

Eco-Cosmopolitanism and Resistance in Indian Regional Fiction: A Comparative Eco-Critical Analysis of Malayalam, Telugu, Bengali, and Hindi Climate Narratives

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ABSTRACT

In the era of the Anthropocene, the environmental crisis is not merely a global abstraction but a lived, local experience. Climate change, forest loss, water scarcity, agrarian distress, mining and displacement fall most heavily on marginalised communities whose voices remain underrepresented in dominant environmental discourse (Ghosh, 2016; Nayar, 2019, pp. 7–9). This paper examines the relationship between eco-cosmopolitanism, understood as a planetary environmental consciousness, and local ecological resistance in selected regional novels from Malayalam, Telugu, Bengali, and Hindi. The texts studied are Sarah Joseph's *Aathi* and Ambikasutan Mangad's *Enmakaje* (Malayalam), Vasireddy Seethadevi's *Matti Manishi* and Kesava Reddy's *Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu* (Telugu), Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and Mahasweta Devi's *Aranyer Adhikar* (Bengali), and Phanishwar Nath Renu's *Parti Parikatha* and Ranendra's *Global Gaon Ke Devta* (Hindi). Using comparative textual analysis, the study draws on Ursula K. Heise's theorisation of eco-cosmopolitanism and the environmental imagination, the concept of slow violence as developed within postcolonial ecocriticism, and Global South critiques of development associated with Vandana Shiva and Ramachandra Guha. The paper argues that these regional narratives do not simply document local destruction. They connect tribal and rural displacement, wetland loss, pesticide poisoning, mining and agrarian crisis to global processes of capital and climate. They also foreground indigenous knowledge and community resistance. Indian regional fiction thus expands eco-cosmopolitan discourse by grounding the planetary in the experiences of the Global South.

Keywords: Eco-Cosmopolitanism, Eco-Resistance, Indian Regional Fiction, Anthropocene, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Climate Fiction, Indigenous Ecologies.

INTRODUCTION

In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh (2016, p. 9) asks why serious literary fiction has largely failed to confront climate change, the defining crisis of our time. He suggests that the modern novel, with its preference for the probable and the everyday, struggles to represent events that are vast in scale, slow in tempo, and collective in consequence. Ghosh's provocation has shaped the rapid growth of climate fiction (cli-fi) criticism over the past decade. Scholars have mapped how novels in English, particularly from Britain and North America, imagine rising seas, extreme weather, and planetary collapse (Trexler, 2015, pp. 1–28; Johns-Putra, 2019, pp. 1–12). Yet much of this criticism takes the Euro-American novel as its default archive. It risks reproducing what Ghosh himself identifies as a blind spot: the assumption that climate is a future catastrophe, rather than a present reality already experienced across the Global South. The environmental crisis is not one that is hypothetical or off in the future in India. Cyclones lash on the Sundarbans; floods engulf Kerala and Bihar; aquifers dry up in the Deccan; Adivasis forced out of their homes by mining; bodies and soils contaminated by pesticide use for generations. These are not one-off incidents. They are the local voice of the planetary processes that Dipesh Chakrabarty (2014, p. 1; 2021, p. 167) calls the convergence of the history of capital with the deep history of the earth system. The Anthropocene for people inhabiting these environments is not a period of history but a day to day struggle for water, land, forest and life. These negotiations have been recorded in Indian regional literatures (bhasha literatures) for a long time. Before “climate fiction” became a market, Malayalam, Telugu, Bengali and Hindi novelists had been telling stories of changing river courses, deforestation, dispossession of farmers from land, and the fight of tribal communities against encroachments by the state and corporations. These stories tend to be place-sensitive, dialect-sensitive, and/or oral tradition-sensitive. They always see their ecological vision in the context of caste, class, livelihood and justice. These vernacular traditions, which have their own ways of understanding the relationship between human and more-than-human worlds, need to be considered seriously by (Moore, 2015, p. 17; Chakrabarty, 2021, p. 167)

This paper engages these regional narratives in conversation with the idea of eco-cosmopolitanism. Ursula K. Heise has been proposing a shift away from the narrowest form of environmental thinking that focuses on the local place towards an understanding of the ways in which places are connected to global ecological, economic and cultural networks (Heise, 2016, pp. 1–18; Heise et al., 2017). In this sense, Eco-cosmopolitanism is the ability to think of oneself as a citizen of a planetary community – not only human, but also nonhuman. Heise's contribution was partly a criticism of the idealizing of "localism" in American environmentalism, which idealized the rootedness in locality, while in turn and at the same time overlooking the global flows that shape every locality. The idea is good, but it's not neutral. Some postcolonial critics have noted that the global is frequently envisioned through the perspective of the wealthy northern countries, and that the Global South is represented primarily as a place of disaster, wilderness or victimisation (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, pp. 1–26; DeLoughrey, 2019, pp. 1–32). Local environmental conflicts in the South are seldom local. Communities opposing dams, mines, or plantations are already familiar with their situation of being dependent on markets far away, international capital, and state development plans. They demonstrate localism, which is actually a kind of global awareness, that is produced by experiences of extraction (Caminero-Santangelo, 2014, pp. 1–6; Wenzel, 2020, pp. 1–46). The paper also fills a research gap. When it comes to Indian literature and ecocritical scholarship, the bulk of the emphasis has been on English-language literature, particularly the work of Ghosh, Arundhati Roy and Indra Sinha. There is very little representation of regional literatures in the translated form apart from a few texts, mainly the fiction of Mahasweta Devi. Comparative studies in several Indian languages are limited, partly due to translation difficulties and the disciplinary specialisation. Consequently, the abundance of ecological imaginations in bhasha fiction has not been completely taken up by the global climate fiction and environmental humanities discourses (Nayar, 2019, pp. 7–9; Rangarajan, 2018). In response to this, the paper makes an interlingual comparison of eight novels in four languages. It's from Malayalam, too, and it features Aathi (2011), about the threatened world of wetlands on a Kerala island, and Enmakaje (2009), on endosulfan poisoning in Kasaragod. It is translated from Telugu as Vasireddy Seethadevi's Matti Manishi and Atadu Adavini Kesava Reddy's Jayinchadu (1984). Its Bengali connections have been reflected in the works of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) in English, and Mahasweta Devi's *Aranyer Adhikar* (1977). From Hindi it translates into Phanishwar Nath Renu's *Parti Parikatha* (1957), and Ranendra's *Global Gaon Ke Devta* (2009). The analysis has been structured in three themes: Water and coastal ecology, Land, agriculture, industrial onslaught and indigenous knowledge and techno-colonialism. These themes transcend the four traditions, and can be compared without erasing linguistic and regional difference. Each text is not treated as a regional curiosity, but rather as a theoretical intervention. These stories each express the idea of the local and the planetary in their own way.

Indian regional novels do not merely document local environmental destruction; they challenge dominant Western formulations of eco-cosmopolitanism by generating forms of resistance that connect the protection of water, forests, and land with broader questions of global environmental justice and human rights.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study combines three bodies of theory: Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism, the concept of slow violence, and postcolonial ecocriticism. Together they allow the analysis to hold the local, the planetary, and the political in the same frame.

2.1 Ursula K. Heise: Sense of Place and Sense of Planet

Eco-cosmopolitanism has been developed by Ursula K. Heise, as outlined in her theorisation in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, and further explored in her later work. In Heise's account, environmentalism has often been based on an ethic of rootedness, one that has been attached to a specific landscape and has been considered a model for ecological care. She argues that such attachment is not enough in a world formed by globalisation. Local places are defined by the global flows of commodities, pollutants, species and capital. An adequate environmental imagination needs to therefore develop a "sense of planet" in addition to, and often in competition with, a "sense of place" (Heise (2016, pp. 19–54) demonstrates the nature of planetary thinking with the help of narrative genres in *Imaging Extinction*. Cultures understand the loss of biodiversity in terms of stories of loss, elegy and tragedy and these are not culturally neutral stories. Ecological loss is experienced differently by each community, depending on its history and values. This is important to the current study because of the cultural framing that it has. Eco-cosmopolitanism is proposed to be more than one single narrative, but a space of conflicting narratives of the local in relation to the global (Shiva, 2016a; Caminero-Santangelo, 2014, pp. 1–6). Heise has three questions to raise in this paper. What is the possibility of scaling up local experience to planetary concern in regional Indian narratives? How do they do so? What narrative forms do they use? Whose cosmopolitanism do they voice up for – the global consumer or the displaced fisher, farmer, or Adivasi?

2.2 Rob Nixon: Slow Violence

The second framework is Rob Nixon's notion of slow violence, which has now been adopted by most postcolonial and environmental critics. Slow violence refers to the type of violence that is slow, out of sight and extended over time, seldom deemed to be "events" in media or policy agendas (DeLoughrey, 2019, pp. 1–32; Nayar, 2019, pp. 7–9). These include toxic contamination, soil exhaustion, depletion of ground water, deforestation, and the effects of dams and mines. They are usually the poor who suffer slowly and gradually so that people can't notice them. Nixon points out that writers are important in making such violence visible, since narrative can encapsulate or dramatise slow processes. Pramod K. Nayar (2019, p. 13) builds on this concept by proposing the concept of "ecoprecarity", which denotes the state of life that is made precarious by environmental degradation that is structural and cumulative. Timothy Clark (2015, p. 30) introduces a formal element: The Anthropocene creates "scale effects," which he says causes a disjuncture with the novel, which is built "around the human subject and its constrained temporalities." Slow violence is a representational issue that regional fiction addresses in unique ways, sometimes through multi-generational narratives, oral history, myth, and collective actors. This scheme is particularly significant in relation to the pesticide related disaster in Enmakaje, the gradual reclamation of wetlands in Aathi, the erosion of agrarian life in Matti Manishi and the dispossession process of mining in Global Gaon Ke Devta.

2.3 Postcolonial Ecocriticism

The third is an ecocriticism of the postcolonial. In the past-colonized societies, environmental issues should not be divorced from histories of conquest, resource extraction, and unequal development, as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2015, p. 1) suggest. They are based on Ramachandra Guha's critique of the wilderness conservation of the North and on the notion of an "environmentalism of the poor," a struggle over livelihood and access to resources that is primarily ecological. Guha argues that, if transported to India, the western concept of deep ecology can be used to justify the expelling of forest dwellers for purposes of nature conservation. Vandana Shiva's writing takes this critique further with ecofeminist and anti-developmental arguments. In *Staying Alive*, Shiva (2016a) contends that colonial and post-independence development policies resulted in a 'maldevelopment', where forests, rivers and seeds were sold as commodities and women's and peasants' knowledge and experience of their environment were marginalised. Shiva (2016b) compares industrial agribusiness with agroecological systems based on local knowledge and biodiversity in *Who Really Feeds the World?* While some critics have criticised the romanticism in Shiva's assertions, her approach is fundamental to debates about Indian environmental justice. Post-colonial ecocriticism has also gained from materialist critiques of capitalism. In an alternative perspective, Jason W. Moore (2015, p. 17) proposes that capitalism is a means of organizing nature, which relies on the seizure of 'cheap' nature—lands, labor, food and energy. Jennifer Wenzel (2020, pp. 1–46) demonstrates the unequal "disposition" of nature in world literature and explains who has to pay the price for resource extraction. In African literature, Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2014, pp. 1–6) shows that environmental justice stories are not just about the environment, but are also about the political economy of the Global South; this approach can be usefully transposed to Indian contexts. These views combine to make it possible to explore the impact on regional fiction of models of conservation and development that are universalistic. They point to local communities, indigenous knowledge systems and alternative ecological practices, with sensitivity to the potential for romanticization.

3. COMPARATIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This section compares the selected texts through three themes. The first concerns water and coastal ecology in Bengali and Malayalam narratives. The second concerns land, agriculture, and industrial expansion in Telugu and Hindi narratives. The third draws all four traditions together around the tension between indigenous knowledge and techno-colonial models of environmental management.

3.1 Water and Coastal Ecology: Bengali and Malayalam Narratives

The Sundarbans in *The Hungry Tide*

The vast mangrove delta that the Ganga and Brahmaputra delta where they enter the Bay of Bengal is called the tide country, and that is where Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is set. In the novel, there is instability in the landscape. Islands come and islands go with the tides; rivers turn, land is changed in a night. Ghosh describes this landscape as a space where land and water, human and nonhuman are continually negotiated. Subsequently, in *The Great Derangement*, he states that such environments demonstrate that the earth is not a passive scene but an active agent (Ghosh, 2016). The tide country looks forward to the argument in story form.

The novel is a collection of characters who represent various levels of environmental awareness. Irrawaddy dolphin researcher and Indian-American scientist, Piya Roy, comes to study the critically endangered Irrawaddy dolphin. She has a scientific outlook and is cosmopolitan, as Heise puts it: "the delta is a place on a global map of biodiversity. Kanai Dutt is a businessman and translator in Delhi, speaking multiple languages but who is not

connected to the land. Unlettered fisherman Fokir has a wealth of experiential knowledge of tides, currents and animal behaviour. The encounter between global and local environmental knowledge is the novel's focal point, conveyed through the interaction of these figures. The novel's central theme is the historical Morichjhapi incident of 1979 when the West Bengal government expelled the Bangladesh refugees from a protected island, partially in the name of saving the tigers. Ghosh tells about this episode through the eyes of Kanai's uncle, Nirmal, who was sympathetic to the settlers. In the episode, Guha's conflict between wilderness conservation and the survival of the poor (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 1) is encapsulated. The refugee Kusum's question, which makes a point about the fact that people matter less than tigers in global conservation discourse, highlights the double displacement of marginalised communities: first by partition and then by protected nature. But Ghosh is not just against conservation. However, the later part of the novel when the villagers entrap and burn a tiger shocks Piya and makes it difficult to present the local communities in a simplistic way. This is a text where the possibility of human survival and of nonhuman life co-exists in agonized tension. This refusal to solve the conflict itself is an eco-cosmopolitan ethics. It requires a balance between planetary care and justice for the people with whom they share their world (Heise, 2016, pp. 162–201; Haraway, 2016, pp. 1–8). The novel's climax – the cyclone – is a tie-up of these threads. While undercover, Fokir sacrifices himself to protect Piya from the storm, and with his knowledge of the land, he saves her life. After the incident, Piya decides to remain in the Sundarban region and create a conservation programme based on local knowledge and collaborates with the community of the islands. This conclusion could be taken as an example of what this paper terms “grounded eco-cosmopolitanism” – a planetary environmental project that borrows its approaches and values from those who are most impacted. It is true that the novel still focuses on the educated, mobile characters, however, with Fokir still being a relatively silent character (DeLoughrey, 2019, pp. 1–32). This restriction is important. It reminds us that even in a sympathetic story, the hierarchies can be repeated.

Kerala's Wetlands in Aathi

Aathi is a contrasting water ecology, but connected, by Sarah Joseph's Malayalam novel. Aathi is a small island in the backwaters of Kerala, which is maintained by the delicate balance of water, mangroves, fish, paddy and man. It is inhabited by people from marginalised castes, who make their living through fishing, farming and gathering. The rhythms on the Island are tidal and seasonal. Aathi, like the Sundarbans, is a liminal place where land is penetrated by water. The conflict in the novel comes when logic of urban development reaches the island. A native son who has thrived elsewhere comes back with a vision to reclaim wetlands, fill in waterways and turn the island into a profit-making enterprise. As the city grows, the waste and pollution from the city starts to seep into Aathi's waters. The novel traces how the legendary development model of Kerala has been built on the exploitation and conversion of wetlands which nourished biodiversity and the poor. Slow violence, in Nixon's terms, is a degradation that does not make headlines, but takes place over time, relentlessly chipping away at the conditions of life (Nayar, 2019, pp. 7–9). The most remarkable formal device that Joseph has noted is the gathering of the community to tell stories. The sessions unite the people of the island, carry memory and express an ethic of caring about water and land. Storytelling turns into resistance. It proclaims another way of living, standing in opposition to the language of profit, and holds on to knowledge that would be lost if it were developed. Aathi places itself in the domain of ecological defence in this manner. The novel implies that the “failure of imagination” when confronted with the climate crisis is not widespread as Ghosh (2016, p. 9) notes. Vernacular communities have narrative resources to envision human–nature relationships differently.

Comparative Reading

The Hungry Tide and Aathi, when read together, demonstrate that water catastrophes are never natural. A cyclone and erosion combined with refugee politics and state conservation in the Sundarban region. In Kerala, the loss of wetlands is due to real estate investment and urbanization. In both cases environmental vulnerability is a social construct and not equally distributed (Wenzel, 2020, pp. 1–46). In both novels, there is a linkage of a specific waterscape to larger processes, global biodiversity conservation in Ghosh and rising seas in Joseph, and networks of capital, migration and consumption. Both texts are different in terms of the positioning of the narrative, however. In the language of English, Ghosh's voice is global; he presents the local in the characters of cosmopolitans who describe it to outsiders. In Malayalam, Joseph tells the story from the inside out of the island community, and she bases her ecology on local idiom, caste history, and Christian and folk spiritual traditions. If there's any such thing as an eco-cosmopolitan, it's her. It has to say that the local is already planetary, as it is being remade by global forces. The difference bolsters the paper's argument that bhasha fiction is not simply a representation of eco-cosmopolitanism but also revision of the same from below.

3.2 Land, Agriculture, and Industrial Onslaught: Telugu and Hindi Narratives Soil and Identity in Matti Manishi

Written by one of the most popular Telugu novelists, Matti Manishi (literally "man of the soil") is one of the most popular Telugu novels about agrarian life in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh. It tells the story of a peasant patriarch who has a life centered around land. By toil and hard work he builds up and cultivates the land, and the land is the source of his identity, dignity and moral compass. The latter generation, however, is attracted to money, cities, and business. The novel follows the transition of the values of the market from the values of cultivation. Matti Manishi is not a novel for today's environmentalists. Its ecological meaning is that it depicts the transition from a land-based relationship to a land-based commodity. The novel captures "the time when soil became cheap nature" as Moore describes it in 2015 (p. 17): "valued for what it can be traded for. This change is looking at the agrarian crises that would later engulf Andhra Pradesh and Telangana: indebtedness, input intensive farming, conversion of fields into real estate and farmer suicides on a massive scale. Shiva's (2016b) critique of industrial agriculture that threatens both the fertility of the soils and the autonomy of the farmers has a literary antecedent in Seethadevi's story of the rupture of generations. Industrial agriculture's threat to the fertility of the soils and to the autonomy of the farmers is echoed in Seethadevi's story of the rupture of generations, which has literary precedents in Shiva's (2016b) critique of industrial agriculture. The novel's tragic structure is also a good example of slow violence. No single catastrophe exists. Rather, the links between human beings and land loosen little by little over the decades, via small choices, debts, and dreams. It's an ecological, social and psychological loss. The farmer's dedication can be seen as conservative, even possessive. But the novel asks readers to imagine a new way of looking at it which is a version of ecological love that modernisation obliterates.

The Forest and Survival in Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu

Yet their vision on land is vastly different and complementary to Kesava Reddy's short novel *Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu* (He Conquered the Forest). It is a story of one night in a forest when an old swineherd protects a sow and her newly born piglets from predators. The old man lives by observing the ground, animal movements, night and weather conditions. The forest is threatening and sustaining and the battle is played out with almost mythic intensity. The title of the novel is ironic. The old man is no conqueror of the forest, but rather a survivor because he knows it so well. His knowledge is embodied, practical and unretrievable from his marginal social status. In this context, the text portrays what was later known as 'traditional ecological knowledge'. It's also an impediment to any notion of living in harmony with nature. The Forest is a place of risk and loss as well as belonging. Reddy doesn't romanticize the old man or his surroundings. Also read with Matti Manishi, Reddy's novel brings forth the multiplicity of class positions envisioned in Telugu fiction. Landed peasant and landless herder are using land in different ways. However, both stories tell of a world in which people are rooted in a real ecological connection that is being cut by market or state forces.

The Kosi and Development in Parti Parikatha

Phanishwar Nath Renu's work, *Parti Parikatha* is an important work in the Hindi anchalik (regional novel). It is located in Parti, a large barren land area of the Kosi river, located in the village of Purnea in north Bihar. The Kosi, nicknamed "sorrow of Bihar," has flooded and left behind sand and barren land several times. The parti is therefore an environmental scar and a record of the past. Its tales, songs and myths are part of the community's heritage. The novel follows the events after independence as the land surveys come to the village, land-reform politics, and the Kosi river project. The educated son of a landed family, Jitendranath comes back to Paranjpur and joins in helping to recover the parti. Renu is very conflicted about development. The prospect of irrigation and good land is more than just a reality; the novel carries some of the Nehruvian optimism in river-valley schemes. But the survey also exacerbates caste and class tensions, with communities squabbling over land rights. Renu demonstrates that technocratic intervention into a river system is never entirely technical. It redistributes both power and water. In the present, *Parti Parikatha* can be understood as an early literary reflection on the price of river engineering that has become pressing in this context of frequent floods on the Kosi, and the discussion regarding large dams (Chakrabarty, 2021). It is also a novel example of the link between local ecology and oral culture. Renu populates the text with folk songs, legends and dialect, allowing the landscape to be presented in the community's own ways of remembering. Also in this place the regional novel, as a form of representation, meets the representational challenge Clark (2015, p. 30) links with the Anthropocene. It is a collective voice and a deep time that spells out long-term ecological change, not just the individual's alone.

Mining and Myth in Global Gaon Ke Devta

Ranendra's *Global Gaon Ke Devta* (The Gods of the Global Village) is the Hindi land narrative of the era of liberalisation. The novel has been written in the voice of a school teacher stationed in the remote parts of the Jharkhand plateau where one of the smallest and most vulnerable Adivasi communities is the Asur. Traditional smelters of iron, the Asur have had their land stripped and turned over to bauxite mining by powerful companies supported by the state. The irony of the title is a major element in the novel's criticism. The asuras are the demons who are enemies of the devas (the Hindu gods) in mainstream Hindu mythology. Ranendra turns these things

upside down. The real Asur people are not demonic, but are victims of a long history of mythic and material dispossession. The "gods" of the global village are the corporations and officials who are taking the wealth out of the ground, leaving those living on the ground behind. In this novel, the theme of conquest is connected to the process of extraction that is happening today, thereby implying a mythological, colonial, and neoliberal continuum of domination. Global Gaon Ke Devta is an example of slow and spectacular violence. Mining pollutes the water, affects the soils and slowly erodes the Asur culture. This is also a story of open repression of resistance. Ranendra is an explicitly eco-cosmopolitan novel as it frames the suffering of an intractable community in a planetary economy of aluminium and capital. But its cosmopolitanism needs to be critical, not celebratory. The "global village" seems to be a community of citizens of the world, but that is not the case, because some are gods, and some are sacrificed (Moore, 2015, p. 17; Wenzel, 2020, pp. 1–46).

Comparative Reading

The Telugu and Hindi texts are a historical journey. Matti Manishi and Parti Parikatha are part of the post-independence period of agrarian change, where land reform, survey, and river projects were touted as means to modernisation. Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu is a portrait of the uncertain existence of the rural poor living on the forest's boundaries. Global Gaon Ke Devta is a document about a free-for-all time for the corporations, following the era of corporate extraction. In this arc the character of land changes from an identity and a subsistence base to an object of state planning and, ultimately, of global capital, and is never used as an economic commodity in any of the four novels. It's a place of remembering, a site of community, a place of struggle. In these texts, the response of the community is from passive endurance and narration to organised protest. These confrontations can be understood in the context of environmental justice, which considers the right to land and resources a human right and an ecological issue (Caminero-Santangelo, 2014, pp. 1–6).

3.3 Indigenous Knowledge versus Techno-Colonialism

The third theme is a combination of all four traditions. For each of the novels selected, a struggle between place-based ecological knowledge and externally imposed models of management, whether colonial, state, or scientific or corporate, is enacted. Such models are referred to here as "techno-colonialism", which considers the local environment as an object that can be engineered from the outside, and local knowledge as backward or irrelevant. The theme has its roots in the historical context provided by Mahasweta Devi's Aranyer Adhikar (The Right to the Forest). The novel tells the story of Birsa Munda and Ulgulan (the great tumult) of 1895-1900 against the British, landlords, moneylenders and missionaries, who set up in the Chotanagpur region. Mahasweta Devi explains how the Mundas' system of collective land ownership, which was destroyed by colonial forest law and land-revenue regimes, converted forests from being privately owned land to state property. Birsa's movement is at the same time a struggle for land, cultural and spiritual autonomy and a claim to the forest itself. Huggan and Tiffin (2015, pp. 6–8) claim that colonial environmental governance was a tool of dispossession and the novel by Mahasweta Devi exemplifies this process of dispossession from the point of view of the dispossessed. The theme is repeated throughout the other texts. The legend of Bon Bibi contains an ethic of restraint and sharing in the forest; in The Hungry Tide, Fokir's knowledge of tides and dolphins is more useful than Piya's instruments. The story is a cautionary tale about greed and an ethos of living in harmony with the tiger. The presence of such myths is not a superstition but a cultural activity which controls human use of a dangerous environment, Ghosh argues (Ghosh, 2021, pp. 34–35). In Global Gaon Ke Devta, the technological knowhow used by the Asurs is an indigenous technology lost to industrial mining. In Aathi, knowledge of tides, fish, and paddy is passed on in the form of story. Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu, survival requires an old man's night-time sensuousness in the forest. Ambikasutan Mangad is the character of techno-colonialism in Enmakaje. In Enmakaje, Ambikasutan Mangad is perhaps a more extreme depiction of techno-colonialism. The novel is about the aerial spraying of the pesticide endosulfan on the state-owned cashew plantation in Kasaragod district, which was correlated with a lot of ailments and congenital disabilities of local people for many years. A disillusioned couple who isolate themselves in the forest find out about the plight of the villages and become involved in the fight. The novel reveals the slow violence which was visited upon bodies, soils, and waters as a result of the introduction of a technological solution—promoted at the state level and by agrochemical companies—as modern and scientific. (Nayar, 2019, p. 90) Local spiritual traditions linked to the forest and the hills are described as holders of an ecological ethic which is being broken by the plantation economy. Enmakaje hence connects a local tragedy with the international debates which resulted in the restrictions of endosulfan and the pesticide industry as a whole. One of the more important critical questions is whether these novels romanticise indigenous knowledge as pure and static, an alternative to modernity. The evidence indicates otherwise. Mahasweta's Devi's Birsa movement is dynamic, drawing on elements from Christianity and Hindu tradition, while creating a new millenarian vision. Ghosh depicts Piya and Fokir working together, thus making scientific and local knowledge not only complementary but also dynamic. The narrator of Ranendra is an outsider who learns from the Asur, and Ranendra admits that he does not know everything. These texts portray indigenous knowledge as a developing, hybrid and

adaptive body of knowledge to new challenges. This is consistent with Haraway's (2016, p. 1) advocacy for "staying with the trouble", negotiating "alliances" in the midst of multispecies and cross-cultural realities, not looking for purity. Meanwhile, there is an actual danger of romanticisation, and it has been invoked with reference to Shiva's work (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 3). The novels would best be avoided when they relied on indigenous knowledge that was based on history, or on something tangible, rather than on timeless spirituality. When they are successful, they provide a very strong critique of the universalisation of technological solutions. They demonstrate the relational and localized nature of ecological knowledge and the tendency of environmental policy to perpetuate colonial practices of dispossession (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014, pp. 1–17; DeLoughrey, 2019, pp. 1–32).

4. DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS

The comparative analysis shows that the four literary traditions place geographically specific crises within a broader planetary frame, but they do so from the ground up. Table 1 summarises the principal findings.

Table 1. Comparative matrix of ecological landscapes, concerns, and concepts

Language	Texts	Ecological landscape	Major environmental concern	Community experience	Key concept
Malayalam	Aathi; Enmakaje	Kerala backwaters, wetlands, and Kasaragod hills	Wetland reclamation, pollution, pesticide poisoning	Fishing, farming, and marginalised-caste communities	Slow violence and narrative resistance
Bengali	The Hungry Tide; Aranyer Adhikar	Sundarbans mangroves; Chotanagpur forests	Tidal instability, cyclones, conservation-led eviction, colonial forest law	Fishers, refugees, and Munda Adivasis	Eco-cosmopolitanism and environmental justice
Telugu	Matti Manishi; Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu	Coastal Andhra farmland; forest margins	Commodification of land, agrarian change, precarious forest livelihoods	Peasants and landless herders	Land, livelihood, and embodied knowledge
Hindi	Parti Parikatha; Global Gaon Ke Devta	Kosi floodplain of Bihar; Jharkhand plateau	River engineering, land survey, bauxite mining, displacement	Rural castes and Asur Adivasis	Land rights and ecological resistance

There are some patterns that can be seen in this comparison. First, in all traditions there is no separation between ecological issues and livelihood and justice. No one of the texts assumes that nature is most important as wilderness and/or aesthetic landscape. Even *The Hungry Tide*, a book that addresses conservation efforts directly and most passionately on the international stage, maintains that conservation has to be responsive to the people who have to coexist with tigers and dolphins. This supports Guha's argument (as encapsulated by Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 1) that environment movement in Global South is essentially an environmentalism of the poor. It is about access to water, land and forest; it is not about the preservation of untouched nature. Second, every tradition has their own way of scaling up from the local to the planetary. Through his cosmopolitan characters and scientific descriptions, Ghosh draws a link between the Sundarbans and global biodiversity and climate change. Ranendra establishes a link between an Asur hamlet and world markets for aluminium through mythic inversion and the concept of the "global village". Mangad traces the endosulfan saga to the international pesticide business. Joseph and Renu operate more indirectly, disclosing how far-flung capital and state strategies transform local

waters and lands. Seethadevi and Reddy rarely mention the global forces, but they record the profound change that the national and global markets wrought on agrarian and forest life. The resulting diversity indicates that eco-cosmopolitanism is not one narrative approach; on the contrary, it is a spectrum of approaches to narrative, in line with the more general idea of environmental narrative put forward by Heise et al. (2017). Third, It is clear in the texts that slow violence is manifested in a collective and multigenerational manner. Aathi, Matti Manishi, Enmakaje and Global Gaon Ke Devta are all processes that take a few years or decades to happen. These processes are made apparent in the novels through storytelling circles, oral memory, folk song, myth and documentary detail. This is in line with Clark's (2015, p. 30) claim that the Anthropocene needs new scales of narrative. It also counters Ghosh (2016, p. 9)'s conclusion that this need has largely gone unfulfilled in the novel. So the failure is primarily of one type of metropolitan realist novel. The idea of collective, non-human and long term agency is a narrative that has been performed across regional fiction through oral and folk traditions (Rangarajan, 2018). Fourth, the texts connect historical and current elements of dispossession. Aranyer Adhikar unravels the colonial forest law, Parti Parikatha calls into question the development of post-independence India, and Global Gaon Ke Devta denounces neoliberal extraction. Together, they show a continuity across these regimes. Both regard the land and forest as commodities to be exploited from the exterior, and both exclude the people who need it. This continuity speaks to Moore's (2015, p. 17) description of capitalism as an ecological regime of appropriation, and to Chakrabarty's (2021, p. 167) argument that the planetary crisis should be understood in terms of histories of empire and inequality. Based on the patterns, one can say that the paper suggests an alternative formulation of 'eco-cosmopolitanism' that can be described as 'grounded' or 'resistant' eco-cosmopolitanism. Heise's original statement is that too much place attachment is the greatest barrier to planetary thinking. There is a different diagnosis offered by the Indian regional novels. The communities they represent are connected to place, yet not parochial. It is a reaction to the forces of the world that are already changing their spaces. The resistance, against dams, mines, plantations and real-estate projects, is already planetary awareness, it is an awareness of extraction. In this perspective the local is not the contrary of the planetary but one of its most acute expressions (Caminero-Santangelo, 2014, pp. 1–6; Wenzel, 2020, pp. 1–46). The alternative also redefines the topic of the eco-cosmopolitanism. The mobile, educated citizen that can imagine distant ecosystems, is the model cosmopolitan in much Northern discourse. The Indian regional novels offer alternative themes: the fisherman who reads the tides, the Adivasi rebel who guards the forest, the storyteller who lives on an island and the poisoned villager who becomes an activist. They are usually immobile, impoverished, but they express an ecological awareness that is connected to their survival and the survival of the rest of the world. These vernacular narratives are reflections of Haraway's (2016, pp. 99–103) image of making kin across species and differences and Ghosh's (2021, pp. 13–14) account of the long history of extraction from colonised lands. There are also tensions in the synthesis which should not be neglected. There is always the danger of romanticizing indigenous knowledge, and in some instances, the text shows that harmony between Adivasis and nature exists in a timeless manner. Asymmetries are developed with the translation process. While Ghosh's novel is in English and is read the world over, Malayalam, Telugu and Hindi novels are read in the international market with select translation efforts, if at all. Consequently, the vernacular voices which most strongly challenge eco-cosmopolitanism, are the least heard in the global environmental debates (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, pp. 1–26; Nayar, 2019, pp. 7–9). This is a step towards a more just eco-cosmopolitanism, because if you don't recognise this asymmetry, you can't possibly have a more just eco-cosmopolitanism. Overall, Indian regional fiction creates an "eco-cosmopolitanism" in which the planetary and the local are interwoven. It demands that environmental justice, human rights and ecological survival need to be fought together and that those who fight for environmental justice are the ones who have been most cast to the margins of the world by global modernity.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has contended that Malayalam, Telugu, Bengali and Hindi regional fiction bring new possibilities into the field of contemporary ecocritical scholarship. The chosen novels are both locally and planetarily environmental crises. They link the Sundarbans, Kerala backwaters, the farmland of coastal Andhra and the forest of Chotanagpur, the Kosi floodplain and the Jharkhand plateau, to larger processes of climate change, capitalist development, resource extraction and environmental inequality. These narratives have been shown to be more than a record of destruction as a result of the comparative analysis. Their stories are collective, multigenerational, oral and they are a means of making slow violence visible (Nayar, 2019, pp. 7–9; Clark, 2015, p. 30). They reveal how conservation and development and industrial agriculture can replicate the pattern of dispossession of colonialism (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, pp. 6–8; Shiva, 2016a). They place emphasis on indigenous and local ecological knowledge and tend to view it as dynamic and hybrid, rather than static. And they create a variety of forms of resistance, from storytelling circles to armed resistance, which connect the defense of water, forest and land to human rights and global justice.

The novels, in doing so, post-modernise Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism from below. They argue that attachment to place is not necessarily hindering planetary thinking, but it can serve as its basis if the place is already influenced by planetary forces. The paper has called this newfound form "grounded" or "resistant" eco-cosmopolitanism. Its exemplary subjects are neither the mobile citizens of the 'global North' but those who live on the land, sea, mountains and forests and whose survival is tied up with the capacity to read and defend their environment: the fishers, the peasants, the herders, the Adivasis. This discovery helps to substantiate the paper's thesis that regional novels written in India in their ecotones question the prevailing Western notions of eco-cosmopolitanism by juxtaposing local ecological resistance with a demand for environmental justice on a global scale. The study also highlights the importance of regional language for global environmental studies in the field of literary studies. Much of the criticism on the climate fiction genre has developed out of an Anglophone archive and this has therefore determined the type of climate fiction that is deemed to exist (Trexler, 2015, pp. 1–28; Johns-Putra, 2019, pp. 1–12). Bhasha fiction proposes that climate and ecological crisis have been told in the Global South for a long time, in ways left untouched by the metropolitan novel. Thus, translation is not a minor but a major ethical and methodological problem. Experiences narrated in Malayalam, Telugu, Bengali and Hindi can be translated into the international discussion if the process is sustained and careful. There are limitations of the paper. It cannot be said that its chosen eight novels can adequately represent the scope of any one literature. Many of the texts, including *The Hungry Tide*, are in English, making them somewhat of a problem when it comes to the "regional" aspect of fiction. The analysis also depends in part on the translations, which in turn are an inevitable mediation of the original works.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This framework can be extended to include other Indian languages such as Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, Assamese, Odia, Punjabi and Manipuri, all of which have their own tradition of ecological writing. Comparative work could also explore how literature from the Indian region engages with literature from other Global South regions like Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, to determine whether "grounded eco-cosmopolitanism" is a global pattern (Caminero-Santangelo, 2014, pp. 1–6; DeLoughrey, 2019, pp. 1–32). Research could be done on the factors that influence which regional ecological narratives make it into translation and publishing markets. These activities would contribute to the environmental humanities listening to and learning from the voices of those most impacted by the planetary crisis.

Primary Texts

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