

Tribhuvan University

Ecological Sublimity in Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* and
Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

A Thesis Submitted to Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences,
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for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English

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Declaration

It is my pleasure to declare that this dissertation entitled “Ecological Sublimity in Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*” submitted to the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, is an authentic work written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, Central Department of English, Kirtipur. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English. Neither it is published anywhere nor presented for the award of any degree or for any other reasons. I must be responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

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Letter of Recommendation

Dipendra Raj Regmi has completed his thesis entitled “Ecological Sublimity in Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Thing*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from July 2021 to March 2022 and completed successfully. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for the final *viva voce*.

.....
Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota
Supervisor
March, 2022

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Ecological Sublimity in Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Dipendra Raj Regmi has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research explores and analyses the sense of ecological sublimity the protagonists from Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* (1931) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) go through. *The Good Earth* tells a story of a protagonist named Wang Lung, who realizes the richness of the land despite its maltreatment caused by modern development in China. *The God of Small Things* deals with the characters Rahel and Estha who are moved by the water pollution in the River Meenachal because of the expansion of the tourism industry in Kerala, India. Both the novels project the interconnection of human beings and nature through land and water resources. These protagonists and other characters from both novels claim that mistreatment of land and water resources brings pain to human life. They speak for the need of harmony and integration with nature as the harbinger of joy and bliss. This research aims to highlight and explore the ecological sensibility the protagonists live through. For this, a systematic exploration of the fiction with the eco-critical insights envisioned by Aldo Leopold and Paul W. Taylor has been taken. The protagonist, in both novels, rises above the aftermath of materialistic rupture during their journey. They display their abundance of love for natural resources like land and water resources. Otherwise, they would have neither coped up with the modern development nor shown a tribute to River Meenachal. From the perspective of protagonists, eco-critical vision is a gateway to experience the sublime world and attain blissful pride.

Key Words: Ecological sensibility, ecological sublimity, encroachment, integration

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Chapter I

Fictionalising Modern Development

This research explores and analyses the sense of ecological sublimity the protagonists from Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* (1931) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) go through. *The Good Earth* tells a story of a protagonist named Wang Lung, who realizes the richness of the land despite its maltreatment caused by modern development in China. *The God of Small Things* deals with the characters Rahel and Estha who are moved by the water pollution in the River Meenachal because of the expansion of the tourism industry in Kerala, India. Both the novels project the interconnection of human beings and nature through land and water resources. These protagonists and other characters from both novels claim that mistreatment of land and water resources brings pain to human life. They speak for the need of harmony and integration with nature as the harbinger of joy and bliss. This research aims to highlight and explore the ecological sensibility the protagonists live through. For this, a systematic exploration of the fiction with the eco-critical insights envisioned by Aldo Leopold and Paul W. Taylor has been taken.

Modernity begins with the advent of the printing press in the European world. Its presence in South Asia is the subject of controversy, especially in China and India. Both nations went through the transformations like colonization, the arrival of Christian missionaries, urbanization, construction of a railroad, and expansion of the tourism industry. Buck and Roy begin their writing by keeping these developments in mind. The influences of modern development recur in the writings of Buck and Roy notably in the novels *The Good Earth* and *The God of Small Things*. Therefore, the impact of modern development on nature is the primary concern of this dissertation.

Buck's *The Good Earth* is set in the Chinese agrarian society. It depicts the

struggles and hardships of a peasant named Wang Lung. Lung with his devotional labor and toil transforms his poverty into prosperity. Lung and his wife O-Lan find their affinity and even their identity in the soil ever since their wedding ceremony. Their journey moves ahead through a tough time amid the drought, floods, and famine. They perceive natural disasters with great patience. Later, the diligent couple has to migrate to the southern city for the survival of the family. They survive thereby begging and pulling a rickshaw. In the meantime, the couple suffers from placelessness because their sensitivity toward the farmland is deeply rooted in their mind. In this aspect, they find themselves dislocated because their bodies remain fragmented far from that land that deeply dwells in their hearts and minds. Anyway, Lung manages to return to his native land and the diligent couple retrieves happiness again after a certain interval of time. But, Lung feels uncomfortable when he overhears the plan of his idle sons after the construction of a railroad in China. He overcomes the fear only when his sons convince him that they will not break their integrity with the land. At last, Lung imagines a better future for his family members because his faith in farmland depends on environmental ethics.

Lung's journey from adversity to prosperity or from a peasant to a capitalist radiates his heroism. He faces many hurdles during his journey to attain material prosperity. While he was living like a peasant, he found himself in the larger context of ecological integration. He hears his voice in the sweet breeze, in the chirping of the birds, gurgling and murmuring of the animals and plants. To find his growth in the growth of plants and greenery handed by the land becomes his quest for identity. All the ecological consciousness merges in him. He visualizes the plants, animals, and the elemental pattern of the earth in him, and he in them. Individual names and forms were nothing to him as he was assimilating into the larger consciousness of ecological

integration. He accepted all the dualities of ecology choicelessly. For him, rejoicing in one aspect of nature and overlooking another part leads to fragmentation that he never wants to make happen. That was the source of sublimity for him. That's why, despite attaining material prosperity and glamour, he fails to perceive the bliss that he achieved during his earlier days in the bosom of ecological integration. This is the final cause that he chose to be the part of that old earthen house in the village, where “he took up a handful of the soil and he held it and he muttered, If you sell the land it is the end” (Buck 260). Finally, he rejected the capitalistic glamour that he achieved in the city and heard the serene voice of nature that was calling for him. His journey from a peasant boy to a prosperous landlord ultimately ends when he longs and returns to his hometown to experience the sublimity in ecology that he found in his earlier days.

Roy's *The God of Small Things* – set in Kerala, India—is popular for its beautiful backwaters like rivers, lakes, natural canals, and estuaries. The twin protagonists Rahel and Estha and their mother, Ammu, migrated to Ayemenem because of Ammu's divorce from her alcoholic husband in Calcutta, who proved even more ruthless than her patriarchal and male chauvinist father. Since their arrival in Ayemenem, River Meenachal provides joy and happiness in their life. The surmise of their hay day depends on the river Meenachal until the river gets polluted by human actions and the whole course goes astray. Ammu falls in secret love with Velutha, who also depends on the same river for his livelihood. Unfortunately, their pleasure becomes transitory because the beauty of Ayemenem does not last pristine for a long time. The natural charisma suffers from the expansion of the tourism industry in Kerala, India. Exactly, its impact can be observed in the water resources of Kerala. The toxic substances are polluting the water of the River Meenachal. The tragic death

of fisheries in the River Meenachal suggests the exploitation of nature. The scene evokes humanitarian feelings in the mind of the protagonists. Therefore, the protagonists possess a broader bio-centric outlook toward nature.

The God of Small Things portrays the protagonist's sensibility about the ecological integration. Rahela and Estha were very much in affinity with the River Meenachal. They realized the sacredness, purity, and harmony of the river toward human and vice versa when they were in childhood. Returning from Calcutta after twenty- three years, they found the river completely manipulated and intruded by the ruthless encroachment of material development. The river was polluted. They could not find the awe-inspiring harmonious integration of the river; rather they realized the life of plants, animals, and human beings was disturbed. In their depth vision, they projected the sense that the encroachment of the pure river and its wrath was turning against humanity. The sublimity they felt in their childhood days was on a negative path. They were missing, “A rushing, rolling, fishswimming sense” (Roy 30). River Meenachal has become the depository of toxic wastes and the aura of the river has been lost. Instead of positive sublimity and embracement of vibes from the river, they pictured that an industrial magnate would flame its smoke and the beauty of nature would shut down. Everything would be enveloped in darkness. Human beings' insensitivity toward the beauty and purity of River Meenachal forms the dark picture of ecology. Destroying the river is another way of destroying the voice of God, nature, and the ultimate reality. This was the inner journey they passed through while perceiving the beauty of the river in the past and visualizing it in the present. This dichotomy of perception about the sensibility of nature remains to be explored in the novel.

Both novels, in this way, center on interdependency and embeddedness

between human beings and nature. The novels radiate that this mutual relationship and its intensity have been ruptured by modern development. But, human beings' connection with the soil and water helps them to live a virtuous life on the earth even in the modern age. Peter Mortensen argues, “. . . the vital connection to nature that makes humans human” (179). Mortensen's argument emphasizes human beings' interconnection with nature. The same concern abounds in the literature for ages. Buck and Roy's protagonists experience the impact of modernity in their life because they perceive their nature is in crisis. The construction of a railroad in China and the expansion of the tourism industry in Kerala, India, disrupt the natural environment. But, Ursula K. Heise explains, “. . . ecocritics view the relation between modernity and nature” (508). Eco critics explore the relation between modernity and nature in the modern age. Modernity and nature cannot move ahead in a parallel direction because the intervention of one affects the cycles of the other. The protagonists of Buck and Roy encounter similar conditions in the novels. This research study, therefore, argues that the sagacity of the protagonists in both novels suggests the urgency of proper treatment of nature to live a virtuous life in the age of modernization.

Nature provides love and compassion to both humans and the non-human world. It always moves in its own accord to complete its cycle. Sometimes, its progression disrupts by the rise of material development. Therefore, the effect of modernization threatens the continuity of human civilization. Its impact can be observed in each field including art and literature in Asia. The two seminal novels of Buck's *The Good Earth* and Roy's *The God of Small Things* capture the very moment of upheavals in mother earth. Buck and Roy's protagonists perceive extreme disturbances in nature throughout the novel. They suffer from the natural catastrophes

which is the primary concern of environmental writers. Therefore, the researcher has attempted to seek answers to these research questions to address the problem rationally: (a) What instigate the different characters in the selected novels to exploit the natural resources? (b) Why does their thirst quench the insatiable desire? (c) How is the reduction of the impingement towards nature and maintaining cosmic integration represented in the selected novels?

The general objective of this research is to analyze two primary texts: Buck's *The Good Earth* and Roy's *The God of Small Things* from an eco-critical perspective. Likewise, the specific objectives of the study are to observe and understand the significance of natural resources like land and water to maintain ecological balance. It also aims to analyze the impact of modern development on nature and to scrutinize the ways represented in the primary texts to overcome such impact to keep the ecology as an organism.

These critical insights of environmental ethics are used as theoretical parameters to analyze the novels *The Good Earth* by Buck and *The God of Small Things* by Roy. So, no other issues have been considered in detail. Likewise, Leopold's concept of "The Land Ethic" and Taylor's "Biocentric Outlook on Nature" has been used to study the impact of modern development on nature. The conclusion has been derived based on minute textual analysis.

The two seminal novels of Buck and Roy represent the contemporary society of China and India respectively. Both nations are rich in natural biodiversity, but the urgency of eco-critical reading of literature rises with the modern development in South Asia. It is essential to preserve the organicity and integrity of nature. This research explores how the protagonists handle their morale to fulfill their responsibility. Therefore, their treatment of the major components of nature including

soil, water, plants, and animals can be examples to imagine a better future for humanity. It does not matter whether it is the time of slavery or independence from colonial rule.

The research has used a qualitative approach and has applied the textual analysis method. Critical insights have been developed through extensive library research, guidance from the supervisor, and advice from the experts. The researcher has had extensive library research for the study. Published books, research journals, research articles, and unpublished dissertations have served as the secondary sources for the research study. Surely, Leopold and Taylor's eco-critical insights on environmental ethics have been used as a theoretical parameter to justify the claim and meet the objectives of the study.

The subsequent pages review the related literature by keeping the research questions and the objectives of the study in mind. By doing so, the research makes a systematic review of the basic concepts and theoretical insights of ecocriticism to identify the research gap that needs to be fulfilled. Also, it reviews the criticisms of authors and the primary texts: *The Good Earth* and *The God of Small Things*.

Nature has the unique quality to revive herself; even if she has to bear the dirty marks of development. Modern development calls for unprecedented loss in the mother earth; its immediate reaction can be observed in the form of natural disasters, loss of water resources, and displacement of agrarian life. The expansion of the tourism industry, construction of railroads, mistreatment of water resources, etc. threatens the natural beauty of the world. Material development that begins with modernity shakes the foundation of the natural environment and it captures the attention of the environmental activists seriously. So, they begin a campaign to protect the dignity of mother earth. Their slogan reads: "No compromise in defence of

Mother Earth” (Wall 3). The slogan of anti-road activists reveals the importance of a motherly figure. Surely, the protection of mother earth minimizes the natural hazards in the days to come. In the meantime, the anti-road activists' campaign opens the door for criticism. Timothy W. Luke critiques the operations of the Earth First! as an “environmental resistance movement”(28). Luke's criticism suggests that even the social movements are against the impression of physical development. Divya Anand argues that ecocritical readings “. . . sensitize humanity to the perils of unabated environmental degradation. . . ” (96). Human beings' moral obligation, to some extent, helps to avoid massive environmental destruction in the future. Anyway, the damage caused by modern development can be revived by following the principles of ecocriticism.

William Rueckert coined the term ecocriticism in 1978 in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.” Ecocriticism is based on the premise that human beings and the physical environment are closely connected. The interconnection of human beings with the environment echoes the claim of Cheryll Glotfelty. She argues, “. . . all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (Introduction, xix). The interplay of affecting and being affected is a universal phenomenon. Therefore, human culture cannot remain in isolation from the physical world. Barry Commoner insists, “Everything is connected to everything else” (qtd. in Glotfelty xix). Commoner focuses on the interconnections of all the things in the world. That is to say, both the living and non-living things depend upon one another in the world. Thus, the chain of connection is better realized if only we follow the principles of environmental ethics at the time of rapid development.

Human beings and nature have shared conflicting relationships since ancient times. Environmental ethics, therefore, focuses on human beings' decent relationship with the natural world. Holmes Rolston III advises, "Humans need to include nature in their ethics; humans need to include themselves in nature" (1047). Rolston put forth a statement that humans need to embrace nature and ethics simultaneously for the prosperity of humanity. Rolston's concern, to some extent, is addressed by Leopold in the words of Michael P. Nelson. He argues that Leopold has "...astute insights about the relationships between humans and nature" (743). Nelson acknowledges the effort of Leopold in the study of the binary relationship between humans and nature. Leopold develops the concept of community to reveal the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature. Thus, mutuality between humans and nature lays the foundation of land ethics.

Human encroachment on the land surges with the beginning of modernity throughout the world. A land ethic is a fundamental theoretical approach that deals with how human beings should treat the land, but critics' have their understanding of this theoretical approach. Charles Starkey claims, "...land ethic is primarily a psychological theory of moral development that advocates a cultural shift in the human perspective on the land" (170). For Starkey, land ethic focuses on human psychology towards the land and it represents a cultural turn of the 20th century. On the contrary, Harry Spaling and John R. Wood describe land ethic in terms of land use policy, but they are careful about the function of an individual or group. They write, "Each land ethic is based on a set of deeply held values that an individual, group or society has about the land, and human responsibility for it" (105). A Land ethic, thus, comprises norms and values for an individual or a group along with human beings' commitment toward the sacred land community. Leopold develops the concept of

community in his land ethic in 1949. He proclaims, “The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, animals, or collectively: the land” (204). Leopold's concept of a land ethic is a broader spectrum that treats the soils, waters, plants, and animals as a member of the community. According to Leopold, the land is more than soil because plants and animals depend on it to absorb water for their survival. But, human intrusion into the land develops the significance of land ethic in the 21st century.

Leopold's philosophical insight of land community exists if only we spread ecological conscience among the members of the society. It is inevitable to spread ecological principles when the land is treated as a commodity. Similarly, it is unjustifiable to pollute the water resources in the name of modern development. That is why Leopold takes the responsibility of expanding “. . . social conscience from people to land” (209). Leopold shifts his concept of ecological conscience to make people responsible for the land community. The same responsibility further helps them to realize their role in biota. Lawrence J. Drew also writes, “Leopold wants man to see himself as part of the biotic community” (194). Leopold wishes for a better future for humanity in the periphery of the biotic community in the words of Drew. Therefore, Taylor argues, “. . . well-being of humans is dependent upon the ecological soundness and health of many plant and animal communities. . . ” (77). Human beings' reciprocal relation with the biotic community forms the foundation of the sound ecological system. Ecology functions in a sound and healthy way if only ecological consciousness rises sharply among the members of the society.

Scholars appear with constructive criticisms since Leopold put forth the concept of the land ethic. D. Chiras comes up with a new philosophical insight that follows the route of Leopold. He believes that “land ethic” arises from an “ecological

conscience” to make conservation become the norm and not the exception (187). Ecological conscience drives the concept of a land ethic and it is necessary to preserve the biosphere through the process of conservation. On the other hand, Glean A. Love recommends that revaluing nature-oriented literature can help redirect us from ego-consciousness to “eco-consciousness” (qtd. in Glotfelty 99). Love emphasizes nature-oriented literature to draw the course of eco-consciousness that plays a significant role to defeat the ego-consciousness of the human being. Surely, eco-consciousness is the basic requirement of environmental ethics that helps human beings to imagine the bright future of the upcoming generation. Leopold's concept of land ethic provides a vision to environmental activists despite some accusations.

Some critics accuse Leopold that he is insensible of human rights. He gives priority to the life of plants and animals rather than human rights in land ethics. That is why Starkey argues that a land ethic is a form of “environmental fascism” because it subordinates the welfare of humans to the good of the ecological whole in such a way that it is incompatible with the idea of human rights (150). Starkey's argument sounds anthropocentric in the sense that it undermines the principle of environmental ethics to protect human rights. But, his argument makes no sense because Leopold rightly says, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (224-25). Leopold focuses on the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community because it is the foundation of his philosophical insight. In short, land ethic promotes the life of all the living creatures in the world.

Human beings' unusual treatment of nature is the root cause of the present ecological crisis in the world. Our ability to respect nature depends on whether we treat nature as a commodity or as an organism. The way of treatment determines what

type of ecological future we prefer. This is how Leopold presents his vision regarding the treatment of land. “When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect” (Leopold viii). Leopold believes that the extension of love and respect forms the foundation of the land ethic. Similarly, Taylor also develops ways to respect nature. “The ethics of respect on nature is made up of three basic elements: a belief system, an ultimate moral attitude, and a set of rules of duty and standards of character” (76). These three elements jointly promote a bio-centric outlook toward nature according to Taylor. Therefore, a bio-centric outlook toward nature incorporates the dignity of all living beings and it plays a crucial role to establish an egalitarian society.

Similarly, bio-centric egalitarianism is a concept developed by Taylor that shows abundant respect towards nature because everything on this earth has its purpose. The bio-centric outlook expands the concept that plants and animals are members of the biotic community, which has equal rights to share the ecosphere. We must protect them for the sake of ecology. Their existence seems inevitable for the proper functioning of an ecosystem because each living thing has its inherent value in nature. Therefore, Taylor argues that each living individual is a “teleological center of life,” each being dependent on the sound biological functioning of others, and human beings should see themselves as equal members of the earth community (76). Taylor's argument is the essence of bio-centric egalitarianism and it denies human superiority in the world. In other words, bio-centric egalitarianism is a highly eco-centric philosophy that imagines a utopia on the earth where human beings respect the life of living beings. Similarly, E. O. Wilson's concept of “biophilia” reveals the sense of human connectedness to nonhuman living beings (157). Biophilia, according to biologists, describes human beings' connection to non-human living things in the

world. Human beings' connection to non-human living beings depends upon biological factors. Rolston adduces that naturalizing values “. . . demonstrate the biological roots of human values” (130). The desire for organic life forms core human values in the chaotic world. Indeed, human beings can imagine a virtuous life if only they co-inhabit with the other members of the earth.

Ecologists always long for the natural functioning of the ecosystem to live a virtuous life on earth. It becomes possible if only human beings quit disrupting nature to fulfill their insatiable desire in the name of modernity. Lawrence Buell et.al. plead for the “stable, harmonious, and homeostatic” (422) natural functioning of an ecosystem. Buell's focus lies on the sustainable functioning of the ecosystem without any kind of intervention from human beings; his imagination corresponds to Taylor's attitude to nature. Taylor proclaims, “From the perspective of a life-centered theory, we have prima facie moral obligations that are owed to wild plants and animals themselves as members of the Earth's biotic community” (74). Understanding the inherent value of a biotic community, therefore, proves the necessity of the interconnection of all living things on the earth. In this sense, balance and stability are the preliminary conditions to celebrate a virtuous life on earth.

Ecocritics regard reverence for life as a permanent environmental virtue. The rhetoric of environmental virtue works out if only we follow the culture of respect and dignity for living beings. Jason Kawall argues, “. . .reverence for life involves valuing living beings, just as honesty involves valuing truth, or benevolence involves valuing increasing well-being” (202). The habit of valuing living beings, ultimately, signals the state of being ethical. This is exactly what Kawall says, “. . .valuing individual things can provide us with an adequate environmental ethic” (202). Environmental ethics, thus, contributes to protecting the dignity of living things in nature. Reverence

for life, in the words of Albert Schweitzer, establishes a spiritual and human relationship with both people and all living creatures within our reach (170).

Schweitzer focuses on the spiritual relationship between human beings and other living creatures to experience veneration in life. Human beings are dependent on nature either physically or spiritually for their survival. Human beings' spiritual relationship with the environment is the ultimate way to enjoy the astounding beauty of nature.

Buck, an American by birth, arrives in idyllic China with her parents when she is a little child. She leaves her motherland with her parents and grows up in China. That is the reason why she considers China as her “fatherland” (Yao 71). Buck achieves her education in China and she becomes familiar with the Chinese language, culture, and tradition. Most importantly, she is the most controversial literary figure in China who contributes dozens of literature to the Chinese people. But, she is also the first American woman to win the Noble Prize for Literature in 1938 for her best-selling fiction *The Good Earth*. In short, she introduces China to the outside world.

Primarily, Buck depicts China in her novel *The Good Earth*. Her depiction of Chinese social life in the novel, thus, receives mixed reception from the readers and the critics. Qian Suoqiao writes, “What *The Good Earth* offers is ‘China’, a panoramic view of the vicissitudes of ordinary Chinese life through the rise and fall of an archetypal peasant family” (163). Suoqiao sees the dynamic picture of China through the typical peasant family and such families play a key role to suggest what China is. Critics accuse Buck of choosing the characters only from her missionary background. Alternatively, Junwei Yao argues, “Regarding religion, one of the most important cultural aspects, Buck negated the missionary enterprise in her nonfiction and advocated dialogues” (79). Buck's advocacy for dialogues and negation for

missionary enterprise provides space for religious freedom in China. The existence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism justifies the thesis of Buck. Similarly, Robert Shaffer praises Hilary Spurling for demonstrating Buck's representation of Chinese life. "Spurling demonstrates that Buck remained steadfastly independent as an observer of Chinese life, rejecting the orthodoxy of American missionaries and elite Chinese literary figures, of ruling Chinese Nationalists and insurgent Communists" (Shaffer 675). Spurling portrays Buck as an autonomous writer, who can avoid any kind of extremism in her writing. Likewise, Stephen Spencer notices, "universal appeal" and "realistic portrayal of Chinese characters" (4) in Buck's *The Good Earth*. Buck's identity lies in her art of juxtaposing universal appeal and realistic portrayal of China. Kang Liao glorifies Buck as "mother" for her astounding contribution of unfolding the life of Chinese peasant (141). Besides all these charming decorations of critics, Professor Kiang Kang-Hu argues that Buck "paints China with a half-black and half-white face" and that her representation of China is, therefore, not representative and authentic (1). Kang-Hu strictly refuses Buck's representation of China in her novel *The Good Earth* because he perceives it with contradictions. It is neither black nor white. In short, Buck's identity lies in the mixed reception of the readers despite Kang-Hu's strong objection.

Similarly, Buck's illustration of Chinese life becomes the core subject of comparative study among critics throughout the world. Harold R. Isaacs observes that Buck "created" China in the same way Charles Dickens "created" Victorian England (155). Isaacs' observation indicates that Buck's portrayal of characters and setting in China is parallel to Charles Dickens's depiction of Victorian England. Likewise, Ami Henchoz identifies Buck as a "specialist in transplantation" (7) who takes pleasure in transplanting favorite characters to different settings. Buck, an American, reveals

herself as an expert in transplanting characters in different settings in China. In the meantime, her long stay in China and experiences of diverse cultures justify her unequal position in the history of Chinese literature. As a result, Buck forms her unique image in China which later attracts the attention of the writers to study her contribution to Chinese literature.

Buck performs multiple roles during her forty years stay in China. She is mostly remembered in China as an interpreter of China to the Western world. Barbara A. White finds, "...Buck as a major interpreter of China to the West" (198). The credit for interpreting Chinese culture, religion, and language to the West goes back to Buck. Without a doubt, American readers explore China through the writing of Buck. That is one prominent reason why Cheung et.al. appreciates Buck for her contribution to China. "With the unique experience of growing up in distinct cultures, she dedicated herself to bridging Asian and American cultures" (51). Buck conjoins distinct cultures, Asian and American, in her novel *The Good Earth*. Michael H. Hunt also argues that Buck's *The Good Earth*, "...shaped an American image of China" (33). Hunt believes that Buck's novel draws the American picture of China. Yet, some writers are very critical of the American image of China. Imabora Seiji admits that Buck's novel "...roused in them anti-Japanese and pro-Chinese feelings" (337). These binary feelings, in the words of Seiji, reflect their attitude towards Asia. In this way, Buck deserves a special position in the field of Asian American literature.

Similarly, Buck's relationship with Asia is not free from criticism during her lifetime. Cheung et.al. conclude, "The relationship between Buck and Asia reflects an important part of her philosophy about the world and her representation of human existence" (65-66). Buck's philosophical relationship with the Asian land is before her understanding of human beings as well as their culture, history, and tradition. On the

contrary, Randall J. Stephens describes Buck as “. . . a public enemy, and her books were forbidden” (27). Why Buck is considered an enemy in China? Is it a sign of extremism? The accusations behind banning Buck's books in China are unjustifiable. But, this is the reality that she admits with Hilary Spurling in an interview. Buck's portrayal as a communal enemy and banning her books signal her controversial image in China. This controversy exceeds when she is ignored officially as well. “Her visa was rejected by the Chinese, who found her works a distortion of Chinese history, culture, and life” (Smylie 553). Buck's visa rejection sounds surprising to the majority of readers because she is the one who introduces China to the Western world. In the meantime, she is also accused of distorting Chinese history, culture, and life. All these charges are enough to reflect her contentious imagery in China. Therefore, the binary of friend and enemy, love and hate, acceptance and rejection, etc. are an integral part of Buck's criticism.

Likewise, Buck reflects her ecological consciousness through her writing in China. It appears very powerfully in Buck's *The Good Earth*. The better evidence of it is the way James H. Smylie revisited Pearl S. Buck. Smylie agrees that Buck “...raised our consciousness of China during the first half of the twentieth century” (540). Smylie's impression of Buck deserves our special attention in the sense that she opens door to ancient China. Her description of Chinese history, economics, politics, culture, and tradition depends on nature. Hunt clarifies Buck's concern for ecology because she has experience urbanization in China. “Throughout her work she stressed the virtues of an agricultural community, close to the soil and hence to nature, where men understood the fundamentals of life and were content with their simple, stable community” (Hunt 51). Buck's closeness to an agrarian community, certainly, signals her ecological consciousness. Buck herself acknowledges, “It is this world community

which I present to you as the coming era- the era of the world as a community” (348). Buck displays her farsightedness by considering the whole world as a community and her philosophy echoes the words of Leopold. Of course, her consciousness is priceless in the age of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and globalization in China.

Modern development challenges the continuity of human civilization throughout the world. The continuity of life from one generation to the other is really strong in Buck's *The Good Earth*. In the words of Richard Jean So, “Buck also argues that the Chinese peasant reveals a uniquely harmonious vision of social life, one founded on principles of cooperation, equality, and order” (90). Buck's argument draws the picture of an ideal relationship between Chinese peasants, the community, and the environment. It describes how Chinese peasants form strong bonds between themselves and the natural world. Their innocence and simplicity reflect the emotions of ordinary human beings. Sophia Chen Zen defends, “But China is neither a land of devils nor of angels; she is composed only of plain human beings, capable of laughter or tears, of love or hatred, just like other human beings upon the surface of the earth” (914). Zen's defense of the peasantry in China is emotional rather than fictional because Chinese peasant experiences the emotions like laughter, tear, love, and hate in their everyday life. Indeed, the ability to recognize the sense of continuity in the peasantry is an integral part of human civilization.

The journey of human civilization moves ahead if only we establish a smooth relationship with other members of the earth. It becomes more challenging, especially at the time of the natural disaster, colonial rule, massive urbanization, and industrialization, but place attachment is an attribute of the human beings. Buck adduces, “...the sense of belonging to a particular piece of earth is deep in the heart of every people” (qtd. in Cheung et.al. 67). Buck concretizes the concept of place

attachment by providing the example of a human being. Human beings are passionately related to the land where they are born, grow up, and live. It lies at the core of the heart, but the reason behind this attachment may be numerous. In the words of Spencer, "It reflects their valuing of land and nostalgia for rural life in a time of expanding industrialism and urbanization" (2). Place attachment grows stronger at the time of industrialization and urbanization; it indicates how much they love their land. It is essential to respect the life of plants and animals during the process of civilization to avoid misfortune in the future. Buck's *The Good Earth* explains the protagonists' religious, physical, and spiritual connection to the land. "What unites the story is Wang's devotion to the land, a figure that marks man's natural relationship to work, community, and livelihood" (Jean So 96). The protagonists' commitment to the land is based on the universal principle of mutuality. It requires abundant patience and hard work. Exactly, this is the bitter reality that we notice throughout the pages of Buck's novel *The Good Earth*.

Alternatively, Roy holds the position of an Indian activist, who shakes the foundation of Indian politics and literature. As an activist, she always fights for human rights and environmental virtue. In reality, she is not against material development in India, but she always advocates for the greater common good. Her novel *The God of Small Things* deals with the impact of modernity on agro-business, social movement, and water resources. Her advocacy brings topsy-turvy to Indian discourse whenever she speaks out on any issue. Yet, she won the Booker Prize for her novel *The God of Small Things* in 1997.

Roy, a brilliant political and environmental activist of India, has a better understanding of life and the world. Her outstanding approach toward life, especially of subalterns, draws the attention of the world. It is undeniable in the South Asian

continent. Miriam Nandi considers Roy “an icon of the global left” (175). Nandi reflects Roy as the epitome of the third world because she possesses tremendous potential to raise subaltern's genuine issues in South Asia. She raises her voice strongly in favor of women, children, and margins in India. That is the reason why Noy Thrupkaew decorates her with the crown of “exotic beauties” for her significant contribution to the Third World (qtd. in Nandi 175). Roy shimmers like a divine figure in underdeveloped nations like India because she has the knowledge, power, and vision to resist authority. She initiates her mission of writing in favor of subalterns. By doing so, she drives the Indian social and ecological movement with the help of beautiful language.

Language provides tremendous freedom to human beings in every sphere of life. Roy's artistic literature outshines her proficiency in the English language throughout the world. Of course, her writings evoke numerous tastes in the mind of the readers. Latika Mangrulkar describes the lyrical prose of Roy's novel as “a fresh monsoon breeze” (254). Mangrulkar draws the similarity between Roy's lyrical proses with the freshness of the monsoon breeze. Her lyrical prose offers celestial joy to millions of readers. Likewise, Anna Sujatha Mathai observes, “Arundhati Roy's humour, her fine sense of nature, her exploration of language, make this book a rare delight, and as Emily Bronte drew the moors of Yorkshire as a living presence” (191). Mathai compares Roy with Bronte, an English poet, and novelist, to celebrate her proficiency in the use of the English language. For example, her expertise in the English language appears when she describes River Meenachal and its secret life. Aarthi Vadde, on the other hand, explores the concept of “terrestrial cosmopolitanism” (529) in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. Roy's concept, hence, supports her broader outlook toward humanity because human beings'

relationship with the land they inhabit is indivisible. In this way, Roy establishes herself as an outstanding writer in developing countries; it is possible by the power play of emotive language.

Similarly, Roy achieves mixed reception of her first novel *The God of Small Things* after its publication of it in 1997. It begins with the interpretation of the cover page of her novel. Graham Huggan explains the cover page of the novel as a “self-referential title: it intimates a magical discovery also hinted at in its cover, where the tiny brilliant lotus-flower appears miraculously among the choking weeds” (76-77). Huggan's observation of the cover page is symbolic; the lotus flower amid weeds suggests the reciprocal relationship of living things in the environment. Reciprocity is the only way to make life more beautiful. Likewise, Mirja Lobnik explains, “Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* offers grounds for a sensory engagement in which the human body turns from a bounded and detached entity into one that is highly responsive to and intimately entwined with its environment” (116). Lobnik's reflection emphasizes the importance of sensory engagement with the environment to enjoy a meaningful life. By doing so, human beings perceive romantic things in their life.

Romantic literature catches the eyes of readers since ancient times because it represents the picture of the ideal world. Mathai explores the magical quality in Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. “There's no doubt about the magic that runs like quicksilver through the veins of this book” (188). The use of the phrase “quicksilver” suggests the magical quality of the novel that offers the quixotic taste to the readers. On the contrary, Amita Sharma discusses the romantic aspects of the novel through the traditional approach. She writes:

The novel cannot get away from its essential repertory of conventional

romanticism including an alcoholic husband pimping his wife, the upper class heroine, the lower class hero both defiant and passionate, family opposition and abandoned children. (171)

Sharma clarifies her idea of romanticism through the social atmosphere of contemporary Indian society. The juxtaposition of the past, present, and future creates a wonderful time frame in the novel. Alex Tickell believes, "... the focal event of the novel is a socially transgressive and ultimately doomed love affair between Ammu and a low-caste carpenter, Velutha" (74). The tragic love affair between Ammu and Velutha reflects caste discrimination that exists in modern Indian society. "Critics have noted this temporal blending and have cited this feature as reflecting the novel's magical realism, or postcolonialism, or postmodernism, which are all associated with various forms of time play" (Outka 21). The majority of critics observe this type of time frame in both postcolonial and postmodern literature in India. Again, Tickell assumes that "myth, magic, and popular religion" (82) are the outstanding features of South Asian magical realism. Myth, magic, and popular religion are the properties of modern Indian literature. Tickell justifies the concept by recalling the performance of the Kathakali dancer in the "Kochu Thomban" chapter of Roy's novel. All these criticisms outshine the enchanting aspect of the life that exists in Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*.

Alternatively, romantic aspects of the life that appear in the novel open the door to other prevailing critical trends of literature in the world. Madhu Benoit simply observes two storylines in Roy's novel. *The God of Small Things* is a "before and after story" (99). The juxtaposition of two different time sequences combines into a whole story because the narrator moves from one-time sequence to another frequently. Similarly, Prasenjit Maiti argues, "Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*,

is really an exercise in two histories, one official and the other interpretative, resulting from the writer's sensitisation to the realities of everyday life” (2382). The critical judgment of official and interpretative history in Roy's text provides space to form a new history. Elizabeth Outka initiates to explore the bundle of traumatic events in the novel. “The novel's most traumatized characters—the twins and their Ammu—reveal Roy's careful portrait of temporal hybridity and mixture of amnesia and flashback, frozen time and relentless return” (27). Outka sees the traumatic events of the novel through the eyes of the protagonist in the form of amnesia and flashbacks. Surely, the majority that suffer from the trauma are women, children, and the subaltern.

Tracy Lemaster examines the characters of Roy's *The God of Small Things* with Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. “Through the female child's point of view, the two novels explore women's experiences within oppressive social regimes” (792). Lemaster's comparative study of the female protagonists' points of view in both novels reveals the true picture of women's position in orthodox society. At the same time, Jane Poyner's research follows the trend of Lemaster. Poyner attempts to explore the “. . . subaltern agency within the context of environmental change. . .” (55). Subalterns are the foremost victims of environmental degradation; it requires an agency to break it down for a prosperous future. In short, all these critical observations of Roy's novel form her unequal position in South Asian literature.

Roy's environmental concern takes the attention of the critics from multiple perspectives. Vadde captures that Roy's novel “. . . address several spheres of existence—the biotic, the public, and the private— but also to develop formal strategies that enable readers to see these spheres as overlapping” (522-23). Roy, in the words of Vadde, demonstrates her ecological collectivity in the novel, but it lacks proper policies to celebrate it. Ecological collectivity promotes our understanding of

the whole ecosphere. Similarly, Youngsuk Chae notices the "...interconnections between subordinated human beings and non-human nature..." (520). The affinity between subordinated human beings with non-human nature is both a compulsion and reality, but it is unjustifiable to ignore their contribution. It requires systematic study to secure the future of both. Lobnik argues in this way:

The rhetorical treatment of the natural environment as reservoir as usable elements, as mere resource and commodity, in the late twentieth century tends to occlude its complex ecologies, its liveliness, and above all, its conjunction with subaltern and marginalized human beings. (116)

Lobnik focuses on the richness of the natural environment in the reciprocal relationship between the subaltern and the non-human nature. In conclusion, Roy's environmental consciousness provides space for the critics to analyze the text from the other ecological perspective as well.

In this way, Buck and Roy holds the attention of the national and international community ever since the publication of their novels. The review of related literature makes it clear that their works have been interpreted from multiple perspectives. To some extent, critics have spent time analyzing these texts from an ecocritical point of view as well. However, they have not discussed much on the impression of modernity and the rupture of land and water on mother earth. We can hear the echoes of this rupture in the comments of some critics, yet they have not systematically defined, identified, explored, and analyzed these themes. That is the reason why this research study fills the gap by analyzing Buck's *The Good Earth* and Roy's *The Good of Small Things* from an ecocritical perspective by exploring and analyzing the vandalism of modern development on mother earth to imagine a better future for humanity by establishing the reciprocal relationship with the nature.

Buck's *The Good Earth* and Roy's *The God of Small Things* have been interpreted from numerous perspectives. Critics have spent a lot of time raising environmental, racial, social, cultural, religious, and political issues in both novels. Despite their untiring effort, they have not talked in detail about the burning issue of the modern age i.e. gender studies. So, I strongly recommend that young researchers explore the gender issues in both novels.

This research study consists of four chapters under different thematic headings. The first chapter introduces the topic, authors, texts, statement of the problem, objectives, theoretical parameters, literature review, research gap, and the point of departure of the study. The next two chapters include the textual analysis of the primary texts through the lens of an eco-critical perspective; and finally, the last chapter covers major findings and the conclusion of the research with the suggestion for further lines of research.

Chapter II

Assimilation to Modern Development in Buck's *The Good Earth*

Assimilation is the process of incorporating the knowledge of the surrounding into the mind. Modern development disturbs the process of assimilating the acquired knowledge of the world. Pearl S. Buck begins her novel *The Good Earth* at the backdrop of poverty that prevails in Chinese society during the turn of the 20th century. Without a doubt, its foremost victims were the poor peasants and the slave girls in China. Wang Lung, the protagonist of the novel, assimilates the development of railway track, concretization of the urban area, and human encroachment on the land and water resources in China. Its immediate impact falls on the whole ecosystem including plants, animals, and human beings. For instance, drought and flood are the results of influencing the hydrosphere. The succeeding pages, therefore, try to explore and analyze how the protagonists assimilated the impact of physical development in the natural, social, political, and commercial atmosphere of Chinese society during that era of transformation from the agronomy stage to the process of urbanization.

Lung represents the living condition of a poor peasant in Chinese society. He looks more anxious about the rainfall than the marriage program at the beginning of the novel. His father's objection to using water for bathing suggests the scarcity of water resources in the village. Buck uses water as powerful imagery to communicate human experiences. Water is the fundamental element of life, especially, for a peasant like Lung. Undoubtedly, it is the source of energy for plants and animals on the earth. Leopold rightly argues, "Waters, like soil, are part of the energy circuit" (217). Leopold's argument signifies the reciprocity of water and soil in the process of energy formation. Lung's monologue indicates how eagerly he is waiting for rainfall that provides liveliness in his life. "A small soft wind blew gently from the east, a wind

mild and murmurous and full of rain. It was a good omen. The fields needed rain for fruition. There would be no rain this day, but within a few days, if this wind continued, there would be water. . .” (Buck 1). Lung's perception of the wind reveals his ecological sensitivity as well as the ecological concern of a peasant. As a natural phenomenon, water is an indispensable element in the field for plants to bear fruit. Plants derive energy from the water and the soil. In this way, Lung's ecological sensitivity epitomizes the voice and feelings of the whole peasants in China.

Lung, a representative of a Chinese peasant, notices the impact of modern development when he sets out to bring a slave girl from the House of Hwang. The grey city wall that appears on his way and the gate of the Hwang's House embodies the concrete world. Similarly, Lung walks court after court in a great family's house. The House of Hwang suggests the sign of the family's disconnection to the land whereas Lung's respect for the Earth God is still intact. He shows respect to the Earth God in both ways that symbolize his religious faith. “What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion” (White 42). Lynn White Jr. believes that our actions and behaviors are largely determined by our religious beliefs. In other words, religious faith guides human beings on how to perform their role in the environment. Lung's respect for Earth God is the result of his religious conviction. He shows signs of faith in Earth God by burning incense and then “. . . place it in the little temple to the Earth God” (Buck 6). Lung and O-lan's devotion to the Earth God reflects an ecological conscience of a peasant in China. Similarly, the diligent couple stands in front of the temple to the earth that is built by the grandfather. Lung displays his gratefulness to the Earth God for his mercy and beneficence for the world. His attitude towards the

Earth God shimmers in his religious conviction. By doing so, Lung challenges the tangible prosperity of the modern people during his journey to the House of Hwang.

Similarly, Lung and O-lan ignore the material culture of the House of Hwang because they depend on the farmland emotionally. Both the husband and wife devote their life to the periphery of the land because they know that everything comes from the earth, and goes into the earth. This is why Cheryll Glotfelty puts forth the concept of an “earth-centered approach” in the study of ecocriticism (xviii). Glotfelty's earth-centered approach, therefore, is the best way to study how human beings treat the earth. By keeping Glotfelty's ideas in mind, we can explore the self-regulating system of the earth. Buck describes Lung's attitude towards the earth as follows:

. . . He had no articulate thought of anything; there was only this perfect sympathy of movement, of turning this earth of theirs over and over to the sun, this earth which formed their home and fed their bodies and made their gods. The earth lay rich and dark, and fell apart lightly under the points of their hoes. Sometimes they turned up a bit of brick, a splinter of wood. It was nothing. Some time, in some age bodies of men and women had been buried there, houses had stood there, had fallen, and gone back into the earth. So, would also their house, some time, return into the earth, their bodies also. Each had his turn at this earth . . . (22)

Buck articulates the magnificence of the earth through the eyes of the protagonist, Lung. His monologue reflects the chronological development of Chinese society, but it values ancient traditions and customs. It depends on the earth-centered approach that Glotfelty talks about above. This is why Buck insists on the impressiveness of the earth because the ultimate destination of all human and non-human beings is the earth. Glotfelty's approach protects the culture, tradition, and religion of the country if the

society shows signs of modernization.

Modernity influences every sphere of life though it grows in its way. It is neither desirable nor avoidable because it is beyond our reach. But human beings cannot keep themselves away from the possible changes in the community because people represent their place. Gabriel Marcel simply says, “An individual is not distinct from his place; he is that place” (qtd. in Relph 43). Marcel's statement relies on the belief that an individual cannot be separated from his place. He represents that place either physically or spiritually. In other words, he bears the mark of that place knowingly or unknowingly. Their actions and behavior reflect this sentiment. Buck's protagonist is not an exception in this context. “Tomorrow I will go into the city and buy a pound of red sugar and stir it into boiling water for you to drink” (Buck 28). Lung utters this statement just after the birth of the first child in the family and it shows the influence of urbanization on the life of a poor peasant. Commercial products replace herbal goods in the age of modernity. Lung cannot keep him away from the vibration of rapid urbanization.

Race, of course, is a hidden discourse in Buck's *The Good Earth*. Buck raises the racial issue in the novel by describing O-lan and her first child in the field through the use of emotive language. Lung and O-lan are happy with their agricultural products from the land and their devotion to the land springs from its beautiful landscape. Edward Relph says that “the spirit of a place lies in its landscape” (30). Landscape exhales the meaning of a particular place. Buck's intention to describe O-lan and her first child in the field are to raise the racial issue. “The woman and the child were as brown as the soil and they sat there like figures made of earth. There was the dust of the fields upon the woman's hair and upon the child's soft black head” (29). The underlying meaning behind the description of the mother and the child in

the field, of course, is to show the contrasts of color. By doing so, Buck signals the arrival of white people in China or the arrival of Christianity. In this sense, the credit for raising the racial discourse begins with Buck in China. White people and Christianity are the symbols of the arrival of modernity in China.

Then, the immediate impact of modernization can be observed in the Hwang family. Hwang's family encounters a tough time because of the young lords' habit of spending the money extravagantly, Old Lord adding a concubine each year, and Old Mistress eating enough opium every day. Now, Hwang's family is ready to sell the land for their third daughter's marriage. Alternatively, Lung transforms his poverty into prosperity due to hardships struggling with the land. By this time, Lung has collected a few silver coins from his harvest. Lung's response to the news that the Old Mistress from the House of Hwang is going to sell the land dispels his affinity with the land. Bell Hooks believes, "When we love the earth, we are able to love ourselves more fully" (51). Our ability to love ourselves abundantly depends on how much we love the earth. And Lung loves the earth or the soil more than his life. In the words of Lung, "Sell their land!" repeated Wang Lung, convinced. "Then indeed are they growing poor. Land is one's flesh and blood" (Buck 37). Lung's reaction to the news of selling land either to smoke opium or to fulfill sexual pleasure contradicts Lung's philosophy who considers the land as one's flesh and body. His philosophy reminds us of Leopold's broader spectrum of land ethics. In short, the degeneration of Hwang's family is the result of their detachment from the land in the modern age, and Lung's prosperity, on the other hand, dominates as the result of his attachment to the land. It is not ethical in any sense to sell the land for opium or concubine.

Similarly, modernity influences the protagonist after purchasing the land from the House of Hwang. By this time, O-lan has already given birth to her second son.

The birth of a male child in the family is a good fortune for the couple. In this way, the poor peasant transforms into a landowner in Buck's novel. Richard Jean So agrees with the remark of critics like Colleen Lye who see “Wang's transformation into a good capitalist and landowner” (101). Lee views Wang's transformation from the perspective of capitalism. This is exactly what we find in the utterance of Lung's uncle who has come to ask for silver coins. “You are rich—you are rich! You have brought the land from the great house at the gods know what heavy price—is there another in the village who could do this thing?” (Buck 44). The question at the end of the uncle's utterance reflects the richness of Lung in the village. At the same time, Lung's uncle is another figure who mistreats the land although he has a wife and children. Surprisingly, keen readers notice gender biases in Lung when his wife gives birth to a female child in the family because she is simply addressed as a slave who is not worthy of them. In this sense, we can project that Lung lacks humanity when he is unable to recognize the virtue of his daughter and he appears as a capitalist in Lee's perception, unlike other characters.

Alternatively, Lung's transformation from a peasant into a landowner follows a series of natural disasters. The whole region suffers from a massive drought. Its effect falls upon plants, animals, and human beings. Human beings are suffering from starvation and they are forced to kill their animals for food. In addition, there is a shortage of water in the whole region. The interdependence of plants and humans is unavoidable. Both cannot survive in the absence of water. Lung is afraid to see the dry and cracked cultivated field because it is his flesh and blood. “Land, then, is not merely soil, it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals” (Leopold 216). Land, according to Leopold, is a tremendous source of energy to fight any sort of hazards. The absence of energy signals the degeneration of

human beings. Lung utters, “Well, and they must all starve if the plants starve.” It was true that all their lives depended upon the earth (Buck 48). Water is an important element to plants, animals, and human beings. If the plants starve, so does the Lung family. The future of the Lung family rests upon the life of the plants in the field. In other words, Lung possesses ecological conscience as well as a bio-centric outlook toward nature because he realizes the interdependence of humans and the non-human world despite natural disasters. Human beings are responsible for calling the natural disaster unless they quit exploiting nature in the name of modernity.

Lung's prosperity has nothing to do when the family suffering from a terrible famine that settles on that region of the earth. The modest lover of land becomes the victim of famine for no reason. There is not sufficient food to feed the children and the other family members. O-lan becomes extremely hopeless and she even presses her hand to her belly even though she is pregnant again. Yet, nothing fascinates Lung except the land and its productions. It is because of his immense faith in the immortality of the land. Some scholars like Willa Cather projects the factual truth of humanity that human life is transitory whereas land is immortal. Like Cather, Lung understands the immortality of the land because human beings' arrival and departure on the earth have nothing to do with the function of the land. Lung adduces in this manner:

They cannot take the land from me. The labor of my body and the fruit of the fields I have put into that which cannot be taken away. If I had the silver, they would have taken it. If I had bought with the silver to store it, they would have taken it all. I have the land still, and it is mine. (53)

Lung's argument sounds philosophical in the sense that it represents the philosophy of Leopold's land ethics. His desire to possess the land rather than the silver rectifies

Leopold's concept of the land community. This is why he prefers the eternity of the land and its production for sustainable livelihood even when China shows signs of modernization.

Lung displays tremendous stoicism unlike the Hwang family and his uncle during the climax of famine. Starvation challenges the continuity of human civilization in that region of China. The rumor of eating dogs and horses in the town circulates like an electric current at the time of famine. It is said that people eat human flesh in the villages. By this time, Lung's fourth child has born and died. The whole village has nothing to eat except the barks of the trees. All this happens when people exploit mother earth by forgetting their obligation. James Lovelock argues “. . . by far the greatest damage we do to the Earth, and thus by far the greatest threat to our survival comes from agriculture” (qtd. in Ogle 286). Lovelock urges people to quit destroying the earth because it challenges the human survival that depends upon agricultural production. Lung is aware of the ecological future of humanity. That is why Lung never participates to destroy the integrity of the land since his family depends on agriculture. O-lan is ready to sell the household goods like tables, beds, bedding, chairs, etc. due to poverty except for agricultural equipment. But, Lung is not ready to sell the land even in a time of adversity. “I shall never sell the land!” he shrieked at them. “Bit by bit I will dig up the fields and feed the earth itself to the children and when they die I will bury them in the land, and I and my wife and my old father, even he, we will die on the land that has given us birth!”(Buck 61). This is the reply of Lung to the client who has come to purchase the land with his uncle. His reply signifies how much he loves his land. Lung respects the land the way he respects his mother and he wishes to die in her company rather than selling it. In this sense, his relationship with the land is spiritual rather than economic. As a result,

Lung's spiritual relationship with the land provides him the power to bear the tragedies in life even if he has to migrate to the south for the survival of his family members.

Migration, in course of time, becomes the last option for Lung and his family to survive on the earth. He begins his journey to the south after selling household goods except for the land and the house. There is no alternative for him to take his family to the southern city for survival. During the journey, Lung comforts his small sons that they will get enough food to eat in the south. But, migration is also the effect of globalization. Vandana Shiva opines that the majority of people are forced to migrate from their native land when they lose their access to natural resources. “The majority is then pushed into a marginalised existence without access to resources necessary for well-being and survival” (Shiva 568). Shiva explains how the majority of the population suffers from the impact of forceful migration. They are unwillingly forced towards a marginalized existence in the urban areas. This is how Buck describes Lung's painful narrative:

Wang Lung withdrew a little from the others and turned himself to the wall and secretly with his hand in his girdle he counted out the pence he had left. There was enough for the six mats and enough each for a penny for rice and beyond that he had three pence left. It came over him with comfort that thus they could begin the new life. But the notion of holding up a bowl and begging of anyone who passed continued to distress him. It was very well for the old man and for the children and even for the women, but he had his two hands.

(67)

Buck articulates what happens to Lung and his family in the south after the forceful migration. Lung's living condition at the street hut in the south is horrible. It is the

heartrending transformation of a landowner into a rag. O-Lan and his children beg on the street and Lung earns money by pulling a rickshaw. As they were struggling for their existence, Lung is haunted by the memory of his farmland. In reality, Lung's ecological conscience is still intact even in the gloomy atmosphere of the city. The cruel fate forces him to migrate to the southern city to save the life of family members. Migration is not the solution to the existing problems in the world. It requires tremendous ecological knowledge to explore the causes behind it.

Lung suffers from placelessness in the city after he settles the hunger of the family members. Most importantly, Lung experiences strange things in the southern city. He witnesses the Western influences and his whole family looks like foreigners due to their dialects. Lung is again haunted by the memory of his home and land because it depicts his true identity. "In authentic experience 'home', whether a house, a village, a region, or a nation, is central point of existence and individual identity from which you look out on the rest of the world" (Relph 83). Home, therefore, affects our identity as well as our perception of the outside world. Human existence is largely determined by the place where we are born, live, or work. In this sense, Lung's proclamation has greater significance in *The Good Earth*. "We must get back to the land" (Buck 80). Lung's utterance rectifies his attitude towards the native land. On the contrary, he does not want his sons to be a thief in the city. Lung again memorizes his native land even in the glamorous city. He feels dislocated in the town because his mind is in the distant past. As a result, human identity fractures in the absence of a true home.

Buck displays the loss of humanity in the modern age by drawing the disparity between the rich and poor at the backdrop of poverty in the south. Lung's couple represents the underprivileged class in the southern city where people sell the girl as a

slave. In reality, a woman sacrifices a lot for the happiness of the man. The storyteller in Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi* compares a woman to the earth. He says, "Just as the earth bears all the burdens of the world, so also a woman bears all the responsibilities of society and spends all her energies in fulfilling them" (Sahni 25). The narrator glorifies women for their abundant self-sacrifice. This is what O-lan exactly does in Buck's novel when Lung expresses his desire to go back to the land from the city. Buck writes, "There is nothing to sell except the girl," she answered slowly. Wang Lung's breath caught. "Now, I would not sell a child!" he said loudly (83). The heartrending conversation of the diligent couple displays the climax of poverty in Chinese society. O-lan's sacrifice is incomparable to anything in the world because Sahni also agrees that women are equal to the earth. But, her sacrifice to keep her husband happy raises a crucial question of whether there exists humanity in China or not. How can we avoid that terrible fortune? It is possible if we spread Leopold's concept of land community even in the modern age. His philosophy of land community renders the notion of civilized life.

Human beings suffer from nostalgia when they are far away from their homeland. Lung's nostalgia instigates when he overhears the poignant story of the man nearby his hut. His narrative rectifies the huge gap between the rich and the poor in the city. Thus, the dichotomy of the rich and the poor stimulates the yearning for the homeland. "Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world" (Relph 141). The experience of the world, ultimately, conjoins human and natural order that cultivates nostalgic feelings in the mind. Lung's nostalgia, therefore, is the result of his attachment to the land. Buck writes:

But Wang Lung thought of his land and pondered this way and that, with the

sickened heart of deferred hope, how he could get back to it. He belonged, not to this scum which clung to the walls of a rich man's house; nor did he belong to the rich man's house. He belonged to the land and he could not live with any fullness until he felt the land under his feet and followed a plough in the springtime and bore a scythe in his hand at harvest. He listened, therefore, apart from the others, because hidden in his heart was the knowledge of the possession of his land, the good wheat land of his fathers, and the strip of rich rice land which he had bought from the great house. (87)

Lung looks restless in the atmosphere of the city because he has deferred hope to return to his homeland. His love for the land is incomparable. Moreover, Lung identifies himself with the land and he wishes to feel and touch it. The image of plowing and harvesting haunts him badly along with the strip of rich rice land. All this indicates that Lung's nostalgia is the effect of the natural disaster. Anyway, the discrepancy that exists in the modern city draws human beings toward nature which in turn provides relief for reminiscence and fills the gap between the rich and the poor.

Lung looks impatient in the atmosphere of the Chinese city because it values money rather than joy and happiness. He grows more impatient when he sees the influence of Christianity and the capitalists. Similarly, Lung is afraid of the movement of the army that signals the war somewhere around the city. Besides all these development, Lung possesses the ecological sensitivity that is essential for the proper functioning of nature. Leopold put forth the idea that nature functions properly if only there is "the balance of nature" (214). Environmental ethics resides in the principle of equilibrium of nature. Lung displays his ecological sensitivity even in the tough time in the city. He consoles himself and says, "Yes, but there was the land. Money and food are eaten and gone, and if there is not sun and rain in proportion,

there is again hunger” (Buck 90). Lung considers the land as the supreme gift of nature; money and food are only temporary possessions of human beings. His ability to realize the cause of famine indicates his ecological sensitivity. He knows that famine occurs if there is no sun and rain in proper ratio. This is how Lung defeats the monetary influence in his life although it is inevitable to pursue material pleasure.

At the same time, Lung decides to return to his land because happiness disappears in the south when the enemy breaks the gates of the city. He repeats the utterance twice, “We go back to the land” (Buck 99). Lung's decision is really meaningful from an environmental point of view. His preparation suggests that he possesses a high level of ecological conscience as he understands the power and value of seeds in the life of a peasant. Shiva also defends the value of seeds while discussing the impact of globalization in South Asia. “The seed has become, for us, the site and the symbol of freedom in the age of manipulation and monopoly of its diversity” (Shiva 574). The tiny seed, therefore, symbolizes freedom in the age of modernity. Lung begins his journey back home when he becomes the victim of extreme manipulation in the city. Buck describes Lung's preparation in this way:

. . . With three pieces of gold he good seed from the south, full grains of wheat, and of rice and of corn and for very recklessness of riches he bought seeds the like of which he had never planted before, celery and lotus for his pond and great red radishes that are stewed with pork for a feast dish and small red fragrant beans. With five gold pieces he bought an ox from a farmer ploughing in the field. . . . (99-100)

Lung purchases a variety of seeds and an ox to chase his dream. He uses the pieces of gold that he collects while the enemy breaks the gates of the city. His intention to buy the seeds, in the words of Shiva, is to enjoy freedom in life. Or it displays his

ecological conscience in the sense that he knows the power of the tiny seed. This is how Lung resists manipulation in the modern city and connects himself with the earth all the time.

Lung, likewise, displays his ethical sensitivity soon after he returns to the native land. The pleasantness of the wind attracts the protagonist because he understands its true meaning. Leopold stands critically while perceiving the environment. He asserts, “We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in” (Leopold 214). The ability to see, feel, and understand makes us easier to know the world around us. Ultimately, it drives us to follow environmental ethics even in an adverse situation. Lung observes the native land after the heartrending exile of famine in this way:

Then in the evening he stood in the doorway of his house and looked across the land, his own land, lying loose and fresh from the winter's freezing, and ready for planting. It was full spring and in the shallow pool the frogs croaked drowsily. The bamboos at the corner of the house swayed slowly under a gentle night wind and through the twilight he could see dimly the fringe of trees at the border of the near field (Buck 101)

Lung's observation of the land after his exile in the city reverberates his place attachment. He perceives the natural elements through the rhetoric of the land community. His understanding of the land community, thus, signifies how Lung avoids the influence of modernity through his untiring effort. In this way, Lung's decision to return to his land unfolds his desire to keep him and the family away from the discrepancy that creeps into the modern cities.

Lung establishes himself as a landowner by purchasing more land from the neighbors and the Hwang family. The degeneration of the Hwang family forces him

to think twice about the future of his sons. That is the reason why he tries his best to keep them in touch with the land. Leopold writes, "In short a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" (204). Leopold considers land ethic as the indicator of knowledge so that one can easily know his or her role in the community. In this sense, Lung's decision to send his sons to school certainly has a meaning. "Come out of the fields from this day on, for I need a scholar in the family to read the contracts and to write my name so that I shall not be ashamed in the town" (Buck 117). Seemingly, Lung wishes to avoid his shame and helplessness in the market, but his desire for a scholar in the family suggests his intention to avoid the fate of the Hwang family. He wants his sons to follow the principle of land ethics. Knowledge, of course, offers space for human beings to realize who they are and what their role in the community is. The reason why Lung wants his sons to keep in touch with the land is to make them realize the beauty of the land community through their knowledge.

Lung demonstrates his intense passion for his land even after the series of transformations in his life. First, Lung finds O-lan no more beautiful for the first time in his life since they return from the city. Second, he begins to argue with his wife and starts to visit the new tea shop in the town frequently. Finally, his infatuation with a girl named Lotus reveals his desire for a concubine. His father addresses Lotus as a harlot even after Lung tells him that she is the second woman in the house. All these upheavals are in a shadow in front of Lung's immense love for his land. That is the reason why Leopold says, "It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value" (223). We cannot imagine an ethical relation to land until and unless we love the land truly, says Leopold. The high regard for land, certainly, is the root of

Leopold's philosophy that undermines the economic value of the land. Lung's inner voice reflects the same kind of spirit even after his unbelievable transformations.

“Where is the hoe and where the plow? And where is the seed for the wheat planting?

Come, Ching, my friend—come—call the men—I go out to the land!” (Buck 152).

Lung's rhetorical questions are the spontaneous reaction to the complexity of the present, but it includes his passion too. It outshines his unconditional love for his farmland. By doing so, Lung controls disintegration in the family by following the principles of the land ethic.

Things fall apart when Lung displays some signs of degeneration after his transformation into a landowner in the village. His relationship with his wife and old father is not as smooth as in the past with the arrival of Lotus in the family. Their conversation and remarks explain how Lung is divided between two halves in the novel. Caroline Breslin writes:

In almost every instance, she proves herself more steadfast than Wang Lung, never changing in response to prosperity, not tempted to take up the ways of the rich. It is she who holds the family together. It is when Wang Lung abandons her for Lotus that things fall apart. (147)

Breslin's judgment signifies the influence of modern development in the life of an innocent peasant Lung. Lung's desire for a concubine shakes the bond of the family.

Buck describes two women's roles as:

So these two women took their place in his house: Lotus for his toy and his pleasure and to satisfy his delight in beauty and in smallness and in the joy of her pure sex, and O-lan for his woman of work and mother who had borne his sons and who kept his house and fed him and his father and his children. And it was a pride to Wang Lung in the village that men mentioned with envy the

woman in his inner court. . . . (154)

Lung brings Lotus into his house as a concubine to fulfill his sexual pleasure with the help of his uncle's wife. His emphasis on the physical beauty of Lotus contradicts the spiritual beauty of O-lan. This is enough to justify how Lung is influenced by material pleasure. This is the reason why he ignores O-lan's compassion and contribution in such an old age. Lung's intimacy with Lotus is the result of his hypocrisy that develops after he visits the southern city. In this way, Lung breaks the ideal social structure of the family by dividing himself among two women: O-lan and Lotus.

Likewise, Lung's elder son begins his deterioration as he starts to drink wine and visit the whore house. Lung looks restless as soon as he discovers the fact about his elder son. He wishes to arrange the marriage of his son as soon as possible to avoid the terrible misfortune. At the same time, he is afraid of the threatening behavior of his uncle. The arrival of locusts in their field from the south suggests the upcoming ecological crisis in the future. That is the reason why Leopold frequently insists, "One of the requisites for an ecological comprehension of land is an understanding of ecology..." (224). Understanding ecology depends upon the ecological comprehension of land because the latter forms the basic principles of the former one. This is how Lung shows his ecological conscience when he appeals to his villagers to fight collectively with the enemies. "... he rushed among the frightened villagers, and he shouted at them, "Now for our good land we will fight these enemies from the skies!" (Buck 168). Land provides therapeutic power to Lung and he can adjust to the series of troubles in his life. He invites the villagers collectively to fight with the enemies from the sky. His proposal sounds in favor of the peasant, and it reflects his understanding of ecology. In this way, Lung recaptures happiness in the company of the land even when his son irritates him by choosing the way of

degeneration.

Lung, later on, finds his elder son in the inner courts of the house with Lotus and he decides to send him to the south. By this time, O-lan experiences strange swelling on her body. Her face and body reflect the bundle of pain, but she is still heroic. Breslin calls her heroic and compares her heroism in contrast with her husband. “Hardly cold, hardly impenetrable, both characters are human to the core, enduring and surviving some hard times. But one is heroic: O-lan. She has come from humblest circumstances, sold as a child, abused as slave, regarded as nothing” (Breslin 146). Breslin declares O-lan as a heroic figure. Self-sacrifice is the greatest attribute of O-lan since her childhood. This is the true property of a woman in the words of a storyteller in Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi*. O-lan displays her sacrifice when she overhears the words of the doctor who detects a large tumor in her womb. “Now when O-lan heard the words, “five hundred pieces of silver” she came out of her languor and she said weakly, “No, and my life is not worth so much. A good piece of land can be bought for so much” (Buck 183). O-lan's utterance shows her attitude toward life; it dispels her priority on the land rather than health. What instigates a woman to sacrifice of this kind? She is ready to sacrifice her life for the joy and happiness of her husband whose achievement depends upon her doing. Of course, O-lan's immense love for the land reflects her dedication to the land community. Without a doubt, her dedication to the land provides strength for Lung to tackle the forthcoming disorder in the family.

Next, O-lan's health condition grows worse day by day and she wishes to see her elder son's wedding before her last breath. Lung manages the wedding of his elder son by calling him from the south. The wedding and the feast follow the death of O-lan and Lung's father respectively. In the light of these tragic events and funeral rites,

Buck reflects the influence of Taoism and Buddhism in the life of the Chinese people. With the help of religion, Buck shows the Chinese people's intimacy with the farmland. Again Breslin writes, "Water, earth garden—all are the natural and symbolic elements ... They create the natural environment of farm life worldwide and communicate the universality of humankind's relationship with the earth" (152). Breslin's objective is to clarify the Chinese people's association with the land. Buck also finds a similar kind of association of Lung during the burial ceremony of his beloved ones- father and the better half. "There in that land of mine is buried the first good half of my life and more. It is as though half of me were buried there, and now it is a life in my house" (Buck 195). This is the reaction of Lung after the death of his father and wife. He is proud to perform their funeral rites in his land. In other words, Lung's attachment to the land and religion explains his relationship with the earth. His affinity with the native religion increases with the influence of modernity that he notices in the function of weddings and feasts at home. In reality, he dislikes the way his sons spend money extravagantly.

By this time, the whole region becomes the victim of massive floods, but Lung's family survives due to their prosperity. In the meantime, Lung settles the matter of his daughter and he purchases more land along with five slaves. Lung again reveals him as a landowner and capitalist after the flood because he is a rich and powerful man with a big heart. As Leopold says, "Land, like Odysseus's slave girls, is still property" (203). Leopold draws the analogy between land and Odysseus' slave girls because both goods are evaluated in terms of their value. Lung's abundant possession of land and slave girls can be the impact of modernization. "...And of these Wang Lung bought land and much land, and he bought it cheaply, since money men must have...And the five he bought in one day, for he was a man rich enough to

do quickly what he decided upon” (Buck 205). Lung again introduces himself as a landowner and capitalist because of monetary power. It is not rational to buy slave girls with money. The idea of money-making is the source of conflict in the capitalist society. Besides all these fears, Lung decides to buy the old house of the Hwang family and shifts his family there to avoid the constant torture of his uncle's family. His uncle appears as a black sheep to the Lung family.

Money and land cannot provide peace and happiness in one's life when land is treated as a commodity rather than as an organism. Lung lives with his family luxuriously in the great house, but his neighbor Ching's death makes him unhappy. His feelings after the death of Ching resemble the philosophical insights of Leopold. He argues, “The man is, in fact, only a member of a biotic team is shown by an ecological interpretation of history” (205). Leopold's argument focuses on man's position in biota since ancient times. Lung realizes this bitter reality when he asks his sons to bury him near Ching when he dies. “Well, and it is meet, for he has ever stood guardian to me against evil.” And he directed his sons that when he himself died he should lie nearest to Ching (Buck 221). Lung portrays Ching as a guardian who stands in favor of him against the evil hour. Ching's death made him unhappy although he possess enough land and money. Land and money provide material pleasure, but spiritual peace is not possible from it.

Why peace does disappear from the house of Lung? Their association with the land decreased since the family shifted into the great house. There are a lot of reasons behind this situation. First, Lung's elder son spends the money extravagantly in the name of renovation of the great house and the wedding of his younger brother, but he forgets the reality that all great families are rooted in the land. Second, Lung's two sons and their wives quarrel with each other on trivial issues. Third, Lung's nephew

enters the great house with his troops and abuses the women and slaves of the great house. Even Lotus feels jealousy towards the maid Pear Blossom because she mistakenly believes that Lung ignores her with her growing age. Fourth, Lung's younger son, one among twins, expresses his desire to be a soldier after listening to the tales of war from the soldiers. The younger one insists on revolution and war to free the land. His desire indicates the influence of modernity in Chinese politics. All these events prove that there is no more peace in Lung's family in the latter part of his life. Lung says, "Well, and I have no peace anywhere in my house" (Buck 246). The disappearance of peace from the Lung family, therefore, is a sign of degeneration. Of course, monetary power is the seed of disintegration in Lung's family.

Ecocritics like Colleen Lye assume that treating the land as a commodity is a sign of degeneration in the modern age. Despite intense love for the good earth, Lung's family falls apart when the younger son decides to get recruited as a soldier. Then, Lung falls in quick love with the slave girl Pear Blossom at such an old age. Besides Lung, the whole family treats the land as material goods because they are unaware of the concept of land as an organism. Leopold puts forth an interesting idea to show the controversial attitude of the people. "The land-relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations" (Leopold 203). It is not justifiable to enjoy the pleasures of the land by ignoring moral responsibilities. An eco-centric attitude develops with the rise of material prosperity. Exactly, this is what Lung feels soon after he overhears the plan of selling the land made by his idle sons. "This field we will sell and this one, we will divide the money between us evenly. Your share I will borrow at good interest, for now with the railroad straight through I can ship rice to the sea and I ..." (Buck 259). The scheme of selling the land reveals the commercial treatment of the land by Lung's sons because they are only concerned

with money. Railroad, a sign of modernity, has a greater economic impact on their lives at that time in China. The idea of selling the land to make money is the result of modern thought; it is also a sign of their detachment from the land. The degeneration of peasants begins with the mistreatment of the land after the construction of a railroad in China.

At last, Lung expresses his desire to return to his earthen house to live there for a few days and he wishes to die in the company of his dear ones. He appeals to his sons not to sell the land because he is already aware of the intention of his sons. Rather, he intends to secure their future by integrating them with the land instead of selling it. That is why he tries to remind them of the role of nature for their better future in the age of modernity. Caroline Merchant portrays nature as a female and describes her role in two opposing ways. Merchant writes:

Central to the organic theory was the identification of nature, especially the earth, with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe. But another opposing image of nature as female was also prevalent: wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts, and general chaos. (10)

Merchant explains the dual image of mother earth in nature. The initial picture of nature has a positive impact on the life of human beings whereas the latter image of nature invites destruction in their life. If we look at these two images of nature, the first one influences Lung's life a lot. In this way, his journey from adversity to prosperity becomes possible through the reciprocal relationship with the land or mother earth. The land returns him a tremendous harvest for his deep love. If the land is traded, the existence of his sons will be in a crisis like that of the Hwang family. In the words of Lung, "It is the end of the family—when they begin to sell the land," he

said brokenly. Out of the land we came and into it we must go—and if you hold your land you can live—no one can rob you of land. . . .” (Buck 260). Lung's broken voice renders the human relationship with the land that echoes the philosophy of Cather. This is the best evidence of his bond with the land and a threat to his sons suggesting their possible future. Lung's last reaction to his sons' plan explains why human beings must be faithful to mother earth.

Lung's journey from rags to riches revolves around the major components of nature: land and water. His attachment especially to the land community echoes the philosophical insight of Leopold. That is why he succeeds in keeping himself away from the deathly impact of modernization. His treatment of the land community sharply differs from the Hwang's family, his uncle, and his sons. Even in the age of modernity, he loves the soils, waters, plants, and animals with due respect. Of course, this is the secret of his philosophy. The same philosophy provides him energy to avoid a fate like that of Hwang's family, his uncle, and his sons. Their tragic fate is rooted in sex, drugs, and an idle lifestyle. The more you run after the material pleasure, the less you perceive spiritual happiness. Spirituality provides relief in the age of modernization. To experience sublime happiness in the beauty of nature, we have to protect it for the forthcoming generation. It is possible if only we follow the principles of ecocriticism in words and deeds.

Lung transforms into the natural sublimity when he realizes himself in the totality of the natural environment. He rejects anthropocentrism but assimilates in the animistic concept that the perfect integration of both biological and sociological environment carries beyond the entirety of cosmic manifestation to the zenith. Lung, in this novel, realizes that he remains as a string that holds everything making wholeness in integration. This is the stage of ecological sublimity that he feels. O. P.

Dwivedi cites the following lines from Metta-Suttara from Buddhist scripture which exactly crystalize the pattern of sublimity that Lung perceives in the novel:

As the mother protects her child even at the risk of her own life, So that there by mutual protection and good-will limitless among all beings. Let limitless goodwill prevail in the whole world-above, below, all around, untarnished with any feeling of disharmony and discord. (205)

It clarifies that with the right perception of the cosmic order and harmony, one detaches from evil feelings. One realizes that one is not there to rupture the cycle of nature, rather a deep understanding of this pattern gives the joyful pride and radiation of perfect bliss. This is what Lung feels when he returns to the earthen house at the end of the novel. He overcomes the obstacles created by modern development after he realizes his real existence in the land community. His journey reveals how human beings have a mutual relationship with the biological environment.

Chapter III

Tribute to River Meenachal in Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* describes a poignant picture of human and non-human life that depends on the River Meenachal after the rapid development in Kerala, India. The protagonists Ammu and her twins, Rahel and Estha, depend on the River Meenachal for joy and happiness. But, exploitation of the river accelerates after the development of the tourism industry in Kerala. It formulates the foundation of environmental apocalypses due to the evil practices of human beings.

Environmental apocalypses, without a doubt, happen in the absence of a bio-centric outlook toward nature in the age of global capitalism. It undervalues the concept of a resourceful egalitarian society. The twin protagonists reflect their ecological conscience when they witness the sign of catastrophes at the premise of the River Meenachal in Kerala. This chapter outline the threatening experiences of the protagonists who depend on the River Meenachal and their comparison of the idyllic past with the Hellenic present that resonates with the ghost of modernity.

The novel begins with the description of the monsoon season in Ayemenem, a microcosm of Kerala. Place attachment of the twin protagonists begins with the journey of Rahel towards the Ayemenem family that operates their agro-business entitled Paradise Pickles & Preserves. Her journey takes place at the time of the rainy season, but it signifies her connection with her parental roots. John Lutz considers rain as a “force of renewal” (69). He portrays rain as a force of renewal in the sense that it revitalizes the components of nature. Rejuvenation is the attribute of nature; rain is the force that regenerates energy in nature. Just as nature renews itself with the energy of water, Rahel renews her relationship with the Ayemenem family on a rainy day. “It was raining when Rahel came back to Ayemenem” (Roy 1). Rahel's arrival in

Ayemenem signifies her palatial attachment in the sense that she cannot detach from her mother's identity. She regenerates her relationship with the family in Ayemenem in the monsoon season. In reality, the place always comes at first when we talk about our roots or identity and it is the base of a healthy egalitarian society.

Estha, Rahel's brother, also returns to Ayemenem in search of his identity. His love for the beautiful landscape of Ayemenem reflects his place attachment as well as the ecological consciousness that rises with the tourism industry in Kerala, India. The impact of expanding the tourism industry can be observed in the ponds, lakes, and rivers; it disrupts human beings' integrity with the natural environment. Paul W.

Taylor writes:

Our duties to respect the integrity of natural ecosystems, to preserve endangered species, and to avoid environmental pollution stem from the fact that these are ways in which we can help make it possible for wild species populations to achieve and maintain a healthy existence in a natural state. (78)

Taylor's concept of bio-centric egalitarianism collapses with human beings' irresponsibility towards nature. Human being ruptures their integrity with nature through the ruthless use of chemicals, pesticides, and carbons. That is the reason why some species of plants and animals are disappearing from the world at present. This is exactly what happens in the surroundings of the River Meenachal when Estha returns twenty-three years later in Kerala. He notices the terrifying scene while walking in the land of Ayemenem. Roy depicts the fate of River Meenachal in this way:

Now that he'd been re-Returned, Estha walked all over Ayemenem. Some days he walked along the banks of the river that smelled of shit, and pesticides bought with World Bank loans. Most of the fish had died. The ones that survived suffered from fin-rot and had broken out in boils. (13)

Estha's acute observation of the river, certainly, reflects the heartrending picture of the ecology. The smell of shit and pesticides, the death of fisheries, etc. along the banks of the river shows how careless are we towards nature. At the same time, the World Bank's involvement in the trade and business of Kerala reflects the influence of globalization of commercialism in India. Without a doubt, Estha's respect for the life of engendered fisheries is a sign of his ecological conscience. He knows that water pollution in the River Meenachal is the by-product of toxic substances released by the great industries and hotels in Kerala. Estha experiences strange things while walking on the banks of River Meenachal and his experience; therefore, is the impact of modern development in India. His horrible sight of dead fish is evidence of it. Of course, it is a great threat to human civilization because the scene reflects the horrific picture of the biosphere.

Human beings' ego-consciousness dislocates eco-consciousness with the rise of urbanization and industrialization in Kerala. There is hardly any connection between the people and the land. Aldo Leopold in his "Land Ethics" emphasizes that "biotic interactions between the people and the land" (205) have existed since ancient times. His focus on biotic interactions is essential to establishing the reciprocal relationship between the people and the land, but it is hardly possible at the time of rapid industrialization. Estha undergoes similar experiences after returning to Ayemenem as it is the developing period of the tourism industry in Kerala. "And Estha, walking on the riverbank, couldn't feel the wetness of the rain, or the sudden shudder of the cold puppy that had temporarily adopted him and squelched at his side" (Roy 15). Why Estha could not feel the wetness of the rain? Of course, the answer to this question is the wrong deeds of human beings in the modern age. It happens when human beings' eco-consciousness disappears by the domination of ego-

consciousness. They cannot perceive the truth and beauty of nature in the absence of ecological consciousness. In other words, they are unable to have direct interaction with nature. Estha's inability to feel the dampness of the rain suggests the rupture of the environment in Kerala. In this way, people are destroying their integrity with nature or the land community. This kind of practice remains a threat to the formation of an egalitarian society in the modern age.

River-sense is a technique to capture the picture of the river in the narratives. It occurs in the mind of the protagonists. The purpose of inventing river-sense in Roy's narrative outshines the exploitation of River Meenachal after the development of the tourism industry in Kerala. Estha and Rahel draw the difference between the pristine landscapes of Ayemenem in the age of globalization. The twins are badly traumatized after the loss of natural backwaters because it is the way to recollect their childhood memory. Aarthi Vadde writes, "Even after the developers destroy the backwaters, the ethics of its ecological collectivity persist in the afterlife of a river-sense narrative" (538). River-sense, thus, plays a crucial role to protect the ecological beauty of Kerala because the tourism industry only promotes anthropocentric activities in the name of development. Roy displays her awareness about the ecological future of Kerala by inventing the river sense in the narrative. She concludes, "Though you couldn't see the river from the house any more, like a seashell always has a sea-sense, the Ayemenem House still had a river-sense. A rushing, rolling, fish swimming sense" (30). Roy invents the concept of river-sense to take the twins back to the serene beauty of the River Meenachal. The rushing, rolling, and swimming of the fish is a thing of the past to the twins. All this happens with the rise of material development in Kerala. In this way, Estha and Rahel display their biocentric outlook toward nature by imagining the tragic fate of aquatic animals.

In addition, Roy recaptures the integrative relationship of water with the agro-business of the Ayenemem family- Paradise Pickles & Preserves- through the eyes of Rahel. Agro-business depends on local agriculture and natural resources for its production, and it is the foundation of a sustainable economy. The agro-business gains economic prosperity if human beings follow the measures to protect natural resources. Timothy W. Luke argues, “. . . our economy and environment are not antagonists, they depend on each other protecting our natural resources generates economic benefits” (69). Luke believes that proper management of natural resources provides abundant profit to the eco-business. As the economy and the environment depend on each other; we have to protect nature from all kinds of rupture in the environment. Roy describes the problem of Rahel's grandmother's pickle factory that lies between Ayemenem's house and the river in detail:

They used to make pickles, squashes, jams, curry powders and canned pineapples. And banana jam (illegally) after the FPO (Food Products Organization) banned it because according to their specifications it was neither jam nor jelly. Too thin for jelly and too thick for jam. An ambiguous, unclassifiable consistency, they said. (30)

The narrative of the pickle factories illustrates that agro-business produces a variety of goods from local as well as natural resources. It is essential to revise the policy of the Food Products Organization (FPO) to promote agro-business in the larger community. Overall, agro-business is the backbone of a healthy economy and it requires a healthy environment for viable development.

Ammu returns to Ayemenem with her twins in search of a cozy home from Calcutta. Her maternal home and their pickle business were undergoing a tough time. Ammu, an upper-caste Syrian Christian, decides to marry a Hindu man who works in

the tea states in Calcutta to avoid the patriarchal domination of her father.

Unfortunately, her husband turns out to be an alcoholic. Later, Ammu feels as if she is a sexual object because her husband forces her to go to his English manager's bungalow. The religious conflict and sexual abuse compel Ammu to return to her parental home or Ayemenem House. Unlike the house of her husband, the parental home provides safety and security in her life. Edward Relph contrasts home with the house according to its function:

Home is the foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community, the dwelling-place of being. Home is not just the house you happen to live in, it is not something that can be anywhere, that can be exchanged, but an irreplaceable centre of significance. (39)

Home, in the words of Relph, is more than a dwelling place, and it is an undeniable place of our hopes, longings, and aspirations. Ammu's attachment to her parental home becomes the ultimate way of her living because she believes that it nurtures her with safety and security from her cold-hearted husband. "For herself she knew that there would be no more chances. There was only Ayemenem now. A front verandah and a back verandah. A hot river and a pickle factory" (Roy 43). The imagery of Ayemenem House with its front and back verandah, River Meenachal, and a pickle factory offers Ammu a cozy environment at the tough time of her life. As she is let down by her alcoholic husband, a maternal home is an ultimate choice for her in life. This is the reason why Ammu returns to Ayemenem with her twins from Calcutta and since then she depends on the River Meenachal unknowingly for the rest of her life.

By the time Ammu returns to Ayemenem House with her twins, she notices significant changes around the surroundings of idyllic Kerala. The peace and serenity of Kerala vanish with the cinema, music, tourism industry, and politics. The tourism

industry interferes with the ecological beauty of Kerala, and it remains a concern of every responsible citizen of the town. That is why, Chacko, the maternal uncle of the twins, explains the relationship between human history and natural history to confer ecological knowledge to them. Ecological knowledge develops human beings' egalitarian points of view in modern society. Taylor argues, "The vast majority of people in modern democracies, however, do not maintain an egalitarian outlook when it comes to comparing human beings with other living beings" (81). Human beings' egalitarian outlook in the modern world disappears when they treat other living beings in terms of superiority and inferiority. The narrative of the Earth Goddess links human history with natural history in an inseparable way:

. . . he told them about the Earth Woman. He made them imagine that the earth—four thousand six hundred million years old—was a forty-six-year-old woman . . . It had taken the whole of the Earth Woman's life for the earth to become what it was. For the oceans to part. For the mountains to rise. The Earth Woman was eleven years old, Chacko said, when the single-celled organisms appeared. . . . The whole of human civilization we know it . . . began only *two hours* ago in the Earth Woman's life. (Roy 53-54)

Chacko teaches the children an important lesson about the relationship between human history and natural history through the image of Earth God. His purpose of teaching is to make them aware of the environment. Human beings' negligence towards other living creatures is the root of the anthropocentric outlook on mother earth. Therefore, Earth Goddess offers ways to form an egalitarian society despite modern challenges because her narrative drives human beings' ecological culture.

The rise of modernity engulfs eco-technology in India although it is ecologically necessary for sustainable economic development. It is the backbone of

subalterns or margins because eco-technology and agro-business exist side by side in the lap of the natural environment. The natural home of subalterns suffers from the encroachment of urbanization and industrialization. Thus, it is difficult for them to establish fine relationships with the natural environment to protect their technology and business. Luke writes, “An eco-technology can be closely integrated into the local environment and the larger biosphere” (193). Luke's thesis explains that eco-technology is ecologically necessary to link the local environment with the biosphere. That is the reason why Roy discusses Velutha's fishing technique that he withdraws with the rise of the tourism industry and the Naxalite movement in India. Roy argues, “It was Velutha who made Rahel her luckiest-ever fishing rod and taught her and Estha to fish. . . .” (79). Velutha practiced the traditional way of fishing method in the past, but he gives up his technique of fishing and agro-business to join the Naxalite movement. He represents the condition of subalterns because a natural environment is necessary for a sustainable livelihood. Eco-technology cannot exist in the absence of the natural environment and it becomes a thing of the past to the upcoming generation if we are unable to preserve it. In this way, we must secure the future of the new generation by preserving eco-technology despite modern movements and technologies.

River Meenachal bears the filthy mark of exploitation from human beings with the expansion of the tourism industry in Kerala. As the river suffers this plight and transforms into the drain, the protagonists are haunted by its memory in the dream. The river motif signifies their deep respect and attachment to nature. In other words, reverence for nature is the fundamental constituent of environmental ethics in the modern age. Taylor repeatedly proclaims the “attitude of respect for nature” (180). Taylor's moral commitment refers to respect for nature which is the fundamental

element of environmental ethics. The river haunts the protagonists during their stay at Hotel Sea Queen. “They dreamed the river. . . . With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it” (Roy 122-23). The protagonists respect the integrity of the natural ecosystem because they realize the inherent value of plants and animals on the earth. Their desire to see the fish, trees, and moon in the river is a reaction against the material development of Kerala. They are against all sorts of human encroachment in the River Meenachal either in the form of leachate or pesticides in it because they are harmful to the better future of ecology. They find the river in them and vice versa. This is the absolute ecological conscience of protagonists that germinates out of their tribute to the River Meenachal.

Rahel draws the plight of River Meenachal to explain the exploitation of nature that begins with global tourism in Kerala. The transformation of the History House into the five-star Heritage Hotel at the premise of River Meenachal is the beginning of the series of ecological degradation. Here begins the process of polluting the river with toxic wastes, one of the major causes of water contamination. Her natural process has been vandalized by the material development that leads the whole course astray. Why do human beings ignore the precious life not only of plants and animals but also their existence in the river? Why do not they act seriously to secure the future ecology? Anuradha Chaudhary declares that “humankind's fundamental irresponsibility towards nature” (168) ruins the life of engendered species in the world. Chaudhary's primary concern is about the negligence of human beings towards nature, or in other words, their home. Are we creating Frankenstein's monster and digging our graves? This is the starkest issue that Roy exposes to threaten the world through the eyes of Rahel:

Years later, when Rahel returned to the river, it greeted her with a ghastly

skull's smile. . . . Despite the fact that it was March, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequined with the occasional silverslant of a dead fish. . . . Bright plastic bags blew across its viscous, weedy surface like subtropical flying-flowers. (124)

Rahel's pictorial description of the River Meenachal after the expansion of the tourism industry in Kerala is the most heartrending one throughout the novel. The pollution of River Meenachal from toxic wastes, garbage, plastics, etc. displays human beings' irresponsibility towards nature. The transformation of a river into a drain exposes human beings' anthropocentric outlook toward nature because they are damaging the life of plants, animals, and other species in the river. Why do they become reckless about the life of plants and animals in the river? The only solution to this problem is to feel that the entire flora and fauna are the kith and kin of human beings. We exist because they exist. This moral relation of universal brotherhood with the earth community can establish a creative egalitarian society in the world. The world becomes a home to maintain the unity in diversity of this mysterious planet.

The formation of an egalitarian society debunks with the rise of global capitalism because it only sees prosperity in material development. The construction of five-star hotels in modern India pollutes the River Meenachal abundantly. Human activities determine their ability to respect the life of species on the water. It requires a bio-centric outlook toward nature. "We are a part of nature and not apart from nature" (Rolston 134). We cannot imagine human beings' separation from nature because they depend on nature either physically or spiritually. Again, Rahel observes the construction of the hotel in modern India, but it renders her ecological consciousness:

The view from the hotel was beautiful, but here too the water was thick and

toxic. *No Swimming* signs had been put up in stylish calligraphy. They had built a tall wall to screen off the slum and prevent it from encroaching on Kari Saipu's estate. There wasn't much they could do about the smell. (Roy 125)

Toxic wastes become the identity of River Meenachal after the development of the tourism industry in Kerala, India, despite the amazing outlook from the premise of new hotels. The smell of the river laughs at human civilization and it is no more suitable for any member who imagines an egalitarian society in the universe. Rahel displays her ecological consciousness to protect the life of species that depends on water and her ecological sensitivity develops a bio-centric outlook toward nature. Material development segregates human beings' intimate relationship with nature because it opposes the fundamental principles of environmental ethics. However, the catholicity of ecological conscience radiates the haven for this burning problem.

Again, Rahel memorizes River Meenachal which brings back the heyday of childhood to magnify the importance of the river. The river is also the home of many plants and animals. It reminds her affinity with Velutha, who also depends on the same river for survival. But, the natural habitat of plants and animals is under a threat because of modern development. Human beings' intrusion into the permanent home of others disrupts the process of forming an egalitarian society. Taylor reviews the process of evolution and writes, “. . . we are relative newcomers, entering a home that has been the residence of others for hundreds of millions of years, a home that must now be shared by all of us together” (77). Earth is the home of all living beings; nobody has the right to invade it either in the name of modernity or development. Intruding the part of others is transgression and overreaching which ultimately makes us the creatures of nowhere. It must be shared by all to imagine a better future for humanity. Rahel imagines in this way:

Inside the curtain, Rahel closed her eyes and thought of the green river, of the quiet deep-swimming fish, and the gossamer wings of the dragonflies (that could see behind them) in the sun. She thought of her luckiest fishing rod that Velutha had made for her. Yellow bamboo with a float that dipped every time a foolish fish enquired. She thought of Velutha and wished she was with him.

(148)

Rahel's imagination of the sacred River Meenachal is a thing of the past because it bears the evil effects of global tourism. Neither she can see fish swimming in the river nor can she visualize the transparent wings of the dragonflies in the sun. They disappear from the river because of toxic wastes. That is why, Rahel is hurt by the memory of Velutha, who makes the luckiest fishing rod for her in childhood. In short, globalization appears as a harbinger of toxic wastes in India that threatens the cozy home of plants, animals, and human beings.

Meenachal River dwells in the mind, body, and soul of the twin protagonists throughout their life. Its haunting presence indicates how much they love the river, plants and animals, and the people who depend on it. The river, undoubtedly, is the symbol of both connection and segregation. Divya Anand explores the double meaning of the River Meenacchal that determines the destiny of the protagonists. She argues, "The most powerful and pervasive natural entity that maps the changes at the metaphorical and literal plane is the Meenachal river whose ebb and flow mirrors the destinies of the characters both materially as well as symbolically" (101). River Meenachal, according to Anand, serves different functions to the twins and their mother, Ammu. It connects the twins with Velutha, but it separates Ammu from Velutha. Rahel, and Estha, the protagonist with separate physiques and joint identities, view the river with deep respect. "Two-egg twins looked out across the

river. The Meenachal. Grey green. With fish in it. The sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it” (Roy 203). River Meenachal is a powerful metaphor throughout the novel; it divides the rich people from the poor or the Ayemenem family from the Velutha family. On the contrary, it also connects the touchable family with the untouchable one or twins with Velutha in the daytime and Ammu with Velutha at night. They are conscious of the life of plants and animals in the River Meenachal. In other words, their rising consciousness lays the foundation for neat, clean, and green River Meenachal. Their critical attitude towards the River Meenachal is the backbone of Kerala ecology as well.

The topography of the River Meenachal displays the twins' natural education which they acquire in Ayemenem. Natural education is the kernel of a prosperous ecosystem. Rahel and Estha's ecological knowledge assists them to live a meaningful life although social movement and material development are against the integrity of Kerala. Neither the Naxalite movement nor global tourism protects the dignity of Kerala citizens until and unless they can spread a bio-centric outlook. In other words, our ability to recognize the interdependence between the human and the non-human world displays our ecological knowledge because it draws an egalitarian view of the world. Vadde argues, “As an alternative to Ayemenem's governing codes, the backwater's ecological collectivity offers Rahel and Estha nonviolent and nonascendant forms of human knowledge ascertained through their environmental literacy” (534). Rahel and Estha's ecological literacy elucidates the interdependence between humans and the non-human world. In this matter, of course, it is an alternative knowledge that develops children's rigorous understanding of rivers, insects, plants, and trees. For instance, Rahel and Estha's ability to read bending bamboo as a signal of the storm is the best evidence of it. This is how Roy describes

Rahel and Estha's connection with the non-human world:

The first third of the river was their friend. Before the Really Deep began.
 They knew the slippery stone steps (thirteen) before the slimy mud began.
 They knew the afternoon weed that flowed inwards from the backwaters of
 Komarakom. They knew the smaller fish. The flat, foolish pallathi, the silver
 paral, the wily, whiskered koori, the sometimes karimeen. (203)

Roy describes the first third of the river as Rahel and Estha's friend. Its purpose is to connect the human with the non-human world in a more egalitarian manner. Their acute observation of the water level, stone steps, movement of weeds, fisheries, etc. suggests how much they respect the life of other living beings. It captures the spirit of Taylor's philosophy of bio-centric egalitarianism as well. Ecological literacy sounds more urgent soon after River Meenachal bears the dirty marks of toxic wastes. Therefore, ecological knowledge is decisive to secure the life of all living and non-living things on the earth.

Rahel and Estha develop intimacy with Velutha despite his untouchability in an authoritarian Indian society. How does a person become untouchable in society? Does humanity exist in reality? Or is it only a misconception? Its root, certainly, lies in superstition and illiteracy that exist in Indian society for ages. On the contrary, humanity is in crisis with the rise of modernity in the subcontinent. The young twins challenge the code of the Ayemenem family and they break its walls of it to enjoy happiness in life. Human beings can cross any boundary to pursue happiness if we look at the trend of history. It is essential to tear down cultural, racial, political, social, and religious barriers for the prosperity of humanity. This is exactly what Rahel and Estha do in the novel. They jump the wall of segregation secretly. Velutha becomes their true companion despite social discrimination against the Paravan in Kerala.

“Estha, delirious with joy, jumped on Velutha, wrapped his legs around his waist and kissed him” (Roy 213). Estha's love and devotion to Velutha demonstrate his humanity in the strict Indian society. He breaks the concrete wall of discrimination with his prime knowledge. Estha's ecological knowledge plays a significant role to keep a healthy environment. Ecological literacy promotes humanitarian philosophy in the modern age so that we can build better homes on earth.

The home provides safety and security to all the living beings on the earth. Roy's sensuous description of Velutha's home reveals the subaltern's attachment to the natural landscape. It also explicates how subalterns and the natural environment are coextensive for ages. Edward Relph cites Martin Heidegger to support his argument that revolves around either home or place:

Even Martin Heidegger in his ontological discussions of place, home, and the relations between man, earth, and the sky and the gods, puts considerable emphasis on the visual properties of landscape, using examples of bridges, a Greek temple, and a peasant's house in the Black Forest. (qtd. in Relph 31)

Relph cites Heidegger to focus on the visual properties of the place rather than anything else because human beings are highly visual creatures. As vision is the most dominant sense organ of human beings, picture describes more than words on most occasions. Or picturesque description has more expressive power than odd words.

Roy's description of Velutha's home reads like this:

. . . On the edge of the clearing, with its back to the river, a low hut with walls of orange laterite plastered with mud and a thatched roof nestled closed to the ground, as though it was listening to whispered subterranean secret. The low walls of the hut were the same colour as the earth they stood on, and seemed to have germinated from a house-seed planted in the ground. . . . (205)

Roy's realistic description of Velutha's home shows how subalterns live in close contact with mother earth. Velutha's connection with the land and water unquestionably supports Taylor's egalitarian point of view. The responsibility for spreading egalitarian culture goes to the subalterns like Velutha although their own home is always in danger due to poverty. In this sense, the subaltern's affinity with nature is in crisis with the rise of capitalism and capitalist are ready to displace subalterns to fulfill their insatiable desires.

Velutha, the playmate of the twins and secret lover of Ammu, has reciprocal relations with nature despite a capitalist attack on ecology. His relation with nature is eco-centric in any sense. As a lover of agro-business and echo-technology, he keeps himself away from the environmental degradation in Kerala. The expansion of the tourism industry, no doubt, is responsible for the environmental damage in Kerala. But, there are a few like Velutha who appears as a gem in the racial atmosphere of Indian society. Therefore, Jane Poyner appreciates the role of subalterns like Velutha in Indian discriminatory society. Poyner says, "Velutha leaves no mark on the *natural* environment in which he resides, living symbiotically alongside it without contributing to the environmental degradation of which the Keralan tourist industry is guilty" (66). Poyner finds the tourism industry responsible for the total environmental mess in Kerala, but subaltern like Velutha is no guiltier. In other words, the natural environment of Kerala bears no mark of dirt from Velutha. His actions are no more anthropocentric; rather, it displays an egalitarian view of Taylor. The same idea appears in Arundhati Roy's description of Velutha. "He left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors" (Roy 216). Roy describes Velutha as an icon of environmental sage. It becomes possible when one promises not to hurt the natural environment in any sense. Human beings have no right to damage the natural

environment in any form because we are part of nature. Rather, they must fight for environmental justice in any condition whether they are rich or poor. By doing so, we can protect the freshness of the natural environment to imagine a pure egalitarian society.

An egalitarian society goes beyond the reality where human beings continue to exploit nature in the name of modernity. Human beings' faith in God and religion is also an integral part of nature. The manipulation of Hindu myths and the deeds of History House by kathakali performers to please tourists is a sign of religious and cultural deviation in Kerala. Religious and cultural freedom invites ecological crises in nature. "Our ecologic crisis is the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture" (White 41). New religious practices in the form of democratic culture are a sign of ecological crises. The primary cause of our ecological crisis is religion; therefore, we need to protect our religion. Kathakali performers ask for forgiveness from God for what they perform in front of the tourists in the Ayemenem temple. Roy writes, "On their way back from the Heart of Darkness, they stopped at the temple to ask pardon of their gods. To apologize for corrupting their stories. For encashing their identities. Misappropriating their lives" (229). The manipulation of culture and religion to promote the tourism industry is not a progressive thought; rather, it leads to ecological misfortune. It pleasures for a short time, but it destroys our religious faith in the long run. In this way, democratic culture is a hindrance to establishing an egalitarian society in the modern age.

Alternatively, Paradise Pickles & Preserves, an agro-business of the Ayemenem family becomes history in Kerala. The dissolution of the pickle factory raises fundamental questions about the land use policy of the state. It needs to be reviewed in time. Hary Spaling and John R. Wood explore the cause of tension in the

land use policy. They argue that the primary cause of conflict is the transformation of farmland into a new city or rehabilitation center (105). Land use policy is an urgency at the present because it is the major source of environmental conflict. Ecologically, the transformation of agricultural land into the urban areas for commercial purposes is a sign of degeneration. It exceeds the stage of a family falling apart. Roy describes how the Ayemenem family ruins with the closing of the pickle factory and what happens to the family who depends on land. Her description reads like this:

. . . After Paradise Pickles closed down, some-rice fields were sold (along with their mortgages) to pay off the bank loans. More were sold to keep the family in food and clothes. By the time Chacko emigrated to Canada, the family's only income come from the rubber estate that adjoined the Ayemenem House and the few coconut trees in the compound. . . (281)

The separation of the Ayemenem family begins with the failure of an agro-business. Chacko's emigration to foreign land signals the degeneration of the family. Similarly, selling land for food and clothes after the failure of the pickle factory points to the urgency of land use policy. The reformation of the land use policy must address the principle of ecocriticism. By doing so, we can protect an agro-business as well as pristine nature because it can only spread what Leopold calls the concept of community.

Rahel, Estha, and Ammu's misfortune begin with the untimely death of Sophie Mol, daughter of Chacko and Margaret. Sophie drowns as the boat overturns with three children in the river. Rahel and Estha become successful to arrive at the bank of the river with the support of the skill that they learn from Velutha. At the same time, their understanding of the river is derived from the knowledge transmitted from the family that depends on agro-business. Holmes Rolston III declares, "Life depends on

unique information discovered and transmitted in genes and DNA” (1051). Human life is the depository of mysterious information that springs from various sources and it drives them to their destiny. In other words, our life depends upon the information that transfers from one generation to another in course of time. Rahel and Estha gather a chilling experience with the tragic death of Sophi Mol in the river. Roy describes the difficulty of the children in this way:

Rahel, covered in slush, clambered ashore and held a hand out to help Estha pull himself out of the water. . . . They ran along the bank calling out to her. But she was gone. . . . A river accepting the offering. . . . It was four in the morning, still dark, when the twins, exhausted, distraught and covered in mud, made their way through the swamp and approached the History House. . . .
(293)

Rahel and Estha's tragic narrative explains how the children come out of the deep river. Did they apply the technique which they learn from Velutha or Ammu? Of course, they did because of their affinity with the river that Sophie lacks because she belongs to another world that deprives her of eco-logical consciousness. Rahel and Estha are familiar with the movement of the river whereas Sophie is not. They are sharp to the basic information about the river, but Sophie lacks the power to understand it. In this way, Sophie's death pushes Rahel and Estha to the complexity of life, but their attachment to the History House is still intact. It shows how they have collected information about the History House. The transformation of the History House is a threat to an individual as well as the community.

Sophie's death divides the Ayemenem family. Rahel, Estha, and Ammu become the victim of racial issues. Baby Kochama discovers Ammu and Velutha's secret love affair, and Velutha suffers from the accusation of rape. In the whirlwind of this

tragedy, Ammu displays her true love for Velutha though his agro-business and eco-technology disappear in Kerala. Her devotion to Velutha defines immense faith in the River Meenachal because Velutha respects the life of plants and animals in the river. Taylor points out that “denial of human superiority” (191) draws the route to a bio-centric outlook. It forms the foundation of an egalitarian society. Ammu moves to the River Meenachal to meet her beloved ignoring the caste system of the Indian society. Roy writes:

She moved quickly through the darkness, like an insect following the chemical trail. She knew the path to the river as well as her children did and could have found her way there blindfolded. She did not know what it was that made her hurry through the undergrowth. That turned her walk into a run. That made her arrive on the banks of the Meenachal breathless. Sobbing. As though she was late for something. As though her life depended on getting there in time. As though she knew he would be there. Waiting. As though *he* knew she would come. (332)

Ammu and Velutha love and respect each other despite caste discrimination in society. As they are in secret love, their telepathic communication reveals how far they depend on the river for their survival. They have immense faith in each other in a discriminatory society. She possesses the ability to break the walls of superiority and inferiority in such a foul play of the racial game. This is how Ammu connects with Velutha's idyllic world through the River Meenachal.

At last, Ammu identifies Velutha amid River Meenachal, and she views his sublime world. His world reflects human beings' closeness to the earth community along with the plants and animals in it. Is it possible in reality? It depends upon our perception. Taylor declares in this way:

When one views the realm of nature from the perspective of the bio-centric outlook, one never forgets that in the long run the integrity of the entire biosphere of our planet is essential to the realization of the good of its constituent communities of life both human and nonhuman. (78)

A bio-centric outlook is the only way to integrate human beings with the environment so that they can respect the life of nonhumans as well. The ability to realize the inherent value of nature in the long run assists to form a creative egalitarian society. Ammu observes Velutha's world which portrays the unimaginable beauty of the earth. This is how Roy describes Velutha's world:

. . . As he rose from the dark river and walked up the stone steps, she saw that the world she stood in was his. That he belonged to it. That it belonged to him. The water. The mud. The trees. The fish. The stars. He moved so easily through it. As she watched him she understood the quality of his beauty. . . (333-34).

Roy presents an idyllic world of Velutha that incorporates the coexistence of humans and nonhumans. Velutha's world resembles the true picture of an egalitarian society. Therefore, an egalitarian view of the world is the solution to all the existing problems on the earth.

Roy's protagonists' complexities in *The God of Small Things* spring from the society to which they belong to. It grows rapidly with the development of the tourism industry in Kerala, India. Then, it affects the life of plants, animals, and human beings unbelievably. Life around the periphery of the Meenachal River is in a deep ecological crisis. That is the reason why the protagonists explore the way to avoid the rupture in the biosphere. The protagonists surpass the calamities generated by modern development with the help of the principles of eco-consciousness. Their tribute to the

Meenachal River is a gateway to the ecological future of Kerala. In this way, the protagonists experience the sublime world by following the principles of ecocriticism although our ecosphere is damaged in the name of modern development.

Rahel and Estha have a deep affinity to the River Meenachal which epitomizes their sublimation. They are touched by the divine value of cosmic integration between man and nature. Thus, they in the deep psyche feel the echoes of the vibration that man without nature is nothing. In this aspect, they worry whether they may intrude into the domain of nature's voice. The same projection of sublimity has been explained in Isha Upanishad, which says, "With this renounced, thou mayest enjoy. Covet not the wealth of another" (qtd. in Mehta 11). It presupposes Rahel's and Estha's very essential that the domain of nature is not handed to them. So, they never aspire to covet the sacredness of River Meenachal. Instead, they feel that they are a part of it. They enjoy the gurgling of the river. They never think that it is their property. But, they believe that they are the tiniest parts integrated with the bosom of nature. They transport themselves with the sublimation and joyful pride of River Meenachal. They understand, "To crave for what is not given is verily the path of destruction and sorrow" (Mehta 15). This is why they seek perfect happiness while finding themselves around the River Meenachal. This inner journey and exploitation hurdled by the encroachment of the modern tourism industry find its genuine haven in the perfect reverence of River Meenachal.

Chapter IV

Divulgence of Ecological Sublimity

The two seminal novels project the interconnection of human beings and nature. Modern development falls badly on land and water resources in both the countries challenging the protagonists' will for harmony and integration with nature. Ecological aesthetics unbelievably disappear from the land when mistreatment of land and water resources brings disorder into nature. Surely, all these disorders and encroachment are the result of modern materialistic development. Its foremost victims are the poor peasants, women, and children. The same fact is represented in both the novels of Buck and Roy. Buck deals with the mistreatment of land in China with the rise of material development. Roy focuses on the heartrending condition of River Meenachal with the expansion of the tourism industry in Kerala, India. Hence, Buck and Roy explain what exactly had happened in China and India respectively through the eyes of the protagonists of both novels.

Buck presents the pervasive impact of modern development with the perception of her protagonists Wang Lung and his wife O'lan in *The Good Earth*. Lung's love for farmland is incomparable because he is a strong follower of land ethics. Ethical sensitivity disappears with the birth of capitalists in Chinese society which in turn takes away happiness of the Chinese people. Lung returns to the earthen house in the last days of his life. Why does he shift from the great house to the earthen house? Was not he happy with his transformation as a capitalist? What drives him to do so? All these questions have been addressed in the light of ecocriticism. After all, Lung possesses supreme ecological sensitivity of universal applicability. The process of capitalism is to drain out the natural resources where the risks are socialized and nationalized while the profit is personalized. This trap and chasm of capitalism have

been deeply exposed by Buck in her novel as the ecological issue crystallizes this reality.

Rahel, Estha, Ammu, and Velutha reveal the atrocious picture of River Meenachal in Kerala, India, in Roy's *The God of Small Things*. They experience human beings' detachment from the natural environment with the expansion of the tourism industry in Kerala. The smell of shit and pesticides, death of fisheries, and toxic wastes reveal the present condition of the Meenachal River. This is how the idyllic beauty of Kerala disappears in the name of modern development. River Meenachal bears the dirty marks of modern industrialized society in Kerala, India. The grotesque image of the river threatened the young protagonists. But ecological knowledge helps them to live a meaningful life even in an adverse situation. Rahel and Estha's ecological sublimation epitomizes with river-sense.

A question triggers the issue recurrently- How did the protagonists break the wall of materialistic rupture in both novels? How did they overcome the aftermath of development? First, they were guided by the philosophy of environmental ethics. It can be seen in the words and deeds of the protagonist's Lung, Rahel, and Estha. Otherwise, they would not have defeated the catastrophe of drought, famine, and encroachment on the natural world. Second, they possess a high level of ecological sensitivity or ecological conscience. Either it may be Lung's deep respect for the Earth God or his desire to purchase the seeds before leaving the town. Similarly, the twins' apprehension about the death of fisheries on the banks of the River Meenachal and the use of pesticides in the river by the modern people evoke their real tribute to the natural world. Third, their actions and behaviors coexist with nature because they believe in reciprocal relationships in the world. Lung's love for the land is possibly driven by the immense production of the farmland. Likewise, Rahel, Estha, and

Ammu's tribute to the river is the result of the love and compassion it offers to them. Fourth, they realize the inherent value of all the living beings on the earth. That is the reason why they have an immense bond with the land community and they respect the life of even tiny creatures. They perceive the quintessence of wholeness and integration of humans in the ecosphere. The ecological sublimation shines its rays when Lung, Rahel, and Estha plead to harmonize with nature's fragrance rejecting the glamour of modern development.

The protagonists of both novels are flamed with a bio-centric outlook and they have high regard for the land community. From the perspective of the protagonists, it is clear that a bio-centric outlook and deep reverence for nature is the only way to handle the complexities that arise with modern development in the social, religious, cultural, and political spheres of life in both nations. Hence, the protagonists in Buck and Roy's novels open the door for critical thinkers that eco-critical vision is a gateway to experience the sublime world and attain blissful pride. Unfortunately, critics and scholars have not much discussed the role of O-lan, Rahel, and Ammu. Besides their sacrifice, they become the victim of family violence. Neither their father nor husband or brother realizes their true dignity. In this context, I recommend young researchers to research the above gender issues in both novels.

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