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Critique of Masculinist Encroachment of Land and Nature: An Ecofeministic Perspective in *Gift in Green*

Dr. Lekha Nath Dhakal

Associate Professor, Nepal Commerce Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Abstract:

This article unpacks the idea of the critique of masculinist encroachment of land and nature in the novel, Gift in Green by applying eco feministic theories. By showing the male characters such as Dinakaran, Kumaran, Markose and Ambu involving in the so-called developmental works through constructions and the encroachment of the resources of the island turning its agricultural lands into concrete jungles, this article argues that the writer is pungently darting her criticisms against the eco-inimical activities of men just for material gains. By the same token, she shows female characters such as Ponmani, Kunjootan, and Shailaja, Karthiyani, who love and attach themselves with farming, fishing and cultivating. They have passionate attachment with the mother earth. They do not do any harm to the land and the landscape of Aathi. They hate people who come to buy land there. They also do not like people who sell and lease their productive land for money and job. They have special attachment with the water and land of Aathi. They have also protested against the idea of constructing bridge. They also love animals and birds of the island. They are living in a perfect harmony with the nature and its beauty. Female characters are striving and aspiring to keep the ideal of Aathi intact by performing their eco-friendly activities unlike males who are performing eco-inimical activities that finally bring destruction in the island. Hence, Women are seen as being domestic, pious, moral, pure, gentle, kind, graceful, simple and beautiful, have soft corner for the nature while men are seen as hard-working, encroaching, industrial, rational, assertive, and independent and proud; none of which is easily connected with nature. Therefore, nature is seen as the embodiment of all the characteristics that women possess.

Keywords: *Eco-friendly, Eco-inimical, Encroachment, Ecofeminism*

1. Introduction

This article unravels the critique of masculinist encroachment of land and nature in Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* by applying ecofeministic theories. The main objective of this article is to analyze and interpret the textual and conceptual essence of ecofeminism in the mentioned novel. Before intervening the novel with the lens of ecofeminism, it is imperative to explore the relevant ecofeminist theories and perspectives.

Eco-feminism, which is the curious fusion of ecology and feminism, is a concept which questions the patriarchal oppression and the exploitation of nature. The term was introduced by Francoise d' Eaubonne in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death) published in

1974. By questioning and pungently darting criticisms against the patriarchal ways of life, ecofeminism holds the belief that exploitation and domination of women by men is flatly connected to the destruction and devastation of the ecology and environment. As Greta Gaard puts it, the basic premise of eco-feminism is that the "ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, sexuality, physical abilities is the some ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature" ("Living Interconnections" 1). Ecofeminism puts the highest premium on the fact that most of encroachment of land and nature is guided and dictated by masculinist enterprises. Women are overwhelmingly guided by sense of love and compassion; therefore, they are more protective and concerned about the land and landscape. Undeniably, like nature women have regenerative power. As women nurtures her child so does the nature for the entire creatures that share the same planet. Patriarchal social structure triggers the encroachment of fertile land. It must be averted and avoided by dismantling the so-called masculinist ideology laid down by patriarchy. In her book, *New Woman/New Earth*, Rosemary Radford Ruether states:

- Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this modern industrial society. (204)

Ruether here is hinting at the fact that patriarchal modality of exploitation and domination is a root cause of the growing encroachment of land and nature. Men are supposed to be active, assertive and adventurous, which pave way for destructive enterprises.

By executing ecofeministic ideas and ideals, this article argues that women tend to love land and landscape more than men. Since women have great sense of attachment with the nature while working, collecting fodders and working on the farms and the fields, they

are more nature-loving than that of their male counterparts. They are also protective and proactive as far as land, landscape and nature are concerned.

Ecofeminism debunks each and every idea of binarism—heaven/earth, mind/body, male/female, human/animal, spirit/matter, men/nature, culture\ nature, white/ non-white and so many others. Such notions of binarism result in division and disintegration blocking social and environmental harmony. In her introduction to *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, editor Warren asserts:

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

Ecofeminism offers no room for any form of domination and exploitation of nature and women. To bring about ecological and environmental harmony is a rallying cry of ecofeminism. The road map of ecofeminism is to establish gender just world with ecological harmony. Vandana Shiva

Also states, “reductionist science is at the root of growing ecological crisis, because it entails a transformation of nature that destroys its organic processes and rhythms and regenerative capacities” (25). Here, she means to say that scientific and technological advancement are responsible to destroy the nature in its holistic form.

However, the modern life is undergoing with environmental problems. In the name of civilization, human beings are hankering after materialistic gains by destroying fertile land and nature. In order to be rich overnight, human beings, more particularly men are striving to change the fertile and productive agricultural land into construction sites. These activities are rampant not only in Nepal but also across the world. This kind of encroachment over fertile land will bring nothing but death, destruction and devastation. Ecofeminism has great sense of wrath over these sorts of activities guided by so-called masculinist ideologies.

By showing the relationship between feminism and ecological theories, K. Warren, in his book, *Feminism and Ecology: Making Connection* says, “every feminist theory must include an ecological perspective and vice versa” (17). Ecofeminism, in fact, reflects the multitude of ways to interpret and analyze the connections between women and nature along with the idea freedom, equality and social justice.

Many ecofeminists hold the view that the root cause of the massive destruction of the nature is caused by anthropocentric world view (Man at the center while nature at margin). In the same vein, the exploitation of women is caused by male-centric view (males are at the center while females are at margin). In the name of being active, assertive and adventurous, men are interventionist and encroachingly-driven whereas women are regenerative, protective and compassionate. Martin Heidegger asserts, “Man is not the lord of the universe. Man is the shepherd of Being” (qtd. in Franz, 69). Here, he means to say that human beings should play key role for equal share of food, water, air, shelter and dignity for all the creatures which share the same planet. Human beings have the tendency to think that nature is something to be conquered by human enterprises. But the fact is that they are simply a part of nature not apart. The relationship between human beings and nature is just like the relationship between nail and flesh. As David Barnhill says, “nature has unqualified intrinsic value, with humans having no privileged place in nature's web. Emphasis is placed on value at holistic levels, such as populations, ecosystems and the Earth as a whole; rather than individual entities” (qtd. in Franz, 69).

On the backdrop of the above-mentioned theoretical modalities, this article now focuses on the analysis of the novel *Gift in Green* by Malayalam writer, Sarah Joseph, is set in a pristine place called, Aathi which is infected by encroachment and exploitation undertaken by and designed by men. The novelist brilliantly describes the life thus:

- For generations, the people of Aathi had deemed that land to be Thampuram's. No one had ever dared to take advantage of it in any way.... Other than birds, squirrels, snakes, garden lizards, chameleons and crickets – familiar denizens of the forest – as well as amphibious creatures like turtles and frogs, no one had ever laid claim to it. (4)

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

- Watching the fallow leaves fall noiselessly on the water, then float towards and accumulate at the bank, he would weave the tapestry of his life – interpretations. He would listen to the blessing of flowers, watch the moss dance, the glow worms emerge from their hide outs, and read the trails of tiny worms. His mind would clear; his lungs fill with a new vitality and his stomach with heavenly happiness..... (25)

This depiction shows the connectedness of human beings and nature. Aathi is bestowed with the boon of Thampuram; the prime cause of its prosperity in the form of rice, crab, fish etc. Kumaran is the vicious character in the novel. In the pursuit of material advancements, he forsakes Kunjimathu, his beloved. He abandons the water – life and often looks down upon it. Kumaran is the epitome of modern capitalist and consumerist tendencies. He is the representative of new generation which does not pay heed to emotions but neglect one's own values for pomp, luxury and enjoyment. After many years Kumaran returns to Aathi and the place starts plunging into doom for ever. He wants to exploit the fertility of Aathi and thrives ahead. Kumaran turns his pristine motherland into a jungle of concrete profits. The people who have molded their lives in the virtue of the soil succumb by selling their lands to Kumaran, the corporate landlord. Under the pretext of changing Aathi into a land of unsurpassed glory and material prosperity, Kumaran turns Aathi into a sewage dump. Kumaran has laws on his side; he is always accompanied by an elaborate menagerie: policemen, a private army, a retinue of personal staff etc. Dinakaran and Ponmani, who consider Aathi their heart and soul, smell a rat in the strategies of Kumaran:

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

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

Not a single female character does harm to nature. Kunjimathu, jilted by Kumaran, pursues the water life stead firstly. Kunjimathu, being confronted with many an adversity, never succumbs before anything. She stands for the nature and its well-being. She has a blissful communion with nature. It was the women of Aathi who built Thampuran's shrine. Every year they come to thatch the roof a new. After breaking down the walls of the shrine, they feel quite unsecured. An inexplicable fear grabs them. They grope in darkness lamenting on the ill fate of being left without any place to light the lamp at sundown. Women believe in God. They worship nature. Nature is venerated as goddess. Any violence on nature is indeed violence on themselves. Her perseverance and indomitable spirit to save her land are depicted in a heartrending manner in the novel.

Kumaran wants to build new hospitals, schools, factories etc. He teaches them to dream a city life with new facilities which may enable them to lead a splendid and carefree life. All the social, economic and cultural invasions ultimately result in changing a place from its natural habitat to an artificial environment.

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

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

The destructive tendencies are strongly opposed by a minority group consisting of Dinakaran, Ponmani, Markose, Shailaja and Kunjimathu. They are characters created out of historical crisis. Porinchi Chakramakkal and Advocate Grace Chaly offer a strong support to this minor group. A girl, who is often referred in the novel, comes to Aathi and takes away all the plastics and other wastes dumped on the land. Sarah Joseph depicts a heart – rending picture of the poisoned Pokkali land. Nineteen children have died of Cholera. Only then the people are ready to undergo a rethinking and realize their faults. Dinakaran is accused by all in the end. He dies for the sake of his fellow people in Aathi. He reminds us the same fate of Thampuran. Sarah Joseph is not against development. She can't help opening her eyes to the cruelty that underlies every development. She discusses the evil effects of *endosulfan*, the filthy conditions existing in the premises of Guruvayoor temple and contagious diseases like Cholera.

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

A culture which extols nature as mother is exposed towards the end of the novel. "To Aathi's children, even though they walked without a thought on Aathi's bosom, she was like their own mother who, standing up to her neck in water" (278). The strong eco-feminist perspective is made explicit through these lines:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The attachment of human beings with the pristine land and nature is possible when they devote and dedicate themselves in farming, sowing and tilling. The act of farming, sowing and tilling gives the idea that how nature has feminine affection with boundless love and protection. Once a man has good sense of love and attachment with the land, he has better understanding with the woman and her nurturing qualities. This idea becomes quite clear in the following thought-provoking line:

- To be a man one must have a body made firm by working hard on the land, tilling and sowing. To know the mind of a woman, he has to know, first, the mind of the land. How Kunjimathu could be entrusted to Kumran who despised the land and was eager to flee from it. (20)

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

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

- Water! Wherever they looked, water was all they found. Swimming and wading, they reached this place. The trees here knew no taboo or untouchability. The birds parroted no religious bigotry. The trees, the birds, the fish, the earth, the water- all beckoned them: 'come, come...' (44)

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

Ecofeminists are of the opinion that encroachment of the nature is masculinist enterprise. They tend to strive and aspire for the encroachment of the nature as they have the tendency to destroy and defile the virginity of women more often forcefully. Let us take a look to the following lines which give the sexual imageries. On the night of his departure, "putting his arms around Kunjimathu and donning a mask of melancholy, Kumran attempted to shed tears of sadness even as he tried hard to hide the excitement frothing within. As a memento of manly remembrance, he ruptured her hymen and took her virginity" (22). The evocation of sexual imageries support us to argue that destruction of nature is equal to the rape of the women, which not only defiles them but also rupture their purity— virginity.

The male inhabitants of Aaathi are striving to encroach the land and nature while female ones are striving and aspiring to conserve and preserve the land nature by worshipping, protecting and working in the land. Water holds an endless fascination for the inhabitants of Aaathi. In its flow, writers have seen the continuum of experience in which events pass from the past to the present and to the future. As the narrative goes in the novel:

- Life seemed to them like a deep, bottomless lagoon. They had no food, no clothes, no shelter. But one thing they had: water. It lay full and brimming, like the miracle of miracles. Water: the unending, ever-renewing fountain-spring of life. (44)

Here, the writer hints at the fact that water has regenerative qualities as that of the nature. Water itself is a symbol of nature in the novel. The inhabitants of Aathi do not have worldly luxury but have water, the life blood of the entire creature in the nature. It is the water that revitalizes and renews life forms. However, in the name of civilization and modernity, water resources in Aathi are all polluted and defiled due to irrational activities of some people who just want to change the purity of Aathi into concrete jungle. More particularly some male members of Aathi are of the opinion that they just want to develop the area with modernity but the females are not happy with such tendency of males. Due to the growing pollution of the island "Shailaja was horrified. The wells, the ponds, the channels, the streams and backwaters, which spread like an ocean in front of the house, were all covered with layer upon layer of shit" (80). Pollution not only has negative impacts on human health, it also results harm for the animals. Another cause of pollution in Aathi is due to growing industrialization. In the name of industrialization and civilization, people are felling trees indiscriminately bringing bad consequences.

In Aathi also some so-called developers are turning the cultivating land into farms which becomes clear in the following lines:

- Many instead of cultivating their paddy fields were forced to lease them out to outsiders who turned them into pawn farms. They subsisted on the meager income from the lease fees, and remained helpless witnesses to the atrocities perpetrated on

their fields by those who made big investments on the prawn farms and sought to rake in astronomical profits by hook or by crook. (151)

The above-mentioned lines implicitly assert the fact that how so-called land mafias are ruining the cultivating land into concrete jungle thereby killing the productivity of the earth. The gathering of land mafias in Aathi has negative impacts on the overall locations and situations. As the narrative goes:

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

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

Kumaran, who represents land mafia, wants to erect bridge in the village. He simply wants to make bridge "to level and landfill the property of Ganesha Subramaniam. The bridge was being built at the location most convenient for that purpose. It had nothing to do with reducing the hardship of the people of Aathi" (152).

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

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

- Journalist: What do you propose to do with all this dangerous waste?
- Kumaran: (Smiles) I am an entrepreneur. I see only entrepreneurial prospects everywhere and in everything.
- Journalist: Sir, wouldn't that harm the environment and cause serious health problems for the people of Aathi?
- Kumaran: (Smiles again) All your environmental problems, I wish to assure you, shall be buried under the earth. It is an insignificant issue; you can safely leave it to me. It is high time journalists became a little progressive. Why can't you think of the enormous benefits this project is going to bring to the city and to Aathi alike?
- Journalist: Kumaran sir, have you obtained permission from the Pollution Control Board?
- Kumaran: (Smiling) Kumaran does nothing without completing due procedures and formalities. That has never been an issue. Nor is it likely to be, in the present instance. (264)

On the basis of the answer of Kumaran, it becomes quite clear that he has nothing to do with the benefit of the inhabitants of Aathi from his project. He simply wants to earn big amount of money. Even he becomes indifferent to the possible negative impacts of his project for the ecology of the island. As the narrative goes:

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

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

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

- Farmers used to own the water body in measures of four or five acres. The people of Aathi called them the 'other-siders'. For generations, the people of Aathi, especially the women, had been planting paddy seedlings, and reaping and thrashing the harvests. Even as the harvest seasons finished, they would begin their work in the fish farms. Shailaja, too, had worked in those paddy fields. By the time she was in standard five, she could plant seedlings. (265)

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

Gift in Green thus tells a wonderful story of Aathi, an island which lies amidst natural beauty uncontaminated by the rays of civilization the novel also highlights on the conflict of people, while facing threats of pollution, diseases, displacement and migration

and their forms of resistance to the invasion of the land full of natural beauties. The novel also raises fingers at the various kinds of encroachments, ecological destructions, aftermath of environmental degradation, and the possibilities of a united fight against human right violations. By putting the highest premium on the unique and wonderful practices and eco-friendly culture of Aathi, the novel opens up avenues for life practices based on mutual love and care, respecting Mother Earth (Nature).

The act of selling and buying land strictly to the inmates of the place, not allowing greedy developers to put their feet in the land, preservation and sustainable use of natural resources etc. are channels of independence and empowerment for the people. When certain people deviate from the rules, the whole village had to face great trial, trouble and tribulation. Even, those who have gone after development and modernity could not find mental peace or comfort in that. Finally they have to come under the shelter of Aathi.

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

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

2. Conclusion

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

Quite contrarily, female characters such as Ponmani, Kunjootan, and Shailaja, Karthiyani are always attached with land, farming, fishing and cultivating. They have passionate attachment with the mother earth. They do not do any harm. They even do not imagine overlooking the island. They hate people who come to buy land there. They also do not like people who sell and lease their productive land for money and job. They have special attachment with the water and land of Aathi. They have also protested against the idea of constructing bridge. They also love land, animals and birds of the island. They are in a sense living in a perfect harmony with the land, landscape, nature and the animals living there. To cut the entire matter short, the mentioned novel not only strives and aspires to critique the interventionist attitude of men to the land and nature but also unfolds the intense criticism against the growing men-sponsored encroachment of land and landscape in the name of development and civilization.

3. References

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