

Enlightning Nature as a Gift Through the Novel “*The Gift In Green*” Novel by Sarah Joseph

Ms. Sree Resmi. C¹, Ms. Joys Prathiba. R²

^{1,2}Assistant Professor, Department Of English, Sri Krishna Arts And Science College, Coimbatore

Abstract:

The novel gift in green which was named as Aathi in Malayalam Sarah Joseph portrayed this pleasure of nature in her novel “The Gift in Green”. The environmental crisis haunts the mankind like the nightmare. It is not only a regional problem but also a global problem. The supporting system of the planet earth, that are land, water, air seemed to be polluted and damaged nowadays because of the illegal activities of human beings. The novel gift in green which was named as Aathi in Malayalam portrays the value of nature through her novel “The Gift in Green”. The novel of is rich with ecocritical references and among the recent fictions it can be most aptly given an ecocritical reading.

Keywords: Environment- Stop deforestation- Serene beauty -Save nature

Literature can be considered as a body of works in written form. Like singing, dancing, drawing etc. Indian writing in English can be considered as one form that is important in literature. Fiction of all terms is most vitally concerned with social conditions and values and at this time, Indian society galvanized into new social and political awareness was bonded to seek creative expressions for its new consciousness and the novel has in all the ages been handy instrument for this purpose.

The environmental crisis haunts the mankind like the nightmare. It is not only a regional problem but also a global problem. The supporting system of the planet earth, that are land, water, air seemed to be polluted and damaged nowadays because of the illegal activities of human beings. Human beings are contaminating the food chain using the pesticides. Nowadays the water ways are dumped with the wastage and villages are seen rendered with the poisonous gases in the world nowadays. The species of different categories are nowadays decreasing. Glotefely in his work writes that,

“You might never know that there was an earth at all. Nowadays the food is replaced by tablests, seedless fruits are reducing the growth of new trees.”

According to Hindu mythology, the earth is considered as goddess. There is a prayer in Sanskrit which all the Hindus are supposed to every morning. The prayer is

Samudhar vasane Devi, parvatasun mandle, Vishnu patni namastubhyam, Padas sparsyam, ka shmasmev: This earth is called as goddess and she resides amidst oceans and she has mountains as her breast. She is called as wife of God Mahavishnu and the person who chants the prayer begs pardon from the goddess earth for touching her with the feet. But now, the goddess earth is facing the ecological crisis.

Sarah Joseph is one of the prominent novelists in the realm of literature. Her works are famous for their style and language. Sarah Joseph was born in the year 1946 to a conservative Christian family in Kuriachira at Thrissur city to Louis and Kochumariam. She was married at the age of fifteen when she was pursuing her tenth standard.

She also won Kerala Sahitya Akademi award, Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award and Vayalar Award for her novel *Alahuyude Penmakkal*. In the year 2011 she won Muttathu Varkey Award for the work *Paapathara*. She also won Sahitya Akademi award in 2015 but she returned it due to her political perception. Most of her Famous works that are written in Malayalam are also translated to English includes, *Paapathara*, *Alahuyude Penmakkal*, *Othappu*, *Aathi*, *Oorukaaval*, *Mattathi*, *Aalohari Aanantham*. Novelist Sarah Joseph have depicted her novel in such a manner that, if nature is affected the whole world will be destroyed. The novel gift in green which was named as *Aathi* in Malayalam Sarah Joseph portrayed this pleasure of nature in her novel "The Gift in Green".

The People in the village of *Aathi* considered *Thampuram* who at once came in the river by floating as their shrine. They made a small temple for *Thampuram* at the place he died. Other than the shrine of *Thampuram* they considered the nature and water as their deity. Their main occupation was farming and fishing. For the first six months they would do fishing and the other six months they farmed. The village was their universe. While men in the village went for fishing all the women after their house hold works went to the shrine.

Each year a story teller would come to the village *Aathi* and will tell the stories of different places. *Dinakaran* and *Kumaran* can be considered negative character in the novel to some extent. *Kumaran* left the village and moved to before years for the purpose of earning money. The *Kumaran* who shunned the old ways to make money in the city, and returned to turn his poor, pristine motherland into a jungle of concrete and profits. He started with *Thampuram*, the god who guarded the backwaters and its simple life. *Thampuram's* thatched shrine was turned into an edifice of gold. He also tried to replace the Shrine of *Thampuram* with other deities saying that the shrine of *Thampuram* is the reason for all sorts of problem in the village *Aathi*. At once people began to oppose him but later with the help of some other members in the village he replaced the shrine of *Thampuram* to other deity.

On the other side a person from *Chakkam kadam* village named as *Chandramohan* marries a girl named as *Shailaja* from the village of *Aathi* and took him to his village. *Shailaja* was not able to survive there in the village as because the water in the village seems to be polluted due to the usage of chemicals from the hospital and factory. The water seemed to be black in colour with stinking smell and she left back to *Aathi* with the permission of her husband.

Markose was a type of person who would go for boating each night to enjoy the beauty of nature. He says that he can feel the fresh air and can hear the music of nature each day. At once, on his way to home he saw a girl standing in front of impure water and feeling sad for its impurity but he advised her with the story of Buddha saying that water and fire have the capacity to make themselves clean. She understood the reality and left that place with pleasure. *Dinakaran* and *Kumaran* tried to change the people of the village and he builds a new deity replacing the shrine of *Thampuram*. He also builds new factories in the name of development in the village. The people of the village lost their convenance with water and nature. The water in the village became contaminated with the chemicals from the factory. Fishes and prawns which was at once the source of life got destroyed due to the chemicals. At the end of the novel the innocent people of the *Aathi* lost their village.

Water symbolically means the life, motion, renewal, blessing, intuition, reflection, and also subconscious, fertilization, purification, transformation etc. It has a universal undertone of purity and fertility. This Chinese poet describes that water existed before the birth of all living beings. It was not dependent on anything. For some people its mother while for others it's the whole world. *Tao* is a Chinese concept signifying "way" or "path". It is a metaphysical concept originating with *Lao Tzu* and it signifies primor-

dial essence or fundamental nature of the universe and is a holistic concept of nature.

Taoists believe that man is a microcosm of the universe and he should live in harmony with the natural universe. This all-encompassing broadminded spiritual vision is practiced by the natives of Aathi in the novel who can't even imagine separating themselves from their environ which is imbued with divinity. The classical element of water is one of the five elements in traditional Chinese philosophy along with earth, fire, wood and metal. It is the quintessential symbol of Tao in philosophy, art and science.

According to Lao Tzu the most important visible facet of water is its softness and its reflection and through it Mother Nature is imparting a noble lesson that all we see around is a mirrored reflection asking us to be soft and yielding and this is exactly the inherent subliminal quality of the people of Aathi. They live in Tao by following the values of non-contention, non-action, simplicity, humility and duality.

For the people of the village in Aathi water and Thampuraan was the universe. The water in the village seemed to be crystal clear. The people followed their own tradition and own way of living. Aathi is an idyllic village that nourishes and protects all life forms. When the novel begins the story teller enters to the village with new stories. The storytellers would always come to the village of Aathi mysteriously. Before the story telling ceremony introducer would step into the water and. The introducer would step into the water and would proclaim, "Jalam Saakshi!", and the people would echo in unison, "Jalam Saakshi!" which means, 'water is the witness' (Joseph 15).

Usually people take promises keeping God as the witness; here the ceremonial act of storytelling evenings which has much connection with the people's connectedness to the water-life of the village begins pronouncing water as the witness. He began to say the story of Ishamel and his mother Hagar. Ishamel was at once banished by her husband to a desert where there was not even a drop of water. Ishamel began to cry for milk but she was not able to give him anything he desired.

Day passed on she hid her baby from the sun spitting the fire. Suddenly after sometime she heard some sound that calling her. She took him and went behind the voice. Suddenly she saw a bird drinking the water dipping again and again. She saw a scoop of water and dipped her son in it. She sat near the lake and thanked the bird gratefully. Hagar sat there and helped the nomads whoever came there in search of water. Hagar at that particular time realized the real value of water. She with the help of nomads began to cultivate vegetables near the lake. She made the desert a beautiful place filled with joy. Harvest festivals hatched the place and people gathered there.

This story in the novel clearly predicts the importance of water. If the facility of water is in the universe it will become a heaven. All sorts of joy will be there if water is available. Water is the main source of livelihood and each drop of water is precious. Sarah Joseph presents the water-life in Aathi as an example for this integral and primordial vision

The novelist shows the pristine purity of water through her novel *Gift in green*. Markose at once during his wandering at early morning met a girl near the lotus pond. She stared at the water and stood still with sorrow. Once Markose approached the girl and asked the reason for her sadness. She pointed out the water in the pond and said that the water became unclear because people walk on it. Markose with a pleasant smile on his face said her story of Buddha. The unnamed water-girl, Noor Muhammad's 'umbilical-cord' with Aathi, is she have a wish to cleanse the polluted water and does it in such an uncomplaining and wholehearted manner that we are made to feel the soul-relationship she shares with the water which resembles a mother daughter bond.

At once Buddha was travelling with his servant on the forest. He at once was in need of water and instructed the servant to get him some water from the nearby pool. As soon as the servant reached near

the pool he saw the water impure. He returned to his Guru with that impure water in his hands. When Buddha saw this he instructed the servant to return to the pond and bring him the pure water. When the servant came back to the pond he saw the impure water turned as crystal clear water. Markose through this story explained the girl that the water and fire have the quality to make it clear. The girl returned to her home back with the hope that the water in the pond will be seen clear at once. She says that in the beginning each person will be innocent as the crystal clear water. But when the child grew up he will be injected with anger, hurt, vengeance, jealous, greed and other qualities. Again when he become old all of his qualities will be changed and will be innocent and pure by heart as in the childhood.

The novel alludes the pollution in the Chakkamkandam lake in the district of Guruvayoor and the disadvantages of the Hydrel project in Athirapally at Kerala. A person name as Chandramohan was a government employer from Chakkamkandam married a girl named as Shailaja from the village Aathi. Eventhough she was a girl who have just passed tenth standard he married Shailaja with pleasure. She expected that the village of Chakkamkandam will be beautiful as Aathi and will have crystal clear water. But, the very next day after the marriage she came to know the unnerving secret about Chakkamkandam.

A middle aged women came towards her paying sympathy on her. She explained her that she cannot drink even a single drop of water from Chakkamkandam. She cannot wash the clothes in the lake near their home. She came out of the home and watched the river, pond, well and backwaters near to their home keenly. The water spread in front of their home were all covered with layer upon layer of shit. Even the wind that blows in the village stink always.

The people too burned the sandal stick day and night to ward off the foul smell. Shailaja cried louder, did not even brush her teeth, did not even sip a single drop of water. She not even had eaten a morsel of food for four days. Her leg did not touch the floor for many days. She shouted and expressed to her husband and in-laws that she want to return to her village.

The pollution in village of chakkamkandam is an example of the effects in the village Athirapally after a hydro electric power project was build. The village was once a place filled with all sorts of rare species of animals Nilgiri Langur, Liontailed macaque and cochin forest cane Turtle. The river is a large eco system with all sorts of rare fishes and tortoises. But now the village meets many shortcomings because of Hydro electric power project in the village.

The project is build across the periyar river and sanctuary were both of these places are affected a lot. On the other hand the project is also in critical situation. The area is to be submerged because of its location as its surrounded on all sides by plantation. A large hydroelectric projects that are build across the dams are responsible for the climatic changes. The water in the dam got polluted due to the waste from the Hydrel project build near the river. The reservoirs emit the greenhouse gases due to rotting organic matter from the vegetation and the flooded soil from the reservoir is created. The river in Athirapally is witnessing the issue for the last few years and is causing many other issues like drinking water scarcity, impact in agriculture and fresh water fisheries etc.

According to the novelist Aathi stands as a symbolism of the world. She have made the the whole world in the form of Aathi. In the beginning the world was beautiful with innocent people and music of nature. Later Aathi stood as an example of the resourceful and natural idyllic spaces of the third and fourth worlds which are ravaged by the global tycoons and corporate power structures.

The story of the other character named as Gitanjali who stays in the house of Markose also depicts the purity and importance of water. Gitanjali was at once living in the metropolitan city. She had a small baby

girl named as Kayal Which means Lake or lagoon in Malayalam. She was at once lost herself in the city and was not able to find out for three days. At once she was seen in the side of street hugging her water bottle. She seemed to be feverish and was screaming hysterically. She was not able to sleep or eat in the city and became insane. Her father left as he was not able to see the condition of his daughter. Later she was taken to the village of Aathi by Gitanjali and there she was peaceful. Kayal was happy there and recovered. She had a peaceful sleep long day before.

For Noor Muhammed Fishes live in the world of silence. They don't make noise nor disturb the underwater. Even they are caught in the Harpoon they won't cry or scream. According to Sarah Joseph the underwater living beings live in silence of water and sacrificed their life for Human beings. But human being without knowing the value of nature and its real beauty spoils it in the name of development.

The forest of Aathi was named as green bangle of its serenity and purity. Except Dinakaran and his workers all others feared about the destruction of Aathi. Especially Shailaja after returning home was in a great fear about Aathi. She was even in her sleep murmuring about the bridge that was being built by the workers to connect the outside world. The village of Aathi had its own lifestyle, own truth, own codes and courtesies. The people lead the present life happily they didn't have fear about the future.

But as the construction of bridge began the cultivation in the land of Ganesha Subramaniam came to an end. Instead of cultivating the paddy they were forced to lease it to the outsiders who changed it to paddy farms. The hunger began to do its rounds in the village of Aathi. As many strangers entered to the village for the purpose of construction and business the wild life and the people were disturbed a lot. The devotees from many other places to visit the new shrine also disturbed them.

In the chapter Kaapu-Kalakku she explains about the death of water fowls as the men from westernized countries entered the village. The village had rare types of birds and fishes. As soon as the men from other place began to enter the village they began to kill the water fowls that were seen rarely on the Aathi. Dinakaran at once had an encounter with a man with his daughter who stuffed the water fowl inside their vehicle's trunk. Many in them were killed many were wounded seriously and some were convulsing with pain.

Sarah Joseph in this novel also portrays the effects of the usage of chemical fertilizer Endosulphan in Kerala. The people in the village used net to catch the fishes from the farm and would give the share to land and water who helped them to do farming successfully but a person named as Komban Joy came to the village and changed the tradition of the people. They were shocked to see the death of their lovable creatures.

Later they came to know that Joy has used the chemical fertilizer named as Endosulphan (nanch) in the water so that the creatures that are attacking the farm would die and each fingerling would become unconscious and will rise upon the surface of water and will be piled near the ridge. People were shocked to hear it and concluded that they will not be able to continue their tradition of Kappu-kalakku as no fish would survive after the usage of Endosulphan in the farm.

On the year 1978 the state of Kerala was attacked by the diseases due to the usage of Endosulfan. Endosulfan is one of the most toxic pesticides on the market and it was responsible for many fatal incidents in the state. In the year of 1978 endosulphan was spread in the cashew plantations in order to avoid the pests. It was sprayed by helicopter three times every year. Although the fertilizer was used to kill the pesticides in mountain ranges it polluted the drinking water of the tribal people. The consumption of such drinking water by the people and animals resulted in many physical deformities, cancers, birth

disorders and damages to the brain and the nervous system. At the early stages of 1979 the new born calves were noticed with stunted growth and deformed limbs in the particular areas.

Many children were found to be effected by anomalies, mental retardation, epilepsy, etc while men and women seen to be effected with many other ailments that was difficult to treat. Even after many years many people live in misery. The people became aware of it only in the middle of 1990's and realized that pesticide might be reason behind the problems and so that they complained against spraying Endosulphan in the fields.

The people in the town of Kasargode have been damaged heavily due to the usage of the chemicals. Sarah Joseph proves herself as the well wisher about nature showing the effects of using chemicals rather than using the ecofriendly methods of agriculture and farming. It can be imagined that the future generation will not be able to survive happily in this world that is filled with chemicals and diseases. The arrival of seedless fruits in the market makes clear that the future generation will not be able see the trees, flowers and the different seasons. Each child of Aathi know nature by heart and take cares on them not for the sake of money but because they love nature. When Shailaja returned to her home in Aathi she saw the new happenings like built of bridge, new Shrine etc in the village. The rain water due to the construction of bridge was not able to flow.

The universe is now seemed to be a concrete jungle. Chennai, one among the metro politan city met with a flood in the year of 2016. The north east monsoon further aggravated the ecological imbalance of the area which lead to the infrastructural defects in the master plan of the city. The flood can be said as a manmade disaster. The city on one hand is suggested as a flood plain but on the other hand the built of many apartments made the water to stagnate on the street. The condition in Chennai became more worst when the Reservoirs in the Cherumbakkam was released at a stretch which lead to increase in the water level. Chennai was unaware of the limitations behind the development however the nature taught the people a lesson. The tsunami happened in December of 2006 can be said as one of the other notable disaster. It swallowed lots of living beings towards its mouth. The coastal regions were totally damaged by it. It was caused by the global warming. When the earth got hot the volcanoes inside the sea got erupted and created tsunami.

In the village of Aathi the salty wind began to blow. At once the people were breathing pure air and cool breeze but when the construction began the wind became impure with the dust of Cement and other materials that was being used. The mangrove forests of Aathi is known as Green bangle. The reason behind the name is that there were many rare animals like Green crab, Frogs, Butterflies, grasshoppers, and the snakes that were green in colour. The name Green forest was the name affectionately given by the village people and was eventually turned as green bangle. During evening the village glittered like a green glass bangle.

But when kumaran entered to the forest the green bangle began to break to pieces. Eventhough he loved the village where he was born he asked to Prakashan to burn the Bangle. At that night trucks, JCB's and Homaosapiens came to the village. Kumaran began to wage war against the hills that Kumaran owned. Kumaran turned the mountain upside down and won the war.

On the fifth of the story telling evening the story teller began a new story. It was the story of Govinda. Before many years in a small village a community of people lived. Their main occupation was raising the cows and earn amount from the milk they get. The village had all animals like elephant, bears, leopards, and lions. The little boys would go there there to play and climb the mountain where in each evenings the parents would come in search of their lives. among the small boys there was a special person who didot gi-

ve up climbing the mountain.

She through the novel also say the story of Biwa lake in Japan. Biwa lake is considered as one of the fresh water lake in the world dating four million years ago. Environmental scientist have documented that more than 1000 species and subspecies in the lake including 60 unique species. The lake that was at once clear was later seemed to like as drainage due to industrialization. The river side was dumped with the waste of chemicals, garbage, and foliage and was of nearly choked by the death of pollution. So the people of tehe village prayed to god that the water in Japan should become clean. A grand old man Shiyoya pronounced a mantra for them to make the river clean. But the condition was that everyone should be united during the prayer. As the words of the man they chanted the mantra and the river was cleaned.

While Noor muhammed and children were cleaning the rubbish under the bridge by laughing, telling stories and playing, he saw one more person crying. She had an umbilical cord with Aathi. She, after hearing the mantra cried and said that the time the human beings recognize the will of cosmos it will be late and the world will be on the hand of death.

People are not recognizing the real worth of the world and when they near to death they will recognize the value of universe and its creatures. Hundreds of chemical industries arised in the country nowadays, eventhough it has advantages in one hand, on the other hand, there seems to be a gradual disappearance of many of the natural resources, the pollution of land and water. The waste from the industrial sites affected the human health. Many diseases that are unheard before are spreading everywhere.

By this novel sarah joseph says that mother nature is teaching the people a noble lesson that all we see around is a mirrored reflection asking us to be soft and yielding and this is exactly the inherent subliminal quality of the people of Aathi. Before committing an ecocide each one in the is in a need to implement urgently measures to protect the life blood of our existence – water and also the entire biotic and non-biotic surroundings.

Sarah Joseph expresses her own views on nature and the damages on nature due to the activities of men. Always the nature has proved and is proving that it is more stronger than man. It showed it s control on manpower by many natural calamities like, drought, Tsunami, Earthquake, and other disaster. She symbolically expresses through her novel that the life of man and nature is always linked with each other and it cannot be separated from each other.

The people of Aathi considered water as the witness for all they activities perform and they will chant the words “Jalam Sakshi! Jalam Sakshi! Which means that water is the witness. In all the ceremonies Fire and other god will be kept as witness but in this in order to prove that water is the reason for the survival of human Sarah Joseph used water as the God and used it as the witness of the people of Aathi.

Water and fire have the power to purify itself and also the sins of other living beings. In Hindu mythology a person who does a sin can purify himself by bathing in the river Ganges. Such characteristic feature of water is now lost and it is now unable to purify itself because of pollution and the scarcity of water is seen everywhere in the world. The third and the fourth world countries live under menace of their water resources sought after by the global powers. It is said by the environmental scientists that the third world war will be for water as because the scarcity of water is seen all over the world. Thus the novel in the backdrop says about the serious issues and making a plea for saving mother earth form destruction, contamination and exploitation. As the water is contaminated, the people all over the country was also attacked by many diseases like Cholera, Plague and also many incurable diseases. In addition to all these pollution the nuclear pollution also plays an important role in the society. Its radiation is creating a great damage to plants and other living beings and the radioactive materials also enter the human body by the

process of food chain which results thyroid cancer. One example for the affect of radioactive radiation is in Japan. Atom bomb was dropped before years where the people of the country are suffering even now are suffering with many diseases like Dwarfism etc.

Though human beings may feel superior to nature, the truth is that they cannot exist without nature as they have to entirely depend upon nature in order to survive. Thus human beings should not turn into a parasite and become a blemish in the landscape.

India can of the first environmental movement in the world. Much before the concepts like ‘ecology’, ‘environment’, ‘sustainability’ were coined, a tribe of Rajasthan called the ‘Bishnoi’ fought successful battles against the mighty rulers and traders to protect the forests. The novel of is rich with ecocritical references and among the recent fictions it can be most aptly given an ecocritical reading.

Thus the paper concludes that there is need to preserve the nature as because the nature and man are interlinked with each other. It can be said that the responsibility of a man is to,

SAVE WATER,

SAVE NATURE AND

SAVE LIVES

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