quaritch-led coupe in Pandora as opposed to the pro-Na'vi/ pro-Eywa stance of Jake Sully and Grace Augustine, SecOps pilot Trudy Chacon calls them the 'tree-hugging traitors'. A seemingly puerile phrase of contextual writing, the deeper signification of this phraseology is not lost upon anyone with access to the collective memory of 'Chipko' movement. With its genesis in the foothills of Himalayas, India, the Chipko Andolan led by people against commercial logging by a sporting goods company, became a *sign* of nonviolent eco-protest and environmental zeitgeist in the country, and subsequently, world-wide. In fact, Ramachandra Guha's assessment of Chipko's success in the domain of collective psyche, presented in his essay titled, "Socio-Ecological Research in India: A 'Status' Report", can lead one into understanding its emergence as an important interpretant holding key indicators as representamens in the spirituo-cultural, ethno-ecological and socio-political coding. Guha enlists them saying,

> First, Chipko was authentically endogenous (and indigenous), not a product of international pressure but a creation of self-motivated peasants. Second, its historic and cultural associations were instantly recognisable: these were its presence in the valley of the Ganges, home to some of the holiest shrines in India… [T]hird, Chipko articulated a truly social ecology…this movement of Himalayan peasants raised questions of equity and justice while not failing to highlight either the threats to ecological stability posed by commercial forestry. Finally, and most importantly, Chipko was representative of a spectrum of natural resource conflicts…over access to forests, fish and grazing resources; conflicts over the effects of industrial pollution and mining; and conflicts over the siting of large dams. ("Socio-Ecological" 346).

The physical act of 'tree-hugging', started as part of this movement as a medium of protecting the tree from being felled, sky-rocketed to become a multi-layered metaphor of the environment conversation. It was a language of interdependence and a sign of the ecology-human interrelation that defied any external striation. It was what Graham

Huggan and Helen Tiffin would call, the recontextualization of 'human' in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings" (xxv). As a semiotic code it became a non-essentialist refrain – one that could be applied to any context that sought to reiterate bio-unity. As such, it rejuvenated an underlying langue of environmental consciousness solidifying individual acts of ecological protests. It is perhaps a combination of the afore-mentioned reasons that led to the event of 18th November 2006. Coelho pointedly documents via the anecdotal insight provided by Praveen Sabnis (a member of *GBA*) the 'event' when a member of People's Movement for Civic Action (Goa), Patricia Pinto was informed about the felling of six heritage trees in the city of Panaji, Goa. Sabnis narrates that upon reaching the site, in a helpless move to stop the imminent felling, Pinto hugged the tree. The metaphoric signification of Chipko as a signifier of protest was neither lost upon the crowd nor the media which covered the event. The members of *GBA* feel that "when [the] photograph pertaining to this incident appeared in newspapers, the image angered and shamed the educated middle class, which enjoys the benefits of the land, and made it to shed its inaction" (108). Sakhardande confirms this event of the '*Tambi Maati* Mango Tree' ("Tambdi Maati" – red soil) and reiterates the fact that it was an essential 'fillip' for the *Abhiyan* (Personal Interview). In fact, the hugging of these 'heritage' trees may also refer to the textual subconscious of the 'sacred groves' that is prevalent in the Goan ecocultural psyche. Taken out of its geographic context, the concept of 'sacred groves' is actually a non-fixated sign which embodies the ethnic affiliations with nature. Environmentalist Claude Alvares traces the etymology of this signifier to the traditional belief-systems as well as ecological concerns of Goa. He records that,

> [T]he sacred groves that exist in the Western Ghats of Goa are repositories of plant and animal wealth that have been conserved over centuries. They are dedicated to forest gods or other local deities, and are worshipped by local inhabitants as the deity's sacred territory. Sacred groves are green patches *in situ* conservation of our genetic resources. These areas show microclimatic conditions within their own distinct floral and faunal values…[T]he ethnobotanical value of sacred groves is also an important factor leading to their protection by local communities. (370).

Thus, the semiotic codes of Chipko as well as the shared consciousness of the 'sacred grove' ecoculture may have informed the action of 'tree-hugging' preceding the *Goa*

Bachao Abhiyan. As free-floating signs in the human signification system, the icons of such 'tree-hugging', informed by cultural habit or memory, can transmute into trans-corporeal experience where the alterities between humans and ecology blur and their essential oneness of being part of the same biosystem gets foregrounded. It's a signifier interplaying out of but also responding to the underlying langue of *Prakriti* – a cultural interpretant of the ontological non-dualisms between humans and nature.

As an approach, if Semiotics provides the agency of meaning-making, concomitantly it also provides the intervention of meaning-deconstruction. And whether the interpreter (human-agent) is conscious about using the process or not, human cognition often decrypts implicit/understated significations within a semiotic sign either through processes of fracture or location of absentia. In the success-stories written by *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* this technique has played a subtle but crucial role. Both the movements foreground the pitfalls entailed within wrongful nomenclaturing of terms which then get subsumed within discourse and become a part of lived space. Carson's narrative, for instance, points out the fallacy within terming chemicals used to kill pests as 'pesticides'. Superficially, there is nothing wrong with this portmanteau. After all, the suffix 'cide' is a Latin term for killing and as such 'pesti-cide' is meant to indicate the killing of insects. However, the nomenclature makes a significant omission. It misleads through its semantic focus on the 'killing of pests' only. The term 'only' is significantly dropped and thereby unimplied. A deeper analysis into this signifying fixation may reveal a deliberate (and vested) interest. The fact that pesticides harm living beings, other than targeted pests, is inconspicuous. *Silent Spring's* literary-scientific analysis exposes the grotesque manipulation of this sign which undermines the quality of non-selectivity in these chemicals. Carson not only de-constructs and re-presents the term but also suggests a more explicit nomenclaturing of such chemicals for full-knowledge of the public. She says,

> These sprays, dusts, and aerosols are now applied almost universally to farms, gardens, forests, and homes— nonselective chemicals that have the power to kill every insect, the 'good' and the 'bad', to still the song of birds and the leaping of fish in the streams, to coat the leaves with a deadly film, and to linger on in soil—all this through the intended target may be only a few weeds or insects. Can anyone believe it is possible to lay down such a

barrage of poisons on the surface of the earth without making it unfit for all life? *They should not be called 'insecticides', but 'biocides'*. (13).

Goa Bachao Abhiyan similarly decoded the understated semiotics behind two politico-legal codes and narrowly avoided the pitfall of inaction entailed in the dominant narrative it was pitted against. When the government conceded to the public exegesis that manifested in the form of mass-agitations heralded by *GBA*, it decided to scrap and de-notify the Regional Plan with prospective effect. The government's decision of denotification was a resounding accomplishment for *GBA* but it detected a material snag in the legal signifier 'prospective effect'. In judicial terminology, a decision taken with prospective effect is "applying the laws in future or at least from the date of commencement of the statute" *(Legal Service India.com)*. The *GBA* gauged that the implications embedded within this sign could veritably undermine the urgency of the situation. Neither the sustainability of ecology nor the identity of Goa's environmental movement could be compromised due to such delays. *GBA* stood firm on its demand for a de-notification of the Regional Plan 2011 from 'retrospective effect'. Ultimately, the government declared its decision of de-notifying the plan per peoples' concerns.

Silent Spring and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* feature as stand-alone embodiments of environmental protest whenever they are invoked in myriad scenarios. However, the present study roots their practical applicability of bringing about policy-changes within their identities as important signs in a larger signification system. This identity is marked by intertextual bearings that managed to appeal to an underlying shared consciousness in specific spatiotemporal contexts. Without undermining their individual achievements as works that wrought tangible impact (the end-goal of ecological criticism in any form), the present study argues that accessing the cultural subconscious to which the narratologies of these movements refer may help in forming a paradigm of environmental praxes that is not quarantined from environmental theory or textuality.

(ii)   Spaces of subversion within spaces of striation: the negotiation of Spatiality in narratology of agitation

'Space' cannot be ancillary to any movement of environmental criticism or protest. It is, in fact, the locus from which most eco-narratives, both tangible and intangible, begin. However, such movements provide interesting examples of space-appropriation central to holistic approaches that may be adopted in Green Cultural Studies. *Goa Bachao Abhiyan*, for instance, captures what Tally Jr. and Battista would

call 'cartographic anxieties' while *Silent Spring* tries to defamiliarize phenomenological realities to present it anew from the point of view of DDT-penetration. In doing so, both the narratives create a 'meta-space' of sorts that requires them to operate above and away from perceived spatiality to chart a new frame of reference. It requires them to operate within but also outside conventional environmental markers; any protest, after all, comes from non-fixations. More importantly, such projects call for breakages of what Rangarajan would term 'hyperseparated enclaves' in which culture and science operate. This is because a movement launched by completely eschewing scientific episteme of a 'place' can be as self-defeating as a protestive measure taken in complete ignorance of the ethnic-cultural and socioecological peculiarities of the 'space'. The dimension of 'spatiality' in the narratives of environmental movements, thus, treads tricky waters. A study of *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* and *Silent Spring* provide useful insights into this dimension and suggest plausible factors that led to the impact which both these narratives managed to bring and leave in their arrivals.

In re-thinking the 'social production' of space, Lefebvre worked through the aporia of 'concrete abstraction'. As complex as it may sound, the concept actually serves as a vantage point for analysing the re-configuration of spatialities in political materiality. What Lefebvre wanted to reconstruct was a structure for understanding space "from a single principle of social development and [also] a retrospective analysis of historical conjunctions, overdetermined by a range of social practices" (Stanek 134). This reconciliatory juxtaposition provides the paradigm through which one can analyse the 'struggle over space' involved in *GBA*'s inception. As a space known for tourism, Goa's sociopolitical identity is interfaced intricately with its geographic make-up. The state is 3702 sq. kms. in area with twelve talukas. The coastal belt as well as the Western Ghats, running from north to south of the region, are important socioecological domains of the state through which the place derives and grounds its political as well as cultural identity. Over the years, responding to various internal and external forces of politics and demography, the ecological landscape of Goa has undergone numerous transitions and transformations. With a strong ecocultural heritage informing the collective consciousness of the peoples of Goa confronting the high-modernist rhetoric of competitive advancement, the binary of 'economic-development-versus-environmental-preservation' has often been a matter of debate and discourse in the state-polity's spatial appropriation. The first environmental movement in the liberated state

of Goa in 1974, over the groundwater pollution in the villages of Sancaole, Velsao and Cansaulim due to chemicals released by a major industry, is one of the strongest reminders of spatial-struggles in the place (Sakhardande 288).

The dialogue between Goa's lived spaces and conceived spaces has often been fraught with tension due to the dichotomy of space-perception mentioned above. Subjective appreciations of ecological integrity, biodiversity as well as unity have often been challenged by economic matrices which become determiners of socio-political advancements. The conflicts over Regional Plan 2011 reveal these rooted interstices. Ritu Prasad, who participated in GBA, forefronts the essential tensions that existed in the conceptualization of Regional Plan 2011. As a policy document, the nomenclatural paradigm of the plan called for a processuality that was to be democratic. As such, the design of 'conceived spaces' vis-à-vis lived-spatiality had to be prepared keeping in view

> [d]ata collected from studies done in varied fields like social, economic, and demographic…[B]ased on an overall policy, broad land use is demarcated on a surface utilization plan, based on which distribution-level plans, comprehensive development plans, and outline development plans are to be prepared. The plan must broadly demarcate areas for different human activities, including agriculture, forestry, industry, and urban and rural settlements. It must also provide land for recreation, botanical and zoological gardens, natural reserves, and so on. In certain parts of the state, areas would be set aside for industrial purposes or town planning schemes. (qtd. in Coelho 111).

The concrete re-configuration of land-use and management implemented by the authorities through governmental sanction, therefore, had to keep the rubrics of conceived-spaces produced at notional levels of design in sight. A nuanced conceptualization and awareness of land as a networked entity plays a huge role in such appropriations. It has been cited that Dean D' Cruz, one of the forerunners of the *GBA* movement, who had been keeping a close watch on implementations of land-measures, found considerable discrepancies between the plan and the implementation. In this, he deployed what Deleuze and Guattari would call the 'smooth space' of hypermediality in the form of Google Earth. GBA members foreground that on further probes into these discrepancies it came to light that in the interim between the first release of the draft-

plan in November 2005 and the final version released in October 2006, an additional seventy-five million square metres of land (Coelho 112) had been converted into settlement zone. Moreover, this reconfiguration displayed cogent polarisations towards private interests, thereby becoming a case-study in 'perceived space' – a place of spatial practice – that becomes useful in decoding the superimpositions of ideology upon land-management. The *GBA* analysts claimed that various new settlements released in the later draft were not identified in the initial plan and thereby it could be causally deduced that these areas were mainly set-out for 'big-time builders', i.e., capitalistic interests of the real-estate. Moreover, in a classic-case of language-appropriation in land-management (as seen in the colonial exploitation of semantics in spatial striation of Africa through *Cry, the Beloved Country*), the seemingly innocuous deployment of the term 'settlement' zone problematized the apparent transparency of the plan and revealed tensions that were picked up by GBA. As highlighted by its members, areas such as coastlines (including beach-zones), forested lands, mangroves as well as lakes were shown as settlement-zones. Traditionally demarcated *communidade* lands, meant for village-communities (spaces often dubbed as '*terra nullius*' in imperial jargon) were also imbricated within this categorization. Post-structuralist readings into spatial language also take into consideration relevant absences which often bespeak of pervasive hegemonies that inform deliberate droppages. GBA members, too, detected relevant absentia(s) in spatial representation within the plan. For instance, proposed mining sites were not shown in the released-version of the plan. The Regional Plan 2011 against which GBA agitated, thus, came to represent a spatial management of undisclosed interests considered detrimental not only to the ecological sustainability of the state but also to the sociocultural identity of Goa as a place. Within this zone of perceived striation, a space of subversion had to be envisaged that, rather than being divisive, could stand as a symbol of becoming and coming-together.

In his work, "Of Other Spaces", Foucault speaks of 'l'espace du debors' that stands for "external space in which we live, and which constitutes our life, our time and our history" (Tally 121). According to Foucault, this heterogenous space is constitutive of "individuals and groups as subjects while also representing the fluid milieus through which social forces move" (121). Although, Foucauldian analysis later on veers into decrypting the sinister menaces of the 'panopticon' within these spatialities, his conceptualization of the 'heterogenous space' as a place of subjectivation in the midst

of intermingling social milieus is a concept beneficial for understanding the way *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* employed spatial embodiments in their protest. As seen in the analysis of the *maand* in the study of *Dhalo* in section 3.3.2 of Chapter Two, Goa's ecoculture has often used designated tracts of land as spaces of non-alterity between ecology and humans. As in the case of *Dhalo*, the practice of the folk songs, dance and festival is an appeal and exhumation of an ecological tradition that defines the identity of the communities performing it. GBA made a similar appeal to the shared consciousness of Goan peoples. It took the agitation out of the narrow annals of meeting-rooms into public domains. Spaces of historic importance such as 'Azad Maidan' (through the public rally organized on December 18, 2006) as well as Lohia Maidan (through the mass meeting held on January 16, 2007) were integrated as part of the struggle. Sakhardande suggests that the selection of these spaces was poignant at many levels since these places were imbued with unique signification in Goa's struggle for liberation from Portuguese rule as well as independent statehood in its aftermath ("Personal Interview"). The spatialities were indices to the belief that if Goan peoples could come together for a common cause, they would emerge victorious. These spaces were also symbols of a collective consciousness built upon the land's chequered historicity and its unique *asmitai* – identity. *GBA* also resourced the frameworks of visual spatiality and integrated them within physical spaces. Coelho records of an exhibition where "graphics and maps of the Regional Plan 2011" were juxtaposed with the "Google Earth satellite images of the same sites" (109). *GBA*, thus, created an adjunctive third space of 'what-is-and-what-could-be' in order to facilitate a deeper cognitive mapping of implications, imbrications and disharmonies entailed within the plan. Environmental messaging was also inserted within digital spaces for greater outreach. A video titled 'Goa Bachao Abhiyan – Save Goa' uploaded on YouTube on June 28, 2007 (in the aftermath of the scrapping) utilized photographs clicked by Rajan Parrikar and posited the state's ecological images vis-à-vis images of the plausible destructions. Thus, even while fighting a dominant narrative juggernauted by the rhetoric of 'development', *GBA* managed to create a space of empowerment that offered not only a subversive perspective but also an alternate agency through which they could reinvigorate their affiliations with the land.

Matrices of similar subversion can be traced in Carson's *Silent Spring*. Carson's narrative invokes space in a more deliberate and definitive protest against pro-capitalist

political hegemony that completely devaluates the intrinsic needs and peculiarities of a particular geography while imposing its ideological policies. Her narrative seems to engage in Warf's 'surface-to-network' paradigm in a more material sense. Like the narratives of *The Inheritors* and *Avatar*, *Silent Spring* too foregrounds the oft-ignored presence of eco-spatial interlinkages. Carson, however, roots this emphatic foregrounding in scientific episteme and calls for an urgent attentivity towards it. The non-selectivity of chemicals makes their insertion an abrasive force to an entire food-chain, even those organisms that come in no direct contact. This network is the synaptic bond of *Avatar*'s imagination but its implications in phenomenological reality are far more damaging than meets the eye. Carson states that

> [the] chemicals sprayed on croplands or forests or gardens lie long in soil, entering into living organisms, passing from one to another in a chain of poisoning and death. Or they pass mysteriously by underground streams until they emerge and, through the alchemy of air and sunlight, combine into new forms that kill vegetation, sicken cattle, and work unknown harm on those who drink from once pure wells. (12).

This interconnectedness is also traced in marine spatiality – a dimension of space which has occupied ancillary positions in most epistemes and theories pursued by cultural studies despite its centrality to major anthropocentric enterprises such as colonial imperialism, expansion and globalization. *Silent Spring* brings the criticality of re-looking at human interferences in marine-spaces to the fore when it emphasizes that,

> In the entire water-pollution problem, there is probably nothing more disturbing than the threat of widespread contamination of groundwater. It is not possible to add pesticides to water anywhere without threatening the purity of water everywhere. Seldom if ever does Nature operate in closed and separate compartments, and she has not done so in distributing the earth's water supply. (30)

A lot of spatial negotiation that transpires in ecology due to anthropogenic interference is often inconspicuous to the human eye or ignored due to the familiarity of lived spaces. The perception of such changes is gradual; the disappearance of familiar birds, the sudden deaths of local fauna, delay in harvests, erratic changes in seasonal cycles are signs which are registered over a period of time. Carson's narrative points out to the

viciousness of such eco-spatial ruptures and dislocations. Not only are they most often irreversible, but also carry a quality of stealth and malignancy. The processuality of such spatial disruptions, however, is not naïve or 'outside' human control. At times, such human inventions are well-aware of the damage as well as the extent of it. However, the 'normalcy' provided to such rhetorics as 'development-at-all-cost' implicitly enforce and sanction the short-sightedness that accompanies the implementation of ecologically unsound practices.

Almost as a refrain, *Silent Spring* attacks two rhetorics that it believes have caused an aggressive demotion of eco-spatial integrity; the first of this is the Industrial Revolution and the second, World War II. The post-war tenor of 'progression' was undoubtedly dichotomic. It was fraught with profound disillusionment amid the debris left behind by violence inflicted upon nature *and* people. The fact that humans could occupy so much of centrality was, for once, terrifying. And yet, in all this, says *Silent Spring*, there was a strain of smugness and superiority. The destruction created and penetrated in environments as part of the relentless war machination was not only continued with callous aggrandizement but also re-enforced with greater propensity. Carson fractures this dominant narrative and in fact, traces the anti-developmental source-to-resource transition brought in by the juggernaut of Industrial Revolution and propelled by post-war ideological domination. She underpins the role of both these forces in the indiscriminate use of chemicals and their prolonged (as well as undeterred) continuity. The narrative of *Silent Spring* records that,

> [A]s the tide of chemicals born of the Industrial Age has arisen to engulf our environment, a drastic change has come about in the nature of the most serious public health problems…a hazard *we ourselves have introduced into our world as our modern way of life has evolved.* (100).

Far from being halted, this polemic of unchecked advancement was inserted into popular rhetoric to re-invigorate the spirit of human supremacy that had spearheaded (destructive) technological breakthroughs and inventions. The post-War world, therefore, was an ideologically-crafted 'conceived space' which brought in negative convergences from different politico-economic forces. It could have also been an agenda-driven policy to re-instil faith in the failing, largely debilitating systems of science that were being appropriated for annihilation rather than sustenance. These

factors, willy-nilly, subdued the connotations of 'hazard' associated with dangerous chemicals and brought in a façade of normalcy. In a way, life-threatening chemicals became a part of the lived spaces of post-war psyche denoting immunization and protection (from 'natural' environment) rather than fatality to human and ecological health. The narrative of *Silent Spring* underscores this point as it documents that,

> This industry is a child of the Second World War. In the course of developing agents of chemical warfare, some of the chemicals created in the laboratory were found to be lethal to insects. The discovery did not come by chance: insects were widely used to test chemicals as agents of death for man. The result has been a seemingly endless stream of synthetic insecticides…Our attitude towards poisons has undergone a subtle change. Once they were kept in containers marked with skull and crossbones; the infrequent occasions of their use were marked with utmost care that they should come in contact with the target and with nothing else. With the development of the new organic insecticides and the abundance of surplus planes after the Second World War, all this was forgotten.(85)

Based on the analyses conducted as part of this research, the present study contends that economy emerges as the single-most influential factor in the anthropogenic re-structuring of space. Moreover, such re-structuring is almost always polarised to meet the needs of a *very specific* group of people. In such systemic configurations, land is treated as an objective entity, a *res extensa* which in itself has meaning only insofar as its utility to the 'larger' human cause is met. If it is anticipated that other humans would be getting affected by the changes in space, then appropriation of socially constructed institutions such as language, law and politics are brought into play. While the deployment of coercion in such processes is not rare, the façade of 'consent' is often used. In the latter machination, the larger mass is led into believing that the re-structuring will happen towards the greater good of the public. The injection of this rhetoric is so potent, as in the case of select (neo)colonial manifestations, that the dominating ideology is barely met with any resistance. Organic intellectualism bearing counter-discourses to such forces, then, comes either from an invocation to shared consciousness (as in the case of *Goa Bachao Abhiyan*) or in the form of a single-narrative that makes its way into collective psyche. Such narratives breakdown these 'postmodern geographies' and rip out hegemonic traces from superimposed surfaces of

normality and consensus. *Silent Spring* does this while pointing out to the mechanism of cyclic destruction entailed in the human enterprises that are labelled as 'improvement' measures in a given space. Carson elaborates, by foreground that,

> It is an extraordinary fact that the deliberate introduction of poisons into a reservoir is becoming a *fairly common practice.* The purpose is usually to promote recreational uses, even though the water must then be treated at some expense to make it fit for its intended use as drinking water. When sportsmen of an area want to 'improve' fishing in a reservoir, they prevail on authorities to dump quantities of poison into it to kill the undesired fish, which are then replaced with hatchery fish more suited to the sportsmen's taste. The procedure has a strange, Alice-in-Wonderland quality. *The reservoir was created as a public water supply, yet the community, probably unconsulted about the sportsmen's project, is forced either to drink water containing poisonous residues or to pay out tax money for treatment of the water to remove the poisons*—treatments that are by no means foolproof. (34; my emphasis).

In breaking down the geographies of human construction built on economic principles that pay little heed to ecological principles, the narrative of *Silent Spring* challenges many of the 'given' notions held within societies. Peter Barry argues that modern literary theory treats truth as a provisional entity and meaning as a contingent matrix both of which are not *out there* for objective re-presentation. These determiners inform Carson's line of scientific inquiry too as she propounds that even the most naïve-seeming instrument of 'mass development' may be shaped by ideologies of capitalistic profit and/or quick-fix solutions to anthropocentric problems. A case in point is intensive agriculture that roots the inevitability of its presence through the factuality of growing consumptive demands. While Carson points out that the *real* problem to be tapped here is not the proliferating demand but rather overpopulation, she also shows that modern agriculture pursuits have also become increasingly capital-driven where overconsumption is deliberately promoted in order to obtain easier sanction for overproduction and concomitantly, higher dividends. Such models, however, not only drain the land of its resources leaving no time for natural recuperation but also generate artificial problems calling for higher pest/insect control. Hazardous chemicals, thereby, largely enter the food chain not through natural processes entailed in farming but

through 'conceived' problems engineered within short-sighted politic. *Silent Spring* states that,

> Under primitive agricultural conditions the farmer had few insect problems. These arose with the intensification of agriculture—the devotion of immense acreages to a single crop. Such a system set the stage for explosive increases in specific insect populations. Single-crop farming does not take advantage of the principles by which nature works; *it is agriculture as an engineer might conceive it to be. Nature has introduced great variety into the landscape, but man has displayed a passion for simplifying it. Thus he undoes the built-in checks and balances by which nature holds the species within bounds*. One important natural check is a limit on the amount of suitable habitat for each species. Obviously then, an insect that lives on wheat can build up its population to much higher levels on a farm devoted to wheat than on one in which wheat is intermingled with other crops to which the insect is not adapted. (53; my emphasis).

While textuality often subsumes the 'spatial' within its temporality, theory stands the risk of abstracting space so much that it loses touch with material unfolding. Neither is preferred within the purview of Green Cultural Studies which operates with an inherent commitment to environmental praxes. 'Movements' of practical application, then, provide new topographies of creative resistance where the corporeal aspect of ecological space is amalgamated within its cultural and meta-physical nuance. *Silent Spring* and *GBA* represent this topography of reconciliation. Working against a region-specific and immediate threat to environment, they often devise positions of spatial critique that can be accessed for universal applicability. Vandana Shiva's anti-GMO narratives, for instance, resonate with Carson's battle against big-leagues from the chemical industry in the sense that it critiques economic re-structuration of ecological spaces – forested and agricultural – to serve short-sighted vested interests. The people's movements springing up in Brazil over the unchecked burning of Amazon rainforests use hypermediated spaces (a combination of physical, virtual and visceral) to stage their protests similar to those used by *GBA*. The need to locate counter-discourses on spatiality within the practical applications of 'movements' of scientific episteme and cultural consciousness can help build a framework within which issues such as

intergenerational equity, regional specificity and futuristic road-mapping vis-à-vis space may be brought into global discussions.

(iii)   Countering hegemonies through forces of subjectivities and locating co-texts : a New-Historicist intervention

The hermeneutics of New Historicism propound that very often critical analyses can occupy and assume positions which the authors/creators of textual signifiers left behind but could not/ did not articulate. This is not to say that authors deliberately omit selective co-textual details. The 'affect' of the co-text may be incidental; it could be an aspect that retrospective 'close reading' brings in its wake by adopting the technique of abrasion. In this sense, New Historicism moves away from the formula of de-contextualised (non-fixated) semiotics and re-builds the literary context around a 'text'. The present study believes that no human endeavour is conducted and produced in a vacuum. Even those disruptions in knowledge-domains that seem like accidental fallouts of 'objective' enterprises are steeped in *very specific* contexts. So, even while signs within a text can interplay into infinitum, their origins can be fixated on firm grounds. Having said this, not all of these contexts make it to mainstream reception of a text. Very often, a fact, facsimile, thread or trajectory, that may have consciously or subconsciously shaped the production of a text, gets left out. A New Historicist study, then, reads into the crevice left by this 'leaving out' and evaluates its significance in textual impact.

The present study picks up this approach in its intervention in the narratives of *Silent Spring*. Numerous works have been written eulogizing the impact of the work which arguably launched one of the biggest environmental movements in America and subsequently, in different parts of the world. The present study itself has tried to uncover cadences involved in such an impact and iterate a semiotic and spatial analysis of the *Silent Spring*. And yet, there may be more than meets the eye. One of the most pertinent reasons for *Silent Spring*'s impact has been the attention it received from the John F. Kennedy government. The imprimatur which Kennedy, as the President of the United States of America in the 1960s paid to a book that was pitted against industrial giants, was shocking to many. America was, after all, in the post-war economic overdrive where industries were modus operandi. What then may have prompted John F. Kennedy to take a potentially disruptive step?

An interesting article titled, "Rachel Carson and JFK, an environmental tag team" by Douglas Brinkley locates this reason in Kennedy's Romantic preoccupation with the Thoreauvian American legend – a metaphor that *Silent Spring* foregrounds in the prologue to its narrative. The study goes on to report that,

> One of John F. Kennedy's favorite books was Henry David Thoreau's *Cape Cod*, published in 1865. When in Washington, D.C., Kennedy, a yachtsman, always craved the Cape Cod winds and turbulent Atlantic waves. He restored his health sailing the Nantucket Sound waters around sandbars and shoals... In awe of the millions of shore, sea, and marsh birds that used the Cape as a stopover during their seasonal migrations, Kennedy, a Massachusetts Audubon Society supporter, wanted to make sure that the shoreline remained unsullied by industrialization. In this spirit, on September 3, 1959, Kennedy, then a member of the U.S. Senate, cosponsored the Cape Cod National Seashore bill. (Brinkley).

This may very well have been the propelling motif behind Kennedy's "New Frontier" rhetoric picked up at the time of his Presidential election campaign in 1960. Political analysts read in it an aggressive defense of American power-crescendo in the midst of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Brinkley suggests that Carson, who had started writing *Silent Spring* around the same time, may have read Kennedy's narrative differently. For her, his leadership seemed like a promise as his speech signified a commitment to preservation – cultural and ecological. This may have in turn led to a textual (sub)consciousness that caused Carson to cast her scientific episteme in the form of a story with the metaphor of America as the backdrop.

It may be grossly reductionistic and self-defeating to pin down *Silent Spring*'s literary structuration as the sole reason for its impact upon the Kennedy-led government. It could have been one of the many forces in the vortex that created a conducive climate for the text's reception. And yet, these matrices reveal more than a plain reading of temporal facts could contain. The present study's New Historicist probe into the issue uncovers an interesting co-textual 'anecdote' of the time which may be a 'missing piece' in the *Silent Spring* success-story.

The post-War political climate was a complex matrix of conflict and power-struggle in the midst of massive dysfunctions of former 'sacrosanct' institutions. The

financial as well as military implications of the two World Wars had led to a conspicuous shift of 'centre' from Britain to America– it was a 'continental' drift of sorts that led to a world of dwindling stabilities and multiple possibilities. In fact, in the work, *Transition in Power: Technological "Warfare" and the Shift from British to American hegemony since 1919*, Peter Hugill calls the power tussle between the two nations as "the most drawn out struggle in the history of the world-system as well as the most complex, involving multiple actors in what we call a multi-polar world" (01). Britain and America shared a relationship of considerable complication in the aftermath of the second World War. The former was tenuously holding on to its institutional formidability embodied in many ways by its then Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Amidst the chaos of spiralling de-centredness, Churchill represented an image of Britain's operative functionality, its tenacious grip over the scheme of things. America, however, was charting a course of newness. As an emerging global power, it invested its faith as much in its historicity as in re-definitions outlined by the likes of John F. Kennedy.

It was in the midst of this political turmoil that Britain was hit by an environmental catastrophe in the form of the Great Smog of 1952. This drastic climatic change came in the form of "a severe air-pollution…a period of cold weather, combined with an anticyclone and windless conditions, collected airborne pollutants—mostly arising from the use of coal—to form a thick layer of smog over the city" ("Great Smog of London"). It has been reported that in the four-day period that the Great Smog lasted, 4000 people died while a staggering 100000 more were left severely ill. In his work, "Old Smoke: London's Famous Fog", Mathew Wills locates the genesis of this problem in the hazardous industrial operations of the time. He reports that the post-war domestic coal, produced for the consumption of locals, tended to be of a poor quality; the better quality coal was kept largely for export to pay off the debts which the nation faced due to World War II. While the fog lifted in a week's time, it had left a huge imprint leading ultimately to the Clean Air Act of 1956. But this environmental disaster had raised more a mere alarm; it brought to light the persistent marginal status accorded by administrations to reports from weather departments. Investigations revealed that despite repeated warning about the toxic emissions from the coal mines, the British administration had paid no heed. The event considerably threatened an already volatile leadership of Winston Churchill highlighting, moreover, the powerful impact that

ecological catastrophes could have on collective consciousness and by extension, political systems.

The years covering the mass-responsiveness and investigative probes into the Great Smog of London coincided with Carson's research for *Silent Spring* and Kennedy's trajectorial rise towards US Presidency. Therefore, the present study argues that when Carson's narrative was ultimately released in 1962 causing substantial pre and post-publication alarm among readers, Kennedy may have been neither prepared nor inclined towards relegating the concerns of the book to the peripheries. He was, after all, chartering a new discourse of preservation and progression. In this, Carson inserted a third value – public health. She connected the movement of new environmentalism with 'hands-on' viability for the general peoples of America. This contention of the present study finds validation in Brinkley's report which states that Carson's new ecological awareness, "would extend to every mom and dad striving to protect their children's precious health. Nobody wanted to give their child cow's milk containing dangerous levels of strontium-90 or serve fish contaminated with toxic mercury. "Ecology" became the new buzzword" (Brinkley).

John Berger's epigrammatic statement, "never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one" (Epigraph, Roy), invoked earlier on in the study, holds truer in the case of *Silent Spring*. The success of the narrative made it an initiator of several global dialogues in the years that followed. But, as the above New Historicist analysis shows, *Silent Spring* was a result of specific sociopolitical forces coming together in interspersion. This historical specificity, however, can be taken *out* of its spatiotemporal context to discern patterns in contemporary politics. It serves as a viable point of departure from where one can analyse the forces of international pressure – direct and indirect – that can play a huge role in regional, national and global policymaking in environment. Viewed in an even larger paradigm, this New Historicist reading of *Silent Spring*'s reception and impact, can open a perceptual window through which the role of bodies such as IPCC, UNFCC and UNEP may be revisited in curtailing ecological disasters arising out of political short-sightedness.

Another pertinent refrain comes to fore through the 'anecdote' of the Great Smog of London: the off-handed treatment which is often meted out to environmental reports. In the aftermath of the devastating floods which hit Kerala in 2018, the state of Goa

woke up to an alarm-raising headline which read, "Goa may go Kerala way, warns ecologist Madhav Gadgil" (PTI). In the article, Gadgil went on to explicate that unchecked destruction of Western Ghats due to profit-maximization activities may fatally endanger the already precarious ecological balance upon which the safety of Goa's people depends. This wasn't the first time, however, that the people of Goa were (re)acquainted with the surreptitious deterioration of ecologies around them. Several important literatures, before Gadgil's, had documented the presence of erroneous judgements (informed by vested interests) that trampled upon paradigms of sustainable socioecology. Pertinent among these, however, did not come in the form of a scientific template or economic report. It came in the form of a literary piece, entailing within itself one of the most protracted struggles which Goa's ecological integrity has had with capitalistic onslaughts. The onslaught uncovered by the narrative in question was of rampant mining-activities and the text in question was the novel *Acchev* written in Konkani.

This brings the present study to one of its crucial arguments: that, if a non-literary 'moment' (an event in totality or an individual episode) can form the critical co-text of a literary work, then a literary work can also form a crucial co-textual interlinkage to a non-literary, in this case socio-political 'moment'. *Acchev* (1977) documented the steep downfall of a village-community that gets embroiled in the vicious clutches of the mining-juggernaut. While it established its locus from the points of view of fictional characters, the tenor of protest it assumed was rooted in socioecological reality. It had been but over two decades of Goa's liberation and the activity of mining, which had come to the state via colonisers, was gaining greater momentum than the one envisaged before. While the noise of 'development' often phased out any nuanced observation, *Acchev*'s poignant portrayal of the vicarious onset of mining in agrarian village of Kollamba traced the locative inflexes that went into wreaking a downward spiral of environment and society. Its microscopic revelations brought out several matrices that current debates in sustainability carry – the high-jargon of 'advancement', the capitalisation of rural vulnerabilities, the marginalization of regional needs, subsequent breakages in community consciousness and a willy-nilly destruction of local ecosystems. In a way, the narrative of *Acchev* prophetically presaged Goa's strained conversations with the phenomenon of mining that reached a climatic highpoint in the first decade of 21st century culminating into the Justice Shah Commission report of

2012. Although the issue of mining comes with its set of vicissitudes that call for multidimensional analysis, *Acchev* provided a narrative for environmental protest which, through the Konkani original and the English translation (2002), entered the collective psyche of the Goan peoples. As critic Kiran Budkuley points out,

> The novel appears to be, at least in critical hindsight, less concerned with the predicament of the characters with the predicament of the characters per se but almost preoccupied with the erosion of ecology, breakdown of the ethical structure, the deterioration of the age-old agrarian economy, and the destruction of the integral cultural fabric of the simple rural economy through wilful acts of omission and commission. (qtd. in Oliveira 122).

The connections between *Acchev* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan*, although implicit and perhaps subconscious, are vividly traceable. Both embody responses triggered by an individual 'event' – in the case of former, it is mining; in the case of latter, it is the Regional Plan 2011. But through the sieve of these specific episodes, the narratives actually highlight underlying power-struggles, dichotomies entailed in the connotations of 'development' and 'sustainability', the material unfolding of social problems due to breakdowns in biosystems as well as the polyvalent implications of *any* decision which incorporates alterations in ecology. The *GBA* movement, as was *Acchev*, is against the authoritarian polemic which tends to ignore the grassroot displacements it effects. As a standout literary piece in Konkani fiction, *Acchev* unfolded its protest movement in a fictional village but cast it into a mould through which it could represent 'any village' thereby generating a fabric of shared consciousness that could be accessed in future time. In this sense, *Acchev* provides an archival continuum in which the *GBA* can be placed. It is an underlying counter-discourse to hegemonies that are routed through cultures (of which literature is a part). In the case of *GBA*, the political strongarm was perceived through discrepancies in re-drafts, language appropriations and non-representations provided to the peoples of Goa. Considering the fact that *GBA* and *Acchev* are almost two decades apart, juxtaposing them as text and co-text can help to trace the discursive patterns vis-à-vis land-management, environmental policy-making and ecology culturation that has been unfolding in the state over a period of time. Moreover, such juxtaposed readings can help decode hegemonies involved in State-apparatus even as power transitions from one governing conduit to another. Such cross-textual abrasive readings, in addition, can rupture putative perceptions of a spatio-

cultural entity formed especially 'from the outside'. For instance, preconceived misrepresentations and stereotypes to which a region may be subjected can infiltrate into its material and phenomenological realities. For instance, the misinformed view of Goa as a land of non-articulation often does the rounds in popular media due to inadequate readings into its historicity. Such mis-constructions may not always be naïve; in fact, they may be incepted through well-designed ideological machinations that are driven by motives of power-acquisitions often routed towards land-grabs and spatial manipulations. An archival continuum of anti-hegemonic, counter-discursive and poignantly protestive organic intellectualism and articulation represented as much by literary production as by concrete 'movements' can play an instrumental role in generating a nuanced vigilance among peoples especially with regard to self and space.

New Historicist methodologies read each phenomenon of human history as 'moment'. These moments, however, are not viewed as frozen monoliths; they are placed within context(s) but the said context is itself looked at as a heteroglossia where conversations continue even as its creators, actors and players move on. Movements such as *Silent Spring* and *GBA* have visibly left their legacies and imprints in the history of environmental protest and response. Any reading into their footprints, therefore, has to take their regional and temporal specificities into account – in fact, even those that these movements themselves may be unconscious of. Doing so, helps to locate useful parallels between 'past' and 'present' time. Co-texts are the locus-points of such parallels. As in the case of *Silent Spring*, the co-text of the Great Smog of London forefronted the influence of trans-regional and inter-national (deliberately hyphenated) politics in micro and macroscopic environmental decisions. A contemporary 'event', in fact, provides a case in point. The Amazon rainforest burning largely went unchecked in the months of June and July despite warnings issued by the INPE. Yet, in August 2019, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro took decisions calling for an 'immediate' mitigation of the fires affecting the environment as well as indigenous peoples. Bolsonaro's decision may be exhumed as a main text of political relevance; however, a disruptive New Historicist reading will uncover interconnections between co-texts. Considering the spatiotemporal 'ambience' in which Bolsonaro took this decision leads New Historicism towards perforated readings of co-textualities entailed in trade-deals between France and Brazil, the speech delivered by France Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron emphasizing upon environmental justice and equity as well as the larger

narrative of the G7 summit held in Paris in August 2019. Similarly, as demonstrated by the locational positioning of *Acchev* with *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* as a subconscious voice of protest and responsiveness in Goan cultural psyche, literatures of green narratology displaying subjectivations (or stories of alterity) on 21st century multimedia and hyperspaces can be pierced through to study the (re)formations of collective consciousness inserted with such phenomena as the 'Thunberg effect' and 'Earth Hour' movements. Moreover, the New Historicist readings of practical applications in environmental dialogues can help view human-ecology interface as an entelechic archival continuum of pastiches and patterns that can play a huge role in determining future trajectories of sustainable interactions.

(iv) Analysing the process of disempowerment and re-empowerment: rethinking (non) representations through the paradigm of Subaltern Studies.

In an interview with Reuters that went into the hinterlands of Amazon rainforest in the aftermath of the August fires, Handerch Waka Mura, a leader of the indigenous tribal clan of the place told the crew, "We are sad because the forest is dying at every moment. We feel the climate changing and the world needs the forest" (*India Today*). He then went on to show them a vast tract of land that lay barren as a result of mass deforestation. Handerch Waka Mura's speech and the deforested land which he showed signify the contextual location he *and* the forest that he mourns for, occupy – it is a space of disempowerment and deliberate non-representation. The Mura and the other tribes living in the Amazon are at the receiving end of an aggressive pro-development policy where 'ecological sustainability' is a conceptual and terminological encumbrance. Willy-nilly, these tribes and the forest itself are faced with a Repressive State Apparatus that works its way into ecological spaces through the authoritarian scaffold of coercion. They are victims of a political system where their representation is nullified in the noise of dominant narrative. They are also victims of an underhand cultural hegemony that doesn't understand their way of living. Their position reinforces the rhetorical question which Spivak asks, "Can the subaltern speak?". To which one may add, "To whom? And how?".

It is in answers to such questions that one may locate the significance of environmental 'movements'. Be it in the form of a mass uprising or an infinitesimal unrest, ecological narratives of protest not only speak but speak *for*. They are, almost

always, a voice projected upwards. The sites they occupy, materially and perceptually, are marked by conflict, strife and struggle. Oftener than not, their space is one of 'counteraction' – against an authority, a State-machina and/or a pervasive ideology that constantly seeks to undermine their role as change-bringers. The 'green narrative' has often been (tactically so) equated with 'anti-developmentalism'. Concomitantly, people fighting such movements are often branded as deterrents to human progress and advancement. Their proclivity towards nature is often referred to as 'primal', a value that can pull humankind backwards in the evolutionary linearity rather than propelling them forward.

With the recent Climate Strike movements often resorting to pre-emptive or defensive violence against authoritarian bodies as part of their protests, the term 'eco-terrorist' has been employed in condemning environmental agitations further. The present study does not seek to provide any defense or justification of such violence. A discussion of the sort not only calls for a complex appraisal of respective situations but also bring into play nondescript frameworks of analyses that do not fall within the purview of the present study. However, the study will make an attempt to consider the distinct spatiality of 'disempowerment' in which green movements foster. For doing so, the study will behold *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* as narratives in transit in order to track their journey into (re) empowerment and representation. Despite coming from prominent circles of intellectualism, both these movements chartered a path inundated with disadvantageous tropes. Their counter-discourse, therefore, can provide a vantage insight into neo-spaces of marginalization that get created in environmental struggles. Lastly, it will try to re-locate the position of nature itself as a subaltern entity that is often denied any agency in anthropocentric systems. Can a people's ecological system, then, speak *for* ecology? The answer to this question may seem axiomatically affirmative; but, it's a position that calls for qualification.

Carson's *Silent Spring* can be read as an advocate *for* and *of* nature. After all, the narrative does speak on behalf of those elements of ecologies whose significations are otherwise lost upon the human reception system. *Silent Spring* brings to fore the losses that biosystems incur in short and long term owing to anthropogenic interferences – these are checks and balances that, more often than not, don't make it to human rosters. In doing so, it tries to reconcile the two binaries involved in green narratives, especially

those that seek to yield a change in the human world. Firstly, it seeks to avoid the pitfalls of being an archaic ventriloquist who invokes nature for poetic effect and suggests ways of living that are removed from perceived realities. Although an ecological movement calls for a distinct perspective in biocentrism, the anthropocentric angle cannot be ignored if the protest itself is to receive mass attention. Secondly, it consciously abstains from viewing the rights of ecology only insofar as such rights do not interfere with the larger human gain. That is, while delineating the ecology-human interlinkage, it does not seek to prioritise the latter over the former as a 'given'. In fact, this notion of 'given' human centrality often becomes a communicative barrier in dialogues that green movements try to initiate. Carson's narrative locates this 'problem' of anthropocentricity in the humans' ability to use the system of communication for hegemonic oppression of other voices – in this case, those of nature. In delineating the smug complacency of this anthropocened worldview, *Silent Spring* expresses its dissent using the medium of irony thus,

> The Ministry of Agriculture considered it necessary to give warning of the hazard of going into the arsenic-sprayed fields, but the warning was not understood by the cattle (nor, we must presume, by the wild animals and birds) and reports of cattle poisoned by the arsenic sprays came with monotonous regularity. When death came also to a farmer's wife through arsenic-contaminated water, one of the major English chemical companies (in 1959) stopped production of arsenical sprays and called in supplies already in the hands of dealers, and shortly thereafter the Ministry of Agriculture announced that because of high risks to people and cattle restrictions on the use of arsenites would be imposed. (20)

The semantics of predominance, the ability to 'know' and 'contain' everything within the human linguistic system is often built into the rhetoric of dominant cultures and it is, after all, these cultures that inform *action*. Interestingly, this is the same logic that Guha and the SSG trace in the complex processualism that led into the subaltern-izing of peasant classes in India in Eurocentric models of documentation. By virtue of being termed 'official records' or 'scientific data', a willy-nilly stamp of authentication is invested in documents which may, after all, be products of ideological propaganda. Despite being a scientific-report itself, *Silent Spring* calls for a sceptical reading of traditionally privileged 'knowledges' which tend to play upon mass-naivetes. Carson

tries to deconstruct such 'scientific' narrations and uncover the agenda-driven commissions involved in them. She also shows that such agendas often use multiple modalities to construct a parapet of elevation from which they can 'talk down' to the masses. Such a process grossly ignores grassroot realities and also tends to dismiss any narrative of subversion. Carson's deconstructive analysis reads into purposeful omissions in 'official records' that often misrepresent ground realities. For instance, she illustrates how the use of aggressive chemicals in exterminating the Alabama 'fire-ant' was justified by an institutionalized document that barely bothered to ground-check its facts and rooted its propaganda upon the device of exaggeration. *Silent Spring* elaborates upon the issue saying,

> The Agriculture Department sponsored a propaganda movie (to gain support for its program) in which horror scenes were built around the fire ant's sting…local evidence is most convincing. Although the fire ant has inhabited Alabama for 40 years and is most heavily concentrated there, the Alabama State Health Officer declares that 'there has never been recorded in Alabama a human death resulting from the bites of imported fire ants,' and considers the medical cases resulting from the bites of fire ants 'incidental'. Ant mounds on lawns or playgrounds may create a situation where children are likely to be stung, but this is hardly an excuse for drenching millions of acres with poisons. These situations can easily be handled by individual treatment of the mounds. (89).

The creation of these half-truths could very well be attribution to genuine limitations in scientific episteme which may get redressed over time. Except that, such attributions do not take into consideration the commitment of 'bodies of science' to capitalistic agendas. Such naïve assessments also do not take due cognizance of the fact that a 'scientific study' may be a funded-project to further a preconceived notion of selective benefit. In this sense, *Silent Spring* operates from the problematic position of self-scepticism; Carson's own research, after all, was informed by a set of ideological commitments that assumed pro-environment stances in specific responsiveness to problems faced by America. But, through its argument of interrogation, *Silent Spring* builds a paradigm of inquiry that can be applied both, to regional peculiarities as well as global essentialities. For instance, it states that the modernist age is,

an era of specialists, each of whom sees his own problem and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits. It is also an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged. When the public protests, confronted with some obvious evidence of damaging results of pesticide applications, it is fed little tranquilizing pills of half-truth. (15)

Silent Spring, thus, brings to fore the presence of a pervasive epistemic violence that may be instituted and furthered by capitalistic State-machination. Interestingly, Indian environmentalists such as Ramachandra Guha and Vandana Shiva also highlight the oppressive pervasiveness of such epistemic violence where Western-centric paradigms of ecological conservation (built upon a straightjacketed approach towards notions of deep ecology) are superimposed on Indian ecological demographies without taking regional and ethnical specificities into view. The tract of 'disempowerment' in ecological movements is, therefore, a subjective spatiality. Pitted against the collective hegemonies of powerful chemical industries and their teams of propaganda, *Silent Spring* also operated from a place of disempowerment. Carson had to defend her pro-ecology stance against numerous accusations that placed her in an antagonistic position of anti-human. Carson's major challenge, thus, was to suggest an ecological democracy as an alternative paradigm to the existing status quo of anthropocentricity. Having said this, *Silent Spring*'s place of disempowerment cannot be used as a template to study ecological movements elsewhere. As in the case of Chipko and allied indigenous environmental agitations in India, the paradigms of 'anthropocentricity' and 'ecological democracy' come into play very differently than they do in Western counter-discourses. In fact, the marked distinction between biocentrism and anthropocentrism along with the inevitable process of privileging one over the other according to vested needs, in itself breeds a space of disempowerment for people whose ways of life have been informed by a time-tested ecology-human interface of mutual benefit. One may take, for instance, the following proclamation made by *Silent Spring* wherein it suggests that,

Our [human] attitude toward plants is a singularly narrow one. If we see any immediate utility in a plant we foster it. If for any reason we find its presence undesirable or merely a matter of indifference, we may condemn it to destruction forthwith. Besides the various plants that are poisonous to man or his livestock, or crowd out food plants, many are marked for destruction

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merely because, according to our narrow view, they happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Many others are destroyed merely because they happen to be associates of the unwanted plants. The earth's vegetation is part of a web of life in which there are intimate and essential relations between plants and the earth, between plants and other plants, between plants and animals. (80)

Read in an enthusiastic extreme, such a postulation calls for no lesser than a reinstation of wilderness where each element of nature is allowed to foster irrespective of its utility *and* impact on human livelihoods/cultures. While this argument is a recurring leitmotif in environmental narratives and rightly so, copying such frameworks verbatim may be more damaging than useful to natural as well as human ecologies. The Western paradigm of redressal by (re)constructing 'natural' reserves for biodiversity and allocating specific lands for the purpose may not work in all contexts. In specific cases of India, for instance, such superficial 'redressal systems' have become a redundant tautology where power was transferred from one set of elite to the other while the ecological ethnicities that were affected by the such 'pro-environment' policies were further pushed into spaces of disempowerment. In his article, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique", Guha uses the via-media of Chipko agitation to highlight the fallacies involved in enforcing global (Western) reincarnations of deep-ecology models upon Indian regional set-ups by yet keeping the local peoples in places of non-representations. The real struggle in such movements is not directed towards bringing about an 'overarching' or 'blanket' solution to all perceived ecological problems arising out of anthropocentrism. In fact, it is oriented towards wresting

[c]ontrol of nature away from the state and the industrial sector and place it in the hands of rural communities who live within that environment but are increasingly denied access to it. These communities have far more basic needs, their demands on the environment are far less intense, and they can draw upon a reservoir of cooperative social institutions and local ecological knowledge in managing the "commons" – forests, grasslands, and the waters – on a sustainable basis. If colonial and capitalist expansion has both accentuated social inequalities and signalled a precipitous fall in ecological wisdom, an alternate ecology must rest on an alternate society and polity as

well…Indian environmental traditions allow for a greater integration of ecological concerns with livelihood and work. They also place a greater emphasis on equity and social justice…on the grounds that in the absence of *social regeneration environmental regeneration has very little chance of succeeding*. (06; my emphasis).

Although the end motive of Carson's protest and a movement like the Chipko may be the same, the modus operandi (as envisaged by Guha and discerned by the present study) has to be significantly different. Carson calls for social regeneration *via* environmental regeneration by focusing on representations to be given to non-human nature; Indian environmentalism (or rather, a large part of it) calls for ecological regeneration *via* social regeneration by focusing on representations to be given to ethnoecological groups that function in close proximity with and *towards* the environment that fosters their fundamental ways of life. Thus, a space of re-empowerment claimed by one environmental narrative may not axiomatically become a spatiality of becoming for another. Inter-regional needs and appraisals, thus, play an important role in measuring the success of any ecological movement.

Since its early inception as a convergent movement against the Regional Plan 2011, *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* was conscious not only of the aspect of inter-regional distinctions mentioned above, but also of intra-regional specificities within the state. When the said Regional Plan was taking shape, Goa was still groping for a more inclusive idea of growth. Its polity as well as ecology was, after all, impacted as much by pre-liberation policies (of the Portuguese regime) as by the post-liberation national frameworks that had to be co-adapted within the context. The phenomena of liberation as well as statehood called for an inevitable re-configuration of spaces – ecological and social. In the course of this chequered struggle, 'development' became a buzzword. It seemed like a quick-fix ideology that could be adopted to level-out any stances of 'difference'. Development could (re)instate Goa's position firmly on the international map and elevate its peoples' socioeconomic status. Any 'position' that interrogated this model was, by default, anti-developmental.

In his interview with the present research, Sakhardande recalls that one of the major challenges before the *GBA* as much as with most environmental agitations in Goa was to break through the 'normalized' discourse of 'development' which had been

injected across strata into the multi-layered Goan society. The success or failure of the movement, then, largely depended on its ability to drive home the point that development acquired at the cost of environmental sustainability (an integrated model within Goa's system TEK in most parts) would not only be short-lived but also highly damaging. Another challenge was the agenda-driven tag of 'elitism' that was associated with environmental movements started. Environmental agitators were constantly viewed with a sense of scepticism typical of any society which is in a state of drastic flux. In order to meet these challenges, a unique counter-discourse had to be charted where the 'business' of knowing a developmental plan which would then be implemented as 'public policy' – as was RP 2011 – was not the prerogative of a privileged few. The *GBA* also, then, worked from a space of disempowerment. It's most putative arguments had to be taken out of the limitations placed on it by tactical 'impressions'. And one clear way of doing it was to make it a mass movement.

For this, the method of knowledge had to be invoked and made available for all. This was the first step towards transitioning into a space of collective (re)empowerment. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the Google Earth images obtained had to be juxtaposed with re-drafted plans of surface land-utilisation under RP 2011. Patterns of unchecked intrusions into local ecological balances had to be reinforced; damages that would be caused to Goa's collective spatiality – its tangible and intangible ecological heritage – had to be foregrounded. In a sense this was a counter-production of knowledge as opposed to one curated by ideological investments. As such, it was one of the first steps in generating 'agency' – a unique standpoint of articulation which would have been otherwise quelled by normativity. In a way, this methodology adopted by the *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* brings the smooth spaces of Deleuze and Guattarian imagination into creative dialogue with Spivakian counter-discourse. It also subconsciously assumed the Gramscian model of developing newer frameworks of 'education' that substituted passive modalities of receiving with more proactive modules of critical activity based on participation and reaction. Viewed from the perspective of Gramscian rhetoric, *GBA*'s narrative assumed the war of position as well as of manoeuvre. It was undoubtedly a tangible showdown – a peoples' movement that made its presence conspicuous in the physical spatialities of Goa. However, although operating towards a one-point agendum of the scrapping of Regional Plan 2011, *GBA* took up a war of position in its textual subconscious. It became a movement that questioned non-

representations of peoples in public policy-making, that fractured 'givenness' of 'developmental' jargonization in political syntax, that revisited and re-defined the functionality of peoples' mandate in state mechanisms and highlighted the role of civic vigilante (or what Spivak would probably term 'organic intellectualism') within a society in the absence of which, spaces of disempowerment can not only be created but also legitimized.

Subsequent to the retrospective scrapping of the Regional Plan 2011 in a landmark victory of the peoples' movement, a Task Force incorporating members from various environmental organizations (including *GBA*) and other nodal sectors were given functional representation in the processuality of Regional Plan 2021. *GBA* had evidently triumphed in its one-point agenda. But in his interview, Prajal Sakhardande reveals one more oft-forgotten success-narrative of the *Goa Bachao Abhiyan*. As a result of this mass movement, he says, the village-communities of Goa were resourcefully (re)empowered in tangible and intangible ways. The position of the Gram Sabha was reiterated in grassroot decision-making while people themselves became aware of their role as participants in ecological movements.

Traditionally connotated with the semiotics of repression, the space of 'disempowerment' can actually be looked at as a place of possibilities and subjectivations where alterity and subalternity can come in dialogue with centrality. History has proven that centrality itself can neither be monologic nor monolithic for a long time, particularly at a time when deconstructivism is subjecting entities – real, visceral and virtual – to multipolar analyses. Transitions from spaces of disempowerment to re-empowerment and non-representations to representations are therefore neither straightjacketed nor essentialist. *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* both embody this process of transition but display variations in their processes at the level of theoretical, textual as well as practical unfolding. Yet, they opened up a common vista – a discernible spatiality – where movements could speak and ensure that their speech(es) is heard.

4.3 Conclusion

Attempts made by select strains of green literary studies in attaching themselves with the more practical aspects of the environmental movement often take a tenor of

reactionary defensiveness or a trajectory away from the presumed solipsism of theoretical criticism. Such points of divergences make it seem as though ecocritical studies of textual literature and practical movements of environmental preservation are actually talking at cross-purposes, when evidently, they are not. Practical, moreover, is looked at as non-theoretical while theory's overenthusiasm is considered to be a tautological reduction or distraction that can steer one away from finding 'material' solutions for concrete problems. Either view invoked in the case of contemporary environmental problems can prove to be trenchantly fallacious. Scientific and cultural probes into issues such as Climate Change and Global Warming are revealing underlying patterns of theoretical importance; there's a method to the man-made madness of current ecological crises that calls for causal textualization mainly to further humanity's understanding and recognition of its own role in the unfolding catastrophes. These patterns are visibly calling for *change* and *action* – where the role of 'praxes' is crucial. In this scenario, can theoretical perspectives, textual perceptions and practical applications be looked at as three parallel but non-intersectional, disconnected and non-dialogic linearities that may each lead us somewhere but in fact, nowhere?

The present study's attempt at analysing *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* has been partly informed by its objective of breaking this schemata of quarantined analysis. As movements that took a pro-ecology locus and went on to bring about tangible changes in environmental policies leading to preventive or reformative measures, *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* became important texts of impact. In becoming so, however, they carried several sub-texts of purpose, pattern and process that has to be studied in order to locate their significance in the larger and ongoing battle against rampant damages to nature. As analysed through the quadruple module, each of them unfold matrices of similitude and distinction thereby engaging environment in human cultures that are at once particular and universal. Therefore, apart from entering discursive discussions in environmental dialogues, the textualities of these movements can also be invoked in more formal disciplines of Green Cultural Studies, particularly those that seek to seep into more impact-driven pedagogies. After all, as Patrick D. Murphy reminds us in his article, "Ecofeminist Dialogues,

> [e]cology as a discipline means, fundamentally, the study of the
> environment in its interanimating relationships, its change and conservation,
> with humanity recognized as a part of the planetary ecosystem…Ecology

can be a means for learning how to live appropriately in a particular place and time, so as to preserve, contribute to, and recycle the ecosystem. (qtd. in Coupe 194).

CHAPTER FIVE

REINSTATION OF GREEN CULTURAL STUDIES

5.1 Introduction

The present study began its journey with the purpose of exploring, scrutinizing and subsequently reinstating the framework of 'Green Cultural Studies' as a suitable approach towards the analysis of nature-human interrelation and its role in contemporary environmental challenges. The study charted its course of research by pooling in available information through books (print and electronic), websites, blogs, official archives, newspaper reports, scientific studies, historiographic documents, digital images, videos and social media pages. Information resourced thus was subjected to cross-authentication and scrutiny where such an exercise was considered necessary and possible. In cases where the available data was inadequate, the same was supplemented through field-studies, translations and personal interview. In cases where prior pedagogical knowledge was discerned as lacking, as in the case of evaluating visual images, courses available on YouTube and SkillsShare were utilised. A five-Chapter model was adopted to elaborate the study; the unfolding of the same has been summarised in the next section.

5.2 Chapter-wise Summary

Chapter One: Titled, "Engaging Culture with[in] Nature: A Case for Green Cultural Studies", this Chapter started by locating a crucial problem in contemporary discussions on ecology: a glaring chasm between *presentations* of nature in human cultural discourse and unfolding *actions* towards it. In order to set the tenor of inquiry used in the study, the Chapter used two news reports and integrated them within the analysis for substantiation. Perceived dichotomies challenging current ecological studies in literature were put forth and the need to take an appraisal of human cultures in shaping and altering environments was reinforced. Subsequently, the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies adopted in the present study was outlined and contextualised. Conceptual terms such as 'culture', 'green' and 'cultural studies' were qualified to instate their significance within the scope of the study. Key terms such as 'Global Warming', 'Climate Change', 'Anthropogenic' and 'Biogenic', which are at times used rather loosely in various discourses were elaborated upon in tandem with their

usefulness to the present study. The question 'Why Green Cultural Studies?' was foregrounded in an attempt to outline its paradigmatic scope. Subsequently, the focus of present study, its aim and objectives, its thesis statement and five-fold hypothesis and the primary texts undertaken for study were listed. A detailed literature survey was undertaken highlighting existing areas and frameworks of analysis which informed the formulation of analytical scaffolds in present study. Chapterization of the study was outlined and the methodologies adopted in dissemination, analysis and presentation of data were enlisted. Perceived limitations of present study which surfaced as a result of its designated purview and allied constraints were put forth and concluding remarks were made.

Chapter Two: Titled, "Rethinking Theory: a study of select perspectives through the Green Paradigm" went on to elaborate its titular commission. In view of existing aspersions cast on 'theory' as a mode of critical thinking that steered one away from practical unfoldings in ecology by overfocussing on abstract concepts, the present study proposed the idea of 're-thinking' theory from an ecocritical perspective. For the purpose, it selected five prominent approaches in contemporary literary theory and cultural studies viz. Structuralism and Semiotics, Post-structuralism, New Historicism, Spatial Criticism and Subaltern Studies. A uniform *modus operandi* was employed in analysing all the selected theoretical approaches. Select concepts from the existing frameworks of these theories were invoked. In case of Structuralism, the Saussurean model of sign-signifier-signified and langue-parole used by major structuralists was reassessed. Similarly, in Semiotics, the Peircean triads of 'icon-index-symbol' as well as 'representamen- interpretant- interpreter' was re-valued in terms of its significance in meaning-making and meaning-analysis. In case of Post-structuralism, the concepts of 'textual subconscious', 'linguistic non-fixations', 'de-centred universe of signification' were discussed through postulations provided mainly by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Barbara Johnson. New Historicism's focus on textual and co-textual juxtapositions to recover narratological meanings through 'anecdotes', 'moment' and 'event' was studied. Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt's methodology of excavating new meanings within the text (via co-texts) through embrasures and slippages was explored for later adoption. The Foucauldian paradigms of panopticon and discourse were re-read from the perspective of tracing patterns with critical procedures. Gramscian concept of 'hegemony' of State-machination and

Althusser's emphasis on ISA and RSA were unspooled for contextualised re-reading. Spatial Criticism was analysed as a relatively newer disruption in contemporary theoretical study. The spatial turn was located and prominent concepts such as Henri Lefebvre's triad of 'lived-conceived-perceived' spatiality, Edward Soja's proposition of 'postmodern geographies' Robert Tally's emphasis on 'Geocentricism', Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's paradigmatic itineraries of 'rhizome' striated and smooth spaces were revisited for relevance within present study. The vastly burgeoning area of Subaltern Studies was revisited through readings in Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'cultural hegemony', 'organic intellectuals' and 'position-manoeuvre' and Ranajit Guha's critical inquires of preconceived ideological commitments in official records. Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak's renowned question, 'Can the subaltern speak?' was analysed and her insights into 'production of knowledge', 'agency and power', '(re)writing the subaltern' as well as 'non-essentialist double-marginalizations' were unspooled for critical subsumption with the scope of present study.

The concepts of each theoretical approach were then co-opted and contextualised within the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies for applications in Chapter Three and Four. The study also proposed four 'values' that approaches in 'green' theory could assume in order to make their articulations in ecological conversations more meaningful.

Chapter Three: Titled, "Textual Perceptions: A Study of 'Re-presentation' and 'Representation' of nature in select texts' started off by making a case to expand the notionality of the term 'text' given the imperativeness of doing so in present day communication-diversity. It also made a case for studying 'texts' as signs within the human signification system and as 'products' of cultural production and consumption. The Chapter was divided into five sub-sections for analytical cohesion. Under <u>literary fiction</u> the texts, *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton, *The Inheritors* by William Golding and *The Kiln* by Mahabaleshwar Sail were analysed. Under <u>popular and folk</u> culture, the texts *Avatar* and *Dhalo* respectively were studied . Under <u>visual</u> culture the illustrative textuality in *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* by Trupti Godbole, Govind Mukundan, Poonam Bir Kasturi and Ishan Ghosh, the graphical textuality in *Our Toxic World: A guide to hazardous substances in our everyday lives* by Aniruddha Sen Gupta and Priya Kuriyan and digital-image textuality in select cartoons from *Green Humour* by Rohan Chakravarty were critically analysed. Select concepts put forth through the

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frameworks of Structuralism and Semiotics, Post-structuralism, New Historicism, Spatial Criticism and Subaltern Studies were applied in the analyses of selected texts. The methodology of abrasive and intertextual reading was adopted. As a result of this, the analyses pooled in diversified secondary data through news reports, official archives, social media posts, scientific documentations et cetera. The fifth sub-section presented and discussed five matrices of convergences resulting from the multipronged analytical modes adopted to study selected primary texts. These five matrices were instituted as a quintuple model of textual 'value' that can serve as a point of departure for future analyses of texts as cultural signifiers.

Chapter Four: Titled, "Locating the Theoretical and Textual Patterns in 'Practical Applications: Narrative as Movement and Movement as Narrative", this Chapter began by qualifying the term 'practical applications' within the context of present study. It mooted the argument that any engagement with issues related to ecology calls for a proactive cognizance of the material rootedness of the phenomena. Subsequently, the two texts under study, *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* (events leading up to scrapping of Regional Plan 2011 in the state of Goa) as a people's movement were sieved through the paradigms of critical inquiry developed in Chapter Two and Three in an attempt to (re)locate theoretical and textual patterns in 'practical applications' by studying the narrative of *Silent Spring* as movement and the movement of *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* as narrative. After brief insights into their independent trajectories and journey from 'protest-to-impact', the two texts were juxtaposed and analysed through a four-pointer critical model. Deleuze's concept of 'affect' was utilised in evaluating semiotic and textual strategies adopted consciously or subconsciously by *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* towards maximizing the impact of their protestive narratologies. The locative coordinates of struggles over ecological space in face of the hegemonic impositions of 'development-paradigms', creations of smooth spaces of creative resistance and spatial appropriation as means of evoking shared consciousness were traced and underpinned in the two texts mainly by using Lefebvre's trialectics, Guattarian emphasis on non-striations and Cartesian dyad of *res cogitans/res extensa*. The New Historicist mode of co-textual reading was employed in recovering 'events' considered to be crucial missing pieces in the larger 'narrative' and subsequent impact of the two texts. In the case of *Silent Spring*, the co-text exhumed was the 'Great Smog of London' in 1952 and in the case of *Goa Bachao*

Abhiyan, the pro-socioecology, anti-mining protest staged by a piece of literary fiction in Konkani much before a formalised movement towards the same started in the state. The framework of co-textual and cross-textual reading of contemporary signifiers was also mooted as a viable strategy in reading events of current importance such as Bolsonaro's 'quick' decision of mitigating Amazon rainforest fires, the rising (and rather complex) influence of the 'Thunberg phenomenon' and institutionalizations of movements such as 'Earth Hour', 'Climate Strike' and 'Fridays for Future'. Adding adjunctions to the Spivakian question, 'Can the subaltern speak?', the notion of 'disempowerment' and its non-essentialist specificities were studied through the readings of *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan*. The need to contextualise applicative usages of terms such as 'disempowerment', 're-empowerment' and 'marginalization' was reinstated through parallel readings of Chipko Andolan and Amazon guardian along with *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan*. The idea that 'disempowerment' can be looked at as a space of subjectivation and possibility of creative agency within ecological movements was mooted.

Chapter Five: Titled, "Reinstation of Green Cultural Studies", the present Chapter enlists the inferences drawn from the study, scope for future approaches, relevance and conclusion of the study on the basis of Chapter-wise observations and findings enlisted as follows:

5.3 Chapter-wise Observations

In **Chapter One** it has been observed that:

(i)   There is a discernible gap between human re-presentations of nature in cultural discourse and the practical anthropogenic actions which impact the environment and its elements. This may be bridged by adopting consilient methodologies of reading into and about nature and the collective human cultures impacting it.

(ii)   Green Cultural Studies, as the coming-together of fundamental perspectives in cultural studies (politics, gender, identity, representation) and the call for practical commitments to environment embodied in 'green' movements, may be one such consilient methodology.

In **Chapter Two** it has been observed that:

(i)   The process of re-thinking theory through the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies helps in analysing representations in polyvalent and polysemic human cultural expressions.

(ii)   The theories chosen for the study viz. Structuralism and Semiotics, Post-structuralism, New Historicism, Spatial Criticism and Subaltern Studies do not engage directly, centrally and/or solely with issues of ecology. However, independently or in combination they address a set of issues related to politics, economics, space, social stratification, gender, class, identity and other such concepts which are of significance in discussions on 'green culture'.

(iii)   Theories that are employed in an intertextual, polysemic, pluralistic and practice-oriented manner in the readings of textualities open newer vistas in critical dialogues thereby becoming forces in continuum rather than anachronistic atrophies.

In **Chapter Three** it has been observed that:

(i)   Conventionally, the term 'text' has been used in a straight-jacketed manner to refer only to verbal (word-based) material. However, with the advent of disruptive technologies, multimedial expressions are incorporating oral, visual, aural, tactile and other forms through which a vast volume of communication is being carried out.

(ii)   A 'text' is any 'sign' within the human communication system which is open for interpretation. Concomitantly, the 'textuality' of any text calls for multiple readings as the set of signifiers and signifieds which it is made up of are non-fixated, permutative entities especially as carriers of messages relevant to present-day ecologies.

(iii)   The texts chosen for the study come from different media/genres/forms of human expression. However, they all are important cultural signifiers that reveal intersectional patterns through which nature-human interrelations in contemporary dialogues can be revisited and rethought.

(iv)   *Cry, the Beloved Country* has been traditionally read as a fiction on apartheid with a focus on social discrimination. Its analysis through the green cultural paradigm, however, reveals important environmental trajectories that are crucial to current global dialogues in ecology particularly those related to (neo)colonial land-shaping.

(v)   *The Inheritors* has been conventionally read a work of post-war fiction. Its analysis through the green cultural paradigm, however, unfolds textual insights into multispecies ethnographies, ecological consiliences, gynocentric subsumptions of

nature as per the female creator principle and artificial superimpositions of the nature/civilization paradigm with the latter given predominance over the former.

(vi)   *The Kiln* has been looked at as a text wired within regional specificity. Its green cultural reading, however, throws up complex interrogations of the term 'development' which are crucial in reading global tête-à-têtes on environment that take place between world-governments especially related to land-based marginalizations of ecosystem peoples.

(vii)   *Avatar* gained prominence as a 21ˢᵗ century tech-marvel that provided cutting-edge cinematic experience. However, a green cultural reading of the text revealed its relevance as an ecological signifier of popular culture that could be used for communicating messages of environmental significance to mass audiences. Through the lens of dystopic science-fantasy, its textuality has forefronted the problems of overconsumerism, hegemonic capitalism, aggressive para-militarization and polarised resource-utilization which grip the contemporary world today and plausibly play a central role in the telling ecological catastrophes.

(viii)   The significance of *Dhalo* as an important eco-conscious folk-text that amalgamates spiritual textuality with sociocultural practice has been known only to selective and smaller groups of population. Its green cultural reading unfolds its importance in embodying some of the most poignant ecocultural concepts that have been formalised in critical theory only recently. Some of these are the notions of 'gynocentric affinities with nature', 'creative resistance through spatial becomings', 'ecofeminist identities' et cetera.

(ix)   Analysed through the green cultural paradigm *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* provides a rare insight into the embeddedness of ecological 'space' and ecology-human interrelations within the compositional frameworks of illustrative texts. Particularly designed for children, its methodologies of foregrounding, backgrounding, associative-pairing and intra-panel significations show alternative ways in which eco-friendly messages can be re-presented and nature-human interlinkages can be highlighted in positive ways within textualities.

(x)   *Our Toxic World: a guide to hazardous substances in our everyday lives* has not received the critical attention it deserves for being a manifesto of alternative-living through greater interanimations with environment than the one driven by hyper-consumerism where nature is commodified. Viewed through the green cultural paradigm, it becomes one of the select environmental graphic texts to highlight such

issues as hegemonic creations of spatial striations, suppressed historiographies of ecological disasters, hegemonic impositions of dominant sustainability paradigms on 'other-ed' spaces without apprising regional specificities and creations of subaltern imbrications within urban as well as rural ecologies.

(xi)   As a burgeoning presence on the digital space, *Green Humour* is an ecological counter-discourse in continuum. It carries an explicit purpose of lodging protests against perceived anthropocentric impositions upon nature (and non-human life-forms) as well as 'educating' digital masses by integrating ecological epistemes within and/or outside its visual text. Images selected for present study, however, show relevant refrains in thematic preoccupations significant from the green cultural point of view, pertinent among which are: suppression of ecological democracy, equity and justice, misappropriation of 'green semiotics' for capitalistic gain, hegemonies of 'anthropocentric-locus' vis-à-vis ecological perspectives, fatal dislocations of flora-fauna due to human 'developmental' tropes.

(xii)   As signifiers of human cultural production, dissemination and consumption, 'texts' help in the methodical understanding of complex matrices that inform humanity's dialogues with nature. While being products and configurations of their individual time and place, the texts chosen for the study embody some common values viz. **trans-spatiotemporality** – they open thematic matrices that go beyond their contexts and become relevant across specific spatiotemporalities; **intertextuality** – they re-read and cross-reference through intersectional or oppositional patterns with other texts thereby showing the presence of underlying structures of human responsiveness towards environment; **performativity** – they are not fixed emblems for aesthetic benefaction only; through an interplay of signs they are 'performances' staged by producers and consumers of potential significance in effecting social change; **apocalyptic tonality** – they carry a tonality that points towards impending dystopic realities if humankind does not pay attention to its own influence over the ecological materiality it lives in. This tonality is not always conscious but causal and hence foretelling; **counter-normativity** – through the deployment of stylistic elements, they not only defamiliarize worlds but also puncture the normalities injected within it mainly, if not solely, by dominant rhetorics. They make receivers question long-held beliefs and 'givens' especially in relation with their interpretations of and interfaces with environment.

In **Chapter Four** it has been observed that:

(i) Though launched as responses to specific scenarios, the ecological 'events' that went on to create a practical impact on environmental policymaking show patterns which are not only significant in drawing similitudes but also in highlighting (requisite) differences in pro-ecology programmes.

(ii) As a text that went on to influence the nationwide ban on the use of DDT for agricultural purposes in the USA, *Silent Spring* is a text that started a movement not only against specific chemical industries but against policies that are iterated as quick-fix models of solution and growth without taking the larger picture of ecological sustainability into consideration. Carson's text blurs lines between literary and extra-literary in presentation of scientific episteme for mass consumption pointing out to the significance of amalgamating cultural signification in practical (scientific) application.

(iii) As a movement that led to the scrapping of Regional Plan 2011 in the state due to perceived anti-environmental polarisations in proposed land-management, *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* is a 'moment' (in New Historicist terms) that embodies several textual signifiers which can be read as indicators of its impact; prominent among these are – appeal to shared/collective consciousness, facilitation of spatial becomings, de-bunking received notions of 'development' normalised by language-appropriations and providing agencies of resistance at grassroot levels.

(iv) Considering their impact as practical applications in green cultural paradigm, the features embedded within *Silent Spring* and *Goa Bachao Abhiyan* can serve as points of departures to form informational designs of ecological-messaging which may prove relevant in academic studies.

5.4. Findings

Based on the observations made by applying approaches from selected theory towards critical readings in select works of textual and practical relevance, it has been found that:

▪ There has been a visible shift in the readings of environment in literary studies with recent trajectories focusing on multi- and interdisciplinary approaches. However, systematic responsiveness to more recent events in ecological movements is inadequate.

- Much like texts, theories are also non-fixated and can be picked for open and adoptive readings especially in terms of their usefulness in understanding issues of current importance such as environmental crises. The theories deployed in this study provided insights into the role of language, signification systems, spatial-perception, historiography and politics in affecting nature-human interrelations.

- Language – as a tool employed in cultural expression – plays an important role not only in representing but also in constituting, shaping and determining human attitudes towards nature. It is important to scrutinize how nature is 'referred to' in any given language and its variations over a period of time.

- Space has often been considered as an axiomatic aspect of human existence. Concomitantly, the representation given to it is dilatory and anthropocentric. This has led to marginalization of non-human ecologies in textual preoccupations of humans subsequently leading to their under/mis-representations in cultural discourses.

- The triads of 'icon-index-symbol' used in conjunction with 'lived-perceived-conceived' spatiality indicate that both, intellectual exposure and cultural habit influence individual and collective human perceptions towards nature. Their role is, therefore, crucial in environmental dialogues.

- Indigenous cultures carry performative and material embodiments of many ecocritical 'concepts' that have surfaced only recently in theoretical and academic discussions. Studying folk cultures – lore, art, performance, living and practice – is crucial towards understanding concepts such as 'interanimations', 'sustainability', 'heterachy' (where ecology and humans interact on levels of mutual enrichment rather than hierarchies) and 'ecological democracy'.

- 'Environmental dialogues' is not a 'niche' area of academic/activist interest anymore and cannot afford to be so. Media of popular culture are important in environmental-messaging and participative responsiveness in complex ecological conversations.

- Subsequently, textual productions of 21st century are bringing about stronger insertions of response, participation and action in their environmental messaging. Some modalities adopted are 'learning-by-doing' activities in texts, real-time reciprocation via social media and cross-platform linkages.

- Similarly, In a bid to maximize their outreach, recent environmental organizations have started diversifying the range of their efforts across multiple modalities and platforms. From hosting interactive videos on issues of civic awareness to publishing literatures, fiction and non-fiction, on environmental themes, these organizations follow a manifold methodology over a singular one. Daily Dump, which has published *The Yellow Ouch and Moo Book* series and Toxic Links which has published *Our Toxic World* are instances of the same.

- Per this, visual culture and 'movement-cultures' have been visibly underrepresented as texts in mainstream approaches within environmental criticism. Present study shows that visual cultures in print, electronic and digital media are engaging in ecological dialogues proactively but such engagements get eclipsed by overemphasis on verbal forms. Similarly, social movements are not restricted to straight-jacketed activism anymore but adopt more multidimensional approaches of maximizing people's involvement in ecological commitment.

- Therefore, polysemic readings are important in understanding ways in which environment is represented in different forms of cultural expressions. Such readings convey that ecocultural messages are being mooted through forms other than 'written' or 'literary' and that such messages, especially on digital spaces, are being consumed by a wide range of people.

- There's a sharp but often blurred difference between non-essentialist and divisive approaches of dialoguing within environmental discourse. While non-essentialist green cultural readings try to highlight the need for considering regional specificities (for egalitarianism or socio-environmental justice), divisive approaches create further imbrications thereby privileging the needs of one set of people(s) over another. Textualities read via green cultural paradigms often cut through such blurring and the agenda that underlie it.

■ Therefore, intertextual readings are important in tracing patterns of similitude in global environmental dialogues. However, such readings also, very relevantly, open up paradigms of 'difference' which lead to a better understanding of microscopic ecological problems.

■ 'Legal' and 'scientific' epistemes on environment cannot be treated as 'objective' and 'neutral'. Their formation, 'acceptance' and/or 'rejection' may be highly agenda-driven and/or informed by socio-political and economic forces of the time. Given their role in knowledge-production and policymaking, such epistemes must be brought into constant discussion within public humanities and eco-literary studies.

■ The interrogation of 'development' – as a politico-economic concept and machination – vis-à-vis environmental sustainability is built into textualities at regional and global level; readings of the same have shown that there cannot be an overarching 'developmental' paradigm. Enforcements of such models, without informed appraisals of local ecosystem specificities, have led to problems of irreversible displacements and dislocations contributing towards environmental issues.

■ 'Environmental sustainability' is not only emerging as political agenda on contemporary global platforms but is also being appropriated as a 'conceptual trend' to further vested economic interests. Such trends can be decoded through critiques informed by theoretical and textual insights.

■ Not all 'activities' that tout pro-environmentalism are devoid of capitalist-agenda. There is a need to analyse the matrices of such activities as much as one would scrutinize any ideology or action which seemingly goes against sustainability.

■ In tracing the network beneath the surface and making causal predictions, textualities – as theory, narratives and praxes – viewed through the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies give a steep insight into the notion of intergenerational inequity. This not only provides informed perspective on creation of neo-poverties, social margins and imposed migrations but also offers unique perceptions in analysing the rise of new

voices and new conduits of resistance against sustained hegemonies installed by incumbent institutions. In the second decade of the 21st century, these new voices have been of children, young adults and indigenous peoples mooted through mediums of digital platforms and cross-spatial cultural collaborations demanding proactive commitments towards mitigating environmental challenges. Such insights provide frameworks of meta-reference through which humanity's engagement with nature as well as with itself can not only be studied but also navigated towards constructive action.

Therefore, the above findings seem to reinforce the present study's thesis statement that,

There is a need to reinstate Green Cultural Studies as an approach that brings together and amalgamates theoretical perspectives, textual perceptions and practical applications in order to initiate meaningful contributions in contemporary ecological dialogues oriented towards positively addressing present environmental crises.

And also its five-fold hypothesis

(i)   That, the present ecological crises call for urgent attention to human impact on the natural world.

(ii)   That, it is also important to understand that while anthropogenic interference in the ecosystem can cause environmental damage, positive human intervention can combat the implications of this damage while fostering a sustainable world driven by values of balance and coexistence.

(iii)   That, human culture – manifested largely in 'texts' – plays a huge role in understanding, influencing and shaping the human-environment dialogue.

(iv)   That, there is a need to undertake a study of human cultural texts by situating environment at the crux of the discourse.

(v)   That, there is also a need to make this study intertextual and amalgamative of theory and praxes in order to underline the tangibility of the problem of ecological crises as well as the direct impact of human ways of life on them and vice-versa.

5.5 Suggestions and scope for future study

In the course of this journey, it was realised that there is a lot of scope to develop certain outcomes of the present study into full-fledged lines of inquiries/methodologies. The major ones among these have been listed below:

▪ **Review of Environmental Pedagogy**: If texts inform and shape perceptions towards nature-human interrelations, their role in forming and influencing attitudes of consumers as 'learners' in a pedagogic set-up is crucial. An intensive analysis of the syllabi being taught under 'Environmental Studies' and allied subjects related to environment may be undertaken into order to highlight inadequacies or reinforcements, if any, so as to strengthen the role of ecology-based pedagogy at all levels of learning (pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher studies) in order to contribute positively towards nature-human dialogics.

▪ **Environment in Tourism:** Since tourism is emerging as a major revenue-sector pan-globe, it is important to study how environment is being appropriated within touristic agenda. Is it being viewed merely as a commercial commodity of capitalistic ideology? If so, what are the implications of such an ideology? Are natural ecologies being promoted as part of hinterland tourism? Are ecological tourisms benefiting local ecosystems – indigenous people, flora and fauna? Are natural spaces being destroyed in order to instate artificial modes of 'experiencing nature' by setting up such spaces as 'wilderness parks'? Are such practices leading to dislocations of flora and fauna from their natural habitat? Such trajectories of questioning may be embedded within these lines of inquiries.

▪ **Hashtag as a semiotic signifier:** Apart from being a digital capacitator, the hashtag has become a crucial semiotic signifier in present cultural experience. This is particularly true in current pan-globe environmental movements such as #ClimateStrike and #FridaysforFuture which have spilled on from virtual platforms onto real spaces. This has given rise to a new 'hashtag phenomenon' of mass consumption. However, if digital spaces can be used in evincing collective responsiveness towards a common goal, they can also be used for ideological propaganda. There is a need, therefore, to puncture any signification which starts to assume the role of a 'given' in contemporary society. Such developing trends may be read as 'texts' against themselves through Post-

structuralist approaches and their crucial role in present-day ecological conversations may be scrutinized.

▪ **Environment in Children's Literature:** How is environment being represented in fundamental modes of learning to which children are exposed? This question can emerge as a crucial signifier in present-day ecological analysis. In tandem with this line of inquiry, the role played by information-design modules such as cognitive-maps may be analysed. Such models can be meaningfully deployed within a textuality to establish relations of heterachy between natural elements and humans rather than always foregrounding the latter over the former and/or re-presenting the former in a reductionist manner.

▪ **Academic Confluences of Environmental Dialogues:** The present study has been mooting consilient approaches towards understanding the complex nature-human interanimations. One way of meaningfully promulgating such approaches would be by creating interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary fora of ecological dialogues. Taking a cue from Digital Humanities that are invoking seamless flows between various pedagogies, branches of ecological learning can also work towards creating vaster confluences of environmental dialogues where the insights of sciences, business studies, humanities and other prominent fields can be integrated towards producing rounded perspectives.

▪ **The representation of 'nature' on modalities of mass consumption:** There is an evident flourish of newly emerging spatialities in contemporary media. The rise of web-platforms of entertainment and social media have created important convergences in participatory culture. Interestingly, these platforms have immediately taken up towards responding to the present ecological crises. Web-series on dystopic themes, web-documentaries on environmental topics as also scores of web-pages on social media dedicated to conversations about nature display a seemingly positive trend of collective preoccupations with ecology-based issues. However, such representations also need to be subjected to deconstructivist readings to trace any underhanded patterns of agenda, bias and/or political ideologies. Are such representations re-invoking 'Occident/Orient', 'First World/Third World' or any other negatively dichotomist 'We/They' paradigms? These questions can be placed into inquiry.

5.6 Relevance of present study and Concluding remarks

In December 2007, the Nobel Peace Prize was jointly shared by two entities that were working towards measuring up, analysing and mitigating the challenges posed by the burgeoning environmental crises. The IPCC-team led by Rajendra Pachauri and Al Gore became immediate newsmakers with extensive media-coverages devoted to their after-victory 'moments'. But the focus shifted after the acceptance speeches were made by Pachauri and Gore. "*We* need to commit ourselves to this path before it is too late" said Pachauri whose message found reiteration in Gore's comment, "*We* are what is wrong; *we* must make in right" (Walker 1150-1155; my emphasis).

The code 'we' which both Pachauri and Gore used as a refrain was not coincidental. Neither was it yet another linguistic appropriation used in emphasizing the 'centrality' of humans in the material world. It was, rather, an indicator, an emphatic signifier to connote that it was high time humans took ownership of the damages inflicted upon environment and collectively worked towards righting the wrong.

Yet, a decade after the incident mentioned above, the world finds itself entrenched further in climatic crises. The fact that 'natural' catastrophes cannot be dismissed as 'natural' anymore but rather reviewed as indices of human interferences in ecosystems has appeared as a refrain in scientific and allied investigative studies. Concomitantly, there has been a rise in human responsiveness towards the phenomena of environmental issues. Although such responsiveness cannot be accurately scaled due to the inherently fluid nature of their presence, the fact that 'Climate Change' has become the most-searched term on search engine Google as of September 2019, that 'Fridays for Future' – a pan-globe climate strike movement has been an omnipresence, the fact that young climate activists and indigenous peoples from different parts of the world are participating as main speakers at global forums such as COP 25 are pointers towards the fact that there is a discernible wave of 'change' being harbingered towards impact-driven environmental sustainability. And yet, the failure of inter-governmental ecological summits due to politico-industrial disagreements, rise in the levels of carbon-emissions (recorded as of November 2019 by EcoWatch) and subsequent proliferations in natural disasters in the form of recent bushfires, polar vortices due to perturbations in stratosphere, hurricanes, unseasonal rains and floods embody ecological trajectories

that are deeply disconcerting. With the issue being subjected to continuous and contiguous debates worldwide, the immediate feeling is that the era of Anthropocene comes with a set of challenges never experienced before.

Literary studies, in theory and text, has often responded to the world around it. In fact, through nuanced perceptions afforded by critical discernments and poetic vigour, it has also presaged occurrences related to ecologies and ecosystems. Although the Romantic movement had heralded an ecocritical way of looking at the world, and in fact, such tendencies are also embedded within ancient literatures and critical discourses of several human civilizations, the need to revitalize and formalise environmental criticism in literary studies was felt pressingly in the 1980s. Not so coincidentally, this process collided with the institution of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change by the United Nations as well as a forbidding image of the 'Endangered Earth' appearing on the cover-page of the TIME magazine. The preamble was clear on all fronts – the issue of environmental crises had become so palpable and pervasive that it was too late to leave anyone or anything out.

The enterprise of formalising environmental criticism within literary studies came with its own set of imbrications and complexities. Some strains of studies in the area were enervated by what they perceived as the inbuilt disability of literary-poetics towards tangibly articulating for or impacting the physical/material world. Some were perturbed by the reductionist strains that were visible in select approaches to ecocritical studies. Some, however, saw the arena of literary theory and text as a field of vast possibilities; a place where newer arguments could be foregrounded and missing pieces to the current (largely scientific) understanding of the climatic crises could be exhumed and unspooled. An enthusiastic fallout of this heterogenous exercise was the paradigm of Green Cultural Studies.

As mentioned in Chapter One, Green Cultural Studies is a burgeoning field of ecocritical approaches which are joined by a mutual endeavour to excavate, initiate, mediate and execute newer means of understanding ecology-culture interfaces and, as Patrick Murphy calls it, 'internanimations'. As such, the operative framework of Green Cultural Studies enables innovative ideations through which newer dialogics can be inserted within current ecological movements towards collective positive contribution

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in mitigating human-caused environmental crisis and also in reinstating a culture of sustainability especially as humanity stands at the threshold of entering a decade that will lead it towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The present study has made one such humble attempt.

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APPENDIX I
The *Maand* Space (Place of Field visit)

[*Maand* space for *Dhalo* at Mauswada, Pedne taluka]

Latitude	15; 43; 1.0224999999989848
Longitude	73; 48; 3.2979000000048586
Altitude	69.911

[*Tulsi vrindavan* at *maand* space in Mauswada, Pedne taluka]

Latitude	15; 43; 1.0864000000000829
Longitude	73; 48; 3.9065999999874634
Altitude	64.031