

Ecological Perplexity and Environmental Consideration in Pankaj Sekhsaria's *The Last Wavean Island Novel*

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ABSTRACT---*The purpose of the study is to discuss the environmental issues in the Andaman Islands after the settlement of the people from the mainland and other countries. It further focuses upon tribal literature and tribes live in the Andaman Islands. It is followed by illegal activities and other schemes followed by the settlers. The schemes create a great threat to the environment and distress the ecology. It discusses some of the illegal activities which ruin the human existence in the world. It discusses some incidents of human ascendancy towards nature and how the ecological disputes and controversies are raised. The impact of the dispute leads to destruction in the hands of nature which decimate the human race. The final note discusses how the problems can be rectified and how to live with nature.*

Keywords--- *Ecological, Environmental, Tribal Literature, Adivasi, Illegal activities, Jarawa, Natives, Tribal Community, Tsunami, Deforestation*

I. INTRODUCTION

The word tribe or Adivasi means the real dwellers of the world or land. Lucy Mair says, a tribe is an independent political division of a population with common culture [Nadeem Hasnain, 2007]. Whenever, the word tribe is heard it shows the picture of people who are half-naked, barbaric and uncivilized. After the influence of literature, the reality of those tribes has been exposed to the world. Tribal literature focuses upon the issues faced by the tribes in the modern world. It even paves way for the environmental issues created by the civilized majority in the name of development. On the other hand, it praises tribes for the irnaturalistic perspective of living. In most of the circumstances, it argues against the luxurious mindset of humans towards wealth and money. Tribal literature denotes tribes as the savers of nature, and they are contempt with what they gain from nature. It advocates for tribal culture and their way of living. Some writers like Pankaj Sekhsaria, Rajam Krishnan and Narayan suggest let the tribes live on their own and it is not good to impose one's culture and ideas towards them.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AND TRIBAL LITERATURE

Ecology and environment are the basic themes discussed in tribal literature. It states that the modern lifestyle, advance development and globalization are the main reason for nature's destruction. The environment should be good for maintaining a healthy society. A man who lives in a particular place has to stick upon his environment to

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lead a peaceful life. The ecology around him has to be maintained by him for successful life. If the person tries to change his environment against nature, it will make a great concussion on human life. There are many disastrous impacts on nature and the environment due to human influence. The important message delivered is that all the issues can be controlled and retained back if the concern for the environment is taken seriously.

“Literature has documented all matters and revealed hidden things. Literature is the best mediator to bring out the real problems faced by weaker sections of the society” (R.S. Suganth and Dr R. Jinu, 2018). Tribal literature is the literature of a search for identity, of exposing the past and present forms of exploitation by outsiders, and of threat to tribal identity and existence, and resistance. Tribal literature points out the importance of tribal people who rely upon nature. It is evident that in all tribal novels and books, the tribes of a particular area's lifestyle will be based on the naturalistic feature. Tribal literature advice the modern people not to ruin the environment. Even after many warnings, the same thing is followed. It may lead to an end to the human race. In the novel, *The Last Wave*, the writer beautifully explains how the calamitous Tsunami has damaged the Andaman Islands with its power. The writer's key motive is to aware the people about the great disaster's going to happen in the future if the natural resources are destroyed for the sake of human luxury. He too discusses about the Jarawa tribes who lives along with the nature peacefully. The development measures and other technological progress affects the ecological peace is the strong voice of the writer.

ECOLOGICAL ISSUES IN ANDAMAN ISLANDS

The Andaman Islands once flourished with dense tropical forest and mangroves. It is the place of tribes like the Great Andamanese, the Onge and the Jarawas. During the colonial rule, many people from the mainland and other countries started to settle in Andaman and there starts the problem. The settlers started to clear the forest for cultivation and construction. Within a few years, the population gets increased and most of the forest has vanished. The water, air and other natural resources are exploited for their benefits. The officers who are appointed by the government are not good and they are the many reasons for the ecological disharmony. “Most of the policemen would go to the forest hunt deer or wild pig and return” (*The Last Wave*, 91). Even though hunting is prohibited to persevere the environment, these attitudes are practiced by the policemen.

The settlers are a great threat to the island. The government approved them to stay there allotting someplace, but they destroy the forest for housing. They destroy most of the living creatures around the creek and forest. Crocodiles are seen all around the creeks and the shores of Andaman but after human influence, the number of crocodiles slowly disappears. “Slowly, this wave of humans and their settlements had penetrated deeper and deeper thrashing the forest... and prime croc habitat. Many were killed legally but the forest department gun, or illegally by the noose and machete” (*The Last Wave*, 103).

Harish is one of the main characters in the novel, who collect all details from the researchers and common people about ecological issues. He stands for the tribes who preserves the environment. He met Dr Sreekumar Kutty, a famous botanist in the Andaman Islands. Sreekumar Kutty states the timber extraction in Andaman island will change the evergreen forest into deciduous. Slowly the forest becomes dryer and brown as like the forest in the mainland of India. Even it may lead to the loss of some small animals and plants in the forest. In an instant, he says

"certain plants and animal forms that are not found here or have only nominal presence become more dominant when the character of the forest changes" (*The Last Wave*, 185).

Sreekumar Kutty gives a clear explanation with papilionanatheteres an orchid flower. He compares Jarawa reserve, which is still maintained by Jarawa tribe the settlements of civilized people. In Jarawa reserve, this orchid flower never blooms because it needs direct sunlight. On the other side, this flower flourishes and it blooms. "It's out and out a sunlight-loving plant. It's what we call an ecological indicator" (*The Last Wave*, 187). This change clearly shows the change of environment in the developing areas. The writer wants to state that the people are not aware of these issues happening around them. The writer is very particular that if nature is destroyed and transplanted into human invention, it may cause unusual effects in our surroundings. There were many trees and plants which stand as a symbol of a locality. But now new species has been replaced in the environment.

Tourism is a great threat to the ecology of the world. After the influence of tourism in the Andaman Islands, many wastes were dumped into the sea. It affects the environment as well as the sea creatures. Sanjay Kumar a journalist in 2013 at *The Diplomat Brief* states that "Package guests have no ethics and they litter plastic bottles all-around" [Sanjay Kumar, 2013]. Recent survey and census claim that there is much plastic waste are seen in the sea. Michael Le Page in *Scientific Reports* states "Plastic pollution leads to many other threats to ocean life, which include, expanding of dead zones, global warming, ocean acidification and trawling"[6]. The water and the living creatures in the sea are polluted because of human attitude.

In Andaman, tourism leads to the spread of pan masalas to tribal community "they are changing too, behaving like brats, getting used to tobacco, alcohol" (*The Last Wave*, 198). "The landscape of tribes is transformed to tourist spots and the people who visit those places dumb lot of waste over there" [Sanjay Kumar, 2013]. The construction and other benefits are made to attract the tourist. The reality is that many tribes are forced to move away from their place. No, strict rules and the rules framed are followed in waste management and recycling plastics. It creates complete chaos in the environment.

The tourist offers food to the tribes which slowly ruins the attitude and nature of tribes. Pankaj Sekhsaria in *Race to the Sun* discuss the tourists visit these islands to see the beauty of the sunrise. On every New Year's Eve, nearly 20000 tourist visits Katchal island. The report states it may affect the tribes of those islands as well as the environment. "The presence of a huge mass of people on a small island will create a lot of health issues to the natives. The wasteor garbage like plastics and papers dumbed by them will affect the local environment" [Pankaj Sekhsaria, 2017].

WILDLIFE IN THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION

The ecological distress not only affect the humans but also all the living creatures around us. Wildlife suffers a lot in the hands of advance development. Roadways and railways constructed over the forest area affect the peace of the forest. Many animals meet with accident and ends up their life. Some of the species has already gone and many are on the verge of extinction because of human influence. Poaching, hunting are the activities which are practiced by greedy men leads to destruction.

Crocodiles, turtles, some ornamental birds and fishes are smuggled and even killed for their valuable skins, feathers and meat. The people who practice this could see only the money gained from the activity, but they fail to understand the ecological distress. Each living creature does a particular job in the earth to make the environment neat and pollution free. But the greedy attitude of human affects the prime source of nature. Oceans and seas are dumbed with waste materials which affect all the creatures in the ecosystem. The scientific report states that fishes captured from sea has toxic materials in them and when those fishes are consumed by humans it affects human health. This shows human can live only with nature, whatever he gives to nature will be given back by nature to him.

The governmental policies are made to preserve wildlife. In most of the cases the law makers act like law breakers. The novel has witnessed some police officers who go for hunting. They find some lope hole to get profit with the laws framed by them. In Andaman Islands many seashores has lost its crocodiles, turtles and many species of fauna. In general perspective development programs and policies which collapses the nature. Tribal literature voices for the wildlife and all the living creatures around us. There should be a stability in the environment and so the environment would be in stable condition.

ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES CREATING DISTRESS

Nature is a prime source which offers all its wealth to human beings. In most of the instance, the greedy mindset of humans leads to the various illegal activities which destroys nature completely. The civilized may argue it is the form of development, but they fail to understand the danger which they are going to face in the future. Even the government frames some rule to stop these issues, the officers who want to safeguard the rules will be the form of lawbreakers.

Hunting animals in the forest is banned by the government of India to conserve wild animals. In the novel, Pillai is a police officer who was appointed in Tirur to protect the people. But he creates more problem in that region. He used to hunt animals from the forest and he even has the habit of destructing Jarawa huts. "Pillai was on leave for three days and was to join duty the day his body was found... what was he doing those three days?... Pillai had gone deep into the forests with two other policemen" (*The Last Wave*, 90) an old man explained these incidents to Harish. The attitude of Pillai has been hidden and all the blame has been dropped on the Jarawas for killing him. The old man considers Pillai as harami (sinner according to Islam) for hunting and creating a problem.

Illegal entry is one of the greatest threats which have been faced by many islands of Indian sub-continent. In November 2018, a Christian missionary, John Allen Chau was killed by the tribes in North Sentinel Islands of Andaman. It is reported by Michael Safi in *The Guardian* in 2018, that "the government of India has banned the entry to those islands because the tribes resist the outsiders with arrows. He has paid some bribe to a fisherman to reach that island" [Michael Safi, 2018]. The people who live on those islands get money from the outsiders and do such illegal activities. In the novel a character named Shiva who gets money from the foreigners and help those people to enter the islands illegally. The foreigners may get into trouble or create trouble. A French man once helped by Shiva entered into Jarawa tribe and took photos of Jarawa women. He even published those pictures in a French magazine which has aroused a lot of issues.

Illegal entry leads to the spread of disease from one land to the other. The tribes live in the islands are not vaccinated for diseases. So, if a person who enters illegally with any disease it affects the entire tribal population. The Andaman Islands has it lost some of the native tribes, clans like Onge, Great Andamanese and so on. Geetika Mantri in 2018, explains that the tribes are "likely not to have developed immunity to several common illnesses... the visit may have exposed them to illness and pathogens" [8]. If a single person in the tribal community gets affected by a disease, there are a lot of chances of spreading to the entire community. It may even lead to a group to end up in extinction.

Poaching of turtles in the Andaman Islands is very common. The turtles are sold in the black market for their shell, skin and medical values. Many officers are appointed in the nesting ground of turtle to prevent these. It arouses a question of why the need for these officers if the people are good. In the novel, Biswas family takes a major role for these attitudes, "Biswas venture into places others would never dare to enter. Shark fishing, diving for shell and sea cucumber, turtles in shallow water... and more than occasionally crocodiles" (*The Last Wave*, 154). They even have many ways to smuggle these goods to various countries. Even after earning more, they have been doing this again and again. They are the best example for greediness and not contempt of what they are having with.

Deforestation is another issue faced by all Asian countries. In the Andaman Islands after the trade of timber establishment, deforestation takes a major part. Many trees were cut down legally and illegally. The settlers help the smugglers for cutting down value trees seen in those tropical rain forests. As mentioned above the destruction of the forest will make the land dry. In the novel, it is illegal to cut down trees from Jarawa reserve. Sreekumar took Harish to a Jarawa reserve and states, "we are inside the Jarawa reserve and this entire timber operation here is illegal" (*The Last Wave*, 196). Even the government officers are helping the smugglers for gaining some money from them as a bribe.

Deforestation leads to various problems like failure of rain, natural calamities, global warming and so on. Money is considered as a prime source for this crime. Education has taught money is important for happy living. "The tribes once worshipped nature also has started to cut down trees illegally. The modern members of the tribal society help the smugglers to cut down valuable trees. Instead of nature, they have shifted their attitude towards money" [3]. This attitude leads to the loss of habitat, green vegetation and even it affects wildlife.

EFFECTS OF ECOLOGICAL DISTRESS

The writer is very keen that there will be a great disaster if the ecology is continuously destructed. He brings Tsunami at the end, which happened on December 2004, to show it will continue in the future too. "A huge solid of greywater came rushing in, engulfing the forest camp, lifting it and then ripping apart the fragile construction as if it were a house of cards" (*The Last Wave*, 262). These lines show how destructive nature could do to the human race if it is continuously disturbed for our luxury. In the year 2009, Andaman has witnessed an earthquake and it was recorded to be the magnitude of 7.5 Richter scale [1]. On April 2019, continuously the Nicobar Islands have witnessed nineteen mild earthquakes [2]. The biologist and nature lovers claim that these incidents are the effect of human attitude towards nature.

In recent times, there is a great change in monsoon and climate. In some places, there will be heavy rainfall and, in some place, there won't be any rain. In both the situations, no life can survive especially humans. Scientists and

researchers have pointed out these are the effects of deforestation and natural exploitation. Many diseases are spreading all around because of natural exploitation. Human use artificial material to develop their products but all those deeds are against nature. Earthquakes, soil erosion, tsunami, volcanic eruption are some of the disaster happening frequently because of ecological distress. All these shows that it is time to change our attitude towards nature.

Pollution has taken its rule in many cities all around the world. Deforestation, emitting carbon in natural elements are the main reason for pollution. Human beings give all the toxics to nature and those elements are given to us by nature. Whatever we gain in this world are given by nature. Pollution in water, air will surely end up human race within few years. Pollution lead to various diseases and the modern people term it with a new name. The environmental activist suggests it is the right time to turn our attitude towards nature or else it will lead to great disaster.

STEPS AND REMEDIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

We are seeds as well as the parasites of the earth. We can either give or take, depending on our perception of growth.

Zephyr McIntyre.

People should aware of the effects which are going to happen in the future. They should stop doing illegal matters like smuggling, deforestation, hunting and poaching. The civilized society should not affect the living of tribal people and their habitat. People should understand the importance of nature and its benefits. Deforestation, pollution, dumping of waste and other issues have to be stopped. People should respect the fact that what we sow in the earth will be reaped by the human race. People should understand that the earth is not only for humans, but also for all living beings.

The duty of the grown-up people is to give good guidance for the young generation regarding the environment and ecological problems. If the young generation is directed in right path, there may be a drastic change in the environment. The false way of living has to be eradicated from the education system. The present education system teaches how to earn leaving how to live in the world peacefully. Planting trees and other environmental programs can be organized, so that it may bring some awareness among the society. Government and NGO's are organizing many programs regarding plastic waste management and advices the people to avoid plastic bags and so on.

People should change their attitude towards nature. They should understand nature is the prime source of living. The government has advised the people to plant more trees to conserve nature. The people of the Andaman Islands should understand the importance of their forest. They should protect the forest from the outsiders to maintain a balanced ecology. The main idea discussed by Pankaj Sekhsaria is that let nature be in its way and the human race should not disturb it further to avoid great disasters. "It's a priceless heritage, this ancient forest that we are destroying. I hope that at least now we will leave the untouched bits alone" (*The Last Wave*, 197).

III. CONCLUSION

The above-discussed facts are the alarm to the human race to get rid of all the issues created by ourselves. It is clear that if this situation continues, it may lead to a great disaster in the future. Human should understand nature is

the gift of God to all living creatures. Preserving and saving wealth for the future generation is the only thing humans can do now. Humans should rely upon nature for their living and not destroy nature for their living. The civilized majority should respect the tribes for their way of living and culture. Environment and nature should be preserved as they are the valuable treasures of the human race. We should understand the fact that we are ruining the treasures of the future generation too in the name of development and advancement.

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