
**Studying the Post-Derangement Indian Cli-fi:
An argument for Sustainable Pedagogy in English Literature**

1.Arundhati R

Phd Scholar, IEHE, BU Bhopal

2.Dr. Shreeja T Sharma

Asst. Professor, Paper Presented at Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Sustainable
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Abstract:

Cli-fi or Climate Fiction is an evolution in post-*Derangement* novels (a genre developed after Amitav Ghosh's 2016 critique). This article proffers studying post-derangement Indian cli-fi narratives to integrate sustainable pedagogy within English Literature. Scientific data alone has fallen short in estimating the propensity of the ecological crisis and has neither catalysed into any behavioural shift nor significant policy change; Ghosh calls it “unthinkability” stemming from normalization of calamities, displacements etc. (8). Sustainable pedagogy thus would be meaningful in addressing environmental predicament as Cli-fi coalesces our quotidian realities with the global meltdown we are in. In this context, *Rising Heat* (2020) by Perumal Murugan postulates climate change as a present day phenomenon rather than an abstract dystopian imagination. Similarly, Sarah Joseph's *Budhini*(2019) and Sheela Tomy's *Valli* (2022) bares our Anthropocentric existence challenging traditional ideations of growth and socio-economic development. Further, employing the trans-corporeal and “ambient poetics” Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing* (2018) renders climate crisis as viscerally urgent demanding immediate ethical intervention from its readers (Morton 2002). Borrowing from Kakfaesque idea “A Book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us” the article posits that as English pedagogy critically engages with cli-fi and the plight of its characters becomes palpable; the pedagogical ethos would strike a compelling public discourse significant in propelling society into momentous action.

Keywords:-Cli-fi, Sustainable Pedagogy, Unthinkability, Anthropocene, Trans-Corporeality, Ambient Poetics.

Introduction

“There was never a time when forces of weather geology did not have a bearing on our lives but neither has there ever been a time when they have pressed themselves on us with such relentless directness as now” (Chakravorty 97).

There’s no denying that climate change is perhaps the most pressing global challenge of our times. Scholars argue that traditional environmental studies that still very much rely on data or dry regulatory approaches have encountered a roadblock. While NEP stresses upon holistic education- in tune with its environmental reality; our pedagogy is still ideating progress only in anthropocentric urbanisation and is unable to imagine sustainable development rooted in empathy and civic responsibility towards environmental conservation. Literature thus proffers an ethical imagination that is prompted through critical thinking and rooted in introspection and self-reflection. Pedagogy grounded in ecocriticism and ecological interconnectedness can nurture environmentally responsible citizens rather than passive observers. It is now imperative that mainstream curriculum engages students with pedagogical methods that promulgates the ecological reality to the students such that the propensity of the crisis is not lost on them. NEP 2020 advocates for the inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems into the pedagogy. Objective of the IKS policy is to reproach Indian philosophy or the Darshan Shastra, reclaim civilizational values i.e. Parampara for real world applicability i.e. Laukik Pariyojana. It is thus proposed that students engage with the Indian Cli-fi narratives that presents India’s indigenous cosmos, its monsoon cultures, coastal ecologies and thereby accentuate the intensity of climate change and also acquaint themselves with the agrarian crisis that India is going through. English Literature and texts within its curriculum must addresses immediate problems like climate crises, social inequities, and ethical dilemmas by cultivating empathy, critical reasoning, and imaginative foresight through narrative immersion, enabling students to envision and enact solutions beyond empirical data. Having a nuanced interaction with the texts students come to comprehend climate change; in all its intricacies and complexities as a localized culturally specific phenomenon rather than a distant global crisis. It is argued that scientific data and hard facts alone have fallen short in estimating and countering the propensity of the ecological crisis confronting us today; “Climate Change research is at an impasse... solutions are beyond technical fixes” (Nightingale, 343). Excessive reliance on STEM subjects too has neither catalysed into any behavioural shift nor significant policy change.

The gap in sustainable pedagogy within the curriculum of English Literature is better understood by delving into the compelling arguments made by Amitav Ghosh’s in his seminal 2016 non-fiction text *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* that has been an eye opening work for English academia for bringing into focus the

contemporary crisis of climate change as not merely a scientific or economic but fundamentally a crisis of imagination. He argues that fragmentation of cultures, and failure of narratives to represent our immediate predicaments as thematic concerns. Ghosh ruminating from 1978, his Delhi University days recounts the media reports after a sudden cyclone and expresses the inept corpus of vocabulary with the media to justly define the event. Further, he points out that absence of cyclones and such devastating ecological disturbances from the consequent literary fiction of the times. "Climate change is like death, none wants to talk about it" (Ghosh). He thus cements the epistemic helplessness, a silencing of sorts, a thematic void that is plaguing the literary narratives. While critiquing the dominance of ideological romanticism and anthropocentrism he argues that in Indian thematic fiction there's excessive reliance on individual agency and bourgeois domesticity and such settings make it structurally improbable to encompass climate change, weather aberrations or nonhuman agency within the narrative thematic fold. Hence, relegating ecological catastrophe to genres like science fiction rather than serious literature. "Indeed, this is perhaps the most important question ever to confront culture in the broadest sense-for... the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination." (Ghosh 23-25). The concept of Post-Derangement Literature emerges in response to Amitav Ghosh's influential critique in *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), where he identified the failure of contemporary Indian literature to adequately engage with the changing realities of Indian ethos, climate change being the significant part of it. Ghosh calls it the "unthinkability" stemming from normalization of calamities, displacements etc. (Ghosh 8). Thereby, he argues that the conventions of bourgeois realism, with its emphasis on individual psychology, probability, and linear temporality, render climate catastrophe narratively "unthinkable" (Ghosh 8). The "great derangement" hence, refers to the collective inability of our modern society, particularly through literature, history, and politics, to adequately perceive, represent, and respond to planetary ecological catastrophe (Ghosh). So, across the text Ghosh is advocating for a rethinking of literary form, reimagination of historical consciousness, and representation of political critique rooted in Indian ecological reality. He urges writers and intellectuals to develop new narrative modes capable of accommodating nonhuman agency and planetary scale, suggesting that myth, epic, and indigenous cosmologies have the propensity to proffer ways of reimagining human-nature relationships.

"The great irreplaceable potentiality of fiction is that it makes possible the imagining of possibilities" (Ghosh). Post-Derangement literature, therefore, denotes a critical literary shift in paradigm that consciously resists this narrative inadequacy and seeks to reconfigure itself in form, ethics and themes to address Indian ecological crisis. It may be defined as a body of contemporary writing that responds to the epistemic and narrative voids as identified by Ghosh and as a corrective measure delineates ecological crisis, vulnerable communities

and non-human species as a destabilising narrative force and substantially foregrounds human–nonhuman entanglements within the socio-environmental ethos of our times weaving into compelling storytelling. Ghosh contends, this reflects a deeper literary exclusion and epistemic silencing of the nonhuman world from modern narrative consciousness. The paper proffers to amalgamate select Post-Derangement Indian Cli-fi namely *Rising Heat* (2020) by Perumal Murugan Sarah Joseph's *Budhini* (2019) Sheela Tomy's *Valli* (2022) and Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing* (2018) within the academia as part of sustainable ecology. The central argument posits here is that Indian Climate Fiction would be significant in countering Eurocentric climate narratives such and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or Melville's *Moby Dick* which although are a quintessential part of English curriculum they are far detached from the ecological predicament of Indian climate and its concerns. Their characters are often studied as “depicted with anthropocentric mindset that thrives due to disregard for environmental justice” (AlGhufaili 417).

In this context, the questions that this research paper posits are:-

1. How do post derangement Indian climate fiction narratives represent climate crisis as an immediate lived reality rather than a distant dystopian imagination?
2. In what ways can the pedagogical incorporation of Climate Fiction foster environmental consciousness?
3. How do the select Indian climate fiction align as sustainable pedagogy with the broader policy envisaged in NEP 2020?

The objective thus of this paper is to analyse and their thematic concerns as an echo of our experiential contemporary climate crisis. It is also intended that critical engagement with these texts can help cultivate ecological awareness and meaningful public discourse within the academia. Additionally, it is argued that these narratives challenging the anthropocentric notions of progress have the propensity to introduce students with more ethical and sustainable models of growth and development.

Methodologically, I've aligned the aforementioned climate fictions and their thematic concern with NEP 2020 which portends to amalgamate interdisciplinary learning, ecological consciousness and socio-environmental sustainability so as to generate a holistic educational curriculum rooted in critical thinking and action-oriented pedagogy. NEP 2020 foregrounds a multidisciplinary and holistic education approach to dissolve the rigid boundaries between sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Cli-fi inherently operates at this intersection- it weaves together scientific knowledge, ecological ethics and political critique to imaginatively delineate climate change into literary narratives that contextualize climate science within lived human experiences, thereby fulfilling NEP's vision of integrated knowledge systems. Further, NEP 2020 prioritizes the development of critical thinking and creative problem-solving. The aforementioned Cli-fi thus can be rather useful tool to evoke

within students critical thinking essential for addressing complex ecological predicament that is today's exigent. Cli-fi interrogates dominant narratives of progress, anthropocentrism, thus by delineating nonhuman agency and environmental uncertainty cli-fi destabilizes conventional capitalist framework and encourages them to think beyond "anthropocentric" socio-economic ideations of modernity (Probyn-Rapsey 47). Another approach of NEP 2020 with which Indian Cli-fi resonates with is the learner-centric pedagogy that is rooted in experiential and socially engaged practice. Integrating climate fiction into the curriculum thus can be paired with fieldwork, community projects, digital storytelling, and climate mapping for a transformative, ethical, and socially responsive pedagogy. "The scale of climate change is such that individual choices will make little difference unless certain collective decisions are taken and acted upon" (Ghosh). Thus, integrating post-derangement Indian Cli-fi within the domain of English Literature is a significant pedagogical transformation that coalesces literary narratives with the present educational policy structure into creating socially aware and ethically responsible future citizens. Climate Fiction thus, within pedagogy are meaningful in addressing environmental predicament as Cli-fi coalesces our quotidian realities with the global meltdown we are in.

In this context the paper henceforth shall argue that studying *Rising Heat (2020)* by Perumal Murugan as a deeply eco-critical text postulates climate change as a present-day phenomenon rather than an abstract dystopian imagination. Similarly, an Ecofeminist reading of Sarah Joseph's *Budhini (2019)* and Sheela Tomy's *Valli (2022)* bares our anthropocentric existence challenging traditional ideations of growth and socio-economic development. Further, Eco aesthetic text i.e. Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing (2018)* renders climate crisis as viscerally urgent demanding immediate ethical intervention from its readers employing literary tools of "trans-corporeality" (Morton 52) and "ambient poetic" (Alaimo 435). Borrowing from the Kafkaesque idea that a book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us, the article argues that as English pedagogy must critically engage with climate fiction so as the plight of its characters becomes palpable; the pedagogical ethos thus would strike a compelling public discourse significant in propelling society into momentous action.

This emotional and ethical dimension of changing social reality also aligns with NEP's emphasis on values-based education and responsible citizenship as sustainable development and ecological sensitivity is one of the core tenets of the policy. It is thus proposed that amalgamation of post-derangement Indian Cli-fi can prove to be an affective literary engagement that cultivates not only environmental concerns but also empathy for the displaced communities and other non-human endangered species adversely affected by the ecological disturbances. Alluding to the proposed select Cli-fi narratives they become crucial

pedagogical instrument that not only introduce the students to the predicament but also functions as a fundamental method of critical intervention that reshapes how students perceive nature, social justice, and civic responsibility. By integrating ecology into literary education, pedagogy becomes responsive to the ecological realities of our time, equipping learners with the ethical imagination, critical awareness, and ecological sensitivity necessary for the future.

Against this backdrop, contemporary Indian climate fiction offers a compelling literary intervention by rendering the climate crisis as an immediate and lived reality rather than a distant possibility. Texts such as *Rising Heat*, *Budhini*, *Valli*, and *Latitudes of Longing* foreground the entanglement of human and non-human worlds while interrogating anthropocentric models of development and progress. By foregrounding ecological precarity through affective and experiential narratives, these works challenge the “unthinkability” of climate catastrophe described by Amitav Ghosh. In doing so, they open up significant possibilities for reimagining literary pedagogy as a site of ecological consciousness and ethical engagement. It is within this framework that the present study seeks to examine how Indian cli-fi narratives can contribute to the development of sustainable pedagogy within English literary studies. We will now examine the aforementioned select Cli-fi narratives to elucidate the modalities of their integration into curricular framework and to further delve into their thematic nuances so as to ascertain their pertinence of qualifying for sustainable pedagogy under NEP 2020.

Rising Heat and the Eco Critical:

“The laughter of the cotton flowers. The strength of the groundnuts. Everything had turned lifeless. Edifices sprung everywhere from a land where crops once grew” (Murugan 7). *Rising Heat* is a deeply environmentalist and personal novel to the author that was his 1991 writing debut published in Tamil as *Eru Veyyl* and was later translated and republished in English in 2020. What is fascinating and haunting about the novel is that the ecological concerns it raises, directly and metaphorically are still relevant as they were way back in the 1990s signifying epistemic silencing and socio-political procrastination by the authorities.

“Perumal was 11 years old when his father’s family land and his grandfather’s 11-acre fields were taken away for development by the government. Agriculture was the way of life for the rural folk in his region and his young eyes watched their livelihoods being washed away, leaving behind a state of confused despair” (Sahasrabudhe, *The First Post*)

Ecology in the text is inseparable from land, livelihood, memory, and social relations. The novel semi-autobiographical, presents environmental degradation rather than an abstract global crisis an everyday lived catastrophe of an 11-year-old village boy Selvan.

Land is not merely property but a self-sustaining ecology that feeds humans and non-humans alike, shapes bodies and redefines cultural identities. As concretization begins crops disappear, Livestock loses grazing ground, Human beings are cut off from their ecological base. “The heat pressed down on everything” (Murugan 6). The title *Rising Heat* operates on multiple ecological levels i.e. the literal heat where the sun turns oppressive parching the land and harsh heat dominates the daily quotidian of life; “none could argue with the sun” (Murugan 42). Further, the metaphorical heat of Rising anger, frustration, social tension amidst ecological decay. In the latter, environmental imbalance mirrors social breakdown as the land dries up, human relationships too decay. Heat then becomes a symbol of unabashed capitalist greed, ecological exploitation. As Selvan asserts, “There’s no promise in tomorrow” (Murugan 78). Urban modernity is shown as ecologically parasitic, thriving on the destruction of rural ecosystems. Development benefits outsiders and the state. As fertile agrarian land is lost the natives and the rustics become vulnerable delineating the social divide that environmental destruction disproportionately harms the rural poor and for them “Living itself has become an act of endurance” (Murugan 121). As the land degrades so do the female bodies. Murugan subtly but surely iterates that environmental collapse disproportionately affects women and is linked with patriarchal exploitation as the Loss of agrarian livelihood pushes women into exploitative labor and sexual vulnerability. The “deterioration of the rural idyllic” within the novel posits an argument that Cli-fi as a pedagogical tool can become a tool of understanding resistance and renewal against anthropocentric capitalism and environmental violence.

Valli and Buddhini and the Eco-Feminism:

“Ecofeminism is a good term for distinguishing a feminism that is ecological from the kind of feminism that have become extremely technocratic. I would even call them very patriarchal” (Barsamian 192). Eco-feminism emerges from the recognition that the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women are structurally interconnected within patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial systems. As a theoretical pedagogical framework, eco-feminism exposes how domination, control, and extraction operate across both ecological and gendered domains. Incorporating eco-feminism into pedagogy is therefore essential for cultivating critical, inclusive, and socially responsive education that is a resistance against anthropocentric capitalism that defines our systems of oppression. Nature is feminized and treated as passive, exploitable, and nurturing Women’s bodies and labour are similarly controlled and undervalued in a patriarchal capitalistic socio-economic structure. Sheela Tomy’s *Valli* and Sarah Joseph’s *Buddhini* are both potent ecofeminist narratives that accentuate the reality of exploitation of women and nature as is inevitable within patriarchal, caste-based and capitalist socio-economic structures. They’re both Eco-Feminist critique of Indian social ethos. Vandana Shiva, renowned Indian Ecofeminist feels mainstream feminism as a discourse is not enough to grapple with the changing dynamics of

predicaments that threaten a woman's body and identity owing to the rampant ecological distress, *Valli* situates ecological concerns within agrarian labor and land-based economies, while *Buddhini* posits ecology through forested margins and extreme bodily vulnerability.

In *Valli*, land is an agricultural ecosystem sustained by women's labor. "Valli was like the land she tilled" (Tomy 7). Valli's body is aligned with the rhythms of cultivation; planting, harvesting and sustaining crops. The exploitation of land through commercial farming parallels the exploitation of women's unpaid and undervalued labor as "her work never ended" (Tomy 18). In contrast, "Buddhini...not a person she was a nation herself" (Joseph 12) presents nature as a space of ethnic blending where communal and cultural burdens are upon women to bear. Buddhini's relationship with nature is primal and precarious, emphasizing endurance rather than productivity.

While for *Valli*, ecological decline increases women's labor burden and emotional exhaustion. "The land demanded more each day" (Tomy 145); *Buddhini's* ecological instability exposes women to extreme bodily violence and social abandonment. *Valli* critiques ecological disruption through capitalism within agriculture (one that prioritizes profit over sustainability). Whereas, *Buddhini* critiques development through displacement and female bodily vulnerability. While *Valli* critiques ecological degradation through explicit mentions of chemical farming, land alienation, and debt "The fields saw everything" (Tomy 58) *Buddhini* through environmental appropriation delineates seized forests as symbol that lives of the marginalized are indispensable.

As NEP calls for adopting pedagogies rooted in Indian Knowledge Systems, we must aim to revive the organic paradigms of self-sustaining agrarian communes in order to bring a conscious awareness against capitalist farming models that are exploitative in nature. The need of the hour thus is cultivating within pedagogy an idea of inclusive, equal and socially responsive female identity that posits resistance against anthropocentric capitalism which lamentably still defines our socio-economic systems. Eco-feminist texts such as *Buddhini and Valli* reveal the shared logic of domination that underpins environmental destruction and gender inequality, enabling students to recognize oppression as systemic rather than isolated incidents. Amalgamating both texts for higher education exposes the inconsistencies of capitalist patriarchal agrarian models that commodify female bodies as exploitative natural resources. Parallely, these texts also attempt to put forth an advocacy for alternative ecological ethics that are rooted in reclaiming self-sustaining farming models that thrive on mutual care, endurance, and marginal resistance.

Latitudes of Longing and the Ambient Poetics:

“Ambience is a sion that turns out to be none other than the nowness that is a poetic enactment of a state of nondual awareness that col-far more radically “here” than any other concept of “here” (Morton 52). Shubhangi Swarup’s debut fiction project is a Eco Aesthetic novel that qualifies for Ambient Poetics as defined by Professor Timothy Morton. It’s a literature that attempts to collapses rigid the boundary between human and nonhuman- “upon which rests the nation, race, gender” (Morton 52). Swarup has thus used landscape as a character where Andaman Islands, Himalayan ranges and Indian faultlines are situated as living agents rather than mere topographical backdrop for the action. The novel “diffuses, atmospheric description; nonhuman perspectives; cyclical time” to push readers from environmental appreciation to ethical responsibility against the Anthropocene (Morton 52)

The four sections of the novel – Islands, Faultline, Valley, Snow Desert each act as distinct ecological-temporal zones that are weaved into alignment by subduction zones and continental drift. Ecological changes within these geological structures then parallels human emotions of grief, longing, desire that are further mapped through natural ecological phenomenon such as earthquakes, tides, glaciers, and monsoons. The novel is deeply ecological and yet aesthetic and lyrical in its style and structure; it’s an exploration of how human emotions are expressed and explored in connection with the natural worlds is a distinct feature of the novel and has the propensity to have a lasting impact on the young students. This syncing of human emotions with ecological disturbances is an argument for a immersive pedagogy where students can witness themselves as “transcorporeal” identities which reshapes and redefines their notion of self (Alaimo 435). The term coined by Stacy Alaimo, a veteran cultural studies and posthuman American scholar who in context of ecological feminism is of the opinion that-

“Trans-corporeality means that all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them. While trans- corporeality as an ontology does not exclude any living creature, it does begin with the human, in order--paradoxically perhaps--to disrupt Western human exceptionalism” (Alaimo 435).

Thus, the volcanic Andaman Islands, the fragile Himalayan ecosystem, and the riverine plains of North India as presented in the novel are ecological, historical, cultural and a emotional force all at once. The novel in its trans-corporeality thus critiques anthropocentrism by positing landscape itself as a narrative force. Swarup’s narrative forms decentres the human subject; as characters move across landscapes, landscapes themselves shift, erode, and transform. “Only a fool would consider the shores of continents, sandbanks,

and parched patches the ends to the unbroken surface of water... Islands are mindless chatter in a meditative ocean” (Swarup 241).

Latitudes of Longing hence has the propensity to proffer ethics of co-existence with nature that’s grounded in humility, attentiveness. Students thus learn to listen to landscapes rather than dominate them. This is an ethical shift in pedagogy that challenges and reforms modern development narratives and advocates for a relational understanding of existence where humility replaces control. “If you reflect upon it, you will see connections and relationships illuminating the most disconnected things. Gravity defines time, space and mortality. How can it not influence our inner state?” (Swarup 268).

Conclusion

“Recognition is famously a passage from ignorance to knowledge” (Ghosh). Climate change, displacement, biodiversity loss, and resource conflicts are no longer distant future concerns. Post-derangement Cli-fi narratives enable students to understand changing ecology as a lived social reality of our times encompassing the themes of environmental injustice, ecology moves beyond abstract concept into active environmentalism. Similarly, including eco-feminism in pedagogy is a necessary response to the intertwined crises of ecological degradation and gender injustice. Ecofeminism highlights this gendered ecological vulnerability, challenging narratives that frame environmental crises as neutral or universal. Vandana Shiva in an interview to *The Hindu* opines “We are either going to have a future where women lead the way to make peace with the Earth or we are not going to have a human future at all” (Binuraj). Moving beyond anthropocentric knowledge systems rooted in patriarchy, centring the marginalised voices, integrating ecology with feminist praxis. By challenging dominant paradigms of power, knowledge, and progress, eco-feminist pedagogy equips learners with the critical tools, ethical sensitivity and relational imagination required to navigate and transform the world. Whereas novel like *Rising Heat* foreground indigenous and regional ecological systems around Selvan and the consequent rupture thereof engagement with Valli or Buddhini’s story compels the students to critique and challenge Western idea of progress and development. Further, it validates marginalized epistemologies as these Climate Fictions demonstrate that ecological disturbances disproportionately affects the marginalized communities including poor women.

In conclusion, the pedagogical vision articulated in National Education Policy 2020- with its emphasis on flexible, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning enables a framework for the incorporation of cli-fi narratives within English literary studies. Ecocritical texts such as *Rising Heat* acquaint students with the immediacy of contemporary climate catastrophes, while the ecofeminist narratives of *Valli* and *Budhini* move beyond theoretical discourse to connect climate change debates with lived praxis. Through these

narratives, students are encouraged to recognise the ethical and socio-ecological implications of the environmental crisis that awaits them beyond the confines of the classroom. At the same time, novels like *Latitudes of Longing*, through their articulation of trans-corporeality and ambient poetics, collapse the boundaries between human and non-human worlds, thereby bridging the gap between academic inquiry and lived ecological experience. Such texts enable students to critically engage with the ethical dilemmas of the Anthropocene while immersing them within narratives that foreground interdependence and ecological coexistence. In this sense, cli-fi functions not merely as a literary genre but as a pedagogical tool where sustainable imaginaries can be cultivated and rehearsed. Consistent engagement with these narratives shall encourages students not only to comprehend the urgency of climate action but also to re-examine and re-imagine the ethical frameworks necessary for responding to the pertinent planetary crisis of our time.

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