

**PHD SYNOPSIS**

**A HISTORICAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE ECOLOGY OF FOREST AND  
THE FOREST DWELLERS OF PALAMAU PURNEA AND MANIMAHESH:  
THE THREE BENGALI NOVELS (1880 TO 1969)**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY FOR THE  
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The world of literature throngs with works dealing with beauty and power of nature. However, the concern for ecology and the threat that the continuous misuse of our environment poses on humanity have only recently caught the attention of the writers. It is this sense of concern and its reflection in literature that have given rise to a new branch of literary theory, namely Ecocriticism. The study of literature has long been preoccupied with historical approaches. However, in recent years critics are increasingly aware of the relation between literature and history, and drawing insights from the mutual study of these two fields. Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship as is evidenced in the works of poets and other writers down the ages in almost all cultures of the world. Today the intimate relationship between the natural and social world is being analysed and emphasised in all departments of knowledge and development. The literary critics try to study how this close relationship between nature and society has been textualised by the writers in their works. There have also been numerous debates on whether to include human culture in the physical world. Despite the broad scope of inquiry all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. It is a broad genre that is known by many names like green cultural studies, eco-poetics and environmental literary criticism, which are some popular names for this relatively new branch of literary criticism. Literary criticism in general examines the relations between writers, texts and “the world”. In most literary theory “the world” is synonymous with society - the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of “the world” to include the entire ecosphere. Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary criticism. It has come to mean not only the application of ecology and ecological principles to the study of literature, but

also the theoretical approach to the inter-relational webs of natural cultural and supernatural phenomena. Eco-critics encourage others to think seriously about the aesthetic and ethical dilemmas posed by the environmental crisis and about how language and literature transmit values with profound ecological implications. The considerable increase in the emergence of Eco-conscious writers in the post-modern era has paved a path for a new kind of critical approach called Ecocriticism. It is a fairly recent but rapidly developing concept in the area of Literary Criticism. It has emerged as a modern ecological literary study and is now acknowledged as a vital critical approach. Ecocriticism not only gives emphasis on the 'harmony' of humanity and nature but also talks about the destruction caused to nature by the changes which take place in the modern world for most of which man is directly responsible. Ecocriticism gives a new meaning to place, setting, and environment. Ecocriticism is one of the youngest revisionist movements, which has swept the humanities over the past few decades. The present world is facing eco-disasters and our environment is now at stake. Only science and technology are not enough to combat the global ecological crisis. We should make change in our attitude to nature. Literature does not float above life, so it has its role to play. For a long time nature was not given due consideration by the literary critics, so ecologically oriented literature pleads for a better understanding of nature in its wider significance. Ecocriticism has developed as 'a worldwide emergent movement' during the last three decades. The scholars are still engaged in developing its nature and scope. The term Ecocriticism was first coined by William Rueckert in his critical writing "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. According to Rueckert, ecocriticism applies ecology or ecological principles into the study of literature. And Lawrence Buell defines

ecocriticism “as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist’s praxis” (The Environmental Imagination). Further ecocriticism does not simply mean nature study; it has distinguished itself from conventional nature writing, first by its ethical stand and commitment to the natural world and then by making the connection between the human and the non-human world. According to Joseph Wood Krutch, Thoreau’s work is not about plants or animals or birds; it is about his relation to them; one may almost say about ‘himself in connection with nature’ (Henry David Thoreau, 1948). Patrick D. Murphy is right in saying that Ecocriticism is literary “criticism that arises from and is oriented toward a concern with human and nonhuman interaction and interrelationship.” Ecocritics in their study want an ecological perception of nature to change the ways humans inhabit the Earth. Ecocriticism is a rapidly changing theoretical approach, which is different from the traditional approach to literature. Here the critic explores the local or global, the material or physical, or the historical or natural history in the context of a work of art. An eco-critical approach to literature is often interdisciplinary, citing knowledge of environmental studies, the natural sciences, and cultural and social studies.

Over the last three decades, Ecocriticism has emerged as a field of literary study that addresses how humans relate to non- human nature or the environment in literature. Today, with the development and expansion of eco-critical studies, any line between human and non- human nature has necessarily blurred. So when subjected to Ecocriticism, literature of all periods and places - not only eco-centric or environmental literature or nature writing, but all literature is viewed in terms of place, setting, and environment. Ecocriticism is inherently interdisciplinary. Ecocriticism is most

appropriately applied to a work in which the landscape itself is a dominant character, when a significant interaction occurs between author and place, character and place. Ecocritics ask several questions on the relationship between environment and literature but one question seems to be the most important. Literary ecocriticism offers an ecological interpretation of texts. Cheryl Glotfelty says that: “Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”.<sup>1</sup> She lists a number of questions which could be asked by literary ecocritics like “How is nature represented in this sonnet?” and “What cross-fertilisation is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse in related disciplines such as history, philosophy, psychology, art history and ethics?”<sup>2</sup> The term ‘Ecocriticism’ is a short form of ecological literary criticism. The tendency to drop the reference to literature distorts the full ecological implication of the discipline. Kroeber like Howarth, points to the linking function of literary ecocriticism between humanism and science and calls the Romantic poets “proto-ecological” because they accepted “a natural environment existent outside of one’s personal psyche”. According to Glen Love Ecocriticism focuses on the “inter connections between the material world and human culture, specifically the cultural artifacts language and literature”. Robert Kern in his essay “*Ecocriticism: What is it good for?*” found in *The ISLE Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993-2003* aptly observes thus: What ecocriticism calls for, then, is a fundamental shift from one context of reading to another- more specifically, a movement from the human to the environmental, or at least from the exclusively human to the bio-centric or eco-centric, which is to say a humanism (since we cannot evade our

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<sup>1</sup> Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm. ed. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens and London: University of Georgia press, 1996. Print pg xviii

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xix

human status or identity) informed by an awareness of the ‘more- than – human.’<sup>3</sup> Arthur Lovejoy’s contribution in this field is also very eminent. He observes that one of the strangest, most potent and most persistent factors in the western thought is the use of the term ‘nature’ to express the standard of human values, the identification of the good with that which is ‘natural’ or ‘according to nature’. Nature has always proved to be stronger than human. It has often shown its power by controlling manpower through natural calamities like famine, drought, flood, earthquake etc. Human’s life and nature are so interlinked that it is not possible for human beings to separate themselves from its influence. Therefore they have no choice but to accept both nature’s bounty and adversity. This can be said to be reciprocal as nature too is the recipient of human’s action. Our irresponsible actions cause irreparable damages to nature. This is how the chain of ecosystem works in which everything is related to each other and therefore affects each other. However, even with a term that defined a new group of writing, Cheryl Glotfelty’s *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* published in 1996 adeptly narrowed the term in spite of a “postmodern age that exists in a constant state of flux” as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”.<sup>4</sup> Ecology has two shades, the shallow, and the deep ecology. Shallow ecology is essentially anthropocentric, which believes that the whole purpose of nature is to serve mankind and humans are the masters of nature; man being the only literary creature thinks himself superior over the others. It also advocates systematic usages of natural resources like coal, gas, forests, oil, etc. for a sustainable future. But deep ecology challenges this

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<sup>3</sup> (Branch and Slovic 267)

<sup>4</sup> Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm. ed. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens and London: University of Georgia press, 1996. Print.pg xviii

conservation mode and advocates preservation of nature to keep it in its original form without any interference of man as nature has its own right to survive. All organisms on this earth have their own intrinsic values and no one is the master of anybody. This realisation will give equal rights to every organism maintaining a balance in the ecosystem. Ecocriticism gives emphasis on this eco-consciousness removing the ego-consciousness man. The present environmental crisis is a bi-product of human culture. It is not caused by how the ecosystem functions; but how our ethical system functions; how we behave with Mother Nature etc. Ecocriticism builds this awareness among man. There are two waves of ecocriticism as identified by Lawrence Buell. The first wave eco-critics focused on nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction. They used to uphold the philosophy of organism. Here environment effectively means natural environment. The aim of the wave was to preserve 'biotic community'. The eco-critics of this wave apprised "the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action". So ecocriticism initially aimed at earth care. The second wave eco-critics inclined towards environmental justice issues and a 'social ecocriticism' that takes urban landscape as seriously as 'natural landscape'. This wave of ecocriticism is also known as revisionist ecocriticism. It seeks to locate the vestiges of nature in cities and exposes crimes of eco-injustice against society's marginal section. The eco-critic interprets nature writing texts. At the same time, they use them as a context for analysing the principles customs of our society in relationship to nature. Often, the result is a critique of how our culture devalues and degrades the natural world and the distinction between environmental writing and ecocritical writing is critical to an understanding of ecocriticism. Glotfelty notes that

“environmental writing supports a dualism that asserts nature as totally separate from humanity, while eco-critical writing unifies the two, or at least analyses the relationship between them”. Foundational to this study of work in nature is Ralph Waldo Emerson’s definition of nature and art and his argument about what it means to be whole through work in nature. In his essay, “Nature”, Emerson defines nature as “essences unchanged by man,” and art as a “mixture of man’s will with what is unchanged by man”. Thus, employing nature as a subject of literary study should address human will in nature. Emerson acknowledges that environmental problems arise because of man’s “resumption of power” and that “the problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty...is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or the blank, that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye”<sup>5</sup>.

Choosing a particular item from the past and recreating it as a variant is in part, an act of historical significance. The past is viewed from the present, wherever the present may be located, and that which is selected from the past goes into constructing a tradition or constructing a history. A tradition is never handed down intact from generation to generation, however appealing this idea may seem. Innovation is what gives it vitality. The items selected from the past are often so chosen as to legitimise the values and codes of the present. In selecting and recasting cultural items we highlight some and marginalise others. The act of selection becomes a dialogue with the past. The point in time at which the selection is being made gives a different value to the selection as a cultural symbol, as an idiom, as an icon. This has happened throughout our cultural history, although our

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<sup>5</sup> *Roots Of Ecocriticism: An Exploration Of The History Of Ecocriticism, A Literary Theory Of The Post-Modern World* Dr.Vathana Fenn Published On Journal Of English Language And Literature (Joell) An International Peer Reviewed Journal [Http://Www.Joell.in](http://www.joell.in) Vol.2 Issue 2 2015 Issn 2349-9753



awareness of this process is perhaps more apparent now. Where the narrative is culturally central to our own present today, we have also to see it as a part of the intervention of the colonial period and recognise the disjuncture this may produce. The concept of culture in relation to the early past, implies an intersecting of disciplines of which history, it seems to me is foundational. This involves the original text and its historical contexts, as also frequently the Orientalist reading of it and equally frequently, the internalising of this reading by commentators of the last century or two. And more recently, the questioning of this reading. Inevitably there is a contextualising of the Orientalist representation and European perspectives brought to bear on the reading. A single item can therefore have multiple identities which change at historical moments. Understanding a cultural item historically requires some comprehension of the world-view which it represented. Each version has some relation with those which preceded it: a relation ranging from endorsement to contestation of earlier versions.<sup>6</sup> **The main motive of this research paper is to narrate chosen literary texts which puts light on the environment, its preservation and decay, and link it with history. As literature is an imaginary examination of a particular society and environment, history preserves those because with passing time texts become archives which helps in preserving writings and help in further readings and researches.**

A narrative can have its own biography and the changes it manifests can provide us with a view of historical change. By historical change I do not mean just chronology but rather,

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<sup>6</sup> Narratives and the Making of History: Two Lectures by Romila Thapar; First Lecture Sakuntala: Histories of a Narrative. pg 1-5

the manifold dimensions of the historical context. A narrative frequently recreated over time becomes multi-layered like a palimpsest. One can attempt to reveal the many pasts which went into the making of its present. Where the retellings of a narrative or where narratives implying an event, become contesting versions, the differing perspectives also provide evidence for historical constructions. If eco-critics seek to understand not only how particular texts represent the interactions between humans and their ecological environment, but also how such representations reflect and shape real-world environmental practices, they must place them within the larger context of historical dynamics that cannot be inferred from these texts alone. By the same token, the recognition that human beliefs and desires play an essential part in environmental practices entails the corollary that textual interpretation is an indispensable component of historical research. Whether they openly acknowledge it or not, ecocriticism and environmental history are mutually implicated. The question that matters is how this relationship can be rendered more explicit and more productive.

A very important aspect of my research are the inhabitants of the forests, whom I will be talking about. These inhabitants are mostly the Scheduled Tribes present in the forests. They are the original rural people living in the forests and the writers are outsiders who are paying a visit from the urban areas for a few days and leaving the place for other future endeavours. Here a loop is being formed where if we see from the eyes of a forest dweller then the person going to the forest from outside could be called as “other” from their aspect, again the Urban Man does not quite fit into the “other population” who are uncivilised to its core. So he analyses the “deprivation of the unheard” and tries to be their voice by penning down their livelihood and everyday struggle and deeply wants that the

inhabitants come out of their misery someday and they are the ones who fascinated the writers and led them to document their beauty. The word “tribe” appears to have been derived etymologically from the Latin word “tribus” which means “group”. The Romans used terms like “tribus barbari” meaning the Barbarian group or tribes with beards and shabby hair unlike the Romans. In English such people were named as primitive people (L. Primus populus - the first people). They are also called the aborigines (L. aborigine - from the origine). These people are also called the 3 indigenous people meaning those naturally existing in a place or country rather than arriving from another area according to Cambridge dictionary. In India these primitive people are called the “Adivasees” (H. adi vasee - first settler) one who has first come to a particular place and cleared the jungles and made it habitable. If we closely examine the definitions given by several scholars we find the following characteristics of the tribes: (1) that it is a group of people of homogenous unit, (2) speak a common language or dialect (3) share common culture, (4) governed by customary laws of their own under a chief, (5) have common ancestry and history, (6) have their habitat in isolated geographical regions preferably in the forests and hilly terrains, (7) have a compact community life and (8) generally averse to mixing with people of other society of the plains. People with the above characteristics are the aborigines or the Adivasees, the first settlers. The Indian government has scheduled some of these aboriginal tribes on the recommendations of the States to give them some benefits and opportunity to develop and come at par with other advanced society economically and socially. The history of these tribes go far back in the past thousands of years ago reaching to the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro of the Indus Valley. Besides their history other aspects of the tribal life too are quite interesting. Their languages and

literature, customs and rituals, their religion and philosophy, their social and political organisations, arts and culture, dance, songs and the whole tribal ethos may as well be an engrossing study. So far the writers in the past on the tribal history and even the tribal in general thought of forts of Rohtasgarh or Ruidasgarh on the Kaimur hills in South Bihar belonging to their ancestors. But off and on some of the tribal people of this region spoke of Ajamgarh, Harappa and Mohenjodaro and the long sojourn of their ancestors through the valley of the twin rivers Ganges and Yamuna. These names do come in their folk songs. Archeologists, anthropologists, linguists and historians began to take keen interests in them. The academic interests grew. Several questions arise as to the origin of these tribes, their possible exodus from the Indus Valley and their long journey southeast to reach the Mountain regions of Chotanagpur now called Jharkhand the name given to it by the Mughal emperors in 16th century.

**My research here mainly aims on relating the Eco-critical Bengali texts with history and analysing the relationship between man and nature and how this is directly or indirectly affecting the environment and also preserving the flora and fauna of the forest and rights of the forest dwellers.**

The main three Bengali texts that I have taken up are “**Palamau**” by **Sanjib Chnadra Chattyopadhyay (1880-1883)**, “**Aranyak**” by **Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (1937-1939)** and “**Manimahesh**” from **Bhromon Omnibus Volume II** by **Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay (1969)**. These three texts form the main component of my chapters where I will try to analyse these highly eco-critical texts individually, from a historical perspective. This is mainly portraying the genre where I am interpreting texts as History.

The thesis is divided into **Four** chapters:

1. The Forest Dwellers: Ecocriticism and Literary Texts as History
2. A Historical Approach Towards Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's Eco-Critical Travelogue "Palamau"(1880-1883)
3. Man And Nature: A Portrayal Of Environmental Consciousness in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Eco-Critical Novel "Aranyak"(1937-1939)
4. Situating Historically: The Sahitya Akademi Award Winning Ecocritical Travelogue "Manimahesh" By Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay (1969)

In the First chapter titled, "**The Forest Dwellers: Ecocriticism and Literary Texts as History**", I have tried to make it an introductory chapter where I have defined **what Ecocriticism is and how history forms the foundation for evaluating any kind of interdisciplinary text, as, history itself can bridge the gap between different genres of writing**. The relationship between Man and Nature is very unique, one cannot survive without the other. In this chapter, I have tried to talk about the inhabitants of the forests i.e. the Forest Dwellers and their relationship with the forest. According to an article written by Elisha Lakra "Forest Dwellers: Life, Eviction, Rights" published in Legal Service India e-journal, "Forests are home to wild creatures as well as to a huge number of individuals across the globe. Ancestral individuals for their livelihood have been dwelling in the woods since ages. Individuals who live in and around backwoods regions are the Ancestral public known as the Forest Dwellers who come up short on the fundamental conveniences of life; they are subject to forests for their livelihood. Tribals or the 'Adivasis' living in forests are that piece of the general public who are far away

from the fundamental offices which they ought to get. In this period of improvement the Forest Dwellers are unconscious of the exercises going outside their dwelling backwoods and the other way around for example we also are uninformed of the challenges they may be confronting occasionally. Misuse of woods is sped up because of mining and industrialisation. They are denied of their privileges, medical care frameworks, instructive frameworks and some more. They experience the ill effects of different diseases yet get no treatment.”<sup>7</sup> According to the ancient Hindu code of conduct outlined in *Manusmriti* written between 400 BC and 200 AD, the duties of royal authority include protecting the “sacred right of first possession for the people who clear the land, even if they have taken use of the land away from others – for example, hunters and pastoralists.” Much later in medieval India, Mughal King Aurangzeb reiterated *Manusmriti*’s tenets on the sacred right of first possession when he declared that “whoever turns (wasteland) into cultivable land should be recognised as the (owner) and should not be deprived (of land).”<sup>8</sup> By talking about the people of the forest it has been easy for me to link it with my research genre where I am taking into account the relationship of the forest dwellers with the forest and how they are being seen by the writers of the particular texts I have included in my research. And this linking makes my work an eco-critical work itself. Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyse the environment and brainstorm

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<sup>7</sup> Elisha Lakra “Forest Dwellers: Life, Eviction, Rights” published in Legal Service India e-journal

<sup>8</sup> Forest dwellers are the best protectors of the environment

A new book, comparing the examples of colonial and post-colonial India, Tanzania and Mexico, shows that clear land rights have been the best protectors of both forest dwellers and forests, published on The Third Pole by Omair Ahamed

<https://www.thethirdpole.net/en/climate/forest-dwellers-are-the-best-protectors-of-the-environment/>

possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation. Ecocriticism was officially heralded by the publication of two seminal works, both published in the mid-1990s: *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination*, by Lawrence Buell. Ecocriticism investigates the relation between humans and the natural world in literature. It deals with how environmental issues, cultural issues concerning the environment and attitudes towards nature are presented and analysed. One of the main goals in ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react in relation to nature and ecological aspects. This form of criticism has gained a lot of attention during recent years due to higher social emphasis on environmental destruction and increased technology. It is hence a fresh way of analysing and interpreting literary texts, which brings new dimensions to the field of literary and theoretical studies. Ecocriticism is an intentionally broad approach that is known by a number of other designations, including “green (cultural) studies”, “eco-poetics”, and “environmental literary criticism.” Western thought has often held a more or less utilitarian attitude to nature - nature is for serving human needs. However, after the eighteenth century, there emerged many voices that demanded a reevaluation of the relationship between man and environment, and man’s view of nature. Ecocriticism gets its inspiration from the three major American writers whose works celebrate nature as a life force, and the wilderness as manifested in America. They are Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret Fuller (1810- 1850), and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). Indian philosophy is similarly, rich in ecological thought since Veda which paid equal importance to all organisms. India is also a land of rich biodiversity. From the Himalayas of North to Kanyakumari of South, from the Bay of Bengal off east to the

Arabian Sea on the west, the country has versatile physical surroundings leaving a deep impact on human beings. Literature is not apart from that. A good number of writers deal with eco-critical texts. Eco-critical perspectives may be best perceived in the writings of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore who founded Viswa Bharati at Shantiniketan far from madding crowd. His Rakta Karabi and Muktheadhara are the best example of eco-critical texts where he denounces human atrocities against nature. His eco-critical poems include 'The Tame Bird was in a Cage' (The caged bird has even forgotten how to sing) and 'I plucked you Flower' (The human feel that plucking flowers is their own right. Nature is not a silent spectator. One day it will react. It would not be just a thorn-prick but can be a mighty tsunami. The human should be careful about this). Anita Desai's 'Fire on the Mountains' is a good example of eco-critical text dealing with the problem of animal killing, population explosion, moral degradation of man - all causing a threat to the ecology symbolised by frequent fire in the forest. Kamala Markandaya's 'Nectar in a Sieve' represents Nature as a destroyer and preserver of life. The novelist here has shown how the evils of industrialisation spoil the sweet harmony of a peasant's life. Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things' is a portrayal of Exploitation of nature, by human beings in the name of progress and modernisation which is a dominant theme of the novel. The authoress here has shown her keen awareness of today's pressing environmental issues. The novelist in this novel has raised her voice for the environment, which is now under a great threat of pollution. In this novel, she not only exposes the massive degradation of nature but also reflects on the reason behind its dehumanisation. Ruskin Bond's 'No Room for a Leopard' presents the pathetic condition of the animals after deforestation. The 'Tree Lover', 'The Cherry Tree', 'All Creatures Great and Small' and



many others are all about the chain which binds man and nature, as in the chain of the ecosystem, showing interdependence. Kiran Desai in her 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard' is critical of the hectic town life, having dissatisfied of which the protagonist takes refuge in the Guava Orchard. In her 'The Inheritance of Loss', the novelist shows how Kanchenjunga pays for the brutality of human aggression. Ecocriticism here gets a political dimension in the novel when an un-estimated loss occurred due to Nepali insurgency causing a lot of damage to human life, animals and the serene beauty of nature. Amitav Ghosh's 'The Hungry Tide' is a powerful eco-critical text as the novel underscores environmentally and socially oppressive system harbored by humans. The delta of the Sundarbans has been presented as the destroyer and preserver of life. The novel faithfully depicts the state sponsored terrorism to evict the dispossessed Bengali Refugees settled at Marichjhapi. Ecocriticism as an academic discipline arose rather late in India. The Indian eco-critics making a considerable contribution to ecocriticism in India are as, in her 'Stolen Harvest', a nice example of eco-critical text, Bandana Shiva (an Indian environmental activist turned eco-critic) denounces the bio-piracy of the west in the name of patents from the poor countries. Thus, she shows that colonisation is not a matter of the past; it is still very much alive. According to her, industrial agriculture has not produced more food; it has destroyed the diverse sources of food. Thus, she gave a neocolonial dimension to ecocriticism. Among her notable contribution to the field of ecocriticism, mention may be made of 'Tomorrow's Biodiversity', 'Soil Not Oil', 'Staying Alive', 'Ecofeminism', 'Violence of the Green Revolution', 'Water Wars', 'Bio-piracy', 'Making Peace with the Earth' and the like. Suresh Frederick (Associate Professor, Bishop Heber College, Tamil Nadu) in his article 'Suicidal Motive' studies

poems about animals like squirrels and birds like sparrows who usually love to live near human habitation and help in ecological balance. But the unhealthy practices of human beings threaten their very survival. Nirmaldasan (an Assistant Professor of SRM School of Journalism, Tamil Nadu) along with Nirmal Selvamony, (a Reader in English, Madras Christian College, Chennai) has made notable contributions to 'Oiko-poetics' which means the poetics of the 'Oikos' or habitat consisting of the spirits, humans, nature and culture particular to it. His first volume of verse entitled *An Eaglet in the Skies* (1996) is the joy of creation, a joy much akin to an eaglet that has learned to fly. Ecocriticism in India is now in its second phase, which propagates the amalgamation of the first wave and the second wave as proposed by Lawrence Buell. While the first phase of Ecocriticism promoted regional understanding of ecology, the second phase witnesses Ecocriticism as an organised movement moving towards a global concern.<sup>9</sup> The historian Arnold Toynbee recorded the effect of human civilisation upon the land and nature in his monumental, *"Mankind and Mother Earth"* (1976). Environmental issues and landscape use were also the concern of the Annales School of historians, especially Braudel and Febvre. The work of environmental historians has been path-breaking too. Richard Grove, Vinita Damodaran and Satpal Sangwan edited book, *"Nature and the Orient"* (1998), David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha's *"Nature, Culture, Imperialism"* (1995) have been significant work in the environmental history of India and Southeast Asia. Ramachandra Guha is of course the most important environmental historian writing from India, today. Various versions of environmentalism developed. Deep ecology and ecofeminism were two important developments. These new ideas questioned the notion of "development"

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<sup>9</sup> Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature by Sandip Kumar Mishra, BRICS Journal of Educational Research, 6(4),168-170, ISSN 2231-5829

and “modernity,” and argued that all Western notions in science, philosophy and politics were “anthropocentric” (human-centred) and “androcentric” (Man/male-centred). Technology, medical science with its animal testing, the cosmetic and fashion industry all came in for scrutiny from environmentalists. Deep ecology, for instance, stressed on a “bio-centric” view (as seen in the name of the environmentalist group, “Earth First!!”). Ecocriticism is the result of this new consciousness: that very soon, there will be nothing beautiful (or safe) in nature to discourse about, unless we are very careful.

The writing of history has had a continuous interface with literature. Historians have culled literature for information on what may have happened in the past, the statements being juxtaposed with other kinds of evidence. This is a legitimate activity. I would however suggest a sharpening of this interface by changing the focus somewhat, by searching for the historical perspectives which this interface provides, through examining the representations present in the narrative. The same narrative or approximately the same, can occur in variant forms as different genres of literature - in this case, the story of Sakuntala in the Mahabharata, the play of Kalidasa, the prose-poem in Brajabhasa. From a different perspective but with a bearing on the narrative, are the many translations of the Kalidasa play where the act of translation in itself becomes a cultural negotiation, and there is also the commentary in the form of an essay by Rabindranath Tagore.

Choosing a particular item from the past and recreating it as a variant is in part, an act of historical significance. The past is viewed from the present, wherever the present may be located, and that which is selected from the past goes into constructing a tradition or constructing a history. A tradition is never handed down intact from generation to generation, however appealing this idea may seem. Innovation is what gives it vitality.

The items selected from the past are often so chosen as to legitimise the values and codes of the present. In selecting and recasting cultural items we highlight some and marginalise others. The act of selection becomes a dialogue with the past. The point in time at which the selection is being made gives a different value to the selection as a cultural symbol, as an idiom, as an icon. This has happened throughout our cultural history, although our awareness of this process is perhaps more apparent now. Where the narrative is culturally central to our own present today, we have also to see it as a part of the intervention of the colonial period and recognise the disjuncture this may produce.

In the Second chapter titled, **“A Historical Approach towards Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay’s Ecocritical Travelogue “Palamau” (1880-1883)”**, Palamau is written by Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, elder brother of the famous literary figure, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, first published serially in *Bangadarshan* from December, 1880 to March, 1883 and is considered as the first example of travelogue in Bengali Literature. I have tried to analyse this wonderful Travelogue which is more of a Novel and less of a Travelogue by **citing the scenario of then Jharkhand and how the ecological balance was maintained in the dense forest of Palamau despite challenging conditions and threats imposed by the British government and later what all measures have the Indian government taken to preserve the forests and its dwellers.** Walking or dawdling happened to be one of the most common means of travel for the young, penniless Romantics of Europe, a trope which seems to have particularly interested Bengali Romantic travel writers as well. Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay’s travelogue, *Palamau* dwells upon this idea of leisurely Romantic travel in a hilly, wilderness-clad location which was perhaps yet to be ravished by the imperialist

mechanisms of control. The virgin topography of Palamau, with its indigenous tribal inhabitants opens up a niche for the narrator to negotiate with the binaries of civilised and uncivilised, progress and stagnation, the metropole and the margin, etc. His Romantic philosophising on the exotic natural beauty of Palamau and anthropological take while enunciating the customs, traditions and lives of the Kol community are manifest with these colonial and cultural broodings, typical of every native subject in the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> According to E. T. Dalton, more than half of the people of Chotanagpur were known by the name of Kol ‘which included many tribes (e.g. the Mundas, the Oraons, Hos, Bhumij and others)’. They were simple but inflammable people and they belonged to a manly race. The author has given a wide picture of the tribal society and its impact on the environment which has enhanced our knowledge of the forest in the time of the colonial rule. Here, the wild, short and black people known as “Kol” are a tribal community, who are exposed to their own whims on a black rocky background. It is in this closeness to nature that a valuable quote is written with the stroke of his pen – “Bonyera bone shundor, shishura matrikrore” (Savages are as beautiful in the wilderness as infants in their mothers’ laps) stated Chattopadhyay in one of the chapters of this work. This much-celebrated line underlines the basic ideological assumptions of the writer when he sets forth on his Romantic quest into a landscape which he visualises as marvelous, exotic and uncharacteristically hospitable towards his disposition. On the one hand, he imagines his relationship with Nature as that of a child with his mother, beautifully imagining a conventional construct to highlight the source of sublimity, beauty and cultural significance. However, on the other hand, the powerful discursive stance which

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<sup>10</sup> The Travels and Travails of a Bengali: Reading Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay’s ‘Palamau’ by Café Dissensus on October 23, 2020, By Stella Chitralekha Biswas

he adopts while envisioning his relationship with Palamau and its tribal inhabitants inevitably ushers in the idea of a dialectical relationship between the metropole and the margin. As echoed in Subho Basu's argument in his article "The Dialectics of Resistance: Colonial Geography, Bengali Literati and the Racial Mapping of Indian Identity", Chattopadhyay here seems to be evoking a similar method of reassessing his own sense of a native, 'modern' self, hailing from the center of culture or the metropole and the perceived 'otherness' of the Kol community whom he locates within an imagined marginal space, beyond the demands of cultural progress or civilisational development. It is important to note the spatial markers of his journey, starting at Raniganj and gradually traversing through rural locations like Barakar and Hasaribagh and finally ending at the destination point of Palamau in the Chotanagpur plateau area of Jharkhand. It is also interesting that throughout the course of his journey his mode of transport keeps changing as if in tune with the geographical backdrop and its cultural significance – from the ride on a mail-van belonging to the Inland Transit Company, he switches on to a ride on a palanquin and finally to the ultimate choice of a Romantic traveler, leisure-walking. The deliberately crafted distancing between the 'self' and the 'other' has been achieved through a careful manoeuvring of the ideas on race, modernity, primitiveness, socio-cultural hierarchy and colonial subjectivity. The problematics of this negotiation between a proclaimed childlike narratorial deportment and the underlying tensions surrounding cultural and racial aspirations posit Chattopadhyay's travelogue as unique within the colonial understanding of travel writing. Similarly, if we look into the writing through another perspective we see Chattopadhyay explaining the line "Wild people are beautiful in the forest; children are beautiful in the mother's womb". In his novel, Sanjib Chandra

Chattopadhyay has given emphasis on the lives of women specially, tribal women who work daily to keep their household going and are a major preserver of the forests. Keeping this in mind I have included the ideas of Eco-Feminism as a major point of this chapter to explore gender discrimination as well as women empowerment among the tribals. Curious, energetic and hardworking women were the mainstay of the tribal community. They were the driving force of their world. The novelist writes that in the Kol community, men managed the house, looked after the children, and were lasy whenever they got the chance. As a result, men became prematurely premature with age and women became the epitome of youth. Even in the Palamau forest the novelist witnesses, eye-to-eye talk, heart-stealing and love results. The game of love was played by fights, quarrels or abuse between two families. The quarrel ended in a huge banquet. On the occasion of marriages, many people had to incur huge amount of debt and the author had skilfully portrayed the horrible result it led to. Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's criticism is not clear in his writings. But what Rabindranath Tagore himself has said long ago about him is that, "*His (Sanjibchandra's) talent had wealth, but not the husbandry*".

According to the *Census of India 1981 Series 4-Bihar District Census Handbook Parts Xiii-A & B Village & Town Directory Village & Town wise Primary - Census Abstract of Palamau District* by B. B. Lal of The Indian Administrative Service Director of Census Operations, Bihar, pg 1, we come to know that the early history of Palamau is shrouded in legends and traditions. Autonomous tribes probably inhabited the area in past. Kharwars, the Oraons, and the Cheros practically ruled over this tract. The Oraons had their headquarters at Rohtasgarh in the then Shahabad district (which include the present

district of Bhojpur and Rohtas). There is some indication that for some time a portion of Palamau was ruled from the headquarters of Rohtasgarh. Palamau was suffering from chaos and disorder which facilitated its subjection by the British. In the beginning, the officers of company hesitated in taking action against Cheros. This was because the Calcutta based high officials of the East India Company had instructed the Patna Council to abstain from the use of force against the Chero with a view to occupying the Palamau fort. The British decided to favour Gopal Rai, who was the son of Chatrapal Rai. By that time Chiranjit Rai and Jainath Singh had captured the fort. The British sent a message to Jainath Singh through Ghulam Hussain for handing over the Palamau fort. Captain Camac marched to Palamau and triumphed on 21 March 1771 when the fort was surrendered. Chiranjit Rai and Jainath Singh managed to escape to Ramgarh. Mukund Singh, the ruler of Ramgarh had been actively assisting Chiranjit and Jainath in their fight with Camac. Even after the fall of Palamau fort, Mukund Singh sent his emissary to Gopal Rai asking him to call back Jainath Singh and assist him in expelling the British from Palamau. Gopal Rai, however, did not oblige him and reported the matter to Camac. The Patna Council ordered Camac to restore peace after the fall of Palamau fort. In July 1771 Gopal Rai was declared the ruler of Palamau. Thus by the middle of July 1771, the East India Company established its authority over the whole Palamau.<sup>11</sup>

While considering travel writings from a historical perspective, it is indeed necessary to look at the important developments that took place in the modes of travel in nineteenth century Bengal. While roads and waterways were the only options open to travelers

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<sup>11</sup> Census of India 1981 Series 4-Bihar District Census Handbook Parts Xiii-A & B Village & Town Directory Village & Town wise Primary - Census Abstract of Palamau District by B. B. Lal of The Indian Administrative Service Director of Census Operations, Bihar, pg 1



initially, the establishment of the railways for the first time in Bengal in 1854 between Howrah and Hooghly greatly revolutionised not only travel but the entire gamut of Bengali socio-cultural life.<sup>12</sup> The gradual expansion of links between the city and the rural or suburban interiors boosted the advancement of various socio-economic prospects and egged the growth of secular leisure travel all the more, though within a highly gendered framework of understanding modernity and mobility. However, the idea of Romantic travel entails the choice of a peculiar and yet common mode of locomotion within the laps of Nature, that which lay beyond the grasp of the colonial project of modernity. Walking or dawdling happened to be one of the most common means of travel for the young, penniless Romantics of Europe, a trope which seems to have particularly interested Bengali Romantic travel writers as well. Sanjib Chandra Chattopdhyay's travelogue, *Palamau* dwells upon this idea of leisurely Romantic travel in a hilly, wilderness-clad location which was perhaps yet to be ravished by the imperialist mechanisms of control. The virgin topography of Palamau, with its indigenous tribal inhabitants opens up a niche for the narrator to negotiate with the binaries of civilised and uncivilised, progress and stagnation, the metropole and the margin, etc. His Romantic philosophising on the exotic natural beauty of Palamau and anthropological take while enunciating the customs, traditions and lives of the Kol community are manifest with these colonial and cultural broodings, typical of every native subject in the nineteenth century. Distinct in style and structure from the other forms of travel narratives or writings about expeditions, missions or enterprises that were proliferating in Bengal since the late nineteenth century, Chattopadhyay's work emerges as a fine example of Romantic travel

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<sup>12</sup> Government of India, Classified List of Gasetted Establishment of Indian Railways, Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) CMS Team Last Reviewed on: 07-05-2022

literature which blends the elements of both fact and fiction to recount the travel experiences of the narrator in the hilly region of Palamau, located in Jharkhand. Chattopadhyay does not merely document the places and the cultures of people he encounters on his many adventures in an ethnographic manner but extends his creativity to project his own personal experiences, reactions and responses towards the diversity of life around him. Dwelling on the intersectional possibilities of the travelogue and the memoir forms of writing, Palamau evolves to be unique in its own right, exploring the nuances of both physical and mental travel. Coupled with this were the significant yet subtle discourses on race, colonisation, gender, socio-cultural hierarchy and other pertinent issues embedded within the narrative. Thus, Chattopadhyay's travelogue is not just limited to the generic demands of secular travel writing but transcending itself to imbibe the Romantic spirit of speculating upon Nature, beauty, memory, imagination and self-actualisation.<sup>13</sup> Palamau, as a narrative, incorporates within itself the intersectional possibilities of both the memoir and the travelogue forms of writing. The narrator undertakes not just a literal, physical journey by various modes of locomotion into the heart of a Romantic wilderness, but also embarks on a mental journey into the past when he sets down to recount his experiences. The problematic interplay of memory, reminiscence and the actual temporal framework of the events add to the introspective nature of the work. It opens up new generic possibilities for the narrator to deal with certain contending issues as he retrospectively assesses his experiences of youth from the vantage point of his mature years. The skillful blend of his past youthful exuberance at

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<sup>13</sup> The Travels and Travails of a Bengali: Reading Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's 'Palamau' by Café Dissensus on October 23, 2020, By Stella Chitralekha Biswas

Palamau and his present wisened, more informed outlook upon his experience has an almost Wordsworthian resonance in underlining the communion he has achieved with Nature. Nature evolves to become a transcendental source of nurturing his Romantic insight for pondering upon the deeper levels of existence. The aesthetics of the picturesque landscape of Palamau has enabled him to undertake a metaphorical journey into self-actualisation and fashion his own socio-ethnic sense of identity. The subtext of negotiating with the complex concepts of masculinity, race, hierarchy, modernity and civilisation also remains palpably embedded within Chattopadhyay's narrative. Thus, Palamau exists as a legacy of the colonial Bengali man engaging with travel and its associated discursive travails, desperately trying to constitute an idea of the self within the larger imaginary of the nation while also attempting to synthesise it with his own Romantic perceptions.

To give a brief summary of Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel and why it is referred to as a travelogue, I have written how this novel narrates the story of Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's trip to a Pargana in India as a government official, it focuses on the story of the soil and the indigenous people of that area. I have elaborated in my chapter as to how after reading the newspaper, the novelist had a very different idea regarding Palamau and believed that it could not be such a huge forest area. After assuming the post of Deputy Magistrate, Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay lost his temper at the first 'Palamau *darshan*' shown by the palanquin bearers from Ranchi, he thought there was nothing there other than the forest lands. After his arrival at Palamau, the idea that he had made earlier was once again proved wrong. The forest was very deep and was not sparse. A travelogue has never been interpreted as history before. Here I will try to take into account how the

Britishers had exploited the forest lands and even used tribal people to fight for them as soldiers and also how Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay has written about the peasant community and how different rules proposed by the British government had ruined and mostly perished massive tribal population. Only one work has been done on Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's, "Palamau" by Arnab Bhattacharya. In his book "Palamau: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature", Arnab Bhattacharya has very elaborately narrated the book and has helped readers to get a good idea about the Bengali literature. This book has been written in English which has made it easier for people outside the Bengali community to get an idea about Bengali forest literature of colonial times. Referring to this book I have written the chapter and connected it with historical evidence for example from the *Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, a study written by Dr. Jagdish Chandra Jha named, "The Kol Insurrection of Chota-Nagpur" was published on 1964*, where he clearly elaborates about the Kol uprising in the Chota-Nagpur area in the colonial period between 1831-1833 against the government. From a study named "*Singbhum, Saraikella and Kharaswan" written by L.S.S O'Malley, and published on 1910 in the Bengal District Gaseteers*, the Kols participated in the Revolt of 1857 against the British as it was not only restricted among the Sepoys and later became a mass movement. Most notable among the Kols was Gonoo, leader of the 'Kol' tribe who mobilised the natives in an anti-colonial struggle and although he declared himself to be a follower of Raja of Porahat with whom the Kols had traditional ties.

In this chapter I have included how Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay himself is a fascinated spectator who is fascinated, stunned and overwhelmed by nature. He did not fall in love with the mountain alone, his followers abounded behind him. It is not a small matter to

show the culture, festivals, sociality and way of life of Palamau in such a short range. The way in which he has skilfully expressed the joys and sorrows of that place, he has shown the same skill by arranging the unspoken words of the miserable lives of the Kols, who are still immersed in the primitive melody. Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's introduction of this tribal group only from Palamau has attracted the attention of the Bengali Bhadrals is a very good point of his writing. The novelist never had much liking towards the colonial government. Although he served the government, Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay never got along with other masters and employees. This can be understood by looking at his career. He never hesitated to reflect his own identity in his writings. His touches are also found in the Palamau travel story. Especially in the last sentence of the book – “*Once our native wine can be sent to Bilet, birth is successful, a lot of heartburn is eliminated.*” The reflected not only the typical mindset of the colonial agency and believed in the originality of Indian culture in its own way.

Palamau being a Tiger reserve have been exploited by the government and common man separately. According to the *Bihar District Gasetteers “Palamau” by P. C. Roy Choudhary, M.A., B.L., Special Officer, Gasetteer Revision Section, Revenue Department, Bihar, Patna, Printed By The Superintendent Secretariat Press, Bihar, Patna 1961 under the sub-section 5: “Forests”, pg 8-9* “Large stretches of forest lands which were once covered with fine forests have since been completely denuded of all vegetation and stand out as desolate, naked wastes on which not even grass can grow. Large parts of such wastes have been gullied and deep ravines have been formed therein. For rehabilitating such denuded lands and for arresting the accelerated pace of erosion, afforestation schemes have been taken up. Gaya Afforestation Division operates in this

district with the above end in view. Besides the above, efforts are also being made by the local Divisions to afforest small patches of lands. Works of improvement in the shape of replacement of inferior species by species of higher value and utility like teak and semal is in progress in Palamau and Latehar Divisions. The target is to plant up 400 acres with semal and 400 acres with teak at a cost of Rs. 40,000 each in each of these two Divisions by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan. For raising teak and semal stumps one nursery at Dorami has been established having an area of 5 acres by improving the old nursery which was very small in extent. Two wells have also been dug up which are fitted with pumps worked by electricity. Another nursery of 4 acres for raising teak stumps at Maromar and of 2 acres at Kurumkheta for raising semal stumps has been established. Another work of improvement which has been taken up in hand in the Second Five-Year Plan is the fencing of derelict areas. Areas having potentiality which cannot show up on account of very heavy incidence of grazing have been fenced with barbed wire to exclude all grazing and it is expected that they will improve in 5 to 10 year time”.

In the Third chapter, **“Man and Nature: A portrayal of Environmental Consciousness in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s Ecocritical Novel “Aranyak” (1937-1939)”**, I have tried to **focus on Purnea, its forest, the Adivasis and on the man and nature relationship. My main aim is to establish how the novelist being the main protagonist himself could see through the lives of the forest dwellers and give voice to the people who were unheard before. How Satyacharan wanted to preserve the forest land of Purnea by not letting the British to continue with deforestation and preserve the environment for the survival of its people. Though he was a failure, still his deep love towards nature and the people have made him a true environmentalist. Along with**

**this I have also tried to see how post-independence did the Bihar government take necessary measures to preserve the forest lands and rights of the Adivasis.** The very prologue of the novel gives us a hint that Aranyak is going to be a highly eco-critical prose work. The setting is in the outdoor wilderness of Bihar. The whole novel is written in the form of reminiscence of forest life experienced by the novelist himself. About the novel, he writes, “There are no dense forests close to human habitation. The forests lie in the distant land, where on banks of Godavari, the winds are burdened with the smell of ripe-fallen jambu fruit. Aranyak is an account of the imaginary land. This is not a travelogue; nor is it a diary, it is a novel. Yet, the background of Aranyak is not entirely imagined. There used to be and there still are, such vast expanses of forest spreading to the horizon.” Composed between 1937-39., the novel is based on Bibhutibhushan’s long and strenuous years in Northern Bihar, where he came across the dispossessed - landless peasants, poor Brahmins, wretched migrants, homeless labourers and wild Adivasis. “It is these people that I shall speak. Our earth has many paths where civilised men seldom tread. Along those paths, the strange cross-currents of life trickle their way through obscure pebbly channels - such currents I had known and the memory of knowing them remains with me.” The whole novel is a recollection as it is presented in the mode of a flashback. But these memories do not give him pleasure. They are his sorrowful experience. Satyacharan is instrumental in conducting an ecocide as he was assigned to do so as a part of his profession. The jungle land of Nara-baihar and Lobtulia had been leased out. There remained hardly any forests like those of former times. All the shady groves and creeper entwined trees and the secluded paths composed by nature for so many years were lopped off by the ruthless hands of the labourer’s. What had taken thousands

of years to come up was destroyed in a matter of few days for setting up human habitation. He had to lease out the land to the peasants and the new settlers for the interest of his employer. Aranyak - Of the Forest is a story of memorisation and understanding of the ecocide of a forest land. The so-called pristine beauty of physical environment of Lobtulia and Nara-baihar were ravished by human greed. But the wounds of destruction ever remain the inmost core of the heart of the protagonist. It is as though a dream that revives man's lost relationship with nature. Like Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" the poem witnesses a development of the protagonist's attitude to nature, though in a different vein. In case of Wordsworth, love of nature was already there since childhood and this was refined into a mystical attitude through three stages. But Satyacharan being a byproduct of city culture had no love for the forest. This gradually changed with his interaction with the forest and its living and non-living elements. With the advancement of civilisation, the primeval beauty of nature is being destroyed in the name of progress. But in each brick of modernisation is attached the impression of disappearing nature and the eternal struggle of primitive human society. The thirty thousand Bighas of forest land is not a mere setting of the novel; it has become a living entity in the elevated thought of the protagonist Satyacharan. Sanghamitra Ghosh in her MPhil dissertation named *Bibhutibhushaner Sahityae Protifolito Samaj, Arthonity O Paribesh: Itihaser Aloy, Chapter 3: Bibhutibhushaner Sahityae Prokriti o Poribesh pg 73* has described how Bibhutibhushan has succeeded in writing a novel by looking minutely at everything that is present in the forest land and analysing them in his own beautiful way and giving the readers a clear view of the forest and the Adivasis and the relationship shared between man and nature. The novel has a message that we should live in close harmony with nature



and any violation of it would lead to disastrous consequences. We are deeply engrossed with Bandyopadhyay's love for the forest and his environmental awareness. The novel indicates how to build a deep relationship between the human and the non-human forest. The novelist here pleads for the environmental protection. Every time we read the novel; our heart is filled up with repentance for the loss of green. Herein lays the eco-critical significance of this memory-based novel. The novel shows how the anthropocentric attitude of man gets purged off in close proximity with nature. It makes us learn how we should behave with Mother Nature and how human atrocities in the name of development and progress of human civilisation are actually robbing us of peace of mind. Satyacharan is the symbol of those people who in the name of the growth of the soil indulge in deforestation for plotting out land for industrialisation and progress. It is very interesting that, like today's eco-critics, Bibhutibhushan could well understand the importance of preservation of natural environment, and his sensitive mind was against harmful practices of man which alienate him from the origin much ago in the 1930s. In short, the novel may be regarded as a pioneering effort creating environmental awareness among the readers. Much like Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, *Aranyak* shows the novelist's penchant cry towards an eco-centric lifestyle long before ecocriticism came into existence. "Like many other nature narrative, but strikingly for a work written in India eighty three years ago, *Aranyak* too ends with a vision of the environmental apocalypse. For all his empathy with those who labour in the forest for a bare subsistence, Satyacharan, according to Bandyopadhyay seems ultimately to be on the side of "deep ecology", and wilderness preservation. There is much in *Aranyak* that reflects what Maria Mies (1993) has called "the White Man's Dilemma", an urban nostalgia for the aesthetics of an untouched nature,

one in which the “natives” appear closer to the nature than the city dwellers but in which too the poor are blamed for not doing enough to honour and protect the wilderness they inhabit. Being a true environmentalist, Bandyopadhyay had to admit with great regret that the imperial influence and capital infiltration could not be stopped in the forest lands.”<sup>14</sup> He did not want the forest to be destroyed by the colonial government for their financial gains rather he wanted to conserve the forest and the environment through the character of Satyacharan which makes Aranyak a highly eco-critical novel and Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay a true environmentalist. In the recent years post-independence we see how the government has taken necessary measures to preserve the forest lands of Purnea. According to the *Indian Planning Commission, Tenth Five Year Plan Chapter 22 page 492* it is seen that, by 1997, eighteen state governments have issued enabling resolutions permitting partnerships with local people. These states have 80 percent of the country’s forest land and 92 percent of its tribal population. The Joint Forest Management programme has now become the central point of future forest development projects funded by the Government of India and the donor agencies. According to government data, it is estimated that 36,130 village committees are protecting about 10.2 million ha of forests (though both quality of protection and its sustainability need improvement). The area comprises 17% of the forest cover in India. With more imaginative policies and innovative silviculture, this area could be increased to 15 million ha in about a decade to cover about a quarter of the total forest cover.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Narrativising Nature: India, Empire and Environment by David Arnold; ed. by Elisabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, Anthony Carrigan; Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities Postcolonial Approaches, published in 2015

<sup>15</sup> [forest and tribes government policies.pdf](#)

In the Fourth Chapter titled, **“Situating Historically: The Sahitya Akademi Award Winning Ecocritical Travelogue “Manimahesh” By Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay (1969)”**, I have tried to take into account the award winning Bengali travelogue “Manimahesh” by none other than Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay. Son of Sir Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay and Smt. Jogmaya Devi, Umaprasad was born on 12 October 1902 in Bhowanipur, Kolkata. He studied English for his bachelor’s degree but chose Ancient Indian history as his subject for his master's degree. He also did his L.L.B. He won many academic laurels throughout. After teaching in the university for some time, he practiced at the Bar. In 1958, he gave up legal practice, in pursuit of wanderlust, and a spiritual quest for peace, human values and the true meaning of life. This started in the Himalayas, and throughout his life, he was attracted to the Himalayas repeatedly. His passion for travel was an upshot of his restless spirit that was not content to be stationed in one place, and his genuine love of nature. He has written prolifically about his travels, capturing the ambience of the locale and sensitive to everything around. He was associated with the *Bangabasi Patrika* throughout his literary career. His minute observations and the authentic historicity of his narration in his book *Manimahesh* (1969) won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1971. Manimahesh is the Second volume of Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay’s “Bhromon Omnibus”. This travelogue has been translated by Sanjukta Dasgupta in English in 2006. The name of the translated book is “Manimahesh: Award - Winning Bengali Travelogue”. The writers love for travelling has mainly drawn me towards this specific writing and also because I was fascinated by the beauty of Manimahesh myself with its deadly roads and scenic beauty. According to the *Road Transports and Highways, Government of India and National Highway Authority of*

*India*, the road from Chamba to Manimahesh is recorded as one of the deadliest roads which is prone to environmental hazards and often creates problem for the natives and the travelers.

This chapter is a bit different from the other two chapters as this dialogue based Travelogue has been written in the post-independence era. So, here I have looked into how the Indian government was taking measures to preserve the environment by protecting the rights of the forests and the people, mainly the Gaddi Transhumant Tribes. Here the main geographical location of my chapter is Manimahesh of Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh. Chamba district was formed as a separate administrative unit on the merger of the erstwhile Chamba state with Himachal Pradesh on 15th April, 1948. Later in 1966, consequent upon re-organisation of erstwhile Punjab, Dalhousie sub-tahsil of Gurdaspur district was also annexed to Chamba district. In 1974-75, 118 villages of Pangi tahsil were transferred to Lahul and Spiti district. Since then there is no change in the area of the district. Presently the district comprises of six tahsils vis., Pangi, Churah, Saluni, Chamba, Bhattiyat and Brahmaur and three sub-tahsils vis., Sihunta, Holl and Bhalai. The district has five sub-divisions and seven community development blocks. According to the *Census 1991 Series-9 Himachal Pradesh District Census Handbook Part Xii-A & B Village & Town Directory Village & Town wise Primary Census Abstract Chamba District Director Of Census Operations, Himachal Pradesh*, the district has recorded a total population of 393,286 persons of these 201,759 are males and 191,527 females. The total area of the district is 6,528 Sq. Kms. There are a total of 1,591 villages in the district of these 1,144 villages are inhabited. Chamba district ranks 2nd in order of area and 4th in order of population among the districts of Himachal Pradesh.

The historical evidence of the population living in Chamba is found in *W.H. Newell, Census of India 1961, Himachal Pradesh, Report on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Vol. xx. Part V-B, 1967, p. 1*. Here it is documented that the population of Chamba district is predominantly (92.31 percent) Hindu. Next come the Muslims followed by Buddhists, Sikhs and Christians. The number of followers of Jainism and other religions and persuasions is negligible in proportion of the district population. Among the Hindus mention may be made of Brahmins, Rajputs and Kanets. Brahmins mostly migrated to the area in the early period of the history as priests and religious devotees. Rajput occupied a prominent position in the state before its integration with Himachal Pradesh in 1948. The Rajput communities are known as Mians, Thakurs, Jagirdars, Rathis and Ranas. The Scheduled Castes constitute 19.75 percent of the total population of the district. Among them are mainly Kolis, Dumnas, Lohars and Badbis found all over the district. The Scheduled Tribes, with their interesting cultural practices and way of life, constitute 28.35 percent of the total population of the district. Among the Scheduled Tribes, mention may be made of the Gaddi, the Gujjar and the Pangwal.

According to the *Census 1991 Series-9 Himachal Pradesh District Census Handbook Part Xii-A & B Village & Town Directory Village & Town wise Primary Census Abstract Chamba District Director of Census Operations, Himachal Pradesh*, it is documented that, the landscape surrounding Manimahesh has been addressed by many other names. The area of Goderan and Bharmour has been called ‘the strange land of the Gaddis’, a nomadic tribe that migrated from Central Asia some two thousand years ago. It is also called ‘Shivbhumi’, a land associated with Shiva, the god of creation and destruction, so it is obviously a place of religious sanctity. We are then told that the precise sacrosanct

space is none other than Manimahesh, 'the snow mountain' that is also 'Chamba's small Kailash', which helps us to assess its position in the natural landscape of India. It also evokes religious associations that immediately help us to identify its people as Hindus who are devotees of Shiv. With an economy of expression, the travel writer draws us immediately into the world and environment of Manimahesh and its surrounding areas. The reader, therefore, is easily carried along with him in his descriptions of his journey, the topography, and his interactions with the local people. Here we can see how a travel writer really accomplishes the task of recording his/her journey in a reader • friendly manner when he/she can make his/her readers believe themselves to be vicariously involved in the entire experience.

Travel writing in the twentieth century tends to focus on the relationship between the individual and the societies through which the writer passes. The writer, mostly writes about the ethno-cultural traits, the socio-economic conditions, the educational opportunities, the proportion of locals versus migrants or anything else. For instance, using dialogue cleverly, the writer describes how his companion Himadri demolishes in one fell swoop the local superstition of the people about not allowing com cobs to be plucked from their farm before undertaking a festive ritual heralding the new crop. By pointing out that bears have eaten some of the com cobs already, Himadri convinces the shopkeeper to imagine that the bears have likewise eaten the same com cobs that he would give to them. In this context I will take into account what all the writer has experienced in his journey and how would he see the impact of the then society that was free from colonial rule on the tribes of the particular area. I will also take into account how the tribes protected the forest areas and what all help did the Indian government do to protect their

land and interest. To keep alive our ethnographic interest, it is essential that the author present the local and tribal people as they are. The description of the tribal people, the Gaddis, are that “They had *the same* cords around their waists’ and that “They were smoking hookahs”. This is so inadequate that it does not help in speculating the form, physique and embellishments of a Gaddi in the way that an urban mind would like to visualise a person from a remote area, belonging to a rare tribal community.

The Forest Rights Act [Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights)] notified on January 1, 2008, forged new grounds and brought fresh hopes for the battered Gaddi community. The Act conferred rights over natural resources in order to secure a living coupled with the responsibility of using forest resources sustainably. By combining livelihood with use and conservation of natural resources, the Act opens up the possibility of sustainable pastoralism. The Gaddi need legally sanctioned and managed access to forest commons to protect the traditional means of conservation of Himalayan flora and fauna. The Forest Rights Act confers access rights, but procedural delays remain. With increased technological upgradation, monitoring the movement of Gaddi and other transhumant tribes can be undertaken through GPS and participation interlinked with tangible biodiversity improvement studies. Research on carrying capacity and changing mindsets of forest and wild biodiversity experts can enhance the role of the Gaddi in establishing sustainable environments. Experiences from other countries should be analysed for their applicability to India and the Gaddi could gain much from exposure to such programmes. With various employment schemes and other benefits offered by the government, it is odd that the Gaddi have preferred to bear various levels of hardship in order to continue their

traditional vocation. But, times are changing – lucrative short term employment schemes in the offing coupled with reduced long term rights to forage are slowly pushing herders out of business. Agriculture now holds more promise, the Gaddi feel and their future depends on the political decisions made by state and central governments. A more participatory and inclusive approach by the forest authorities in grasing and herders’ rights would be effective for long term conservation, management of forest resources and sustainable grasing practices. On the downside, the Act perpetuates what the colonisers had set up – individual/household permits in lieu of community rights. As sustainability concerns are community driven, perhaps conferring community rights would have been an appropriate option. As of now the Gaddi herders are applying to village/community committees already set up, or are in the process of constituting a village committee.<sup>16</sup> In an article **“State Government committed towards welfare of Gaddi community: HP CM” published on Monday, 13 December 2021 | PNS | Shimla.** The Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday said that it was due to the benevolence of late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee that Gaddi community was given this special tribal status in the year 2003. The State Government would consider including adequate representation of tribal people in Scheduled Castes Scheduled Tribe Commission so that participation of the Scheduled Tribes must be ensured.

**The main aim of this chapter is to focus on the travel writing and analyse it historically by taking into account the events that had happened in Manimahesh before and taking into account the Gaddis who are a very interesting bunch of tribe**

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<sup>16</sup> THE GADDI TRIBE: Struggling to preserve its Identity. By Ruchi Saini  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341215940>



**with totally different characteristic from the tribal people we come across while reading, and how their rights are being protected and what the government is doing for the betterment of them. There has not been any historical research on an Eco-critical Travelogue like Manimahesh and my work would be the first of its kind. By linking an eco-critical text with history and by showing the writers love for the environment it has become easier to tag the travelogue as an eco-conscious writing where the writer has kept his eye on every minute detail of the land, its people and the environment.**

This research is unique in its aspect because the three Bengali texts that I have taken into account are absolutely one of a kind. The main focus here is on how the texts are being historically interpreted by keeping into account all the details provided by the writers. Two of my selected texts are Travelogues among which Palamau is more of a novel and less of a Travelogue, Manimahesh justifies itself as a Travelogue and Aranyak is a pure Novel. Palamau and Aranyak are written in the colonial time which portrays challenges faced by the forest inhabitants and how they stood up against the colonial domination and fought for their rights in protecting their birth land and the environment too, whereas, Manimahesh is a post-colonial take on travel, visiting new places and getting to know more about the history of that particular place and their tribes. The stories of Palamau and Aranyak are geographically situated in the Eastern part of India and Manimahesh takes us to the Northern part of India. Here I have tried to portray the difference between the writings and the thought process of each writer and how they are having sudden revelations after visiting the forests and interacting with the inhabitants. Another very important thing that I have taken into account are the tribes of the particular

forests. In Palamau we see the “Kol” tribes who are people of the forests, in Aranyak we see the Oraos, Mundas and Santahals who are continuously fighting with the British for their rights in the forest, but in Manimahesh we see the Gaddi tribes who are mainly the inhabitants of Bharmour who trace their origin from Alexander and Aurangzeb and lead a transhumant life and are very different in nature and occupation from the other tribes we know about. At the end I am taking into account all the forest protection acts and policies that the Indian government has made to protect the rights of these people. Nature is being exploited all the time everywhere by the commoners and the government and for this reason different movements like Chipko Movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan etc. have been led by the forest dwellers to save the environment from foreign encroachers. Many groups are working to stop exploitation of forests and to stop deforestation in search of raw materials and making of railway tracts and industries. The forest inhabitants have been given different protections after the passing of “**The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**”, which is a key piece of forest legislation passed in India on 18 December 2006. It has also been called the Forest Rights Act, the Tribal Rights Act, the Tribal Bill, and the Tribal Land Act. This recognises the rights of the forest dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers to forest resources, on which these communities were dependent for a variety of needs, including livelihood, habitation and other socio-cultural needs.