

Tribhuvan University

Resistance to the Invasion of Land in Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green*

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Letter of Recommendation

Prerana Mahata has completed her thesis entitled “Resistance to the Invasion of Land in Sarah Joseph’s *Gift in Green* under my supervision. She carried out the research from 2014 July to February 2016. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Abstract

This research work makes an attempt to explore the idea of resistance to the invasion of land in *Gift in Green*, by Sarah Joseph by applying ecofeministic perspective. The male characters such as Dinakaran, Kumaran, Markose and Ambu involving in the so-called developmental works through constructions and the encroachment of the resources of the island turning its agricultural lands into concrete jungles. The female characters such as Ponmani, Kunjootan, and Shailaja, Karthiyani, who love and feel of being attached themselves with farming, fishing and cultivating. They have passionate attachment with the mother earth. They do not do any harm to the land of Aathi. They never imagine leaving the island. They hate people who come to buy the fertile land there. They also do not like people who sell and lease their productive land for money and job. They have special attachment with the water and land of Aathi. They have also protested and defied against the idea of constructing bridge destroying and devastating the productive land of Aathi. They also love animals and birds of the island. They are in a sense living in a perfect harmony with the nature and its beauty. In fact, female characters are striving and aspiring to keep the ideal of Aathi intact by performing their eco-friendly activities. While their male counterparts simply perform the so-called eco-inimical activities, that finally bring destruction and devastation in the island. Women have soft corner and regard land as an organic entity while men are seen exploiter of the land and consume land as an inorganic object. Therefore, nature is seen as the embodiment of all the characteristics that women possess.

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I. Introduction to *Gift in Green* and Ecofeminism

This research project explores resistance to the Invasion of land in Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* by applying ecofeministic perspective. In the novel, Sarah Joseph presents the essence of ecofeminism, especially with its post-colonial lineage in the Indian socio-political and cultural milieu, as a means of critiquing the masculinist encroachment of land and nature. By doing so, the writer wants to focus on the requirement of an eco-friendly and gender-just world order. The main objective of this research work is to analyze and interpret the textual and conceptual essence of ecofeminism in the mentioned novel. To achieve this, it is imperative to explore relevant ecofeminist theories and perspectives through literature survey. In order to materialize my thesis, I have brought the ideas of ecofeminist critics, Bina Agrawal, Ruether, Gaard, Warren and Merchant.

The novel raises the fundamental issue of the impact of invasion (social, political, economic and psychological) on women and environment in an ecofeminist perspective to bring out the major ecofeminist theories to analyze the novel with the light of that. This research area is not extensively researched so far. It is, thus, a fresh and original area to be explored. The present research work is interdisciplinary in character, and its scope is indeed wide. It is focused on the actual, specific interactions with the environment. Connections between environment and gender can be made by looking at the gender division of labor and environmental roles rather than an inherent connection with nature. The gender division of labor requires a more nurturing and caring role for women, therefore that caring nature places women closer with the environment. The knowledge of nature is shaped by the experiences an individual has. Women have a distinct knowledge of the land, yet are excluded from making policies and decisions of development on that land. This is prominent in many

developing countries where the responsibility of collecting fuel and fodder is placed upon the women. Both the resources and the meanings are taken into consideration with environmental feminism. There is a challenge to not only focus on the gender division of labor but also the actual appropriation methods of the resources. In other words, there is not simply an inherent connection between women and nature; rather there are material realities that exist.

The deep connection between women and land comes from the daily interaction between them. In recent decades, environmental movements have increased as the movements for women's rights have also increased. Today's union of nature preservation with women's rights and liberation has stemmed from invasion of their rights in the past. In developing areas of the world, women are considered the primary users of natural resources (Land, forest, and water), because they are the ones who are responsible for gathering food, fuel, and fodder.

Although in these countries, women mostly can't own the land and farms outright, they are the ones who spend most of their time working on the farms to feed the household. Shouldering this responsibility leads them to learn more about land, soil, plants, and trees and not misuse them. Although technological inputs increase male involvement with land, many of them leave the farm to go to cities to find jobs; so women become increasingly responsible for an increasing portion of farm tasks.

These rural women tend to have a closer relationship with land and other natural resources, which promotes a new culture of respectful use and preservation of natural resources and the environment, ensuring that the following generations can meet their needs. Besides considering how to achieve appropriate agricultural production and human nutrition, women want to secure access to the land. Women's perspectives and values for the environment are somewhat different from men's.

Women give greater priority to protection of and improving the capacity of nature, maintaining farming lands, and caring for nature and environment's future. Repeated studies have shown that women have a stake in environment, and this stake is reflected in the degree to which they care about natural resources. Ecofeminism refers to women's and feminist perspectives on the environment, where the domination and exploitation of women, of poorly resourced peoples and of nature is at the heart of the ecofeminist movement.

Given the environmental degradation caused while men have had dominance over women, and women's large investment in environmental sustainability, some have theorized that women would protect the Earth better than men if in power. Although there is no evidence for this hypothesis, recent movements have shown that women are more sensitive to the earth and its problems. They have created a special value system about environmental issues. People's approaches to environmental issues may depend on their relationship with nature. Both women and nature have been considered as subordinate entities by men throughout history, which conveys a close affiliation between them.

Bina Agrawal says, "throughout history men have looked at natural resources as commercial entities or income generating tools, while women have tended to see the environment as a resource supporting their basic needs" (14). As an example, rural women collect the dead branches which are cut by storm for fuel wood to use rather than cutting the live trees. Women use the land to produce food for their family; they acquire the knowledge of the land/soil conditions, water, and other environmental features. Any changes in the environment on these areas, like deforestation, have the most effect on women of that area, and cause them to suffer until they can cope with these changes. Bina Agrawal by highlighting the attachment of women with nature

further asserts:

An example of female prominence in the defense of natural forests comes from India in 1906. As forest clearing was expanding conflict between loggers and government and peasant communities increased. To thwart resistance to the forest clearing, the men were diverted from their villages to a fictional payment compensation site and loggers were sent to the forests. The women left in the villages; however, protested by physically hugging themselves to the trees to prevent their being cut down, giving rise to what is now called the Chipko movement, an environmentalist movement initiated by these Indian women (which also is where the term tree-huggers originated). This conflict started because men wanted to cut the trees to use them for industrial purposes while women wanted to keep them since it was their food resource and deforestation was a survival matter for local people. (51)

Gender-based commitments and movements such as feminism have reached to a new approach through the combination of feminism and environmentalism called Ecofeminism. Ecofeminists believe on the interconnection between the domination of women and nature. According to ecofeminism, the superior power treats all subordinates the same. So, ecofeminism takes into account women subordination and nature degradation. Remarking all these different reactions, one can see that however, most policy and makers are men. There are some ecological movements initiated by women in the world which are very contextual here to argue that women are oriented to conserve and preserve the land and nature. Ecofeminism has its base in literature also. Ecocriticism and feminist literary criticism have contributed to the linguistic as

well as literary aspects of theories and ideologies in literature. Ecofeministic literary criticism is not new, but still it is at a formative stage, especially in the context of post-colonial literature.

In this research project, I have focused on the novel of Sarah Joseph, *Gift in Green*, which is enriched with the essence of ecofeminism and the resistance to the growing invasion of fertile land. This novel expresses and exposes the idea that women and nature are productive and nurturing for the living beings. However, women are still not respected in the male-dominated society. Men, on the other hand, are seen not serious about the protection of the nature. They are hankering after the invasion of land and nature for so-called power and prosperity.

With the development of modern industry and technology all over the world, the issue of ecological imbalance is the most urgent one. This problem has reached a scale at which it is practically impossible to resolve. Much of what has been destroyed; unfortunately we will not be able to recover. Ecological imbalance between the natural factors and human activities is socio-ecological crisis. This means that the balance between the environment and society is broken. This situation can lead to the destruction of humanity. The extent of the ecological imbalance may be different. Pollution is the smallest damage that was done to the environment. In this case, the nature itself can cope with the problem. After some time, it will restore the balance, providing there won't be the harm factor.

Ecological imbalance in the cities is the most massive. Construction of buildings and cutting parks lead to clogging of the environment. A large number of vehicles and lack of green spaces contribute to the accumulation of smog and carbon dioxide. This results in the increase in the number of sick people among the urban population.

Industrial development has led to an increase in harmful emissions into the atmosphere. Not many business leaders take care of the environment. In this situation, mankind can expect an ecological disaster. Today, in many countries the environmental issues are sharply rose. The political leaders and environmental committees concern the changes occurring in nature. Many manufacturers are establishing cleaner production. Thus, for example, began to produce electric cars, totally safe for the environment. A particularly important point is the recycling of waste. This question needs an immediate solution. Many countries are seriously engaged in the disposal and recycling of human waste – it's one of the ways to restore the balance between the natural world and society.

In this background, this project attempts to bring to idea of the growing trend of invading the productive land in association with ecofeminism so as to bring about socio-ecological harmony in the society. To achieve this, it is essential to explore relevant ecofeministic theories and perspectives.

Ecofeminism asserts that all forms of oppression are connected and that structures of oppression must be addressed in their totality. Oppression of the natural world and of women by patriarchal power structures must be examined together or neither can be confronted fully. These socially constructed oppressions formed out of the power dynamics of patriarchal systems. In one of the first ecofeminist books, *New Woman/New Earth*, Ruether, states:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic

socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] society. (204)

Ruether makes clear a central tenet of ecofeminism: earth and the other-than-human experience the tyranny of patriarchy along with women. Classism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, naturism (a term coined by Warren) and speciesism are all intertwined.

Ecofeminism is multi-faceted and multi-located, challenging structures rather than individuals. By confronting systems of patriarchy, ecofeminism broadens the scope of the cultural critique and incorporates seemingly disparate but, according to ecofeminism, radically connected elements. Combining feminist and deep ecological perspectives, this project argues that women tend to love land and landscape more than men. Since women have great sense of attachment with the nature while working, collecting fodders and working on the farms and the fields, they are more nature-loving than that of their male counterparts. They are also protective and proactive as far as land, landscape and nature are concerned.

Ecofeminism claims that patriarchal structures justify their dominance through categorical or dualistic hierarchies: heaven/earth, mind/body, male/female, human/animal, spirit/matter, culture/nature, white/ non-white. Established oppressive systems continue to manifest their abusive powers by reinforcing assumptions of these binaries, even making them sacred through religious and scientific constructs.

Ecofeminism posits that as long as any of the dualisms exist as an integral component of societal structuring and justification, they will all continue to serve as starting points to justify patriarchy. Therefore all dualisms and binary oppositional forms must be dismantled otherwise humanity remains “divided against” itself, a phrase that Griffin uses to describe the ideological impact of dualism. As a justice advocate for the entire web of life, ecofeminism resists dividing culture into these

imbedded separate or dualistic arenas. In her introduction to *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, editor Warren asserts:

What makes ecofeminism distinct is its insistence that nonhuman nature and naturism (i.e., the unjustified domination of nature) are feminist issues. Ecofeminist philosophy extends familiar feminist critiques of social isms of domination to nature. (4)

Ecofeminism's constructive worldview replaces hierarchical dualisms with radical diversity and relationship, modeled on both biodiversity and the feminist emphasis on the strength of difference.

Contemporary life is a manifestation of many a crisis. These adverse conditions are the consequences of the destruction of nature from fertility to aridity. This is a global problem. Man's greed to conquer nature has resulted in a deplorable state of humanity. In such a critical situation, when the world is facing depletion, a thorough eco-consciousness is necessary for its survival. Mankind with its unique literary talent bears the great responsibility to influence human behavior so as to enable him to maintain a healthy relationship with his natural environment.

Eco-feminism, which is an amalgamation of ecology and feminism, is a concept which questions the patriarchal oppression and the exploitation of nature. The term was introduced by Françoise d' Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* [Feminism or Death] published in 1974. It is simultaneously an environmental critique of feminism and a feminist critique of environmentalism. As Greta Gaard puts it, the basic premise of eco-feminism is that the "ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, sexuality, physical abilities is the some ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature" ("Living Interconnections" 1).

As far as ecofeminism is concerned patriarchal structures justify their

dominance through dualistic hierarchies such as mind/body, male/female, human/animal, spirit/matter, culture nature and so on. Ecofeminism argues that as long as any of the dualisms exist as an integral component of societal structuring and justification, they will ever continue to serve as starting points to justify patriarchy.

When the consumerist human urge to up root the fundamental basics of life like soil, air and water became so strong and uncontrollable, an ecological rethinking was initiated on a global level and ecological thoughts were widely discussed in the realm of literature unprecedentedly. We are on the verge of oblivion— that neglects those myths, stories, traditions sand folktales imparted to us through generations. Ecofeminism proposes three core premises: The oppression of women and the domination of nature are fundamentally connected. This is because patriarchal dualism places women and the concept 'Nature' in the same classification, which is deemed to be of less worth than the 'Culture/Masculine' classification. Therefore, any process that makes humanity more ecologically aware must also overcome the oppression of women.

The connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature are highlighted in order to understand “why the environment is a feminist issue”, as well as “why feminist issues can be addressed in terms of environmental concerns” (Gaard, 4). However, there are disagreements about the nature of these connections and whether they are “potentially liberating or simply a rationale for the continued subordination of women” (King, 12). Thus, while many feminists agree that ecology is a feminist issue, they differ over the nature of desirability of “ecofeminism”. Hence, just as there are a variety of feminisms, so there are a variety of ecofeminisms, too. Ecofeminism is based on certain fundamental claims that point to the existence of important connections between the oppression of women and

oppression of nature. As Warren asserts “it is essential to understand the nature of these connections to understand the oppression of women and nature, and finally, every feminist theory must include an ecological perspective and vice versa” (17).

The different configurations of ecofeminism reflect the different ways of analyzing the connections between women and nature, as well as the differences in the nature of women’s oppression and solutions to them, the theory of human nature, and the notions of freedom, equality and knowledge on which depend on various feminist theories.

Some feminist scholars like Carolyn Merchant have categorized ecofeminist theory into liberal, radical, or socialist frameworks. However, leading versions of feminism have not, in fact, articulated their position on ecology or on the nature of the connection between the twin oppressions of women and nature. In the 1960s, the feminist movement demanded equity for women in the work place and in education as a method to achieve a fulfilling life. At around the same time, Rachel Carson’s book, *Silent Spring* (1962) focused attention on the effects of pollution on the human and non-human world, making the question of life on earth a public issue.

For the ecofeminists of liberal mode, environmental problems are a result of the rapid exploitation of natural resources accompanied by the lack of regulation of pesticides and other environmental pollutants. This can be overcome by a social production that is environmentally sound. For this, one requires better science, conservation and laws, with equal educational opportunities; women can become scientists, natural resource conservators, lawyers, and so on, like men. Thus, these ecofeminists attempt to change human relations with nature through the passage of new laws and regulations. However, just training women to be lawyers and environmental scientists will not solve the increasing problem of environmental

degradation. Those ecofeminists fail to question the whole development process, which is the primary cause of environmental destruction. As a rejoinder to the view that associated women with nature, both of which were devalued in western culture, ecofeminist with a radical bent as Merchant says, “analyzed environmental problems from within their critique of patriarchy and offered alternatives that could liberate both women and nature” (30).

Many ecofeminists hold the view that the root cause of the massive destruction of the nature is caused by anthropocentric world view (Man at the center while nature at margin). In the same vein, the exploitation of women is caused by male-centric view (Males are at the center while females are at margin). As the plight and predicament of women is equivalent to the devastation and destruction of the land and the nature thus, eco-feministic consciousness is absolutely necessary to bring about socio-ecological harmony. Before interpreting the novel from the lens of ecofeminism, it will be imperative to discuss the undercurrents of the novel.

Gift in Green is a story of Aathi, an island which lies with its natural beauty and primitive purity untouched by the so-called contaminated germs of civilization. Conflict of people, while facing threats of pollution, diseases, displacement and migration and their forms of resistance, more particularly by women inhabitants to the invasion are the reflective side of the novel. The novel darts the pungent criticisms against various kinds of invasions— ecological destructions, environmental degradation, and human right violations. By narrating the unique practices and eco-friendly culture of Aathi, the novel opens up possibilities for life practices based on mutual love and care, respecting Mother Earth— the Nature.

Male characters such as Male characters such as Dinakaran, Kumaran, Markose and Ambu are the ardent supporters of so-called development and

modernized life. As votaries of such things, they sell and lease their lands for the so-called developers, who turn the beauty of land into concrete jungle. The spiritual degeneration of the Aathi starts when young people mostly men are fascinated by the life beyond farming and fishing. Kumaran even distributes dream to the framers regarding to give them good job and concrete buildings but later on he is opposed by them. It is Kumaran like people who turn the beauty of the island into dull and drudgery. They are responsible to change the glorious island into ignominious one.

Quite contrarily, female characters such as Ponmani, Kunjootan, and Shailaja, Karthiyani are always attached with land, farming, fishing and cultivating. They have passionate attachment with the mother earth. They do not do any harm. They even do not imagine overlooking the island. They hate people who come to buy land there. They also do not like people who sell and lease their productive land for money and job. They have special attachment with the water and land of Aathi. They have also protested against the idea of constructing bridge. They also love land, animals and birds of the island. They are in a sense living in a perfect harmony with the land, landscape, nature and the animals living there.

To cut the entire matter short, the mentioned novel not only strives and aspires to show the interventionist attitude of men to the land and nature but also unfolds the intense resistance from the part of female characters against the growing invasion of land and landscape in the name of development and civilization.

Literature Review

In the context of developing/under developed countries, ecofeminism is vital to unveil the exploitations and invasions over our ecology and its resources by the developed countries in the names of globalization, urbanization and development. At the same way, gender issues can be questioned and analyzed by looking into our

relationship towards nature, other living beings and the opposite sex/sexual minorities. Ecofeminism as an ideology and movement finds that the oppression of women is interlinked to the oppression of nature with the same masculine centered attitudes and practices concerning to the patriarchal society. In these backgrounds I have made an attempt to explore the mentioned novel.

Many critics have expressed their views about this novel from the very beginning of its publication. In this connection, R. Krishna Niyathi highlighting its story says, “it narrates the story of Aathi, an island which lies with its natural beauty and primitive purity untouched by the outside life” (106). In the same way, in her article, “The Impetus of Ecofeminist Perspective in Sarah Joseph’s Gift in Green” K. Sangeetha says:

Gift in Green is steeped in eco-feminist concerns. Gift in Green is an unconventional novel about the relationship between a people and the land they inhabit. The structure of the novel is refreshingly unconventional in the canon of Malayalam fiction. The twists and turns of Sarah’s plot - ride through the landscape of Aathi make eminent sense from a holistic perspective. Aathi, in the Gift in Green, is a lagoon. It lies, cool and sense, in the womb of an inviolate purity. Aathi is not a utopia, but it is a land cherished by everyone- a land of beauty, pristine serenity and a rich repertory of natural resources. The inhabitants are innocent to their cores. Agriculture is the traditional occupation there. (3)

Here, the critic is putting emphasis on beauty, pristine serenity and a rich repertory of natural resources. Amidst these things lie the future of both human and non-human creatures

Likewise, focusing on the narrative of novel, Anupama Raju asserts “The narrative makes generous use of folk songs, storytelling and other oral traditions, dipping into the Mahabharata or the Bible from time to time. There are strains of the Sufi tradition as well” (4).

In the same and similar way, highlighting on its story Palki S. Upadhaya says “This is the story of Aathi. It is like a long soulful poem that reflects the beauty and anguish of people. One of the most evocative accounts of a contemporary issue written by award winning Malayali author and social activist, Sarah Joseph” (10).

Similarly, viewing the novel from nature and spiritual point of view, K. Santhosh says, in the novel “The writer links her environmental vision to the spiritual celebration of water in the Bible, Koran, Zen stories and Sufi music” (12).

In the same and similar way, Indian critic, Depaika Pandey glorifies this novel as a “fusion between nature and civilization” (13). In the same and similar way, Shanker Shreevastav by highlighting the glorification of the nature in *Gift in Green* says:

[...] it is not only about the inhabitants of Aathi and their attachment with the island; it is also about the harmony between rural people and nature. The novel brilliantly unpacks the beautiful landscape around the Island, Aathi and people, more particularly women’s attachment with the land and landscape. (13)

Here, Shreevastav is also hinting at the fact that women are more of nature lovers than that of men. Women basically have strong attachment with the nature.

Hence, despite having many criticisms on this novel, none of the critics has given focus on the theme of the resistance to the invasion of land and ecofeminism. My thesis seeks to bridge this critical gap.

In the subsequent chapters, I have gone through in-depth textual analysis along with the discussion of ecofeministic theories to support my argument and in the concluding chapter I have focused on the fact that women are the agents and agencies to preserve and protect the nature.

II. Resistance to the Invasion of Land and Life in *Gift in Green*

Gift in Green narrates the story of Aathi, an island which lies with its natural beauty and primitive purity untouched by the outside life. Kumaran, who has left Aathi for a better life, comes back after years to transform Aathi into a city, for a huge profit. Conflict of people while facing threats of pollution, diseases, displacement, migration and their forms of resistance to the invasion are the central parts of the novel. The novel points fingers at the various kinds of invasions, ecological destructions, aftermath of environmental degradation, and the possibilities of a united fight against human right violations.

By narrating the unique practices and eco-friendly culture of Aathi, the novel opens up possibilities for life practices based on mutual love and care, respecting Mother Earth. The stories such as nights in Aathi, selling and buying land strictly to the inmates of the place, not allowing greedy developers to put their feet in the land, preservation and sustainable use of natural resources etc. are channels of independence and empowerment for the people. When certain people go out of these rules, the whole village had to pay for the huge loss and catastrophe. Even, those who have gone after development and modernity could not find peace or comfort in that. Gitanjali comes to Aathi seeking a cure for her daughter Kayal's mental turbulence and Shailaja leaves her bridegroom and his polluted village to remain attached to the purity of Aathi.

The irony of Shailaja's village getting more polluted later on than that of her husband, points to the critical analysis of environmental destruction and its huge and wide-spread negative impacts on the whole living and non-living system. It emphasizes the need to understand development not only as physical, but also as the well-being and happiness of people, the foresight needed for any activity concerning

environment and the impact of invasion over nature and women. There is a nameless female character in the novel, which is the village herself. The plight of the village is depicted through her worries, anguish and helplessness.

. *Gift in Green* is steeped in eco-feminist concerns. It is an unconventional novel about the relationship between a people and the land they inhabit. The structure of the novel is refreshingly unconventional in the canon of Malayalam fiction. The twists and turns of Sarah's plot - ride through the landscape of Aathi make eminent sense from a holistic perspective. Aathi, in *Gift in Green* is a lagoon. It lies, cool and sense, in the womb of an inviolate purity. Aathi is not a utopia, but it is a land cherished by everyone- a land of beauty, pristine serenity and a rich repertory of natural resources. The inhabitants are innocent to their cores. Agriculture is the traditional occupation there. Aathi, the lagoon and its very existence is so connected with Thampuran and his shrine. In Prologue, "Except for Thampuran's shrine we had no other refuge in Aathidesham" (2). People believe Thampuran guided the backwaters and their whole lives. Thampuran gave up his life for sake of his fellow beings.

In *Gift in Green*, Sarah Joseph depicts a heart rending picture of how the consumerist urge rapes the virginity of the soil; ruthlessly kills the purity and existence of water, the basis of life. The mangrove forest, that the people of Aathi affectionately call Green Bangle, encircles Aathi. It is an enchanting world in itself, its waters cool and serene. The people of Aathi are the children of soil. They have woven their life in the mystery of Green bangle as well as in the magnitude story telling:

Watching the sallow leaves fall noiselessly on the water, then float towards and accumulate at the bank, he would weave the tapestry of

his life – interpretations. He would listen to the blessing of flowers, watch the moss dance, the glow worms emerge from their hide outs, and read the trails of tiny worms. His mind would clear; his lungs fill with a new vitality and his stomach with heavenly happiness. (25)

Gift in Green is abundant with such depictions which manifest connectedness of human beings and nature. Aathi is bestowed with the boon of Thampuran; the prime cause of its prosperity in the form of rice, crab, fish etc. Kumaran is the vicious character in the novel. In the pursuit of material advancements he forsakes Kunjimathu, his beloved. He abandons the water – life and often looks down upon it. Kumaran is the epitome of modern capitalist and consumerist tendencies. He is the representative of new generation which does not pay heed to emotions but neglect one's own values for pomp, luxury and enjoyment. After many years Kumaran returns to Aathi and the place starts plunging into doom for ever. He wants to exploit the fertility of Aathi and thrives ahead. Kumaran turns his pristine motherland into a jungle of concrete profits. The people who have moulded their lives in the virtue of the soil succumb by selling their lands to Kumaran, the corporate landlord. The imminent fall awaiting them has never dawned upon them.

Kumaran turns a lion – portion of Aathi's youth folk his puppets. They hate soil. They forget the virtues of life. They feel so self-secured in the dresses of pimps, spies and party men. A new bridge is erected for luring them in to the fancies of the outer world and dumping the wastes of outer world to Aathi. Science, with its reductionist policy has discriminately exploited nature for its benefit. Deforestation, industrialization and other technological advancements many fetch far-reaching material prosperity, but only at the cost of this vast ecosystem. Vandana Shiva in her book, *Staying Alive; Women, Ecology and Survival in India* states, “reductionist

science is at the root of growing ecological crisis, because it entails a transformation of nature that destroys its organic processes and rhythms and regenerative capacities” (25). Under the pretext of changing Aathi into a land of unsurpassed glory and material prosperity, Kumaran turns Aathi into a sewage dump. Kumaran has laws on his side; he is always accompanied by an elaborate menagerie: policemen, a private army, a retinue of personal staff etc. Dinakaran and Ponmani, who consider Aathi their heart and soul, smell a rat in the strategies of Kumaran:

They sensed that certain schemes and clandestine activities were under way. Strangers came, assessed, assented or dissented, and went away some came and tarried in the tent and roamed the mangrove forests. But why, and what it was all about, remained wicker. An air of uncertainty and anxiety pervaded. (41)

The female characters share an intimate connection with the land and the nature. When nature is at risk they feel their last refuge is gone. Thampuran’s shrine is a thatched one. As far as Kumaran is concerned, a thatched shrine does not suit, he wants to build an edifice of gold for Thampuran, the savior of Aathi. The youth of Aathi is mesmerized, flabbergasted by the proceedings of Kumaran. Dinakaran and Ponmani are against such enterprises. When they start quarrelling over these matters, the inner spirit of women saves the land-they demolish the shrine of Thampuran.

The prophetic perspective of women; their pride and strength; their perseverance- all are brought into light through this action. They do not like people getting divided over this. Though they reel in intense mental anguish, they can’t help destroying the shrine, for the sake of Aathi and the people. They have every right entitled upon them because they had built it. Fertile land and fertile women are equally exploited by the capitalist patriarchy. Exploited women and exploited land

suffer the same impoverishment. On the day of departure, Kumaran, being materialistic to the core, deliberately ruptures the hymen of Kunjimathu and takes her virginity away. Similarly Kayal, a young lovable girl is physically and mentally wounded by the patriarchal society. Geetanjali, her mother fetches Kayal to Aathi, only to get her recovered. Soon she has to face the fall of Aathi. Green bangle is the cynosure of Aathi. The cradles in the mangrove forest are green in colour. Green bangle contains crabs, frogs butterflies, grasshoppers and snakes – all green in colour. As the forest virtually encircles ‘Aathi’, it is affectionately called green bangle by the people. It remains a full-fledged ecosystem until the huge tongues of flame destroy it. Green bangle is a powerful symbol similar to the ‘Amarappandhal’(Bean-stalk) in Aalahayude Penmakal.

The deliberate attempts by the author to depict the intense exploitation of ecosystem become so intense and clear in Aathi. When we go through the novel, we feel conspicuous presence of total greenery, cool water and that pervades our every vein. It is explicit when Noor Muhammad says, “water is not merely a means of washing away dirt. Since the inscrutable mysteries of life are encoded in it, we must deem water equal to God” (257). Sarah Joseph imparts an exquisite significance to green bangle in Aathi. Green bangle is so capable of bringing about variegated colour and richness to the narrative.

Women’s intimate affinity with nature is expressed splendidly by Sarah Joseph. Not a single female character does harm to nature. Kunjimathu, jilted by Kumaran, pursues the water life stead firstly. Kunjimathu, being confronted with many an adversity, never succumbs before anything. She stands for the nature and its well-being. She has a blissful communion with nature. It was the women of Aathi who built Thampuran’s shrine. Every year they come to thatch the roof a new. After

breaking down the walls of the shrine, they feel quite unsecured. An inexplicable fear grabs them. They grope in darkness lamenting on the ill fate of being left without any place to light the lamp at sundown. Women believe in God. They worship nature. Nature is venerated as goddess. Any violence on nature is indeed violence on themselves. Her perseverance and indomitable spirit to save her land are depicted in a heartrending manner in the novel.

The Octopus's hands of Kumaran do not omit even a single thing in Aathi. In the disguise of 'development', he trusts the last nail on Aathi. Kumaran wishes for a wonderful Aathi where no signs of innocence and primordial virtue should be left. He wants to build new hospitals, schools, factories etc. He teaches them to dream a city life with new facilities which may enable them to lead a splendid and carefree life. All the social, economic and cultural invasions ultimately result in changing a place from its natural habitat to an artificial environment.

Another shining character is Shailaja. She is married to Chandramohan of Chakkamkandan. Shailaja can't cope with the filthy nauseating atmosphere of ChakkamKandam. She discovers the unmeaning secret that none would eat a morsel of food or drink a drop of water in that house. The wells, the ponds, the channels, the streams and backwaters, which spread like an ocean upfront of the house, are covered with layer upon layer of shit. Shailaja, being self determined returns to her own home. She never likes to adjust in a maladjusted environment. She is in the forefront when people decide to destroy the bridge built by Kumaran. She tries her every nerve to save nature from getting depleted. Gitanjali and Kayal are visitors to Aathi. Kayal has been inflicted with a strange disease. Gitanjali arrives in Aathi seeking a remedy for Kayal's ailment.

Eco-feminism throws light on how female body is treated as a territory to be

colonized by patriarchy. As Shiva states in Eco-feminism, “Colonization of seed, reflects the patterns of colonization of Women’s bodies. Profits and power become intimately linked to invasion into all biological organisms” (29). A woman’s body is her terrain. It is her environment. The entire right over her body is entitled upon her. A woman is completely objectified and alienated from her body. Thus “Know the water”- was the remedy prescribed by her Guru (61). Aathi, where the air is light, the water pristine and the wind pure will catalyse the recovery. Gitanjali tells a moral story to the people of Aathi. Aathi has its own codes and norms. A land abounds in rituals, traditions and specific customs. The plot is designed with a double focus. There is, on the one hand, the life and struggles of the people of Aathi, specific to the context and quite earthy in its portrayal. The plot pivots the decay, death and phoenix – like regeneration of Aathi. The inexorable progression of the plot in seemingly interrupted by the periodic ceremony of storytelling nights. Diverse stories are narrated. But all of them reflect profoundly on the plight and destiny of the people of Aathi.

The combination of the mundane and the mythological serves two important purposes – The nights of storytelling, and the palliative solemnity this confuses into the narrative, encapsulate the artistic and spiritual aspects of the life of a people. The story tellers offer them lace and rekindle their witting will to live. They often tell stories with a moral message to be inculcated in their lives. The story telling begins with some exclusive rituals. After the introduction is over, the introducer would take off his head gear, emerge from the water, and stick the burning torch on the stem of a plantain tree. Only then the storyteller will begin the story. The story of Hagar and her son reveals how dedicated women are especially in preserving nature. All those stories are abundant in nature images. One story is told by Gitanjali. The mesmerizing

magic by the magician captivates the people in Aathi. The fancies of the new world are open before them. They are coerced into a war against the water and the earth, which sustain their lives. They are torn between two worlds – Kumaran’s world – so luring and Aathi - the primordial land. Aathi, eventually is degraded into a carrier of pollution and putrefaction. The destructive tendencies are strongly opposed by a minority group consisting of Dinakaran, Ponmani, Markose, Shailaja and Kunjimathu. They are characters created out of historical crisis. Porinchu Chakramakkal and Advocate Grace Chaly offer a strong support to this minor group. A girl, who is often referred in the novel, comes to Aathi and takes away all the plastics and other wastes dumped on the land. Sarah Joseph depicts a heart – rending picture of the poisoned Pokkali land. Nineteen children have died of Cholera. Only then the people are ready to undergo a rethinking and realize their faults. Dinakaran is accused by all in the end. He dies for the sake of his fellow people in Aathi. He reminds us the same fate of Thampuran. Sarah Joseph is not against development. She can’t help opening her eyes to the cruelty that underlies every development. She discusses the evil effects of endosulfan, the filthy conditions existing in the premises of Guruvayoor temple and contagious diseases like Cholera.

Almost all the environmental issues are dealt in the novel. Eco-feminist discourse attempts to expose the metaphors which keep women, land, landscape, nature and animals bound together, there by revealing their collective subordination – “The darkness churned like placental fluid. It throbbed with birth pangs. In the twilight hours before the crack of dawn, it would give birth to light” (120).

A culture which extols nature as mother is exposed towards the end of the novel. “To Aathi’s children, even though they walked without a thought on Aathi’s bosom, she was like their own mother who, standing up to her neck in water” (278).

The strong eco-feminist perspective is made explicit through these lines:

No human hand was allowed to touch that water, for the goddess of rice and fish dwelt in it. For the delicate water goddess to survive, the ceiling of the marsh had to remain wet. The water mansion would collapse if the marsh were to go dry. If and when that happened, the goddess would go in search of a wet marsh through the deep, underground water paths: a journey full of hardships. Her anger, more destructive than fire, would rise in proportion to the difficulties she faced. (102)

Here, the author views nature and women as one and the same. The people of Aathi organize themselves and decide to reap harvest. Thus, *Gift in Green* ends with people's attachment to land and a new eco-consciousness.

The novel becomes a canvas on which the author paints the intense agony of a community, the inevitable result of the horrendous consequences of man's cruelty and atrocity to land and nature. The novel being one of the most evocative accounts of a contemporary issue, steals the hearts of the readers. It is a new land mark in environmental studies. It is quite impossible to this novel simply and remains unchanged at the end of it – That transformative capacity itself is the unique quality of *Gift in Green*. Women can bring about a sea change in the society.

They often share an intimate relationship with nature. Be it patriarchy or capitalism, they share the common male dominated practices that are biased and unjust. An ecofeminist perspective will bring about many positive changes as far as nature, women and the deprived are concerned. Such an alternative can certainly make our world a better place to live in and grow towards the development of the nation. Ecofeminists hope for a better future and a new society endowed with the

equality of men and women and will surely make their relationships and interactions more just and fair.

By narrating the unique practices and eco-friendly culture of Aathi, the novel opens up possibilities for life practices based on mutual love and care, respecting Mother Earth. Story nights in Aathi, selling and buying land strictly to the inmates of the place, not allowing greedy developers to put their feet in the land, preservation and sustainable use of natural resources etc are channels of independence and empowerment for the people. When certain people go out of these rules, the whole village had to pay for the huge loss and catastrophe. Even, those who have gone after development and modernity could not find peace or comfort in that.

Gitanjali comes to Aathi seeking a cure for her daughter Kayal's mental turbulence and Shailaja leaves her bridegroom and his polluted village to remain attached to the purity of Aathi. The irony of Shailaja's village getting more polluted later on than that of her husband, points to the critical analysis of environmental destruction and its huge and wide-spread negative impact on the whole living and non-living system. *Gift in Green* is a novel with a warning; it emphasizes the need to understand development not only as physical, but also as the well-being and happiness of people, the foresight needed for any activity concerning environment and the impact of invasion over nature and women. There is a nameless female character in the novel, which is the village herself. The plight of the village is depicted through her worries, anguish and helplessness.

The attachment of human beings with the pristine land and nature is possible when they devote and dedicate themselves in farming, sowing and tilling. The act of farming, sowing and tilling gives the idea that how nature has feminine affection with boundless love and protection. Once a man has good sense of love and attachment

with the land, he has better understanding with the woman and her nurturing qualities. This idea becomes quite clear in the following thought-provoking line “to be a man one must have a body made firm by working hard on the land, tilling and sowing. To know the mind of a woman, he has to know, first, the mind of the land. How Kunjimathu could be entrusted to Kumran who despised the land and was eager to flee from it” (20).

In the sense of truth, unless a man understands the nature he cannot understand the internal dynamics of female. In the above-mentioned quote nature and female are put in equal footing. In other words, nature is given to feminine attribution.

Nature offers everything pure, pristine and perfect for the human beings but them artificially construct social evils such as taboo, untouchability or religious bigotry. The people living in Aathi are in the lap of nature. As the narrative goes:

Water! Wherever they looked, water was all they found. Swimming and wading, they reached this place. The trees here knew no taboo or untouchability. The birds parroted no religious bigotry. The trees, the birds, the fish, the earth, the water- all beckoned them: come, come.

(44)

The ethos of this line simply means nature has been decoyed and polluted by human activities; otherwise the nature itself is something uncontaminated and glorious. However, the so-called culture or civilization is responsible to make the glorious nature as ignominious one.

Ecofeminists are of the opinion that destruction of the nature is masculinist enterprise. They tend to strive and aspire for the destruction of the nature as they have the tendency to destroy and defile the virginity of women more often forcefully. Let us take a look to the following lines which give the sexual imageries. On the night

of his departure, “putting his arms around Kunjimathu and donning a mask of melancholy, Kumran attempted to shed tears of sadness even as he tried hard to hide the excitement frothing within. As a memento of manly remembrance, he ruptured her hymen and took her virginity” (22). The evocation of sexual imageries support us to argue that destruction of nature is equal to the rape of the women, which not only defiles them but also rupture their purity— virginity.

The male inhabitants of Aaathi are striving to destroy the land and nature while female ones are striving and aspiring to conserve and preserve the land nature by worshipping, protecting and working in the land. Water holds an endless fascination for the inhabitants of Aaathi. In its flow, writers have seen the continuum of experience in which events pass from the past to the present and to the future. As the narrative goes in the novel, “life seemed to them like a deep, bottomless lagoon. They had no food, no clothes, no shelter. But one thing they had: water. It lay full and brimming, like the miracle of miracles. Water: the unending, ever-renewing fountain-spring of life” (44).

Here, the writer hints at the fact that water has regenerative qualities as that of the nature. Water itself is a symbol of nature in the novel. The inhabitants of Aaathi do not have worldly luxury but have water, the life blood of the entire creature in the nature. It is the water that revitalizes and renews life forms. However, in the name of civilization and modernity, water resources in Aaathi are all polluted and defiled due to irrational activities of some people who just want to change the purity of Aaathi into concrete jungle. More particularly some male members of Aaathi are of the opinion that they just want to develop the area with modernity but the females are not happy with such tendency of males. Due to the growing pollution of the island “shailaja was horrified. The wells, the ponds, the channels, the streams and backwaters, which

spread like an ocean in front of the house, were all covered with layer upon layer of shit” (80). Pollution not only has negative impacts on human health, it also results harm for the animals. Another cause of pollution in Aathi is due to growing industrialization. In the name of industrialization and civilization, people are felling trees indiscriminately bringing bad consequences.

The nature of life in “Aathi had begun to lose its serenity because of the continual incursions from the external world. Not only human beings but also animals, birds and fish were being affected” (151). Fueled by the desire to become more developed and modernized, people are turning ideal village and island into industrialized sites. Demand for urbanized areas to cater to the increase in population, economic demands, and technological advances. Urbanization causes an increase in the emission of pollutants into the atmosphere, a higher need to clear lands, and a loss of biodiversity in virgin forests on in a massive scale. Narrowing the view point into two particular influential developing nations, such as India and Nepal focusing on how they have been affected, we have been able to examine, in better and more detailed ways, how urbanization has been bringing environmental problem of various sorts. In Aathi also some so-called developers are turning the cultivating land into farms which becomes clear in the following lines:

Many instead of cultivating their paddy fields were forced to lease them out to outsiders who turned them into prawn farms. They subsisted on the meager income from the lease fees, and remained helpless witnesses to the atrocities perpetrated on their fields by those who made big investments on the prawn farms and sought to rake in astronomical profits by hook or by crook. (151)

The above-mentioned lines implicitly assert the fact that how so- called land mafias

are ruining the cultivating land into concrete jungle thereby killing the productivity of the earth. The gathering of land mafias in Aathi has negative impacts on the overall locations and situations. As the narrative goes:

A hoard of strangers, and the inscrutabilities that surrounded their coming and going; the hustle and bustle of new devotees who thronged to the temple in Aathi. Crowds could be seen everywhere: at the ferry bank, in the boats, near the remains of Thampuran's shrine, in the mangrove forests— all of them brashly indifferent to the spirit of Aathi. They broke boisterously into the green bangle, terrifying the birds and outraging the sanctity of their meditative tranquility. The birds in their nests became restless, and those keeping vigil over their little ones cart wheeled over the nests, screaming in terror. The persistent cries and desperate wing-beats disturbed the serenity of the forest. (152)

Here, the hoard of strangers hints at the land mafias, who simply want to change the fertile land into nothingness to quench their thirst for wealth and property. In order to fulfill their vested interest how they are performing eco-inimical activities. The sound coming from the construction sites of the bridge has really killed the peaceful and serene environment of Aathi. Due to “the intrusion of the bridge workers and the cacophony of their machines that ruined the peace” (152).

Kumran, who represents land mafia, wants to erect bridge in the village. He simply wants to make bridge “to level and landfill the property of Ganesha Subramaniyam. The bridge was being built at the location most convenient for that purpose. It had nothing to do with reducing the hardship of the people of Aathi” (152). Here, it becomes clear that the construction of bridge in the fertile land has

nothing to do with the benefit of Islanders but it is the for the benefit of the invaders of land just for money.

In fact, that bridge would do nothing for the welfare of the villagers. It would simply bring profitable gain for handful of people like Kumaran, who want to destroy the village full of natural and environmental beauties. However, some female characters such as Ponmani, Kunjootan, and Shailaja oppose the idea of constructing the bridge. “We must not allow the bridge to be complete,’ Ponmani declared. ‘Resist it by all means and, if need be, bring it down’ ” (153). Ponmani, Kunjootan, Ramesh and Shailaja “vowed to blast the bridge at any cost. Dinakaran and Markose knew nothing about this” (154). Here, by invoking god, the female characters want to destroy the bridge as it is against the fertile and fruitful land.

Male characters such as Dinakaran, Kumaran, Ambu and Prakashan are in support of so-called development. They are devoted and dedicated to change the land and the natural environment of Aathi by developing it with modern technologies. Even Kumaran has a special project called, ‘Billionaire to the Rescue of the City!’ Regarding this project and its possible impacts on the environment of Aathi, a journalist asks him few questions as:

Journalist: What do you propose to do with all this dangerous waste?

Kumaran: (Smiles) I am an entrepreneur. I see only entrepreneurial prospects everywhere and in everything.

Journalist: Sir, wouldn’t that harm the environment and cause serious health problems for the people of Aathi?

Kumaran: (Smiles again) All your environmental problems, I wish to assure you, shall be buried under the earth. It is an insignificant issue; you can safely leave it to me. It is high time journalists became a little

progressive. Why can't you think of the enormous benefits this project is going to bring to the city and to Aathi alike?

Journalist: Kumaran sir, have you obtained permission from the Pollution Control Board?

Kumaran: (Smiling) Kumaran does nothing without completing due procedures and formalities. That has never been an issue. Nor is it likely to be, in the present instance. (264)

On the basis of the answer of Kumaran, it becomes quite clear that he has nothing to do with the benefit of the inhabitants of Aathi from his project.

He simply wants to earn big amount of money. Even he becomes indifferent to the possible negative impacts of his project for the ecology of the island. As the narrative goes:

With the advent of hospitals, the value of the properties of the other-siders skyrocketed. Farmers, frustrated that cultivating the land was no longer profitable or even sustainable, began to sell their land. Those who bought the land were not farmers. If paddy fields were left fallow for three years running, you could get them to be declared as non- agricultural land. (266)

Due to the encroachment of the nature of Aathi by some people within and out of Aathi, finally the system of the village collapses. The real attachment of people with the pure nature becomes dismantled. Some people even after leaving the village come back to Aathi. As in the case of the novel, Gitanjali comes to Aathi seeking a cure for her daughter Kayal's mental turbulence. Similarly, Shailaja leaves her bridegroom and his polluted village to remain attached to the purity of Aathi.

Before the intervention of the land mafias in Aathi, the place was so wonderful and beautiful. People were in a perfect harmony with the nature. Mostly women used

to make friendship with nature. They used to conserve and preserve the nature as they knew the value of nature not only for human beings but for the entire creatures, which share the same planet. But due to the aspiration of earning pelf, power and prosperity, some men let the outsiders come to the village sell their land for so-called development only leading the charming village into barren and charmless sites in the absence of natural beauties. As the narrative goes:

Farmers used to own the water body in measures of four or five acres.

The people of Aathi called them the 'other-siders'. For generations, the people of Aathi, especially the women, had been planting paddy seedlings, and reaping and thrashing the harvests. Even as the harvest seasons finished, they would begin their work in the fish farms.

Shailaja, too, had worked in those paddy fields. By the time she was in standard five, she could plant seedlings. (265)

Women are by nature loving and caring. Since they are compassionate, devotional and nurturing, they are more protective rather than destructive. Men mostly are destructive in nature. They are less compassionate, loving and caring. They simply want to be active, assertive and adventurous in nature. They, therefore, are conquering rather than conserving unlike men.

Gift in Green thus tells a wonderful story of Aathi, an island which lies amidst natural beauty uncontaminated by the rays of civilization the novel also highlights on the conflict of people, while facing threats of pollution, diseases, displacement and migration and their forms of resistance to the invasion of the land full of natural beauties. The novel also raises fingers at the various kinds of invasions, ecological destructions, aftermath of environmental degradation, and the possibilities of a united fight against human right violations. By putting the highest premium on the unique

and wonderful practices and eco-friendly culture of Aathi, the novel opens up avenues for life practices based on mutual love and care, respecting Mother Earth (Nature). The act of selling and buying land strictly to the inmates of the place, not allowing greedy developers to put their feet in the land, preservation and sustainable use of natural resources etc. are channels of independence and empowerment for the people. When certain people deviate from the rules, the whole village had to face great trial, trouble and tribulation. Even, those who have gone after development and modernity could not find mental peace or comfort in that. Finally they have to come under the shelter of Aathi.

Gift in Green is a novel with a great insight. Modern people are hankering after material gain by destroying the nature which is absolutely wrong. The nature must be conserved and preserved for the betterment of entire civilization. The relationship between nature and human beings is just like the relationship between the nail and flesh. One cannot exist without another.

Normally, people take nature for granted and do not realize that they cannot just reap from it. The Earth needs to be nourished in return, so it can catch up with the people's requirements. Everyone should assist in preserving nature because someday it may start to vanish. Eventually, the Earth will cease to exist if people do not start caring for the planet.

Without plants and land, the animal and human population dwindles down to almost nothing. The remaining individuals look depressed or insane and have to scavenge for food. Is this what the world will come to? Simple changes can save it from the doomed fate that lies ahead. There is still time to do what is necessary, so enough with wasting the glorious life in the world, and start doing what is right now. Everyone can help save the nature around us by acting out in many different ways.

Recycling, planting, using eco-friendly products, being more conservative with products and bringing awareness to this horrid matter are just a few simple acts that can cure the Earth. Applying the necessary changes will allow everyone to witness the beauty in Mother Nature. Clean air and fresh water will be major effects that everyone will love. Plants will blossom and grow into beautiful sights to behold. People will become happier with the spectacular views surrounding them. Food and other resources will be plentiful as long as it is replaced. All this sounds better than an ashy gray world. The changes made will help preserve and expand nature. Nature has always been important to everyone and everything in the world. It provides nourishment and beauty for life. Simple changes can be made to better Mother Earth, so start taking responsibility to make a difference or else it may descend into nothing.

In the novel, male characters such as Dinakaran, Kumaran, Markose and Ambu involve in the so-called developmental works through constructions and the encroachment of the resources of the island turning its agricultural lands into concrete jungles. Female characters such as Ponmani, Kunjootan, and Shailaja, Karthiyani however, love farming, fishing and cultivating. They have passionate attachment with the mother earth. They do not do any harm to the land of Aathi. They never imagine leaving the island. They hate people who come to buy land there. They also do not like people who sell and lease their productive land for money and job. They have special attachment with the water and land of Aathi. They have also protested against the idea of constructing bridge and buildings on the productive land of Aathi. They also love animals and birds of the island. They are in a sense living in a perfect harmony with the nature and its beauty. By showing so, the writer may be pungently criticizing the growing trend of invading the productive land of the world in the name of development.

Hence, Conservation of land and nature is the main source that we need to focus on more to preserve our environment. Conservation includes developing and utilizing natural sources such as land, water, soils, rivers, wildlife, minerals and other natural resources. Both economic and social issues contribute to the welfare of our environment negatively and positively. Because of our selfish behaviors, our actions have driven out wildlife animals from their natural habitat in order to satisfy our needs. Hence, human beings should perform eco-friendly activities holding biocentric world view at the cost of anthropocentric world view. In the sense of truth, *Gift in Green* is hinting at this fact so as to enjoy peaceful and comfortable life in this planet.

III. Women as Agent for Nature Preservation

Gift in Green presents the panic and pain resulting from the disruption of the relationship between man and environment and also provides the hope of redemption by reclaiming a holistic and integral approach and effort. Employing water as the central metaphor, she foretells the catastrophe immanent on humanity if man does not stop his atrocities to nature and environment. She does this through the delineation of certain contemporary and local issue that attains a global and local identity. The issues related to development, urbanization, tourism, deforestation, uprooting, waste management, water contamination, environmental pollution, etc. which appear as the immediate and intimate problems of the people of an idyllic village called Aathi, really upset the reader as he stands in confrontation of these issues in his day to day life and environment. At the same time, the novel forces us to a serious contemplation of these issues globally. The scarcity of water is taken up as a serious theme which is contemplated in the context of the impending threat of invasions for the sake of water. The third world and fourth world countries live under menace of their water resources sought after by the global powers.

The novel, thus in the backdrop of pertinent issues and realities makes a plea for saving mother earth from destruction, contamination and exploitation. Some people argue it is nonsensical only to think about preserving the nature and aesthetic beauty of green belts diverting the attention from the problems of the poor and that environment has nothing to do with trying to give a better deal to the large and ever-growing population responsible for environmental crisis, maintaining that there is too little of everything except people. These views illustrate how little we know of ecosystem and ecobalance. Environmental concerns are not only the business of rich countries, which cause most of the pollution. It is a business of concerned members

of world. Environment and development are not necessarily incompatible. The mistake made by developed countries can be avoided if proper developmental strategies are worked out. Further, there is no division such as the environment of developed countries and that of developing countries. Degradation of the environment is going to affect each of us irrespective of the country, region or area.

Gift in Green is a tantalizingly unconventional narrative that explores, on multiple levels, the pain and poetry that eventuate from the disruption of the intimate relationship between a people and their life-world, using water (the 'water-life' of the people of Aathi) as the overarching metaphor that mirrors the degradation of the society. Between the polarities of attachment and abandonment, darkness and light, predatory progress and the sheer will to survive, unfolds the saga of a people confronted by the progress driven by Kumaran, who seeks to abandon water-life, threatening its very existence. But water-life is the hope of a new beginning.

It is a story of Aathi, an island which lies with its natural beauty and primitive purity untouched by the so-called contaminated germs of civilization. Conflict of people, while facing threats of pollution, diseases, displacement and migration and their forms of resistance, more particularly by women inhabitants to the invasion are the reflective side of the novel. The novel darts the pungent criticisms against various kinds of invasions— ecological destructions, environmental degradation, and human right violations. By narrating the unique practices and eco-friendly culture of Aathi, the novel opens up possibilities for life practices based on mutual love and care, respecting Mother Earth— the Nature.

Male characters such as Male characters such as Dinakaran, Kumaran, Markose and Ambu are the ardent supporters of so-called development and modernized life. As votaries of such things, they sell and lease their lands for the so-

called developers, who turn the beauty of land into concrete jungle. The spiritual degeneration of the Aathi starts when young people mostly males are fascinated by the life beyond farming and fishing. Kumaran even distributes dream to the framers regarding to give them good job and concrete buildings but later on he is opposed by them. It is Kumaran like people who turn the beauty of the island into dull and drudgery. They are responsible to change the glorious island into ignominious one.

Quite contrarily, female characters such as Ponmani, Kunjootan, and Shailaja, Karthiyani are always attached with farming, fishing and cultivating. They have passionate attachment with the mother earth. They do not do any harm. They even do not imagine leaving the island. They hate people who come to buy land there. They also do not like people who sell and lease their productive land for money and job. They have special attachment with the water and land of Aathi. They have also protested against the idea of constructing bridge. They also love animals and birds of the island. They are in a sense living in a perfect harmony with nature and animals living there.

However, such life is ruptured by the greediness of men in the island. They just do not like the productive land and water life. They simply hate farming and fishing. In the name of leading sophisticated and modernized life, they become ready to sell their productive land and lease their land for land mafias. They simply venture to mar the real melody of island in the name of earning money. They become more materialistic. Finally due to the intense sense of materialism, the real charm of the island vanishes.

Due to the encroachment of the nature of Aathi by some people within and out of Aathi, finally the system of the village collapses. The real attachment of people with the pure nature becomes dismantled. Some people even after leaving the village

come back to Aathi. As in the case of the novel, Gitanjali comes to Aathi seeking a cure for her daughter Kayal's mental turbulence. Similarly, Shailaja leaves her bridegroom and his polluted village to remain attached to the purity of Aathi.

The novel is story of Aathi, an island which lies with its natural beauty and primitive purity untouched by the outside life. Kumaran, who has left Aathi for a better life, comes back after years to transform Aathi into a city, for a huge profit. Conflict of people, while facing threats of pollution, diseases, displacement and migration and their forms of resistance to the invasion are the central parts of the novel. The novel points fingers at the various kinds of invasions, ecological destructions, aftermath of environmental degradation, and the possibilities of a united fight against human right violations. By narrating the unique practices and eco-friendly culture of Aathi, the novel opens up possibilities for life practices based on mutual love and care, respecting Mother Earth. Story nights in Aathi, selling and buying land strictly to the inmates of the place, not all owing greedy developers to put their feet in the land, preservation and sustainable use of natural resources etc. are channels of independence and empowerment for the people.

When certain people go out of these rules, the whole village had to pay for the huge loss and catastrophe. Even, those who have gone after development and modernity could not find peace or comfort in that. Gitanjali comes to Aathi seeking a cure for her daughter Kayal's mental turbulence and Shailaja leaves her bridegroom and his polluted village to remain attached to the purity of Aathi. The irony of Shailaja's village getting more polluted later on than that of her husband, points to the critical analysis of environmental destruction and its huge and wide-spread negative impact on the whole living and non-living system. Gift in Green is a novel with a warning; it emphasizes the need to understand development not only as physical, but

also as the well-being and happiness of people, the foresight needed for any activity concerning environment and the impact of invasion over nature and women. There is a nameless female character in the novel, which is the village herself. The plight of the village is depicted through her worries, anguish and helplessness.

The novel is abundant with such depictions which manifest connectedness of human beings and nature. Aathi is bestowed with the boon of Thampuran; the prime cause of its prosperity in the form of rice, crab, fish etc. Kumaran is the vicious character in the novel. In the pursuit of material advancements he forsakes Kunjimathu, his beloved. He abandons the water – life and often looks down upon it. Kumaran is the epitome of modern capitalist and consumerist tendencies. He is the representative of new generation which does not pay heed to emotions but neglect one's own values for pomp, luxury and enjoyment. After many years Kumaran returns to Aathi and the place starts plunging into doom for ever.

He wants to exploit the fertility of Aathi and thrives ahead. Kumaran turns his pristine motherland into a jungle of concrete profits. The people who have molded their lives in the virtue of the soil succumb by selling their lands to Kumaran, the corporate landlord. The imminent fall awaiting them has never dawned upon them. Kumaran turns a lion – portion of Aathi's youth folk his puppets. They hate soil. They forget the virtues of life. They feel so self-secured in the dresses of pimps, spies and party men. A new bridge is erected for luring them in to the fancies of the outer world and dumping the wastes of outer world to Aathi.

Whatever may it be, the novel consists of female characters, who are striving and aspiring to keep the ideal of Aathi intact by performing their eco-friendly activities. While their male counterparts simply perform the so-called eco-inimical activities, that finally bring destruction and devastation in the island. Thus, it is

concluded that Women are seen as being domestic, pious, moral, pure, gentle, kind, graceful, simple and beautiful have soft corner for the land and the nature while men are seen as hard-working, industrial, rational, assertive, and independent and proud; none of which is easily connected with nature. Therefore nature is seen as the embodiment of all the characteristics that women possess.

Connections between environment and gender can be made by looking at the gender division of labor and environmental roles rather than an inherent connection with nature. The gender division of labor requires a more nurturing and caring role for women, therefore that caring nature places women closer with the environment. Since all the women characters overwhelmingly love the land and landscape of Aathi, they have utterly gone against the male enterprises of invading the productive land and landscape to make money and fortune. In this sense, women are eco-friendly while men are eco-inimical in the novel.

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