

Tribhuvan University

**Environmental Ethics in Niles Shrivastava's *No Man's Land* and Khuswant Singh's
*The Sunset Club***

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Letter of Recommendation

Kumar Thapa has completed this dissertation entitled "Environmental Ethics in NileshShrivastava's *No Man's Land* and Khuswant Singh's *The Sunset Club*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from January 2020 to April 2022. I hereby recommend his dissertation be submitted for the viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This dissertation entitled "Environmental Ethics in Nilesh Shrivastava's *No Man's Land* and Khuswant Singh's *The Sunset Club*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Kumar Thapa has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Declaration

I hereby declare to the best of my knowledge that this thesis is original; no part of it was earlier submitted for the candidature of research degree to any university.

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Abstract

This research analyzes two seminal novels *No Man's Land* by Nilesh Shrivastava and *The Sunset Club* by Khushwant Singh from ecocritical perspective to explore the absence of environment ethics and responsibility in human's treatment towards nature and its adverse effects on land, natural diversity, its integrity and ecological balance. The study deploys ecocritical approaches, especially of those of critics such as Aldo Leopold, Lenka Filipova, and Eliza F. Kant to interpret and analyze the texts.

Shrivastava's novel deals with the issue of a farmland near Gurgaon, its treatment by Agastya and its eventual downfall after his death. The treatment of land among the human beings are starkly contrasted: Agastya treats the land with love and respect and brings life to it but the people of the outskirts of his farmland treat land as commodity and they trade land for economic benefits. The burgeoning city, with the extension of physical infrastructures, is encroaching Agastya's land, and threatens the existence of the land community. After the death of Agastya the land becomes barren and lifeless as his sons, Pranay and Karan, do not know how to treat the land in better way. Similarly, Khushwant Singh's novel deals with the affairs of Lodhi Gardens, the urban space in Delhi, and the evening meetings of three octogenarian characters. Their meetings draw attention to the value of urban spaces, their contribution in the city ecology and the limited awareness of the old men about the cultural mechanisms that are put on the practice for the betterment of ecology. Their limited awareness results into the destruction of Lodhi Garden in terms of its natural significance as it is full of leftovers, dirt and pollution. As a result, on the program of the Indian Republic Day on January 26, Lodhi Garden is crowded and has huge amount of wastage left, a debris of paper plates stray dogs wagging their tails, begging for the leftovers. This is how, it has an adverse effect on the flora and fauna of the place. Besides, the place is

no more a place for social bonding for the people as it has been polluted and crowded. Therefore, human is not the conqueror of land but a member of land community. The beauty, stability and integrity of the land community help in maintaining global justice and planetary health.

Contents

	Page No.
I. Ecological Standpoints in NileshShrivastava's <i>No Man's Land</i> and Khushwant Singh's <i>The Sunset Club</i>	1-13
II. Critic of Land-Use and Call for Land Ethic in NileshShrivastava's Novel <i>No Man's Land</i>	15-36
III. Critic of the Ecological Ethics of City Dwellers in Khushwant Singh's <i>The Sunset Club</i>	37-53
IV. Environmental Ethics in NileshShrivastava's <i>No Man's Land</i> and Khushwant Singh's <i>The Sunset Club</i>	54-56

I. Ecological Standpoints in NileshShrivastava's *No Man's Land* and Khuswant Singh's *The Sunset Club*

This research studies ecological responsibility and ecological ethics as well as the relationship between humans and nonhumans in NileshShrivastava's novel *No Man's Land* and Khuswant Singh's *The Sunset Club* from ecocritical approach to find the overall impacts of urbanization on natural environment and the sense of ecological ethics among the characters. The ecocritical theories propounded and advocated by Aldo Leopold, LenkaFilipova and various other scholars and experts are used in the research process. The scholars related to urban ecology are also brought to the conversation in this research.

NileshShrivastava's novel deals with the subject matter of a large chunk of farmland tended by renowned farmer Agastya and the way the land is treated. Agastya takes care of the land in ecologically ethical way, with all the love and respect. The expansion of city nearby is threatening to overshadow the land due to rapid urbanization. After his unexpected heart attack and death, the land is not taken care in proper way. The people in the surroundings treat land as commodity traded for the profit. They are not concerned a bit about the ecosystem and land's role in it. After Agastya's death, despite the love towards the land, his city-bound sons Pranay and Karan also do not know what to do with the land. They lack the father's skill and ways to work with the land. Thus, the land loses its charm and has become barren. Khuswant Singh's novel *The Sunset Club* is altogether different in its subject matter. It depicts city-dweller Octogenarian characters and their lifestyle. They see each other in the Lodhi Gardens of New Delhi, the beautiful park and open space in the evenings. They talk about various issues about their life and incidents going around them. Thereby, they touch various ecological issues as well as show the value open

spaces like Lodhi Gardens in the urban ecology. This research looks at their ecological awareness and examines them.

This researcher has selected the two novels by the virtue of their concern over environment for the study for the fulfillment of the thesis. The novel *The Sunset Club* covers twelve months in the life of three octogenarian characters. These twelve months are used to show the weather cycle throughout the year. All twelve months are portrayed with their month by month climactic nature. For example, In the chapter “The Month of Flowers” comes the *BasantPanchami* which marks the end of winter with the advent of spring. The short spring makes a colorful entry melting into the summer’s heat by the end of February. February is shown as Delhi’s floral month. All parks and roundabouts are full of flowers, it is a riot of colors. In the same way, the relationship of these three friends: PanditPritam Sharma, ShardarBoota Singh and NawabBurkatullah also bloom. All the trees and the flowers gather Boota’s attention and he lectures about them to the other two members of the Sunset Club. *No Man’s Land* presents the fluctuations of nature and the way it has affected us and the everlasting inspiration for humans to control anthropocentric nature which extends to generations. With a setting as real as the Gurgaon realty, it is but natural that the author makes a piece of land in fact a farmland the central theme of the novel. Around the land are characters built with unique perspective to what it means to them and there you go a scintillating story of men and women who take you on the ride with their whims and fancies taking over them.

The Sunset Club by Khushwant Singh’s three characters come from different religious backgrounds. The trio has been a regular visitor to Lodhi Gardens and has been friends from the past forty years. Now that all of them have attained eighty years of age, they share at the gardens their life experiences, both normal and controversial.

The author confesses to having stated memories of his dead friends by mixing facts with fiction. Lodhi Gardens in the middle of the city is the park that the city dwellers come to have rest during the sunny days and other times as well.

No Man's Land by Nilesh Shrivastava sets in Gurgaon, a farmer's town. It is a good example of a big city encroaching into its nearby small towns, which resulted in a new city being born. Petty farms transformed into virtual gold mines. The protagonist, Agatsya, who was on his deathbed lords over one such estate. He decides to pass on his legacy to his estranged sons, Pranay and Karan, who come from Delhi with tainted pasts and base aspirations and how a woman divides them. Like the Mahabharata, the land becomes the stage where their fears, affections, and greed struggle and eventually is smothered. The changing of a rural area into a luxurious city gives a different environment that is quite distinct from the natural one.

This research attempts to address the lack of the ecological ethics and the negative or positive effects of modern development on the natural environment. How the destruction of the natural ecosystem for the concretization of the city effect the environment in the urban area? Both the novels are the Indian literary texts that deal with the everyday activities of human beings and their effects on the Mother Nature. These novels reflect the urban environments quite different from the rural or natural environments. As a rational being, it is the sole responsibility of humans to protect the environment along with the proper utilization of it for their survival. It is obvious that humankind's existence is just a myth without the sustainable environment.

The relationship between human and nonhuman beings has been an integral part of human life since the dawn of recorded history, as evidenced by cave paintings found in the subterranean reaches of southwestern France where Cro-Magnon humans realistically depicted animals of various sizes and

shapes. Animals have coexisted with the human race for many millennia. The relationship between human and nonhuman has involved a systematic denial of the most basic values of being dignity since the first human killed and ate a nonhuman being. Nonhuman animals “have been feared, loved, beaten, caressed, starved, stuffed, and ignored”. (Turner 662)

Turner has pointed out the relation between living and non-living beings but man’s anthropocentric position always keeps human beings at the center and neglects the other aspects of ecology. At the same time, man kills the animals and feeds on them denying them their rights to live. It is not the ethical and rational for a man to behave with other important living and non-living things present in the nature.

The selected novels have raised so many environmental issues in them so that the readers can be aware of the ecological imbalance and environmental haphazard due to human activities in their surroundings. The rapidly growing urbanization has long-term impacts on environment especially, in the urban areas. The selected novels also presents struggle between two generations and have different perspective to treat with it.

This research raises number of questions reading these two novels. What is the proper way any aspect of ecology is treated? Is there any ethical and rational standpoint to guide the human beings’ treatment of nature? What is the role of land and open spaces and ecology? How they need to be treated to maintain balance in ecology? Are there indigenous cultural perspectives and teachings that warn people about the ecology and human interconnectedness to the various aspects of nature and the conservation of ecology? What are their positions? These questions are explored answered in the course on this research while reading NileshShrivastava’s novel *No Man’s Land* and Khushwant Singh’s novel *The Sunset Club*.

Along with the passage of the time, humans have made remarkable development in science and technology so that they can make their life more comfortable. But in the process, it threatened to disturb the ecological chain and putting the lives on the earth at risk. Shrivastava's novel can become a revelation to the ethical standpoint how the land should be treated in the best possible and rational way keeping the ecological chain undisturbed. Due to the materiality and scientific innovations, the world has changed from manual to mechanical trend that almost every work from production to decomposition is done with the help of the machines. To add more milestones to the never-quenching thirst for more comfortable life, urbanization has been the ultimate tool that can replace the age-old tendency of living and working into a new height. Nevertheless, along with the comforts, urbanization has many adverse effects on the natural environment. This has resulted into a new dimension in the relationship between humans and nonhumans in urban environment. The ecology of cities also needs to be kept intact and keep the cities pollution-free and life sustaining. Singh's novel can reveal this.

In today's world, urbanization is a usual process that enables humans to live their life in a different but more comfortable way than their predecessors. The development of science and technology has influenced them to invent more scientific appliances that can be helpful to live more luxurious life. As a general objective, this paper intends to study the selected texts: *The Sunset Club* and *No Man's Land* by employing ecocritical approach. Studies conducted on the issues of urbanization have been focused on its impacts on environments and they discuss on the positive or negative impacts of the urbanization on natural environments only. Nevertheless, the interconnectedness between human beings and nonhuman entities has not got much attention of the critics of environmentalism. There is no study of the environmental

responsibility and ethics as well. Therefore, this research aims at studying about humans and nonhumans in the urban environment that how they relate to each other and what are the ethical stand human beings must take while dealing with them.

The research has used qualitative research method for the textual analysis of the selected primary texts. The texts is analyzed applying the theoretical lens of established principles of ecocriticism, basically the land ethic of Aldo Leopold. Critical insights are developed with the help of extensive library research, and guidance from the supervisor are sought to enhance critical insights into the texts. These insights are used as the theoretical parameters to examine, analyze, and interpret the primary texts. As the secondary sources of data for the research purpose, the published books, research journals, research articles, and unpublished dissertations are used. The arguments put forth by the critics guide in understanding how natural environment is affected by urbanization and what interconnectedness is found between humans and nonhumans in the urban environment. The principle of environmental ethics is the primary tool for analyzing narratives of the primary texts. Moreover, this thesis deals with the ideas developed on the field of environmental literary studies like environment, environmentalism, environmental analysis, ecopoetics, etc.

Ecocriticism is a tool for literary analysis informed by an ecological or environmental awareness. It studies the relationship between literature and nature through a range of approaches having little in common other than a shared concern with the environment (Glotfelty xix). Combining traditional literary tools with ecological perspectives, ecocriticism is most appropriately applied to a work in which the landscape itself is a dominant character, when a significant interaction occurs between author and place, character(s) and place. Landscape by definition includes

the non-human elements of place—rocks, soil, trees, plants, rivers, animals, air—as well as human perceptions and modifications.

While analyzing a certain literary text from ecocritic theoretical lens, the landscape viz. environment is considered to be one of the prominent characters interacting with authors and places. It is obvious that environment is summation of nonhuman elements of the place such rocks, soil, trees, rivers, animals, air, etc. and human understanding.

Taking first law of ecosystem ecology of Barry Commoner as reference that "everything is connected to everything else," ecocritics consider that human culture, specifically its literature, is connected to the physical world, affecting nature as nature affects culture (Glotfelty ASLE). The main concern of ecocriticism, however, is an environmental awareness of the overwhelming effect of human activity on all aspects of the environment. As Bill McKibben opines in *The End of Nature*, for the first time in history, "human beings [have] become so large that they [have] altered everything around us. That we [have] ended nature as an independent force, that our appetites and habits and desires [can] now be read in every cubic meter of air, in every increment on the thermometer (sic)" (xix).

Regarding the environmental crisis, McKibben claims that nature has literally been destroyed. Particularly as the result of large-scale climate changes produced by human industry (that is, global warming caused by the burning of fossil fuels on the one side while on the other, damage to the ozone layer by chlorofluorocarbons on the other), he suggested, we have now entered a stage where no square inch on Earth can any longer be considered natural. Because of human intervention, everything in the world is different from what it naturally would be, and so everything in the world has in a certain sense become an artificial. "We have changed the atmosphere, and thus

we are changing the weather," McKibben wrote. "By changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man-made and artificial. We have deprived nature of its independence, and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature's independence is its meaning; without it there is nothing but us (58)." The trees he sees out his window in the Adirondacks, he sadly concludes, although they look natural, no longer really are—in the context of global warming, they become hothouse trees, their growth and nourishment dependent on human action

EcocriticCheryllGlotfelty advocates this profoundly new relationship in a little different way that humans have developed with the rest of the natural world, stating, "we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems" (ASLE). It is through a deep study of literary, ecological, philosophical, and political environmentalism that ecocritical practice distinguishes itself from Romanticism of the nineteenth century (Mazel 137). Though significantly influenced by the spiritual, philosophical, and aesthetic appreciation of nature that comes from pre-ecology Romanticism, ecocriticism is also informed by ecology and the contemporary environmental crisis. Transforming all of those influences to the study of literature, one of ecocriticism's main goals is to identify and analyze "our own attitudes toward nature and to engender a sense of accountability for the havoc the culture's left hand wreaks on its right hand through shortsighted technological practices" (Arnold "Forum" 1090). As such, ecocriticism is more accurately described as a form of literary device focusing on environmentalism.

According to Grimm et al., ecology in cities research that uses ecological approaches from wild and rural ecosystems in analogous "green" patches within urban areas from the early foundation and backbone of the field (756-760). Regarding

ecology cities, McDonnell states that;

It is classic ecology focusing on primary ecological questions in urban areas, such as how ecological patterns and processes in cities compare with those in other environments and how urbanization and development affect the ecology of organisms in urban habitats. (1232-1237)

To assess the impacts of urbanization in the environment, it is important to know about urban ecology and its multiple facets. Another concern of urban ecology is the trend of humans-nonhumans interaction in an urban environment. Urban ecosystem is shaped by the couplings between social processes and environmental structure and processes, so they intend the new science of enactive and codetermining processes and thus emerging phenomena (Pickett et al. 148). Adding their arguments, Pickett et al. assert,

The boundaries of urban ecosystem are often set by watersheds, airsheds, commuting radii, or convenience. In other words, boundaries of urban ecosystems are set in the same ways and for the same reasons as are the boundaries in any other ecosystems study. In the case of urban ecosystems, it is clear that many fluxes and interactions extend well beyond the urban boundaries defined by political, research, or biophysical reasons. Urban ecology, as an integrative sub discipline of the science of ecology, focuses on urban systems as broadly conceived above. There is little to be gained from seeking distinctions between "urban" and abutting "wild" land, as a comprehensive, spatially extensive, systems approach is most valuable for science. (139-150)

While urban ecology is poised to make new breakthroughs in the functioning of complex, human-dominated ecosystems, the potential to translate scientific advances

to practical applications has never been greater. Cities worldwide are struggling with a myriad of environmental and social problems as growing cities face air, water, and soil pollution, resource depletion, and aging infrastructure. As a result, there is renewed interest in developing and testing new solutions to these problems, with an increasing emphasis on approaches that apply ecological principles such as green infrastructure (Gill et al.).

Unlike natural ecosystems, cities contain many ecosystem components that are almost entirely human-constructed. Building robust ecosystems that can withstand environmental change and avoid negative, unanticipated consequences of modifying the environment requires a systems-level understanding of ecosystem complexity, thresholds, and feedbacks.

The definition of nature for the purposes of this discussion relies on Aldo Leopold's definition of land in his essay "The Land Ethic" (239-253). It is a holistic definition that includes not only the non-human elements—both organic and inorganic—but also humans, their perceptions, and their modifications of the landscape. When I refer to nature, I mean an ecosystem in which humans are not the dominant species or force of environmental change. Nature, therefore, does not mean wilderness per se, though wilderness can be considered its most pristine manifestation and one that historically dominated the thinking and imagination of European explorers, colonists, and American citizens. In contrast to nature is the built environment that exhibits significant alteration by humans or by the presence of a high concentration of humans. Alterations can include clear-cutting of vegetation, large-scale grading, paving, significant road building of any kind—either paved or unpaved, and the presence of structures that overwhelm or distort the natural topography because of their placement, scale, number, or concentration. Regardless of

how distorted the indigenous environment is by human alteration, elements of the non-human natural world, of course, are always present—if only in the form of vegetation pushing through cracks in the sidewalk. However, ecology has taught us that intense human population densities and human manipulation of the physical environment disrupt important ecological systems that are only sustainable in the presence of significant biodiversity. While the definition of nature for the purposes of this study includes the presence and manipulation of humans in the environment, a natural setting is one in which human population and activity are not so great as to disrupt the sustained functioning of many non-human communities.

Both of the novels selected for this research are rarely reviewed. There are no literature reviews for Nilesh Shrivastava's novel *No Man's Land* but a few reviews are found on Khushwant Singh, his novel *The Sunset Club* and his writings. Dr. Sunita B. Nimavat has reviewed the writing context of Khushwant Singh:

Khushwant Singh edited 'Yojana' and 'The Illustrated Weekly of India, a news weekly. Under his editorship, the weekly circulation rose from 65000 copies to 400000. In 1978, he was asked by the management to leave with immediate effect. His departure made the circulation of the weekly slump. He toyed with politics supporting Indira Gandhi, emergency and autocratic ways of Sanjay Gandhi. However, the operation Blue Star destroyed his illusions. The massacre of Sikhs in Delhi post-assassination of Indira Gandhi shook him to the core. He realized that the Indian politics has never been truly secular. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1974 which he returned in 1984 in protest against the siege of the Golden Temple by the Indian Army. In 2007, he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan. (60)

Depicting Singh's immense success as an editor, his leave from the job of editing, his

politics supporting Indira Gandhi, his mental suffering after her assassination are covered in Nimavat's review. Singh questions if India has truly been secular. He was awarded Padma Bushan and Padma Vibhushan for his activism and writings.

Another reviewer of Singh's novel *The Sunset Club*, Ankita Manuja points out the pathos or the emotional factor the readers generate at the end of the novel, where two of three old friends appear to die and one of them sits on the bench they used to sit alone:

The reader gets struck by gloom when towards the end of the novel, Sardar Boota Singh opens his telephone book and crosses the name of now deceased Pandit Preetam Sharma and Nawab Barkatulla with the date, month and year of their passing away. Death here, holds a theme central to works corresponding to old age. Whether it be *Ulysses* of Alfred, Lord Tennyson who in the end is stalked by death because he is old or be it Florentino of *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez who considers death in old age as a bottomless pit, all these characters show the inevitable process of aging, death, and decay. Towards the end of the book, Sardar Boota Singh on knowing about the death of other two friends pulls himself out of despair and goes to Lodhi Gardens, occupying the bench all by himself and gazing at the Bara Gumbad, once again likening it to fully rounded bosom of young woman. (149)

At the end of the novel, Pandit Preetam Sharma and Nawab Barkatullah Baig are dead. The reader feels the grief and loneliness of remaining old man Sardar Boota Singh. This ending of the novel is compared to Tennyson's *Ulysses* and the characters of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Keeping these available reviews in consideration, this research studies the selected novels from the perspective of ecological responsibility.

II. Critic of Land-Use and Call for Land Ethic in NileshShrivastava's Novel *No Man's Land*

The plot of NileshShrivastava's novel *No Man's Land* revolves around the land ethics and criticizes the lack of land ethics in the younger generation as Agastya's farmland loses its significance and becomes the commodity to sell letting the city grow encroaching the natural surroundings. Agastya's sons are unable to keep the land intact, with all its beauty and natural significance. Deep ecologist Aldo Leopold has talked about land ethics and given a critical insight to question the land ethics in the people of modern times; "There is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. Land, like Odysseus' slave-girls, is still property. The land-relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations" (22). People treat land as the property, like Odysseus' slave-girls and use it for economic gain alone. Leopold sees this anthropocentric and selfish treatment of land as problematic making fervent call for the land ethic.

Leopold justifies necessity of the ethics extended to environment studies as supplement to the ecological thought process sequence. Ethics is necessary in the sequence of evolutionary possibility and ecological necessity:

The extension of ethics to this third element in human environment is, if I read the evidence correctly, an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity. It is the third step in a sequence. The first two have already been taken. Individual thinkers since the days of Ezekiel and Isaiah have asserted that the despoliation of land is not only inexpedient but wrong. Society, however, has not yet affirmed their belief. (22)

Leopold gives mythical example to underscore the fact that the necessity of ethics existed since antiquity. Individual thinkers have pointed out since the mythical

time that despoliation or ravaging the land as wrong act. However, society has not taken it responsibly. Roman Bartosch, in his book *EnnvironMentality*, comments upon Leopold's land-ethics as, "For Leopold, land ethics means both a philosophical and an ecological-evolutionary process" (29). As such, two processes undergo Leopold's land ethics; it is not only the philosophical process rather it is also a process of ecological evolution. But in Shrivastava's novel, both the processes are lacking. Only the older generation, Agastya and his brother-in-law Dushyanta know value of the land. Younger generation, like Pranay, Agastya's son come to the farm from the city as a refuge, for a few days for change. The narrator relates the father's dedication to the land:

Father came to the farm with all honesty—honesty in his efforts and honesty in his heart. He sincerely believed that his honesty could change the game. The land he had come to was not known to be lucky for its owners. Father never said so, but I heard it from many people. They told me stories of this land from previous generations, and they were never happy stories. I even asked Father about those stories, but he dismissed them all. It's all up to your two hands, he said, everything else is the work of imagination. If this land is lucky, it's because we have been good to it and we have given our sweat to it. If it's unlucky, it's because of our greed and lust, he said emphatically. (121)

Father takes up and treats the land as if it is a living organism; responding to a man in the same way a man treats it. His land is known to be unlucky for their past owners; all the stories of the previous generations that spent their life in that land were not too encouraging; they were tragic stories. But whenever somebody reminds father about the unlucky jinx of that land father terms it an act of people's imagination and dismisses it. For him, land is not the matter of being lucky or unlucky; it responds to

the human treatment – if man gives his/her sweat to land, it responds in the way a man feels lucky, if a man invests greed and lust, it becomes unlucky. It is so simple for him. It is the reason, he treats the land well and grows as a reputed farmer.

Dushyanta, Agastya's brother-in-law also laments that the land is bound to be matter of business until and unless people understand the potential in it. He reminds Karan, Agastya's elder son from his first wife Shailja:

Land isn't about of soil and a bunch of papers declaring its ownership is more about the solidity and identity it can bring to a man. It's physical, visible, and, most importantly, it's permanent. You can't burn it like money; you can't melt it like gold. You can only buy it, sell it, snatch it, grab it. Titles change, governments change, times change, but the land stays where it is unmoved and sterile. That's its beauty. Men somewhere deep down want to grab its immortality, and slip it into their horribly insecure lives. They never can but they never will stop trying. Till that continues there will be business for you and me. (115)

Dushyanta sees land not as technical thing; it is not a bunch of papers of its ownership rather man can form his/her identity using the land and the land can give him/her solidity. It is physical, visible, and permanent; unlike money and gold, it can neither be burnt, nor be melted. The land has permanence and immortality; it gives men security and sense of stability. They are unable to get its immortality or permanence into their life but they keep trying. There is a competition between unstable people and stable land and men never give up this competition. As this continues, it becomes only the thing for business and profiteering.

Looking at the next generation, we see that second generation, Agastya's son, uses the father's farm as his escape from city for a few days. While talking to Shreya,

he says he has strange bondage to his father's farm. It is not his interest in farming like his father but just a visit to the farm soothes him, gives him certain level of comfort:

I like it there for a day, a week maybe, but after that the place gets to me. If I settle there I know that it will suck me in, without allowing any hope of escape. I would be stuck and have nowhere to go," Pranay said, his voice a little louder than usual. "That kind of bondage scares me. I like it here, with things to do, places to go to, and time to enjoy it all. I like the noise, the streets, the crowds, the options. If I ferment myself long enough in the city, maybe something half-decent will eventually germinate out of it.(154)

Pranay visits his father's farm whenever he feels bored with city; the visit would be short, one-day visit or one week long at the maximum. However, he gets frightened that the farm might attract him forever, suck him with giving him hope of no escape. He is frightened to spend more time in the farm because he enjoys the noise, the streets, the crowds, the options of the city. He gets simply attracted to visit the farmland when he needs some change in the city environment.

The novel opens with the description of land that is inherited by unnamed narrator and arbitrator of the land of the farm left as ancestral heritage by his father. Land and the society's treatment of land are the basic points focused on the opening section. This section is italicized that lets us see the narrator's emphasis. The first person narrator reports what is going around paving way to each of the chapters narrated by different omniscient speaker. The land of the farm is the center of all conflicts. The first person narrator is allegorical embodiment of Sanjaya, the man with divine insight to observe the war in Mahabharata and relate what is going on around it to blind King Dhritarashtra, the land can be allegorically related to Hastinapura, the

land of Pandavas confiscated unjustly by their cousins Duryodhana and Dushasana. Thus, the novel is allegorical. The first person narrator gives impetus to this connection as he points out:

I felt some sympathy for the mythical victors of another land not far away, as they would have stood at the end of their Great War – the Pandavas of Hastinapura. I doubt they gloated over all they had won and the kingdom that was theirs. Yet, from where they stood, they had the blessing of the gods. From where I stood, I was merely human. (6)

Despite the allegorical connection to the Mahabharata, this novel raises the various issues surrounded with the land-use, farm and ecology around it, the questions of ecology. It describes the burgeoning city rapidly expanding closer to the farmland and threatening its existence. At the death of Agastya, it has got no proper heir to the land who can save it from the annexation to the urban expansion.

The greed, the disputes, and eventually the malice in the minds of men had sucked the fertility out of the land. It does not matter, people told me. Men will pay for the land, not for its beauty or ugliness, not for its past but for its future. Men will pay, if they just hear the word yes. Set with the family, override them, or do what you want, but move ahead, they said. (6)

People treat land as commodity; paying money and getting its ownership permits them to do anything with land. This view is anthropocentric and capitalist in itself; they do not worry about degrading soil quality and loss of fertility of the land. They just need the land and they are ready to pay for it indifferent of its spatio-temporal, historical aspects. They exploit it without any rational consideration of its bio-diversity or quality. They use it as per their interest and life goes on. It has become the modern reality of the land. Traditional, aboriginal people used to treat the land better;

there used to be little flow of money and they had little sense of monetary profiteering.

Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra in their essay “Aboriginal Place” point out, “Traditional culture provided a highly flexible set of ways of encoding a nexus of rights and obligations towards the land. It gave rise to aesthetic statements which were essentially political and juridical rather than personal and expressive” (412).

Traditional way of treating the land was aesthetically sound; their rights and obligations to the land, their treatment of land was better. The norms which they applied to use the land were not to anthropocentric, personal or expressive rather they were political, juridical, communal and more considerate. Personal gain or profiteering from the land was insignificant for them. They had certain land ethic in the past. Whenever capitalism entered the land, it invaded the traditional ways of treatment of land and reduced land to a commodity on can buy and exploit.

Since the land-use, the treatment of land as property by Agastya’s city-bound sons, Pranay and Karan, their lack of motivation to run the farm as the heir of the farm, the attack on the chunk of land by the rapidly expanding urban infrastructures and skyscrapers in the neighborhood of Gurgaon being major state of affairs in the novel, deep ecologist Aldo Leopold’s “The Land Ethic” is very relevant to probe into the novel. In the opening section of the novel, the first person narrator sheds some lights upon the land and some of his approaches as well as the human approaches to the lands become evident:

I stood on a very large piece of land and looked around in all directions. There was the highway on my left running all the way to Delhi behind me, there were faint edges of half-constructed towers extending deep into the embryonic city of Gurgaon, and there was the airport some distance away on my right.

Sandwiched between these man-made signs of prosperity was a massive tract of uneven, parched land that bore my family name. It was vacant, substantial, and crying aloud for a flood of developers to take it over. It was wealth that could run for a few generations, I was told. It was time to look forward, to pick up the soil and watch it turn to gold, they all said. It was time to make future. (5)

The rural farmland is juxtaposed with urban area of Delhi and adjacent to the land, similar urbanization is going on; Gurgaon is taking its shape invading the green spaces surrounding it. The narrator contrasts the vast farmland with the man-made structures and their so-called prosperity. The farmland was sandwiched between the man-made developments, between the highway leading to New Delhi in the left and the airport on the right. The land was target for the new developers for the man-made construction works and so-called development. Nobody cared about its fertility or any other inherent, ecological significance rather they wanted it to buy for money and make it an annexation to the city with material constructions, all sorts of sky-crappers and infrastructure. They are making offer to the narrator to sell the land, take the money and make the future is evident. In other terms, they wanted to become the conquerors of the land and get maximum profit from it.

Aldo Leopold criticizes the people's treatment of land as the conquerors and exploiters in reference to his reading of human history:

In human history, we have learned (I hope) that the conqueror role is eventually self-defeating. Why? Because it is implicit in such a role that the conqueror knows, *ex cathedra*, just what makes the community clock tick, and just what and who is valuable, and what and who is worthless, in community life. It always turns out that he knows neither, and this is why his

conquests eventually defeat themselves. (23)

Leopold warns that the conqueror's role of human beings over land is ultimately going to be self-defeating; it is historical observation. Human position of the conqueror develops total new kind of value system in the society that all the things are divided into valuable and worthless, and treated according to their values. It creates communal rift between valuable and valueless and does not let the conqueror recognize them properly ultimately leading to his/her own downfall. People are desperately trying to buy Agastya's farmland in the novel and assume the self-defeating role of conqueror is evident. The land is being encroached as well as there is huge pressure to sell it.

There is not only the pressure to sell the land but also the physical threat is escalated from outside. This keeps the existence of farm and its ecology in question. There are the signs from every angle that the farm and its ecology is under threat: Shashwat was proven right when encroachments farmland began a few months ago. It started with small threats - random broken fence here or a missing corner gate there - gradually the incidents became bigger. Once, a large portion the barbed wiring on the west end of the land was found toon the very next day it was repaired. Some days later the wall around the main gate was found broken. Apart from cows would often be found grazing on the land and stray dogs would strangely bypass the animal barriers installed for them. Trees that fell over the boundary would routinely be chopped away during the night. If ever there was confusion between overactive kids and malicious miscreants, the hammers resolved it. Shashwat found a bunch of them near the broken wall one morning. After that it was clear there were men, very strong men, out to scare the family. (10)

Agastya's major helper from the beginning of the farm, Shashwat, is the

keeper of the farm; Agastya's health is not in good condition. He takes care of the every little bit of the farm. It is no surprise that he is the first person to see the threat to the farm. The threats are small at the beginning, such as random breaking of the fence, missing corner gate, broken barbed wiring and so on. They repaired them not taking those incidents seriously as threats. Some days later, they find the wall around main gate broken. The tree that fell over the boundary started to be regularly chopped and taken away. First, they were taken as kids' or some miscreants' job but they had to accept them as planned and serious threat when they found hammers. They started to think that there were strong men behind those threats.

Ecosystem of the land should go undisturbed by the outer world; the land should not be seen merely as an object to possess. But the anthropocentric, materialistic profiteering and exploitation of the land goes unabated. People round the land start encroaching the farmland and it becomes clear that they want to take advantage exploiting the land at any cost. Aldo Leopold points that only thinking about economic advantages of the land is not right, "It is painful to read these circumlocutions today. We have no land ethic yet, but we have at least drawn nearer the point of admitting that birds should continue as a matter of biotic right, regardless of the presence or absence of economic advantage to us" (24). Every animal in the ecosystem needs to live; they have got their biotic rights to exist even though people do not want to accept it immediately. The economic advantage or lack of economic advantage of the land should not be taken into account to accept the biotic rights and the ecosystem of the land needs to be accepted without question in the coming days. Leopold predicts that we are nearing the acceptance of the biotic rights.

Rapid displacement of the farmlands by rapidly growing urban infrastructures is presented as the major enemy of the farmland's existence in the novel. Another

enemy of the farmland is the clack of family unity and the unwillingness of the city-bound second generation of Agastya, his sons Karan and Pranay. The dilemma of its existence is presented in the novel well:

The city was closing in from every direction, sucking out spaces and smashing the undisciplined mud tracks into shape. This piece of land, for decades a secluded hideaway for father, was now very much on the map. It with a fortune from here, if my family . . . or what was left of it - could look together in the same direction. But that would mean walking away from the decades my family had spent here, and the day one woman had spent here. All of that would also have to be bartered away, and that was not going to be easy. (6)

Rapid expansion of city and changes going around the farm are described as the alarm bell for the existence of the farm. It is invading the seclusion; father's peaceful retreat to the nature is being threatened. The labor of the family to keep the land intact and productive for decades are going to be vain. The narrator accepts that it would be really hard feeling to give up all these family contribution and history that are rooted to the farmland. Therefore, he is in serious mood, brooding over all the changes and dreaded over the adjacent predicament to evacuate the land, "I stood statue-like for long-unprepared and feeling hopelessly inadequate. There was a dulling sense of confusion that, by just being there, was chipping away at all that was composed in me. Fortune or no fortune, the real choice always was and will be whether to walk away with peace or to walk away with a heavy heart" (6). The narrator, the witness of all the family struggles in the land is in pensive mood, brooding over the fact that how painful it would be to leave the land; he is unable to think whether he is going to make a fortune from the land, or he has to give up all the sense of belonging and walk away with a heavy heart. The evacuation of land seems prominent to him but the sense of

place is also greatly attached to his existence.

Environmentalist theorist Lenka Filipova sees place as the concept around which civil struggles against the environmental exploitation and destruction are organized. This sense is displayed in the narrator in the novel *No Man's Land*. Filipova clarifies the connection of the land to the civil struggles against environmental exploitation and destruction:

Despite the problematic representation of place in environmental writing, place is often the very concept around which civil struggles against environmental exploitation and destruction are organized. In *This Changes Everything* (2014), Naomi Klein provides an illuminating discussion of the common clash between local environmental activism and the interests of various global corporations and industries in the twenty-first century. Klein's examples, most of which deal with cases of global resource extraction and the negative impact they have on specific places and climate change, show how current environmentalism undergoes a transformation as a result of the activity of local communities. (9)

Filipova's reference, Naomi Klein's discussion, the clash between the local environmental activism and the interest of various global corporation and industries are bigger pictures but Agastya's farm and the family's struggle to save the farm against the interest of city builders, construction groups is smaller picture.

Environmental struggles rooted to a place are bigger and planned but the struggles of the family to save the land and family existence rooted to the land are smaller and helpless. Land plays crucial role in both the cases is evident. Local struggles rooted to the place are contributing to the environmental protection bringing about significant changes in the treatment of environment and the exploitation of the land has stalled in

many of the places but similar change, for environmental cause cannot be produced with the family resistance in the novel. The invasion of the city to the farmland appears to be unavoidable predicament for Agastya's farmland. Unorganized resistance of a family cannot avert the predicament of the evacuation of the land.

The threat to the family farm became acute as Agastya, renowned farmer of the area and the owner of that big farmland falls sick and becomes weak. He had to go through the bout of heart attack and it seems it is hard for him to recover. The narrator relates, "The clean, fresh air of his farm, the daily walk across the greens, and the fresh foods that had sustained him so far seemed to be losing their potency. He was entering his sixties" (7). There was a heart attack in Agastya that made him weak, bed-ridden and his body unable to improve by the fresh air, walks or the nourishing foods in the farm.

The land is taken as commodity and people sell, buy, stamp their authority over it and exploit it. In the modern times, it is rapidly becoming a normal business; the economic transaction of land and its use without considering a bit about its flora, fauna, ecosystem and other aspects. All the neighboring lands around Agastya's farmlands are passing into private hands in the recent times:

In the past five years, the lands neighboring Agastya's had started passing into private hands on one pretext or the other. Some had gone to large farmers and some to investors who never showed up to inspect their properties, choosing to leave them barren and wasted. Agastya had not paid much attention to these dealings until one clear morning a few months ago when Shashwat pointed out building spires coming up far away on the horizon to him. As they both stood watching dozens of trucks ferrying men and material and ripping into the heart of agricultural lands, Shashwat said, "We won't stay untouched a long. The

roads carrying those trucks are coming to our doorstep. Men and their greed won't be far behind." (10)

The selling and buying land has been rampant in Agastya's neighborhood in recent years. The lands are being sold to large farmers and passive owners who do not return back to their land after buying it thereby leaving the land waste and barren and thus, not allowing its productivity; they just care about the economic value of the land. Agastya took those activities as normal and he was not alarmed much. But after Shashwat points him building squares coming up few months back and the trucks were busily ferrying the construction materials and people in the agricultural land, he gets quite worried. Shashwat also points out that we they would also be affected by such activities soon. The trucks for him, were not coming closer to them, rather they were also bringing people's greed closer. The problem to develop land ethic in such condition, in the condition that city and modern-development obsessed people just focus on the monetary value and man-made constructions without considering the originality, lies on the modern education and economic system itself. Aldo Leopold contends:

Perhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the evolution of a land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is headed away from, rather than toward, an intense consciousness of land. Your true modern is separated from the land by many middlemen, and by innumerable physical gadgets. He has no vital relation to it; to him it is the space between cities on which crops grow. Turn him loose for a day on the land, and if the spot does not happen to be a golf links or a 'scenic' area, he is bored stiff. If crops could be raised by hydroponics instead of farming, it would suit him very well. Synthetic substitutes for wood, leather, wool, and other natural land products suit him

better than the originals. In short, land is something he has 'outgrown.' (25)

As the educational and economic system fails to head towards an intense consciousness of land, the modern people are unable to value the land and its dynamics. Rather they are mediated by various machineries and gadget and see land as the middlemen. They do not have the understanding of the value of the lands that grow crops between the cities. They are likely to bored by the lands that have no scenic areas or golf courts. They like synthetic products rather than natural productions from the farms. The distance with the land is obvious and normalized in the modern people. It is the reason, they are not serious enough to see the land, its ecology and its other environmental values. The growing buildings, operation of trucks and other machineries are normal for the modern people but they ring alarm bell for the land-conscious farmers like Agastya is evident.

Agastya is distressed to know his secluded lifestyle in the farm is under threat. He is unable to accept that the farmland that has long been the epicenter of his family life is turning to tradable commodity.

Agastya's heart sank on realizing that his secluded lifestyle was under threat, that the one thing that had been the constant epicenter of their lives for decades suddenly seemed like just another tradable commodity. If that worry had not been enough, a paralytic stroke and heart attack almost pushed him off the edge. Even Shashwat was starting to get perturbed, which was unusual. Between the threatening calls and Agastya's illness, Shashwat would sometimes pray for the return of the uneventful days of just a few months ago.

In the midst of the distress that the land is under threat, his lifestyle is under threat and the fear that his land is soon going to be a tradable commodity, a paralytic stroke and heart attack almost kills him. His chief helper, Shashwat has also grown

nervous and worried. He is under pressure due to the threatening calls to sell the land as well as the illness of Agastya.

Agastya treats land as the living entity; he is true land ethicist in the Leopold's definition as he is conscious of the ecological and weather cycles that govern the land. Just looking from the window even in the time of his illness, Agastya can feel the every bit of the farmland and appreciates its soothing existence:

Agastya looked out of the large French windows that faced his bed. There was a light wind outside, and the curtains flew casually in it, letting through glimpses of the view beyond his room. Agastya did not require an uninterrupted view of his land to picture how it must look. Yes, the farm changed colour with the seasons and the wind and the men who tended it, but over the years, Agastya had learnt to recognize its immutable core that would always remain solid, that could not be touched by beast or man. It was an invisible but comforting presence, one that let him sleep peacefully at night.

(11)

Agastya looks at the land through the large window of his bed, he feels the light wind blowing across his farmland and windowpane and feels the pictures of the land even though whole land is not visible from the window. He has got the uninterrupted picture of the land in his heart; he can complete the picture of the land and feel it in imagination. He is aware of the weather cycle and its impact on the land in each of the seasons. Because of his long care of the land, he can recognize the soul of the land, its immutable core; he can feel its comforting presence, some invisible love that brings peace in him and lets him sleep peacefully. He is the true ethicist of the land use. For him, land and its ecology are like the living organism capable of loving back if one loves them and treats them with respect and care.

Agastya enjoys every bit of the land with sense of enthusiasm and wonder. He loves everything that are in his farmland, the lush greenery and ripe fruits, the crops impregnated with the abundance of grains.

Compared to the patchy greenery on the roads he had come by, the lushness of the farm stunned him for a moment. He noticed a large fruit garden on his right, surrounded by foot tall hedges all around. Several papaya, chickoo, and mango trees spread out over possibly a quarter of an acre of the garden. The main farm began on his left and continued as far out as he could see, with crops laid out in neat, contiguous rows. Apart from a few benches on the cobbled path he stood on and a one-room cemented outhouse in the middle of the farm, the place was all nature. The main house was straight ahead from where he stood, towering over the vegetation nearby, but seeming quite modest before the scale of the rest of the farm.

Agastya feels stunned looking at the farm, he enjoys its lush greenery and appreciates the fruits and crops giving abundance of production. He looks at the land as far as he can, to the one-room outhouse in the middle of the farm. The place was all nature; Agastya had tended it with love for many years now. The lushness of his farm contrasted with the patchy greenery on the road to his father's home from which he has come to the farmland. His love and care for the land is phenomenal and it is too intimate and human.

Karan, his Agastya's illegitimate son from the first relation with Shailja, illegitimate in the sense that their marriage is not accepted by his family and he had to marry with Shubhangi, Pranay's smoother later, is aware of his father's love for the land and appreciates it.

It is obviously a labor of love, Karan thought. He knew Agastya loved his job, and it showed in the way nature had been tamed all around him, and in the fragrance

of pride in the air. He could almost see farm workers walking unhurriedly between the neat rows of plantation, noticing the flaws in crops, trimming the yellowing leaves, and gently stroking their vibrant colors. Being there in the middle of a well-tended farm was an incredibly pleasant feeling. And to realize that he could possibly be the par owner of such an enormous piece of land was almost heady.

Karan knows his father's love to the land and his work on it. He conquers nature not by force rather he conquers it by love and treats it with care. There is the fragrance of his father's love and pride of the successful farmer. When he enters the farm, he imagines farm workers walking unhurriedly between the neat rows of plantation, noticing the flaws in crops, trimming the yellowing leaves, and gently stroking their vibrant colors. Their tender way of working with the farm is very suggestive. They are unhurried, stable, and work gently stroking the vibrant color of plantation; they are human and they take care of the farmland with love. The work environment of the farm follows the land ethics properly in terms of Leopold giving Agastya the rank of the par owner of the farm. Leopold explains the components of nature that fall under land ethic, "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. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mereeconomic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense" (25).

It is possible for a city-born person to become a land ethicist and lover of the land. Agastya is an example of this fact. He used to laugh at the possibility of coming closer to soil at his twenties; he was city born lad who spent his childhood days in city:

Till Agastya was in his twenties, he would have laughed aloud at the mention of a life close to the soil. He was born in the city, bred in its buzzing by-lanes,

and used to its chaos and noise. Land for him meant the little spaces on which men built houses and raised their shops, it meant the power to feel secure in one tiny corner of the city. That land could also mean a life of quiet independence and satisfaction that it could be the source of livelihood on its own, were thoughts alien to Agastya. (22)

Agastya, a city-born and grown up young lad, was used to the chaos and noise. He used to love the man-made constructions and businesses in the city. Working on a soil and being a farmer was never his goal. He felt secure and satisfied with the city life where he was grown up. He had never given the consideration that land could provide him independence and satisfaction. Agastya came to Gurgaon and took up the family land as the next chapter of his life and became a renowned farmer who could understand the land and its ecology and tended it with love, care and respect. He died on the very farmland where he spent rest of the life feeling the soil. After his death, the land is divided into four parts, among the narrator, Pranay, Karan and Shashwat.

The death of the land ethicist Agastya opened up the possibility of selling the land and making the land the commodity. This possibility weighs high because nobody in the family was interested on farming, even Shashwat, who worked with Agastya in the farm from the beginning had lost his interest to the land. The narrator relates about his visit to the farm after the death of Agastya:

It took me many months to get my head cleared. After the funeral, I left the farm and went back to my rented room in the city, hiding from the world that like a recluse. I neither spoke to anyone, nor met a soul. I waited in that coma-like state and saw the winter pass and the spring wither away, One day, I felt like seeing the farm once more and got up from my room, hoping that being there would make a difference, that maybe the land would guide me. (292)

The narrator was devastated after the death of Agastya. He went to the city leaving the farm and spent a life of a recluse there for a long time. He describes his shock as coma-like state. He spent winter and spring in that condition and suddenly, he felt like he wanted to see the farm again. This led him to visit farm and report its condition. The farm was the only free space as the man-made buildings and constructions around it were going unhindered. The farm was on the verge of being shrouded by the city and modern development:

When I approached the farm, I realized that the world hadn't stopped. The lands around me had found new owners and were now enduring feverish construction activity. Buildings and houses and roads and flyovers and anything else that man could build were coming up everywhere around the farm. There was a new world forming there, where the farm had no place. As I re-entered the gates, I saw that the farm had changed too. Unlike when I had first seen it, it was now just a wasted monument to the men who had spent decades tending to it. The desolation and the barrenness made me hesitate for a moment. Then I walked to the end of the driveway and turned to look at the farm. I stood there for a long time, thinking, musing, and savoring the solitude.

(292)

The narrator presents the situation in which rapid urbanization is undermining the farmland and its ecosystem. Land around the farm were completely succumbed to the modern development and construction works have brought a lot of changes there. Man-made objects occupied the once arable lands and the plants and animals dependent on those land were displaced. When the narrator enters the gate of the farm, he sees changes in the farm too. The gate was not tended at all and it had reduced to an old monument. The farm had lost its life, desolation and solitude

haunted it. The narrator stands long time pensive about the changes. For the people in the modern time, the land is a commodity, an economic problem. They do not know how the land and its ecosystem come to life again. Leopold suggests the ethic not to think the land as economic burden alone:

The 'key-log' which must be moved to release the evolutionary process for an ethic is simply this: quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. 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. (26)

Adopting land ethics and follow the evolutionary process of the ethic begins with quitting the assumption that land is decently used only by considering it as an economic problem. One has to examine each of the questions whether they are right ethically and esthetically. The right is determined with the consideration whether it preserves the integrity, stability and the beauty of the biotic community. Ecology is thus, kept at the center of land ethic. After the death of Agastya, the farm is not sold immediately but it has lost its life; the charm is no more. Nobody treats it with love and respect and nobody caresses it. The family members seem illusioned and they have lost their way regarding the proper treatment of the land. The narrator relates:

When I finally walked into the farmhouse, it was no surprise that there us no one to greet or meet me. I looked for Shashwat Uncle. He continued to live on the farm but had clearly lost interest in the farm, in me, in himself, probably in life itself—in those months. It was as if something very close to him, like his skin, had been peeled off from him. I wasn't sure what had caused him more pain—the death of a friend, loss of his trust, or what we did in that room after

that. I think he expected my father's end to be grander, more dignified, but we made it all seem like a brute joke. (293)

The narrator notices how the soul of the farm has been sucked out after the death of Agastya. There was nobody to welcome him. Shashwat uncle used to live in the farm but unfortunately he had lost the interest in the farm. Not only the farm, he seems to loss interest in himself and other people and probably in his own life too. He feels as if something has peeled off his skin, the closest thing to him is taken away. The narrator is unable to fathom the root of his pain. Probably, his expectation about great death of Agastya did not materialize and he suddenly died. This could be the source of his pain. The narrator looks around the farmhouse and vast land before him feeling pathetic onlooker in the memory of his father and the desolation of farm after his departure:

I climbed down the stairs and came out of the farmhouse. I looked up behind me and saw the French windows of Father's room. They were now locked and shut. I imagined Father watching the farm today from beyond the windows and being appalled by the desolation of the place. The vastness of the farm ahead of me was awe-inspiring, but it didn't affect me at that moment. Pranay, the owner, stood over its vastness, but what was the use of that sterile vastness? I wondered. In that one moment, I knew this was not how the future should look like. Suddenly, the way forward was clear to me. I stood at a crossroad from where men could either be weaklings or gods for the rest of their days. (293)

The narrator climbs down the farmhouse and looks at the locked window of Agastya from which he used to look at the farm. He imagined him looking around from the window as well as feeling the chocking desolation of the place. He sees Pranay in the

vastness of the land but that vastness was useless now because the land had remained sterile, unproductive. He gains the clarity that man can be weakling or god from the same point; it is only the matter of his/her choice.

The narrator soon acts upon the father's will and the land is legally divided into four chunks. Karan helps him with the legal works but he is not interested in the land of his father. Shashwat is also not interested to get his share. The narrator promises them to build trust in their name and keep the share under the trust. The unified land is divided, broken and there is adjacent possibility that it is sold to let the expansion of city, the modern form of development work to go unabated. The family is on the verge of becoming developmental refugee from their family land in Rob Nixon's term as they appear soon to be displaced from their farmland because of the encroachment of the farmland by urban structures:

The "developmental refugee" is a poignantly paradoxical figure. Development implies positive growth, ascent toward a desirable end; refugee implies flight from a grave threat—in this case, the threat of development inflicted destitution or even, when it comes to megadams, of drowning. In horizontal terms, the notion of the developmental refugee holds in tension an official, centripetal logic of national development on the one hand and on the other, a terrifying, centrifugal narrative of displacement, dispossession, and exodus.

(152)

Rob Nixon presents the horrible predicament of the modern development, as it is likely to produce developmental refugees displacing the people from their family land and their family land would be taken over by development activities. The term developmental refugee is paradoxical one because development refers to positive growth while refugee suggests the people escaping the threat. They are the product of

the destitute created by development works like the case of the displaced landowners around Agastya's farm. The refugees are the result of the tension between national development and displacement. This horrible predicament can be averted only when people follow land ethic like Agastya and treat the land and its ecology with love and respect.

III. Critic of the Ecological Ethics of City Dwellers in Khushwant Singh's *The Sunset Club*

Kushwant Singh's novel *The Sunset Club* derives its name from the Sunset Club, which is three octogenarian member's unofficial club that meets every evening in the Lodhi Gardens of the India's capital city, New Delhi. The members are Pandit Preetam Sharma, Nawab Barkatullah Baig and Sardar Boota Singh. They are friends for over forty years; they are now in their eighties. "English-speaking Indians call them the 'Sunset Club' because the three men who occupy the bench are seen on it every day at sunset. All three are in their late eighties, the sunset years of their lives" (5). The novelist justifies the title of the novel clearly in the beginning section of the novel. The evenings, garden and the view of sunset in the time they themselves are in the journey of life during their sunset years is very suggestive. They are, by one reason or another, obsessed with the spaces and natural settings that are available in the sophisticated city. They sit together on a bench in Lodhi Gardens to exchange news and views on the events of the day, talking about everything from love, lust, sex and scandal to religion and politics.

The plot of *The Sunset Club* revolves around three octogenarian friends living in Delhi and their gatherings on every evening at the Lodhi Gardens. During their meetings, they talk about myriads of subject matters they have experienced in their life. In a sense, the Lodhi Gardens have become their junction where they can freely share their personal views and the news they have heard from somewhere else. Although there are a few other parks in the urban setting of Delhi, these friends have made the Lodhi Gardens their destination and there is a separate bench named the Boorha Bench (the bench for old men) to spend the sunset of the day and their lives as well.

This research studies this novel from an ecocritical perspective to study the effects of urbanization on environment, displacement and the relation between human and non-human world. Development activities are unavoidable and they are not possible to be carried out without utilizing the natural resources. Moreover, without putting pressure on natural environment, no developmental work cannot be carried out; however, the probable pressure must be minimal as far as possible.

Among the three friends, Boota Singh is very much interested in trees and birds (*The Sunset Club* 11). Right from the first section of the novel, we find evidence of urbanization impacts on environment. Lodhi Gardens has become major refuge to the otherwise busy city dwellers in the need of some space in Delhi. Lodhi Gardens is also the space that hosts numbers of programs with national importance. The narrator gives some details about an important program, “the 26th of January 2009, the 59th anniversary of the founding of the independent Indian Republic” (1). He later points out the people’s dependence in such programs:

On the afternoon of the 26th January 2009, Lodhi Gardens is more crowded that on other days. On its many lawns men and women lie sprawled on the grass. Around each group is a debris of paper plates and cups, with stray dogs wagging their tails, begging for leftovers. (11)

It is evident that, Lodhi Gardens has served the people of Delhi and it has close connection to them. It is not only the space to see trees, birds and people living with the crowd to seek refuge in a natural setting but it is also the space for the various socio-culturally important programs. Its ecological significance for the ecology of the town is even more prominent.

Endlicher et al. in their essay “Urban Ecology - Definitions and Concepts” discuss the dimensions and processes of change in urban ecology. They write:

Urban ecology addresses processes in space and time. Besides the spatial dimension, four main processes of change are the focus of recent research: changes in urban biodiversity, climate, human demography and economy: Urban land use significantly affects biodiversity patterns. Until the 1960s cities were perceived as 'biological deserts', whereas they are currently considered as 'hotspots' of botanic and animal diversity. Species respond quite differently to urbanization, with a decline in native species and increase in introduced species as a general trend. These changes in urban biota are currently regarded as major drivers of global homogenization. However, regional studies have demonstrated that both native and non-native species richness is higher in urban areas than adjacent areas and that non-native species may also contribute to the dissimilarity of urban floras. (5)

Urban ecology, in its spatial dimension, undergoes the four major processes of change: the change changes in urban biodiversity, climate, human demography and economy. The land use of the cities affects the biodiversity of the cities. World cities were in ecologically impoverished condition until the 1960s but Endlicher et al. elated to assert that those ecologically neglected and deserted cities have turned into the centers of botanic and animal diversity. For the animals, the displaced native species of the animals decline but the introduced species of animals increase. This could also be case with the native floras. Whatever be the case, the urban biota is improving in the world after the 1960s; it has created global homogeneity among the various cities. The problems of cities are similar. People pollute the public urban spaces is evident in the novel. On the program of the Indian Republic Day on the January 26, Lodhi Gardens is crowded and there is huge amount of wastage left on the ground. A debris of paper plates and cups with stray dogs wagging their tails, begging for leftovers

show the level of pollution and lack of awareness among the people regarding the ecology of the public spaces. Man-made public spaces such as park and other recreational centers are not getting proper care in the city areas like Delhi. This kind of behavior has adverse impact upon the flora and fauna that are dependent on public spaces and that, in turn, affects the ecology of the whole city.

The parks and spaces have provide shelter to the birds and trees and save the city ecology. Besides Lodhi Gardens, there is also number of quiet and beautiful spaces in Delhi. PuranaQuila or the old fort is one of them. Lodhi Gardens is introduced as the most popular space among them:

Around noon, the parade on Rajpath is over and crowds begin to disperse. Some go to the nearby PuranaQila, the Old Fort, to picnic on the lawns and doze in the sun. There are other ancient monuments which provide similar space and quiet. The most popular of them is Lodhi Gardens. It is within easy walking distance from Rajpath, and has a vast variety of trees, birds and medieval monuments. It is perhaps the most scenic historic park in India. At one time it was a scatter of tombs and mosques in a village called Khairpur. In the 1930s the villagers were moved out and the monuments taken under government protection. (3-4)

The writer praises Lodhi Gardens for its scenic beauty and historicity. Before turning this place into Park, it was a place for tombs in a village called Khairapur. The villagers were moved from there in the 1930s and the government completed the acquisition of the land to turn it into the park. It has given many city dwellers place to breathe fresh air among the concrete jungle of the city. There are own reasons for the members of the Sunset Club to visit Lodhi Gardens:

Members of the Sunset Club have their own reasons for preferring

Lodhi Gardens to other city parks. As I said before, Sharma likes to exchange greetings with important people: members of Parliament, senior politicians and retired civil servants. Most of them recognize him because he is a retired important person. Baig has an abiding interest in ancient monuments, notably those built by Pathan kings who once ruled the whole of northern India. Lodhi Gardens reminds him of the glorious rule of the Sayyid and Lodhi Sultans. Boota Singh does not bother about VIPs nor is he very interested in monuments; he pretends to be a nature lover—birds and trees are what draw him to the park because it has lots of both. (38)

Sharma, being a retired official of the government, visits the Lodhi Gardens, so that he can see important personalities there such as members of parliament, senior politicians and retired officials like him. Baig shows interest upon ancient monuments and Boota pretends to be nature and birds lover.

Although there are other parks in Delhi, the members of the Sunset Club prefer Lodhi Gardens (38). Throughout the story, Boota Singh is found “to be a nature lover – birds and trees are what draw him to the park because it has lots of both” (38).

The author presents Boota’s love towards nature and plants:

His own attempts to grow exotic varieties of trees have not been very successful. Many years ago he brought a sandalwood sapling from Mysore. Boota didn’t know it is a parasite and its roots feed on roots of trees nearby and turn the trunk into fragrant wood. It now stands twenty feet tall in his garden. But it has no fragrance... Boota watches it by the hour as its leaves start to drop. Gusts of wind bring some down in showers. And soon new ones turn the tree into a flowering pyramid of fire, a sight for the gods... It is these trees that are the focus of Boota’s attention and he lectures about them to his

other two members of the Sunset Club. (38-39)

There is a displacement of the indigenous plant while Boota plants the exported sandalwood. When he planted a sandalwood in his garden, it distorted the indigenous environment (Leopold 239) by preventing the native plants to grow in the garden as the tree feeds on roots of those plants. The sandalwood turns its trunk into fragrant only when it kills the indigenous plants. Besides the displacement of the indigenous plants, it is also an act of the city dweller's love towards nature and wish for a greenery. Only the lack of knowledge about the particular species of plant that makes him unsuccessful.

Eliza F. Kent, in her book *Sacred Gods and Local Gods* has studied the Malayalam culture. She sees how the indigenous Tamil people managed to save the ecology culturally. They make particular indigenous tree as jewelry for the God or a deity and protect the areas surrounding the tree making a temple inside jungles near it. It is cultural sense of preserving ecology.

At an aesthetic level, the identification of the trees as the adornments, or jewelry, of the temple or the deity makes perfect intuitive sense. The towering trees do add to the beauty of the spot, clothing the space with cool shade and providing a lovely green backdrop for the terracotta votive offerings or images of the deity frequently found in sacred groves. But at another level, referring to the trees as *alankaram* is a reversal of the usual dichotomy in Tamil discourse between "nature" and "civilization" or culture. *Alankaram* is typically precisely that which is made (*seykai*), crafted, embellished, or deliberately cultivated beyond its natural state, not that which appears or grows spontaneously, or *iyarkai* (the Tamil word most frequently used for "nature"). (41)

Even though Boota appears to love trees and plants, he lacks ecological awareness that a tree can have and how trees are culturally protected in the various cultures in India. Tamil people make trees the adornments of the God and thus, they subvert the traditional discourses between nature and culture. Lack of culturally shaped ecological sensibility and helps protect the ecology surrounding the temple area. This lack of culturally shaped methods to protect ecology are everywhere in Indian and Hindu cultures but Boota dismisses them as superstitions:

Boota butts in: ‘And allow me to add one more question to Baig’s. If all you say is true, why are Hindus more ridden with superstition than any other people? Why is the Ganga holy? Like other rivers it is made of melted snow and rain. Why is a dip in its dirty waters regarded as holy, to cleanse the body and the soul? Its waters, which get dirtier and dirtier as it flows along, soil the body. And as for the soul, no one knows about it ...’ (167)

In this debate on superstition, Boota reduces Ganga River into mass of water alone and forgets its ecological significance. He does not realize the ecologically sensitive cultural codes that one should not pollute the sources of water. Keeping trees and rivers holy and respectable, Hindus are saving ecology. The love and respect towards the nature in also an ethic on how nature should be behaved so as to protect the overall ecosystem. The ancestors had mechanisms to protect as much resources as possible and keep natural entities intact in the name of the gods is obvious. They wanted to handover the earth in the condition that the resources are less damaged, thereby they ensured the longevity of the overall human civilization.

Boota appears to be rash and intolerant. He expects privacy in the public places like Lodhi Garden. More that being anthropocentric, he seems to be egocentric. The crowd in the park in such early hour compels Boota to think that his privacy and

freedom is more or less disturbed. Therefore, he wishes if those people would do all their lots at their own homes instead of in public places. Most of the city dwellers, thus, like Boota either are anthropocentric, never thinking about the nature and its ecosystem while using them for their purpose or egocentric, thinking about using all the natural resources by themselves. This tendency is problematic and it takes laborious efforts to make people ecologically aware. It is the problem of the common city-dwellers in most of the cities. Boota is a pretender to be a nature lover and is very superficial whenever real ecological issues emerge. He is the representative of most of the city dwellers. Though lacking in complete ecological awareness, these people show their affection to nature whenever there is the chance to do so.

There was better sense of conservation of nature in the past time. To prevent the environmental imbalance in the city, the Lodhi dynasty had built a public park where people could go and enjoy the nature at least to some extent. Whatever the conservation condition of the park, it is one of the limited spaces where people of all ages gather in the evening or morning or even daytime as per their convenience. This is far from the natural ecosystem; however, it is the place where children get to know about birds, flowering and non-flowering plants, butterflies, and other species of nonhumans. So, Boota is looking out of his window to see if there are any girls, boys, or their pet dogs playing on the lawn facing his window.

It is too early, the sun is still too hot for them to step out. He catches sight of the laburnum in full bloom. How is it that he had not noticed it last year? He steps out of his flat to take a better look. In all its golden splendour, it proclaims the glory of God. He must tell his friends about it. Unfortunately few of his countrymen show much interest in trees, birds or animals – they are far more interested in politics, money, scandals or religion. And so it turned

out to be that evening, when the Sunset Club met. (103).

The problem of people like Boota and their ecological sensibility tend to distinguish between natural world and other aspects of the society – politics, materialism, and religion and so on. They do not understand that all these aspects of environment and society affect each other. If one wants to save the nature, there needs to be a political and religious initiatives as well as material contribution. In the quote above, Boota charges people focusing on politics, money, scandals and religion rather than focusing on trees, birds and animals.

Cities worldwide are struggling with a myriad of environmental and social problems as growing cities face air, water, and soil pollution, resource depletion, and aging infrastructure (Gill et al. 115-31). Therefore, one of the octogenarians of the Sunset Club, Boota Singh laments upon his missing of natural environmental nonhuman entities and says,

Because I have not seen it or stars for many years. There was a time we used to sleep on our rooftops or on the lawns with mosquito nets, revolving fans, earthenware surahis with steel tumblers over their mouth. We saw the moon in all its phases, from a crescent to PoorahMasi, full moon, and then to moonless Amavasya. We saw Venus and the Pole Star and the Sapt Rishi – the Plough. And could tell time without looking at our watches. Now all that is the past.
(104)

The past, the memory of a lot of interaction to the nature haunts the old man. He used to be so familiar with the stars in the sky that he could guess the time looking at the stars. The watch, the gadget of sophisticated city, and the lack of open space has cut off the old men from the interaction with the nature, the open sky, moon and stars. This sense keeps him sad and dissatisfied in his city life.

In an attempt to console his friend's desire to enjoy the wilderness, Baig says, "If you are missing the moon and the stars so much, all you have to do is to spend a night in a village half an hour's drive from Delhi" (104). It is not much possible in the city to observe the stars and the moon changing its size and shape due to the lack of open spaces on the one hand, and the atmosphere is too polluted to stay outside and enjoy the moon on the other hand. It is common problem with city ecosystem; not much ecologically sound space available for them. Lodhi Garden has added extra charm to the city and it soothes the city dwellers in their life disconnected from the nature. In the month of February, the flowers of the various gardens and give the people the sense of natural proximity and intimacy. It plays crucial role to excite the old men feel in the wild environment and enjoy their life:

February is Delhi's floral month. All parks and roundabouts are, as the cliché goes, a riot of colours. You can see the flowers at their best in Buddha Jayanti Park on the Ridge. There they have long flower beds growing the same flowers en masse. Lodhi Gardens cannot claim to provide such a feast for the eyes for flower-lovers. Undoubtedly, it has an enclosed rose garden with exotic varieties of roses which are beautiful to look at but lack fragrance. Few people besides rose-fanciers bother to visit it. There are a few nondescript flower beds on both sides of its footpaths, but Lodhi Gardens makes up by having an incredible variety of flowering trees which come into bloom in February. They attract lots of tree-lovers. (37-38)

The old friends of the Sunset Club enjoy the flowers and imagine the sweet life feeling the part of natural world. On the other hand, the bees and other insects in the town sustain their existence and the ecology.

The eastern view of nature and ecology is holistic and more ethical in

comparison to the western view. How trees are conserved making them and related to God and how the rivers and sources of waters kept unpolluted and clean keeping them sacred in the eastern cultures are already discussed. But English-speaking Indians call them the 'Sunset Club' seem to have less knowledge about this holistic and respected concept of ecology. Every guru, every mantra, and every prayer teaches them to respect ecology and environment. But people are not listening to them; this results in environmental crisis, pollution and destruction of nature. Even the people become ethically bankrupt and corrupt. Talking about immorality of a married man of Bishnoi tribe, father to two children, marrying second time with a young Brahmin girl from respectable family, Sharma talks about the founder of the Bishnoi tribe, Guru Jambeshwar:

The founder of the sect, Guru Jambeshwar, was a noble soul, a visionary, a century ahead of his time, the first environmentalist. Don't kill trees, don't kill animals, don't hurt people, don't tell lies—that's what he preached. He even sanctioned selecting handsome, healthy males to service married women whose husbands could not impregnate them. That's the reason why the Bishnois are a handsome people. And see what happened to them. At one time the British intended to declare them a criminal tribe. They have a very high rate of murders and violent crimes. (31-32)

It is obvious that Guru Jambeshwar was the first environmentalist. He was a visionary and he taught people to respect and love the nature. He was against cutting down the trees, killing the animals, hurting the people and cheating them. He drew moral codes for the marriage and restricted polygamy. But the Bishnoi tribe is corrupt now; they are involved in immoral and criminal activities and once, the British government of India almost declared the whole tribe as a criminal tribe. Ethical ground is lacking in

people in the modern times. On the other hand, people do not seem to take his initiative to preserve environment seriously. They do not think environment as holistic and the trees, animals and human beings are interconnected. The crisis befallen on the existence of one part of nature affects the existence of other aspect of nature.

People just repeat the mantras and hymn with the hope that they could be beneficial for their health but never try to understand their hidden messages – to treat every aspect of nature because they all are parts of same universe. They use mantras and hymns in anthropocentric and egocentric gains; they want personal benefits from the mantra without coming into terms with the sensibility they impart. Boota is one of such hypocrites; even though he professes to agnostic and materialist, he chants mantras and hymns every morning:

When he gets up around 4 a.m. he prays for his health and repeats
AumArogyam many times, followed by the Gayatri Mantra and a Sikh hymn
designed to keep sorrows at a distance:

May ill-winds not touch me, the Lord is my Protector.

Around me Rama has drawn a wall to protect me;

No harm will come to me, brother.

The True Guru, who put the Universe together

Gave me Rama's name as panacea against all ills;

Meditate on Him and Him alone.

He saves those who deserve saving; He removes all doubts

Says Nanak, the Lord is merciful. He is my helper.

He explains the contradictions in his agnosticism and hedonism by saying:

'Who knows! They say prayers can work miracles. No harm in trying them out.' (8-9)

Rama or the protector is the holistic equilibrium of the universe and binding chain of the ecology. He puts the whole universe functioning and due to the ecological chain the universal force of the nature puts us around all the aspects of nature, man is protected. However, people just chant the mantras and hymns without feeling any responsibility to the Universe, and the ecological change. They are superficial; they just want the mantras and hymn to be beneficial for their anthropocentric, egocentric narrowness. Even the so-called agnostics like Boota chant the mantras and hymns due to the benefit of doubt, or they-might-work-wonders, who knows kind of mentality. Thus, people are eschewing their ethical responsibility to the Universe as well as ecological chain. Aldo Leopold in his holistic land ethics points out, “All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to compete for)” (22-23). Leopold’s community and the mantra’s Universe are similar; we all that exist in the universe are interrelated and integral parts of each other; we have to contribute and cooperate to the community without eschewing our responsibility.

Sharma is another character who, despite the continual chanting of Gayatri Mantra lacks the ethical duty to the ecology and nature. The Gayatri Mantra binds all the elements of the universe together but he fails to see its ethical significance and holistic position it refers to on the behalf of the betterment of all the aspects of the nature that are the part of the ecological chain.

Sharma gets up after daylight, stretches out his arms and loudly intones *Hari OmTat Sat* a few times, coming down to just *Hari Om, HariOm*. He goes to the bathroom to urinate and rinse his mouth. Then he downs a tumbler of

warm water and a mug of tea. He goes on to recite the Gayatri Mantra at the top of his voice:

Almighty God: Creator of the Earth and the firmament

Blessed be Thy Name

And blessed be the Sun that gives us light and life

May thou endow me with similar qualities

May such thoughts enlighten my mind. (27)

The earth and its binding forces, the Sun and all the other elements of the nature are connected by the mantras. Earth is land and the Sun is its source of life on the Earth. Aldo Leopold includes the soil, water, plant, animals and all the other aspects in his holistic approach to the land ethic, “The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (23).

Nosheen Ali et al. in their essay “Decolonizing nature/knowledge: indigenous environmental thought and feminist praxis” charge English language being the culprit that keeps elites from properly understanding the indigenous knowledge, creativity and cultural possibilities:

English is the source of bourgeois power and success; it helps to service class inequality and constantly undermines the connection with popular commonality. It is also an alienating and stifling language for many learners as it carries deep inferiority signals. To live in English is the painful truth of our continuing colonial present. No matter how excitedly we talk about decolonizing, the global system of education dominated by English and Euro-American theory constantly robs us of our indigenous creative spirits and cultural possibilities because we are forced to speak in it in order to be

counted, in order to thrive. It is hard work, and exhausting vigilance, to thrive in it without being defined and contained by it. (81)

For Nosheen Ali et al. English has become the language of power, it is language of bourgeois power and success, and it promotes inequality undermining the connection with popular commonality. As Khushwant Singh introduces the Sunset Club of the old men he terms it as a club of “English-speaking Indians” in the novel (5).

Therefore, it is not uncommon to see that the old members of the Sunset Club do not understand the ethical and ecological standpoint of the eastern cultures and mantras.

In the words of Nosheen Ali et al., they are self-colonized elites of the society:

To live in English requires us to self-colonize and uninhabit our multiple cultural inheritances. It is often a second, third, or fourth language in South Asia, and the act of speaking it involves deep cognitive struggle as well as layers of translation from multiple local languages. If we are to continue using English as the medium of global exchange, the minimum demand is that this multilayered English-speaking and expressive reality of the postcolonial subject must be acknowledged and respected. In the narratives that follow, these layers are visible, adding to the beauty, complexity and authenticity of voice, and more fully bringing out the reflections on nature being expressed.

(81)

It is hard to charge all the members of the octogenarian Sunset Club to be the persons who self-colonize themselves and eschew number of cultural inheritances but it is obvious that the cognitive level they acquire is different; they appear to shallow in many of the cultural understandings of India or the South Asian societies. They lack ethical and considerate perspectives whenever the question of the treatment of nature arise. Lenka Filipova in the “Introduction” to *Ecocriticism and the Sense of*

Places suggests, “The knowledge of green spaces in a particular urban environment can contribute to one’s concern for them as it can contribute to an appreciation of their existence in more depth and with greater intensity” (6). Therefore, it is beneficial for the ecological awareness of the city dwellers to have more urban spaces like Lodhi Gardens.

Besides the ecological significance, the parks also illuminate people’s cultural and historical knowledge and thus, they have promoted cultural and religious tolerance among people and maintain the social and cultural harmony.

For good reason, the most popular place in the park is the extensive lawn on the southern side of what must have been the main mosque, the Jami Masjid, built in 1494. The reason for its popularity is its dome, which is an exact replica of a young woman’s bosom including the areola and the nipple. Most mosques and mausoleum have domes but they have metal spires put on top of them which rob them of their feminine charm. (4-5)

It is important to notice that small embellishment in the cultural and historical places robs them of their charm. The women of the mosque lose their feminine charm because of the metal spires added to them. Additional improvement can thus, be detrimental in most of the cases. People like naturally plausible things rather than unnatural extensions.

The novel has also dealt with the various problems of the old age and underscored the significance of the better urban ecology for their health. The morning times are problematic for the old people:

For old people, mornings are an ordeal. No matter what age-related ailments they suffer from, it is usually in the mornings from sunrise to noon that they succumb to them. More old people die during these hours than at others. This

is a blessing in disguise as in tropical climates relatives dispose of their dead before sunset. And many deaths are related to bowel movements because they weigh heavily on their minds. (26)

Many of the people suffer from various ailments related to their age. The old people are not different. Their body becomes sensitive to the small change in the weather and pollution level of the town. Therefore, considering the benefits of the fresh air in the morning time to the aged people, the government should take initiatives to make more urban spaces and parks and discourage the ecological exploitation. Lenka Filipova points to the need for ecological justice:

To address questions of power, environmentalism often draws on political ecology, using vocabulary such as 'justice', 'resilience' and 'scale'. Unequal relations may occur within regional, national and supranational political and ecological contexts, as well as within the context of colonial and neocolonial exploitation more specifically. (10)

There is the possibility of hierarchy and unequal power relation in the ecological context, so, environmentalism draws the vocabulary from the political ecology and uses the terms like justice and resilience. Political initiatives to make city ecology better and impart the right ecological awareness among the people is necessity.

IV. Environmental Ethics in NileshShrivastava's *No Man's Land* and Khushwant Singh's *The Sunset Club*

Analysis of both novels - *No Man's Land* by NileshShrivastava and *The Sunset Club* by Khushwant Singh - from ecocritical perspective demonstrates that the lack of environment ethics and irresponsible human activities towards nature has a debilitating effect on nature. As a result, the human behaviors end up in destroying the land, natural diversity, its integrity and ecological significance. This research has applied the theoretical and conceptual approaches of various critics such as Aldo Leopold, Lenka Filipova, and Eliza F. Kant are applied to interpret and analyze the texts from ecocritical perspective. More specially, Shrivastava's novel concentrates on the family farmland and its ownership after the death of Agastya. It raises the questions regarding the treatment of the land amidst the worsening fear that the land will soon be invaded by the man-made sky-crappers due to rapid expansion of urban structures around it. As a consequence, Agastaya, who treats land as a living entity, has a heart attack and dies later on. And after his death, the land is divided, broken, and has the possibility of being sold to let the expansion of the city. Likewise, Dushyanta laments that land has become a matter of business and also reminds Karan, Agastaya's elder son from his first wife Shailja, that the beauty of land stays forever. In the same way, Shaswat has less interest in the farm later on. Moreover, the family is in the state of 'developmental refugee' as discussed by Rob Nixon. On the other hand, Kushwant Singh's novel hinges around the Lodhi Gardens, a park in the heart of New Delhi, and three octogenarian friends who call themselves as the members of the Sunset Club. In Singh's novel, the old men display the superficial awareness and they have ignored the cultural, indigenous models of environmental conservation while putting many of the cultural practices in use. This lack of awareness is

questioned. As a result, the indigenous plant has been displaced when Boota Singh brings sandalwood that stands twenty feet but has no fragrance. In the same fashion, Lodhi Garden lacks its natural state and the people who go there to share their experiences cannot find it as usual since the park is crowded and polluted. Though Lodhi Garden is far away from the natural ecosystem, it has flowering, non-flowering plants, butterflies and other species of non-human species. People have become individualistic and only think of their own benefits. Most of all, these people lack indigenous knowledge, creativity and cultural possibilities.

Shrivastava's novel rigorously poses questions regarding the land ethics. The city-bound sons of Agastya are clueless about how to treat the land and how to preserve the heritage left to them by their father. The land loses its charm and life after his death and the chance that it would soon run over by the infrastructures and burgeoning city's expansions becomes high. When the father was alive, he always treated the land with love and respect and got a great return from it. But the general approach of the rest of the world is to regard land as the commodity or dead object that needed to be bought and conquered is too mechanical and harsh. It lacks ethics beside the target of profiteering. The sons of Agastya are in difficult situation after the death of their father: they can neither tend the land like their father nor bring life back to it, nor they can directly sell it and let the powerful and rich elites do anything. It shows that they also love the land but they do not know how to impart love and respect to the land and fetch the reward it gives to them in return. Modern people treat the land as the commodity; they buy and sell it for profiteering; they lack any sensibility regarding the life, ecology that surround the land. Land ethic reminds the responsibility of the people regarding the ecological aspects rooted to the land. Land is not the property; it is not like the Odysseus' slave girl to borrow the word of deep

ecologist Aldo Leopold. It should not be treated in terms of economic transaction and to feed the human being's ego of being a conqueror of the nature. This Anthropogenic ultimately leads to the human downfall.

Kushwant Singh's novel is actually a frivolous lifestyle of the three old men who visit Lodhi Gardens to watch the sunset and kill the time with some frivolous chitchat. So, the knowledge and awareness they display can logically be faulty and manipulated by idiosyncrasies too. Whatever be the case, their conversations and debates touch the ecological facets repeatedly. It is because their topics revolve around various issues and the ecological, cultural issues are also among them. They crack jokes and display the mock anger with each other's positions. Since the cultural background of the three old men, Sharma, Baig and Boota, are different, they also practice different set of cultural rites. Once, they talk about the morality of a man from Bishnoi tribe who, despite being married and father of two, marries a Brahmin girl. They raise the question about his marriage and the moral standing of the Bishnoi people, they venture into their history. The tribe was first founded by Guru Jambeshwar who was also the first environmentalist of India. He taught people to respect and love the nature. He preached against cutting down the trees, killing the animals, hurting the people and cheating them. He drew moral codes for the marriage and restricted polygamy. The people of the tribe he founded lack the morally correct and disciplined behavior; they have turned immoral and corrupt. Many of them have become criminals. The cultural practices of India are ethical and they teach Indians to respect all the aspects of nature with love and respect. Such discussions lead the old men show their approach regarding cultural practices and their connection to the nature. Further, they chant mantras and hymns early in the morning but they practice them as if they are some rites; chanting them alone is sufficient. They lack the

awareness how those mantras and hymns are ecologically conscious and how number of other indigenous practices conserve ecology making people responsible towards nature. With the discussion of both the novel, environmental responsibility or ethics has become the central issue.

In nutshell, the analysis shows an intrinsic connection between land and environmental responsibility, ethics and human existence. Like in the novels discussed above, we have to face the barren, polluted and divided land if used it only for the sake of monetary profit and economic advantages discarding its beauty, stability and integrity. People who treat the land with love and respect get a great return from it. But the general approach of the rest of the world is to regard land as the commodity or dead object that needs to be bought and conquered is too mechanical and harsh.

In this regard, the analysis asserts that the modern people value land as a commodity traded for economic benefits, materialistic profiteering and economic advantages that eventually leads the human's downfall and environmental crisis. It leads to the broken family relationships, social bonding, less interest in the farmland and eventually individualistic society where people have connection only for the sake of profit and economy. Like crisis in human existence, the indigenous plants and species are also being displaced since the farmlands are the targets of modern developers. This is what happens when the environmental struggles rooted to a place are bigger and planned but the struggles of the family to save the land and family existence rooted to the land are smaller and helpless. With the modern development, people forget the cultural sense of ecology and treat everything as a matter. This is how there happens an attack on the chunk of land and expands urban infrastructures invading traditional ways of treatment of land and reduce land to commodity. In this reference, land and environment should be treated with love and respect since it

strengthens social bonding among people as three octogenarian characters share their experiences and bonding at Lodhi Garden. Furthermore, it also implies that the family also remains intact as the treatment for the farmland is with of love and respect.

Otherwise, people are alienated and remains individualist. The land offers great if we take care of land and its ecological balance.

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