



ECOCRITICAL AND POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES OF INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE LIVING MOUNTAIN*

Mrs. Renuka S. Meesi¹, Prof. Ashok M. Hulibandi²

¹Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Studies in English, Karnatak University, Dharwad

²Professor & Research Guide, Dept. of Studies in English, Karnatak University, Dharwad

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra27545>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra27545

ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the theme of Eco critical and postcolonial perspective of Indigenous Resistance, Amitav Ghosh is a prominent Indian author whose works highlight the themes of nature and environmental awareness. He portrays how human actions lead to the destruction of nature and suggests that, in return, nature responds with consequences to restore balance. The novel presents various characters whose roles carry deep symbolic meaning. The narrator Mansi, represents a childlike voice filled with wonder, memory, and the potential for rediscovery. She symbolizes the next generation, which may still reconnect with lost wisdom. Mahaparbat, the living mountain, is portrayed as sacred, representing nature as a living, breathing entity resilient yet vulnerable. The indigenous people, known as the Varvori (valley dwellers) serve as guardians of ancestral knowledge and ecological balance. Although they begin as protector of nature, and gradually they are corrupted by external influences. In contrast, the Anthropoi and the Krani functions as invaders, and enforcers, respectively. Together they symbolize industrial and colonial forces that seek to dominate nature while dismissing spiritual and ecological traditions. These people are systematic control over both natural and human worlds. Finally the Adepts act as keepers of forgotten knowledge, representing spiritual sages who preserve the memory of harmony and may hold the key to restoring balance.

KEY WORDS: Exploiters, Ecological, Invaders, Breathing, Valley

INTRODUCTION

The present paper explores the Wrath of nature as a consequence of human greed. It suggests that nature does not harm to human being unless it is first harmed by human actions. Many of the problem we are facing today related to environment, they are the result of our own mistakes and irresponsible behaviour. A recent example is the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the entire world stood still in the face of nature's power. Interestingly, during this period, the river Ganga showed noticeable signs of self rejuvenation. Despite significant government efforts and expenditure to clean the river, it was only when the human activity was drastically reduced that the river appeared truly restored. This serves as a powerful example of how human activities contribute to environmental degradation.

The living mountain is a ecological and philosophical fable, it describes the tale as a dream or vision by a young girl named Manasi. Through this dream, Amitav Ghosh delivers the powerful critique of environmental destruction, colonization, and the silencing of indigenous wisdom. The story revolves around Mahaparbat, a living mountain revered by the indigenous people known as the Varvorai. For them, nature is sacred and must be respected, as it embodies ancestral wisdom passed down through generations. However, this deep spiritual bond is threatened by the arrival of the foreign invaders called the Anthropoi. Their presence reflects colonial forces that invade new lands and exploit valuable resources, similar to the historical colonization of India.

The indigenous people do not view that mountain as a mere object, instead of that they see it as living being filled with power, wisdom, and spirit. According to their belief, Mahaparbat sustains life by providing water from its melting snow, fertile soil, medicinal herbs, and spiritual nourishment. Even today, such reverence for nature can be observed among tribal and rural communities. In contrast, modern society often fails to respect nature, and instead of that they exploits it for their profit. This contrasts reveals how deeply the impact of colonial and industrial ways of thinking are ingrained in our mindset mindsets. In the novel, the ancestors of the Varvorai laid down a sacred commandment that, they may sing for the mountain, they may dance for it, and they may tell stories about it, but they must never set foot on it. This law was not rooted in superstition, rather it emerged from generations of lived experience and a deep understanding of nature's delicate balance. The Varvorai faithfully followed this teaching, expressing their gratitude and reverence through songs, myths, and rituals. Their relationship with the mountain was both sacred and reciprocal they offered love and respect, and in return, the mountain sustained life.

It shows that we must follow the customs and commands set by our ancestors. These rules were not made randomly, but were shaped by their knowledge and life experiences. They understood nature, society, and the consequences of actions better through years of observation. Such traditions help to maintain balance, discipline, and harmony in life. By respecting



these teachings, we also show gratitude towards their wisdom and ensure that valuable knowledge is passed on to future generations.

While everything is going smoothly, the sudden harmonious balance is soon disrupted by the arrival of a new group called Anthropoi. These people are from outsiders driven by science, ambition, and the urge to conquer and develop. They come with advanced equipment, maps, laboratories, and an insatiable curiosity. They do not see Mahaparbat as a living being, but as a pile of resources to be exploited, studied, and subdued. But when the indigenous people refuse their entry, the stranger smiled and said "Since I can't enter your valley, I must learn about it from you. Tell me about your valley and about all the other valuable trade goods that it produces" (Ghosh, *Living Mountain* 11). The Anthropoi called the indigenous people stories as a childish myths and accuse them of wasting resources by not using the mountain. The Anthropoi believed that anything that exists in nature must be harnessed, mined, extracted, or monetized.

Through this, colonial powers often tried to reshape people's thinking in the name of development. As a result, many local communities were made to feel inferior or uncivilized, and some began to abandon their own traditions and imitate foreign ways without questioning them. This led to a loss of cultural identity, language, and indigenous knowledge systems that had been preserved for generations. It also created a sense of dependency, where local people started valuing external ideas more than their own. Over time, this weakened their confidence and disconnected them from their roots, even though their traditional practices were often sustainable and deeply connected to nature and community life. They begin to join hands with the Anthropoi, and forgetting their ancestor's teaching and sacred songs.

The exploitation begins, the Anthropoi build road to reach mahaparbat by ignoring every warning. They begin drilling, excavating, and constructing structures on its body. Their activity is aggressive and disrespectful, because they put their leg on that mountain, it was against the law of ancestors, but these people claim their actions for the sake of progress, knowledge, and economic development. As the exploitation intensifies, the Mahaparbat begins to respond by Natural disasters like, Avalanches, landslides, floods, and the earthquakes. But after this natural disasters the Anthropoi blames this disasters are natural causes. They denying that their own actions are not responsible and they increase their activity to extract every bit of profit from the mountain.

To suppress resistance, the Anthropoi deploy their military force, the Kraani, a harsh and disciplined army that appears quiet and controlled among the valley dwellers. The Kraani symbolize the use of force and intimidation to maintain control and protect economic interests, even at the cost of human lives and the natural environment. Their silent presence creates fear and discourages opposition, making it difficult for local people to raise their voices. This also affects how power can be misused to silent communities, destroy their sense of security, and enforce authority without consent, ultimately deepening injustice and inequality.

After forgetting adepts and vanishing of wisdom the sacred balance is lost, and there is no one left who remembers old ways. The songs and stories have vanished, and the mountain - once vibrant and generous has become silent and broken. The Savants said to indigenous people that, "there was some wisdom in your beliefs after all. Can you please tell us your old stories, sing us your old songs, show us your dances- so that we can determine whether your mountain really is alive or not?" (Ghosh *Living Mountain*. 34). It shows that many still do not believe the mountain is a living entity, yet a new sense of hope begins to emerge. There are whispers that somewhere in the valley, a few people known as the Adepts still survive. These individuals often elders, mystics, or spiritual seers, continue to preserve the deep ancient knowledge of living in harmony with nature. They represent a connection to forgotten wisdom and offer the possibility of restoring balance between humans and the natural world. If they live in harmony with nature, they drawn upon ancient traditions, stories, and songs that have been passed down through generations. These practices reflect a deep respect for the natural world and guide a balanced way of life.

The story ends with Maansi waking up from her dream mirrors the real world- where mountains are being blasted, rivers are being dammed, forests are being cleared, and traditional knowledge is being erased.

Similar postcolonial dimensions are evident in Amitav Ghosh's *Nutmeg's Curse*, which provides a broader historical framework for understanding how colonial powers transformed ecology into sites of extraction and domination. When the Dutch entered the Banda Islands during the 16th and 17th centuries, they encountered the nutmeg fruit and quickly recognised both its medicinal value and immense profitability. At a time when plague outbreaks were widespread, they believed nutmeg was curative properties, which significantly increased its demand and economic worth. In fact a handful of nutmeg was considered so valuable that, it could be exchanged for substantial wealth, such as ships or large estates.

Driven by this profit motive, the Dutch forced the indigenous people of the Banda islands to cultivate nutmeg on a large scale. Although the local population provided the labour, they were paid meagre wages, this creates severe economic inequality. Over time, the Banda people were effectively reduced to slave on their own land. The value of these fragrant seeds turned overlooked islands into contested centers of colonial power, the Dutch established their military control, eliminated competition, and even displaced or exterminated sections of the native population. The population of the Banda Islands, once around 15000, was drastically reduced to nearly 1,000 as a result of the oppressive colonial system and forced labour. "where the poor and the non - White will bear the brunt of the planetary crisis. This is in fact nothing other than a new iteration of the kind of "conflict through inaction" that was so marked a feature of the biopolitical wars of colonization". (Ghosh *Nutmeg's Curse* .171) From an ecocritical perspective, the text further illustrates how indigenous knowledge systems, rooted in an intimate understanding of the land and its limits, were systematically undermined by colonial forces. These knowledge systems, which once ensured ecological balance and sustainability, were



dismissed as primitive and replaced with exploitative practices aimed solely at maximizing profit. As a result, nature was no longer regarded as a living entity but was reduced to a commodity to be extracted and controlled. This shift not only disrupted the harmony between humans and the environment but also initiated long term ecological degradation. Ultimately, Ghosh's work reveals that the roots of contemporary environmental crises lie in these historical processes of colonial exploitation, were human need, driven by unchecked greed, led to the systematic destruction of both culture and nature.

Amitav Ghosh argues that this history embodies a colonial mindset that reduces the earth to an instrument of extraction. The curse was not just on Banda Island, but it was a curse on our relationship with the planet, it symbolizes the lasting impact of colonial attitudes that reduced the earth to a mere resource for exploitation, serving the balance between human and nature. This curse continues to persist in the form of environmental degradation, such as climate crises. Both *The Nutmeg's Curse* and *The Living Mountain* ultimately remind us that unless this exploitative mindset is challenged and transformed, the consequences will extend far beyond specific regions, affecting the entire planet and future generations.

CONCLUSION

It is not merely a fantasy or a myth, it serves as an allegory of our time and reality. Such a novel teaches us the importance of protecting the environment and respecting nature. It also highlights how human greed, exploitation, and unchecked development can disturb the balance of nature. The novel encourages us to value indigenous knowledge, live sustainably, and take responsibility for our actions. When natural disasters occur, humans often become helpless and lose control, reminding us of the consequences of neglecting our relationship with the natural world. Ultimately, it calls for awareness, respect, and a collective effort to preserve the environment for future generations.

WORKS CITED

1. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Living Mountain*. University of Chicago 2022
2. --- *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a planet in crisis*. University of Chicago press, 2021
3. Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011