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Ecocriticism and the Southern Challenge

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Resumo: O desafio da ecocrítica do Sul Global surgiu da necessidade de desmantelar a hegemonia e a práxis teórica da ecocrítica euro-norte-americana compartilhada e projetada pela vangurda ecocrítica e que, por um tempo, tem se projetado como a consciência dessa vanguarda. Esboçando referências à história do meio-ambiente ficcional e não ficcional e outros textos, os críticos do Sul Global contestam que a crítica hegemônica se autoproclama como normativa e igualitária, qualidades que falharam por não refletir as percepções ambientais do Sul Global. Entretanto, sua representação ambiental é limitada, irrelevante e elitista. Nesse sentido, o desafio da crítica sulista consiste em responder à autoproclamação epistemologica e centralizada do questionamento crítico, dando voz aos despossuídos do Sul Global, para que as margens falem. Como resultado, articular suas realidades ambientais que, até agora, têm sido subrepresentadas pela hegemonia do discurso ecocrítico.

Palavras-chave: Ecocrítica, meio-ambiente, Sul, desenvolvimento.

Abstract: The Southern challenge to mainstream or Euro/north-American ecocriticism arises out of a desire to defeat and dismantle the hegemony of ecocritical theory and praxis which for quite some time has projected itself as the vanguard of ecocritical consciousness. Drawing references from both history of the environment as well as fictional and non-fictional texts writers and critics of the global South argued that mainstream ecocriticism while proposing itself as normative and egalitarian, not only failed to reflect the environmental perceptions of the global South, but its very representation of the environment is highly parochial, skewed, irrelevant and elitist. The Southern challenge thus consists in writing back against the West's self proclaimed epistemological centrality of ecocritical enquiry by giving voice to the disenfranchised of the global South, by allowing he margins to speak and thereby to articulate their environmental realities which till now had been un/under-represented in mainstream ecocritical discourse.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, environment, global, South, development.

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The global South has of late come to interrogate the theories and praxes of mainstream ecocritical discourse and narrative. The Southern challenge to mainstream Euro/north American ecocriticism arises out of a desire to challenge and dismantle the hegemony of Western centres particularly the United States and the United Kingdom which till now have projected itself as the vanguard of planetary ecocritical consciousness and in the process obliterating or at best ignoring any trace of voice from the global South in its precarious Subjectivity. This institutional and epistemological centrality of mainstream ecocriticism, though apparently promised to be egalitarian, was at best parochial, irrelevant, elitist, skewed and it failed to appreciate the various significant social and ecological concerns that generate such discourses which are often grounded in provincial realities particularly that of the countries of the global South. This Southern challenge may be argued as writing back against the "epistemic violence" (24), to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's phrase, of mainstream ecocriticism which often refused to acknowledge the disenfranchised of the global South as agents and tried to establish itself as normative, thereby interpreting the environmental realities of the global South rather as a mirror image of the affluent North. The Southern challenge discourages and denounces this shoddy, one size fits all kind of a solution of mainstream ecocriticism by giving voice to the disenfranchised, by allowing the margins to write back, by giving ecocritical agency to scholarships from the global South and thereby to articulate the environmental aspirations and priorities of the regions which until recently have been un-/underrepresented in mainstream ecocritical scholarships.

The conceptual origin of the terms "North" and "South" in the Anglophone world may grossly be traced back to the works of British sociologist and anthropologist Peter Worsley (WORSLEY, 1964, 1984) where he referred to the idea of three "worlds". However, the notion of the "Third World" dates back to 1952 when the French cartographer Alfred Sauvy in his reference to *le tiers monde* drew a parallel between the poor countries and colonies with that of the third estate, *le tiers etate*, at the time of the French Revolution, (Sauvy did not presuppose the existence of First or Second world) i.e. those who did not belong either to the clergy or the nobility. Sauvy referred to those countries who had the potential ─ who would ultimately rise to prominence and claim their share. In the post-Cold War era, after the fall of the Communist Block, the world rather than being divided on the basis of political ideology aligned themselves according to the degree of benefits one received in globalised neoliberal capitalism ─ thereby integrating the entire planet under a single economic system, which Thomas Friedman, the American political author and thinker

infamously referred to as "a flat world" (FRIEDMAN, 2005). Proposed by the German chancellor Willy Brandt in 1980, the terms "North" and "South" have come to replace the earlier terms such as "First", "Second" and "Third" world and are used now to distinguish between the more 'developed' rich regions of the world which lie mostly north of the thirty degree North latitude with that of the 'less developed' poor regions situated south of the thirtieth parallel.[1] However, such categorisation is not cartographically coherent as both rich and poor countries lie on either side of the Brandt line. While both Australia and New Zealand as considered as *de facto* counties of the North, countries such as China and Argentina are difficult to fit in into either blocks. Thus, global North and global South instead of being purely geographical categories are rather economic and ideological categories ─ more of an updated perspective on the post-1991 world, which generally distinguishes between benefactors and victims of colonialism and global neoliberal capitalism ─ a world based on economic inequalities and uneven developments, and which seems to have certain cartographic coherences.

The body of literary texts, both fiction and nonfiction, from the countries of the global South seeks to resist the ecocritical hegemony of the North by writing back against the world centres of political, cultural and economic powers articulating the intersections of nature, culture and history from the perspective of the global South/ postcolonial countries which has faced the brunt of a colonised past and an uneven neoliberal capitalist development in the post-colonial times. Although Graham Huggan in his book *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) accuses the postcolonial novel of banking on the "global commodification of cultural difference" (vii) that has "capitalised on its perceived marginality while helping turn marginality itself into a valuable intellectual commodity" (viii) and thereby helping in the extension and regulation of the neo-colonial market regime which itself is an extension and a more intensified form of the older colonial and imperial capitalist formations, yet, as Huggan himself acknowledges subsequently, that the postcolonial novel bites back, that the postcolonial writer of the global South manage to find a way to critique their own sociological position in forms of "cultivated exhibitionism" that resides in their formal and stylistic qualities (xi). The Indian postcolonial and ecocritical thinker and critic Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee while partially accepting Huggan's arguments, urges to pay attention to the themes and contents in the postcolonial novel/ novels of the global South, besides the formal and stylistic qualities, for "much of the literary specificity ─ and what we may call cultural politics ─ resides therein" (09). The story of the postcolonial

novel representing the general socio-environmental conditions of the global South, as Mukherjee argues, about the necessary interlinked devastation of humans, non-humans, air, water and soil is experienced as a performance of the story, "a disturbing experience that prevents any easy consumption of the story as merely another simple pleasure, a supping of the more exotic product of the world." (11) Literatures from the global South thus try to interrogate and subvert this normative, egalitarian Northern literary representations of the environment, in the process trying to ground and de-exoticise the reading of the environment of the South, thereby providing a just case to prove that the subaltern can and indeed speak out.

One of the foundational arguments that run through the environmental discourse of the global South is that the environment stands as a testimony to the violent process of imperialism and colonialism. Thereby, it is essential to understand the mutually intertwined relationship between history of the environment with that of histories of imperialism, colonialism and accompanying modern capitalism. Colonialism (and postcolonialism/neocolonialism) needs to be understood as a particular stage of the flow of global capital since the primary aim of the colonial empires was to enrich themselves through trade in resources, both material and financial capital, chiefly through resource extraction and plantation in the colonies and then siphoning off those resources to the metropolitan centre ─ a process which helped to strengthen and perpetuate the capitalist structure in an almost never ending exploitative feedback loop. Lenin observed how capitalism became a "world system" through colonial exploitation and severe financial strangulations by a handful of 'advanced' countries on the majority population of the world (646). The basic feature of capitalism, as both Marx and Engels has observed long ago, is its tendency to concentrate in one zone while emptying the other. Colonialism (or capitalism) led to massive drainage of both natural resources and capital from the periphery to the metropolis, leading to uneven geographical developments and rampant environmental destruction in the global South. Colonialism and accompanying capitalism had constructed a dichotomous relationship between the centre and the periphery ─ something that was and is primarily reflected in the material realities of the environment of the global South. Trying to explore the mutually entangled relationship between land and colonialism, the Palestinian scholar Edward Said argued in (SAID,1993), how for the natives "the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss of the locality to the outsider" and how through such an act of "geographical violence ... virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and brought under control." (77) Said underscored the

necessity of understanding the land or by extension the earth to comprehend the complex ramifications of colonialism. If Said tried to delve into the geographical imperatives of colonialism, Franz Fanon, the Martinican scholar pointed out decades earlier in *The Wretched of the Earth* (FANON, 1961), that for the colonised people the land is central to their fundamental existence as it "provides bread and ... dignity" (09). Exploring the unholy nexus between land, colonialism and capitalism, Fanon goes on to argue how "[c]apitalism, in its expansionist phase, regarded the colonies as a storehouse of raw materials which once processed could be unloaded on the European market." (26) Such arguments substantiate the veracity of Richard Grove's findings when he argues much later in his book *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of the Environmentalisms, 1600-1860* (1995), that the environmental destructiveness of the colonial experience had its roots in the "ideologically 'imperialist' attitudes [of the Empire} toward the environment" (06). It is this awareness about the interdependence of imperial history and environmental degradation, capitalism and ecology that leads Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier to propose for a radical rethinking of the basic conceptual framework of social ecology for a proper understanding of the socio-environmental crisis of the global South ─ differences that takes into consideration the disparity of wealth of the people of the region as a result of the history of colonialism and imperialism: "If poverty arises, or is thought to arise, from unequal economic and ecological distribution, then we may expect that social movements against the rich will also be ecological movements" (75). Guha and Alier uses the capacious term 'environmentalism of the poor' to define the environmental realities of the people of the global South and their everyday environmental struggles in which issues of ecology are so interlinked with more realistic, complex and pressing issues of human rights, ethnicity and distributive justice that it is almost impossible to comprehend one without a reference to the other.[2]

As a corrective to the predominant machinations implicit within colonial environmental historiography in which history is often repressed to solitary moments of communion with nature, scholars, writers and activists from the global South attempts to exhume the tortured and scarred history of the colonial past by exposing the vicious link between landscape and colonisation. Much prior to Said's famous pronouncement on how the Empire and literature underwrite each other, the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) brings to the fore how people's connection with the land is intimately moulded by his culture and how this relationship evolves with time as a result of

the cultural encounter between the natives and the colonisers. Although Achebe's novel scarcely count as an ecocritical text in the traditional ecocritical sense of the term, since scholars tend to read it more rather as an anticolonial text, Achebe's mapping of Nigeria's apparent transition from a precolonial Igbo community to a 'modern' British imperial colony depicts the gradual cultural and ethical shifts among the natives of Africa which finally paved the way for the imperial colonising mission. Achebe describes the precolonial organic bond between the humans and the earth, a relationship that had its roots in the genealogical understanding of the land, and which was mediated across generations through their culture and value system: "The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them" (122). But this organic bond between humans and the earth is disrupted with the introduction of a foreign culture and political rule. Achebe anticipates in a way what Said describes as a process in which colonial servitude is inaugurated with the "loss of locality to the outsider". But, if Achebe is critical of territorial colonialism as a result of the loss of the land to the coloniser, he is much more critical of the imperial cultural machineries, especially the way religion was used as a tool of the Empire in the imperial colonising mission, something which Desmond Tutu, the South African Anglican cleric and anti-apartheid activist points out in scathing terms: "When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land." (qtd. in Burton 228) Thus territorial colonisation through military occupation and cultural hegemonisation exposed the once pristine African frontiers to unchecked environmental exploitation.

Territorial colonialism lead to political colonialism and opened up the opportunity for unlimited resource exploitation and capital accumulation mainly through resource extraction and plantation economy. The silver mining in the Andes in South America by the colonial Spanish empire in the sixteenth century is an example of how colonial resource extraction brought havoc to both the environment and the people of the region. The Spanish empire in order to meet the demand of silver going destroyed the entire topography of the region and the area was denuded of its vegetation to ensure a steady supply of timber and fuel for its mining operations. Additionally, the heavy tax levied on agriculture not only destroyed traditional indigenous farming but also compelled the otherwise reluctant peasants to join mining operations thereby ensuring the arrangement of labours for extraction for the colonisers. A similar history of colonial extraction and resource exploitation marks the

history of the tropical island of Nauru. Indiscriminate mining for phosphate deposits by Germans, British and Australian colonialists led to once self sufficient Nauru people dependent on foreign aid. The Pacific Island novelist Daryl Tarte in his novel *Islands of the Frigate Bird* (2008) lays bare the unimaginable environmental horrors and severe human rights violations in the Pacific islands as a result of European colonial expeditions primarily for the sake of phosphate deposit extraction. Narrated from the perspective of the marginalised and exploited people of the Pacific, the novel describes how both the landscape of the atolls and its inhabitants were treated as dispensable in the race for economic supremacy.

The Guyanese author and anticolonial activist Martin Carter in his poem "Listening to the Land" (1951) explores how it is essential to enter into a dialogue with the landscape in order to expose the brutal history of colonial violence and erasures embedded in the earth. Right from the beginning of the poem Carter stresses how he "bent down", "kneeling" on his "knee" to "listen to the land" but all he heard was "tongueless whispering/ as if some buried slave wanted to speak again". Carter's description of Caribbean ecology is not that of a *locus amoenus* or an idealisation of a neoromantic landscape, rather it describes a scarred plantocratic landscape of the Caribbean owing to extreme colonial exploitation. Carter envisions "listening to the land" as central to understanding the past, to recognise how the empire has exploited both the landscape and its people and what means were available to those severely exploited by such colonial landscaping and re-landscaping. Carter cannot hear properly what the slave is saying except some "tongueless whispering", but by "listening to the land" he believes that he will be able to uncover the collective unconscious of the people of the Caribbean, since the land stands as a testimony to violent colonial oppression and depredation.

In a similar vein Jamaica Kinkaid in *A Small Place* (1988) points out how the British Empire wiped out the entire forested area of Antigua for cotton, tobacco and sugarcane cultivation and replaced the indigenous population with imported slaves thereby making the entire island dry and dependant on tourism. Kinkaid argues how behind the apparent veil of romance of an idyllic Edenic landscape there lies a brutal history of gross colonial exploitation on both the environment and the people of Antigua. A similar history of environmental degradation may be traced back in the forest areas in India. The Indian forest management under the British colonial administration left the Indian forest areas in a much worse state than when colonial forestry first began in India. As Ramachandra Guha points out

citing a Scottish forester, that "Is it not the case that the history of civilized man in his colonization of new countries has been in every age substantially this — he has found the country a wilderness; he has cut down trees, and he has left it a desert."(GUHA & MARTINEZ-ALLIER, 2000, p. 28) The imperatives of what Said, Fanon and Guha argues is that the colonial project of the Empire had its roots in the capitalist ideology which in turn was integrally linked to the exploitation of the land and its people in the colonies.

Beyond the observations of Marx, Lenin, Said and Guha that primarily deals with the theories of capitalist origin of the European empire as a territorial entity primarily through military conquests and exploitation of the indigenous people, it is essential to understand the intellectual history behind the origin of the European empire, to find out the conceptual threads of genesis of colonialism. Sir Ronald Ross, the British scientist, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1902 for his discovery of the pathogen for malaria argued in his paper "The Malaria Expedition to West Africa" that "the success of Imperialism would depend largely upon success with the microscope" (36). Sir Ross's argument blatantly hints at how ever since the beginning, the study of natural philosophy and science in the West were intimately involved with the intellectual and practical processes of empire building particularly that of the western European states, paving the way for the capitalist economy which defined modernity. Though the naturalist philosophers of the seventeenth century had its ideological foundation in Christian theology with their primary aim relying on an agrarian trope to restore Adam's prelapsarian dominion in the Garden of Eden, it is interesting to note how their propositions had its practical roots in commercial enterprises. In fact the theological argument of the natural philosophers of the seventeenth century to retrieve Adam's mastery as manifested in his perfect knowledge of the natural world, a knowledge which enabled him to give correct names to all creatures of the earth, but which he had lost as a result of his Fall may be argued as a theory of the Empire itself. Most of the natural philosophers and scientists later on were either directly or indirectly involved with the capitalist enterprises of the empires' colonising forces. Francis Bacon held shares with the Virginia Company, the Newfoundland Company and voiced extensively for Ireland's colonisation. Robert Boyle served in the board of the East India Company, held shares in the Hudson Bay Company, and served on the Council of Foreign Plantations (IRVING, 2008, p. 01). Again Sir Hans Sloane worked with the East India, South Sea and Royal African companies and Sir Charles Darwin and Sir Joseph Banks rode on the voyages of British exploration all of which helped colonialism, and paved ways for setting up of the British Empire. The other motif apart from

the agrarian aspect of the restoration of human's empire over the natural world, as Sarah Irving argues was epistemic. The epistemic aspect consisted in reclaiming the encyclopaedic knowledge of the natural world which Bacon argued in *Valerius Terminus* as "a restitution and reinvesting (in great part) of man to the sovereignty and power (for whensoever he shall be able to call the creatures by their true names he shall again command them) which he had in his first state of creation" (222). Bacon's idea of renaming may be linked to Carolus Linnaeus' renaming the flora and fauna of the New World through the common language of Latin. This Linnaean taxonomy has been critiqued by Jamaica Kincaid in *My Garden (Book)*:

> These countries in Europe shared the same botany, more or less, but each place called the same thing by different names; and these people who make up Europe were (are) so contentious anyway, they would not have agreed to one system for all the plants they had in common, but these new plants from far away, like the people far away, had no history, no names, and so they could be given names. And who was there to dispute Linnaeus, even if there was someone who would listen? (122)

Although Linnaeus' binomial nomenclature was understood as a scientific method of classification capable of managing the huge floral profusion, historians of science, such as, Richard Drayton, John Gascoigne, Steven Harris, Ray MacLeod, David Philip Miller, Francos Regourd and Emma Spary argued how the study of plants and its renaming was intimately connected to the expansion and consolidation of the hegemony of the European colonial project. In the eighteenth century across Europe, political economists from English and French mercantilist to German and Swedish cameralists propounded how an exact knowledge of nature was a key to amassing huge national wealth and power. The linguistic imperialism inherent within Linnaeus' system of classification obscured the plants of vital informations such as its medicinal values, biogeographical distribution, cultural valence and history to a celebration of the deeds of European men. Although Linnaeus recognised and reorganised the knowledge of the Asiatics and Arabians as ancient and comprehensive, he didn't chose their language for he considered them as barbarous; a skewed observation which finds an echo later in Macaulay when he argued that Sanskrit and Arabic were "barren of useful knowledge", "fruitful of monstrous superstitions", and contained "false history, false astronomy, false medicine" (07). This reconfiguration of the biotic forms on earth has been likened by Vandana Shiva to the latest process of patenting life forms and indigenous knowledge by the giant transnational corporations which produce nothing but a "monoculture of knowledge" (SHIVA, 1999, p. 05).

It is hard to miss that at the heart of European colonialism was an environmental double standard, something which Lawrence Buell otherwise calls "environmental doublethink" (04), for while the European national space was imagined as an idyllic garden where neither violence not labour intrude, the colonies were subjected to unprecedented environmental horrors and human rights violation. This imperial ecological duplicity has been pointed out by V.S Naipaul in his autobiographical novel *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987). Looking through an environmental double prism to interrogate the dichotomous relationship existing at the core of the centre/periphery relationship in matters of natural resource distribution, Naipaul argues that it is the exploitation of the transatlantic colonies which made the wealth, luxury and affluence in the imperial centre a reality.

The encounter of colonialism with the indigenous people was also an encounter between alternate epistemologies of nature. One of the central epistemological legacies of European colonialism is the idea of environment itself ─ as a concept distinct from nature and culture and which requires institutions and policies to govern it. Colonial capitalist ideologies have strongly contributed to an oppressive relationship between nature and humans especially in the countries of the global South. Colonial capitalism severed the organic and holistic relationship between humans and nature and there was a marked shift in the understanding of nature from a living, contiguous organism to something as fragmented and dead and which needs to be controlled. Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) explores how humans' relationship with the non-humans is deeply conditioned by the way they situate themselves in nature. Trying to probe into the human-animal conflict and contemporary environmental exploitation in the Sundarbans, Ghosh observes how the pre-colonial symbiotic relationship between humans and nature based on equalising ethos and mutual respect was broken down with the British colonialism. The commercialising and revenue logic of the British which later on gave way to preservation of a diminished core for sustainable yield and state revenues redrew the lines of relatedness between humans and nature by placing "the burden of conservation on those who can least afford it" (GHOSH, 2004, 397) so much so that both were pitted against each other.

If the roots of current ecological crisis in the global South lie in a history of unprecedented loot and plunder during the colonial period which led to severe depredation of material resources of the colonies but which made the idea of laissez-faire an ecological myth and an economic fantasy in Victorian England, an urgent need has also been felt to decode how the contemporary ecological realities can be linked to complex reticulate structure of

global neo-colonial and neoliberal order. Though colonies have formally ceased to exist after World War II, informally it inaugurated a regime of severe and more sustained exploitation of the erstwhile colonies as the nature of capitalism changed from industrial to financial. Said refers this situation to a political process through which despite the West having parted with their former colonial territories in Asia and Africa have retained them as financial markets over which they continued to rule morally and intellectually (SAID, 1994, p. 27). While capitalism during the colonial phase was interested in extracting certain material riches out of the colonies to fuel the industries of the metropolitan centres, in the post-colonial times the former colonial territories were turned into as Fanon argues, "an economically dependent country" (55) to ensure a long term market of goods. With the end of the Cold War as the balance of global power shifted from Europe to North America, especially the United States, a country which has in recent times come to be regarded as the vanguard of planetary ecological consciousness but which ironically has ended up doing much more to "reinvent the imperial tradition for the twenty-first century" (LAZARUS, 2006, p. 20) by initiating what many believe to be the chronic engenderment of a late capitalist-world, it is the global South which continue to be at the receiving end of such a late-capitalist economy. This late-capitalist economy inaugurated a new historical condition in the global South which Pablo Mukherjee argues to be an "intensified and sustained exploitation of the majority of humans and non-humans of the former colonies by a cartel composed of their own and 'core' metropolitan European/north American elites" (06) whose interests as Brenan argues are embodied in giant transnational corporations and speculative financial transactions. Rob Nixon finds this to be "an era of resurgent imperialism, an era in which — sometimes through outright, unregulated plunder, sometimes under camouflage of developmental agendas — a neoliberal order has widened, with ruinous environmental repercussions, the gulf between the expanding classes of the super-rich and our planet's 3 billion ultrapoor." (37) Linda Colley pertinently rues that "[w]e may be living in post-colonial times, but we are not yet living in post-imperial times." ("What is Imperial History Now" quoted in Nixon, *Slow Violence*... 233)

Writers and critics of the global South have come to interrogate the sanctity and universality of western ideology of development and progress in this neo-colonial period. Development was to be a post-colonial project, a conscious choice for the newly emergent nation for the progress and improved well being of all. Unfortunately, development was equated with the categories of economic growth and resource utilization of the erstwhile

colonising countries which did not have to go through the history of subjugation and exploitation of colonialism. Thus, the grand narrative of development, as Vandana Shiva argues, being tied to "[c]oncepts and categories about economic development and natural resource utilisation that had emerged in the specific context of industrialisation and capitalist growth in the centre of colonial power, were raised to the level of universal assumptions and applicability in the entirely different context of basic needs satisfaction for the people of the newly independent Third World countries." (SHIVA, 2001, p.1) Shiva's argument found an echo earlier in the German sociologist Wolfgang Sachs when he pointed out wryly that "what development means depends on how the rich nations feel." (26) Sach's observation augurs ill for the countries of the global South, the sufferers of the global capitalist structure, for under the guise of technical and financial assistance, the North pushes its own economic and political agendas. De Rivero observes that this myth of development, taking false support from the Enlightenment theory of progress and Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest encourages the South to close the gap with the North and in so doing forcing the South to subscribe to a capitalist growth model that has devastating social and environmental cost (110). Development and the progress it implies is thus best understood as colonizing anti-colonialism. A concomitant idea to the ideas of development and progress is the idea of globalisation. Literally globalisation means the transfer and accessibility of trade and ideas between and across nations. However, globalisation, as, DeRivero sums up, is the result t so much of free global competition among nations, but of a network of agreements and productive and financial activities among the transnational corporations." (29) DeRivero goes on to argue, that while the earlier colonial powers tried to balance between their global ambitions and international responsibilities, the executives of the present day transnational companies do not want to link heir global negotiations to the environmental damage they accrue. (33). Taking a jibe at India's post-colonial agenda of development and questioning the idea of "National Progress" especially the construction of megadams in post-Independent India, displacing thousands of people particularly the subalterns "for the greater good of the Nation" (ROY, 2016, p.25), Roy argues: "How can you measure Progress when you don't know what it costs and who has paid for it? How can the 'market' put a price on things ─ food, clothes, electricity, running water ─ when it doesn't take into account the real cost of production? ("The Greater Common Good" 43) Such unequal distribution of natural resources under the neoliberal capitalist economy, the brunt of which is faced by the subalterns, opens up fundamental questions of rightful ownership. Alluding to Jawaharlal

Nehru's statement where he extols dams as the 'Temples of Modern India' (40) and urges the populace of the nation to "suffer in the interest of the country", Roy argues how the multi-billion dollar dam industry having been decommissioned in the countries of the North for its social and ecological hazards is deliberately pushed to the global South in the name of developmental aid and globalisation and made possible by the vicious nexus between politicians, bureaucrats and dam construction companies. Regarding such developmental projects as 'undemocratic', Roy argues that "[t]hey're a brazen means of taking water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich." (42) Thus the struggle of the poor for social and environmental justice should not be viewed as an isolated "tribal war", "a remote rural war" or even "an exclusively Indian war" but rather "a war for the rivers and the mountains and the forests of the world" (65). Taking a shot at globalisation she points out: "I think of globalization like a light which shines brighter and brighter on a few people and the rest are in darkness, wiped out. They simply cannot be seen. Once you get used to not seeing to something, then, slowly, it's no longer possible to see it." (qtd. in Nixon 01)

Ken Saro-Wiwa, generally regarded as 'Africa's most visible environmental martyr' (NIXON, 2005, p. 234) presents how both social justice and ecological justice is integral to people in the global South. Saro-Wiwa understood how the idea of environmental justice in integrally connected of issues of ethnicity, pollution and human rights as well as with the larger local, national and global politics. He recognised the futility of trying to comprehend the socio-environmental issues of Africa on a purely nationalistic framework as Nigeria's socio-environmental degradation is the result of a collaborative plunder by his own nation-state whom he calls 'internal colonialists' and the giant transnational corporation of Shell and Chevron. In his book *A Month and a Day* (1995), Saro-Wiwa points out how their struggle is both an ecological struggle against pollution of their land and waters by the giant transnational oil conglomerates especially Shell and Chevron and a political struggle against the gradual extermination of the Ogoni people by systematically dispossessing them of their natural resources and human rights. Helon Habila's novel *Oil on Water* is a delineation of the environmental realities of the Niger Delta in Africa by addressing issues of the environment along with issues of pollution, human rights and violence. Habila pointed out that he "wanted to carry the readers into the landscape that's being destroyed and show people who are also being destroyed ... to draw attention to the environment and the people who are living on that land and are really suffering" ("Rivers of Oil and Blood: PW Talks with Helon Habila". Web). Habila tries to look into the issue of the environment in the Niger Delta through his

depiction of the experiences of the ethnic minorities of the region, who are barely visible even on the global economic periphery, communities who are pitted against the mighty transnational oil companies working in tandem with maximum governmental impunity. *Oil on Water* indicates how environmental justice can be of paramount importance. In a very real sense, the novel focuses on the unending struggle between the micro-minorities and macro-multinational oil companies in the region. Habila tries to fit in this novel a series of otherwise apparently ill-fitting series of causes — an African commitment to environmental and human rights, minority rights and the slow violence faced by the people of the region as a result of the environmental pollution indulged in by the multinational oil companies which Saro-Wiwa succinctly termed as "ecological genocide" (SARO-WIWA, 1991, p. 71). Habila notes how "the narratives of belonging and ownership of natural resources are reshaping the politics of claim making in many communities of the Niger Delta, and also how the politics of claim making is reshaping the politics of belonging." (ADUMBI, 2013, p. 293) The novel indeed shows how the delta people are treated very much as dispensable both by the vampire state and the oil conglomerates. But Habila also introduces a discourse on the propriety of the use of violence in the struggle for environmental justice. Responding to a question about his idea about the use of violence in achieving environmental justice Habila clarified: "I care about the environment and I care about Nigeria, my country. People are taking up arms to fight the government over the land ... Even if they are criminals, they are doing criminal things, what about the land?" ("Rivers of Oil and Blood: PW Talks with Helon Habila") The Professor, one of the central characters of the novel fighting to protect the environment clarifies this issue to the journalist Rufus in a parting tone:

> Write only the truth. Tell them about the flares you see at night, and the oil on the water. And the soldiers forcing us to escalate violence every day. Tell them how we are hounded daily in our own land. Where do they want us to go, tell me where? Tell them, we are going nowhere. This land belongs to us. That is the truth, remember that. (HABILA, 2011, p. 209-10)

The Indian novelist Indra Sinha presents how the Western narratives of globalisation and development often prove to be counterproductive for the environment of the countries in global South and its people. Thinly based on the Bhopal Gas Tragedy of 1984, Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* describes India's toxic postcolonial landscape. Sinha brings before the world a chilling truth, how the 'advanced' countries of the global North in cosy collusion with the ruling elites of the countries of the global South pushes their multinational companies in the

name of aid, progress and development, who operate with dangerous technology resulting in mass scale death, destruction and a ravaged environment. Sinha's fictional city of Khaufpur is a testimony of how forces of globalisation transform the material realities of people's existence when transnational companies in luring after the benefits of globalisation outsource toxicity by establishing potentially threatening factories in the global South where labour is cheap and where there are new markets to tap. Khaufpur stands both as specific and non-specific, a stand-in for Bhopal as well as a synecdoche for all the poisoned communities of the global South. Sinha acknowledges in an interview that Khaufpur is a city of the imagination and he wished people not to take it literally as Bhopal in every little detail; that at one point he "had thought of calling it Receio and setting the city in Brazil. It could just as easily have been set in West Africa or Indonesia, because the story is really about how powerless, disenfranchised people deal with the monstrous injustices that are heaped upon them." (Sandhya. Web.) Sinha makes this point clear through Zafar, one of the central characters of the novel fighting against the socio-environmental injustice and the subsequent medico-legal disaster: ''Is Khaufpur the only poisoned city? It is not. There are others and each one of has its own Zafar. There'll be a Zafar in Mexico City and others in Hanoi and Manila and Halabja and there are the Zafars of Minamata and Sevaso, of Sao Paolo and Toulouse..." Like Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring*, Sinha brings in the same notion of biocidal victimisation, when an old woman, herself a victim of the company poisoning, points out to the American company lawyer: "Mr Lawyer, we lived in the shadow of your factory, you told us you were making medicine for the fields. You were making poisons to kill insects, but you killed us instead. I would like to ask, was there ever much difference, to you?" (Sinha 306) Sinha, by corollary hints at the notion of environmental racism when dealing with issues of the environment of the global South. Though Bhopal Gas Tragedy is regarded as the world's worst industrial disaster (KHARE, 1990, p. 12); (MOREHOUSE, 2015, p. 475), as the "Hiroshima of the chemical Industry." (Morehouse 475), compared to Chernobyl, Bhopal received much less attention from the North; Chernobyl being close to the global North, its threat was presumed to be much imminent than Bhopal which situated in the global South, its threat was assumed to be limited to its national border.

Writers and activists from the global South are sceptic of the superpower parochialism indulged in by countries of the North especially the USA. USA's foreign policy has had a long history of reinforcing asymmetrical relations between a domestically regulated environment and an unregulated environment elsewhere, outside the US national border.

American insularity of the environmental havocs they create outside their national geographical border added to America's pre-eminence as the leader of the contemporary neoliberal empire exerts a self proclaimed right to rupture the lives and ecosystems of millions who while living at a geographically remote are very much vulnerable to the force fields of US foreign and defence policies. While such asymmetrical environmental relations is clearly exemplified in the "economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country" or "encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the Least Developed Countries" (Confidential World Bank memo, December 12, 1991, qtd. in Nixon, *Slow Violence*... 01), it is nowhere more evident than in the hundreds of nuclear tests carried out by USA and other European nations in the Pacific. Robert Barclay's *Melal: A Novel of the Pacific* brings into focus the unimaginable environmental horrors faced by the inhabitants of the Marshall Islands as a result of the continuous nuclear tests carried out by the USA in the Pacific Islands. Although written in the background of the Bravo blast of 1954 at Bikini Atoll, the blast or the incidents leading to the blast does not feature in the novel directly. Instead, the nuclear holocaust is referred to in the novel indirectly as a nightmarish incident through the narratives of the characters. The implicit racist attitude of the USA becomes quite evident when one notes that in 1953 the US Atomic Energy Commission communicated to the American Congress that "tests should be held overseas until it could be established more definitely that continental detonations would not endanger the public health and safety."(qtd. in Smith-Norris 06) Seeking "empty" test spaces, the USA carried out their Cold War programme of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands. But the island region was not *terra nullis* but inhabited by indigenous peoples since thousands of years. The people living on those islands for long were forcefully relocated to other islands, and were told by the US administrative authorities that this would be "for the good of mankind and to end all world wars" (qtd. in McArthur 264; Brown 40). Barclay's *Melal* brings to light the chilling truth, that those very countries in which the contents of the modern environmental imagination were born are in fact responsible for the environmental devastation of the Marshall Islands.

The literary texts chosen in this paper tries to understand/ situate the environmental realities of the global South from the perspective of the intertwined vicious nexus existing between colonialism, neo-colonialism and capitalism. However, the reference to global North and global South should not be taken as an entirely closed system, rather it should be understood as an open framework that also tries to situate more similar situations existing at the very heart of Euro-north American 'core' i.e. North within South and South within North.

But what binds these apparently distant geographical locales in the North and South is that they are the sites of an intensified environmental exploitation by a capitalist ruling class ─ a capitalist economy which is primarily responsible for creating uneven geographical developments i.e. pockets of extreme wealth on the one hand and large areas of poverty and underdevelopment on the other, a general condition in the global South and in the poor areas within the North. Though the texts selected speak of a few countries of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands, the socio-ecological issues raised in them are emblematic of the general environmental realities of the global South and of the poor pockets within the affluent North. Thus the issues raised in these texts are both local and global at the same time.

Notes

1. Such cartographic categorisation is, however, not strict as both "rich" and "poor" countries lie on either side of the line. For example, Australia and New Zealand despite lying south of thirty degree North latitude are considered de facto members of North.
2. For more details, see, Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier's *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (1997); Ramachandra Guha's *Environmentalism: A Global History* (2000); Joan Martinez-Alier's *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (2002).
3. This idea of Empire forms the basis of Francis Bacon's *The Great Instauration* which delved to "enlarge the bounds of human empire to the effecting of all things possible" (480). Again, Boyle in his tract *Of the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy* describes his project as to justify "*The Empire of Man Over Inferior Creatures*" (406).

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