

Chapter - II

Climate Justice in the Anthropocene: A Theoretical Perspective

The term 'Anthropocene' was coined by Paul Crutzen in the early 2000s to describe the end of the Age of the Holocene and the beginning of the age of "human-caused planetary violence" (Lunstrum and Bose 645). The term is derived from "Anthropos (human) plus scene (recent)" (Chakrabarty 157) to describe the new epoch of change caused due to human actions which had pushed the planet "out of the relative Holocene stability of the last 11,000 years and into an epoch of rapid change defined by greater biophysical variability and extremes" (157). It marks "Earth's alleged graduation from the Holocene to the Anthropocene" and assigns responsibility to humankind as "a powerful force in Earth's evolution." (157)

The Age of the Anthropocene and representations of climate change catapults humankind "out of habitual ways of understanding the world" (Gillespie 11). The representations of climate change like climate fiction resist the act of defending the established and habitual worldviews as they are devoid of ecocentrism. The publication of climate fiction that "move the notion of environment from abstraction to a tangible concern" (Maughan 73) is considered as an act of resistance towards climate inaction as it assigns "culpability for the offense of creating the global environmental crisis" and also seeks "in the crisis of global warming an ethical horizon for the future of humanity as a whole." (Chakrabarty 159)

The plots of climate fictions have portrayed the complexities of the "Shrinking habitability of the planet, a rise in the number of climate refugees and "illegal immigrants", water scarcity, frequent extreme weather events, prospects of geoengineering" (Chakrabarty 12) and other possibilities of a climatically altered future. Such an evolution in terms of the environment as well as literary representations that were

produced required the evolution of the field of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism like Ursula K. Heise has put forth owes a “triple allegiance’ to ‘the scientific study of nature, the scholarly analysis of cultural representations, and the political struggle for more sustainable ways of inhabiting the natural world.’”(Heise 506) Despite the wide range of focal points addressed and the dynamics investigated related to the environment and its inhabitants, the Anthropocene requires a differential framework that sheds light on the politics of climate change, the agency of the nonhuman and also depicts the urgency to “adopt a virtue-ethical framework to the problem of climate change” (Williston 12).

In the Age of the Anthropocene, inhabitants “live on the cusp of the global and what may be called “the planetary” (Chakrabarty 3). The blurring of such boundaries between the human and the more than human components requires the figure of the human “to think about how various forms of life, our own and others’, may be caught up in historical processes that bring together the globe and the planet both as projected entities and as theoretical categories and thus mix the limited timescale over which modern humans and humanist historians contemplate history with the inhumanly vast timescales of deep history.” (4) The Anthropogenic representations are intertwined in various timescales, shifting dynamics of coexistence, and the magnitude of the climate crises which bring into concern the failure of democracy and the need for the formulation of green political theory as the “uneasy relationship between ecological concerns and democracy is a central issue in green political theory” (Goodin 53).

Environmental Criticism in the face of climate change enunciates the twofold ability “to see both texts as registering the political and psychological impact of environmental crises, and also to see such writing as active in recoding and reiterating the ideological consequences of such impacts back into contemporary material conditions.” (Maughan 19) Such an interpolation articulates the need to curate an “ecological turn”

(Zapf 847) as well as an “ethical turn” (847) in the discourse of climate change. The need for an ethical turn arises from the unfair distribution of the climate crisis as put forth by Guha in *Varieties of Environmentalism*, wherein the gulf between the full stomach environmentalism and the environmentalism of the poor is discussed as the proprietor of the “ecological distribution conflicts” (22). Climate change despite being a global issue, it’s “impacts will be most devastating to the vast majority of the people in the South, as well as the “South” within the North” (Schlosberg 84). Due to unfair distribution of the crisis, the climate framework must ensure that views from the margins of both the human and natural world are represented.

The concept of environmental justice was formulated in the intersection of environmental issues and ethics; it puts forth the need for equitable distribution of both “environmental goods and bads” (Schlosberg 523) between people of all races, genders and ethnicities. The threshold of the Anthropocene characterised by anthropocentrism, which stands in contrast to ecocentrism or biocentrism by prioritising humans as the central and predominant factor compared to all other living organisms and utilitarianism, which posits the value of the natural world and the material world based on its usefulness to the human society. The multifold concerns and issues of climate change ranging from slow and sudden onset events, species extinction, toxification of migration trajectories, Global South and Global North disparity due to inequity both in terms of climate events as well as economic and political factors, growing number of multispecies climate refugees, the unethical restructuring of the political institutions to cope with climate change, the unjust technological fixes to climate issues and so on were issues of magnitude that required a term of its own to warrant collective action. This led to the formulation of the need for climate justice, which emerged from the interface of environmental justice and climate change discourse. It gained traction by major theorists like Naomi Klein, Dipesh

Chakrabarty, Rob Nixon, Antonia Mehnert and an increasing number of theorists addressing the need for social and political intervention to establish climate justice.

The theoretical discourse of climate justice is yet to situate itself to the intricate dynamics of the climate crises and as Buell puts forth the field of ecocriticism also lacks “a strong environmental justice component” which “should be felt as a deep crisis.” (Buell 113) Climate change is identified to manufacture risk societies as it “is likely to aggravate environmental injustices experienced by minority communities or by marginalized individuals within nation-state boundaries, and thus intensifies rather than simply adding to structural inequalities.” (Mehnert 186)

The review of climate justice definitions revolve around accomplishing the three dimensions of justice: “distribution, recognition, and participation” (Mehnert 190). Climate justice aims to fulfil its mission “through acts of pedagogical or activist outreach” that “instill and reinforce public concern about the fate of the earth, about humankind’s responsibility to act on that awareness, about the shame of environmental injustice, and about the importance of vision and imagination in changing minds, lives, and policy as well as composing words, poems, and books.” (Buell 133) The climate justice movements seek to address the first world and third world disparity, postcolonial racism, the conflicts between the Global North and the Global South, counter “exclusionist tendencies” (Mehnert 185), and emphasise “international historical responsibilities.” (185)

Such an unfair distribution of scarcity, conflicts and crises have led to the development of avenues of environmental justice and ecological justice. The former “addresses environmental risks within human communities” (Schlosberg 3) whereas the latter “focusses on the relationship between those human communities and the rest of the natural world” (3). In the Anthropocene, the disasters of climate change transcend the specific concerns and encompass justice in all spheres of human existence and

coexistence. Such an epoch of changes call for a proposition of justice that addresses the concerns of the Anthropocene: climate justice. The concept of climate justice lies in the meeting point of the two divergent areas of environmental justice and ecological justice. The purpose of climate justice is trifold: ecological, environmental as well as political. The crux of the debate of climate justice as a differential framework curated for the age of the Anthropocene lies in developing “a broad and inclusive discourse” that addresses the “Issues of inequality” through “recognition”, “participation” and the “functioning of individuals and communities—human and nonhuman”(8).

The thesis attempts to address the range of approaches proposed by Glasgow Caledonian University’s Centre for Climate Justice: “to dissolve and alleviate the unequal burdens”, “to address the disproportionate burden of the climate crisis on the poor and marginalised”, to recognise “that the most vulnerable are the most deserving”, to alleviate the triple inequality of “responsibility, vulnerability and mitigation”, to dismantle “the fossil fuel corporate power structure”, commit to a “fair distribution of the world’s wealth”, “to encapsulate the equity aspects of climate change”, “to redress global warming by reducing disparities in development and power structures that drive climate change”, to safeguard “the rights of the most vulnerable” (Jafry 3) and to seek justice in all aspects affected by climate change. The core chapters of the thesis attempt to address discussions around the discourse of multispecies inclusive climate justice in the selected primary sources.

The first core chapter titled “Environmental Justice Activism: Disparity in Displacement and Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change in Amitav Ghosh’s *Gun Island*” sheds light on the resistance towards postcolonial racism and climate apartheid and focusses on climate justice that is inclusive of mobility, human rights for climate refugees, security and sustenance of the vulnerable and marginalised people of the Global

South. The chapter recognises the nature of the climate crisis “quite unaware of national and cultural boundaries” (Buell 81-82). National borders by no means regularly correspond with “natural” borders or “physiographic units.” (81-82) Borders are viewed as both anthropocentric in terms of border security and vigilance as well as planetary in terms of the disasters. The planet is perceived throughout the chapter from the viewpoint of Ghosh: “Gaia” (Ghosh 84), which emphasises on the concept of “biopossibility” (Baldwin and Bettini 223) and the agency of the more than human.

Dipesh Chakrabarty’s *The Climate of history in a Planetary Age* is employed to critically analyse the plot of *Gun Island* as a tale of the Global South that challenges established Eurocentric notions of climate change. The “slow violence” of the climate crises and the emerging Environmentalism of the Global South acquires the focal point of the chapter and has been analysed using Nixon’s concept of “Environmentalism of the Poor” (Nixon 65) as marginalised people of the Global South are referred to by Guha as ‘Ecosystem People’, who are treated as ‘disposable people’ and are referred to as the ‘sacrifice population’ of the Capitalocene. The role of postcolonial racism and climate apartheid in aggravating existing structural inequalities of the climate hotspots of the third world countries are brought out as a call for climate justice. The impact of colonial continuities in determining the futures of the displaced climate refugees of the Global South and the lack of human rights and security of the displaced are viewed as indicators of Global North and Global South conflicts.

The categorical hybridity of the nonhuman is deconstructed through an emphasis of the “phonological asynchrony” (Morton 67-68) of the lives and responses of the more than human which is professed as a measure to reiterate the agency of the more than human. The politics of the Anthropocene dealt in this chapter is characteristic of the politics of “eco-emancipation” (Cole 14) as it seeks to address the crises of the more than

human in ecocentric and ethical grounds. The characters resist climate injustices like postcolonial racism, climate apartheid, climate conflicts between the first world and the third world countries and the unfair victimisation of the more than human inhabitants.

The second core chapter titled “Community Based Activism: Conservation and Sustenance in Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour*” features the species of monarch butterflies and the more than human environment as species with agency and mobility seeking multispecies inclusive climate justice. The migration trajectory of the monarch butterflies is traced to recognise the anthropogenic toxification that is slow, place based and anthropocentric. The climate altered migration trajectory of the monarch butterflies is elucidated from the perspective of “wild ethics” and the climate crisis is interpreted as a call “to extend ideas of politics and justice to the nonhuman, including both the living and the nonliving.” (Chakrabarty 13) The featuring of the monarch butterflies as nonhuman climate refugees brings out the crises of the nonhuman inhabitants of the “dead zones” (Baldwin and Bettini 1) of the planet.

The chapter contests the concept of anthroporaciality by proposing biopossibility to think about human relationships to the more than human both “abstract and material” thereby deconstructing the “speciesist double standard” (Sebo) and the “hopelessly humanocentric” (Chakrabarty 223) political and economic institutions. The climate refugees of the more than human world undergoing displacement with movement and displacement without movement reshape the place based and species based association of human relationships thereby calling out for the unified concept of “biotic community” (Buell 8) and “ecocosmopolitanism” (8) or an “environmentally oriented cosmopolitanism” (Jalan 2). The theoretical grounds of deep ecology and kinship have been applied to deconstruct the anthropogenic values that are anthropocentric.

The factors that propel climate and community based activism like climate grief, solastalgia, and intergenerational justice are explored. The activism put forth by the characters to promote the survival and sustenance of the butterflies are analysed from the viewpoints of “motherhood environmentalism” (Buell 75), and “symbiosis” (Streeby 71). The impact of climate activism exhibited through protests, digital campaigns, student campaigns, climate activism and resistance are scrutinised as ways to effectively redefine “environmental victimisation” and “species justice” (White 107).

The third core chapter titled “Countering Ecofascism: Subversion and Survival in John Lanchester’s *The Wall*” analyses the dystopian plot as a “secondhand nonexperience” (Mehnert 4) of a risk society that is a plausible reality in a climatically altered world. This chapter raises questions on the political responses that would lead countries to hide behind tall seawalls as an exhibition of “reflexive modernization” (Buell 5). The temporal and spatial denial symbolised through the construction of the wall and the border security that marginalises climate refugees from the Global South and the third world countries are critiqued as outcomes of necropolitics in the light of climate change.

The construction of the wall, the climate events and disasters and the rise in climate refugees’ border crossing are examined from the theoretical viewpoint of coastal studies to bring out the spatial dynamics in evolving a modern form of colonialism and oppression. Politics in anthropogenic representations especially in a climatically altered future has recorded the failure of democracy resulting in the rise of an ecofascist, necropolitical, and colonial governance. The ethical grounds under which the ecofascist Empire operates in the novel is perceived as a contested zone, in which risks are manufactured, materialised and the climate emergency is regulated to victimise the weaker section of the population.

The fascist agenda in the novel that operates on “lifeboat ethics” (Hardin 37) excludes and overwrites the narratives of climate refugees resorting to politics of xenophobia, racism, and colonialism. The chapter deconstructs the Eurocentric and capitalistic climate narrative and dominion through characters subverting the ecofascist agenda. Through acts of resistance, the characters seek to counter “the racial-class dynamic” (Reed 233), establish intergenerational and equitable climate justice inclusive of free mobility and human rights for all climate refugees.

The fourth core chapter titled “Resisting Technocapitalism: Security and Rights of Migrants in Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Water Knife*” analyses the micropolitics of survival in a technocapitalist regime in the age of the Capitalocene. The chapter explores the need to establish climate justice through the theoretical grounds of corporatism, capitalism and neoliberalism. The shifting margins of the anthropogenic necropolitics of survival that is regulated by “artificial structures” (Purdy) of technocapitalism and power is evaluated.

The water and resource shortage in the United States portrayed in the novel is scrutinised from the theoretical viewpoints of internal climate racism that lead to the rise in climate refugees thereby creating a Darwinian struggle for survival. The plot of water scarcity is approached from the theoretical perspective of hydrofiction, exploring the “hydrosocial relations” and “hydraulic engineering schemes” (Boast). The riverscape in the novel is perceived as a medium in which power is inscribed and reproduced.

Climate justice in this chapter is approached through the lens of mobility, displacement for survival and an equitable share of resources. The climate refugees are perceived as “displacees of a globalised network of intersecting mobility regimes” (Baldwin et al. 291) and the violence, border security, and persecution are viewed as attempts to sustain the political power structures. The activism put forth by the characters

through journalism, online protests, research on water rights and privatisation, are interpreted as a call to implement mitigation, adaptation and protection related laws. In such acts of activism put forth by the characters in the novel lie the deconstruction of the hegemony of corporatism and “the possibility of retracking technocapitalism toward an emancipative trajectory” (Villa 5).

The thesis considers the “transformative or counter-hegemonic mode of politics, the actions, public perceptions, and representations of activism and social movements” in the novels as a reiteration of “political agency and possibility” (Maughan 8) in a climatically altered future. The call for climate justice amidst events of climate emergency is defined as a need to resist environmental victimisation not only “in terms of injury to humans” (White 107) but also to establish a multispecies inclusive network of climate security. The theoretical discourses of the chapters critically approach the age of the “hyperobjects” (Morton 1), counter the inefficiencies of the established political structures and express resistance towards the hegemony of power structures that are characterised by exclusionist tendencies. The theoretical framework aids in analysing the spectrum of causes and impacts of climate injustice of the human and the more than human and seeks to address the outcome of collective action undertaken to resist unjust measures. It decenters the human as the central standpoint of climate fictions by focussing on the equitable representation and analysis of climate refugees and victims. The theoretical perspective strengthens the research argument by augmenting the concerns of multispecies climate refugees and supports the representation of select climate fiction on themes of inclusivity and multispecies justice.