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ECOCRITICAL POST-COLONIAL STUDIES ON  
HUMANS, LAND, AND ANIMALS

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Alia Afzal

University of Northern Iowa

July, 2017

## ABSTRACT

Ecocritical post-colonial study is a newly emerged field in literary criticism. The theory combines the study of post-colonial environment in literary work and reveals a relationship between literature and the environment. Before the word 'Ecocriticism' was coined in the world of literature, from the beginning, writers were exclusively engaged presenting nature as source of inspiration and a privilege to evolve their ideas and pen them down. With the introduction of the term Ecocriticism in literary criticism by the Association of the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1993, scholars approached the analysis of texts to highlight environmental concerns and explore the roles of literature to bring awareness to society.

Post-colonialism, on the other hand, as a response to colonization, studies the cultural and economic exploitation of the colonized/marginalized-- the natives and their land. As one can see the split between the two schools of thought-- nature versus culture-- has been a trend for more than a decade. This split of thought has obliterated the fact that the environment is an integration of nature and culture, humans and nonhumans, animate and inanimate.

Post-colonial ecocritical studies takes the challenge to respond to these two separate fields; post-colonial and ecocriticism, by studying the environment as a complete body composed of humans, animals, and land. It redirects critical thinking towards the relationship between humans (indigenous and foreign) and land and humans and nonhumans.

My thesis, “Ecocritical Post-Colonial Studies on Humans, Animals, and Land,” focuses on the study of the following texts: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh, *Remnants of the First Earth* by Ray A. Young Bear, and *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko. In these multicultural texts, I examine a relationship between post-colonial land and humans and how, together, they constitute the environment. I use secondary resources on these texts to acknowledge the values, rights, and beliefs associated with nature and land in each culture and humans’ consequences of devaluing them. My study also highlights the crisis of understanding between the ancient tradition and mainstream culture, and negotiates the crisis through literary imagination. Thus, the application of Post-colonial ecocritical scholarship in my thesis has given me an opportunity to broaden my perspective on the treatment of land by post-colonial indigenous communities, and humans’ role in the environment. It has allowed me to take different approaches to peer into the texts and acknowledge the concern of a conflicting relationship between human and nonhuman within the environment, and offer a praxis to maintain harmony and equilibrium in the environment.

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HUMANS, LAND, AND ANIMALS

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This Study by: Alia Afzal  
Entitled: Ecocritical Post-colonial Studies on Humans, Land, and Animals

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts

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## INTRODUCTION

### ECOCRITICAL POST-COLONIAL STUDIES ON HUMANS, LAND, AND ANIMALS

In the modern era, Environmental literature has incited a huge debate about environment, people, and their relationship with each other before and after colonization. English and American writers took a common approach in Environmental study in literature in the 1980s and 1990s. Writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries took advantage of nature writing by creating a setting which attracts readers. The images of environment and nature in a text are a convention which focuses specifically on nature's wilderness. However, today, environmental study in literature is a crucial topic to be explored. It raises concerns about current issues and their relationships and influences upon each other, which was not the case in the field of literature a century before. Contemporary writers and critics have concentrated their thoughts and studies on humans' expression, their behavior, and their impact on the environment. Moreover, their major concern is what type of resolution literature offers to current issues. This is the strength of nature writing in Multicultural literature, which amalgamates society and the environment and discusses the two concepts as a whole. Contributing to this literary field, many scholars explore the tradition of wilderness and affirm it as a necessity of humans' lives.

Humans, non-humans, and land are all inevitable parts of nature and environment. However, theories like post-colonialism, because of their anthropocentric nature, study only human behaviors and their condition as a significant subject over non-human

entities. Post-colonialism examines and responds to the cultural and ideological legacy of colonialism. The theory offers intensive studies of people and the culture affected by colonialism; certainly, literature plays a crucial role in imparting knowledge to people about colonial and non-colonial descent. This theory celebrates the historicity of events, sculpture, documents, music, art, and people. Post-colonialism attacks the centuries of slavery and economic and physical exploitation of native people and their lands and resources. It dismantles the social hierarchical structure, which is based on western thought and epistemology and provides an agency to the colonized and the marginalized people to speak for themselves. It creates a space where cultural, linguistic, and identity discourse of the colonized is formed.

Contemporary studies offer a rethinking of post-colonialism. It is not true that post-colonialism is unaware of environmental changes and recurring problems because of people's neglectful and oblivious attitude towards the environment. Theoretically, environmental studies have never been the emphasis of post-colonialism. Commonwealth literatures under post-colonial scholarships are restricted to geographical and political conditions. Post-colonialism offers an understanding of human culture shaped by imperial power. One cannot deny the fact that imperialism influences both people and places simultaneously. When any region is colonized, it means the whole environment is colonized. The environment begins to be manipulated by the dominant power. Besides, land provides an identity to people who belong to the place. Hence, any kind of intrusion in terms of power politics harms integrity of the culture and the environment. The environment is inseminated with history; every trait (land, animals, plants, animals, etc.)

which constitute the environment witnesses changes that occurred in the past and present. If one ignores the environment while studying human centered culture, then the whole utilitarian means to understand the earth community, will be imprecise.

Many current scholars pursued the studies of the two scholarships: Environment and Post-colonialism. In *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literature and the Environment*, DeLoughrey and Handley suggest that there is an emerging scholarship on post-colonial ecology which exhibits the western discourse of nature and environment shaped by the imperial history. The role of literature, here, posits a remarkable shift when it comes to interfacing between humans and the environment. Thus, there is certainly a need to merge the theory to begin a holistic study of the environment (which includes humans, non-human creatures). Because the environment and human culture cannot exist in isolation; they are an inextricable part of each other, and hence, I believe, they should be studied in relation to each other.

In this study, I intend to examine multicultural literature with the combined study of ecocriticism and post-colonialism. Multiculturalism is a vast field and covers an immense amount of concerns, cultural and environmental transition in society, and different approaches to those concerns. To study multicultural literature from an ecocritical post-colonial lens is advantageous in a way that multicultural literature elicits responses and approaches which challenge the trope. In the recent past, ecocriticism has been limited to nature writing. To extend the boundaries of the ecocriticism, one can think of nature not just as the study of wilderness, but the study of everything which constitute the environment. Ecocritical post-colonial study in multicultural literature

develops a critique that humans belong to nature and the environment and not vice-versa. To understand this relationship, we need to see the environment as a culture on the first hand. For example, some essential ecocritical post-colonial representation and environmental ethics are expressed in the multicultural literatures discussed below. The environmental representations in *The Hungry Tide*, *Ceremony*, *Remnants of the First Earth*, and *Things Fall Apart* are similar. However, the representation of the relationship between humans, non-humans, and land very much depends upon the cultural ideologies practiced by post-colonial countries.

*Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe is a novel grounded on reality of Igbo community. The fiction is divided into three parts. It concentrates on Igbo the community, the socio-political condition and how the regional culture is shaken after the intrusion of western power. Okonkwo is one of the respected leaders of Umuofia. He earned his social and financial status through his hard work in Igbo community. Okonkwo wanted to be opposite to his father, Ukono. In an attempt to be so and to prove his masculinity, he kills his foster son, Ikemefuna. Later on, he kills the boy accidentally and experiences seven years of imprisonment. After he is released from the jail, he found that missionaries captured Igbo leaders and sent them to jail. People of Igbo held the war against the missionaries. At the end, Okonkwo commits suicide after knowing the fact that no one from his clan is participating in the war against the missionaries. The novel is a classic study of cross-culture and presents a failure of a leader because of his own folly and his up rootedness from land and from his ancestors. Achebe's representation of the African atmosphere before and after colonization is remarkable.

Similarly, Amitav Ghosh, an Indian writer, who touches upon the legacy of colonial issues: poverty of refugees, homelessness, oblivious attitude of government, and its environmental effects. *The Hungry Tide* is one his novels which captures rich images of the flora and fauna in the biggest delta called Sundarban. This space is inhabited by people who are refugees from Bangladesh and India. Sundarban is situated on the mouth of Ganges River on the eastern coast and is a place of fear, death, eviction, tidal flood, and devastation experienced by poor people. In the novel, these people are attacked by deadly tigers and are victims of the stormy and tidal climatic conditions in Sundarban. The novel offers some major conflicts between conventional conservatives and mainstream ecocritical scholars who believe in harmony of the environment by offering a praxis to see the environment. Both animals and humans are represented as a threat to one another. The novel offers an imaginary suggestion to end chaos in both the spaces. It displays some major conflicts between the conventional conservationist and mainstream ecocritical scholars who believe in resolution for harmonize the environment created by both animals and humans. It is fascinating to see how Ghosh has created a grand transcending space, the environment, in which every biological creature and nature with ravaging tidal force is in conflict with each other. Such an environment, using Homi Bhabha's words, the "Third Space" is created by banishing people to a group of islands where survival is an ordeal. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha proposes, ". . . Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious" (53). In the text, the Third World, which forms Third Space is

full of tension and presents a congested environment; it gives an opportunity to examine how the characters in the text responds to the environment and what imaginary relief the novel offers to problems and to the readers. Ghosh's imagination fills the crisis: an aporia between common people and the environment, and provide resolutions to fictional issues corresponds with the real world.

To add to the ecocritical scholarship, Ray. *A Young Bear's Remnants of the First Earth*, a Native American literary pieces, gives a wonderful description of Native American lives and their community in Iowa. The novel is a about Edgar Bearchild and his revisit to ancient forefathers. *Young Bear* reminds reader of *Black Eagle Child Settlement* in Meskwaki. The novel elegantly travels through the present into the past composed of myths, history, ancient rituals, and supernatural belief. In the middle of the novel, there is a murder investigation that takes place. The investigation includes some corrupt tribal authorities, white cops, and shamans running a court in Ramada. In later parts of the novel, *Young Bear* reflects upon the adversary of the tribal community and emphasizes on healing through rituals as a cure and a legacy of the Native American culture. In addition, memories of Grandmother in the novel plays a crucial role in peering in the Native American ancestry and their value system and becomes a medium of instruction for Edgar in the novel and readers. Memories are used as past events to create a better present. Certainly, Gerald Vizenor's key concept of survivance comes in play in Native American world of literature. Grandmother's *Teasing* in a form of memory is one of the tools used to emphasize the idea that one needs to recognize and respect the ancestral legacy and the Mother Earth by relying on natural reasoning. Memory under

post-colonial scholarship aids the characters to return to the values of pre-colonial Native American world to gain an unprecedented view of indigenous culture to shape the present and the future. Grandmother's *Teasing* reflects upon the relationship between Native Americans and their land.

In addition, supernatural images play an influential role in highlighting Native Americans core values. Young Bear emphasizes that supernatural connects one with the ancestors. To practice belief on Supernatural is one of the tools to subvert modern belief system, which according to Native Americans, sabotages their tradition and culture.

All of these above-mentioned texts touch upon the dysfunctional relationship of man and environment in post-colonial settings. Adding to ecocritical post-colonial scholarship, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* provides a solution to a post-traumatic war syndrome. The novel is about the character, Tayo who struggles with post-war trauma and depression and transforms his identity by participating in a Laguna ceremony. Tayo is a wheat complexioned man-- half native and half white, who served the army in the World War II and was imprisoned by Japanese forces. He experienced death and despair for a long time, which left him with hopelessness and nihilism. He has lost his feeling of belongingness. The novel describes a beautiful journey of Tayo's recovery from darkness to light, and shows a bond he develops gradually with the landscape. Tayo meets with medicine man Betonie who saves his life. Betonie provides him with, in Vizenor's words, "natural reasoning," which is a sense of presence that ultimately becomes a cure for both Tayo and the Native American community. Natural reasoning, according to Vizenor, ties one with worthy thoughts of nature, wisdom, and reasoning with the help of which one

receives contentment and recognizes human rights and a tease of personal experience. Stories and myths create a sense of survivance over dominant culture and restore a bond between one and the surrounding. Because of Betonie's stories, Tayo develops his sensitivity towards the environment. A simple act of storytelling creates a sense of presence and becomes a cure for Tayo as well as for the Native American community. Tayo's vision of land changes and helps him gain a sense of belonging.

Modern approaches to environmentalism began to emerge in the 1920s. The modern scholarship of environmental studies in literature has questioned modern lifestyle of humans and their negligent attitude towards environmental degradation. This raises the concerns of contemporary scholars and encourages them to take initiative to bring environmental awareness among people by introducing a praxis to study and observe the surroundings. *The Storyworld Accord* by Erin James, *Environmentality* by Roman Bartosch, *The Comedy of Survival* by Joseph Meeker, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, and Environment* by Graham and Tiffin and *Native Liberty: Natural Reasoning and Cultural Survivance* by Gerald Vizenor are some important critical works which broach debate about the dysfunctional relationship between humans and the environment and how this relationship can be harmonized in the Post-colonial era. Furthermore, there is something in common between all of these scholars: they offer a praxis to understand the pros and cons of humans' action in relation to their environment. In this project, there are secondary resources, which are easily recognizable as good examples of post-colonial environmental writing.

To extend the contemporary scholarly idea of merging post-colonialism and



ecocriticism together and the praxis to develop new perspectives on the subject, I intend to begin with the question: how does human culture depend on the physical environment, which includes animals, humans, non-human, and land? How does the environment shape human culture, and how does humans shape the environment; do they affect each other minimally or strongly? The purpose of this research project is not to provide analysis of post-colonial and multicultural texts, but to sharpen the awareness and perspectives of the audience, and to stimulate their curiosity by reading a diverse range of literary and critical works and forming connections between these texts despite the distinct solicitude incorporated in them.

## CHAPTER 1

CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* AND THE  
ARGUMENTATIVE AFRICAN ECOLOGY

African ecology is known for its dense vegetation and vast green landscapes. The continent has always tempted foreigners to explore the fascinating culture of flora and fauna. The landscape is a prominent part of the African indigenous culture, which echoes the indigenous history and points towards the genesis of human relations with the land. African literature shows an abundance of pre-colonial and post-colonial changes that occurred in the environment. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe is one of the outstanding resources which describes Nigerian environment with a blend of honorific literary sketches of the Earth, the bonding between the people of Igbo, and African wilderness. Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart*, highlights the subjective relation between people of Igbo and land. I intend to examine the relationship between indigenous people and the environment in African cultural context. I am also interested in how their relationship changes with land with the change in the environment because of missionaries' expansion in Umuofia. I also want to explore the role of literary imagination in the process of decolonizing post-colonial ecology. Things are falling apart in the novel, so, what does the novel offer from a Post-colonial environmental perspective? Post-colonial ecocriticism focuses on the environment as a whole. The environment is made of diverse entities, and each of them play significant role in maintaining ecological balance. Post-colonialism is aware of the environmental changes or degradation, but it is acutely anthropocentric and prioritizes humans' interests over

other, and the other is the environment in this case.

The environment, in *Things Fall Apart* has genealogical (a communal ancestry) and phenomenological (connection between body and place) specificity with geographical expansion. This suggests a mutual intimacy between the Igbo community and nature before the arrival of the missionaries in the novel. Rinda West, through his scholarly work, *Out of Shadow Ecopsychology, Story, and Encounters with the Land*, offers an in depth understanding of the pre-colonial Igbo culture in contrast with the ambitious Western civilization. She states that the oral tradition in *Things Fall Apart* has a powerful language to summon imaginative reality. West emphasizes the environmental values lived by people of the Igbo. Names have power because a name individualizes the object. The names of plants, animals, places, and rituals in the novel evokes their strong presence in which lives in Igbo village depends. There are rituals and ceremonies practiced by Igbos to honor vegetation, land, and the indigenous agrarian culture.

#### Pre-colonial Land of Umuofia: Wild Forest and Rituals

Achebe's details of Igbo environment allow non-native readers to enter into the indigenous life and culture. In reading the novel, one can see the contrast between the two cultures: Igbo community and missionaries. When a community harmonizes with nature and follows the natural cycle for their living, the environment becomes simple and peaceful. West points out the anomalies in the western way of living which is too dissociated from nature and have inadequate knowledge about natural wisdom. She argues that the rituals in the novel play crucial roles in Igbo culture. She says,

“Rituals are linked with the land. Like farmers everywhere, Umuofians study nature closely. Many of their rituals are directed at ensuring the land’s fertility” (57). It suggests a vital interdependence and interconnectedness of people of Igbo not just with their surroundings but also with the outer, non-being world. These rituals are performed to honor land and to do offerings so that Earth can give “good increase” every year and lives in Igbo community could be prosperous. She writes, “This earth-centered religion helps account for the Umuofians’ low impact agriculture” (58). In *Things Fall Apart* and in other Post-colonial texts like *The Hungry Tide*, *Remnants of the First Earth*, and *Ceremony*, rituals and an agrarian based life is an ideal way of living, which helps one become intimate with nature and the surrounding to become receptive and wise for oneself and for all creatures. Moreover, it teaches a wisdom which modern life lacks. West quotes Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian Nobel prize winner, when he said, “Where a society lives in a close inter-relation with Nature, regulates its existence by natural phenomenon within the observable process of continuity--ebb and tide...-- the highest moral order is seen as that which guarantees the parallel continuity of species” (59). Post-colonial ecocriticism gives one a room to understand a native culture and their practices to safeguard the natural and ancestral heritage. The analogy of Earth as a mother figure is extensively theorized in almost every indigenous culture and is a vital component of post-colonial ecocritical theory.

Achebe points towards the psychology behind this bond between a man and the Earth, when one of the characters, Uchendu, explains why a dead woman is buried with her own kinsman and not her husband’s: “It’s true that a child belongs to his father. But

when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness, he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you" (134). Building on this quote, one can say that there is an elegant, tender, protective, comforting touch which helps modern readers float around the indigenous notion of Earth and provides them with an ancient yet aesthetically powerful perspective to look at it. It is a beatific vision of land which is divine and personal to the Igbo community, but unique and foreign to non-native communities; this vision aided non-native readers to understand the world of native people. This aesthetic is denied when the environment is altered for the purpose to "civilize" people. People of Umuofia have a very strong sense of belonging with the nature. They practice environmental retribution as their faith. It implies that if one goes against the divine law of land, then that individual and the entire clan will face a penalty by nature. The images of wild forests, the caves, and crop fields are not just background descriptions, but they are portrayed as strong characters, which in good and bad ways affect the life of the villagers. Every clan or village has its own wild forest. The wild forest represents death, punishment, and a powerful force of nature which follows the execution of sinners in the village. It is a spiritual source on which the people of a village rely for justice. Of course, missionaries' intrusion in the community is an unpleasant stir to the villagers. People of the village find it obnoxious when the missionaries are looking for a piece of land to construct an institution of their faith. Thus, full of exasperation, the people of Umuofia decided to offer them the wild forest. The scene below is Hades for people of Umuofia:

“I am an Evil Forest. I kill a man on the day that his life is sweetest to him.”

“That is true,” replied Uzowulu.

“Go to your in-laws with a pot of wine and beg your wife to return to you. It is not bravery when a man fights with woman.” He turned to Odukwe, and allowed a brief pause.

“Odukwe’s body, I greet you,” he said.

“My hand is on the ground,” replied Okonkwo.

“Do you know me?”

“No man can know you,” replied Odukwe.

“I am Evil Forest. I am Dry-meat-that-fill-the-mouth. I am fire-that-burns-without-faggots. If your in-law brings wine to you, let your sister go with him. I salute you.” (93)

This is a dark and powerful image of the environment which comprises the submission of humans for justice before a majestic flora and the law of nature. Nature is a deity. The scene reveals the relationship between the sacerdotal and locals. The Igbo community is submitted to the space for justice. Their relationship to land is similar to the lord and the followers. It is more subjective in relation with people. The dialogue shows a powerful persona of the forest and communicates its incomprehensible for humans to understand a dominating, persuasive, intimidating, yet a convincing gesture of nature. The dialogue also connotes that humans are mere entities of nature and can be easily crushed by nature’s calamities if they do not pay attention to their actions. This statement of the Evil Forest, “No man can know me” (93), indicates the idea that wilderness is dense and dark. It is the place where dead bodies are buried and there are rituals and spiritual beliefs that involve people and places. This communication between the village people and the Evil Forest is quite essential here. The narrative suggests that nature always has an upper hand to command humans and reminds humans of their inability to control nature for their benefits. However, the mainstream culture has not only controlled nature, but have also

altered it widely and exploited it for their own luxury and benefit, despite the fact humans pay the cost for their condescending relationship with nature. Whether it is a dialogue between the Evil Forest and village people or personification of caves, Achebe's rich imagination informs one about indigenous way of life and their belief on creations of the earth, "But the Hills and caves were as silent as death" (112), *Things Fall Apart* is an excellent example of Achebe's literary imagination. Achebe's literary imagination reflects upon the individuality of the African environment and its aesthetic richness. The Environment, which includes humans, animals, and land, is treated as a single and powerful entity in *Things Fall Apart*.

The post-colonial ecology of the indigenous linked with colonial records questions the typical human mindset on nature as "other." Achebe foregrounds an ethical bond between a man and the land/earth: a bond which changes a sojourner into a dweller. This bonding diminishes the binary of the self (human) and the other (nature). One can say that African indigenous communities see land as their heritage, their ancestors, and the earth. Besides a role of divine justice, Achebe also presents economic status based on portion of land and crops. The yam is an important crop, which carries high status in Igbo culture. Okonkwo and Obierika gain their social status in the community because they produce many yams.

The yam symbolizes masculinity. It is difficult to grow and involves intensive labor. Since Okonkwo is a farmer and is physically strong, the major portion of yam cultivation is done by him along with the help of his wives and son. The novel describes, "His mother and sister worked hard enough, but they grow women's crops, like coco-

yam, beans, and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop" (22-23). It is an industrious task to grow yams and the indigenous agricultural process to grow yams is hefty. The hot burning earth can burn the crops, hence, a growth of yams depends on the first rain. Okonkwo grew his first yam for the wealthiest man called Nwakibie. Once the crop is harvested, the Igbo community celebrates the yam festival in Umuofia to give thanks to the earth goddess, Ani. Achebe provides details of agriculture, climate, and condition of the land, rains, and humans to emphasize produce, on which prosperity of the Igbo lives depends. Such collaboration of humans and non-humans indicates the environment is a huge abstract body composed of everything under the sun.

Earth, or Ani, in Igbo culture is land which produces and feeds villagers. The land goddess is a spiritual domicile for people of Umuofia to which they submit at the time of crisis. There are rituals, prayers and offerings performed by the community to show gratitude. Land and the wild forest is a space which pacifies humans' emotion and fills the spiritual and personal crisis in the lives of the Igbo. It is an ambiguous space which expresses itself as an ontological proof, as one can think of sacred wilderness as necessity if one believes of its existence.

#### People of Umuofia and Animals

Achebe's description of the scene in which animals are shown as informers of climatic changes in Umuofia is fascinating presentation of the natural system. By presenting the environment as a whole through a myth, Achebe draws one's attention to the specific characters and the individual role of animate and inanimate to show how



significant each one of them is to maintain the equilibrium in nature:

He remembered the story of the quarrel between Earth and Sky long ago, and how sky withheld rain for seven years, until the crop withered and the dead they could not be buried because the hose broke on the stony Earth. At last vulture was sent to plead the sky, and to soften his heart with a song of the suffering of the sons of men. . . . At last sky was moved to pity and he gave vulture rain wrapped in leaves of coco-yam. (53)

It clearly contributes to the idea that nature is a vast macro entity with some significant micro characters, which function to maintain the equilibrium of nature. This short story within the story (novel) gives us a big picture of the vital roles played by the land and the sky. It also suggests that the land and the sky work in coordination with each other.

Achebe presents a promising portrayal of the Igbo people and their dependence and emotional proximity with land, rain, sky, and animals. Achebe presents the culture with its individuality and shows sincerity towards the preservation of the culture. In the novel, every character takes a stand to save the integrity of the culture, heritage, and the environment, and the rituals associated with them. According to Igbo belief, animals are not the “other,” but they are harbingers of omens; according to ornithological studies, birds and animals are messengers of climatic changes. Villagers lost their yams because of the unsupportive weather, which affects their economy, their foundation of livelihood. They are dependent on natural external condition. Human dependence on nature model them to be submissive and respectful to the environment composed of all human and nonhuman species. In addition, animals and birds have the extraordinary potential to communicate with the inanimate natural world, which is beyond a man’s capacity and his imagination. In *Things Fall Apart*, Nwoye’s story seems like a myth, but studies on animals and birds cannot deny the fact that vultures are the guardians of the ecosystem.

The culture and beliefs of Igbo are about relationships between the physical and nonphysical and the animate and inanimate. This metaphysic is significant in the culture to acknowledge the rights and wrongs on which their social and religious system work. Jude Chudi Okpala in his article, "Igbo Metaphysics in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*" examines the Igbo metaphysics in the narrative imaginations. Okpala sees "Igbo metaphysics as a thought system which recognizes the reality and independent existence of nonphysical being and their interaction with physical beings in their material world" (560). Achebe's images of the physical and the nonphysical are symbolic. There are meanings on metaphysical levels which is a feature of post-colonial texts linked indigenous lives. *Things Fall Apart* as a post-colonial text deviates from the western epistemic which relies upon this idea that the existence of human beings is dependent upon only one non-physical being, God. The intrusion of missionaries in Igbo community is also an attack on the indigenous school of thought, which believes in the relationship between the physical and nonphysical beings, between humans and non-humans, and the absence which is present. *Things Fall Apart* celebrates the non-physical as a powerful force. In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon argues that mainstream environmental study is inclusive in its nature. It understands the plight of nature and poor who are also victims of environmental destruction. Merging social justice and environment gives humans a privilege to be a part of the environment. The meaningful involvement of people of the Igbo community in the social justice of the Wild forest is an implication of the same idea which Cronon emphasizes that people and all non-human species are integral part of "what should be understood as an

environment” (301). When thinking about the environment, one needs to recognize the reasoning behind natural phenomenon and gain wisdom through recognition. In contrast, colonial environment destroys the sense of reasoning a native culture offered to the world.

### Missionaries and Environment

To understand this distortion of culture through colonization, one needs to know the pre-colonial socio, environmental, and cultural values. Achebe, in his post-colonial work, portrays the pre-colonial harmonized environment of Igbo and their bonding with natural world, but the environment’s sanctity is put in great perils when the missionaries invaded. Alison Searle, in “The Role of Missions in Things Fall Apart and Nervous Condition” proposes that missionaries who are introduced in the later parts of the novel, are central to the narrative. Achebe points out the cataclysmic effects of missionaries in the lives of people of Igbo and their culture. Although the purpose of the theological mission is biblical in most of post-colonial texts, it becomes a tool of power relationship applied on indigenous culture. Searle suggests that the Christian mission with its eschatological reconfiguration, “tends to construct the central issues in terms of self-agency, politics, subjugation, and power, failing to effectively incorporate the spiritual, affective, and transcendental dimensions of the missionary endeavor” (50). Colonial power, when executed on any culture, is cultural imperialism and has an effect on people’s lives and the environment. This cultural imperialism constitutes change in the value system, which as a result, changes people’s beliefs, faith, and consequently alters the environment. People of the Igbo community choose to participate in their religious

teaching. Okonkwo's own son Nwoye converted into Christianity. Achebe's depiction of missionaries' role in Igbo community is psychological with colonial enterprise.

Moreover, their relationship with Igbo land is objective. For missionaries, the land is a resource, which they want to use to build their dwellings and institutions. Since they have no bonding with place, they are more objective in using the land. They cannot understand the behavior and nonverbal language of land and the climate of Umuofia the way the natives do. On the other hand, a native diagnoses the climatic conditions of the place he/she belongs to. Climate plays a significant role in determining the economic status and class among the Igbo people, as dominant culture changes the value system. Thus, they are more subjective towards the physical environment around them. Huggan and Tiffin in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, displays a major concern about ecological history, which post-colonialism overlooks. They argued that there is huge violent exploitation of indigenous land in name of development and civilization and ignoring the ancestral values of land and the community, which is an execution of culture imperialism. Besides the problem of exploitation, the Europeans are purposefully disregarding the value system for their own political and economic benefits. They refer to this ideology as ecological imperialism, a phrase coined by environmental historian Alfred Crosby. Quoting Gustava Estava's point of view here, he argues that development and progress are better understood as "forms of 'colonizing anti-colonial in which poor countries of the world are simultaneously seen as socially and politically 'backward,' and in which the positive meaning of the world "development" profoundly rooted after [at least] two countries of its social construction -- is a reminder of what are

not” (30). Ecological and cultural imperialism alter the practices and beliefs of indigenous culture until it becomes universal. This approach bothers lots of academicians and scholars, which brings to them an intellectual responsibility to ponder the definition of “growth” and civilization and think of it as the environment. The environment becomes inevitably corrupt when the sacred is repudiated under the effect of development. The environment witnesses the unethical. The irregularity of the landscape is an example of indigenous classical beauty and ethics; “development” or “civilization” disrupts the natural orders and the way of life of local people. The attempt to replace ethnicity of the environment is a sacrilegious action in respect to the pre-independent land and culture.

Achebe does emphasize that not all missionaries are conservative authoritarians. Mr Brown is a white missionary who shares his religious thoughts and stays most of the time with people. He builds his trust among people of Igbo and shares empathy, which is one of the fundamental grounds in both the cultures. Searle points out that these two different cultures are trying hard to understand each other. By sharing a mutual understanding between the two cultures, Mr. Brown influences the indigenous people to adopt the faith practiced by missionaries. She further posits that Europeans/missionaries have their own assumptions and images of African culture and so do the Africans about Europeans. According to Searle, “Instead of gazing through the eyes of the European, the text displaces the assumption of imperial narrative, and grants the terms of reference and mediating perspective to the usually suppressed ‘other’” (51). The presence of missionaries tremor the lives in Igbo in a good and bad sense. Achebe’s novels do not

just suggest the pros and cons of the missionaries' invasion, but also show how the people of these two communities touched the lives of each other and affected the environment. For example, people of Igbo like Mr. Kiaga and Nwoya and others are influenced by Mr. Brown. The influence of the dominant culture over the non-dominant culture religiously and socially changes the relationship with culture and land. The environment of Igbo began to change. People of the community (including men and women) begin participating in white missionaries' faith, educations, and economy, which gradually desecrates Igbo culture.

#### Okonkwo and Land

Okonkwo realizes that the Igbo community is losing its traditional values, and as an inflexible character, he chooses to commit suicide in violation to Igbo laws. He is the most complex character, who emerged as a great leader in the beginning and became wretched at the end of the novel. In "Beast and Abominations in *Things Fall Apart* and *Omenuko*," Hugh Hodge examines Okonkwo's characters as an abomination of Igbo culture. He points out the title of the novel in relation to Okonkwo, specifically. This essay is a response to the articles by Adeleke Adeeko. He objects to some of Adeeko's reading on *Things Fall Apart* and argues that a protagonist of *Things Fall Apart* is a "premonition of postcolonial beast, slouching towards Bethlehem" (50). Hodge writes that Adeeko calls Okonkwo a character "who worries about future, in contrast or anti-Okonkwo who act as tomorrow does not exist..." (51). Hodge argues that since Okonkwo comes from a cultural background in which suicide rituals are blasphemy to the land and the belief system of Igbo, he violated the most sacred law of Igbo culture, thus people of

the community boycotted his dead body. Hodge affirms that “Igbo culture has no place for rituals or politically motivated suicide; all suicides are considered abominable offense against the earth. . . .Traditionally the body of a person who committed suicide was discarded in the ‘bad bush’ along with other inhuman things his spirit was lost, and he could neither join the ancestors (not even ‘all stained in dung’) nor be reborn” (53).

What’s ironic about Okonkwo is that he became a successful leader in the pursuit of not standing parallel to his lazy father, but the novel ends with him becoming a replica of his father: a coward, criminal, and a disgrace on his clan and Igbo culture. He disobeyed the land and stained the sacred relationship of his and Ani, the earth goddess. Besides violating his land, he violates the fundamental affinity of being human, which is common in Igbo culture and among the missionaries. In order to prove his masculinity, he kills his foster son Ikemefuna, his wife, a boy from a different clan, and the court messenger.

West also reflects on Okonkwo socially and psychologically. She suggests that “When Okonkwo cannot control his temper, his violation of ritual jeopardizes the community and causing imbalance among all the cosmic forces” (60). Obierika did warn Okonkwo saying that the Earth goddess will punish the community for violations done by anyone in the clan. The harmony in the community is directly proportional to the Earth’s fertility, honor, and sanctity of the environment. There are rituals for land by people to praise it in order to increase produce, to fluster human minds to be patient and wise, and to maintain the balance between the land humans. She posits that “The Week of Peace expresses in ritual a need to restrain impulses and curb aggression in order to keep the humans and the natural world in balance” (60). However, Okonkwo constantly loses a

sense of being human and disobeyed the moral bearing of the Earth spirit and ancestors, which Igbo community is firmly associate itself with. His actions are violent, irrational, unwise, and capricious; they damage the moral and spiritual status of the community and Earth. He loses his connection with the land by breaking the Week of Peace. These actions lead him into exile for seven years and later on to his death.

Okpala discusses the symbolic significance of the novel because he believes anthropological interpretation does not do justice in terms of revealing some deep-rooted meaning in the events and actions in Igbo culture. He, with the reference of *Morning yet on Creation Day*, discusses symbolic relationship of Igbo community with their land. He summarizes Achebe's philosophy that a person earns his character before he is born, and the Earth and ancestors are there to guide spiritually before and after birth. The people of Igbo live this ancestral wisdom and values, which Okonkwo did not. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe shows the relationship between a person and *chi*. Okpala argues that "The narrative presents Okonkwo in different lights: he said yes when his chi says yes; yet, he infringed the law of the gods: he broke the week of peace; he killed Ikemefuna" (562). In contrast, Obierika, who is a better leader, did warn Okonkwo about the consequences of his action. Obierika's role in Okonkwo's life is a wise advisor, yet out of his sheer arrogance and ego, Okonkwo refuses to listen to his clan, his close friends, and the goddess Ani; he pursued his power irrationally. Okpala suggests that Okonkwo's fall is not about missionary's invasion, rather it is about the "metaphysical nature of Igbo person's experience" (563). Since Okonkwo broke the week of peace and has criminal records, his Earth, Anni, sentences him for seven years of exile. Okonkwo was banished



to his mother's land Mbanta. His exile is an avenue to recognize his relationship with land and to honor a mother's nurturing love and disciplined himself emotionally for himself and his clan. He was sent to exile to learn to be gratuitous to the land. But, he is clouded by ego and power. His suicidal actions completely segregated him from receiving one last act of respect; he did not receive burial.

Okpala affirms that on the existential level, Okonkwo was ordinary and inauthentic, which makes his presence insignificant in the novel. But what seems blasphemous is Okonkwo's death without burial. He conveys, "to die without burial is the worst thing that could happen to an Igbo person because burial suggests both a physical and spiritual transaction with the ancestors; burial sets one off from the ancestral journey among the spirits" (564). Hence, not showing a final respect by giving him a funeral, clearly suggests his sanctions by the Igbo community, his loss of connection from his ancestors, and penalty given by the community. Suicide is blasphemy in the Igbo community and is against the law of nature. Achebe's portrayal of the environment in relation to the Igbo people is of master and slave, and the master is nature in this case. The fall of the Igbo tribe suggests "changes" in the culture and the environment. Okonkwo's death and the novel ending in silence leaves one to contemplate on what could be the next, when 'things are still falling apart.' It is a continuation of the fall of Igbo culture. The study of Igbo metaphysics surpasses the study of empirical invasion in *Things Fall Apart*. As a post-colonial text, the novel emphasizes on the being and the non- being, and their inevitable relationship and effects upon each other. This metaphysic of Igbo culture helps us understand the significance of the absence, the mystical, the

supernatural in an ordinary human life. It helps us understand the existence of the environment (relation between beings and non-beings) outside the empirical bubble.

### Environment and Text

Along with the past and the present, Huggan and Tiffin look to the future; what will come after environmentalism and post-nature? What will be the next step for future generations to realize the consequences of being detached from natural world and whether or not there is need to return to primitive knowledge and its implication on mainstream environmental culture? Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* projects this ideology by showing different approaches to these concerns. In an article called “Achebe’s Sense of an Ending: History and Tragedy in *Things Fall Apart*,” Richard Begam brings three different ways of reading the events, which can conclude the novel. First, Achebe writes a form of nationalist history, which means recovery of the past. Second, he writes a form of adversarial history, which does not focus on reconstructing an authentic past, but rather it emphasizes “deconstructing the imposed counterfeit past.” Achebe’s celebrates the peculiarities and specifics of Igbo culture by highlighting the depth and significance of the events in novel, the integrity and ethnic beauty of the land of Umuofia. It suggests the reconstruction of an authentic past before colonization, which national writers of Nigeria ignore. Begum argues that from the first point of view, Okonkwo’s suicide is tragedy. Okonkwo suffers from “a guilty of errors in judgement, of hamartia” (399). He is one of the best representatives of Igbo communities in the novel, but he obliterates the line between being virtuous and being prideful. This constitutes Begam’s first reading of the events. The second reading, adversarial projects Achebe’s Nigerian attitude against

colonialism. Achebe discredits the colonial enterprises and colonial discourse by creating an ironical underpinning beneath missionaries to reveal their political interest and “superior” attitude towards natives. The third way of reading suggests that Achebe creates a metahistory to highlight the sensitivity and authenticity of the Nigerian culture. This kind of history calls attentions to itself as a piece of writing, a narrative construction that depends on principle of selections (what material will be included?), emphasis (what importance will be attached to it?), and shaping (how will it be organized or arranged?)” (398). This third one mentioned above draws upon the specificity of introducing the past in a manner that it counters the colonial legacy and creates a critical awareness about Nigerians and their relationship with each other. Okonkwo is an individual, yet he presents Igbo community. He is a cultural and social ambassador for the Igbo village. His falling apart in the novel is a falling apart of the entire community and culture. This fall constitutes changes in social system by dominant forces of imperialism, changes in belief and customs in the villages of Umuofia, changes of faith and economy, changes in relationship between people of Igbo and the missionaries, thus changes in the environment of Umuofia.

From the rise of Okonkwo as powerful leader to his fall, which indicates the fall of Igbo culture, the events are placed in a series; one action leads to other. Achebe’s narrative and use of language plays crucial roles in highlighting the changes before and after missionaries’ expansion in the village of Umuofia. His style of writing supports the first and the second ways of Begam’s reading. His use of language recovers the past glory of Igbo as well as destroys the imperial leverage from the English language in the novel.

In *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell points towards the problem behind the pastoral imagination. He is skeptical towards how close a text can mirror the real environment, when after all, a text is a product of imagination: a virtual world. This makes the imaginary reconstruction of the environment is being invented and distorted simultaneously. According to him, “. . . even if human perception could perfectly register environmental stimuli, literature could not” (84). However, Achebe’s portrayal of African environment is praiseworthy and presents a true picture of the African world by fictionalizing the events, the African landscape, and familiarizing one with ethos of African culture. This might be the reason why Achebe did not compromise with succinct uses of language to construct the reality in the novel. He highlights the individuality of African wilderness and lifestyle of Nigerian dependent on the flora and fauna. The use of language such as, “ilo” (the village Green), “obodo” (the land of the brave), “nza” (a very small bird) are words associated with land and the environment in African culture. Words like “Go-di-di-go-go-di-go” is rhyme and reflects upon the oral tradition entangled in rituals. For example, the word egwugwu, is a ritual; these are ceremony associated with environment.

Bill Ashcroft, in *The Empire Writes Back*, posits that post-colonial countries are distinctive in terms of culture and so they have distinguished literatures. However, the common ground in all post-colonial literatures is a process of abrogation (a refutation of the categories set by imperial power) and appropriation (when a language is used to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural status). It is a remake of language to its new use (38). Achebe’s deliberate use of a native/local language with English is remarkable because it

answers Buell's skepticism on literature's inability to represent environmental reality. For example, the word "ilo," is a place in the village where people assemble for social, political, and religious interactions. It is an Igbo name for a special space where people meet for the environmental ceremonies and rituals. The new yam festival took place in "ilo" in Umuofia. It was an occasion to be thankful to "Ani" the "Earth goddess and the source of all fertility" (Achebe 36). Such use of creole is a post-colonial feature of the text. It leads one to gain a better understanding of the ethnic environmental space. Moreover, it also justifies Begam's adversarial reading by destroying sympathetic and counterfeit impression of Nigeria given by national writers and celebrating individuality of culture through the language. It makes the environmental imagination genuinely unique. His use of language and style bridges the gap of imaginations that exists between an indigenous audience and foreign readers. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe highlights the power relation between a man and a place through language, and makes it more subjective to one whether or not one native.

Huggan and Tiffin talk about 'post-nature' and posit that modernity and mechanical order of life is a phase of post-nature. They define "post-natural in a dialectical sense of losing human connection to the natural environment while simultaneously gaining a reinvigorated awareness that nature itself is continually reformed" (203). They argue further that humans gain an awareness of constantly reformed nature. This reformed nature is a result of humans' actions when they take on control of nature and pretend to be as powerful as nature. *Things Fall Apart*, condemning this modern idea of 'post-nature' lived by mainstream culture, reflects on the primitive

value of nature having complete control of animate lives. Considering this in retrospect, mainstream self-involved culture will have to return the ancient wisdom of nature to maintain the balance within the environment. This is why it is significant to know the Igbo community, its ancient virtues, and its individual glory without being affected and influenced by missionaries. The invasion of missionaries does affect the Igbo community and the environment changes significantly, however, the missionaries are not the only reasons behind the Igbo community is falling apart.

Post-colonial literature explores this tension between subjective and objective relationships represented by the two different cultures, and highlights the crisis of mutual understanding between the perspectives of the two cultures about the environment. The African landscape is religion grounded to the indigenous culture of Africa. A culture will be diminished by the dominant culture, and with the loss of that culture, the entire unique understanding of nature and the environment will be vanished. Achebe brings an independent and uninterrupted narrative of the native people of the Igbo and their environmental culture. Like a proud African, he celebrates the singularity of African flora and fauna and creates an authentic representation of the culture.

*Things Fall Apart* presents the macro narrative of an indigenous culture. The most interesting shift seems to happen here by merging post-colonialism and ecocriticism. This is an interaction between humans and nonhumans and suggests that the environment is one powerful entity comprised of humans, animals, and forests. The physical setting of the novel opens the door for one to travel through the village culture and African forest. Achebe projects a very complex social system entangled in beliefs and rituals and

provides a reason and purpose behind such practices. He affirms that if such African lifestyles and practices do not seem true to modern civilization, it does not mean African people and their belief system is philistine.

Putting my final thoughts, there is a strong presence of a subjective relationship between human and land. Pre-colonial status of land in respect to Igbo community is more personal, reverend, and divine. Such practice of ideology of land formulates people of Igbo to pursue socially and economically stable lives. This ideology of land changes with foreign intrusion, resulting into falling of the culture. Achebe's literary imagination of the environment in *Things Fall Apart* is panoramic. It tells us about humans, animals, social system and religion, and demonstrates a strong relationship between each living creature in the novel. The relationship between the entities is cooperative and interdependent. It bridges the crisis by encouraging the idea of mutual co-ordination of humans, animals, and forests and offers some fundamental cultural differences (indigenous and European) focused on land. Post-colonial ecocriticism provides a clear picture of relationship dynamics and tension between different cultures resulting in a hostile environment. Undoubtedly, Achebe's literary imagination bridges the gap between the stories and scientific environmental studies. It suggests the possibility that the two fields are designated towards one aim: bringing awareness to the readers about the role of every single creature to maintain the ecosystem (the environment). In *Things Fall Apart*, he traces nature and its power in the roots of philosophy, religion, history, and theology.

## CHAPTER 2

REINCARNATING SUNDARBAN IN AMITAV GHOSH'S  
*THE HUNGRY TIDE*

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is one of the admirable works in Indian-English Literature. Ghosh's writing usually focuses on mixing most cultures and identities. Concomitant with this theme, *The Hungry Tide* is about the conflicts between the culture and species living in Morichjhanpi, a small village in Sundarban. It is an exotic island, an archipelago, which paints a treacherous picture of inhabitants who live in fear of fierce tides, wild animals, and the struggle to make their living. Sundarban has a history, the legacy of colonization, and extraordinary flora and fauna, which determines the living condition of Bangladeshi refugees living in that space. *The Hungry Tide* reflects upon the discourse of the archipelago. Life in an archipelago is beyond the imagination of ordinary human beings who live in landlocked areas. As a matter of fact, the lifestyle in the archipelago is challenging because it is not programmed to be pursued the way it is in a landlocked, well organized city. Vegetation is highly rich. It is the home of some of the most unique species which are difficult to find in general.

Humans have trained themselves to live in a place where animals are in authority. Sundarban, as an archipelago, is an unadulterated biodiversity. The novel provides a mainstream environmentalist and conservationist lens on the biodiverse environment of Sundarban. Ghosh offers an intellectual inquiry that peers into the life of species: animals, humans, and tides, who are in conflict with each other to conquer the space for living. *The Hungry Tide* is a problem novel, which integrates three crisis- the crises of



imaginations, the crises of mediation, and the crises of negotiation. In this chapter, I am analyzing one of the most complicated environmental discourses which points toward how the characters are responding to each other and what environmental perspectives can be offered through this piece of literature. I will also investigate how the crisis of imagination and a tension between the cultural and textual worlds are projected in the third space called Sundarban. It is the biggest delta on the earth with the largest mangrove forest and home of wild animals. A large portions of Mangrove forest on the Indian side are declared as reserved forest under the Forest Act 1865. It is a wildlife sanctuary, and it has the largest number of tigers. Since it is formed by the confluence of three rivers: Ganges, Meghna, and Brahmaputra, the place has a complex network of tidal waves and mudflats. Sundarban has a pulsating environment. This hostile environment opens the opportunities to touch upon the issues like tourism and extinction of endangered species with. Marichjhapi was one of the uninhabited islands in Sundarban.

#### Sundarban—Third Space

This post-colonial land is impregnated with the history of partition of India and Pakistan and the East Pakistan and the West Pakistan. During the colonial period, the Bengal Tiger was an endangered species and still it is, hence, the government took an initiative to protect and preserve the species by creating a wildlife sanctuary in Sundarban. Sundarban also provides a small refuge to the community--a space where people can feel liberated and they can find their identity: a home. Through the characters in the novel, Ghosh presses upon some unknown issues regarding society, identity crisis, the dysfunctional relationship between people and endangered species in that “third

space” to use. The term ‘third space’ was introduced by Homi Bhabha in his scholarly work, *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha explains that a post-colonial sociolinguistic space in which enounce (words or utterance) and enunciation (implied) comes into play. He proposes, “It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitute a discursive condition of enunciation that insure that a meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity...” (55). The use of language to portray Sundarban as islands encapsulate some unique features specific to Sundarban landscape and its environment. Looking at the images of Sundarban Island, water, tides, and flora and fauna, one might say that Ghosh’s use of language is succinct and metaphorical. The images wrapped in the narrative convey the literal condition of the island and tension within inhabitants of the environmental and political culture of ignorance after partition. The images of the environment does not celebrate cultural and biological diversity, but shows a socio-political difference between the natives’ culture and the Europeans’ protective attitude over the plight of locals and refugees. In order to show the seriousness of the issue, the lands of Sundarban become a third-space to appeal that the environment of Sundarban needs attention and care. Jonathan Rutherford in an interview published in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, argues that Bhabha differentiates between culture difference and culture diversity and suggests how the ‘third space’ challenges cultural code wrapped up in language and questions a presumed cultural identity. This essay covers the historical and ecological aspects in respect to Sundarban. After the division of India and Bangladesh (Eastern Pakistan) in 1947, upper class and middle class refugees settled in West Bengal and Eastern Pakistan, but a huge crowd of poor, outcast

refugees took their refuge in Sundarban land. Since they were counted as neither Indian nor Bangladeshi, the West Bengal government evacuated some of them and killed lots of them. In one of the chapters, “Locating the Politics of the Environment and the Exploited in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*,” in a scholarly work, *Essays on Ecocriticism*, Divya Anand contributes, “The novel fictionalizes the tenuous links between environmental conservation and environmental racism, mapping the nexus between blind “conservation” projects, free enterprise and the State where the scapegoats are more often the environment and the exploited” (159). The islands of Sundarban and the lives of those who live on them evoke this debate about the exploitation of the environment under the umbrella of the word “preservation.” Anand argues that this project of preservation and conservation is double standard of the West Bengal government. In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh fictionalizes the consequences of the settlement of which miserable villagers are scapegoats and presents a casuistry of the “environmental altruism” played by the government.

In one of the interviews, “Between the Walls of Archives and Horizons of Imagination: An Interview with Amitav Ghosh,” Mahmood Kooria reports that “the novelist’s approach to the past through the eyes of characters is substantially different from the approach of historians.” By providing such vast, rich imagination of people in conflict with animals and their struggle to survive in one of most the tempestuous climatic conditions, Ghosh familiarizes his readers with an unfamiliar third world. It is a space that offers a sociolinguistic transformation with the use of metaphors and symbols. Divya Anand in “Words on Water: Nature and Agency in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry*

*Tide*,” discusses the metaphorical use of language to extract symbolic meaning of water and landscape, which constitute an implication of ‘third space’ in *The Hungry Tide*. She builds upon the review of W. R. Greer and states that “Situating in the face of threatening topography of the Sundarbans, social differences between both the urban and rural sets of characters are gradually elided, resulting in an increasing tension between their cultural and social identities” (25). The space raises a unique discourse of the third world with linguistic and social identity. The novel best exemplifies the concept of the ‘third space’ because Sundarban offers one a place of transformation and cultural changes. The whole nature of this environmental sphere is composed of humans of multiple identities and cultural background and living with different forms of species.

The environment of Sundarban rules over the people who have refuge there. Sundarban, in respect to those people (refugees), is a third space. It constructs the culture and new identity within the postcolonial condition. Those refugees settlement in Sundarban is a result of hegemonic forces and later on they are evicted. Rutherford quotes Bhabha saying, “This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and set up a new structure of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (211). Sundarban is an in-between space for the people where they are negotiating for their own rights and identity. Despite the environmental challenges, those people are looking for new possibilities by staying in that hostile space which is ambivalent and by questioning the established definition of culture and identity.

### Sundarban as a Character

It is important to mention that Sundarban rises as the most powerful non-human character in relation to other animate characters. The richness of the vegetation and mysteriousness of the environment mesmerizes readers. The reason Sundarban is intensified as a character is because it sets a strong foundation for a reader in order to understand the lives of animals and humans influenced by the volatile atmosphere of the Sundarban and its tidal waves. The scene below is a vast image of Sundarban:

Until you behold it for your-self, it is almost impossible to believe that here, interposed between the sea and the plains of Bengal, lies an immense archipelago of islands. The islands are the trailing threads of India's fabric, the ragged fringe of her sari, the 'achol' that follows her, half wetted by the sea. They number in thousands, the islands . . . . When the tide creates new island, overnight Mangroves begin to gestate, and if the conditions are right they can spread so fast as to cover a new island within short years. A mangrove forest is a universe unto itself utterly unlike other woodlands or jungles . . . . Every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes, and crocodiles. There is no prettiness here to invite the stranger in: yet to the world at large this archipelago is known as Sundarbans, which means "the beautiful forest." (Ghosh 6-7)

This passage is a representation of space that has its own principal governed by its own natural law. Sundarban itself is an ecosystem that is comprised of a symbiotic relationship between all kinds of inhabitants in that ecology. The above narrative brings to our consciousness a constant evolution of those islands and recurring changes in the environment. The image of Archipelago in the novel and the life associated with it projects the lack of global understanding about how oblivious people are towards the place they do not belong to. Just because one does not know about the place and issues related to the place, that does not mean that place never existed. The sketch of Sundarban does tell the story of its own genesis and the ongoing climatic changes which puts the

lives of villagers in jeopardy. “The mangrove forest is a universe unto itself” (7) which kills hundreds of people. Also, the journal “Words on Water: Nature and Agency in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*,” suggests that the novel gives a voice to subaltern experience and brings awareness about the condition of local people in the eyes of elites and foreign audience. Anand affirms that Ghosh’s novel offer a dialogue between flora, fauna, and human, and questions the biases and hypocrisy showed by the government and environmental conservationists. She broaches a discussion on how Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* problematizes the relationship between the community and the natural world. Anand states that “The friction between land and sea in the land Sundarban creates unique ecosystem for plants and animal life, and given the increasing human encroachment on the habitat coupled with lopsided conservative initiatives, tensions between these various elements seem inevitable” (26). The richness and density of Sundarban juxtaposes Ghosh’s problematization of the place in an ethical and aesthetic way. In *The Hungry Tide*, although the Sundarban forest does not exchange a dialogue, it does perform the role of being a phenomenal and an uncontrolled force. Her focus on aquatic life in Sundarban really caught my focus. One cannot deny that the environment of Sundarban is constantly changing and shifting. Water can be seen as a strong element physically and metaphorically in the novel. The effects of water is on animals and humans. She refers to German biologist Hubert Hendrich’s studies that since water in Sundarban is salty, which makes the tigers irritable (26). Also, Fokir helps Piya to differentiate between the dolphins in salt water and in fresh water. In agreement with Anand, I will add water in form the rivers, seas, tides, and floods play a significant defining role in shaping human

and animal life. Such environment in which water, wind, land, animate and inanimate objects are subject of influence to one another and invent the third world which reveals the uniqueness of people, flora, and fauna and their interdependence on each other.

The islands are spread wide and land also has some of the most dangerous species who place themselves as an authority over man. What makes Sundarban a powerful character is the everlasting invincibility and its impregnability in respect to the people living in Sundarban. This is similar to the scene about the wild forest in *Things Fall Apart*. The persona of the wild forest is portrayed the one who does divine justice.

Ghosh, in *The Hungry Tide*, offers the literary imagination which aids readers to share an understanding with the two foreigners Kanai and Piya and share the experience with locals. Through his narrative, Ghosh draws our consciousness toward the ethical responsibility we have as human beings. The conversation between Kanai and Piya after the killing encourages Burke's idea of rethinking on such environmental concern:

“Piya,” said Kanai, tugging at her hand. “Whatever it is, it’s better you don’t stay here to see this.”

Piya looked into his face, illuminated by the torches. “What aren’t you telling me?” she said. “What are they going to do?”

Kanai spat into the dust. “Piya, you have to understand—that animal’s been preying on this village for years. It’s killed two people and any number of cow and goats—“

“This is an animal, Kanai,” Piya said, “you can’t take revenge on an animal.”

All around them now people were howling, their faces lit by the dancing flames: “Maar! Maar!” Kanai caught hold of her elbow and tried to lead her away. “It’s too late now, Piya. We should both go.”

Go?” said Piya. “I am not going anywhere. I am going to put a stop to this.”

“Piya,” said Kanai. “You’re dealing with a mob here. They could turn on us too. We’re outsiders.”

“So you’re just going to stand by and let it happen?”

“There is nothing we can do, Piya.” Kanai was shouting now. “Be reasonable. Let’s go.” (242)

Kanai, a translator, goes with the idea of killing a tiger and takes it as reasonable event that occurs in the village, whereas Piya, a marine biologist and sensitive person, resists anthropocentric views about humans over animals. Piya’s argument is that animals should not be subjected to revenge because they are animals. They don’t have a conscience to prove that they are sensitive and are responsible for everything around them. God has created them that way, hence, why they are always at the end of a gun point. The synthesis of conflicting ideas between Piya and Kanai shows a movement-- a shift from one idea to the other.

#### Character: Piya and Kanai

In addition, Kanai’s visit to Sundarban after being invited by Nilima, suggests the revelation of the political initiatives taken by Nirmal to safeguard Louisbury. Nirmal’s journal is documented evidence to show that the cultural and geographical displacement exceeds frame of expectation of readers by showing a sign of contestation. People living in Sundarban are claiming their identity by conquering the space. Sundarban as third space is a catalyst for new cultural formation in which habitats (including humans and animals) are in negotiation with each other to initiate new identity.

In *The Hungry Tide*, it is important to consider that these characters walk one through the lives of Sundarban. They familiarize one with one of the most outrageous environments on the planet. Roman Bartosch’s *Environmentality* suggests that fiction causes experience and creates a bond between the textual world and the outer world. It is helpful to analyze the crisis in environmental ethics and the role of culture and text. This



complex relationship between the environment and human society is suffering because of the gap in Bartosch's words, 'aporia.' There is this gap between what the environment is trying to communicate and the way human society perceives it.

In *Environmentality*, he posits that environmental concern should not be a subject of environmentalists and sciences. Rather, it should be a ground of common concern for the whole society, which includes the experts as well as ordinary people. Ghosh quite astutely employing the role of a journalist, a scientist, and a local to point towards the existing crisis of sensitivity towards humans, land and animals constitute the environment. This makes a point in order to understand a complex relationship between humans, animals and the environment and emphasizes the idea that each one of us has a role to play. Anand posits that "The novel is sensitive towards environmental crisis as well as the human crisis, foregrounded these crises as mutually inclusive of the poor and the natural world" (166). A forced evacuation of the poor and denial of their rights and survivals in the name of environmental conservation exposes a serious lack of empathy and inability of the first world to think about a judicious approach to care for the environment which includes the third world. To understand the problem within the community in Sundarban and their relationship with the natural world, Ghosh uses a two folds narrative: the one is narrated through the eyes of Piya, Kanai, and Fokir, and the other unfolds through Nirmal's letters, which shows the historical event twenty years ago. Both the narratives emphasize the plight of poor and their attitudes towards non-human species. For Kanai, Sundarban is touristic. He is a sojourner in the town. He responded to his Aunt Nilima after she sent many letters. In "Home and Homelessness in

The Hungry Tide: A Discourse Unmade,” Saswat S. Das examines home and homelessness as a metaphorical space. Das reveals his viewpoint on the relationship of central characters with the place on experiential basis of the characters. He offers, “Though, Kanai lives in a translated world, a world at once unreal and vacuous, he is not at ease while journeying through socio-cultural hinterlands” (179-185). If we see the world of Sundarban through the eyes of Kanai, it is chaos, in which he has been plunged into. It is a source of literary translations for him. His relation is very objective to the place. The place is not a home for him. The definition of home has been transformed constantly with time. “Home” has various meanings; in general definition, home is house- a place of dwelling for a person. A place belongs to forefather could be a home for a person; a place can be called a home if a person has deepest connection with that space. The meaning home or land depends upon the experiential aspects in relation to a person. In postcolonial literature, home is a socio- cultural, geo-political phenomenon which integrates some major issues related to identity and belongingness. *The Hungry Tide* presents a home which belongs to homeless Bangladeshi refugees. They were banished from their own country and they found shelter on the island which is a home of unique species, and creates the most complicated, dense, and congested environment. Sundarban land is a home for those refugees and locals. Das suggests that, “At the end *The Hungry Tide* swallows ‘home’ and ‘homelessness’ along with their multiple inhabitants, what remains like silt under the raging water is Bonbibi’s kingdom of entropy without a trace of the authorial injunction written with the finger of water on the vast body of the river” (179-185). Ghosh’s characters are subjective to the land of Sundarban. They are agents

who help one understand their relationship with Sundarban, and walk through the history of Sundarban.

Character: Piya

Piya is more conscious to the environment and her profession which convinces her to observe every single detail behind the climate, ecology, and inhabitants, in particular dolphins in Sundarban. Piya's lens of looking at the world of Sundarban is academic and simultaneously she is subjective towards the environment and expresses her resentment towards the revenge killing of the tiger. Piya provokes the attitude of the 'First wave ecocriticism,' which means to focus on conservation. For Piya, Sundarban is a home for her excursion and to save the Orcaella. She shows her empathy towards the tiger killed by the villagers rather than showing her sympathy towards the miserable life of villagers. She is a tourist; however, she catches the sensitiveness of the atmosphere, the rage and hatred of people, and the revenge killing of animals by villagers. She takes a stand on hunting tigers and is opinionated about why villagers should not kill tigers. No doubt, her guide, Fokir, plays a crucial role in walking her through the dense and complicated environment of Sundarban. Certainly, she receives the first hand deep understanding of the land and animal with the help of her companion and guide Fokir. Ghosh through the eyes of Piya, creates a narrative-- an 'ecological' literature of which the subject is *Orcaella Brevirostris*. He successfully creates a story on dolphins, and familiarizes the extratextual with this unfamiliar species, rare of its own kind:

But she has seen today made her wonder if she hadn't made a mistake. If these were coastal Orcaella, what were they doing congregating in the pool? That was out of character of them. . . . Had they found novel way of adapting their behavior to this tidal ecology? Piya knew that if she could establish she would have a

hypothesis of stunning elegance and economy--a thing of beauty rarely found in the messy domain of mammalian behavior. (Ghosh 104)

The novel has a structure which reveals human consciousness and forms a narrative discourse forming a connection between nature and humanity. Through the eyes of Piya, Ghosh creates a narrative, an 'ecological' literature of which the subject is *Orcaella Brevirostris*. He successfully creates a story on dolphin and familiarizes readers with this unfamiliar species are rare. Through an ecocritical lens, Ghosh uproots one with the environmental threat first caused by government and then caused by human apathy.

On the contrary, Kanai is a literary person and sees the Sundarban as an exotic place which could inspire any writer to write. In *Postcolonial Ecology: Literatures of the Environment* edited by Deloughrey and Handley, Jonathan Steinwand contributes an essay on "What the Whales Would Tell Us." Steinwand suggests that studies of cetacean have become a significant part of post-colonial environmental studies to seek guidance on how humans should guidance from whales and dolphins to participate in ecology. He quotes Bryld and Lykke who trace symbolic significance of dolphins; dolphins are "extra-terrestrial others;" they are companion species, messengers of the sacred, tricksters, and cyborgs" (183). Dolphins are a bearer of spirituality and cultural values, hence, a western endeavor of emphasizing cetacean in modern environmental studies becomes crucial. Steinwand argues what makes whales and dolphins seem mythical and compelling is there ambiguity. They are animals who share some human characteristic like developing their own language, and being collective, friendly, and compassionate in nature and although mammals live in water. Steinwand calls them a "liminal figure."

### Character: Fokir and Piya

On the contrary, Fokir's struggle to save the island and Piya's failed attempts to save the tiger from being killed, indicates the inability of humans and politics to address environmental concerns on a serious level. Fokir never was disappointed about his occupation, despite the fact that he was not making enough money to secure the future of his wife and son. Ghosh employs a greater amount of significance to Fokir's work of catching the crabs. He is claiming the land for his and the villagers' survival. Das suggests that "River is a passion for Fokir, who identifies each and every moment of its life with his own, the placid moments and also the deeply ferocious ones that lie within. Lusibari, for Fokir is prison where he broods and sulks" (181). Fokir is a strong character who, despite all the challenges and disappointment of his wife, goes with his passion for his occupation, knowing the fact he does not earn that much. Fokir is a local to that place. He uses his vision and prediction on climatic changes to help Piya time to time. He is not literate, but he is educated enough to read the unseen changes in that space which the visitors and even some villagers can't see. Fokir is an eye for Piya as well as the readers. To Fokir, Sundarban is a home and that is why he is relentless towards preserving the land from being swallowed by oceans because of crabs. Anand's impression of Fokir is, "far from being stereotyped as a "noble savage." Fokir exhibits no innate sensitivity to natural forces when given the opportunity to be the agency of violence" (162). People depend on Fokir's sense of geographical direction. Fokir kills crabs to save the land and as every ordinary villager, he sees the tiger as a threat, and supports the killing of the tiger. It is because he associates himself with the plight of

villagers and stands by his right to live and survive on the island.

Besides, these two tourists, Piya and Kanai with conflicted thoughts, Fokir and other refugees/residents, though illegitimately living in Sundarban, consider Sundarban as their home, and they are in conflict with non-human creatures. All nature's entities including mankind are involved in a tug of war and those who live will conquer the land. Sundarban's land represents a space of 'belongingness.' Because they have invested their time, they have developed a strong feeling of connectedness with the land. Following my argument, Joseph Meeker brings to us an interesting, yet frightening characteristic of anthropomorphism in Ecological pioneering species:

Ecological pioneering species, like human pioneers, are creatures capable of living with some of normal needs felt by others of their kind. They are heroic individuals who make their homes where no one else wants to live, and their lives lead the ways towards challenging and dangerous horizons. They risk death in order to conquer new territory, and their survival depends upon individual qualities of strength, aggressiveness, and often their ruthlessness (141).

In *The Hungry Tide*, Sundarban is a hub of ecological pioneers; humans, tiger, and crocodiles, three heroic species indulge in war with each other. It's a dangerous phenomenon that occurs in Sundarban and humans are inundated with it on a daily basis. Ghosh attributes all these creatures with heroic value in order to create credible conflict in which different groups of creatures with the same value and power are in war with each other and are all ready to take the risks of death and misery to conquer their space. From a post-colonial ecocritical lens, the novel strongly suggests that neither humans nor nonhumans are subjected to be oblivious.

#### Filling the Crisis

The novel focusses on the response of humans to nature and nature responding

back to humans based on what humans are doing as well as implies what humans are supposed to do. Literature plays a significant role either by fulfilling a gap of understanding between a man and nature or by ringing a bell about something wrong that happening on the humans' end. Bartosch's offers reading praxis to fill the imaginative gap which is inclined towards examining forms of the narrative in the novel. He argues that forms and structure ignores the post-colonialism and ecocriticism theory. He suggests that "fiction must be read with regard to both literary encounters with 'reality' and to the literary means of emplotting such encounters" (89). Roman Bartosch examines the novel through its narrative structure. The novel presents a clash between the environment and human society: the ecology and social ecology which problematizes the environmental discourse. The narrative constantly engages the reader and the characters like Piya and Kanai, who are strangers on the wild land with inevitable conflict between the nonhumans and humans. Bartosch encourages forms of oriented reading to pursue a post-colonial ecocritical analysis of the text. The reason behind his appreciation of such reading is that post-colonial ecocriticism focuses on harmonizing the environment and to do so the text requires language of "organic form," which is more nature oriented. Hence, the praxis of looking at the postcolonial ecocritical narrative in the text produces harmony between the readers and the text and produces an aesthetic piece of literature.

Huggan and Tiffin write about the human-animal relation and a sense of priorities towards protecting endangered species or securing local lives who suffered from a cannibal environment. He argues that in *The Hungry Tide*, the tiger is not sacrificed to satisfy any anthropocentric belief system. It is killed for the purpose of getting revenge,

and the locals earn the right. There is certainly a split of ideology between the western conservationist and mainstream environmentalists, and one of the examples in the novel is Piya who presents a conservationist approach and the locals who stand for mainstream environmental voices. Because of the deterioration of flora and fauna on large scale due to human disposal, a preservation movement began. However, I would say the act of preservation excluded and neglected the locals and indigenous lives. They argue:

Ironically, however, the shift of emphasis from anthropocentric to environment-based (ecocentric) philosophies and practices not only failed to benefit those peoples whose pre-colonial apprehension of being-in-the-world had been systematically denigrated by Europeans, but also consistently provided justification for their colonization, the 'primitive' being distinguished from the 'civilized' precisely by the 'civilised' precisely by its proximity to natural world. (187)

Although, Sundarban was not a colonized space, a hostile environment and the settlement of refugees in Sundarban is certainly a legacy of colonization. During the partition, refugees were forced to be to be displaced in Murijichappa, and later on they were evacuated by the government which consequently turned into mass killing and rape. Huggan and Tiffin asserts that this is a colonial attitude executed on the refugees at the beginning of the post-colonial era. In agreement with Huggan and Tiffin, I would say that the locals and the refugees paid a heavy and life threatening a cost for their displacement. Considering this dichotomy between the two schools of thought (conservationists and modern environmentalists), the mainstream environmental scholars express a need to merge post-colonial and environmental studies to study the environment with purpose to examine problems and conditions of all animate and inanimate entities in a post-colonial space. This split of thoughts between the



conversations suggests Burke's notions of "praxis of rethinking." Burke suggests the model of "orientation, disorientation, and reorientation," the idea that emphasizes here is continually involved in thought process. This thought process is about 'being' rather than 'becoming.' Burke facilitates us with the idea of negotiation. He recognized the fact that human viewpoint of the world will be always be anthropocentric, but he stresses that human beings have the "ability and the responsibility to become as critical as possible of their own motives..." (417). Humans have tendency to forget who they are and become something that is not necessary, but is a driven material obsession. This change from being to becoming occurs when a man stops recognizing the significance of non-human entity and how it affects his/her life.

Post-colonial ecocritical study of *The Hungry Tide* gives us a lens to contemplate the condition of people (refugees and descendants) in a constantly shifting environment, which includes a strong tidal force that wipes out the village and a constant fear of being preyed on by wild animals. Steinwand's concept of "liminal creature" aids one to understand relation of humans dwelling in the environment of these liminal figures; they are the locals and indigenous people who are often overlooked when it comes to conservationist approaches in environmental studies. He further argues that these local and indigenous people are also liminal figures like dolphins and whales; they are marginalized too, and this needs to be taken care of by the same authorities who are protecting the wildlife. In *The Hungry Tide*, Piya's profession as a marine biologist serves the role Steinwand proposed of making dolphins and whales important figures to be protected. Piya's resentment towards killing the tiger is sensible, but she ignores the

flipside of the argument about the condition of refugees and local people who live in such a hostile and insecure environment. Fokir's indifference to killing a tiger offers a perspective that a local and marginalized person of the area; as well as his fellow villagers, go through the same threat the tiger is going through. Hence, they need protection and security for their lives as well. In regard to the incident of killing a tiger, Steinwand argues, "Piya and Kanai are both challenged to rethink their complicity through this incident. Ghosh is encouraging readers to consider what Ramachandra Guha calls 'the paradox of global environmentalism': namely, that those who worry the most about the destruction of nature are usually those who are making the problem worse" (194). This European approach of idealizing nature and showing sensitivity by preserving wildlife is objectionable for the reason that it leaves marginalized refugees and locals aside in this whole conservationist act. Kanai (although Indian cosmopolitan), Fokir with Kusums and Nilimal are the voices of locals who believe in natural manner of living in relation with animals. Post-colonial ecology puts an emphasis upon the relationship between humans and animals, which nature/universe offers itself. One cannot choose one species over the other for protection. It will destroy the balance between entities in nature.

Bartosh discusses this lack/ gap of perspectives in *Environmentality* and Ghosh's imaginary characters highlight them clearly in *The Hungry Tide*. The environment in the novel is created by focusing narratives on specific situations say, the dialogue between the Piya and Kanai during killing of tiger, or Nirmal's latter (written historical documents), Fokir's song while he was helping Piya, Kusum's (a refugee) point of view

on those who chose to protect animals over humans. All these sub-narratives are internally focalized and interwoven in one large narrative which reflects mainstream post-colonial ecocritical concern of how one can priorities one entity of the nature over other. The novel as a piece of literature offers a praxis of negotiation between the mainstream environmentalist and conservationist, between the locals and the elites, between the humans, animals and inanimate on a largest scale to see through individualistic concern.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Sundarban is a space where an interesting, yet awful dynamic of human versus nature is displayed. Fokir, though illiterate, is intelligent enough to know the science and mood of the environment in Marichjhapi and a thousand other islands in Sundarban. Ghosh portrays the world which shows the struggle and suffering of the refugees and simultaneously fills the gap the crisis of being liberated for those villagers, the crisis of identity, the crisis of imagination. Through the characters and their reactions to the holistic and perplexing atmosphere of Sundarban, Ghosh draws our attention towards the sensitive relationship between the land and its inhabitants, and suggests the ethical stance which needs to be thought of by people. The conflict between the species in the novel is an example of post-colonial definition of home or land in respect to humans and animals. A home is a space which is ambivalent in nature. This is a small glimpse of Sundarbans Island. The novel posits the relationships between human activity and environment. There is an ethical relationship between the two; as a human being, we should have these concerns about the environment.

The crisis in *The Hungry Tide* can be bridged only when the anthropocentric

attitude of humans becomes 'eco-centric' and mature enough to deal with the issue with the help of mutual actions. We notice that humans are in a hostile relation with animals to secure their own geographical space and identity. This hostility between humans and animals creates a dysfunctional environment in terms of culture and the atmosphere. Also, we learned that literature invites an ecocritical study and compels us to think that ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary movement in literature. By problematizing the environment and people of the community in Sundarban, Ghosh makes a significant contribution by providing some imaginary scaffold on which one can rethink on the perspectives offered through the characters and provides us with the praxis to think about the ways in which humans and nonhumans can live in harmony. By highlighting the conflicts between the mainstream generation and the third world, Ghosh emphasizes on an ethical responsibility on mainstream culture to gain an understanding of the emerging 'third world/space' influenced by tidal forces and landscape and participate in their crisis to resolve their environmental issues. Under post-colonial ecocriticism scholarship, *The Hungry Tide*, as a fictional piece of literature, makes a significant contribution by providing a perspective through characters. It presents valuable insight on the life of people of Third Space, a third world and their challenges to survive. The ecocritical conflict between the first wave scholars, who are conservation oriented and the third wave readers, who are focused more on ethnic perspective and peculiarities and provide a praxis to think in relative term: cultural and historical context. Post-colonial ecocritical studies harmonize the tension and the conflict between the human centered world and environment.

## CHAPTER 3

MEMORIES OF HERITAGE, LEGACY, AND LAND IN RAY A. YOUNG BEAR'S  
*REMNANTS OF THE FIRST EARTH*

*“We are here, after all, as reflection of other events and past lives. We merely reenacted this constant battle of right and wrong, a promise kept and transgression committed. We who are but Remnants of the First Earth”* (Young Bear 111).

I am using this quote from *Remnants of the First Earth* as an epigraph to reflect upon the past action of a man, which plays a crucial role in shaping his future. The novel reflects upon our past events, loss, and memories of Native American great grandfathers to protect their heritage and legacy of land and culture. The novel is deeply rooted in Meskwaki culture, which reinforces values of ancient forefathers and counters modernization. Young incorporates some fascinating myths and supernatural images, which are blended in the narrative. The supernatural is a significant agent in Native American culture, as it connects the current generation with the ancestors to seek wisdom. It is important to mention that Ray Young Bear, a poet and a novelist is from Iowa Meskwaki. When his grandfather moved to Iowa, he bought the land in order to save that tribal community. In this chapter, I focus on the involvement of the supernatural and the vision it suggests concerning the origin of humans and their connection with the universe. Moreover, I will analyze the relationship between some basic elements of the culture: the supernatural and healing and its influence in people's lives of mainstream culture and the echo of Vizenor's survivance in all of these significant features of Native American culture.

### Iowa Landscape

Native American culture, like other indigenous cultures, is nature oriented.

According to the native culture, there are spiritual forces embedded in all the creations on this planet. Hence, images of nature: mountains, rivers, trees are personified to reveal their value in humans' lives. One can begin with a soothing and naïve portrayal of Iowa which rooted in serenity and gratitude of corn-land Iowa:

There were within, white strips of clouds that held motionless against the blue summer sky. High atop a cottonwood tree, three insects buzzed noisily together in their rendition of the Sun-burning-skin song. Through the high grass and shrubs somewhere along the edge of the Iowa River, there rose the mirthful sounds of human conversation and laughter. (176)

This passage in the novel reveals the atmosphere of Iowa riverside. Following the passage, Young Bear describes events associated with country side atmosphere of Iowa, “The Insects sang, accompanying each other” (176). These are live pictures of Iowa which are ritualistic in their presentation and suggest a strong connection between naïve Iowa and native culture. I call it naïve Iowa because it was and is still a place to take refuge from the “maddening crowd” of the United States. As a piece of Native American literature, *Remnants of the First Earth* emphasizes the serene and spiritual side of the wilderness as well as a struggle to recover indigenous culture and tradition associated with the land in the postmodern age. The native quality of being down to earth, valuing the legacy of forefathers, and participating in oral culture infused with spiritual value and supernatural influence in the lifestyle of natives is what makes this post-colonial cornfield unique and full of charm. Besides the image of Iowa landscape, there are Native American values and beliefs associated with the landscapes, which give the landscape its

native features. There are supernatural events happening on the post-colonial landscape and their recognition is crucial to know the culture.

Before this episode, at the beginning of the novel, Young Bear incorporates the image of the Iowa River and explains the formation of Why Cheer, a uniquely named small town in Iowa. The passage discusses Carson with his association with the supernaturals. People think Carson knows where the supernaturals kept their door ways. Later on, when engineers built the dam on the Iowa River in the 1990s, the Land of Tama County was flooded. Edgar describes, “When the gallant plan to diminish flood levels backfired, causing huge flood, it was no surprise. When the Swanroot River joined the fiasco, three cities and one hundred farms downriver suffered.... Because of the experimental landscaping of the government, the two rivers made the Why Cheer News-Herald headlines: “TAMA COUNTY UNDERWATER!” (34). People of the Black Eagle Child community were against building the dam, however, they could not stop the government. The environment was disdained. The dam affected the life of indigenous people, animals, and vegetation, and the prairie grass disappeared. Although dams stand for progress and modernizations, they are built to control water, and thus to control life. The idea of a dam is opposite to nature, the beliefs, and the practice of indigenous life, and is against indigenous rights.

Rivers, in many indigenous cultures are associated with the idea of reverend life, deities, and a home of many unique inhabitants. Such construction destabilizes community and forces displacement. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, Timothy Clark argues that in current post-colonial environmental

debate, which falls under the capitalism era, modern environmentalism has capital enterprise. Large areas of land used are for 'national parks' or to replace rural area by urbanization for the sake of development. He further states that, "Since 1980s the world has witnessed a weird alliance between the first-world environmentalist and the fourth world people fighting to defend the indigenous way of life" (121). Building a dam seems more of an indication of environmental colonial action rather than land and water conservation. It displaces communities, their culture, tradition, and language. The Dam on the Iowa River did unsettle people of the community as well as made them concerned about the secret doorways that goes through the river. Edgar believes there was something unusual about the environment. People felt victimized and the elders were offering prayers and gathering. The construction of the dam became a reason of loss of culture and the beginning of poverty. People started noticing supernatural activities, which old stories contain.

Young Bear has rewritten the history with the blend of contemporary issues of the Black Eagle Child Settlement. The historicity of the Meskwaki settlement is post-colonial move. Young Bear's writing from the center does show how terrible the feeling is when one loses one's land and becomes foreign on one's own dwelling. This is an act of displacement, which involves a major identity crisis and cultural denigration. In "Memory in Native American Land Claims," Burke. A. Hendrix discusses Native American claims on American land and Native American rights. He looks upon claiming American land from a judicial perspective and supports every reason for Native Americans to claim their land. Native Americans were forced to cede a land in Iowa and



move to the Mississippi River. They experienced the trauma of being forced to leave their place and being disconnected with the land. Owning a large amount of land is a significant part of Native American culture. Land is the basis of their economic life which involves fishing, hunting, and growing crops. It is associated with social status in a community in Native and any indigenous culture, which is quite apparent in *Things Fall Apart*. For some native cultures, land is a source of spirituality and supernatural events, which we notice in *Remnants of the First Earth*. When one recognizes these beliefs and values associated with land and its loss, then displacement seems painful and causes cultural loss and identity crisis. Hendrix suggests a literary solution to retain the loss.

Native American culture is categorized under endangered culture, hence, any action or practice to retain the culture is counted as a cultural survivance. Hendrix asserts that one strategy could be to intensively pursue land claims by Native American can forces the mainstream American citizens to think about their relationship with American land and encountering historical facts about the American land and their true owners. Another strategy is a role of memories in relation to Native American and mainstream Americans. He suggests the narrative as a reminder of the past events and sacrifices, a narrative in the form of memory to reconcile both Native Americans and mainstream American citizens. Hendrix proposes, “a real reconciliation, in which American national narratives become reformed in ways that allow Natives to feel that they are tolerably safe and respected within the bounds of the United States” (773). The events in the narrative become examples when told and retold to a person; they can develop a deeper understanding and association with the past. Grandmother’s memory for Edgar and her

teasing in the novel corresponds with Hendrix's idea of narrative of reconciliation. Grandmother's telling and retelling of the stories to Edgar aids him in forming a strong association with the native culture. The memory associated with Grandmother informs one about their ancestors; their individuality has been taken from them. Her recurring lessons connote the retaining of the culture, native selfhood, and native identity. This repetitive process of teasing by the use of the flashback technique constantly familiarizes a native and a reader with the process of relocating culture and selfhood.

### The Supernatural

The supernatural realm is closely tied with religion, theology, and spirituality in Native American culture. The supernatural is an experience or event that is not natural and real. Arthur Hobson Quinn in "Some Phases of the Supernatural in American Literature" suggests that the "definition is best approached by drawing a distinction between the natural and the supernatural which may be epitomized by stating that the former is comprehended, the later only apprehended" (114). The modern definition of supernatural is not incongruent with the beliefs and practices of Native Americans. For mainstream culture, the supernatural might be labeled as an unhealthy experience of mind. In contrast, Native Americans share a belief in the supernatural strongly. It is a doorway to a secure life. In the novel, during investigation of the murder, one of the characters, Carson, considers himself gifted as he belongs to the Black Eagle Child community: "The invisible spirits gave instead of talking. In appreciation for the stories, people, white or Indian, walked up to his porch and left canned goods, flour, coffee, and canned tri-angles of ham" (33). The supernatural is closely associated with their religion

and spirituality. According to some indigenous beliefs, the supernatural is an epistemology which requires a better understanding of physical environment. It is a way to contemplate the universal phenomenon for which the physical form of nature does not provide an answer. The notion of the supernatural is embedded in the Native American lifestyle, rituals and tradition. It ameliorates the uniqueness and fecundity of the Native American culture. Supernatural, thus, preserve the ancestral connection in the culture. *Remnants of the First Earth* emphasizes the cultural aspects of the supernatural.

In Native American culture, the stories with supernatural events show the grandeur of nature, didactic features of primitive culture, and the actions and consequences a man. In the culture, it is not a myth recited during festival, but it is deeply wrapped up with messages which signify the human existence and the purpose behind that existence. One of the examples in the novel is when Edgar is with Ted, Horatio, and Hayward in the woods near Liquid Lake, looking for a spaceship:

Suddenly behind them deep in the woods, they heard leaves being parted and twigs being broken. There was a movement behind the tall cottontail grass.... 'First the three owls; second, the water; and now this! But my grandmother says that if you don't dwell on strange occurrences, you decrease their presence' (41).

The presence of the non-physical is denied when humans claim their presence on a place. Edgar proposes his friends leave the place, but none of them listen to him. Ted, Edgar, Horatio, and Hayward are agitated in this scene and Horatio and Hayward clutched each other's hands tightly. Later on, a strange vice joined their conversation. It was Pat wearing a red hat. This event might seem comical, but what's noticeable is this belief on an occurrence which seems paranormal. That belief comes from the lessons of Grandmother dwelling in Edgar's consciousness. According to obvious human nature, if

anything is absent, it is ineligible to be believed in and that is how the absence is denied. Native American culture celebrates the absence—the non-being—and considers it as part of their life. Such relation with the non-physical is built on personal level and is in one's consciousness. It is a way to understand the physical being. The supernatural is suggestive of moral ideas and ethical ground as well as good and evil, if one knows how to study it. One cannot see something, but can feel it is not always evil or bad omen. Native American culture encourages one to sense the presence of the invisible or absent, and establishes a connection between the two beings: physical and nonphysical—being and nonbeing. One might say this is how one can become intimate to nature's secrets:

(In one of the most memorable encounters with paranormal, Selene Buffalo Husband and I were chased away from our river-bottoms residence by an entity we call the 'Supernatural Strobe Light.' It wore many masks: that of three owls, fireflies flying in V formation like distant military jets, a floating ball of pale light, a red fluorescent rectangular mass the size of school bus, and, of course, the strobe light that became a small pulsating star. Education left me wounded back then and thus vulnerable. . . . (110)

This description of Edgar is a magical event he experienced by the riverside. The images are associated with nature and creatures, which in general, are unnoticeable and are invisible to humans, but they carry a great significance if captured in their true nature and essence. I was born and raised in the post-colonial country India. It is a land of many cultures and religions, and many superstitious beliefs and practices. I grew up learning that owls are associates of night/darkness. In Hindu mythology, they are harbinger of misfortune, which is quite the opposite from Western belief. In some folklores and myths, owls are symbols of death. It is a belief that they carry messages from the physical world to the other world. Every culture has meaning associated with animals and other physical

animates and inanimate beings. So does Native American culture. This belief is formulated on the ground that every living and nonliving creature has a soul and it can communicate with humans. These images in the passage suggests that nature communicates with humans in a supernatural manner as a warning or message. It informs about their existence through nature. The supernatural manifests the environment and takes ownership of the land through its dwelling. They are a reminder of the oblivious presence of ancestors. The notion of the supernatural also suggests that one cannot understand the presence without the absence, and to understand this binary—presence versus absence—the absence must be acknowledged. The absent has spiritual bearing of the ancestors. Hence, one might say how deeply people of native culture are influenced by the idea of supernatural. It creates a sense of presence of the absence. This phenomenon refers to what Gerald Vizenor called the survivance paradigm.

#### Grandmother's Teasing, Memories, and Survivance

“The Theory of Survivance” is a term coined by Gerald Robert Vizenor. In *Native American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology*, Vizenor defines:

Native American survivance is a sentiment heard in creation stories and the humorous contradictions of tricksters and read in the tragic wisdom of literature; these common sentiments of survivance are more than survival reactions in the face of violence and dominance (6).

Any form of knowledge earned by experiencing suffering or adversary gives one a sense of moral responsibility. Such voices are heard in stories, songs, rituals, and tradition. These voices are recognition of liberty and Native American sentiments and a denial of victimization. In *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, Vizenor proposes that it is a “responsible presence of natural reason, and resistance to absence and victimry” (19).

One cannot capture its meaning in a concrete definition. The specialty of Native American culture is known by their traits, attributes, and substantial non-human images and abstract occurrence apparent in literature and rituals they perform. In *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, Vizenor suggests, “Native survivance is continuance of stories” (Introduction 1). Orality in Native American Literature and the religious performances are agents to create a sense of presence which is absent according to foreign culture. The simulation of Native culture is denied by western culture and philosophy. Native stories are subjective in nature and projects an intuitive, individual, instinctive, and deep message to the world. There are lofty, metaphorical, and astute images of tricksters, animals, humans, nature, wilderness, and events that appear to be the supernatural in the texts. Native stories, to use Vizenor’s concept, tease the visible and the predictable and create a sense of presence.

Vizenor’s *teasing* is an important attribute one can contemplate on. Teasing through natural reasoning and a firm belief of its outcome is a base of their Native American belief system. It is quite apparent in the lessons of Grandmother in *Remnants of the First Earth*. Her strong image exists in Edgar’s conscience, and her lessons populate most often during the events and surrounding he is a part of. Her positive appraisal of nature and natural reasons imply in humans’ lives to have a better understanding of the universe. Edgar’s childhood is nurtured with affection and moral teaching of his grandmother. She imparts a major and significant portion of knowledge about the Earth and wisdom associated with the idea that motherland. When Edgar visits her during laundry, she enlightens, “If you want to make something of yourself,

Grandson,” she’d say at home over supper, “you will need to find better things to do than this. Don’t do like what I am doing” (73). Then she mentions her husband and Edgar’s grandfather, Jack Principal Bear, informing Edgar that his grandfather was never swayed with the white man’s novelties and ways of life. She further says Edgar, “Everything starts over again.... All this we see outside the window stretched before us is the second earth” (73). It is obvious that growing on the land once colonized affects the new generation indigenous culture and personality. But the concern is where to draw the line to protect ancient wisdom, tradition, and reminiscent of the first earth for growth of indigenous community. The notion of Earth, Grandmother provides, is a recovery of the past through recognizing oneself and one’s relation to the earth.

Moreover, her teasing plays a crucial role in comprehending the involvement of the supernatural. Her method of teasing Edgar by telling him stories and sharing her wisdom wrapped in transcendental reasoning provides one with epistemic experience in Native American culture. As Edgar affirms, “Grandmother’s stories and awesome demonstrations, established in me a clear understanding of animism” (106). This style of teasing through the stories is evidence of the narrative of survivance. This metaphorical idealization of landscapes and native stories bridges the gap between the visible and obvious and the invisible yet viable. This bridge suggests the idea of “transmutation and totemic association” in the form of informal instructions for the world to maintain the physical and spiritual balance in the word. Certainly, such a form of survivance demands the language more poetic and subtle. *Remnants of the First Earth* has high form of poetic maneuvers quite elegantly embedded in the text. The style of the presentation of

flashback narratives to emphasize memories, the images to create a presence of the supernatural, to rejoice the natural beauty of farming land, Iowa, and grandeur of ancestral teaching and legacy, require a highly metaphorical use of language. Young Bear does it quiet gently in the novel.

Teasing through natural reasoning and memories enforces respect for the forefathers and land. Edgar's childhood flourished with Grandmother's stories, and his belief in those stories shows his affirmation and reliance on Native American culture. His affirmation can be easily noticed in his flashbacks of memories: "Recalling these special places, if only by threads of memory through songs, dance, and prayers was crucial. Long ago the clans had access to the Supernatural, and they even made visits to gain their wisdom and advice" (30). Stories have this incomprehensible power to preserve the wisdom by securing the effect of human action. The songs, dances, and rituals to practice the belief establishes the atmosphere in which a native experiences a force which functions to transport him/her into the afterlife. These stories are very much associated with the land- the mother earth and nature.

Stories related to ancestors and the supernatural are quite subjective to the people of native culture. In one's life, they are a collection of memories that serve as an instruction for a lifetime. Similarly, in one scene, Edgar reminisces about the wisdom behind the supernatural when she says, "Anything that we do here," she continued, "our success and failures, have all been done before by the supernaturals" (73). Whether it is a story of forefathers or the supernaturals, stories are one of the tools of Grandmother and is suggestive of Native American ethos. It is an evitable part of their subjective thinking



and they are strong associates of this ideology that combines natural and supernatural. It is used as a method to celebrate survivance. Stories of survivance are products of deracination of Native Americans because of the colonial conflicts. In *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, Vizenor explains that Native Americans actively fought wars between the union and the confederacy. Those survivors of the war were left with a diminished sense of native-ness, continental liberty, and legacy of victimry. Hence, it is significant to understand that stories of survivance are not a reaction, but a source of knowing the past and gaining wisdom. Vizenor writes, “The practice of survivance creates an active presence, more than an instinct of survival, function, or substance” (88). This process of knowing one’s past and being subjectively connected to grandparents and their lessons is the opposite of modern time and modern lifestyle. Edgar completely relies on his memory.

Whether it is a supernatural encounter or Grandmother’s lessons, these memories work as a medium to secure the past events to use them in future to seek wisdom. Native American belief and cultural practices associated with the supernatural are not an expression of blind faith or superstition. One of the good examples of creating such a supernatural atmosphere is when Edgar recalls his memory related to his grandmother and grandfather. Like the supernatural, memory opens the door of wisdom and better fortune. In the novel, Edgar’s relationship and his memories attached with Grandfather and Grandmother suggest his upbringing and provides him with reasons for why it is important to live and respect the inheritance of Native American culture. As a result of the lessons he learned, he developed love and compassion for female members of his

family and Grandmother Earth. It is a microcosm picture of Edgar's life which presents the macrocosmic atmosphere of the Native American culture. It is not a narrative of fairy tales nor is it a source of seeking amusement. Rather, it is a narrative of survivance. Grandmother's teasing is a practice of survivance actively participating in Edgar's modern world. His supernatural encounters and his response based on grandmother's teasing are examples which create the environment and affects him in a good way and will be carried on to his generation as a member of Black Eagle Child Settlement. This practice of survivance functions against modernization because it rejects primitive ideologies and relies on visible and obvious rational. According to Native American belief, modernization limits the understanding of the universe and neglects natural reasoning.

#### Ancient Healing and Modernization

Edgar realizes that the ancestors practiced the ancient knowledge and wisdom. But it has disappeared in modern times. Modernity is a high-volume age, which does not bring a good omen; according to many indigenous cultures. In one scene, Young Bear writes:

Modernity came to us in different forms; the early versions brought forth war, disease, famine, and undreamt-of atrocities. Invariably, our plights became our legacy. . . . Stories were retained for the purpose of instructing others. Through the retelling of our suffering, it was hoped lessons could be learn (31).

Edgar, with the help of Grandmother's stories, cultivates a fair distinction between the modern way of life and the ancient legacy. In this post-colonial era, it is acceptable to approach ways of life full of growth and advancement, but not on the cost of losing one's identity by imitating foreign ways of living. Native American culture is rooted in the

land, and where sense of belonging is based on the environment one is associated with and the values one practices. Edgar's lessons also remind one of being in contact to forefathers of the community, since they are the one source of guidance for their next generation. One can say that narrative of survivance familiarizes one with the cultural identity, the self, and tease the natives about their genesis and their relations with their ancestors and the earth. Modern thoughts are quite scientific and they underestimate the use and significance of primitive methodology. Assets like therapeutic healing and supernatural stories for the modern era are either lies or subjects of fascination and mockery. Like Silko, Young, strongly posits the idea that, just because the modern ordinary man does not have an ability to experience the unseen, it does not mean that the unseen never existed. The power and courage to believe in the power of nature, which is beyond the subjectivity of man, makes man a part of the power. This can only be taught by and recognized through the eyes of ancestral legacy. All it takes is a submission of oneself and a realization of consequences for a human's actions if one violates the principle of nature. Grandmother's teasing departs one from the shallowness of modern life and connects one with the belief in, "one ancient force gaining an upper hand, lying down the rules by which people should live on earth" (111). This realization of one being ruled by a supreme being should not come out of fear, but rather should be realized out of gratitude; as she said, "This existence is a privilege" (111). Hence, one should be gratuitous to the universe.

#### The Language in the Text

Elements of supernatural, memory, rituals, and customs establish the environment

within the Native American community to remember the legacy and cultural heritage of the Native Americans. One of the assets of Native American culture is healing prescribed by a medicine man. Jane Robin Rose, a medicine woman and one of the characters in the novel, took the responsibility of healing the community. The section in the novel emerges when the Black Eagle Child community is in peril. Young Bear, quite genuinely, reveals the adversary of the Black Eagle Child Community and presents some core issues surrounding child abuse, murder, alcohol, family, disputes, and corruption occurring during that time. The reason behind such problems was that people of the community had distanced themselves from the values and rituals practiced by their forefather. Devotional practices of songs, dances, rituals, crafts and therapeutic studies of herbs for cures touch the human body and senses (consciousness). This unification of the body and the spiritual consciousness leads to wholeness of one. Healing in Native American culture is achieving wholeness by mending brokenness inside the person. The healing fills the hole inside the person. This quality of healing spiritually is significant to Native American theology. Rose is a keeper of this asset of medicine and healing, similarly, to the medicine man in *Ceremony*. In *Remnants of the First Earth*, the carrier of the gift of healing is a woman. She learned the skills of healing from herbs and learned a constant recitation of the words to heal one emotionally. She is the only person left in her family to practice it because people either lost or mishandled the gift of healing. Rose is obligated to practice the healing: "Holy Grandfather had asked her to heal people and send them on through to the doors of Afterlife, but He had also asked her to suffer, to experience unimaginable torment" (171). Healing in most native cultures is a process to

unify the physical with the spiritual. This combination of the sacred and an ordinary body is a door to the after world. The process of healing methodologically creates an environment which hits on the sense and sensibility of a man. The atmosphere becomes supernatural when methods for healing is performed. Whether it's the supernatural or the medicine woman, *Remnants of the First Earth* presents a post-colonial psychology of preserving the ethnicity to secure the identity of the land, which was colonized and stolen. In the novel, Rose is the custodian of this gift of healing and is solely obligated to keep on the process. Like Grandmother's teasing, Rose's obligation to carry on the legacy of healing is a process of cultural survival.

Rewriting history itself is a process which includes an anthropological encounter of events and ethnic traits. Memory and flashbacks are the ingredients of constructing the history, which puts historical features of post-colonial writing in the category of fiction. Young Bear's style of writing reminds me of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems, which I read in high school. It has a supernatural effect which is suitable to reflect upon the Native American style of writing illuminating the core cultural values. Language plays a crucial role in creating post-colonial texts. Along with an eroded sense of self, displacement produces linguistic alienation. A gap is formed when one experiences a place or event and has inadequate language to describe it. In this situation, the process of abrogation and appropriation comes into play. Post-colonial literature frequently molds a language in order to accommodate unfamiliar readers to the ethnicity of the text. To secure the aesthetics of the native language and to show that the power of the language lies in its originality, Young Bear uses textual strategy which Ashcroft labels as

abrogation. “Abrogation,” as Ashcroft defines, “is a refusal of the categories of the imperial cultural, its aesthetics, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usages, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in the words” (37).

Abrogation is certainly a requirement in post-colonial texts because some core ethnic elements that give the culture its uniqueness and individuality are only available in that particular culture. For example, the ritual and use of words for healing is linguistically impossible to replicate in a non-native language. There are passages in the novel which emphasize upon the usages of the native language: “Luciano Bearchild ne ke ki no a ma kwa-ni ne wa ki-ne na wa ka si a-na i na kin a wi a we te-me to se ne ni wa (Luciano Bearchild taught me to identify night enemy sorcerers when they visit people)” (91). The subject matter in the sentence is foreign. It is normal in a modern society to learn about the cults and sorceries; however, it is a significant part of Native Culture. Words contain power to exercise ritual and supernatural forces. The use of the native language for the indigenous culture is a medium to communicate with the supernatural and ancestors. Thus, in order to understand the sensitivity of the culture one cannot ignore the originality of native language in the novel.

In addition, to the concept of abrogation handled by the novel, one cannot overlook the appropriation, another concept introduced by Ashcroft. “‘Appropriation’ by definition is the process by which the language is taken and made to ‘bear the burden’ of one's own cultural experiences. . .” (38). Ashcroft suggests that abrogation cannot be performed without appropriation. In *Remnants of the First Earth*, the language is a medium used in an experimented way to express Native American cultural experience.

Ashcroft suggests that, “Rather the act of appropriation in the post-colonial text issues in the embracing of that marginality as fabric of social experience” (103). The goal behind the appropriation in post-colonial text is to preserve the native-ness of the language and provide originality to the native tales and culture. Such usage of language is a reminder of the fact that native-ness in language and culture can be survived despite of harsh colonial rule if the indigenous communities return to their principles, values, and practices. It is a resolution to the contemporary domestic issues of the Black Eagle child community.

Thus, *Remnants of the First Earth* successfully incorporates substantial tools to reveal the struggle of the Native Americans when forced to settle in Iowa. The supernatural is reflected in their powerful belief system experienced by ritual and use of language. Grandmother’s teasing of Edgar encompasses unique supernatural events, native thought process, her way of looking at the world, and wisdom extracting from natural reasoning. This teasing also mirrors insecurity, divisiveness, and degradation visible in the existing society of which the outcome is survivance. The story does not establish a single centered consciousness. Of course, the central character is Edgar, but his experiences in the novel are incomplete and insignificant without Grandmother, and in some places, Grandfather. Edgar’s grandparents ‘survive’ through Edgar’s memory. The literary Survivance, as Vizenor calls it, is a tease to the world. It is a gesture of native ethos which combines delicate association of nature, natural reasons, human rights, and cultural teasing of personal experience by stories, customs, rituals, and history. In addition, the novel informs us about the healing that comes from within. It is a process to restore oneself in a certain environment, such as when people of the Black

Eagle Child Settlement were in a spiritual crisis. *Remnants of the First Earth* emphasizes retaining the Native American cultural integrity by executing the strategies of highlighting some significant pieces of cultural practices. It is about an individual, as well as about the entire native community and its relocation in the history of America.

To conclude my final thoughts, I would like to say that, *Remnants of the First Earth* is a reminder to a wider audience—whether or not they Native Americans—that one needs to return to the traditional teaching ways of life with a blend of modernization in order to preserve the sacred land and culture. The reason behind the chaotic life of the Black Eagle Child Settlement shown in the novel is microcosm picture of the macrocosmic pattern of life people are living across the world. One can affirm that creating a distance from the root is an invitation to apocalypse. To revive the lost tradition, the implication of tools like memory and storytelling is a crucial process in post-colonial scholarship.



## CHAPTER 4

PRE-COLONIAL CURE TO POST-COLONIAL WORLD THROUGH LESLIE  
MARMON SILKO'S *CEREMONY*

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* is a master piece of the Native American literature. It is a subtle and clever play of back and forth narrative, mystical, metaphorical images, essential rituals, symbols, and the psychological peer through characters' minds stands out splendidly in the novel. Tayo, as a half native and a half white protagonist, served in the American army in World War II, and was imprisoned by the Japanese. He gets into a psychological tug of war and trauma after belligerent actions in the battlefield, which causes post-traumatic stress disorder. In most parts of the novel, it is noticeable that Tayo participates in the healing ceremony of the Laguna community. Tayo is quite a self-contemplative character and has lived alienated throughout life after the war. He experiences hallucinations as the novel proceeds, and gives readers a glimpse of the experiences soldiers go through after the war. These flashbacks have narrative, as well as psychological significance; in addition to projecting past during the present in the novel, Silko shows that unlike his compatriots, Tayo has deep emotional and personal complications and he goes on the quest to find where his consciousness is grounded. His process of healing is a perfect specimen of a Native American therapeutic cure. The beliefs and stories of Native Americans associated with the home land and surviving guilt make the novel significant in the world of Native American literature and tempt one to be a part of the excursion of Native American spiritual and environmental epistemology. Ecology and ecocriticism is crucial to a mainstream audience, not because the

environment is degrading, but because we need postcolonial ecocritical scholarship to realize how nature and landscape serve humanity, and thus it should be revered. So, this chapter examines Tayo's recognition and connection with land which leads to his healing. Spiritual medicine is a quintessential part of Native American tradition, which *Ceremony* celebrates. Certainly, Land and environment become a character and a sources of healing emotional crisis of Tayo.

Because of his war experiences, Tayo lost the idea of sacredness every living thing carry. He failed to realize that all non-human creation is alive and is worthy of respect. During the war, he learned to follow the Eurocentric ideology that the inanimate, animals and other creations are inferior to humans. Post-traumatic war syndrome is so intense that one lose recognition between life and death. Tayo had lost his sensitivity towards the environment and all creations which constitute to the environment. One cannot ignore the environmental set up in the text that very much contributes to and influences the life of Native Americans and the life of other indigenous groups on this planet:

Tayo stood near the horses, looking down the path over the way they had come. The plateau and the canyons spread out below him like clouds falling into each other past the horizon. The world below was distant and small; it was dwarfed by the sky so blue and vast the clouds were lost in it. Far into the south there were smoky blue ridges of the mountain haze at Zuni. . . . He could see no signs of what had been said loose upon the earth: the highways, the towns, even the fences were gone. It had nothing to do with measurement or height. It was a special place. (139)

In most of postcolonial texts, nature comes as a very strong character. In *The Hungry Tide*, we have the portrayal of Sundarban, in *Things Fall Apart* we have image of the Wild Forest, in *The Remnants of the First Earth*, the grandeur of the Iowa River side and

Iowa landscapes, and in *Ceremony*, the mountain and forests. All of them have one theme in common: these powerful images of the environment influence the lives of people.

Humans are unconsciously and psychologically dependent on nature. Tayo basks beneath the Sun and embraced the vastness of nature. The place was the highest point of the earth according to Tayo, but it has “nothing to do with measurement or height. It was a special place” (139). His healing begins with the solace he found in stories and in the environment he was surrounded in. In *Ceremony*, nature, animals, and humans are very strongly integrated and suggest the interconnectedness of living creatures with one another. For example, the transformation of man into a bear and back is enchanting. It strongly connects one with their belief system: the inner power to believe in something which is the unseen. It is quite contradictory to the belief system of the modern world. Also, Tayo begins to cultivate his relationship with the land with the help of Betonie that is why he feels he is a part of it.

#### Tayo and the Place

To Native Americans, land is not a possession—it is a dispossession, a surrendering and that cannot be traded by monetary units or law. To develop such calmly submissive and intricate relationship with land it requires time and stories which tells about the experiences and memories related to places, which is significantly discussed in *Remnants of the First Earth*. Tayo recognizes the bond with the place the first time he listens to the old man’s geographical description of Laguna, “His language was childish, interspersed with English words, and he could feel some tightening in his throat; but then he heard the old man describe the cave, a deep lava cave north-east of Laguna where

baths flew out on summer evenings. He pushed himself up against the pillows and felt the iron bed frame against his back. He knew this cave” (34-35). This passage presents Tayo’s first recognition of the place. At the beginning, he was perplexed about what the old man talked about, but gradually he realizes there is something familiar in the old man’s story- the place. This recognition of being connected to the place makes him curious to know more about it. This familiarization turns out to be a healing resource for Tayo. Unlike his compatriots, Harley and Rocky, Tayo is sensitive towards his surroundings and he knows his problem is personal and deeper, hence his illness cannot be recovered by some shallow and cheap way of seeking pleasure. After a long imprisonment and loneliness, Tayo suffers physical illness, hallucinations, and disturbing visions; exasperated, he cursed the Philippine jungle’s rain that he blamed for his uncle’s death. Consequently, the whole landscape of Laguna experienced drought. The land of Lagun is dependent on rainfall for their agriculture and irrigation system. His visionary abilities might seem irrational, but it does suggest a combination of his suffering and his inheritance of traditional Indian beliefs, which stands against Euro-American environment.

His cure lies in unravelling the confused cultural knots. Stories aid one with realization of differences and provides a clearer picture of connection between the self and culture. Siko begins *Ceremony* with:

Ceremony  
I will tell you something about stories,  
[he said]  
They aren’t just entertainment.  
Don’t be fooled.  
They are all we have, you see.

all we have to fight off  
illness and death.

You don't have anything  
if you don't have the stories. (2)

Tayo needs natural and spiritual counselling to be cured. He needs to find his association with one of the cultures. Story is one of the primitive methods to recuperate from personal anxiety, guilt, and shame, and it helps one to be connected with the wisdom of the universe. For Native Americans, this recuperation from storytelling is a significant method to remind one's belongingness with his/her ancestors and recognizing the glory of mother earth. Tayo begins finding his comfort in the geographical description of the old man and begins associating himself with the Laguna's culture and place.

#### Tayo and the Medicine Man

Betonie, the medicine man plays a crucial role in helping Tayo introspect himself. He is like a therapeutic counsellor, a Native American who discerned Tayo's psychological perplexity and volunteered to help him. In *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory, and the Environment*, Steven Rosendale suggests that Betonie teaches Tayo a sense of belonging. It is different from an ownership or a possession. He teaches Tayo about a sense of belonging. Rosendale further quotes N. Scott Momaday explaining that a "belonging with that involves a coequal relationality between person and place. Such a "comfortable" relationship, Betonie implies here, take a long time to develop; ...it takes not just years but many generations" (101). Landscape and people develop a bond with "coequal" contribution to each other; and what could be so intensely coequal than time invested in each other? Time, when spent by a man on a

landscape gives him a feeling of home and belongingness. When land consumes time by human and nonhuman creatures, it serves the environment—it is alive and fruitful. Both land and people are barred from alienation. I agree with Rosedale that it takes years and generations to build that bonding, but that is how an equal share of time creates a spatial and temporal relation between a landscape and humans. This relationship when explored in the form of storytelling provides humans with meaning of their existence in relation to an unanimated, yet living object called land. As Vizenor said, “Native survivance is a continuance of stories” (Introduction 1). Many Native Americans served the United States of America during war and those who survived were emotionally disturbed. They suffered with post-traumatic stress disorder, which includes horrifying memories and physical and emotional scars. Tayo’s experiences in the war and his imprisonment has cut him deeper.

In “Blue Medicine,” Kenneth Lincoln discusses Tayo’s and Betonie’s growing relationship through rituals. Betonie and Tayo are mixed blood and match with each other consciousness. One might think that it could be a reason that Tayo is influenced by Betonie’s ways of healing. Nelson writes, “the healing involves the right triggering of memory, health within things, natural to body and mind. And, similarly to name things rightly is to make medicine through memory, to heal and give strength. The right naming connects inner and outer forms, the *ianyí* (“breath”) or spirit with matter by way of living words” (51-52). This traditional healing approach is environmentally oriented. Memory is a storehouse of past events and experiences—both of the conscious and unconscious. When memory is triggered, it compels one to rethink about those past events and

experiences are associated with people culture and place. This process is an extension of understanding through rethinking or one might say reflecting upon the past to ameliorate the present. Memory encourages one to remember ancestors and their contribution in making one who s/he is. This remembrance when aligned with place is ceremony. Nelson says, “This sense of ceremony, restored to Tayo, instills positive abstinence knowing what *not* to do” (59). In Vizenor’s words, this is “natural reasoning.” One might say such a method to cure fills one’s inner soul and provides them with a sense of completion. It fills one with wisdom and universal reasoning to pacify one’s troubled soul. *Ceremony* takes place in Laguna land, which is a primary resource of uranium exploitation to create nuclear weapons. Tayo goes through the same spiritual counselling with Betonie, who helps him become self-contained. With the help of Betonie, Tayo learns to be connected to the land, the sky and the trees and animals in that surrounding. Hence, retrieving memory through storytelling is hypnotic for Tayo; it helped him remind the land he grew on. This is an inception of his healing, his survivance as well as cultural survivance. The healing does not refer to Tayo, but the entire Native American community.

### Tayo and Survivance

In *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, Vizenor suggests that, “Survivance stories create a sense of presence and situational sentiments of chance. . . Survivance is a practice, not an ideology, dissimulation, or a theory” (88-89). In the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Tayo feels alienated despite being with his comrades. His emotional scars disoriented him. It is a result of displacement. He is

emotionally and mentally wounded. Displacement causes alienation. It is an expression of the sense of otherness incorporated by the overtly oppressive conquest upon indigenous people. Any 'place' or 'space' where a culture, heritage, and language is evolved creates belonging for a person. When this sense of belonging is lost because of any reason, it gives birth to some serious issues like, identity crisis, split of consciousness, alienation, unhomeliness, cultural denigration, etc. Tayo suffers because of geographical and psychological displacement, which leaves him in a psychological space of unhomeliess. His encounter with the old man in Laguna and his talk about the landscape becomes the source of gaining hominess. It becomes a source of relationality and empathy for natural reasoning. It hits his consciousness and stimulates his experiences with the natural world. Rosedale argues that, Tayo's relationship with Laguna has to be formed on a cultural basis:

Tayo...recognizes that his identity only comes from being a part of that community or culture and that other living things in that place are also a part of the culture—they all have their stories. Only by knowing their stories can one see that they are all alive.... (102)

Building on this quotes one might say, it is a suggestion of active presence and survivance is an active presence, as Rosedale further suggests is "a matter of knowing their stories, too, and periodically visiting them and giving them care, attention, and respect" (102). It is not just the stories that are alive by telling and retelling them, but also Tayo who feels alive, present, and conscious after experiencing the death of lives, their ordeal, victimry, and annihilation for a long time. Tayo's life in isolation and his quest for healing is a process of finding himself, a process of healing his distorted soul and his identity, and recovering his disintegrated indigenouness personality. In *The Empire*



*Writes Back*, Ashcroft suggests that “The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two” (9). Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are features common to all post-colonial literatures in English. Silko’s constant pointing towards the landscape is a reminder of the idea that a person is bounded with the place. Tayo’s association with Laguna culture and land helps him recognize that bond with Laguna’s landscape and the environment and the importance of respecting it.

For one, being a Native American is not just about practicing a religion based culture; it is more about a firm adherence to the land and etiquettes related to the land. Paula Gunn Allen, in the essay, “The Psychological landscape of Ceremony” says, “We are land” (1). She reflects upon the core belief of Native American culture, summarizing the culture in a nutshell by saying that there is no boundary between humans and land. Unlike in European culture, humans and lands are not the binary opposites. Rather, they are concomitant to each other. Both make up a unified whole and they both complement each other like a man and a woman. The imagery and perception of land in *Ceremony* and Native American culture is feminine. A mysterious woman appears at certain intervals in the novel. She is associated with Ts’eh, and with her, Tayo experiences love and compassion. Silko splendidly describes her in correspondence with land:

He dreamed he made love with her there. He felt the warm sand on his toes and knees: he felt his body as it was as warm as the sand, and he could not feel where her body ended and the sand began. He woke up and she was gone; his fists were full of sand and he was sweating” (222).

There is similarity between her character and Tayo's imaginations about the landscapes, which builds an inevitable bond between Tayo and her. Her character, as described, reflects on natural elements and her warmth that sooth Tayo and leaves him in a trance—in a space where he forgets there is a boundary between dream and reality. She has a mystical and a strong presence. Silko's clever implication of "her" and her strange bond with Tayo uphold her character and her role in the novel. In the later part of the novel, "she" confirms her name to Tayo by saying: "I'm a Montano" (223), which in Portuguese and Spanish means "a mountain." A Mountain is a sublime and majestic element of nature and is too big to be missed by human eye sights. Similarly, one cannot miss 'her' presence in the novel, though her name is not disclosed initially. Mountains are individualistic in nature and are examples of the evolutionary process. In "Function of Landscape of *Ceremony*," Nelson writes, "The connection between the woman and the land becomes manifested in the account (filtered through Tayo's evolving awareness) of his love making with her, an event during which her body takes shape in Tayo's consciousness as a landscape, while his sense of his own relationship to her takes shape in the language of geographical awareness" (149). Building upon Nelson, one might say that Tayo's love making with the woman whether or not it was his hallucination, is a part of the gradual healing process for him and as well as a literary relief for one. Her association with landscape is crucial in realizing the foregrounding relationship Native Americans have with the earth. In this sexual interaction with her, Tayo's experience about sense of place confirms Tayo's belonging. There is a union of body, mind, and spirit with the external world; these lines show Tayo's organic connection with Mount

Taylor.

Visions are an integral part of religious discourse and comes to people who carry that cultural characteristic within them. Visions are an indication of one's connection with the meta-physical and can only be recognized if one suffers an ordeal. Tayo has a vision while experiencing the presence of the woman which also suggests that Tayo was bereft of the geographical culture he belongs to. He experiences it while dreaming about a woman, as the woman has a strong connection with that landscape. Her association with the landscape reminds him of the cure he is looking for throughout the novel. Nelson suggests that Tayo's vision about the woman is his need to "reconfirm his own ability to merge with the land and thus with regenerative spirit immanent in the land. . ." (159). Furthermore, Nelson suggests that the woman's identification in Mesa also confirms her bonding with Mount Taylor and Pa'ta'ch (160), which means she needs the same recognition and affection which Tayo is in search of. Nelson's argument reminds me of the concept of reunion of the two spirits when both of them have the same needs to be satisfied and same route to be taken. Hence, there is a reason why Montano is transported into Tayo's mind and Tayo is the one with whom she builds her spiritual connection. It is a reunion of the lost identities and lost selves. Since Montano appears as a metaphor of life and spirit of earth, it hints towards the idea that reunion of soul and reviving one's identity can only happen when both a man and the earth gain their recognition and respect from each other. Silko insists upon the idea that when a man chooses his impulse over the basic earth then mankind will be forsaken by nature as well. That is why it is crucial to realize that nature and landscapes are strengths of mankind and not just a

resources to be exploited. Ecocritical studies helps the mainstream generation understand this relationship dynamic between land, nature, and mankind.

#### Tayo—A Hybrid

What is inevitably remarkable about Tayo's personality is that he is a mix blood—a hybrid. Hybridity is one of the postcolonial scholarships, which celebrates diversity. According to narcissistic European colonial power, hybridity used to be racial impurity in the eighteenth century. The execution of this idea can be seen in Auntie's relationship with Tayo. Although she is European, her pure indigenous blood allows her to hold against Tayo for being a mixed blood in Native American tradition. Hybridity is a cultural phenomenon which invites interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary examples and studies. It celebrates newness, diversity, and proposes a solution against colonial bigotry. In "Theorizing the Hybridity," Deborah Kapchan and Pauline Strong discuss hybridity as discourse and its current engagement in every sphere, transgressing disciplinary boundaries. They suggest that, "For Bhabha, at least, the postcolonial hybrid does not challenge us to disentangle influences like tradition and modernity or to unravel strands of difference. Rather, it stands in resistance to such disarticulations: instantiating identity at the same time that is subverted" (245). Bhabha thinks of hybridity as a tool or strategy to rejoice differences without playing power politics. *Ceremony* instantiates Tayo as a hybrid and celebrates his ethnicity. Unlike Josiah, Harley, and Rocky, Tayo and the medicine man's hybrid feature functions as a tool—as a genetic mechanism to heal themselves. In response to colonial zeitgeist, Silko gives current readers a new perspective to contemplate on Tayo's survival instinct because of his hybrid character.

Hybridity comprises creativity and multi-ethnicity, and facilitates one to become a visionary. It is Tayo's genetic strength which contains the potential of both races and makes him receptive to both ethnicities. It is his hybrid personality which gives him an ability to make a choice. This process of learning: to be receptive to new and unexpected environment is *Ceremony*. Certainly, the medicine man plays a significant role in helping Tayo realize his inner strength and his identity, which becomes an ingredient for a cure. Hybridity involves a vast form of social transformation with a cure for a better and versatile society.

Tayo's recognition of self and place bridges the crisis inside him and within Native American community. If Tayo had not envisioned that sense of place as a process of regeneration of self then one would have not known about cure for Tayo and the indigenous community. A non-native is unfamiliar with the sense of 'place' and 'space' that Silko offers through the novel. If not, then a non-native audience will be in an alienated space because of not having acquaintances with geographical condition. Silko remarkably connects readers with Tayo by tying them together, so that Tayo can share the same experience with public readers who are not aware of the beauty and depth of geographical culture in Native American society.

As one can notice, the events form a connection between one and characters, hence, it is important to bring Erin James's *The Storyworld Accord* in this discussion. James discusses a brand new process of analyzing narratives which are engaged with the environment contextually. James invents the term *econarratology*-- a combination of ecocriticism, which focuses on relationship between literature and physical environment,

and narratology, which focuses on literary structure and devices which is a tool to compose narratives combining the textual imaginative world and the physical and extratextual world. Her focus is more on formal choice of language rather than on theme. James stresses the words, “Porseal Protal,” which means a machine that permits readers to leap into the textual world. In the book, he takes a step further and analyzes the process of one’s involvement into the textual world. Story world, according to scholars, is a mental structure of context and environment. Her major interest is that a reader should experience the environment with the help of characters’ experience in text. In addition, the presentation of time and space in the narrative in *Ceremony* with the culture-specific life of Native Americans, their imagination, their experiences, and their responses to life, their past, present, and future, and their perspective on looking at the world is outstanding. James uses such back and forth connections to produce a literary narrative scholarship to celebrate cultural differences and diverse environmental realities across the world. That is why James shifts her focus from content to forms to show how literature can offer environmental insight.

*Ceremony* emphasizes the importance of one’s relation to place and one’s relations to animals, birds, and all nonhuman characters. In Native American culture, environment is not a product of humans, but it is assimilation of humans, animals, land, and the sky. In contrast to European belief, nonhuman creations, whether it be the sky, the mountains, the rivers etc. are alive, and this recognition leads one to the universal reasoning. That is why Betonie teaches Tayo to form this relationship with nonhuman entities for his healing. Thus, everything land owns is alive: trees, flowers, mountains,

animals, birds, and humans. Along with landscapes that are symbolic in the novel, It is clear that Native Americans' association with animals and landscape is not only limited to the physical world but is also associated with spirituality. The scene in the novel where a human transforms into a bear connotes a binding of two characters:

He grunted loudly and scratched on the ground in front of him  
 He kept watching the entrance of the bear cave.  
 He grunted and made a low growling sound.  
 Pretty soon the little bears came out. (129)

This transition of human into bear presents a harmony between the two different creatures and suggests that balance needs to be maintained among creations. This imaginary transformation cuts down the possibility of anthropocentric white man's attitude to nature and nonhuman creations belong to nature. Native Americans and most indigenous cultures emphasize that animals and other creations are as significant as humans on the planet. Both of them are similar, alive, and significant to nature. Thus, all creations should be treated the same way humans like to be treated. Equilibrium in nature can be maintained if the creations are recognized and respected in relation to each other to achieve environmental harmony. Silko presents a poetic image of creations and a poetic sense of place as stylistic features to present the metaphorical layers of meaning of Native American life. A human transforming into a bear is a persuasive metaphor which hints towards Native American epistemology. According to Vizenor, these metaphors and other literary figurations leaves traces of natural reasoning. The use of such metaphors and figurative transformations in the novel is a practice of survivance.

*Ceremony* is about retrieving one's life from death figuratively. In his essay, "Animals and Theme in *Ceremony*," Peter. G. Beidler states that *Ceremony* is about

people and their problems which are personal and social. To solve personal and social problem, one needs to contemplate his/her relationship with the outer world—both physical and metaphysical. He further expresses, “The fly-squashing soldiers becomes transformed at home into a man who once more shows respect for and kindness toward even that lowly form of animal life, the insect” (20). Tayo begins to connect himself with animals by looking at himself in relation to animals. He becomes aware and conscious of his surroundings. His awareness becomes apparent after he meets the medicine man, Betonie. Silko creates an urgency about environmental awareness and indicates that as a human, one cannot underestimate the existence of animals and insects while being a part of the world. It is a very Native American belief that all creations coming out of earth are worthy of same respects. Tayo pays attention to grasshoppers. He listens to them buzzing around him: “Grasshoppers buzzed out of weeds ahead of him; they were fading to a dry yellow color, from their bright green color of spring. . . . He looked down at the weeds and grass” (154-155). Tayo begins to accept the world in its full natural beauty. This natural beauty is comprised of animals, birds, grass, the sky, landscape and everything which exist in the world. Natural beauty is comprised of, in Vizenor’s words, “natural reasoning,”—if one is able to recognize it. Tayo begins to accept the world in its full beauty. On the contrary, Tayo’s friends Harley and Leroy (Native Americans) are examples of ignorant individuals towards their environment and prefer relying on cheap amusements:

“Hey!” Harley said. “What you watching?”  
“Grasshoppers.”  
She giggled. (156)



Harley then hands the wine bottle to Tayo, saying he should have some because he is paying attention to grasshoppers instead of Helen Jaen, a prostitute. Silko makes a point here by addressing the neglectful attitude of Native American characters towards the environment. She creates an awareness by inventing environmental concern and an individual personal relationship with the environment, whether or not a Native or a white or a hybrid. With the help of images like: grasshopper, spider, bears, and other nonhuman and inanimate creations, Silko conveys an individual and communal responsibility by creating the sense of their presence. It encourages humans to find meaning and purpose of life and to gain wisdom out of this natural reasoning.

#### Tayo and Healing

Then Tayo travels to Mount Tylor and pe'ta'ch, he explores the landscape which give him an opportunity to feel his genetic inclinations towards the earth. Howard Clinebell, in his book *Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves and Healing the Earth*, discusses why and how human minds and souls are prone to nature. Like other animals, by the virtue of being a part of nature, human minds have high potential to intermingle with nature cognitively and enrich the experience of outer world by bonding themselves with nature and earth. This is how genetic earth-rootedness is discovered among mankind. Tayo's grounded consciousness towards his land and nature point towards humans' grounded connection with nature, which man keeps denying. This denial of relationship between humans and nature echoes the concept of ecoalienation. Clinebell describes, "Ecoalienation is a dual distancing, a splitting of humans from connectedness with the natural world that they are in and that is in them" (34). To understand the significance of

Tayo's natural inclination towards his land, and Native Americans' emphasis on land and nature, one needs to understand what happens when one alienates oneself from earthly rootedness. In the modern era, one complains about lack of inner peace and lack of communion of body, mind, and spirit. Alienating nature from one's life is sabotaging one's own personal spirit and inner strength that a man receives from the place he belongs to.

Clinebell offers readers three experiential dimensions; inreach, upreach, and outreach. Inreach is to open oneself or submit to nature, upreach is to gather one's spiritual awareness, and outreach refers to be a participant in spreading that such awareness (9). Clinebell focuses on the strong relationship one can develop with nature and suggests a methodology for cure. It is embedded in Native American culture, which Silko presents in the novel. This method requires experiences, images, thoughts, and feelings connected to land and nature. Silko offers these approach of healing through Tayo, the medicine man, and Montano in *Ceremony*. These characters submit themselves to nature and allow themselves to be healed; Clinebell calls such process "Being 'nurtured by nature'" (8). Tayo and Montano trace their consciousness rooted in their land and nature. They made the choice to be receptive instead of rejecting. Rejection and reception are two important ideas while discussing man's rootedness in nature. In spite of having ecological orientation, a man is arrogant and reluctant to submit to nature. He rejects his own inheritance and holds dominance over nature. The opposite of rejection is reception. Reception happens when a man allow himself to form a deep, intimate relationship with nature. It is reception which defends a man from anxiety, fear, and

alienation, when one develops it within oneself. Reception is an organic proclivity towards something very powerful. In this case, the powerful is nature—the environment. Tayo grooms his receptivity gradually, which plays a profound role in his healing. Tayo begins gaining this knowledge of reception when he begins polishing his connection to native culture, flora, and fauna.

Silko presents the cure to a shallow pattern of living and a distorted self. Silko's *Ceremony* offers a cure—a healing for not just Tayo, but for the distorted and oblivious Native American society. This process of healing by natural reasoning is fundamental to Native Americans as well as to humans of all races and cultures. Through the character, Tayo, Silko suggests that the self is assembled and completed by the ceremony—recognition of self with the place through storytelling, Tayo develops a trust of natural reasoning and gains his sense of belonging by forming a relationship the land and the surrounding of Laguna culture. Tayo, as a half-breed, chose to submit himself to the idea of being and believing in magical power of the unseen. His hybrid personality serves post-colonial scholarship by affirming the fact that the hybrid is a solution to post-colonial concerns.

## CONCLUSION

*“YOU MUST GIVE TO THE RIVER A KINDNESS YOU WOULD GIVE TO ANY OTHER BROTHER.”* (Unanimous)

Unlike European thinking about nature and environment, for indigenous culture nature is not a pastime, and landscape not just a place to dwell on. It is deeper than what one might assume. This recognition comes from an in-depth study and familiarization with an unfamiliar, primitive, yet prudent way of living by indigenous cultures on their land. While analyzing these four texts: *Things Fall Apart*, *The Hungry Tide*, *Remnants of the First Earth*, and *Ceremony*, I wondered, we had not had a sense of place so profoundly associated with the ‘self.’ Living in a post-colonial world and analyzing these texts from objective vantage, I might say that we have lost ourselves by being choosing ‘self’ over everything we are surrounded with. How can one trade a piece of land for a cheap amusement and temporary pleasure; it is harming an integrity of land. This recognition is ones reconciliation with the environment (includes humans, non-humans, animate and inanimate creations). Post-colonial ecocritical analysis gives us an opportunity to rethink about the current relationship with the post-colonial land and fills the gaps between people and the environment, between native and non-native, and compels us to ponder on local and indigenous culture and their roles in the environment.

Throughout the twentieth and twenty first century, many writers from across the world have raised their environmental concerns. They highlights a deteriorating relationship between humans and the environment as a consequence of capitalism,

arrogant anthropocentric approach and oblivious attitude towards the surrounding.

Ecocritical Post-colonial studies of these texts invites us to embrace the differences and ethnicity to prevent environmental racism and the euro-centric or monocentric ideas which can only become a source to catalyze the existing environmental problems. The scholarship serves to maintain the harmony in the environment despite differences in cultures and asks us to develop a more refined and horizontal and not hierarchical perspective to look at the physical world.

Keeping the current work on Post-colonial ecocriticism in multicultural literature, in future, I aim to work on Econarratology. In brief, I will say, econarratology is a study of the use of language as a tool suitable for environmental context. The scholarly works of Erin James and Roman Bartosh on this concept have inspired me to take a step further to see rhetorical the implication of the scholarship in literatures.

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