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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Nature has always stood as a matter of discussion in various disciplines. Earlier, works of literature embodied nature merely as an object of magnificence with its fresh, serene and aesthetic physiognomies. With ecocriticism, writers contemplated on the realistic aspect of nature, representing its wretchedness, its barrenness, and anthropocentric exploitations. It deliberates nature as an entity that deserves the right to get served with reverence. The same surge of thought can be perceived in the field of science. James Lovelock, through Gaia theory, put forward the premise that Earth is a “super organism” and like any organism, earth deserves veneration from the part of its inhabitants. The conditions of the earth are devised by its inhabitants and they eventually get compensated both positively and negatively conforming to their activities. The thesis endeavours to investigate the apprehensions of science and literature on nature by tracking the common characteristics of the theory of ecocriticism and Gaia.

Ecocriticism is a literary theory that assesses different dimensions of nature embodied in literary works. It scrutinizes how the present ecological circumstances influence the imaginative level of the literary writers. Gaia is a scientific theory that examines how diverse organisms on earth construct or destruct the chemical compositions and habitability of earth and how the earth rebalances itself from the annihilations of any extent.

It has been identified that ecocriticism and Gaia share some correlations in their collaboration with disparate elements, such as gender, spirituality, climate change, and animal extinction. These resemblances connect women with nature and they often stand

for the progress of the mother earth in their attempt to survive in this marginalized world of enslavement and oppression. The process of reproduction associates the female gender with nature and both of them are designated as “mother” which entitles many duties and obligations on them regardless of their inconveniences and sacrifices. Despite these regulations and incapacities, there prevails an inner urge for freedom and self-assertion in them. They strive to free themselves from the clutches of patriarchy to reassert their identity. The Gaia theory attributes a feminine existence to earth by choosing the name “Gaia”, which means “the goddess of earth”. In ecocriticism also, the feminine gender “mother earth” is adopted to denote the earth. Marko Pogacnik in *Daughter of Gaia: Rebirth of the Divine Feminine*, describes three different phases for the development of earth- “the white”, “the red” and “the black” (6). The white phase marks the “wholeness of the earth”, where the earth is a fully developed entity. The red phase specifies different interactions that are taking place on the earth. Different organisms both positively and negatively affect the earth’s atmosphere and tremor its balance. In the Black phase, the earth behaves as a self-regulatory system by rebalancing itself to a favourable condition for lives to survive. The earth’s self-regulation influences the earth’s inhabitants too.

Ecospirituality and deep ecology attribute a spiritual existence to nature, where, nature is recognized as an entity with inner worth. The divinity of nature demands reverence and concern by its organisms. An irreverence caused to nature will be repaid. Nature is considered as a complex whole, where each part is reciprocal and the disorder in one part disturbs the other, too. Each part has a unique function, whereas no part is inferior or superior to the other, as everything works collectively to complete the complex whole. Gaia hypothesis also maintains the same view of the earth. It observes the earth as

a superorganism, which has the potential to take vengeance and rebalance itself. Any negative acts executed against earth will be eventually questioned by the earth. There is a give and take relationship between each organism on earth. The first organisms on earth developed consuming the air, water, and other substances on earth. In return, the organisms offered themselves to the earth at their death. The composition of the earth plays a substantial role in the development of various organisms on earth and in assuring the diversity of the ecosystem. The coordination of each organism is imperative for the smooth functioning of this superorganism.

Climate change and animal extinction are the two important realms of apprehension for both the ecocritics and the proponents of Gaia. Climate change stands as a disastrous factor that carries the power to destruct the diversity and equilibrium of the planet. Thousands of organisms get extinct every year because of the conflicts raised by the adverse climate. Both the followers of Gaia and ecocriticism recognize climate change and animal extinction are provoked by anthropocentric destruction. The irreverent perspective of human beings to accomplish their egoistic needs can be regarded the lone reason for these natural disorders. Human intervention transforms the chemical composition of the earth, inducing it to raise its temperature levels. The expulsion of various toxic gases, deforestation, overexploitation of natural resources, and global warming add to the misery of numerous organisms in the ecosystem. The self-regulating power of the earth attempts to rebalance its chemical configurations and atmospheric levels. In this rebalancing process, some organisms become extinct as a sufficient environment is not found for their survival.

The introduction describes the development of the Gaia hypothesis and the theory of ecocriticism. The fundamental premise of the thesis is to investigate the ecocritical perspective of the novels *Flight Behaviour* by Barbara Kingsolver, *The Year of the Flood* by Margaret Atwood, and *Skinny Dip* by Carl Hiaasen and associate it with the concept of the Gaia hypothesis. The thesis is dealt with the basic concept of the Gaia hypothesis and it seeks to view the hypothesis from a literary perspective by connecting it with ecocriticism. The Introduction traces the development of the theory of ecocriticism and the relevance of the term Gaia in it. It provides a brief introduction to the concept of the Gaia hypothesis, introduces the novelists and offers a gist of the select novels. It also specifies the need for reviewing the select novels from an ecocritical perspective.

The first chapter furnishes a theoretical framework of the thesis. It examines varied ecocritical concepts and attempts to associate them with the Gaia hypothesis. The chapter scrutinizes the basis of ecocriticism and elaborates on the elements of ecocriticism, such as ecospirituality, ecofeminism, climate change, animal extinction, scientific and technological advancements, and developmental activities. It inspects the view of Gaia and ecocriticism in these realms.

The second chapter, "Conspiring Nature as a Feminist Space" explores the ecofeminist perspective of the select novels. The select novels depict the subjugations and dominations suffered by nature and women in a patriarchal society. The women characters in the select novels and the nature portrayed in them display the features of ecofeminism. Both of them are regarded as mere products of a consumerist society. The selected novels illustrate the three different phases of ecofeminism elaborated by Marko Pogacnik in *The Daughter of Gaia: Towards a Divine Feminine*.

The Year of the Flood depicts a post-apocalyptic world where people are striving to sustain in an ecologically uncertain place. Atwood endeavors to render the disintegrated life experienced by the planet and the female characters in a patriarchal system. The novel demonstrates the protagonist Toby's survival in a disparaged society. The novel describes the three phases in her life "the white", "the red", and "the black" (Pogacnik 6). Toby's life with her parents represents the first stage of her life, where she enjoys maximum freedom and receives ardent support from her family to improve herself. Toby and her parents are forced to leave their homeland because of the activities of the corporates. The work with the 'HelthWyzer' makes Toby's mother diseased, and it eventually drives them to debts. The struggle for survival from the disease subsequently leads to the death of Toby's parents. There begins the second phase of her life. Toby's search for a place for survival takes her to a small rented room. In the region, she witnesses many merciless and brutal acts against the animals, specifically the endangered species. Life in the area adds mental suffering for Toby. As a way of escape from the region, Toby finds a job at the 'SecretBurgers', where she is deliberated merely as an object of sexual satisfaction. Blanco, the owner of the restaurant, torments her both sexually and psychologically. Toby leaves with the gardeners and the life with the Gardeners represents the third phase of her life, where nature serves in redefining her position in society. This period can be regarded as a period of transformation for Toby. She gains her new identity as a gardener and the circumstance encourages her to operate her knowledge of herbal medicine. The helpless, subjective, and marginalized Toby gets transformed into a strong woman who has great aspirations in her life. She uses this opportunity to question patriarchy for its prejudiced treatment.

The nature presented in the novel also illustrates the three different phases of its existence. The nature in Toby's childhood stands for the first phase of its existence, which is characterized by biodiversity and experiences less pollution. The second phase of nature resembles the second phase of Toby's life, where a lot of unethical events occur challenging the equilibrium of nature. Corporate activities shatter natural boundaries and diversity by approaching it as a resource. Many nefarious acts, such as the slaughter of endangered species, animal extinction, and the use of chemical pesticides, dominate this phase. During this phase, nature appears barren, devoid of any biodiversity. In the third phase, the gardeners strive for the betterment of nature and restore its position. During this phase, nature develops into a vigorous entity that has the strength of transmuting the lives of herself and others. Nature withstands a total transformations in this phase and imperils the life of its exploiters through a waterless flood and with an unnamed disease. The sole survivors after these incidents are the people who keep an affinity with nature.

The novel describes the concept of the commodification of women in a patriarchal society. Most of the female characters in the novel such as Toby, Ren, Lucerne and Rebecca are considered sufferers of mental, physical and sexual persecution from the authoritative male members of patriarchal society. The voices of these deprived and deserted women are quietened by the economic and physical power of these elite groups. Blanco, Lucerne's husband and the management of the sex club are regarded as the representatives of this system.

The female characters in the novel are aware of the ecological degradation that is advancing in their environment. Lucerne sacrifices her comfortable life with her husband to join the God's Gardeners. Her affinity towards nature assists her in surmounting the

materialistic outlook of metropolitan culture. Toby's character is also strengthened by her association with nature. Toby gets opportunities to practice her knowledge of herbal medicines through her connection with nature. The waterless flood plays a decisive role in bringing justice to the lives of different female characters. The flood intimidates the existence of different agents of patriarchy and establishes a secure life for women and nature.

Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* illustrates the suppressions and dominations suffered by women and nature in a patriarchal society. Many instances of natural degradation and the exploitation of the female gender can be discovered from the novel. The novel progresses through the life of the protagonist Dellarobia Turnbow. The incidents depicted in the novel also offer an ecofeminist reaction. Three phases of nature and the protagonist can be explored in the novel. Dellarobia maintains a peaceful childhood with her parents. She gets access to educational facilities and possesses great aspirations in her life. Childhood suggests the first phase of her life, where she stands as a self-confident and aspiring woman. The premature marriage brings her transformation from the first phase to the second "the red phase". She is perceived merely as an object of reproduction and a mother and wife figure in this phase. She sacrifices her dreams and aspirations for the smooth functioning of her family life. She gets suffocated in a demanding family atmosphere. Even if Dellarobia is not highly educated or experienced, she keeps a great affinity and appreciation for her surroundings. She notes down even a slight change in the atmosphere. She travels to the Appalachian Mountains as a way of escape. The journey to the mountains brings the transformation of her life to the third phase. The sudden revelation that she receives from nature stands as a determining force

in redefining her position in society. She changes to a stronger and socially responsible individual after the incident. She empowers herself with education and strives for the justice of nature. It is the connection with nature that drives Dellarobia get acquainted with the scientist, Ovid Byron, and enlarges her horizons of knowledge, and transforms her into an independent and self-reliant woman through a modest career.

The same three-phase journey can be detected in nature that the novel deals with. At the beginning of the novel, the Appalachian Mountains symbolizes the sanctity of nature and its diversity. The wilderness in the mountains fascinates the Monarch butterflies who are compelled to migrate from Mexico because of unprecedented climate change and global warming. The second phase of the mountain's life experiences a disequilibrium. Landslide and heavy rain occur in the region because of logging and other developmental activities of the greedy human beings. In this phase, the entire region appears as a heap of waste with plastics and other man-made things. The landslide and heavy rainfall that the region experiences disturb the life of both the human and the non-human organisms in the neighbourhood. In the third phase, nature rebalances itself and makes a suitable condition for the survival of other organisms especially, the monarch butterflies. The monarch butterflies also represent an element of nature that experiences this three-phase journey of its life. The Mexican climate threatens the life of the monarchs, where they experience a loss of life and a huge decline in their species' population. As a matter of survival, they migrate to the Appalachian Mountains. Their survival in the region is also interrogated by the intolerable climate. Later, Dr Ovid and Dellarobia deport them to an atmosphere conducive for their survival. The new region

offers a new beginning for their lives. The flight of the butterflies and Dellarobia's flight in career reflects a sense of freedom and their attempt to reclaim their lost position.

The supporters of ecofeminism consider women as more environmentally sensible and apprehensive about any transformation that occurs in the environment. The female characters in the novel such as Hester and Dellarobia seem so much anxious about the climate change that is transpiring in their surroundings. A gender-based response towards the migration of the monarch butterflies is visible in the novel. While the female characters, Hester and Dellarobia strive for protecting the monarch butterflies, the male characters such as Cub, Bear Turnbow and Mr Norwood deliberate the appearance of the monarch butterflies a curse as it urges them to suspend the plan of logging in the area. The female characters in the novel are bothered about the security of their fellow organisms, whereas the male characters are only apprehensive about their material benefits.

Kingsolver examines the marginalized condition experienced by the animals, similar to the female gender. Both the animals and the female gender encounter the same subordination in society. As the female characters in the novel are necessitated to sacrifice their dreams and aspirations for the progress of their family, the non-human beings in the area are compelled to change the course of their life and adapt to a new scenario set by the egoistic human beings. The sheep in Dellarobia's farm are forced to stay in a contaminated surrounding, restricting their movements. The monarch butterflies are also urged to leave their regular habitats in Mexico due to landslide and global warming that appeared in the region because of logging and bulldozing done by the materialistic human beings.

A comparative study can be made between the nature reproduced and the protagonist of the novel *Skinny Dip* by Carl Hiaasen. A struggle for fetching an end to the sufferings of nature and her sufferings can be traced from the protagonist Joey Perrone's portrayal. This novel also moves through the three distinct phases of the female protagonist and nature. Being a well-educated woman with good fortune, Joey retains a high prestige in society. She is presented as an independent and self-reliant woman in the first phase of her development. Her faulty marriage with Chaz Peronne leaves her in a devastating state leading her to the second phase of her existence. Chaz treats Joey purely as an object to satisfy his sexual needs. During this phase, her life passes through impositions and restrictions. Chaz's murder attempts assist Joey to get transformed into the third phase of her developmental stage. She realizes her strength and efforts to prove it to her husband through revenge.

Nature in the novel can be represented through the Florida Everglades. Florida Everglades symbolizes a sacred ecology with biodiversity and the repository of freshwater. The Everglade's freshwater storage is threatened by the use of pesticides and other poisonous chemicals such as phosphorous. Chaz also impends the lives of various aquatic organisms in the Everglades. He injures its biodiversity by killing the organisms for fun and eating purposes. The hostile activities of Red Hammernut are revealed at the end and the Everglades rebalances itself with the death of the profit-loving chemist, Chaz Perrone.

There are many incidents in the novel that reflect the emotional and sensual connection that exists between women and other non-human organisms in nature. Joey was partially blind when she reached the island. But she deciphers the presence of a

Doberman there. The incident reflects Joey's ability to formulate a sensual bond between various organisms in nature. Joey's concern for non-human beings is revealed on another occasion, where she takes efforts to feed the fish in her home, even if she arrives there in a dangerous situation. The Doberman's attempt to console Joey through various bodily movements exposes the power of animals to perceive the female psyche.

The third chapter discusses the concept of ecospirituality, where nature maintains "an intrinsic worth". It relates the concept of Gaia-"earth behaves like a living organism" (Lovelock) to the ecospiritual concept of nature as an entity with "intrinsic worth". The characters in *The Year of the Flood*, such as Toby, Ren, Pilar, Nuala, and Adam One, trust in the inner worth of nature and regard it as something divine. There is a community named God's Gardeners operating in the story. The activities of the community can be associated to the spiritual dimension of nature. They celebrate various days to show reverence to nature and different tiny organisms in nature. Saint Euell's week is associated with the collection of all kinds of tiny creatures of germination and storage of different eatable food materials for emergency times. The gardeners observe Mole Day to highlight the role of each organism in retaining the balance of the ecosystem by keeping an encouraging climate and assisting in gas exchange. Creation day is celebrated to preach the obligations of human beings towards nature.

The gardeners trust in the healing capacity of nature, prepare herbal medicines, and follow natural ways of treatment for diseases. They consider honey as a divine medicine, which has magical powers for curing diseases. They gather many medicinal objects, including mushrooms, honey, roses, and poppy plants in the storerooms of their Ararat. They list out the therapeutic benefit of some creatures - the antibiotic property of

the maggots and moulds, the healing power of the honey, and the ability of the spider's web to stop the blood flow from a wound. The incidents illustrate the concept of the therapeutic power of nature.

The notion that nothing is a waste rules over the entire novel. God's gardeners value everything and they resort to various eco-friendly ways of promoting nature, such as recycling. Tree of Creatures arranged by the gardener children from plastic wastes emphasizes how ugly things can be set to expert uses. The primary intention of the Tree of Life Natural Materials Exchange is to stress the scope of recycling in the ecosystem. The exchange is conducted in an ancient house built of all-natural materials like clay, sand, and straw. All the materials offered for sale here comprise waste materials. God's gardeners take an ardent effort to collect various waste materials and scraps from public places and abandoned areas. They make the optimum use of these materials and turn them later into various useful objects. On the whole, the novel follows an ecospiritual cult throughout the development of the plot.

Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* also keeps the cult of ecospirituality throughout the progress of the story. The ecospiritual dimension of the novel is revealed through the characters such as Dellarobia, Hester, Ovid Byron, and Bobby Oggle. Dellarobia believes in the revelation of nature. Nature, especially wilderness, plays a significant role in altering her life's course. Her life initiates a complete transformation with the exposure that she receives from the Appalachian Mountains. Wilderness stands as a force that has the power to regenerate and enlighten an individual. The Appalachian Mountains offer her a kind of consolation and provide a temporary escape from the miseries of her life. Dellarobia discovers the cause of her existence to find the reason

behind the appearance of the Monarch butterflies. Hester can be considered as a person who trusts everything that is happening in nature has the power to teach us something new. She reverences the revelation that Dellarobia receives from nature. Nature stands as a force in eliminating the hatred that she kept for Dellarobia, her daughter-in-law. The Monarch butterflies mentioned in the novel also carry the heavenly spirit in them. The characters view the butterflies as “God’s messengers”. Bobby Oggle preaches on the importance of natural revelation in the Sunday mass. He considers nature as an influential medium to transfer the light of divinity to the world population. Despite being a scientist, Ovid Byron also has faith in the divinity of nature and values the lives of the Monarch butterflies. He takes significant efforts to travel a long distance to salvage the lives of the Monarch butterflies. The novel can be viewed a piece of literature, which carries the element of ecospirituality in it.

Similar ecospiritual elements can be drawn from Carl Hiaasen’s *Skinny Dip*. Characters such as Joey Perrone, Mick Stranahan, Corbett Wheeler, Rolvaag, and Maureen explain the perception of ecospirituality. Belief in the therapeutic power of nature can be delineated by Maureen and Mick Stranahan. Nature plays a dynamic role in determining the destiny of the protagonist Joey’s life. The unusual alteration in the weather and sea bring an alternative course to her life, which might have otherwise ended in the cruel hands of her husband. The quest for justice for herself and nature executes a significant role in transforming the life of Joey into an independent woman. Nature stands as an inspirational force behind Corbett Wheeler’s personality development. His trust in the intrinsic worth of nature and love for wilderness and pasture lands can be delineated from the plot. He keeps an affinity toward different creations and attempts to derive a

kind of solace by interacting with innocent beings. He wholeheartedly chooses the profession of sheep husbandry and leaves his homeland for New Zealand. The farming profession and the association with nature rescue Corbett Wheeler from the hopelessness and bleakness of his life. The transformation of his life reflects the power of pasture lands and non-human organisms to transcend the human mind.

The investigator Rolvaag also carries ecospirituality within him. He venerates the worth of the existence of all organisms in the universe. Rolvaag's habit of feeding pythons represents this cult. Regardless of the treacherous aspect or the instrumental value of the pythons, Rolvaag retains an affinity with them, appreciating their inner worth and their role in complementing the entire ecosystem. The character Maureen also detects a kind of solace in nature. She admires nature and acclaims the glory of God in keeping everything in order. Various manifestations in nature function as an analgesic against her incorrigible disease.

The Fourth chapter deliberates various ecological crises such as climate change, global warming, animal extinction, the spread of an unnamed disease, scientific and technological disturbances, and the ill effects of developmental activities. *The Year of the Flood* portrays a post-apocalyptic world, where the people live in continuous fear of the outbreak of some natural calamities like a waterless flood and the spread of an unnamed disease. Animal extinction and the destruction of natural landscapes are some problems caused by corporates. The scientific community depicted in the novel is so busy creating various genetically modified organisms, questioning the law of nature and the spread of various diseases through the distribution of health supplements.

The climate imagined in the novel *Flight Behaviour* is affected by life-threatening forces such as global warming, heavy rain, landslide, and the spread of various incurable diseases like cancer. Various progressive undertakings instigated by the corporate community destruct the novel's environment. The logging and mining activities contribute to the extinction of various tiny organisms in the environment, especially the monarch butterflies. The accomplishments also transform the landscape of Mexico, contributing to serious threats to the existence of both human and non-human organisms. Human beings in the area are suffering from various serious diseases. The novel can be viewed the best illustration of how human intervention can lead to the destruction of the entire planet.

The annihilation of the Florida Everglades because of anthropocentric activities can be analyzed as the central theme of Carl Hiaasen's *Skinny Dip*. Corporates and scientists shatter the equilibrium of the Florida Everglades. The corporate named Hammernut causes the pollution of the freshwater reservoir in the everglades through pesticides. The greedy chemist Chaz Perrone also bolsters the corporate to disguise the high phosphorous composition in the water. Chaz Perrone indulges in the slaughter of different extinct organisms in the everglades such as freshwater fish, crocodiles, and turtles. On the whole, the fourth chapter illustrates the flaws of anthropocentric intervention in the environment.

Thus, the thesis endeavours to expose the relevance of addressing nature from an interdisciplinary perspective. It attempts to stress the importance of science, religion, gender, politics, and economics in defining the destiny of nature. It can be concluded that the present environmental disasters can be resolved successfully with an effective

intervention of all people irrespective of the scientific or environmental understanding they possess. The novels claim the need for admiration and reverence for nature to keep it in balance. They also interrogate the problem of gender inequality in society. Like nature requires an escape from the clutches of anthropocentrism, women need to define their position in society by liberating themselves from the stereotypical views of patriarchy. Literature and science must be more biocentric, giving sufficient place for the concern of nature in it. Human beings have to initiate satisfactory measures to restrict the unbearable fluctuations in climate by setting an end to those developments and innovations that intimidate the law of nature. The issues of climate change, animal extinction, and global warming should be eradicated with wholehearted collaboration from people belonging to various realms of knowledge and culture. Different innovations and developments in the field of science, such as genetically modified organisms, the production of pesticides, and the invention of medicines, should consider the balance of the environment at their disposal. All developmental activities should be sculpted in an eco-friendly manner.

The present study attempts to explore the different perspectives on ecocriticism, such as ecofeminism, ecospirituality, global destructions, and ecological crises and attempts to associate it with the theory of Gaia. Yet, many substantial areas of concern under ecocriticism remain unexplored. Further research can be conducted based on the untouched areas of this realm, such as Ecotoxicology, Biosemiotic Criticism, Migration and Human Ecology, Geocriticism, and Artificial Intelligence.