

Reinforcing Ecological Ethics: An Ecocritical Study in Select Fiction of Arundhati Roy's, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" and Ruth Ozeki's, "My Year of Meats"

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Abstract:

Nature has never failed to render its blessings to man in the olden days as it envisaged the significance of preserving the environment. Whereas, modern man, with his anthropocentric attitude, causes adverse impacts to the ecosystem. The paucity of ecological ethics that has caused havoc to nature by human beings is expanding at a high rate in the exploration of ethical dilemmas recorded by the global environmental crisis. In this study, an attempt has been made to analyze the global environmental crisis caused by man and his roles and responsibilities towards nature for maintaining a better living environment through the fiction, "Ministry of Utmost Happiness" and "My Year of Meats" by Arundhati Roy and Ruth Ozeki respectively. The unethical practices of man towards the environment presented in the novels are culled out and displayed to create awareness of the adverse effects caused to the ecosystem thereby, emphasizing the exigencies in the conservation of the ecosystem for the well-being of all species on earth by adhering to ecological ethics. It also reinforces bringing out the hidden and forgotten ecological values that would nurture the relationship between man and nature through the lens of ecocriticism for expediting sustainable developed planet.

Keywords: - Ecological ethics, Anthropocentric approach, Eco-consciousness, Environmental ethics, Ecological values, Sustainable development.

Introduction

Every man must be conscious of the contemporary environmental crisis wherein all his actions have a possible repercussion. Destruction of one element in the ecosystem would inevitably affect the other elements too. On the contrary, human beings claim that they have superior power over nature, and the different creatures on earth are not considered living beings. Man's pre-eminence over other creatures on earth for his welfare contributed to a major transition and disparity in our ecological environment. The well-being of man is interdependent on the well-being of all other beings in the ecosystem. The unethical utility of the species in our environment results in "Widespread environmental destruction...taking away from the sense of having options or a positive future... We grow numb rather than face what's going on. We need to learn to be active participants rather than bystanders to a tragedy" (Rowland, 2013).

To be on the front burner, our evergreen planet will grow sterile, if we fail to care for our ecological community. Brown, an American writer has pictured the present condition of the earth as: "Mother Earth had become a man's world, and the Gods of destruction and war were taking their toll..." (Brown, 2009) and man's existence on earth is like a "life out of balance". The ill effects may curb human existence shortly if ignored today. The changing attitude of modern man towards our environment is due to the lack of ecological ethics. To promote a healthy living environment that is free from toxins, various pollutions, and natural disasters in rural and urban areas, environmental justice has to be maintained in reviving the disappeared values. Huggan and Tiffin believe

that there is “no social justice without environmental justice” (Huggan, 2010). Hence, a great deal of attention has to be paid by every individual to enhance the ecological ethics to building a healthy environment to live in.

The central focus is to underscore the lack of ecological ethics due to the unhealthy lifestyle practices of the present generation, and also to sensify the misfortunes that led to the lack of ecological ethics to reinforce the necessity to adhere to the values in creating a sustainable planet. This would value or recognize the role of every species on earth as an integral part of the eco-consciousness that has been brought out through the novels of Arundhati Roy and Ruth Ozeki.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The exploitation of the natural environment by man due to the anthropocentric approach and the subsequent threat caused by the mother earth have led to the emergence of philosophies related to nature. “One common form of anthropocentrism claims that only human beings have intrinsic value... It could mean that things other than human beings can only have value as means to our ends, which is sometimes referred to as strong anthropocentrism” (Norton BG, 1991). The devastating impacts on Earth due to man’s dominance took root for the blooming of new theories in philosophy related to the environment. The ecologists believe that ecological awareness can be fostered through art, poetry, and music. Subsequently, environmentally-ethical sensibility can be achieved by “substantial reorientation of our whole civilization” (Naess A, 1995). The term ‘ecocriticism’ was coined by William Rueckert in 1978 which helps to reexamine how human beings perceive and construct the environment in literary works. Rueckert defines the term as, “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature” (Rueckert, 1996). Ecocriticism is a move “from ego-consciousness to eco-consciousness” (Glotfelty C, 1996).

As the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth have value in themselves, ethical codes are to be adhered to about nature to create a better living environment. Singer’s observation puts forth that though in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, philosophers focused more on nature, Environmental Ethics emerged as an academic discipline only in the 1970s (Singer P 1991). “It is acknowledged that the roots of ecological crises are philosophical. That is why environmental ethics emerged as a discipline in philosophy to examine the moral relationship of man with nature and the environment. Even though nature was the interest of much nineteenth and twentieth-century philosophy, it was not until the 1970s that contemporary environmental ethics appeared as an academic discipline” (Çiftibaşı, 2011).

Eventually, Environmental Ethics progressed as an academic discipline in response to the work of the scientist, Rachel Carson and the events about the first Earth Day in 1970. It was the result of the environmentalists urging the philosophers to contemplate the philosophical aspects related to environmental issues (Laal M, 2009). Gewirth reveals that “...the actions and policies that we as contemporary humans undertake will have a great impact on the well-being of future individuals. In the light of these facts, some philosophers have found environmental ethics on obligations to these future generations” (Gewirth, 2001). Environmental Ethics studies the moral relationship of human beings to the environment and its contents (Brennan, A., 2010).

As this ethical principle is conveniently skimpy, Bioethics supervened as another theory by the biochemist, Van Rensselaer Potter. The biocentric approach will help in rendering equal consideration for all living beings as humans. However, to address the need for a sustainable world, the extension of study has been made by “...conservation scientists who find both bioethics and environmental ethics inadequate frameworks for ethical fieldwork have proposed the term Ecological Ethics to shape professional ecological and conservation management in a morally complex world” (Curry, 2011).

The term, “Ecological Ethics” was first used by Rolston [in the year 1975](#) in his title, where he subsequently used the term “Environmental Ethics” within philosophy. The term, “Ecological ethics” includes the management practices in the natural world and conservation biology. Ecological ethics addresses humans’ moral relationship with the environment and is involved in protecting wilderness and endangered species on earth.

According to the definition in Encyclopaedia, “Ecological ethics is the study of what humans, individually and corporately, ought to value, ought to be, and ought to do in relationships with all other beings and elements in the biosphere” (Encyclopaedia, 2023). Rolston believes that “to treat the natural world ethically means loving and respecting it for its own sake, not just ours” (Rolston, 2017). Paul Taylor, in his review (1981 and 1986), argues that each individual is a living thing in nature—it can be an animal, a plant, or a micro-organism—all are “teleological-center-of-life” in which every living being conquers the top position and have intrinsic value in the planet without any difference. Intrinsic value to respect and not to harm any species on earth for the existence of human being and their betterment of life (Paul). “This realization of limits, dramatically shift ethical application

though it may, can hardly be said to reform our ethical roots, for the reason that its scope remains (when optimistic) a maximizing of human values or (when pessimistic) human survival” (Rolston, 2017).

It is the responsibility of every living being to nurture the values in connection with nature thereby creating a more caring and environmentally sustainable world. In his work, Frederick points out that our worldwide emergency is to nurture the moral framework which is more important than the biological systems work. "The most well-known measure to handle an ecological emergency is sustainable improvement" (Frederick, 2002). Prof. Sabine Wilke, a former Vice-President of PAMLA (the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association) states: "I believe that analyzing, understanding, and finding solutions to environmental problems is one of the most important tasks facing our generation and that the study of literature and culture has a significant contribution to make in this endeavor, a contribution that has not yet been sufficiently acknowledged" (Wilke, 2011).

Ecological Ethics focuses on the relationship between human beings and other living creatures including plants and animals, where "Every tree and river, large mammals and small fish now exist about human action, knowledge" (Barnhill and Gottlieb, 2001). Moreover, all human and non-human environments should have an equal right to survive on the earth without any partiality since, "An ideal nature is one in which plants, creatures, feathered creatures, and individuals live in such concordance that none overwhelms or wrecks the other" (Frederick, 2002). It is more "significant in determining the purpose behind conservation as an inclusive purpose to protect wild lands can be envisioned only if nature is valued for its intrinsic value, and not its utilitarian value" (Karunya, 2023).

Result:

The researcher explores that unethical modernity destroys the world by wicked and injudicious forms of utilization. The reinforcement of ecological ethics can help every individual to show eco eco-centric approach towards the ecosystem and its entities. This positively shows that the only way to treat the world ethically is by loving and respecting it for its own sake and not for anything else. We are forced to generate more caring attitudes for nature and the whole biosphere. Only by being Eco-conscious, we can take good care of our mother earth. To build a sustainable planet, ecological ethics is the key to adopt. Eco-critical perspectives should not just stop with reading and thinking about its impacts and importance but involvement and action to some extent is required in protecting our environment for healthy living and developing a sustainable ecosystem through ethical values.

Discussion on the eco concerns in Arundhati Roy's "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness"

Arundhati Roy is an internationally acclaimed Indian English writer and environmental activist who intensifies her ecological concerns in every fabric of contemporary Indian society. In her second novel, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" (2017), Roy portrays the eco concerns of the twenty-first century and the adverse effects of destroying the elements of nature. This study unravels the horrid pictures of environmental deterioration projected in the novel through the ecocritical perspectives and reinforces the ecological ethics for creating a sustainable earth.

The plot of the novel is centered around the busy cities of Delhi and Kashmir in India where there are faded ecological values and there is no concern for our ecosystem. The description of the cityscape with its detrimental impacts is portrayed in the novel which picturizes the 'great' modern cities as an old lady with "parchment skin", "wrinkle", "arthritic joint", "varicose veins", "withered tits", "aching feet", and "stiff old hips" (96)

Roy throws light on man's selfish attitude towards human and non-human beings. She has also criticized human's discriminating act of injecting diclofenac in cows and buffalos for enhancing the production of milk, "Diclofenac, cow-aspirin, given to cattle as a muscle relaxant, to ease pain and increase the production of milk, works – worked – like nerve gas on white-backed vultures. Each chemically relaxed, milk-producing cow or buffalo that died became poisoned vulture bait. As cattle turned into better dairy machines, as the city ate more ice cream, butterscotch-crunch, nutty-buddy and chocolate-chip, as it drank more mango milkshake..." (prologue)

The prologue in the novel vividly portrays the exploitation of the environment caused by human beings. The white-rumped vultures that help sanitize the forest by consuming the carcasses perished as they devoured the diclofenac-injected dead animals and polluted the environment. The unethical behavior of man is the root cause of destroying these rare species that exist in our ecosystem. Moreover, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed the white-rumped vultures as a critically endangered species in the year 2000. As a keen observer of the modern Indian society, Roy depicts the society nonchalant of the ecological disaster it has incurred:

"Not all the din of their homecoming fills the silence left by the sparrows that have gone missing, and the old white-backed vultures, custodians of the dead for more than a hundred million years, that have

been wiped out. The vultures died of diclofenac poisoning ...vultures' necks began to droop as though they were tired and simply couldn't stay awake. Silver beards of saliva dripped from their beaks, and one by one they tumbled off their branches, dead. Not many noticed the passing of the friendly old birds. There was so much else to look forward to" (Prologue).

Roy implies that the city is fully exploited by man as he has disregard for the ecosystem and it is no more a friendlier place for the man to live in. The protagonist of the novel is Anjum, a transgender who was known as Aftab in his childhood. When his parents realized that he was no longer a male and had female features, they refused to accept their child and thereafter Anjum left home forever and lived with another such community. Anjum preferred to stay in the graveyard with an adopted female child named Zainab after analyzing that it was the safest place for her to survive which she referred to as 'heaven'. A blind man Imam and Saddam Hussain were the neighbours who settled near the graveyard with Anjum. They also started a new business, "Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services" and led a peaceful life till the end of the novel.

Irrespective of Roy's attack on the absurdity of man for his unethical act of tormenting the creatures for the sake of discovery, killing animals in laboratories is considered a noble cause these days. She comments on "... a beagle who had either escaped from or outlived his purpose in a pharmaceutical testing lab. He looked worn and rubbed out, like a drawing someone had tried to erase...with the drugs tested on him" (82). Greta Gaard criticizes man for destroying the earth by his wicked and injudicious ways: "These hazardous chemicals are often initially tested on laboratory animals to determine levels of toxicity; this practice, together with the enormous environmental costs of factory farming and meat eating, demonstrate the linkages between environmental degradation and the oppression of nonhuman animals" (Gaard, 1993).

Another injustice caused against the environment by man is genetic modification of animals which is brought to focus by Arundhati Roy in the novel. The process is scientifically known as Transgenic. Genetic modification is done to increase the muscle weight of the animals by mutating the Myostatin gene (MSTN) to yield more meat. This is normally done in hens, pigs, cows, buffalo, trout, etc. Roy boldly unveils the brutality in which these creatures are subjected to scientific experiments and this immoral act is questioned by Roy. "These days one is never sure whether a bull is a dog, or an ear of corn is a leg of pork or a beef steak. But perhaps this is the path of genuine modernity?" (299). Tilottama, another character in the novel witnesses a scientific phenomenon between two bulls when they "appear quite normal but at night they grow tall...When they piss, they lift their legs like dogs...are they bulls or dogs? Or wolves?" (298).

The dilemma caused by the injected hens in the poultry industry is observed by the narrator, Tilottama. She articulates, "I have learned that scientists working in the poultry industry are trying to excise the mothering instinct in hens to mitigate or entirely remove their desire to brood" (299). This in turn affects the health of human beings leading to some dangerous illnesses when it is consumed by human beings. According to Paul C. Mangelsdorf, an American agronomist and botanist, "The genetic egg-laying potential of chickens has been further increased by largely eliminating, through selection, the brooding instinct. Modern hens in modern environments are virtually egg-laying machines" (Paul, 1966).

Arundhati Roy catches every glance of environmental degradation by highlighting man's superiority over other living beings. The pathetic condition of the zoo animals is keenly observed by the author and projected by her thoughts through her character, Tilottama. The immoral behavior of authorities who do not have any concern for the caged animals in the zoo and no care given to the zoo animals in the novel shows the unscrupulous act of man. The animals and their cages are damaged badly due to the cruel behavior of the visitors and the carelessness of the concerned authorities.

There was an Indian rock python in every cage in the snake house. Snake scam. There were cows in the sambar stag's enclosure. Deer scam. And there were women construction workers carrying bags of cement in the Siberian tiger enclosure. Siberian tiger scam. Most of the birds in the aviary were ones you could see on trees anyway. Bird scam. (235)

In an interview, Roy expressed her intention to focus on the problem that animals face due to the violence made by man. She also enunciated that humans need to understand the importance of protecting the other living beings with whom we share the planet. She states,

"The animals in the book sometimes wonder why they go unnoticed. In "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness", the borders between the living and the dead and between animals and humans are porous too. There are comings and goings. I don't think they compete with each other. They complement each

other. Humans are just one of the many living species that populate this planet of ours. We need to understand that. And soon.” (Roy)

The materialistic attitude of the political leaders of the city leading to the destruction of natural surroundings into a dry infertile land is implicitly criticized in the novel. The leaders decide to change the old city into “. . . super capital of the world’s favorite new superpower” (96) and the urge to modernize the city without caring about the impacts is well delineated in the novel. “Skyscrapers and steel factories sprang up where forests used to be, rivers were bottled and sold in supermarkets, fish were tinned, mountains mined and turned into shining missiles. Massive dams lit up the cities like Christmas trees. Everyone was happy” (98).

The egoistic nature of man led to the destruction of a pretty and calm atmosphere by raising tall buildings, thereby creating a dry and lifeless environment. “Most of the older houses have been torn down and plush new developers’ flats are coming up in their place. Some are on stilts, the ground floors given over to parking. It’s a good idea in this car-maddened city...” (145) Though poverty is at its height, the shops are overwhelming with a variety of foods. Business magnets, who were not bothered about the harmful impacts on health, were involved in the production of mineral water and processed food. “But the food shops were bursting with food. The bookshops were bursting with books. The shoe shops were bursting with shoes. And people (who counted as people) said to one another, ‘You don’t have to go abroad for shopping anymore. Imported things are available here now’” (99). Due to the lack of ecological ethics in man, natural resources get affected in many ways thereby polluting the whole ecosystem. Man’s attempt to create an ultra-modern city concurrently resulted in a proliferating number of deprived people. People were least concerned about ecological sustenance which has various ill effects as projected in the novel, “On the city’s industrial outskirts, in the miles of bright swamp tightly compacted with refuse and colorful plastic bags, where the evicted had been ‘re-settled’, the air was chemical and the water poisonous. Clouds of mosquitoes rose from thick green ponds” (100).

The negligence of Officials in taking care of our natural resources causes various ill effects on all the species in the ecosystem. Alternatively, they plan to build a dam on the site of the poor by vacating them from their homes. The false promises given by the politician on the production of hydropower and sufficient water supply for human consumption for the sake of constructing the dam are well pictured by the author through the character, Gulabiya Vechania.

This unprincipled act figured out the real condition of many people in India.

“In his dream, his brother Luariya wasn’t a tour-guide at the dam-site whose job was to showcase the miracles the dam had wrought. His mother didn’t work as a sweeper in a dam engineer’s house that was built on the land that she once owned. She didn’t have to steal mangoes from her own trees. She didn’t live in a resettlement colony in a tin hut with tin walls and a tin roof that was so hot you could fry onions on it. In Gulabiya’s dream, his river was still flowing, still alive. Naked children still sat on rocks, playing the flute, diving into the water to swim among the buffaloes when the sun grew too hot. (113)

It is the responsibility of every individual to protect the downtrodden people who are also the part of our eco system. The sufferings of the underprivileged are unnoticed by the politicians and other business magnets has been brought to the limelight by Roy in the novel. The most miserable condition of migrant workers who are homeless and the lives on the pavements are crushed to death by the rash and reckless drivers who are not concerned about the poor and helpless people. They have to face challenges for their daily survival in the capital city of India. Hence, these people must be given much importance and protected in the ecosystem.

The pathetic condition of the ailing population who were subjected to deadly diseases due to the negligence of the concerned authority who treats them unethically and deny to provide proper sanitation and the increased mortality rate are depicted by the author as: “. . . two hospitals so full of sickness that patients and their families had spilled out and were camped on the roads. Some were on makeshift beds and in wheelchairs. Some wore hospital gowns and had bandages and IV drips. Children, bald from chemotherapy, wore hospital masks and clung to their empty-eyed parents.” (136)

Roy also made her focus on conserving the water bodies which is the major source for the healthy living. The carelessness of human beings in contaminating the water which is the unethical behaviour of mankind bringing forth the poignant scene: “. . . a man rows a circular raft built with old mineral-water bottles and plastic jerrycans across the thick, slow, filthy river” (234). The Bhopal gas tragedy that has taken thousands of lives and several are affected with serious deformities that has impacted the subsequent generation too. “The Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal sprang a deadly gas leak that killed thousands of people. The newspapers were full of

accounts of people trying to flee the poisonous cloud that perused them, their eyes and lungs on fire. There was something almost biblical about the nature and the scale of horror.” (151)

The poor management by the waste recycling units is reflected through the mouthpiece of the narrator where the decaying garbage is smoldering continuously emitting methane gas polluting the atmosphere with toxic gases. The gases pollute the environment and cause harmful diseases. These poisonous gases which circuit in the atmosphere cause various illnesses. There is a crucial need to think of rebuilding ethical values. The condition of the polluted environment due to the carelessness of the public is seen in the novel through the “. . . miles of city waste, a bright landfill of compacted plastic bags with an army of ragged children picking through it. . . In the distance, garbage trucks wound their way slowly up the garbage mountain” (234). Narrator also quotes an incident of “a cow that had died – burst – from eating too many plastic bags at the main garbage dump”. (264)

Roy expresses her regard for the Quarry workers who were underpaid for their hard work and for being ignored by society. Through the mouthpiece of Tilottama, another important character explains the ailing condition of the lungs of a poor quarry worker as it is “refused to be cremated” (258) due to the stone dust. She also adds “. . . their day’s work on the building site, their eyelashes and lungs pale with stone-dust from cutting stone and laying floors in the multi-story shopping centers and housing estates springing up around the city like a fast-growing forest” (256). Man has exploited the nature and its resources by taking it too much for granted. But it is man who ought to be more conscious in establishing the ethical values in order to bring the environmental sustainability for living in harmony with nature.

Another ecological issue focused in the novel is exploitation of the Adivasi people. The Adivasi people who are also a part of our ecosystem have become the victim of injustice. Roy portrays the pathetic condition of the Adivasis who are not considered as living beings by people.

In 2008, the situation was much worse inside the forest. Operation Green Hunt is announced by the Government. The war against people. Thousands of police and paramilitary are in the forest. Killing Adivasis, and burning villages. No Adivasi can stay in her house or their village. They sleep in the forest outside at night because at night police come, hundred, two hundred, sometimes five hundred police.

They take everything, burn everything, steal everything. Chickens, goats, money. They want Adivasi people to vacate the forest so they can make a steel township and mining (421).

This led to the emergence of Maoists. Revathi in the novel turned into a Maoist out of frustration. Human beings are the sole living beings who can think rationally. It is a growing demand “to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now” (Jeffrey Gettleman, 2011). This is the time to preserve the earthly biosphere by treating all species on earth with equal importance. Man has to realize that “The optimum is a healthy life in a healthy world” (Johnson, 2010).

Discussion on the ecocritical elements and ethical values in Ruth Ozeki’s “My Year of Meats”

Ruth Ozeki, an American-Canadian author and filmmaker sensibly incarnates the impacts of environmental degradation due to unethical practices through her novel “My Year of Meats” (1998). When man dominates nature by conquering, cultivating, and stripping the environment to uplift his standard of living materialistically, he cannot tolerate the consequences caused by nature. The unethical behaviour of man has now questioned the existence of man in this ecosystem. Hence, “Ecology can be a means for learning how to live appropriately in a particular place and time, to preserve, contribute to, and recycle the ecosystem” (Murphy, 2000).

Through the ecocritical perspectives, Ozeki brings forth the current health issues that arise relentlessly. Once in an interview show, Ozeki shared her intention to contribute to novels despite her profession as a filmmaker. She said, “I want to write novels that engage the emotions and the intellect, and that means going head-to-head with the chaos of evils and issues that threaten to overpower us all. And if they threaten to overpower the characters, then I have to make the characters stronger” (Ozeki). Ozeki begins her novel with a positive note where the protagonist, Jane receives the offer for a Japanese TV show, ‘My American Wife’ which is sponsored by an American national lobby organization, “BEEF – EX” that represents “U.S. meats of all kinds—beef, pork, lamb, goat, horse—as well as livestock producers, packers, purveyors, exporters, grain promoters, pharmaceutical companies, and agribusiness groups,” (9–10). The main motive of this show is to market meat from US to Japan. Jane calls it a “cultural pimp” (9). She puts forth that “the average Japanese wife finds a middle- to upper-middle class white American woman with two to three children to be both sufficiently exotic and yet reassuringly familiar” (13) with the TV show.

Ruth Ozeki, through her characters, brings to light the environmental issues that we face in the modern world.

The plight of the protagonist, Jane Takagi, who strives hard to seek environmental justice for injecting growth hormones into the meat in the meat industry. Jane is an unemployed Japanese–American documentary filmmaker and director. Jane suffered reproductive disorder because of the carelessness of her mother who was exposed to DES (diethylstilbestrol) hormone which was mistakenly prescribed to prevent the miscarriage when Jane was in her mother’s womb. Jane’s mother believed that she could intake more such hormones for the foetus to grow healthier and she regularly consumed it during her course of pregnancy without realizing the consequences.

This study investigates and explores the environmental injustice of the hideous use of growth hormones in the light of ecological ethics to demand eco-justice for the whole species on earth. The thematic focus is that no creature in the ecosystem should be harmed and the food we eat must be highly nutritive without any adverse effects to lead a healthy life. Ozeki promptly puts forth the usage of growth-promoting hormones in feeds by men who have not realized its harmful impacts as “Today . . . 95 percent of feedlot cattle in the U.S. still receive some form of growth-promoting hormone or pharmaceutical in feed supplements” (126). Even after knowing all the harmful impacts of eating the hormone injected meat, people promote meat as innocuous food: “Meat is the Message. . . It’s the meat (not the Mrs.) who’s the star of our show! She must be attractive, appetizing, and all-American. She is the Meat Made Manifest: ample, robust, yet never tough or hard to digest” (8). According to the people in the modern world, the nourishing food which the women cook is meat, “contemporary wholesome values, represented not by gadgets for the wife’s sole convenience but by good, nourishing food for her entire family. And that means meat” (13).

Ozeki’s other character is Akiko Ueno who looks thin and weak and is raised out of her lonely childhood as an orphan by a drunken uncle and dour-faced aunt (39). Jane often criticizes Akiko, a former manga artist who specialized in horror scenes and is reluctantly married to Joichi “John” Ueno, who also works for BEEF-EX. Jane believes that Akiko’s menstrual cycle has stopped because she is a vegetarian. As Jane is fond of Texas girls, she also thinks that Akiko can be healthier and stronger only if she eats meat like the girls in Texas. Cheng criticizes the women characters of Ozeki as, liberation, for them means to “achieve [e] equality and freedom in conjugal relations within an imagined bourgeois domesticity” (Cheng, 2009).

During her voyage, Jane visited different people like Alberto and Catalina Martinez who were willing emigrant to Texas with the desire of giving birth to their son in America to claim US citizenship. Jane also met Vern and Grace Beaudroux, a family that adopted Asian children. They excitedly grew a plant that was “the most infamous exotic to shoot its roots through the thin mantle of American soil” (76). The craze for people to be called citizens of America was picturized in the novel which is not because they love the land but because they want to show their pride in calling them Americans.

Ozeki’s concern for food safety and its importance is portrayed in the novel. She voices out the unethical practice of using hormones in the meat industry. Through her characters, she ridicules the injustice act of injecting “growth-enhancing” drugs to the cattle to provide more meat. This creates a harmful impact on human health. The materialistic attitude of human beings is the root cause of all the environmental deterioration. John, Akiko’s husband wants Akiko to conceive a baby and he insists she watch the TV show “My American Wife” through which she at least could cook and consume meat and thereby improve her health to bear a child. John has been violent with Akiko as he forced her to eat meat to carry his child though she is a vegetarian. Shameem Black, a feminist compares women with meat as: “both women and meat become commodities on the global market whose bodies are shaped, deformed, and violated for commercial profit” (Black, 2004).

The confounding nature of relationships in the modern era through Jane who is intimate with the saxophonist Sloan is highlighted in the novel. On listening to her husband’s advice, Akiko watches the TV show “American Wives”. John ill-treated Akiko. He also beats and rapes her, he warns her to stay in the house until her wounds are healed (201). In the later part of the story, she miserably tunes herself into cooking and consumes some of the delicious foods an American wife cooks, such as beef fudge. Contrary to John’s expectations, Akiko becomes violent with her husband after watching the TV show for forcing her to eat meat. She often listens to “Hot Tamale Baby” (79) and plans to adopt a child to cope with the dreadful infertility.

The alarming issue of food poisoning in the food industry is one of the true evils in the world against man. Ozeki telescopes the serious impacts of poisoning meat in the food industry through the revolving eyes of the protagonist Jane. During her travel, Jane visits a slaughterhouse where she witnesses the meat poisoned by growth hormones. When foul play is suspected, “many were afraid to testify against large meatpacking companies, fearing retaliation and ‘economic ruin’ (142-43). In the ecocritical perspective, Keith Sagar flares on witnessing the pathetic

condition of animals by asking, “why aren’t ... animals simply given the legal status of ‘fellow citizens’” (Sagar, 2006)

Jane, in her course journey, meets Dunn and Son, the other characters who are the Custom Cattle Feeders. Jane also meets Bunny, a former stripper rodeo queen, and her husband John, an elderly man who has proposed to Bunny earlier in a lap dance show. They have a son Gale and a daughter Rose. While in one of the prayer services, she realizes that chicken which is processed in modern times is a dangerous delicacy and notices the dismal life of man because of the fumbling qualities of human nature.

The hormones-induced food when consumed by men hurt them. This global issue has been brought to the limelight by Ozeki in her novel. Jane also notices a neighbouring slaughterhouse where the meat is poisoned by growth hormones which is the cause for the five-year-old little girl who suffers “precocious puberty” (270) and appears as mature as a grownup woman.

Gersdorf critically studies the illegal practices involved in the meat industry. The character of Ozeki is indirectly affected because of the use of hormones in meat. The mania for consuming more meat is considered a culture among the civilized citizen (Gersdorf, 2010). Kim, in his attribution, exemplifies that the women characters of Ozeki are inability to give birth to a child because of the contaminated food they eat. The American TV shows project meat as a healthy food despite knowing the fact that will disturb the hormones of women. She hones on the environmental injustice that happened in the meat industry (Kim, 1998).

The pathetic condition of the quarry workers, who are also a part of our ecosystem is deliberately highlighted by the author. The mentality of the container truck driver who ill-treated those unnoticed poor beings even after hurting them. He was least bothered about those people even if they are hurt and are suffering. The anthropocentric attitude of the modern generation is projected in the novel through the incident when the teenager named Christina Bukowsky’s leg is crushed by a container truck where the driver had no concern for the fellow being. He ignored her and refused to stop gave her first aid or took her to the hospital for treatment. To care for and protect such downtrodden people, Eco ethics has to be nurtured.

In the later part of the novel, Jane is presented as an environmentally conscious filmmaker. Kalejahi deals with food politics, which is a very common issue today. He believes that illegal behaviour can be minimized by “disclosing the invisible reality behind the visible surface of that which poses as the real”(Kalejahi, 2012). The current dilemma questions the survival of Mother Earth and the sustainability of future generations who are affected by the toxic bodies used in the food industry.

Ozeki [dexterously](#) incarnates the significance of creating an awareness to understand and enlighten human beings on the harmful impacts of hormones which are injected into animals to gain more profit. In one of the TV interviews, Ozeki expressed her desire to create awareness of the ill impacts as “it only made sense to investigate how meat could impact the physical body of my character.” She has also condemned the use of DES in her show as, “the synthetic hormone DES had a history of misuse, as not only as a pregnancy drug for women, but as a growth stimulant for cattle” (Ozeki). This shows that the deterioration of one element in the ecosystem has an impact on the other. Ozeki expresses her anxiety about the fumbling instincts of human nature. The realization of the evil thoughts lurking in the hearts of man to harm the other living things in the environment without any care for them and to prevent any dangerous illness to the human race because of their anthropocentric attitude. Naess asserts that “self-realization” by a human being can benefit both man and the whole ecosystem (Naess, 1995). Human beings should develop intrinsic value to be ecologically conscious for creating a sustainable planet for healthy living.

Conclusion

Man’s greed for conquering the earth and the elements of the ecosystem sketched in the novels prove that man goes to any extent to elevate his standard of living. The selected novels invoke environmental justice since people in the modern world are least bothered about ecological sustenance. An attempt has been made in this work to capture the deteriorating environment which leads to the destruction of all living beings. Every human being in this ecosystem has a responsibility in building a sustainable environment rather than viewing ecological ethics as a theoretic perspective. Everyone has to delve into the root cause that exploits the environment and make a possible decision for maintaining a healthy living. In Wangari Maathai’s view, there is a need to move to the higher level of the moral ground: “In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now (Maathai, 2004).

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