

THE IDEA OF ECOTOPIA AND ECOCRACY IN PRECOLONIAL INDIAN LITERATURE: A STUDY OF LITERATURES FROM SOUTH-EAST TO NORTH-EAST INDIA

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Ours is primarily an era of eco-scams. Pollution, degeneration, degradation, decadence, waste colonialism, marginalization of nature and the likes have been the key words in our day-to-day life. Man's imperialism over nature and the resultant constant ecocidal tendencies have been paradoxical and self-destructive in the postcolonial times, which have invited ecological visions translatable into social, economic, political and individual programmes of action. The term "ecology" which is now-a-days, used in a much looser sense than the scientific, presents the cultural manifestations and complex realities about anthro-pocentrism and ecocentrism in the post-natural world (Kerridge 2006: 536). In our era, various concepts in ecological/green thoughts uphold the economy of nature or the concept of real wild nature as depicted in the romantic literature (Mc Kusick 2007: 200-01) as a contrast to the grim environmental threats of the postindustrial times (ibid.: 199). Another important aspect of Ecology as a science is its strong connection to a history of verbal expression: "In the medicine rites of early people, shamans sang, chanted, and danced stories to heal diseases or prevent disaster, which they saw as states of disharmony or imbalance in nature" (Howarth 1996: 71). Deep ecology, shallow ecology and spiritual ecology are the important aspects of the ecological ethics which propound the ideas of Ecotopia and Ecocracy. Shallow ecology seeks prevention of eco-scams whereas Deep Ecology seeks sincere realization of them, to avoid any kind of involvement in destroying/doing harm to the environment/ecology.

According to Matthew T. Fox, there are four paths to a spiritual ecology: (i) to experience the Divine in terms of delight, awe and wonder at being present in the world; it involves the intuition that creation is a blessing, and response of gratitude (via *Positiva*) (ii) it

“comes through experiencing darkness, deprivation, suffering, and pain” (via *Negativa*) (iii) it “involves identifying new ecological virtues for living such as vegetarian, recycling, relearning the sacredness of nature, defending creation through political action, and making new rituals to celebrate sacred places, times, and being in nature” (via *Creativa*) (iv) it “is a transformation to a more compassionate society in which all beings love one another” (via *Transformativa*); such compassion includes the making of justice (Fox 1998: 228).

Ecotopia or Ecological Utopia is a novel concept of an ecological ideal world which is free from all sorts of pollution. Ernest Callenback in 1975 published a book entitled *Ecotopia*, which achieved the status of a “classic environmental book” (Geus 1990: 170). In this fictional travel story, he has provided a sketch of an unknown ecological, utopian society. In his other work, *Ecotopia Emerging* (1981), he refers to Ecotopia’s main issues towards eco-friendly society. The contemporary world politics has been dominated by democracy. The activities of our states have been dominated by politics. To control the ecological crisis, we shall have to adopt the ecological democracy or ecocracy and follow its principles. Ecology, thus, can be a means for learning how to live appropriately in a particular place and time, so as to preserve, contribute to, and recycle the ecosystem (Murphy 2000: 194). Ethno-ecology, Deep/shallow ecology and ecofeminism are the important concepts/movements that uphold conservationist and preservationist ideology.

In religious literatures and practices, which present spiritual ecology, there is profound inspiration for preservation and conservation of the environment through the four ways as mentioned earlier. The whole creation is a blessing of the Divine Almighty and we need to acknowledge it through our gratitude, devotion/bhakti by being humble and faithful to the Almighty. Our love for the Almighty and his creation should all time remain exposed. During the Vedic age the human society remained obliged to the Nature. Lapses came with the change of time. The saints and devotees have been born in the different parts of the world to reform society and prescribe principles of living for all concerned. Those great men have created/named/established sacred places, prescribed rituals and times for all their followers, advised them to be vegetarian (in many cases) to conserve and preserve the ecology. The places established or sanctified by them may be called ecomuseums because these have been sources of solace or tourist spots for all. The virtues prescribed by them are followed for maintaining the deep and shallow ecologies and bringing in strength of the spirit of all the

humans providing them the divine bliss. Even devotees/saints realized the spiritual ecology through their suffering, pain and deprivation, which have purged of the worldly impurities blessing them with the heavenly bliss.

THE VEDIC/ POST-VEDIC REFERENCES TO ECOLOGY

The Vedas are the earliest ecological literatures which have kept record of the preservationist ideology and practices: The Gods and elements of Nature have been prayed to provide stability/strength to the human society. The Vedas uphold the cosmic glory of (five elements: earth, water, fire, air and sky). Since the time of the *Rigveda*, man had been maintaining close relationship with various natural elements, without treating himself as a Supreme Being (Jena, 2002: 14). Man's aberrations during modern times and the industrialization of the world have brought in the ecological imbalance, hampering the equilibrium. In the *Rigveda* the Sun is prayed as the source of light and energy: *Taranirvishwa darshato jyotishkudasi surya, Vishwama Bhasi rochanam* (RV/ 1.50.4). In the *Atharvaveda*, the earth is glorified and is praised that the whole world comes to life in her breathing and moving: *Vaishyanaram bibhrati bhumiragnimindra rishabha dravine no dadhati* (AV.XII.1.6). (The earth feeding all, treasure house, firmament, gold breasted, passage for the whole world, she bears the Vaisvanara Agni, consort of mighty Indra, may give us wealth) (ibid.: 29). In *Srimadbhagavadgita*, Lord Krishna explains Arjuna, how he is the essence in every worldly things and beings: *Punyo gandhah prithivyanch tejaschasmī vibhavasou/jivanam sarvabhuteshu tapaschasmī tapaswishu/vijam mam sarvabhutanam vidhi partha sanatanam/Vudhir Vudhi matamasmi tejaswinamamaham/ (7-9/10)*. (I am sacred and fragrant in the earth, heat in the fire, life in everything/being, penance in the sages, eternal seed in the creation, the intellect in the intellectuals and brilliance in the saints). (Tr. by author).

Though the word "Ecology" was coined by the German biologist Ernest Haeckel in 1869 AD, from the Greek root "*Oikos*" which means "house", a similar term is there in a verse of *Atharvaveda* (3.2.2) where "*Okas*," a Sanskrit word means place or house (Jena 2002: 17). The essence of the creation, the humility and all kinds of divine virtues and principles are gathered in various embodiments in the ecology. The realization of the greatness of this spiritual ecology is named as Deep Ecology and the attempt and practices of stopping erosion and imbalance in the ecology is the shallow ecology.

The sages, saints, devotees and great men of all times have been caretakers of the society and they have guarded the society against all kinds of ecological degenerations. During the post-vedic era Buddhism influenced the eco-consciousness of the humanity. Buddhism in its proper perspective is an ecological religion or a religious ecology (Batchelor and Brown 1994: viii).

Lord Buddha advised his disciples about right action and other virtues as follows:

What is right action? Abstention from killing breathing things, stealing, misconduct in sensual desires: this is called right action. There are five trades that a lay follower should not ply. What five? They are: trading in weapons, in breathing things, meat, liquor and poisons (Batchelor 1994: 7).

Concern for the welfare of the natural world has been an important element throughout the history of Buddhism (ibid.: 12). Lord Buddha was the supreme physician who prescribed *panchashila* (non-injury, non-stealing, non-infatuation, non-lying and non-addiction) for all humans for maintaining proper spiritual ecology and upholding the Deep Ecology and maintaining shallow ecology. Adi Sankar in his *Mohamudgaram* has prescribed the human's association with the sages/saints for crossing this ocean like illusory world. Everything in this world is transitory. The Buddhist religious practices became polluted afterwards. The Saivite and Vaishnavite saints took the leadership to reform the society thereafter.

In South India before the rise of Saivism and Vaishnavism, the Nature influenced the imagination of the people. The Tamil Sangam poets have very beautifully narrated the nature. Buddhism and the worship of Indra and Kumara were the prevailing religions of those days. The Sangam poets formulated an environmental aesthetics and made a five-fold categorization of the environment into *Kurinci*, *Mullai*, *Marutham Neidal* and *Pallai*, combined with the corresponding flora and fauna. In those poems, over two hundred plants of all five regions have been named and described (Das 2007: 31). Tamil Alwar saints influenced the Vaishnav saints of Eastern and North-East India also.

THE VACANA POETRY:

The religious literature propagates *bhakti* (devotion to Lord). "Vacanas are *bhakti* poems, poems of personal devotion to a god, often a particular form of the god. The vacana saints reject not only the great traditions of Vedic religion, but the 'little' local traditions

as well (Ramanujan 1973: 25). The vacanas mock at the defects of folk-religion like animal sacrifice which are narrated in sangam poetry though those poems are rich in nature description.

Basavanna (1106-67), the leader of Virasaivite movement, expressed a kin-sense and kindness for all living things, which is the very essence of ecoethics. He derides the human activities by saying:

They say: Pour, Pour the milk!
 When they see a snake image in a stone
 But they cry: Kill, Kill
 When they meet a snake for real.

(Ramanujan 1973: 54)

He further says about a sacrificial lamb and the destiny of everybody in this world to arouse the eco-consciousness of the humans: The sacrificial lamb brought for the festival ate up the green leaf brought for the decorations.

Not knowing a thing about the kill,
 It wants only to fill its belly:
 Born that day, to die that day
 But tell me.
 Did the killers survive,
 O lord of the meeting rivers? (ibid.: 76)

The poems of Basavanna expose the nine-fold devotion to Lord Siva. He addresses the Lord with all his sentiments and rejoices in his own thoughts over the Lord. Sometimes he scolds the Lord as if the Lord were his friend, and at the other times he exposes his servitude and exposes his humility. He sings:

Siva, you have no mercy
 Siva, you have no heart
 Why did you bring me to birth
 Wretch in this world
 Exile from the other?

Tell, me Lord,
 Don't you have one more
 Little tree or plant
 Made just for me? (ibid.: 71)

Basavanna sees the presence of god everywhere and in everything as a polytheist, but he is a monotheist and his only god is Lord Siva. He says:

Gods, gods, there are so many
 There's no place left
 for a foot.
 There is only
 One god. He is our Lord
 of the meeting Rivers (ibid.: 84)

Devara Dasimayya, who is supposed to be the earliest of the vacana poets, was a devotee of Ramanatha, the Lord Siva, Rama's Lord. His devotional songs speak of the world's ecology, the spiritual ecology and the ways of salvation in this world. He says:

You balanced the globe
 on the waters
 and kept it from melting away,
 you made the sky stand
 without pillar or prop.
 O Ramanatha,
 which gods could have
 done this? (Ramanujan, 1973: 97)

He says how everything in this world is the gift of Lord Ramanatha:

The earth is your gift,
 the growing grain your gift,
 the blowing wind your gift,
 what shall I call these curs
 who eat out of your hand
 and praise everyone else? (ibid.: 103)

The devotee's devotion to the Lord and his creation is essential. The whole world is merged in the Body of the Lord or the devotees' thought/perception of the Lord. So visiting sacred places is if no use for a devotee who can concentrate his thought on the Lord at his own place. He sings:

What does it matter
 if the fox roams

all over the Jambu island?
 Will he ever stand amazed
 in meditation of the Lord?
 Does it matter if he wanders
 all over the globe
 and bathes in a million sacred rivers?
 A pilgrim who's not one with you,
 Ramanatha,
 roams the world
 like a circus man (ibid.: 104)

The five elements of the world, the Sun and the Moon, and all the mysteries are but the creation of the Lord Ramanatha and Devara Dasimayya offers his soul and humblest devotion to the Lord for everything in this world.

Allama Prabhu was a miraculous devotee. He was considered as an incarnation of Lord Siva. It is said that Goraksa was stunned at Allama's spiritual powers. Allama was a true spiritual ecologist. In one of his vacanas, he makes a contrast between the shallow ecology and spiritual ecology:

Feed the poor
 tell the truth
 make water-places
 for the thirsty
 and build tanks for a town you may then go to heaven
 after death, but you'll get nowhere
 near the truth of our Lord.
 And the man who knows our Lord, he gets no results
 (ibid.: 167)

Mahadeviyakka, a fine poet and saint, was a younger contemporary of Basavanna and Allama. At ten, she was initiated to Siva-worship by an unknown guru. According to one legend she died early in her twenties, getting her body mingled in the air being one with Lord Siva. She was mad for the Lord's love, when she sings:

Not seeing you
 in the hill, in the forest,
 from tree to tree
 I roamed
 searching, gasping:

Lord, my Lord, come
 show me your kindness!.....
 O Lord, white as jasmine
 to your hiding places (Ramanujan 1973: 119).

She again says:
 O Swarm of bees
 O mango tree
 O moonlight
 O koilbird
 I beg of you all
 one favour:

If you should see my Lord anywhere
 my Lord white as jasmine
 call out
 and show him to me (ibid.: 122).

She becomes impatient to see her Lord. She realizes His presence everywhere and asks Him to show her His face:

You are the forest
 you are all the great trees
 in the forest
 you are bird and beast
 playing in and out
 of all the trees
 O Lord white as jasmine
 filling and filled by all
 why don't you
 show me your face? (ibid.)

Citing the evils and good and the human passions in this world, she thinks of the virtues like peace, patience, forgiving and self-command which uphold the ecology and stabilizes the ecotopia and ecocracy in this world. This contrast between shallow ecological practices and spiritual ecology presents her realization of the deep ecology.

ORISSAN/UTKALIYA BHAKTI LITERATURE:

The 16th century Orissa was a great time of religious fermentation. Prior to it the Oriya literature had religious trends and was

influenced by the Buddhist and post-Buddhist Nathapanthis. The great poet of the *Oriya Mahabharat*, Sudramuni Sarala Das, who was a devotee of Goddess Durga, claimed himself to be a peasants' poet and the poet of the downtrodden and his literary works presented the early tradition of Bhakti (spiritual ecology) and the tradition set by him was carried forward by five poet saints of 16th century who have been called clandestine Buddhists for their Buddhist-like theoretical orientations in the propagation of Bhakti. Prior to the advent of these five saints popularly known as *Panchaskha*, the Vishnu-cult was prevailing in Orissa. Vaishnav prophets from South like Ramanuja, Ballabhacharya, Madhvacharya, and Nimbarka visited Puri and established their monasteries and propagated ideologies there. Narasimha Muni and Narahari Tirtha of Kannada speaking country came after them and established the tradition of Krishna worship what was introduced by Ramanuja. The five saint poets named Achyutananda Das, Balaram Das, Ananta Das, Jagannatha Das and Yashobanta Das dedicated themselves to the spiritual upliftment of the downtrodden and wrote in colloquial language the vedic/vedantic/philosophical theories, medicinal treatises and apocalyptic prophecies and devotional principles of life like the Buddhists. Their writings reflected the main tenets of Mahayana Buddhism and the pinda-brahmanda theory of the Natha-Yogis (Mansinha 1962: 88). These five poet-saints were the followers of the two streams of Bhakti – *Jnanamishra Bhakti* and *Shuddha Bhakti*. Puri, the shrine of Lord Jagannath and the monasteries established by these five saints in different parts of Orissa have been the eco-museums which have the ideals of a casteless society, spiritual initiation and value-promotion and sites of harmlessness and eco/bio-ethics. Like their predecessor, Sudramuni Sarala Das, these five saints conceived Lord Jagannath as Lord Buddha, *Nirakara*, *Sunyahpurush* and *Purushottam* -the formless Brahman (Chaini 1998: 2).

The oldest of the five saints, Balaram Das initiated intense devotional activities and was called a 'Lunatic' (Matta Balaram Das). In his *Laxmi Puran*, he established the greatness of the women and outcaste (shudras) in the society. The *Laxmi Puran* is one of the earliest feminist texts and the author is supposed to be an ecofeminist in the sense that he propounded how by honouring women and the downtrodden, there would be economic and ecological stability in the society. Jagannath Das was a stable saint and his *Bhagavat Puran* is the most popular moral textbook of every household in Orissan village, where there has been one *Bhagavat Tungi* (Hut of

Bhagavat) which is also an ecomuseum. The following lines from *Bhagavat* give the hint of the aphoristic trend:

Born on this earth
 even the gods die/
 ...wealth acquired is for religious deeds
 and through that you attain to the Lord./
 ...with humble words like nectar
 you should please men's minds./
 ...This human body is a rare gift
 meant only to aspire for salvation/
 ...Karma is your own guru.../
 The mind is the giver of pleasure and pain
 the author of sin and guilt
 (Mahapatra 1989: 37-39)

The other three saints — Achyutananda Das, Ananta Das and Yashobanta Das — were very much prophetic. They wrote *Malikas*, (the rosaries of prophecies/future foretelling), which are messianic, and which warn the mankind not to involve in any kind of immoral activities. The concept of *Kalki*, an incarnation of the Almighty to appear in the Kaliyug is very much present in the *Malikas* composed by the three saints. There are severe warnings not to act against the Earth, which is very eco-ethical. Among the three, Achyutananda Das was the most prolific, who, it is said, had composed one lakh books, which are the interpretations of the Vedas, Upanisads, contemporary events and his own views about the society and principles of ideal life. His books entitled *Bata Varnnana*, *Sharika Varnnana*, *Sthala Varnnana*, *Chitrotpala Mahatmya*, *Sunya Samhita*, *Gurubhakti Gita*, narrate many ecological and spiritual ecological episodes which provide ideas of ideal life to the readers. In the first three books mentioned, he speaks about the greatness the banyan trees, and places highlighting their importance and presence in this world since time immemorial. In *Chitrotpala Mahatmya*, he celebrates the greatness of a river named *Chitrotpala*, a tributary of Mahanadi, the biggest of river and a male river of Orissa, by assigning it a superior position to the sacred river Ganga. He says that river Chitrotpala came to this earth one hundred years earlier than the Ganga and its water is purer than that of the Ganga. This is an attempt by the saint to establish the river as an ecomuseum. In *Sharika Varnnana*, he has narrated the importance of many places which he calls *Bata*, i.e. places having dense cover of banyan and peepul

trees. These *Batas* are eternal places which exist on the bank of the river Chitrotpala at many places and those are the most sacred places where under each tree there lives a god/saint. It is an attempt to provide the sense of holiness to the people so that they would not cut those trees and would worship them. All these *Batas* are also ecomuseums. He says:

These *Batas* are places eternal
equal in status with Indra's garden. (Tr. author)

He also prescribed some mantras, by uttering which under those banyan trees, one can achieve many things. To get rid of all the sins in life one can chant the mantra:

Om vishnum vishnum dhrim dhrim radhe radhe svahah.

One can get his desires fulfilled by chanting the following mantra and moving around the banyan at *Sharika Bata*:

Om hrim shrim iim iim aim aim svahah.

The liberal religious tradition set by the *panchasakhas* was carried forward by Vaishnav poets in the succeeding eras. This mystic tradition even influenced poets from other castes. A Muslim soldier named Salabeg who was born of Lalbeg, the then *subedar* of Bihar and a Brahmin widow of Danda Mukundapur, Puri was a great poet and devotee of Lord Jagannath. Lalbeg kidnapped the widow from a village tank where she came for bath and forcefully married her. Salabeg, the muslim, under the influence of his mother became a great devotee of Lord Jagannath and his songs still influence the pious devotees of Orissa. His songs are replete in the tenets of nine kinds of Bhakti. An example from his devotional songs may suffice to prove his spiritual humility:

Oh magical flute! Happily I surrender myself
to your lotus feet...
you won the green garden of my body
listening to your sweet songs, rocks melt,
and yonder flows the Yamuna wild... .
No salvation without chanting
the honeyed names of Radhakrishna,
thus sings Salabega, the low born. (Mohanty 1998: 270)

So many other devotees, saints, saivites, Buddhists and Vaishnavs of Orissa have left behind their poetic monuments which provide evidences of a strong argument concerning the conservation and preservation of internal and external ecologies.

BENGAL/GAUDIYA VAISHNAVISM

The late 15th century and 16th century Bengal witnessed social upheaval for various reasons. Political instability, brahminical autocracy and feudal oppressions obsessed the populace. The emergence of Sri Chaitanya at this juncture brought in a cultural renaissance. His devotional insanity and propagation of love among the populace pacified the troubled souls of the time. During the pre-Chaitanya era, Advaitacharya led the Vaishnav society of Bengal. The activities of Advaitacharya and his associates were confined to close-door chanting of the name of Hari and to some stray religious discourses held in strict secrecy only for the fear of Muslim tyrants (Sastri 1988: 23). The emergence of Sri Chaitanya helped flourishing of the propagation of *Prem Bhakti* in the whole of Bengal and beyond. Sri Chaitanya's Bhakti movement was very ecological in nature as it disseminated the spirituality and encouraged the *Panchashila* as was propagated by Lord Buddha. Sri Chaitanya was basically a religious activist and saint and through his chanting of the holy name (*namasamkirtan*) he mesmerized the world, making the denizens engaged in holy/virtuous activities healthy for internal and external rational ecology. In his only religious literary work *Sikshastaka* (*Octet of Teaching*), he has prescribed the modes of chanting the holy name. In the first verse, he has said about the seven-fold efficacy of the chanting of holy name:

polishing all dirts
 from the mirrors of our hearts,
 quenching the great forest fire of affliction
 from the cycle of births and deaths,
 shedding moon-beams
 upon the lily of eternal good,
 life of His charming bride,
 muse of real burning,
 augmentor of the swelling ocean of eternal bliss,
 Imparting, at every utterance of the holy name,
 the perfect relish of pure nectar,

ensuring the cooling immersion
of every limb of the soul,
may the chanting
of the holy name of Krishna
be intensely glorified (Sastri 1988: 82)

Regarded as an incarnation of the Lord in the Kaliyuga, Sri Chaitanya moved and has been moving every now and then the hearts and minds of the millions to spirituality and religious humility.

BHAKTI AND ANIMIST LITERATURE FROM NORTHEAST INDIA

Sankardeva (1449-1569) was the propagator of Neo-Vaishnavism in Kamarupa (Assam). Before his advent, Saktism had been the most dominating religion of Kamarupa and Goddess Kamakhya was the prime deity and the inhabitants of the land were overpowered by magic and all sorts of tantric rites, including human sacrifice in the Kamakhya temple. Hinduism was on the verge of extinction under the influence of the later corrupt forms of Buddhism. Caste prejudices and negligence of women are at the top of the social demoralization. Sankardeva, through his preaching of the single-minded devotion to Lord, propounded the principles of *Ekasarananama-dharma*. In his *Kirtanaghosha*, he declares from the mouth of Lord Krishna:

If women and sudras cultivate bhakti for me, impart to them this knowledge, O great minded one. (Dev Goswami 1982: 20)

He propounded the doctrine of self-surrender and advised his disciples:

Throw thy body, soul and all at the feet of that
vast one with single minded devotion and thou
wilt enjoy the bliss of human life (ibid.: 22).

Sankardeva has proclaimed the supremacy of Bhakti *dharma* by saying:

There is no other great religion in the world than bhakti or devotion:

this is the essence of all the four Vedas (ibid.: 30).

He has said further:

The name of Hari is higher than crores of tantras,
mantras, sacrifices, penances and pilgrimages (ibid.: 31).

His disciple Madhavadeva was his great associate in propagating the principles of Bhakti, which channelizes the human activities to eco-ethics and preservationist ideology.

A Sufi saint named Ajan Fakir, who migrated to Assam from Baghdad in the later part of 16th century, is credited with the composition of 200 *jikir* songs for the Muslims of Assam. Similarly, another *fakir* named Chand Khan (Chand khai) was a disciple of Sankardeva. Ajan Fakir in his *jikirs* has spread the Bhakti principles both for the Hindu and Muslim communities of Assam. He has said:

Kurane purane ekeke kaise bujiba giyanar loke (The *Quran* and the *Puranas* preach the same thing. If you are a wise man, you will understand).

He has emphasized on the control of mind and sense to overcome the worldly illusions. He says, "Keep your wild senses under control. You will be victorious." (Malik 1990: 31)

The Vaishnav and Sufi saints of Assam have propagated the principles of spiritual ecology for realization of Deep Ecology.

Mamang Dai, an eco-historian, and a former IAS (recipient of the first Annual Verrier Elwin Award, 2003, of Arunachal Pradesh), in her bioregional narrative has narrated the state of disharmony in nature in her homeland Arunachal Pradesh in form of myriad evils. Her debut novel *The Legends of Pensam* (2006) constructs a subaltern history involving Arunachal's Adi tribe, pristine animism, mysterious ecology and its tribes' profound sense and idea of the existence of Evil in numerous forms. Narrating the tribal faiths since the remotest past, she reflects how the Evil is inevitable at every walk of tribals' life and during the current years of ecocidal devastations, how the Evil has incarnated in novel shapes. The novel displays and bridges the gap between the tribals' ancient and present mindsets, their innocence and experience, and narrates the elaborate ritual practised to thwart the Evil and the roots of Evil along with the concepts in the tribal religion, the mystery of the creation of cosmos, the deity of Donyi-polo — the Sun and the Moon, and the multiple incarnations of Evil. The pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial times and Arunachal's transgression through the times of the current post-colonial turmoil has beautifully been depicted. The work debates on both deep and shallow ecology, the former demanding recognition of intrinsic value in nature and the latter arguing for preservation of natural resources only for the sake of humans (Garrad 2007: 21). As a contrast to the toxic consciousness aroused by the ecocidal/ecological disaster of postindustrial era depicted in the postnatural American fiction (Deistering 1996: 197), the pristine

landscape ecology or its postcolonial metamorphosed shape evokes toxicity or psychopathy in the tribal minds in Arunachal.

Mamang reconstructs the animist principles and the idea of Evil in the ecology of the Adi tribals. Animism is “the belief that plants, objects and natural things such as weather” (literary ecology) have a living soul (Dai 2006: 52). It is a belief in a power that organizes and controls the universe (ibid.). Like human rights, animism pleads for the ecology rights (ecofeminism) and animal rights. The humans smell the Evil in the huge ferocious ecology and the tribes practise the rituals to propitiate the Evil for peace and prosperity of all concerned. The Evil in the Adi culture as has been portrayed by Mamang may be classified and (i) supernatural, (ii) physical, (iii) ecological, (iv) symbolic and (v) mysterious/ magical. These evils essentialize the tribal cultural ecology.

Evils experienced by the Adi tribals have become legends and as such there are some guiding principles to deal with them properly. The *miri* (priest of Adis) and the experienced elderly men know many small histories about the role of Evils in affecting the tribes. The powerful priests have very important role in the Adi society. They propitiate the evil spirits and bless the householders for peace and prosperity. The householders need to perform the rituals in frequent intervals by inviting the *miris*. If there is any negligence in the rituals the spirits become angry and harm the children and the householders. For good harvests, wellbeing of the domestic animals and the household, rituals and propitiation of spirits, travelling the road during the *Ponung* festival being led by the *miri* are necessary. The *miri* has the most important role in driving away the Evil. He is the storyteller, the healer, and the rhapsodist par excellence. He sings the legends, invokes, chants and reminds. In his songs all aspects of the daily life of man are touched from guidelines for construction of shelters to the techniques of making a bow, arrows, the preparation of poison, and the origins of community hunting. If culture is what makes life worth living, then the *miri* celebrates this in words” (Dai, 1998: 108). *Miri* (Nyibu) “is the mouthpiece of the people to communicate their grievances and suffering to the spirits and to request them for redressal—a sort of intermediary between the human and the spiritual world.” (Riba 2000: 259)

The Evil is the constant obsession with the Adis. Mamang presents the Adi Ecotheosophy along with the various shapes of Evils in the narrative. The central logic in Adi Ecotheosophy is generally explained by the Nyibu, as is etched by Mamang:

In the beginning, there was only Keyum. Nothingness. It was neither darkness nor light, nor had it any colour, shape or movement. Keyum is the remotest past, way beyond the reach of our senses. It is the place of ancient things from where no answer is received. Out of this place of great stillness, the first flicker of thought began to shine like a light in the soul of man. It became a shimmering trail, took shape and expanded and became the Pathway. Out of this nebulous zone, a spark was born that was the light of imagination. The spark grew into a shining steam that was the consciousness of man, and from this all the stories of the world and all its creatures came into being. (Dai 2006: 56)

It is believed by the Adis that “the life of a man is measured by his actions and his actions are good if their origin is pure” (Riba 2000: 57). The existence of Evil is unavoidable and unpredictable. So every man has to be cautious all the time to pacify the Evil. According to the Adi belief there are numerous spirits and evils residing in the biodiversity.

THE SUPERNATURAL EVILS

Adis believe that all agents of ecology are the abodes of spirit. The trees, forest, lake, river, place and the likes have spirits. They have harmful effects on the humanity. The supernatural evil spirits dealt in the novel are Biribik, the Water Serpent, Mitimili, Dimitayang, Danki, etc.

(i) Biribik, the Water Serpent: On a night of heavy rain, a fisherman who was all alone with his nets by the river, heard a rushing sound as the water parted and when he looked up at the tree, he was sheltering under, he saw a serpent with a head with horns coiled up in the branches looking down at him. He then ran for his life. He never recovered from the effects of the terrible vision and died within a year of wasting illness. The name of this mysterious serpent was Biribik. Hoxo’s father had also seen this serpent named Biribik (Dai 2006: 9-10).

(ii) Mitimili: Mitimili is a race of supernatural beings. These small, quiet people first prepared the mysterious si-ye, that is the yeast used to ferment rice into beer. Before this race disappeared, deranged by strange visions, they gave this sacred powder to mankind warning that this sacred powder had special powers and was to be handled with respect by women only. This white powder mixed with ground rice, roots and berries are shaped into small flat biscuits called si-ye cakes which when eaten make people hallucinate like

mitimili race and as such are forbidden before a hunt or a journey (ibid.: 28-29). It is believed that a bad spirit lurking in the si-ye makes men go mad.

(iii) Dimitayang: It is the lonely spirit who stirs up the lake waters and clutches trespassing men in an embrace of ice. Every winter Adis set out on a journey to the snow Mountains to harvest a precious root (the deadly aconitum) for preparation of poison arrows. They trek to the realm of silent waste and hallucinations. After collecting and packing the roots, before return, they address the mountains and air turning in every direction and bid farewell with promise to visit again. They convince the jealous spirits to permit them safe return. But once in spite of all prayers a group of Adis had to face the wrath of Dimitayang or some monstrous vision that devoured them in cyclonic wind, dust and cloud. When they reached home and the cyclonic danger subsided they found a dead praying mantis, which they took to be the evil spirit and performed rituals to ward off the danger.

(iv) Danki: The fabulous vessel owned by the Lotang family of Migu clan, Danki was made of the strongest metal alloy. It was believed to be an auspicious gift from the gods. It has been passed down from father to son for generations in the family. One day, the eldest son of the family noticed that the vessel was lying overturned in its usual place. He was surprised to see the moisture and patches of moss on its surface. Since then he was cleaning it everyday and next day finding it filled with bamboo leaves of the variety which is available only in far north hills. After such strange behaviours, the danki was afterwards split into two halves and disappeared. With that the fortunes of the Migu clan declined and the last son bearing the Lotang title who lived to the ripe age of ninety-eight had no male heir (ibid.: 62-63)

(v) The Python Spirit: A tragedy that befell Karyon Togum family of Yabgo village was that Togum's son Kepi was suffering from fever for long and his condition was not improving. Kepi was taken to the hospital at Pigo, and was given tablets and an injection. But his condition did not improve for long. The child was crying and his small torso twisted stiff and unmoving. Someone told the parents to think about performing a special ceremony because it was the spirit of a snake that had coiled around the body of their son. So it was Hoxo, the nyibu, who was called to conduct the ceremony. Hoxo

narrated from his vision how Togum killed a python in the timber depot in the middle of the forest. It was fact. Togum who had no experience of hunting, had killed a python which was inside the pile of logs, for which the elephant which saw it was not drawing the logs. Togum killed this terrible python with two gunshots. The spirit of the python took revenge on his son Kepi. So Hoxo had to perform the serpent ritual all night, chanting and negotiating with spirits calling them to restore the sick child. But the spirits had moved away to a place beyond recall. "They are the most dangerous ones, the ones who go away and never return", Hoxo said (Dai 2006: 24).

(vi) The Tiger/Fire Spirit: Pinyar, the widow, who was deserted by Orka, her first lover, and whose husband Lekon died in a hunting accident, was living all alone. Once her house caught fire and everything was burnt down. As per rule, she was banished to the outskirts of the village and had to undergo the taboo (Dai 2006: 28). This fire is generally caused by a spirit known as the Tiger Spirit or Fire Spirit. During the period of taboo when the Adi householder is banished to the outskirts of the village no one could go and eat with him/her for fear of provoking the Tiger Spirit which follows the people to their home. The angry fire spirit completely gutted twenty houses in Duyang village and the village had to perform special ritual to propitiate the angry fire spirit (ibid.: 122).

In the old days fire watching had been a sacred duty. All young men were expected to give their time, taking turns to stay together in the bango, the boy's dormitory, and keep vigil through the night (ibid.: 121). The angry fire spirit causes immense harm.

2. SYMBOLIC EVILS

Turmoil in the tribal world happens due to some fault/error in human behaviour or due to the negligence in rituals. When such turmoil take place, the old people of the village sit around speculating on clan titles and origins, on births, loves, marriages and spirits and ghosts. The right or wrong kind of marriage, the right or wrong kind of life, could always be traced to something in the blood. Down the line certain traits appear suddenly in a nephew, an aunt, or a great grandson. Some bloodlines are almost taboo to mention. It is due to the defect in the blood that some see visions visited by spirits, etc.

Beyond this phenomenon, there are other things or agents which represent certain good or evil values; for example, the tooth of a tiger and a wild boar are symbols of luck and success (ibid.: 35), whereas the aborigine plant growing into a size of a tree with small poisonous-looking flowers, and long bloated fruit becomes a ghostly tree that creates psychopathic behaviour in people who come under it. It is believed that after sunset women should not linger by streams and rivers, because those places are visited by ghosts and spirits. Again it is believed that some people are auspicious and some inauspicious (ibid.: 83).

3. ECOLOGICAL EVILS

Ecology comprises of both biodiversity and abiodiversity. Before the advent of colonizer migluns into Arunachal, it was only the homeland of the tribes. No road links were there. High mountains, dense forest full of wild animals, poisonous snakes and insects, rivers, streams, gorges and intense valleys proved the land a difficult terrain and its people, wild and innocent. The people practiced animism, believed that everything had a soul and the spirits, if not propitiated, would harm them. Beyond that, elements of nature like wind, water, fire, sky and space have also spirits which avenge humans, Life becomes difficult because:

It rains during the day, it rains all night. It can rain non-stop for sixty two days at a time. Not a peep of sunshine. Not a breath of wind. Every summer the tangled undergrowth clinging to the hills is swept away by the downpour, causing landslides that cut off all communication and links (Dai 2006: 37).

The fierce hissing of rain would cover the land like the sea. It seems that the heavens brush very close to the earth. The nature displays its wilderness:

The wild fruit born is of unknown family, bittersweet, pungent, often misshapen and hardy, or swollen to an unnatural size. Hidden by mountains and covered by a charcoal sky the forest and rivers become battlefields ferocious with the struggle for survival. Astonishing plants with gills spring up in clumps. Delicate green shoots unfurl into monstrous fans and umbrellas with stinging hair. The wild berry covers itself with ants. Insects like miniature armadillos emerge out of nowhere and move about briskly until a flick of the broom transforms them into crumpled balls protected with green headlights (ibid.: 36-37)

After the early 1800s, when the first white priests, surveyors and soldiers had begun arriving in the region, rapid changes came over the landscape. The migluns struggled hard to make the land inhabitable for them. With the thunder of cargo trucks and bulldozers, and the shouts of men the jungle burst into flame as the mountaintops were blown off and the labour force struggled to claw their way through the rubble and drag the wretched road across the mutilated hills. There are ferocious places like the Lake of No Return, where so many airmen had lost their lives flying the Himalayan Hump during the war. About the nature of the forest a British officer wrote in his notebook. "The forest is like an animal. It breathes all around us... like a green snake out of the decaying vegetation.... The trees are enormous and sinister". (ibid.: 52)

The destruction of forests by the colonizers was politically motivated. There was an evil motive behind it of "alienating natives from ceremonies and rituals... for their replacement by alien systems" (Tripathy 2007: 101). This attempt was destined at taming the wild also. As a result of the decimation of trees, they became homeless and went away leaving us unprotected (ibid.: 42). Other evil spirits residing in trees or hills and valleys became jealous and angry and harmed the humans. With the cutting of trees, the canopy of shelter and tradition has fallen and the wind and sun and burning our faces now. Besides that the wild rivers and mountains seem to be hungry for human lives. They are the ecological evils.

4. Mysterious /Magical Evils: The spirits of wind, place, big trees, rivers and streams which harm the humans are mysterious and magical. Nemen, it was said, was carried away by wind and she was found dead at the water point beyond the orange trees. The ghostly aubergine plant that poisons the minds of men who go under it is mysterious like the behaviour of the evil spirits.

Myriad landscape of Arunachal and her people who consider themselves "peripheral people" (Dai, 2006: 190), their living amidst may religious rituals and festivals, ancient memories, many events and incidents of life make them integral to the rhythms of ecology. Shaman's stories elaborate the truths and realities of life. He is the guardian of time and destiny. He is also the mentor of every soul and regulator of life and activities of the individual. As such he upholds the ecological vision and maintains both the deep and shallow ecology.

Adis, the followers of animism, have profound knowledge about the evil spirits, mysteries of creation and ways of nature. Exorcism,

rituals of the propitiation of the evil spirits, listening to the miri/shaman about the mysteries of the creation and the old stories, legends and small histories of the land keep them occupied in exploring the essentialism of life. The idea of Evil is the guiding principle of a cautious life that helps a tribal escape the danger at different stages of life and also enables him maintain sustainable social development and cultural integrity.

The religious literatures from Vedic times till 17th century from South to Northeast India have made efforts to promote eco-ethics and educate people in the lore of both internal and external ecology preservation and realization of the intrinsic values of ecology. So the human concerns for ecology and propogandas of our times are not new concepts.

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