

**NATURALIZING WOMEN, FEMINIZING
NATURE: AN ECOFEMINIST ANALYSIS OF
ANGLOPHONE SRI LANKAN FICTION**

By

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

ISLAMABAD

MARCH, 2021

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M. A., National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, 2017

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

In English

To

FACULTY OF ENGLISH STUDIES



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

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Thesis Title: Naturalizing Women, Feminizing Nature: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Anglophone Sri Lankan Fiction

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Naturalizing Women, Feminizing Nature: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Anglophone Sri Lankan Fiction** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of M.Phil. degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Naturalizing Women, Feminizing Nature: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Anglophone Sri Lankan Fiction

By invoking Greeta Gaard's instructive concepts of Naturalization of women, Feminization of Nature, this dissertation discusses the subjugation of women and exploitation of nature in Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of Thousand Mirrors* and Romesh Gunsekera's *Heaven's Edge*. Women are naturalized and nature is feminized by finding parallels between these two. In the selected fiction, women's bodies are not only co-opted biosphere but also treated as landscapes in the form of rape and abduction in war. Similarly, nature is feminized because of its qualities like nurturing and caring. Moreover, it is presented as mother earth, barren land, and a sexual object. These shared attributes allow patriarchal ideologies to dominate nature and women through oppressive strategies. All oppressions are interlinked in one way or the other, especially when war figures prominently in both the novels and damages the landscapes therein. The female characters break the societal sanctions, and resurface in order to move vertically while deconstructing the binaries of male-female, Sinhala-Tamil, and human non-human. Moreover, the selected texts show that binaries are the root cause of most of the problems: women and men should work irrespective of class, race and gender for a healthy planet. We need to treat all living creature equally with kindness. I use Catherine Belsey's method of textual analysis and Rachel Alsop's ethnographic method in order to interpret the selected fiction. My research has broken the grounds for other researchers focusing on Anglophone Sri Lankan fiction from the perspective of ecofeminism. This research is likely to creatively contribute in the production of knowledge in the area of ecofeminism.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- *HE* *Heaven's Edge*
- *ITM* *Island of Thousand Mirrors*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful to Allah Almighty who enabled me to complete this work in due time.

A new language has to be invented to express my tremendous love and gratitude for my family who unconditionally supported me in all walks of life. I want to acknowledge my debt to my dear father, Muhammad Ilyas Khan, whose presence illuminates my life and my mother whose countless prayers always surround me like a guardian angel. Their sincere wishes helped me climb the ladder of success and made this project possible. Without the support of my family, this work was next to impossible. A bundle of thanks to the flutter of butterflies, my trio sisters, for their love and encouragement in sluggish times. I would like to extend a token of love for Dr. Anjuman Ilyas, my sister, for inspiring me to work hard. The jagged edges of jealousy and silly fights created an aura of competition between us and I assume that is one reason of my epistemic verticality. I would like to express my deepest affection for my uncles who motivated and supported me to conquer every stage of life. They are real blessings! Loads of love for all of them, especially Niaz uncle, who kept on reminding me the dragging nature of dissertation, at least once a month.

I would like to offer special thanks to my wonderful, amazing, motivating and inspiring supervisor, Dr. Sibghatullah Khan. I knew right from the very first day that I was in the best hands. His availability made this project flourish and grow like bamboos and his sincere efforts naturalized my work in academia. Dr. Sibghat's insightful remarks and critical questions on my work shaped the mauled body of this document and improved the quality of content. His positive and constructive criticism on my several drafts improved them gradually. I am always in debt to him for making me what I am today. I am really blessed to have him as my mentor. He grafted/irrigated certain ideas on the seed that sprouted under the sunshine of biological parents and his guidance provided food and water to slumbering thoughts of this tiny sapling and help nourish into a strong luxurious tree. I want to extend an additional thanks for him for being there on "Tuesdays" sharp at 10 that always reminds me of *Tuesdays with Morrie*.

Thanks to all people who walked with me in this wonderful endeavor of my life. Special thanks to my all friends who amazed and entertained me when this project was on my nerves. I offer my sincere, heartiest and humble gratitude to Ms. Ruth for supporting me in this academic journey. Discussions on certain conflicting ideas and different cross

cultural references assisted me look at things with different angles. A profound gratitude for Anum Yousaf; colossal thanks to Sahar and Shaista for assisting me in this journey.

I owe thanks to my university and especially entire English Department faculty for facilitating me in this journey.

Last but not least, I am especially thankful to slurpy teas and frothy coffees for interrupting and shaking off my uninvited slumbers.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my biological and spiritual parents.

My father, **Muhammad Ilyas Khan**, who taught me that to be human in true sense is the real accomplishment of a person, and my mother, **Zahida Begum**, who imparted to extend kindness not only to humans but also to non-human objects. Ma'am **Ambrina Qayoum**, like a mother, helped me walk in the corridor of academia and gave me roots to anchor in this land. **Dr. Sibghatullah Khan**'s fatherly concerns inculcated innumerable qualities in me that would help sail the ship of my life in the right direction. The struggles of these people made me a better person, therefore I dedicate my thesis to them and they all are very close to my heart. I just want to be like them!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!”

Sojourner Truth, *Ain’t I a Woman?* : A Speech

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates the ecofeminist concerns of Nayomi Munaweera and Romesh Gunsekera in their novels *Island of Thousand Mirror* and *Heaven’s Edge* respectively. Employing Greeta Gaard’s lens, I attempt to examine how ecofeminist issues figure in my selected texts. The common thread that runs across these selected works is the treatment of women and nature in the backdrop of Sri Lankan civil war. This research reflects the impact of environmental degradation on the lives of women, and it attempts to evaluate the role played by different characters to protect ecosystem. The main argument of the study is that women and nature are subjected to oppression in almost similar modes. Investigating the reasons of their subordinate positions, I explore the possible solution to these problem for “sav[ing] the earth” (Gaard 5).

I argue that women and nature seem to be equally exploited at the hands of capitalist man with his baggage of bias in terms of class, race, and gender. One of the main concerns in ecofeminism is to dismantle the existing binaries and liberate women and nature from the clutches of capitalist patriarchal strangleholds. Greeta Gaard has used the main title in her essay “Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature” and the relevance of the title may be vindicated here. The main title, “Naturalizing Women, Feminizing Nature,” of my dissertation provides the crux of my argument and the selected novels provide plenty of space to discuss “naturalization of women” and “feminization of nature.” The subtitle of this project states that I make an eco-feminist reading of Sri Lankan fiction. Before moving forward, I briefly discuss the terms. “Naturalizing Women” means that women possess the same qualities as nature, and “feminization of nature” means that nature and women embody the same characteristics. It is the capitalist man that feminizes nature by treating landscapes and the environment like woman. Gaard explains this stance in another essay in a positive vein by ascribing motherliness to earth. Man destroys the nurturing and nourishing aspects of Mother Earth. As Greeta Gaard writes in “Ecofeminism and Native

American Culture” that “mothers are expected to be selfless, generous and nurturing” (302). It seems that mothering has subordinated women. The Mother Earth symbolism is, in fact, feminization of nature and qualities like producing and nurturing qualify nature to be a mother. Nature has femininity within it, and because of human’s behavior it has now become a “damsel in distress.”¹ The term “animalization of women” is implied in “naturalization of women,” therefore I discuss animalization of women under naturalization of women. The animalization of women refers to the treatment of women as animals and puts them in a vulnerable position. Carol Adam, in “The Feminist Traffic in Animals,” observes that the “others” are “feminized or animalized by the same ideological process in order to make their subordination seem more natural” (Gaard 8). The naturalization of women and feminization of nature gives justification for subordination of both at the hands of men.

In this dissertation, major part of my argument explores the treatment of women and nature by invoking Greeta Gaard’s theory of ecofeminism. In order to do this, I address the categorization of capitalist men at war on one hand and “working class, nonhuman, animals, underdeveloped nature and female” (Gaard 1) on the other hand which seems to be the main cause of certain social problems in South Asia, especially in Sri Lanka. According to Greeta Gaard’s theory of ecofeminism, the ideology of women and nature’s oppression is the same. She states that oppression based on class, race and gender sanctions the oppression of nature too. The feminists categorize the privileged and the oppressed in different groups. Being a feminist, Gaard writes that the privileged are upper middle class, human, “technologically and industrially developed male” (1). The privileged group always wants to dominate the oppressed one. In the theory of ecofeminism, the main assumption is that society is constructed on the base of dualism. The main concern of ecofeminism is to unravel these structures of dualisms. It may be said that dualism divides entities in two opposing groups which is the main cause of domination of stronger over the weaker and human over non-human. I also want to explore how naturalizing women and feminizing nature serves as justification for the domination of men. The aim of ecofeminists is to liberate women and nature simultaneously. This approach may help create a healthy planet to live.

Part of a larger argument explores the feminist concerns of these two writers in the selected fiction. Since the primary writers belong to Sri Lanka and this country survived civil war, these works celebrate the decades of war. I want to see how my selected writers

handle war and map out its horrors and consequently sufferings of human beings, especially children and women. I see that these conflicts eventually pollute the environment. My concern in this project is also to see and document the effects of environmental pollution and degradation on the lives of living entities, especially women and animals. The pollution and other human activities which involve the use of chemicals have some incredibly detrimental effects on the lives of women and animals constantly. The use of explosives in war zones makes the situation even worse; above all, it disrupts our ecosystem. The poor quality of life for humans, animals and environment demonstrates sexism, racism, classism, speciesism, and naturism. Gaard believes that all these problems reinforce the system of oppression.

I also want to address the question of subjugation and sufferings of rape victims and unravel the ideology that is responsible for their deteriorating condition. In the fiction of the two selected writers, I investigate the treatment of women along with ecological crisis. Part of my argument revolves around the idea that women's bodies are treated just like land in war decades. However, it seems to me that men constitute superior binary in contact with inferior binary of nature and women in order to disrupt both of them. All South Asian countries are underdeveloped and undergo certain issues global as well as local. Being underdeveloped, the women of certain places, perhaps, face many problems. There is an ever-growing group of South Asian writers who are constantly involved in contributing their part to protect this land from disasters and women from violence by invoking the awareness among people.

The men-women binaries, I argue, are man-made and there is a dire need to deconstruct these binaries. Gaard is inclusivist and she does not negate men from their duty to protect nature. This is not that one gender is protecting nature and the other is exploiting it. Gaard writes: "It is for this reason that I see coalition-building strategies as critical to our success" (5). Though whatever are our problems, I want to see what strategies are critical for our success. The aim of ecofeminism is to dismantle the hierarchy of patriarchy in order to liberate women from the oppressed group of society. Ecofeminists assert that "no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature" (Gaard 1). Therefore, the imperative of the liberation of nature cannot be overemphasized. The changing shades of nature in *Island of Thousand Mirror* and *Heaven's Edge* depict several problems of women and environment. For if one thing is certain, it is that women alone cannot "save the earth"; we need the

efforts of men as well” (Gaard 5). This approach of Gaard also dismantles the male-female binary. In the selected texts, the writers seem to give voice to the same stance regardless of their genders. Overall, my investigation may engage with the question as to whether men and women can transcend these binaries to become human.

My dissertation also argues that ecofeminism is not only related to women, one of the selected author is therefore a male writer. Male writers also contribute in finding some solutions for the environmental diseases and, like women, they also want to invoke environmental consciousness. The project under investigation discusses two writers, Nayomi Munaweera and Romesh Gunsekera, and partly investigates the differences, if any, in writings by men and women on the topic of ecofeminism. The selection of writers also support my argument that women alone cannot save the earth; we need the efforts of men as well. Though these two writers are diasporic, the issues that they highlight in their fiction attempt to balance the argument of my study.

Analyzing these writers in larger connection with environment, Sri Lankan society, and civil war, I have tried to trace their concerns for the sufferings of women and health of the “weathering”² environment. Since selected writers are Anglophone South Asian writers, therefore it would be useful to situate them within this context. For that, in the forthcoming pages, I intend to locate these writers in a larger context of South Asian literary and ecofeminist tradition in which my research is placed.

1.2 Locating Gunsekera and Munaweera’s Fiction in the Trajectory of Anglophone South Asian Literary and Ecofeminist Tradition

In order to locate the primary texts, my argument revolves around three stands. I have subdivided this part into three sections for clarity of purpose. In part I, I have looked into the historical trajectory of Anglophone South Asian Literary Tradition; in the second part, I have discussed eco-feminist tradition in detail. The third part locates my writers in South Asian and Ecofeminist tradition.

I

In order to locate this project in South Asia, it seems in order to have a brief overview of the history of South Asia. South Asia is a group of eight sovereign states: Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. On a larger level, my project addresses the issues of women and environmental concerns which

are worldwide. On a smaller scale, this is limited to South Asia, particularly Sri Lanka. This place, South Asia, seems to be threatened by environmental disasters such as earthquakes, floods, epidemics, coastal erosion, landslides and pollution that upsurge every day. This part outlines the major concerns of South Asian Anglophone literature by considering colonial, postcolonial and diaspora aura in South Asian writings, in general, and writing traditions of Sri Lankan writers in particular. As my project is limited to Sri Lankan fiction (and to Anglophone South Asian Literature on a larger scale), I focus on tracing the literary history of South Asian Anglophone writers only.

The British ruled subcontinent and they wanted their language to be the medium of instruction. In 1835, Macaulay's "Minutes on Indian Education" initiated the talk to create a class of people who would be "Indian in blood and color and English in taste," (374) therefore the people of the subcontinent learned English. English has been an integral part of Indian life for seventy years after British departure and Amritjit Singh and Nalini Iyer observe the pervasiveness of this language in India. When the people of the subcontinent learned English, they started writing in English as well. The Anglophone writers have been writing in English since late 80s. As Jain Sanga writes in his book *South Asian Novelist in English: A to Z* that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* is regarded the first Indian English novel that appeared in 1864.³ The major concerns of the writers of 18th century are the poverty and problems of women. When the British invaded these territories, the writers' approach towards writing also underwent some considerable evolution. Though some writers were writing in English since 1930s like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand.⁴ The novels of this period echo the themes of struggle for freedom, social issues like Hindu Muslim dynamics, and the status of untouchables (Sanga xiii). In 1930s, English writings did not enjoy a privileged recognition. According to Amritjit Singh and Nalini Iyer, the Indian writings in English gain recognition with the publication of Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English*.

Almost all states of South Asia have a colonial history and the influence of that sovereignty emerges in the expression of sublime thoughts of different writers. Sandeep Banerjee in "A Brief History of South Asia" presents an overview of the history of this place. To begin with, India and Pakistan separated into two different countries in 1947 and later independence was given to Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Though my project is limited to only Sri Lankan writers, and this Island has been a British colony since 1796, it gained independence in 1948. Other states like Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bhutan were not under

British control directly. The emergence of writing back to the empire gave some prominence to South Asian writings. After independence, the writers dealt with the theme of independence for example R.K Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* published in 1955 immerses the readers in the depth of independence. Kushwant Singh captures the seething pains of partition in *A Train to Pakistan* (1956). Furthermore, Salman Rushdie seminal work *Midnight Children*⁵ (1980) also gives some prominence to Anglophone South Asian literature.

Shakespeare is a writer of 16th century and the Postcolonial interpretation of *The Tempest*⁶ is possible. Postcolonial is a critical rather than historical term and post-coloniality is not confined to the text produced during or after British rule (Javed 2). Some South Asian writers were writing back even during colonial rule and articulated their notions for independence.⁷ South Asian writers address the colonial and postcolonial aura. Being third world intellectual, Arif Dirlik attacks the super needy question of Ella Shohat: "When exactly—does the 'post-colonial' begin?" (1) According to Derlik's opinion, the postcolonial started when third world intellectuals landed in the first world. In the same vein, Amritjit Singh and Nalini Iyer see the contribution of these scholars in Anglophone South Asian writings. According to them, the emergence of postcolonial studies is "coupled with the flow of graduate students from South Asian nation for language and literary study, has further contributed to South Asian Anglophone writings" (Singh and Iyer 211). When these scholars settled in the first world, the issues of diaspora emerge from their writings. The contribution of Arundhait Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* are included in the long list of "South Asian Diaspora."⁸

In the bulk of South Asian writings, there are diaspora writers and several contemporary indigenous writers who write in English and above all these indigenous writers consider it an Indian language. Sanga considers South Asian Literature: "a protean phenomenon" because it is a fluid process and it encompasses and embraces all changes which highlight the productive nature of this literature. For him, this is "a fluid process that constantly accommodates imaginative profusion" (Sanga xv). In this long list, few names are most prominent like Kamila Shamsie, Nadeem Aslam, Muhammad Hanif, Bilal Tanveer, Mohsin Hamid, Anita Desi, and Khalid Hussein. South Asian fiction has been shaped under the influence of all these factors. The relationship between diaspora, postcolonial and South Asian writings can be vexed and perhaps a bit difficult to mark

boundaries among them. Though the writers of South Asian territory engage with all the above discussed auras, Sri Lanka is no exception.

Anglophone Sri Lankan writers like A. Sivanandan, Shayam Selvadurai, Nihal De Silva, V.V. Ganeshanathan and some others have produced novels that deal with various themes from a Sri Lankan perspective. These writers provide the readers with the images of atrocious history of this part of South Asia. Though Sri Lanka is a small place, the writers of this territory have taken the issues of this world very seriously by capturing the events dexterously and expressing their concerns worldwide in the range of texts. Anglophone Sri Lankan writers' novels deal with the ethnic conflicts that hatched war, and these episodes are evident in the works of some prominent writers. Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies*⁹ explores the cause of civil war, unhappy marriages and the sufferings of rape victims. Different characters of Sivanandan struggle to guard the disintegrating country. Similarly, Shayam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*¹⁰ also deals with horrendous incidents of violence through the Tamil protagonist Arjie. The Tamil seeks refuge in Sinhala's house and in the end prefer to move to another place, Canada, as refugee. V.V. Ganeshanathan's *Love Marriage*¹¹ makes an attempt to capture the horrors of 1983. The theme of diaspora also emerges in the petals of this novel. In order to keep track of the political situation in the country, different characters are glued to the TV to watch news, in Colombia. Nihal De Silva's *The Road from Elephant Pass* published in 2003 and it also pictures war trodden Sri Lanka. Most critics consider it the book of nature and two main characters travel through forests. Nihal De Silva mirrors up the flora and fauna of Sri Lanka in his writing. War exploits the landscapes and ecosystem and different literary authors make an attempt to capture these incidents in literary works. These writers are Postcolonial, Diaspora or South Asian and we may put them under the umbrella category of Anglophone writings. The review of these novels shows that war plays out a crucial role in shaping Sri Lankan writings. However, it seems instructive to discuss Sri Lankan civil war and oozing ecofeminism to build firm grounds for the research in hand.

After locating the selected writers with the Anglophone literary tradition, it is useful to link them with the ecofeminist tradition. This is what I have aimed to do in the following section.

II

In this part, I discuss feminism and eco-criticism to see how the overlapping of these two gives birth to ecofeminism. Since my research focuses on the treatment of women and environment in ecofeminist terms, therefore, before discussing the research questions, significance of the study, and delimitation, it is instructive to provide a rationale of the theoretical concepts I have used for this research. That entails a brief discussion on ecofeminism as a branch of feminism and ecocriticism.

Eco-feminism is a multidisciplinary approach and it is considered as an offshoot of Feminism and Eco-criticism. To start with, the word feminism comes from the French word *Feminisme* and Feminism struggles for the equal opportunities for both men and women. According to online *Encyclopedia Britannica*, feminism is “the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes” (Brunell and Burkett 2019). This is a movement that started with the publication of “Vindication of the Rights of Woman” by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. She makes an attempt to trace out “the cause that degrades the sex, and prevent women from generalizing their observations” (54). In 1919, Virginia Woolf laid the foundation of feminist criticism in *A Room of One’s Own* and she elaborates this belief that men have treated women inferior. In twentieth century, other matters like the wake of Great Wars and The Great Depression of 1930 diverted mankind’s attention from the issues of feminism. Feminist issues, then, once again surfaced with the publication of Simon De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in 1949. She declares both French and Western societies as patriarchal (Bressler 104, my paraphrase). Women are relegated to oppression thereby the main focus of feminists is to talk about domination of women. Men must not have power over women as Mary Wollstonecraft rebuttals Rousseau’s claim and conversely holds this stance that women should have power over themselves. The oppression of women means that woman are suppressed and they are deprived of education and opportunities. In Spivakians term, these dominated and subjugated women are “subaltern.”¹² The aim of feminism is to provide these “subalterns” equal rights. There are different feminists like liberal feminist, marxist feminist, social feminist and radical feminist. The drawback in the sublime thoughts of all these feminist theories is that they are based on the logic of dualism.¹³ The logic of oppression operates in the essence of all these theories. In other words, all these theorists are exclusivist while Gaard is inclusivist.

Different theorists define ecocriticism differently and Glotfelty is the proponent of this theory and her contributions are crucial. Ecocriticism in Glotfelty's words is "the earth center[ed] approach" (xviii) and it shows the relationship between environment and literature. She defines ecocriticism as "study of literature and physical environment" (Glotfelty xix). Unlike other literary theories, the focus of an ecocritical approach is on outside. Sultan Demir writes in her thesis titled as "Ecofeminism Themes in American Women's Novels" that ecofeminism is also a criticism and its roots are connected with ecological thinking (23-24). Francoise d'Eaubonne coined the term ecofeminism in 1974 and she argues that the fate of human species and planet is at stake. Mary Dally quotes Francoise d'Eaubonne's claims in her book, *The Mary Dally Reader* that "no male-led revolution will counteract the horrors of overpopulation and destruction of natural resources" (141). Therefore, women should also come forward to participate and protect the natural resources. There are many women who started movements, like Chipko movement, for the protection of natural environment. While ecofeminism probes the connection between patriarchy and environmental obliteration, ecocriticism explores the connection of environmental destruction and human culture.

Many theorists like Judi Francoise d' Eaubonne, Carolyn Merchant, Val Plumwood, Cherry Glotfelty, Mary Mellor, Karen Warren and Greeta Gaard contributed in the development of the concept of ecofeminism. According to Greeta Gaard, ecofeminism has evolved from various movements like "peace movement, labor movements, women's health care, and the anti-nuclear, environmental and animal liberation movements" (1). The essence of ecofeminism is inclusive as Gauri defines ecofeminist theory in these words: "ecofeminist theory will recognize sympathy and compassion as a fundamental feature of any inclusive, liberatory theory. An inclusive ecofeminist theory suggests that compassion is crucial to undoing oppression in both theory and practice" (80). My study is also inclusive; it does not negate the contribution of men in protecting the land. The aim of this project is to critically analyze the works of Nayomi Munaweera and Romesh Gunasekera by taking into account the treatment of women and nature. While discussing the obliterated landscapes, it seems that wars have spoiled them, therefore, it is crucial to discuss the war as it destroys the natural landscapes and devours the beauty of places.

A large part of my argument engages with war, therefore, looking into the Sri Lankan civil war is of paramount importance. After independence, different tensions emerged and festered between ethnic groups of Sri Lanka and, consequently, war broke out

in 1983. This civil war continued for a span of twenty-six years ending in 2009. The insurgency of 1971, nationalism, ethnic conflicts have been the main concerns of Sri Lankan writers after independence. The change that occurred on a larger scale not only influenced the lives of Sri Lankan people, but also the literature produced by writers of this time addressed inflammatory issue like war, terror and violence. Maryse Jayasuriya writes in her book, *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009*, that at the beginning of colonial rule there was no clear system of categorization. The British categorized people in groups for administration (8-37). Likewise, Sandeep Banerjee writes in his book *A Brief History of South Asia*: that Sri Lanka is a diverse community with Sinhala people as a majority and “ethnic minorities include Tamils, Muslims, Moors, burghers, kaffirs, and the aboriginal vedda people” (62). This shows that categorization in this diverse community turned into ethnic conflicts and become the main cause of war.

These conflicts have engulfed the natural beauty of this place and now this country is facing certain issues like deforestation, soil erosion, coastal degradation, water pollution, air pollution, and coral reef destruction. The writers make an attempt to highlight all these issues in their literary pieces. The bulk of Anglophone literature has addressed the ethnic conflicts and impacts of terrorism and violence on society. As Maryse Jayasuriya writes in her book *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009*

The body of Anglophone literature that has sprung from the ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka both reveals the impact of terrorism and ethnic violence on a particular society and seeks to understand how and why the conflict took root. (Jayasuriya 8)

This 26 year campaign shows that the Tamil wanted a separate country and Sinhala wanted to dominate them. At the end of the war, the Tamil were defeated. Sinhala and Tamil’s arrogance towards nature is the main cause of destruction. The use of guns, explosives and other technological gadgets make this world a battlefield and eliminate many natural beings. The discussion on the literary history of Anglophone fiction and literary tradition of ecofeminism help me place these two writers in marginalized Sri Lankan market.

After locating my writers in Anglophone South Asian context and ecofeminist tradition, it is convenient to discuss the spatial and temporal place of these two writers in Sri Lanka. I have done that in the next part.

III

The South Asian writers participate actively by documenting their concerns for the preservation of environment and awaking awareness among people. The selected writers, Munaweera and Guesekera, embed war, environmental distortion, and ultimately human's sufferings in their writings. Writers are human beings and human beings are cultural beings as well. Being cultural, they have geographical, social, and historical associations. The writings of these social beings reflect the hopes, fears, problems and hardships of the people of their time. The selected works under investigation question the forces that have ruined the natural landscapes of their motherland. The diasporic writers have lessened the "burden of representation" (Ranasinha 80). They migrated from this place but still their sublime expressions are intrinsically bound to the place of their birth.

As discussed earlier, in Part I, South Asian writers were writing even before independence, but their writings were not acknowledged. In comparison to larger South Asia, Sri Lanka is a small place and it could easily be overlooked. Keeping this argument in mind, it is useful to dwell on this statement that Sri Lankan writings are relegated in the global market, therefore, I make an attempt to locate Romesh Gunsekera and Nayomi Munaweera as marginalized writers who struggle to give some prominence to Sri Lankan writings within the International market. According to Wikipedia, Sri Lankan writers write in their indigenous languages and they have produced an immense body of Sri Lankan Literature in their native languages: Sinhalese and Tamil (Sri Lankan Literature, my paraphrase). A new group has been added in this trajectory of Sri Lankan writings and that is a group of Anglophone Sri Lankan writers; these writers started writing after migrating to some foreign places and are also known as diaspora writers. This dissertation partly seeks to investigate how South Asian writers claim visibility across the borders by crafting vivid pictures of their problems. Ranasinha writes in *South Asian Writers in Twentieth Century Britain: Cultural in Translation* that "South Asian Anglophone literature itself is often equated with "Indian writings in English": authors from other countries in the Indian subcontinent are virtually ignored" (Ranasinha 1-15). The selected works are part of diaspora and Sri Lankan fiction as well. I have chosen Sri Lankan fiction because it is ignored and it needs critical attention.

As Sri Lanka is also part of South Asia, writers discuss this country in a South Asian context. *South Asian Fiction in English: Contemporary Transformation* is a collection of South Asian fiction divided into two parts: regional transformation and contemporary

transformation. In this book, Ruvani Ranasinha's essay "Sri Lankan Fiction in English 1994-2014" discusses Sri Lanka and its prominent writers. While doing so, Ruvani Ranasinha lists up several reasons that are responsible for boiling down the essence of Sri Lankan fiction. Firstly, its output is smaller; and secondly its "Anglophone publishing culture" (Ranasinha 80-102) is at embryonic stage and he holds this view that it will take time to grow and become mature. Sri Lankan fiction has not enjoyed an international visibility because of its smaller literary output and its nascent Anglophone publishing culture. Michael Ondaatje and Romesh Gunsekera play an important role in this process. Similarly, Chelva Kanaganyakam in his article: "Dancing in the Rarefied Air: Reading Contemporary Sri Lankan Fiction" compares Sri Lankan fiction with Fijian Literature that remained in the shadow of Australian and New Zealand literature. Sri Lankan literature has been in the shadow of Indian writings, but now because of a few prominent writers it has created a separate place for itself. Chelva Kanaganyakam starts his essay with the name of Michael Ondaatje's *English Patient* and Romesh Gunsekera's *Reef* along with some other prominent writers of the time (51-65). The theorist, Ruvani Ranasinha and Chelva Kanaganyakam, have strengthened my claim that Sri Lankan writings are marginalized therefore need special attention in academia that my project partially fulfills.

Similarly, Jayasuriya, in her book *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009*, divides the writers of Sri Lanka in two groups: diaspora and indigenous. The indigenous writers write novellas, poems and short stories while diaspora writers focus on novels. Jayasuriya talks about the marginality of Sri Lankan fiction in "Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature and problems of Publication" that

[F]or Sri Lankans, however, the war that raged from July 1983 until May 2009 was anything but peripheral, and the current shape of Sri Lankan literature in English reflects the centrality of war, terrorism and attempt at reconciliation to the Sri Lankan experience of the late twentieth and early twenty first century. (Jayasuriya 8)

This literature has always been at a peripheral position and Anglophone writers have struggled to make it visible. Therefore, in the writings of prominent authors the thread of war runs throughout. Maryse Jayasuriya has affirmed much of the same stance in her book *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009* and focuses on the dearth of publishing culture. My work has partially given some consideration to this

neglected corpus of literature. I have used the expression “Sri Lankan Fiction” in the title of my project rather than South Asian Fiction.

In this part of introduction, I have located my selected writers, especially in the article: “Contestation, Marginality, and (Trans) nationalism: Considering Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature” by Maryse Jayasuriya, the writer of the book: “Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009”, and Aparna Halpe. This article was published in 2012 and Munaweera’s novel *Island of Thousand Mirror* was also published in the same year, however, she does not gloss over Munaweera in this document. Before introducing Anglophone Sri Lankan writers, she gives a brief overview of the history of English that is a class marker and a legacy of colonial rule. In a long list of Sri Lankan writers, the authors endorse Munaweera’s work by stating that her recent novel is “the first novels to deal with the conflict as well as the post-conflict era” (Jayasuriya and Halpe 21). Similarly, she briefly documents the conflict in Romesh Guneskera’s *Reef* from a diasporic point of view. These articles give me reasons to place Romesh Gunesequera and Nayomi Munaweera around Sri Lankan fiction.

These two notable writers have contributed in drawing the world’s attention towards the ignored Sri Lankan Fiction. They have made a successful attempt to lessen “the burden of representation.”¹⁴ When Sri Lankan writers are marginalized and neglected, it seems palatable to make this generalization that women of this place are ignored too. The layers of these novels is punctuated with the aura of war and violence. By keeping in mind these issues, I intend to explore ecofeminism in the selected works. I have discussed in detail the ecological crisis, and relationship of women with nature in chapter four and five of this dissertation. The Sri Lankan state has suffered at the hands of war among the people of its own communities. The novels provide an insight into the horrors of war from the perspective of ecofeminism. This understanding of Sri Lankan fiction has helped me place the novels of Gunesequera and Munaweera in this context of war and work on them from the perspective of ecofeminism. Investigating the background of South Asian literary history, South Asian Anglophone writers, and Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts, considerable attention is given to the marginalization of Sri Lankan writings and the relevance of this research to my country, Pakistan. While doing so, I have discussed the reasons for selecting Sri Lankan Fiction. Sri Lanka is a separate country and now it is seminal to discuss the relevance of this project with my country. I believe that my Situatedness as a Pakistani scholar is also of paramount importance. I briefly discuss it below.

1.3 Situatedness of the Researcher

Being a Pakistani national, I developed an interest in reading South Asian fiction because of its cultural proximity with my country. In this project, I delimit my interest to the neglected fiction of Sri Lanka. Trividi's essay "South Asian Literature: Reflection in Confluence" is quite relevant to relate this project with Pakistani society. As Trividi uses "One Sky, Many Worlds" (186) for South Asia, "One Sky" means South Asia, and "Many Worlds" refer to writers of all South Asian countries. As South Asian Literature is a signifier and it is exclusive, therefore the culture and traditions of South Asian countries merge into one another. All these countries of South Asia have common geography, history and common culture. Even if South Asian writers move from one place to another, they carry their indigenous burden with them. Cultural differences are, obviously, there but similarities surmount all these differences. If the culture and other rituals of South Asian countries are in confluence then it seems appropriate to dwell on this argument that the problems and other environmental concerns of these nations are also, perhaps, the same. In this sense, my research work allows me to contextualize the aspects of ecofeminism as a Pakistani. The fiction for this dissertation has been selected from only one sovereign state of South Asia, Sri Lanka, but the selection of works does not confine my project to this country only. The issues that I have discussed in my project are global. We need to pay attention to environmental degradation and the rights of women.

Moreover, the political issues in Pakistan are sometimes so intense that they may result into war. Jayasuriya states in her book, *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009*, that "although the war in Sri Lanka has ended, the search for interethnic amity and reconciliation embodied by many of these works remain crucial for the future peace and well-being of Sri Lanka and vital as well for the pursuit of peace and reconciliation around the planet" (8). This statement makes my project significant with reference to Pakistan. Being a Pakistani, I understand the political situation of my country, therefore Pakistanis may learn a lot from these unfortunate events. Like Sri Lanka, Pakistan is also a developing country and the minor fights may give birth to something more catastrophic. The cultural proximity helps me understand and interpret my selected works. Therefore, I am eager to learn about the problems of other countries and their viable solutions to make my country aware of the upcoming calamities.

1.4 Delimitation

The study is delimited to the ecofeminist analysis of two Anglophone Sri Lankan novels: *Island of Thousand Mirrors* by Nayomi Munaweera and *Heaven's Edge* by Romesh Gunsekera. Since Ecofeminism is selected as a theoretical lens, the analysis is confined to Greeta Gaard's theory of ecofeminism with special reference to feminization of nature and naturalization of women.

1.5 Thesis Statement

Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of Thousand Mirror* and Romesh Gunsekera's *Heaven's Edge* seem to play out the coalition-building strategies through a focus on exploitation of women and environmental degradation. This may be vindicated with the invocation of Greeta Gaard's theory of ecofeminism as a lens for this project.

1.6 Research Question

This project attempts to find answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the feminist issues addressed in terms of war and its effects in the selected novels?
- 2) How does Romesh Guneskera embed environmental degradation in *Heaven's Edge*?
- 3) In what ways are women animalized and nature feminized in Nayomi Munaweera's novel?

1.7 Research Plan

I have carefully constructed six chapters in all. However, the overall layout of my dissertation is given below.

In chapter one, I have introduced my topic and situated my writers in contemporary ecofeminist and Anglophone South Asian tradition. This chapter develops the rationale of my study and enwraps the research questions along with the significance of this project. The next chapter, Literature Review, encompasses all the researches have already been done on ecofeminism across South Asia and globally focuses to scrutinize the literature related to my research. It has also highlighted the loopholes in previous works and identified the gaps in critical corpus. This chapter, is subdivided into three parts: Introduction, Review of Literature, and Conclusion. In the second part of this chapter,

Literature Review, is further subdivided into two parts for clarity of thoughts. In the first part, there is a brief discussion on feminism and ecofeminism and its relevance to my project. The next part reviews the critical corpus on Gunesequera and Munaweera. Literature Review has enabled me to choose the method and theory for this project after tracing the gaps in existing critical scholarship. The third chapter of my dissertation has briefly expounded Belsey's method of textual analysis and Greeta Gaard's theoretical lens of ecofeminism that I have selected for analysis of the selected two Sri Lankan works.

Chapter four deals with the analysis of Nayomi Munaweera's novel and has largely focused on the subjugation of women, whereas chapter five converges its attention on the analysis of Romesh Guneskera with special focus on exploitation of landscapes. I have analyzed these novels in the theoretical framework of Greeta Gaard. The novels make an attempt to figure out the de-romanticized picture of Sri Lanka along with the sufferings of women. The beautiful picture of the city of pearls is mutilated by civil wars and other activities and consequently humans are suffering at the hand of humans. Chapter six finally wraps up the argument of the research and highlights the findings of my interpretations of novels. It also makes further recommendation for researchers who intend to dive in this interdisciplinary field, ecofeminism. There are many other angles that may be explored with a slightly different critical insight.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The ecological crisis and, consequently, the sufferings of women are not issues of one nation only; it is a global issue. These ecological battles are being fought every day in every country throughout the world. Humans, the cause of this crisis, are suffering terribly. This study intends to highlight this issue of contemporary times through a scrutiny of South Asian fiction. Here the weather is rapidly changing because of the use of technological gadgets and other explosives in terrorist activities and bomb blasts. The landscapes are becoming infertile because of the use of these chemicals and other pesticides. Gunesequera and Munaweera articulate the ways in which environmental crisis affects the lives of women in Sri Lanka and, understandably, elsewhere. In this way, they contribute to the production of knowledge in this area.

This project examines how Sri Lankan fiction has been marginalized in decades. As Munaweera's fiction has not gained much critical attention, critical focus on her novel is likely to be an original work. Furthermore, the significance of this project lies in the fact

that these two writers have not been investigated with the lens of ecofeminism yet. The critical analysis of the selected works from this new perspective brings a different way of analyzing the literary texts. This project is likely to spark further research in terms of greening the “weathered world” (Cassel 27). Munaweera and Gunsekera have produced works of global significance and I believe that my work is likely to be a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge. With the introductory argument in view, I have written the literature review in the next chapter.

Endnotes: Chapter 1

¹ Greta Gaard has used term “Damsel in Distress” for earth in her essay “Ecofeminism and Native American Culture”

² Adrienne Cassel uses the term “Weathered World” in the title of her essay “Walking in the Weathered World” and I have molded the term according to my need.

³ Chatterjee is considered the father of novel in Indian Literature. *The Poison Tree* (1873) and *Krishnakanta’s Will* (1878) are two other contributions of Chatterjee in writings.

⁴ Raja Rao works are rooted in metaphysics. Mulk Raj shows the miserable condition of the lower class. See Mulk Raj, *Untouchable*, (1935)

⁵ See Rushdie’s *Midnight Children* Vintage 2008

⁶ See O. Mannoni’s Interpretation of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in his book *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (1956)

⁷ The writers draw the attention of audience towards postcolonialism and mirror the oppressed society. The untouchables are subalterns; a postcolonial concept. See Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, (Penguin Classics 2014)

⁸ Amritjit Singh and Nalini Iyer has used this term “South Asian Diaspora” in their article “Introduction: Beyond the Anglophone—Comparative South Asian Literatures” (2016: 212)

⁹ See A. Sivanandan, *When Memory Dies*, (Arcadia Books, 2007)

¹⁰ See Shayam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy*, (William Morrow, an Imprint of Harper Collin Publisher, 2015)

¹¹ See V.V. Ganeshanathan, *Love Marriage*, (Phoenix 2009)

¹² Spivak has used this term, subaltern, in her essay “Can Subaltern Speak?”

¹³ For further details, see Lauri Gruen, “Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of Connection between Women and Animals”.

¹⁴ I am using Ruvani Ranasinha’s term, “Burden of Representation,” which he has phrased in his article “Sri Lankan Fiction in English 1994–2014”

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

An immense body of literature is available on ecofeminism and Sri Lankan fiction. The critical examination of relevant scholarship is useful to trace the gaps in the existing body of literature. The project includes Sri Lankan writers to be studied from the perspective of ecofeminism, the sources of review range from critical essays to books on South Asian Fiction and ecofeminism. The literature review is descriptive in nature and the purpose of literature review is to situate this project in the contemporary scholarship by reviewing the relevant secondary sources. This chapter consists of three parts. The first part is the introduction of this chapter that leads to the main corpus of literature for review and is further subdivided into two parts: (1) Critical sources on ecofeminism and Sri Lankan Fiction and (2) Critical sources on Gunasekera and Munaweera's work from diverse perspectives. In the third part of this chapter, I conclude my review and refer to the gaps in the available scholarship.

2.2. Review of Literature

For clarity, I have divided this section into two parts and reviewed the books and articles that fall into the following categories:

- Critical sources on ecofeminism and Sri Lankan Fiction.
- Critical sources on Gunasekera and Munaweera's work from diverse perspectives.

2.2.1 Critical Sources on Ecofeminism and Sri Lankan Fiction

In order to review ecofeminism, Greeta Gaard's *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals and Nature* is very useful. I have used this book as foundational reading. It is divided into ten chapters, it covers prominent aspects of ecofeminism. It was first published in 1993. The first and last essay is written by Gaard and the rest are written by different contributors: Janis Birkeland, Lori Gruen, Stephanie Lahar, Linda Vance, Ellen Loughlin, Josephine Donovan, Carol J. Adams, Chaia Heller, Marti Kheel, and Huey – li Li. The same concern of these theorists towards women and nature's suppression binds them together. Janiet Biehl's "Thinking Ecofeminist Politics" addresses the place of animals in ecofeminist theory and she considers ecofeminism as a "self-contradictory" theory that is a healthy sign, may be, for the

survival of this theory. The conflict between green politics and ecofeminism is analyzed by Janis Birkeland in “Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice.” In green philosophy, anthropocentrism is the root cause of all social and environmental problems while ecofeminists consider anthropocentrism as a symptom of androcentrism. Similarly, Lauri Gruen’s “Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection Women and Animals” delves into the projection of women and animals as dominated by patriarchs and she concludes her essay with the thought that ecofeminist theory provides an inclusive framework for the liberation struggle. Gaard’s concluding chapter, “Ecofeminism and Native American Culture: Pushing the Limits of Cultural Imperialism” demonstrates three areas within this field of ecofeminism. First, she discusses the place of animals within ecofeminist theory, secondly, feminization of nature as “Mother Earth” and thirdly she moves towards “the movement to reclaim the goddess in an ecofeminist spirituality” (Gaard 10). She concludes her essay with the suggestion that while avoiding cultural imperialism, ecofeminism must address these topics. Greta Gaard expresses in the preface of the book that she intended to create a “theoretical bridge for women working in the related movements of environmentalism, animal liberation, and feminism” (vii). With great motivation, Gaard has written this book and the first chapter serves as a theoretical framework for my project that is discussed in detail in chapter three, “Theoretical Framework,” of my thesis.

This book was published in 1993 and Romesh Guneskera was writing at that time. Though Gaard has used all the themes that Guneskera has discussed in his novel *Reef*, published in 1992, Gaard has, perhaps unwittingly, marginalized Romesh Guneskera. What makes this book relevant to my dissertation is that all essays included in this book are linked to the main idea that Gaard has used in her first essay: “the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature” (1). In this dissertation, I will discuss the work of Guneskera in the framework of Gaard to fill this existing gap. Above all, different ideas imbricated in essays support several arguments of my analysis.

Cherry Glotfelty’s *The Eco-Criticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* discusses the reasons of ecological problems. It is divided into three parts: “Eco-theory: Reflections on Nature and Culture”, “Eco-critical Considerations of Fiction and Drama” and “Critical Study of Environmental Literature.” I have focused only on the introduction and reviewed it because it covers all the chapters. Glotfelty distinguishes eco-criticism from other literary criticism and believes that literary theory “examines the relations between writers,

texts, and the world” (xix) while eco-criticism stretches its confines to include ecosphere too. Glotfelty observes that in the twentieth century, the hot topics such as race, class and gender are under discussion. It is never suspected that earth’s life is under stress. This anthology is significantly relevant to this research project as she studies different articles and comments on them in the introduction of her book and gives the crux of environmental crisis such as oil spills, global warming, toxic waste contamination, depletion of ozone layer, acid rain, battles over public land, extinction of species, pollution, and lose of top soil. Glotfelty suggests that humans should take serious steps to conserve the "Endangered Earth” (xvi). According to Cherry Glotfelty, humans have reached the environmental limits and their activities exterminate species by demolishing the natural beauty of the world. She wonders at the high rate of up-surgng environmental problems and states that “if we’re not part of the solution, we’re part of the problem” (xii). Basic life support of planet earth is being damaged by human actions. If humans fail to change their attitude towards nature, we have to face “global catastrophe” (Glotfelty xxii). There is a dire need to recognize these environmental issues that are by-products of our culture.

Introduction to this book, *The Eco-criticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* is closely relevant to this project as it gives details of all essays included in this book. The same ecocritical insight may help in discerning the crisis of land in novels like *Heaven’s Edge* and *Island of Thousand Mirrors*. Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as the “study of literature and the physical environment” (xix). Ecofeminism is also a sub-branch of ecocriticism that is not discussed in detail in this book, therefore, Glotfelty fails to document the relationship between women and nature. Thus, the book also identifies the missing gap that makes my project significant.

Sara Upton’s *British Asian Fiction: Twenty First Century Voices* engages with nine writers that entails eight essays on the writings of British South Asian writers like Salman Rushdie and V.S Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, Ravinder Randhawa, Arima Srisvastava, Meera Sayl, Hari Kunzru, Monica Ali, and Suhayl Saadi. Sara Upton avers that British Asian writers were there since 17th century but they were not recognized. In this book, she focuses on the idea that Asian writers have been writing in English since they migrated to Britain, now we have “British born Asian authors” (Upton 1). In British schools, there was a fusion of many culture and almost 50% of the students had Asian backgrounds. Unfortunately, Asian writers have never been part of the academic landscapes in Britain. Sara Upton states that she never studied an Asian writer; Asian writers were invisible in Britain. The book is written with

conscious awareness of anxiety of the “complexities of its own definition of British-born/raised writers” (Uptone 4). While discussing V.S Naipaul and Rushdie, Uptone writes that the works of these writers on the seventh floor of the library demonstrates their problematic status. These writers get established in the late twentieth century and early twenty first century.

All the writers, being discussed in this book, are of different nationalities such as Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, but, none of them are Sri Lankan. Though Sara Uptone mentions the name of Romesh Gunesequera and Sivanandan in the introduction of this book, it seems as if she forgot to devote a chapter to these writers who have also contributed to South Asian fiction. As the title of the book speaks, these writers are the voices of twenty first century, Sara Uptone discusses the works of this “newborn generation”¹ at length, but marginalizes Sri Lankan writers. My contest on Sara Uptone is that why does she overlook Romesh Guesekera, who is a British national. This book was published in 2010 and Romesh Gunesequera has been writing since 1992 when his first book *Monkfish* was published followed by *Reef* in 1994. This book is relevant to my dissertation because it converges its attention on prominent areas of South Asia like Pakistan and India while ignoring Sri Lanka, therefore, my project makes an attempt to fill this significant gap by foregrounding Sri Lankan fiction.

Since South Asia comprises seven states, the culture and problems of these seven regions converge at certain places. As Sri Lanka is also part of South Asia, it seems relevant to discuss this country within a South Asian context. Above all, the environmental concerns are global but I have confined myself to the criticism of Sri Lankan fiction only in order to avoid unpalatable generalization.

Sri Lanka is pivotal in my dissertation, and Ruvani Ranasinha’s essay “Sri Lankan Fiction in English 1994-2014” is relevant to this study because it discusses Sri Lanka and its prominent writers. Ruvani Ranasinha discusses the marginalized identity of Sri Lankan fiction in postcolonial and contemporary canon. Guesekera has written *Heaven’s Edge* in 2002 while Nayomi Munaweera’s *Island of a Thousand Mirror* was published in 2012. These novels were written in the same time that Ruvani Ranasinha has covered in his article: “Sri Lankan Fiction in English 1994-2014”. The writer, Ruvani Ranasinha, pens that diasporic writers have lessened the “burden of representation” (80-102) and also discerns the reasons of marginalization of Sri Lankan writings. She also gives credit to some notable writers like Michael Ondaatje, Romesh Guneskera and Selvadurai. They have lessened the burden of representation and these writers played an important role in making Sri Lankan fiction visible. Moreover, Gratiaen Prizes, for published and unpublished writings, and Perara- Hussain

Publishing House helped in the growth of Sri Lankan Anglophone. Ransinha observes that present interests of Sri Lankan writers are embedded in war of 1983-2009 which resulted in an incredible loss of thousands of lives. For Ransinha, the civil war gave Sri Lankan fiction an international attention and the catastrophic events of this country raise serious questions of “citizenship, national identity and gender social relations that many Sri Lankan writers (in all three languages) attempt to engage with” (81). In her view, Sri Lankan fiction is haunted by the ghost of the past. She discusses Selvadurai and A. Sivanandan work in diasporic vein and explores the themes of inter-ethnic friendship and class marriage. She also examines Jafana Library incident of 1983 in the works of Selvadurai, Jeganathan, Wijesinghe and Ganeshanathan.

This article is worth-quoting because the writer acknowledges the fact that Sri Lankan writings are marginalized and this is also the central argument of my study. While doing so Ruvani Ranasinha has marginalized Nayomi Munaweera, who also writes in English. Being an Anglophone Sri Lankan writer, she deserves this place in literary scholarship that she has been deprived of. This article informs me about serious questions that I have kept in my mind while analyzing the novels and tracing ethnic conflicts. Ransinha’s insight into various Sri Lankan novels makes my concepts of the massive violence in Sri Lankan territory clear.

Chelva Kanaganayakam’s article “Dancing in the Rarefied Air: Reading Contemporary Sri Lankan Fiction” assesses concerns similar to that of Ruvani Ransinha. Chelva Kanaganayakam, like Ransinha, detects the marginalized status of Sri Lankan writings in this article; he discusses some prominent writers who have created a separate place for this body of literature. Sri Lankan writings in English achieved some recognition with the success of Michael Ondaatje, Romesh Gunesekera, Shyam Selvadurai, Yasmine Gooneratne and Ambalavaner Sivanandan. Chelva Kanaganayakam observes the efforts of various organization and the handful of these dedicated authors. He also encouraged the attitudes of different journals, like Navasilu, and Channels that helped Sri Lankan writings flourish. The major concerns of this paper are to see different issues related to “pedagogy, canonicity and postcolonial critical practices” (Kanaganayakam 52) in the critical material. The main concern of the author is to see the problematic relationship of the production of literature and its reception. Patrick Ferando has been writing since 1950s. The essayist discusses certain historical events such as: communal disturbance between Sinhala and Tamil in 1958 followed by the departure of burgers in 1960, however these were not strong enough to stir the nation. Insurgency of 1971, led writers to look at concerns differently and “writing in English was

beginning to reveal an awareness of political upheavals of the nation” (Kanaganayakam 54). The fullest expression of the conflict between Tamil and the government may be found in 1983. While categorizing Sri Lankan writing, he places Romesh Gunesekera among the diaspora writers. Chelva Kanaganayakam elaborates that the variety of writers both local and diaspora concerns with the problems of “reception, response, aesthetic values, and canonicity that are inevitably complex” (55). Riezi Cruz work is full of the issues of immigrants in Canada and the nostalgia for the homeland and “the failure to pay homage to the flowering of a Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka makes him no different from Ondaatje” (Kanaganayakam 58). Ondaatje is also “unconcerned with the realities of his own people” (Kanaganayakam 55). He examines the attitude of different critics towards writers. Some writers are considered Sri Lankan by some critics and diaspora by others. These conflicts put the readers of other countries in an awkward position; is the writer a patriot or traitor. This is a problematic status that needs to be addressed.

Chelva Kanaganayakam starts his essay with the name of Michael Ondaatje’s *English Patient* and Romesh Gunesekera’s *Reef* and he discusses the works of all writers in his essay but fails to throw light on the writings of Romesh Gunesekera and even overshadows Nayomi Munaweera and does not mention her name in this essay. This essay makes me conscious of the neglected status of Sri Lankan writings with in the historical background and helps me trace the roots of ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, it introduces some Sri Lankan writers though their works are not easily available on the market. It has also helped me peep into the overall trends of Sri Lankan writings and identify the different approach of my writers towards these issues, if any. This essay informs me about the problematic identities of some Sri Lankan writers though I don’t focus on these issues. Ignoring these explored areas, I focus on the presentation of Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts and consequently the sufferings of women and exploitation of nature. Now, my project attempts to fill this gap thus making it significant.

Alyssa Banford and Cameron Kiely Froude’s article “Ecofeminism and Natural Disasters: Sri Lankan Post Tsunami” informs me in detail about the sufferings/oppression of women during and after natural disasters. The claim of these authors subsides on the “pre-existing social structures and social preconditions for women’s marginalization” (Banford and Kiely 70). The article investigates the vulnerabilities of women in post natural disasters. The authors think that the intersectional analysis helps understand the effects of natural disasters on vulnerable creature; women. The focus of these writers is on the oppression of Sri Lankan women. They write:

[women] fought in war engaging in combat and suicide bombing when their male family members had been killed. Skilled and successful entrepreneurs, the demographic profile of women business owners in the north east showed that their motivation for entrepreneurship was inspired in part to support their families and be self-reliant. (Banford and Kiely 177)

The oppressed women suffer in the absence of a male partner but still manage their homes. Alyssa Banford and Cameron Kiely Froude quote researches of other authors who discuss Sri Lankan women, who suffered physically, mentally and psychologically, as a result of natural disasters. In Sri Lankan context, the author observes women's roles as care-taker. They reside in the boundaries of their houses, therefore, more vulnerable to the exploitation of natural disasters. The article states that Sri Lankan women are financially dependent on men.

This article seems relevant to my project because it traces a significant gap in existing scholarship as the essayist has discussed largely all the issues discussed by Munaweera in her debut novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, but, nowhere does she give any credit to Munaweera who is also concerned about protecting her motherland and conveying her stance worldwide. With reference to my critique on the article of Alyssa Banford and Cameron Kiely Froude, there is ample space to discuss *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* in Sri Lankan context especially from the perspectives of ecofeminism. Above all, this article causes me to be conscious about status of women in Sri Lanka and it allows me to interpret their status in relation to nature.

2.2.2 Critical Sources and Research Articles on Gunesekera and Munaweera's Work from Diverse Perspectives

In this literature review, I have probed into the existing scholarship available. I have selected Romesh Gunesekera's *Heaven's Edge* and Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of Thousand Mirrors*, therefore, literature written by different scholars on these two novelists is analyzed and criticized. While doing so, I have found some gaps within the existing studies.

Tariq Jazeel's "Unpicking Sri Lankan Island-ness" seems relevant to my project, because the novel that is under investigation in this article, is written by Romesh Gunesekera: the writer of *Heaven's Edge*. In this article, Tariq Jazeel focuses his attention to Island-ness in Romesh Gunesekera's works. Sri Lanka has been a British colony and he considers it disputed territory. In the backdrop of these conflict, it has lost its beauty. Jazeel asserts that Gunesekera explores the same themes in, *Heaven's Edge* (582-598). The background of both novels is the same; the conflict between Tamil and military guerillas are discussed at length. This article

seems relevant to my study because this research is also done on the same writer. Sri Lanka is an Island in South Asia and civil wars and other political campaigns have turned the landscapes into a desert. This Island-ness is also exploitation. My project discusses this Island-ness in relation to women as a visible gap. This article makes me aware of the reasons for Island-ness in Sri Lanka and my project also makes an attempt to see the environmental crises.

Walter Perea, in his article “Images of Sri Lanka through Expatriate Eyes,” argues that expatriates misrepresent Sri Lanka in their literary works. Providing ample examples to prove his argument, he asserts that the characters of expatriate novelists always compare the values, belief, custom and people of Sri Lanka with foreigners. *Reef*, the first novel of Gunesequera, was short listed for the Booker prize. Perea asserts that the short listing of *Reef* for the Booker Prize “and the numerous reviews and interviews that followed its publication gave Sri Lanka the kind of attention this country had not received for some time” (76). Gunesequera makes a fruitful effort to bring Sri Lankan literature in limelight. Many scholars and writers place Ondaatje on a high pedestal and he is also awarded a prize for his novel, *The English Patient*. I agree with his comment that Ondaatje novel is devoid of any Sri Lankan content, Perea laments that “Ondaatje’s success did not bring Sri Lanka the same degree of publicity as did Gunesequera’s *Reef*,” (76) but, was awarded the Booker prize that puts him in a questionable position. Gunesequera not only embeds west in his works but also Sri Lankan landscapes. His works, including *Heaven’s Edge*, are full of description of his home country.

This article is worth-quoting because first it is about Romesh Gunesequera’s *Reef* and; secondly, it created a gap that needs to be filled. This article is significant for my project because Walter Perea has not discussed this novel, *Heaven’s Edge*, from an ecofeminist perspective. He overlooks *Heaven’s Edge* and states that many people don’t consider *Heaven’s Edge* as a great success. My focus is on Sri Lankan fiction and Perera’s argument substantiate my stance for choosing Romesh Gunesequera’s *Heaven’s Edge* for this study. Analyzing this novel from ecofeminist perspective, fills the gap in existing scholarship to some extent. I have already discussed and critically analyzed the works done by different researchers on *Heaven’s Edge* and Sri Lankan civil war. Now, I aim to briefly scrutinize different articles on *Island of a Thousand Mirror*.

To start with, I analyze Jeslyn Sharnita Amaraskera article, “Bound by the Sea: Translational Sri Lankan Writing and Reconciliation with the Homeland.” In this article, she argues that Nayomi Munaweera uses the sea as a symbol to discuss the traumatic and heart wrenching memories of homeland, Sri Lanka. This country is all nations’ home as Adam and

Eve landed on a Sri Lankan mountain, therefore, all living creatures especially human beings are by nature bound to this place. She demonstrates “the ways in which transnational Sri Lankan writers, Nayomi Munaweera and Randy Boyagoda, expand on the notion of the sea as a binding metaphor of Sri Lanka as a homeland” (Amaraskera 19). Jeslyn Sharnita Amaraskera interprets this novel in diasporic vein and states that different intellectuals fled the country due to war and political circumstances. The transnational writers, both men and women, discuss the plights of war and consequently the sufferings of the people of the Island.

The sufferings of different generations emerge in the layers of the novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirror*. In hard times, the sea has a soothing effect that Amarasekera Jeslyn Sharnita manifests in these words: “the characters are seen as relating their ideas of home to the sea as it serves their place for comfort and familiarity” (23). The essayist has interpreted this comfort in another context, however, she has not discussed the feminine nature of the sea. This is an apparent and looming gap that beseeches fulfillment. Like the sea, women are a fountain of comfort to their families. The sea and women share many common qualities. She asserts that “the sea which surrounds the island becomes one of the strongest elements in memory of most Sri Lankans as the sea serves as a constant companion” (Amaraskera 23). The word “companion” is supporting my claim that women and nature both share many attributes. As Francis Bacon also writes in one of his essay “Of Marriage and Single Life” that women are a companion in old age. (16)

Though I agree with Amarasekera Jeslyn Sharnita’s views that the diasporic elements are embedded in the layers of Nayomi Munaweera’s work, her moves are reflective of the sufferings of women and nature’s exploitation by man-made objects and activities. She is worthy to quote because she has written this article on Nayomi Munaweera. While making a list of diaspora writers, she has mentioned Romesh Guesekera at the top of her list. This essay makes me conscious of the existing interpretations of the sea. I look to analyze the sea from a slightly different angle.

Birte Heidemann, in his article “The Symbolic Survival of the “living dead”: Narrating the LTTE Female Fighter in Post-war Sri Lankan Women’s Writing,” uncovers the experiences of war in two novels: Nayomi Munaweera’s *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Niromi de Soyza’s *Tamil Tigress*. I reviewed that section in which she discusses Munaweera’s work. While reviewing Munaweera’s work, she compares the picture of opening and closing chapters of Saraswathi’s story and explores the causes that tend to make women suicide bombers. The opening atmosphere is quite serene and peaceful, according to Heidemann: this peaceful

imagery echoes silence and as the story progresses further it changes into “deserted, almost deadly, place, one that is littered with bodies –both dead and alive- of the living dead” (12). Heidemann focuses on the transformation of Saraswathi’s character, who is shattered and her dream of becoming a teacher is brutally thrown to the ground. After an assault, Saraswathi’s family mounts an ample amount of pressure on her, eventually she has to abandon her house and join the Tigers to shake off the heap of shame from the shoulders of her family. She concludes her argument in these words: “by employing two female protagonists from across the ethnic divide, the novel succeeds in presenting a balanced perspective on Sri Lanka’s polarized political identities at different stages of the war” (Heidemann 12). This is just a short glance at the story of Yasodhara, who has covered more space in the novel. The writer proves that the patriarchal society have no space for sexually violated or deflowered women and the main focus of Hedimenn is on the story of Saraswathi.

This article is quite relevant to my project as it largely takes into account the problems of women. The visible gap mentioned above shows that the writer has discussed the bomb blast and war at length but she has failed to look at this debut novel from the perspective of ecofeminism that my dissertation explores, therefore, this article traces the major gaps and makes my project significant. I have also focused on sexual exploitation of women and made an attempt to draw parallels between the exploitation of land and exploitation of women in the hands of patriarchy. This has made me conscious of the war experiences of women and their sufferings.

In contention with Jeslyn Sharnita Amaraskera, Shashikala Muthumal Assella³ in *Contemporary South Asian American Women’s Fiction: the “Differences”* examines *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* with postcolonial lens. In this document, Shashikala Muthumal Assella seeks to uncover Munaweera’s novel as re-orientalist project and enlists some other South Asian writers along with Munaweera. She holds this stance that mother-daughter relationship is another name for Sri Lankness; and it is unjust to boil it down. This scholar interprets Munaweera along with Ganeshanathan and proves, through her argument that Munaweera “incorporates her Sinhalese Protagonist’s ethnic other through the Tamil protagonist Saraswathi” (Assella 6). Assella observes that Nayomi Munaweera has conspicuously given some space to colonial history in her novel and this novel starts with colonial rule. She considers this novel as the first Sri Lankan American woman’s narrative that talks about the geographic location of Sinhalese diaspora in America.

This dissertation is quite significant to my project because it does not address the issues of women and nature. The main focus of the writer is re-orientalization. This review has traced a significant gap in the existing scholarship and helped me fill the gap and make this project interventionist. The reading of this dissertation has been useful in that it has allowed me to recognize the new dimension to read this novel as it has not been explored by Shashikala Muthumal Assella. Thus, my analysis may be more focused on the ecofeminist concerns of Munaweera. As a researcher, I believe that Shashikala Muthumal Assella is neglectful of the evils that Occident left behind them and the way they have plundered the land of Sri Lanka.

Maryse Jayasuriya discusses three contemporary novels: Chandani Lokuge's *Softly, As I Leave You*, Minoli Salgado's *A Little Dust on the Eyes* and Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* in "Legacies of War in Current Diasporic Sri Lankan Women's Writing." In this article, she traces trauma that is caused by war. I reviewed only that part in which she discusses Nayomi Munaweera's work with central attentions on violence, conflict and trauma. Maryse Jayasuriyal remains very concerned about the shattered dreams of many characters because of these conflicts; she observes that girls are not secured and they are gang raped. According to Maryse Jayasuriyal, "Saraswathi is victimized twice, once due to her ethnicity and once due to her gender: along with the trauma of the rape, Saraswathi has to contend with rejection from her own community" (148). As Saraswathi is assaulted no one will marry her. The article depicts the legitimized curse of being a family member of the assaulted women. For instance, people consider Saraswathi's younger sister "being tainted and therefore ineligible for marriage" (Jayasuriya 148). She perceives the ethnic conflicts and the sufferings of women by mentioning the reasons of migration and the deep rooted concerns for homeland even in a foreign country. This research does not directly look into the environmental crisis, hence, I look forward to examine this unexplored area.

Like Birte Heidemann, Maryse Jayasuriyal's article points out the horrors of war in Sri Lanka. Resultantly, this analysis tells me of the atrocities of Tamil and Sinhalas in history. This essay adds to my knowledge showing violence and consequently the traumatic experience of different characters. The persistent gap in this article is that Maryse Jayasuriyal does not discuss environmental problems and the soothing effects of nature on the lives of trodden characters. Moreover, she has marginalized all male writers in this article by giving pivotal attention to women writers. As a researcher, it is in the realm of my responsibility to avoid any bias towards male writers. In order to fill this gap, I have chosen writers of different genders. My project fills this gap by interpreting the novel with a slightly different angle and also helps me see

novels unbiasedly. While analyzing the novel, I am much conscious of Saraswathi's sufferings and their root causes, discussed by Jayasuriya, to avoid the duplication of same ideas.

In a similar light, Maryse Jayasuriya, in her another article "Terror, Trauma, Transitions: Representing Violence in Sri Lankan Literature" gives an overview of those Sri Lankan literary pieces that encompass the idea of war, violence and terrorism. While analyzing the works of different Sri Lankan writers: Karen Roberts' *July*, V.V Ganeshanathan' *Love Marriage*, Medawattegedera' s *Playing Pillow Politics at MGK*, Michael Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost*, Punyakante Wijenaik'e's novella *An Enemy within*, Carl Muller's *Colombo.*, In her point of view, Nayomi Munaweera and Romesh Gunesequera embed violence and trauma in their works. She rightly writes: "both Roberts and Munaweera describes the violence of July 1983 and the resulting rending of the national fabric through the conceit of tragic romantic relationships between characters on opposite sides of the ethnic divide" (Jayasuriya 198). Jayasuriya also analyses Romesh Gunesequera's novel *Noon Tide Toll* and tries to trace the layers of violence in the novel.

Like Birte Heidemann, Jayasuriya's article has familiarized me with war in the novel. Though Jayasuriya has discussed Gunesequera and Munaweera but she has not discussed these two novels. Above all, she has not discussed Gunesequera's novel *Heaven's Edge* that is also full of war, violence and terror. My research fills the gap of the critical corpus. It allows me to see the seeping horrors within the novel.

Shruti Das's "Xenophobia and Ethnic Violence: Colombo in Nayomi Munaweera's *An Island of Thousand Mirrors*" takes a glimpse of the ethnic violence in wake of civil war. She is aware of the fact that Munaweera grasps the entire situation and its aftermaths in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and she observes that both parties are equally involved in the process of discursive formation. Munaweera's fiction presents Colombo in its bipolar form that is "separated in structure and psychological space by race, religion and nationality" (Das 568). This bipolar Colombo portrays the pictures laced in blood. Das makes an attempt to trace the history of Sinhala and Tamil in Sri Lanka and she takes start from 500BC. According to Das, Sri Lanka was not economically strong at the time of decolonization in 1948. Sri Lankans hated colonizers for uprooting history and making their country economically weak. By the end of 1970, the brooding hatred took a turn for the worst and this hatred is channelized towards Tamil. The Tamil migrated from South India and occupied the North of Sri Lanka, while the South was in the reign of Sinhala.

In fact, as Das explores in detail, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* exhibits discursive formation that eventually leads towards ethnic violence. She refers to the Jafana Library incident that burnt the whole history of Tamils and the sole purpose in the minds of Sinhala was to force Tamil go back to India. The emergence of LTTE in the country escalated violence and the tigers' revenge against the atrocities of Sinhala. Das observes that not only men but also women are trained to fight and "with the spirit of martyrdom they chose to kill masses of Sinhala and in turn be blown into pieces as suicide bombers" (573). She observes that matriarch are also involved in ethnic violence. Though for economic purposes, Sylvia Sunethra lends the upper portion of her house to Tamils but hate always simmers deep in her heart. Tamils are treated differently, as if they were not humans. Das sees the xenophobia as a "double sided weapon" because he believes that "those who are subjected to Xenophobia are themselves capable of being xenophobic" (570). In such circumstances, one group considers the other group as a threat to their power and makes an attempt to suppress them. According to the author, Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, portrays the same picture.

Das's insight on how Munaweera presents the atrocities of these two groups towards each other in the backdrop of civil war, shows the unexplored areas in this piece of fiction. This article acquaints me with the backdrop of this novel; and, moreover, I am cognizant of the historical facts that help me contextualize my work in Sri Lankan civil war. As a researcher, I do not confine my research to Das's interpretation of Munaweera's writings in context of war. I have taken another perspective of war and converged my attention on the exploitation of land and women in this context. However, it still helps me remain conscious of not only the suppression of Tamil by Sinhala but also the suppression and exploitation of women. As a result, I am better able to scrutinize the work in ecofeminist terms and how war intensifies these crises. Das' work does not directly investigate the suppression and exploitation of women. Hence, I look forward to probing into this unexplored domain.

In line with Das's ideas, "Voices of the Trauma: A Dissection of *Island of Thousand Mirrors*" by Jency James takes a glimpse over the conflict between two races for supremacy. She observes ethnic conflict, traumatic experience and different types of diaspora in Munaweera's work. Though colonizers left this territory, social exclusion and internal colonization have ignited the brutal civil war in Sri Lanka and this article is full of vivid blazing details of violence. According to James:

The conflict between two races for the supremacy over the land results in the dissection of the community into two as a result of which resentment or hatred is spread among

those who once lived as brothers and sisters. Refugees are created in such brutal battles whose selves gets dissected when they really belong nowhere, neither in their past space or new shelter. A threatening question of identity is posed before those people with torn selves. (49)

James considers the main cause of these conflict as supremacy over piece of land. The attainment of supremacy dismantles the harmonious relationship between the members of these groups and the burning question of identity makes the situation even worse. Initially, Sinhala wanted to ward away the spirits of Tamil from their land; then, Tamilians fought back because they were being humiliated in public. These conflicts not only contaminated the peaceful lives of those who fought for supremacy, but also made the situation even worse for future generation and consequently ethnic conflicts resulted in civil war.

Apart from exploring ethnic conflicts, she also talks about the traumatic experience of the victims of these conflicts and scrutinizes the dissected selves of characters. While studying trauma, his main focus is on the traumatic experience of narrators: Yasodhara and Saraswathi, who feel completely alienated. This alienation showcases the mental state of their minds. Like Maryse Jayasuriyal, James sees Munaweera's work as a piece of diaspora and applies a refugee theory. At times, different characters experience diaspora within the boundaries of their own country. James also scrutinizes the burden of exile. Lives of exiled characters are haunted by the ethnic conflicts and violence. Unlike Das, James sees the novel from a refugees' perspective. She also categorizes three types of refugees.

Like Das, James' article points out ethnic violence and the consequences of this violence. As a result, it keeps me informed about the reasons of violence. Keeping James' analysis in mind helps me recognize the attitude of both parties, whilst analyzing the traumatic experience of assaulted figures. The review of this article has been useful to me as it has allowed me to identify the gap. Thus, this article helps me keep novel more focused on ecofeminism and see in detail how ethnic conflicts have exploited the land and eventually given rise to environmental crises. I manage a to-the-point analysis of the novels. These researchers relied on the theories of post-colonialism and diaspora to trace the sufferings of humans. A missing link in this fiction is an ecofeminist analysis.

2.3. Conclusion

Literature reviews of secondary sources has helped me explore literature related to the chosen texts and region of my study. Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and

Romesh Gunesekera's *Heaven's Edge* have been largely studied and critically analyzed from the perspective of diaspora, war, ecocriticism, and post-colonialism. The works have been studied in South Asia and many reviewers reviewed these two novels within international newspaper and journals. They identify the causes of diaspora, nostalgia, imaginary homes, war and ecological destructions and suggest certain preventions or discern symptoms of such forthcoming unfortunate events. Intentionally, I have not quoted newspapers and magazine' reviews and I focused on articles published in books and journals. However, I investigated that the topic has not yet been studied from the perspective of ecofeminism so far. Reviewing these several dimensions traces the gap to make this project significant by investigating the unexplored area of Anglophone Sri Lankan fiction with the lens of ecofeminism. This research fills in the gaps pointed out in this review. Thus, this project explores the subject from a new dimension. The existing scholarship reviewed above provides me with clarity as to what theoretical perspectives and research approach I need to use for the analysis of my primary texts. Keeping this in mind, I have explained my research lens and methodology in the next chapter.

End Note: Chapter 2

¹ See Sara Upton, *British Asian Fiction: Twenty First Century*, (Manchester University Press, New York, 2010) especially “Introduction” of the book. She has used this expression for Asian writers in Britain. In 1980s and 1990s, British Asian culture was considered for granted.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, review of available critical scholarship on selected novels and Sri Lankan fiction gave me a clear in-sight into the theoretical perspective for critical reading of the two selected novels. Ecofeminism, which is deeply embedded in the layers of both these novels, has not largely been discussed in the current literary corpus on Romesh Gunsekera's *Heaven's Edge* and Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of Thousand Mirrors*. The previous chapter has helped me recognize the gaps in the existing literature on the texts. Now, I am in a position to decide the theoretical framework and methodology suitable for my study. This chapter explains the research's theoretical perspectives used for this study and explain the research methods adopted for my dissertation. I have divided this chapter into two parts: the former part engages with Greeta Gaard's theoretical lens to provide an appropriate theoretical base for the study of Anglophone Sri Lankan fiction and the later part discusses in detail the research methodology appropriate for my project. In the next section, I explain theoretical framework in detail.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

Greeta Gaard contributed to the theory of ecofeminism by writing *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals and Nature*. Divided into ten chapters, it covers prominent aspects of this interdisciplinary field. The article, "Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature," from which the dissertation takes its title, makes the theoretical framework of my project. The selected essay helps explore the novels under investigation. In this essay, Gaard gives the crux of oppression of women and nature. Gaard claims that the western thought has "devalued whatever is associated with women," while simultaneously "elevat[ed] in value those things which are associated with men" (5). In certain parts of South Asia, women are dependent on men financially as the avenues of obtaining education are barely in their access. Women play the traditional roles of mothers and family bearers thus making them passive. Child bearing increases their vulnerability and devalues them. Compare to women, men are physically strong, to fight in battles, they are rational and capable of making decisions. In sexual relations,

they are active and women stay passive. De Beauvoir believes that women are oppressed sexually, and this oppression has turned them into “imperfect beings” Nature is also considered as mother and the “mother’s generous apron”¹ always has something to give. The food we eat and the different products that we use come from this living entity. Natural resources are for humans, but, at times, the overuse of these resources results in environmental degradation. The excessive use of fossil fuels raises serious environmental concerns. The ozone layer depletes day by day, consequently the ultraviolet rays from sun directly come towards earth. In short, nature and women share several qualities: nurturing, caring and producing. However, both nature and women are devalued and vulnerable. Women and nature are submissive and dominated by dominating groups. Women are considered sensitive creatures, therefore, they are more vulnerable to climate change than man. Both women and nature need to be considered while taking any decision for climate change or environmental protection.

Ecofeminists believe that the ideology that sanctions the oppression of race, gender and class is the same ideology which gives approval of the oppression of nature. Racial, gender and class discrimination give air to oppression; one group is superior to another. Along the same lines, humans consider themselves superior to nature, they want to dominate it for their own betterment. While naturalizing women and feminizing nature, we put both of them in a worthless inferior position. Being in an inferior position, they are vulnerable of exploitation. Gaard asserts that “naturalizing or animalizing women has served as justification for the domination of women, animals, and the earth” (5). This is a dehumanized representation of women. British Scholar Dorothy Sayers’ address on the topic “Are Women Human?” engages with the treatment of women and she concludes that men are human beings, because they are rational (165-178). Thereby women are not human; the way women are being treated does not qualify them to be human.² If women are not human, then, it is easy for humans to exploit women who are considered non-humans. I focus on Gaard’s concepts to trace feminization of nature and naturalization of women that has justified the oppression of women and nature. From my vantage point, I see that all these biases result in land exploitation and distortion of natural landscapes.

Furthermore, environmental degradation results in poor quality of life. In a polluted environment, the basic necessities of life are impure and at times unavailable; they start depleting and consequently humans suffer. As Gaard states: “another connection between feminism, animal liberation, and environmentalism has been made by documenting the effects of environmental pollution and degradation on the lives of women and animals” (5). All these

problems seem to reinforce the system of oppression. Then, Gaard moves forward to explain that the poor quality of life for women, people in the third world, and the environment “demonstrates that sexism, racism, classism, and naturism are mutually strengthening the system of oppression” (5). This poor quality of life is most probably for the lower strata of society, therefore, disenfranchised races, genders, and classes suffer because of poor environmental condition. This demonstrates that the marginalized group of society along with nature possibly faces all these problems. Mother Nature is in a distressed state, the reason for being that “human children have not worried about dumping raw sewage or garbage into the waters” (Gaard 303). Gaard suggests that human should stop behaving like children.

The ultimate aim of ecofeminism seems to float this idea that all humans are equal regardless of their gender, race or class, therefore, dismantling the facade of these dichotomies help liberate women and nature from the shackles of oppression. Gaard’s suggestion regarding these issues is that “no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature” (1). In order to liberate women from the clutches of domination, the first and foremost thing is that, one should perhaps make an attempt to liberate nature as the roots of their oppression are the same. The common thread that runs throughout Gaard’s theory is that women and nature should be liberated simultaneously for the progress of this world. It seems impossible to liberate only women while ignoring nature. The oppression of nature is directly proportional to the oppression and exploitation of women, for this reason, one needs to struggle to liberate them together. Gaard opines that the liberation of all oppressed groups must be discussed and critically analyzed simultaneously to get some solution to this worldwide problem of oppression. Being inclusivist, Gaard makes ecofeminism a multifaceted approach by including animals, nature and women and most importantly she does not exclude men. This approach of Gaard brings diversity. It appears responsible for bringing long awaited changes in the map of this world. Gaard concludes her essay that “this theory is dedicated to create a sustainable way of life for all inhabitants on earth,” (10) however, men should also play their part in order to protect this world from ecological crisis. She further adds: “for if one thing is certain, it is that women alone cannot “save the earth”-we need the efforts of men as well” (Gaard 5). Humans are powerful, therefore, they can save the earth “the earth is depending on us” (Gaard 304). To Gaard, the only way out of these lurking problems to get men and women working as humans to protect this land from exploitation. This project undertakes Greeta Gaard’s concepts to see the execution of ecofeminist concerns of Munaweera and Gunesequera in the selected texts.

3.3. Research Methodology

The research methodology I have used is qualitative in nature. Creswell defines this qualitative method in these words: “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (22). Being qualitative in nature, the research explores various domains to substantiate the argument of my study. Like New Critics, I have not treated my novels as autonomous entities; but I have analyzed them according to my understanding. Since I have made ecofeminist analysis of Anglophone Sri Lankan fiction, this project is reflective of exploratory and interpretive research. Qualitative analysis is subjective in nature as David Bleich writes in his article, “The Subjective Character of Critical Interpretation” that any piece of literature is a response to author’s life and the interpretation of a text is the reader’s response to his reading experience. He writes that “it is idle to imagine that we can avoid the entanglement of subjective reactions and motives” (Bleich 203). Though the analysis is not strictly confined to subjective interpretation; different secondary sources like books, magazines, and articles are consulted for interpretation of primary texts. My selected theorist provides ground for rigorous analysis because it subscribes to qualitative approach for textual analysis. I focused on theory and novels, and the reader-text “transactional experience”³ has helped me develop a new understanding of the primary texts. This is how I contribute to the existing body of knowledge. To vindicate my research, I have used ethnography and textual analysis as my research methods.

3.3.1. Research Methods

The research methods help carry out the research in the right dimension, and, this part discusses, in detail, the methods that I have used to analyze the selected texts. There is a slight difference between research method and research methodology, therefore, it would be appropriate to enunciate the difference between research method and research methodology before moving forward to discuss them in context of the study in hand. Gabriele Griffin writes that “[r]esearch methods are concerned with how you carry out your research. The choice of method depends on the kind of research one wants to conduct” (5). Contrary to research method, the scope of methodology is much wider. Rajendra Kumar articulates in his book titled *Research Methodology* that “[r]esearch methodology has many dimensions and research methods do constitute a part of research methodology”(5). Perhaps most importantly, it explains the logical reasoning behind the selection of a particular method. My project is a study of Sri Lankan fiction and the research questions posited in first chapter of this dissertation are

exploratory in nature, textual analysis and ethnography stand out the most suitable research methods to answer my questions. While scrutinizing the selected texts, I have taken the interpretive approach to analyze and exploit the meanings. My project is confined to Sri Lankan fiction and this small territory is riddled with ethnic conflicts. These ethnic conflicts eventually exploit landscapes; therefore, I have mixed ethnography as a research method with textual analysis to understand the imbricated issues of this place clearly. In the next section, I briefly discuss textual analysis and ethnography as research methods for this project.

3.3.2. Textual Analysis as a Research Method

The research scholars of cultural and literary studies most commonly use textual analysis as a research method and I follow the same beaten path. While interpreting the selected texts, this method of analysis has empowered me to use my subjective consciousness to read the works and analyze them. Charles E. Bressler writes in his book *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* that a reader responds to text personally and “seeks to objectify this personal response and declares it to be an interpretation of the text itself” (53). Through deeper interpretation of meanings, I have tried to analyze the ecofeminist concerns of Romesh Gunasekera and Nayomi Munaweera. The specifications of Catherine Belsey’s method of textual analysis that help me read the selected texts are as under:

1. Catherine Belsey expresses in her article, “Textual Analysis as a Research Method” that the researcher cannot interpret something without knowledge from elsewhere and this knowledge comes from secondary sources, and she explains the reason that “the first impulse of many researchers, confronted by an unfamiliar text, is to look up what others have said about it on the internet, in the library, and in bibliographies provided for the purpose” (157). Furthermore, she elaborates the significance of these secondary sources that what they “usually provide is well informed, coherent and rhetorically persuasive arguments” Belsey (160). Likewise, Louise Rosenblatt also believes that “reader and text must work together to produce meanings” (qtd. in Bressler 48). The array of my ideas and readings of other relevant materials help in pluralistic interpretation of the selected novels. I agree with Belsey’s statement and I do the same while analyzing the novels: *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and *Heaven’s Edge*. Environmental degradation and exploitation of women are embedded in the narrative of both novels, and I have interpreted the texts according to my knowledge of South Asian culture.

2. According to Belsey, cultural knowledge also plays an important role in interpretation of texts. It also encompasses cultural criticism that “includes English, cultural history and cultural studies, as well as any other discipline that focuses on texts (Belsey 157). Textual analysis does not exclude history, therefore I have tried to read novels in historical context like the effects of civil war on the people of Sri Lanka. In the same vein, Spivak writes in her essay “The Burden of English” that the “implied reader is drawn into pattern of cultural values” (38). Being an implied reader of selected South Asian texts, I am not culturally alien. Spivak’s argument offers some extra support to Belsey’s interpretation of text, therefore I am a successful “implied reader” (Spivak 38) of Sri Lankan writings because this country is part of South Asia, and general knowledge about South Asian culture strengthens the arguments in interpretation of these works.

3.3.3. Ethnography as a Research Method

I have chosen Sri Lankan fiction that is riddled with ethnic conflicts and seemingly for this reason I have mixed up ethnography with textual analysis for better understanding of the culture, tradition and conflicts of this country. Ethnography is defined as “the study of social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organizations, and communities” (Reeves, Cooper and Hodges 512). Being exploratory in nature, ethnography explores the cultural interaction between different groups. Griffin writes in the Introduction of *Research Methods in English Studies* that the “ethnographic research methods extend [their] concerns to cultural and social practices” (9). Later on, Rachel Alsop expounds on this method in a separate article titled as “The Uses of Ethnographic Methods in English Studies” and she acknowledges the significance of ethnography in English studies. I have chosen Rachel Alsop’s ethnographic method for the analysis of my one primary text, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*.

1. Ethnographer observes the people of community in field. Though my research is not field research, and I have not collected data first-hand. Alsop believes that ethnography is chiefly a qualitative research strategy and it “relies primarily on participant observations and concerns itself in its most general sense with the study and interpretation of cultural behavior” (111). As “observation is central to ethnography,” (Alsop 111) I participate and observe the aspects of life. Being a participant observer, I see different characters in novel to discern their cultural behavior for interpretation with the same frame of mind. Furthermore, Alsop adds up that in English studies this

method of research may be supplemented by document analysis or consideration of novels. The purpose is to find out features of other cultures.

2. As far as Sri Lankan fiction is concerned, there are two conspicuous groups: Tamil and Sinhala, and it is constructive to study the conflicts between these two hostile groups who loathe one another. Understanding the culture and other practices in the backdrop of these conflicts help analyze the exploitation of natural landscapes and women. Ethnographic research methodology helps “explore literature within cultural context” (Alsop 121). It gives an “interactive analysis of the social conditions and aspects of literary pursuits” (Alsop 119). I analyze the social conditions that my selected novel portrays. These social conditions encompass environmental imbalance, gender discrimination and different kinds of health hazards. This approach gives me insight into the social practices of this country.

3. Rachel Alsop states that ethnographic as research method may be appropriate to travel writing and audience response criticism. I have relied on Alsop’s reader response criticism to analyze Munaweera’s *Island of Thousand Mirrors*. The purpose of audience response criticism is to see how the text is negotiated and interpreted by the readers. She writes that “reader is seen as the source of meaning, neither passive nor invisible” (Alsop 123). The texts have no pre-existing fixed meanings given by the author. This meaning-making process helps me identify the emerging issues and ethnic conflicts in Sri Lankan fiction. Different cross references within texts help me find the root cause of ethnic conflicts in Sri Lankan culture. Hammersley’s stance on ethnography substantiate my argument, he writes that “the task (of ethnographer) is to document the culture, the perspectives and practices, of the people in these settings. The aim is to ‘get inside’ the way each group of people sees the world” (4). I observe the attitude of Tamil and Sinhala towards the exploitation of land and women’s sufferings.

In the light of these perspectives, presented by great authors, I read the selected texts to analyze the hidden meanings of the words and how problems are addressed by these novelists. In this study, different ideas have been established through various readings. The research method in this dissertation is qualitative and I come up with my analysis after dissecting different layers of words. Belsey’s method of textual analysis and Rachel Alsop’s method of ethnography (partially) are likely to be helpful to analyze the selected corpus. Moreover,

Gaard's theory plays an important role to bind this interpretation with the main thesis of my dissertation.

3.4. Conclusion

I have discussed in detail the theories and methodology that I have used to analyze the selected works of Nayomi Munaweera and Romesh Gunsekera. In order to read the selected texts, I have chosen textual analysis and ethnography as my research methods that I have discussed in detail. With an understanding of research method and theoretical framework, I am in a better position to move forward to conduct the critical analysis of selected works under consideration. Through a critical qualitative analysis of these writers in the next chapter, I have tried to find answers to my questions posed in "Introduction." The next chapter is an analysis of *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and explains how the environmental degradation and sufferings of women happen.

End Notes: Chapter 3

¹ Greeta Gaard considers mother-earth's bounty as "mother's generous apron" in her essay "Ecofeminism and Native American Cultures"

² Dorothy Sayers believes that women belong in the home and they don't have any right to make choices as if they don't exist. They don't have avenues of success open for them. Women, therefore, are not human. For a detail analysis, see Dorothy Sayers, "Are Women Human?" (2005, pp. 165-178.)

³ In Louise Rosenblatt terms, the interaction between reader and text in meaning-making process is transactional experience. Bressler quotes Louise Rosenblatt in book *Literary Criticism*. See Charles Bressler, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, (1994: 48)

CHAPTER 4

HEALING THE WOUNDS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF ISLAND OF A THOUSAND MIRRORS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*¹ from Gaard's perspective of ecofeminism. Based on this theory, it draws parallels between nature and women in the text. Ecofeminism allows naturalization of women and feminization of nature for putting them in the same vulnerable position for subjugation. It has highlighted that women and nature are beautiful yet maltreated; the patriarchal societies cause them to suffer. My analysis discusses the treatment of women as land and traces their exploitation and vertical mobility. Munaweera also raises the issues of marriage, infidelity, and literacy in Sri Lanka through her characters. I have made an attempt to figure out women's treatment in different institutions. While doing so, I have observed the construction and deconstruction of binaries in the layers of the novel. My reading of the selected text explores binaries are the root cause of certain problems; therefore, there is a dire need to dismantle them to move vertical. Afterwards, I have discussed the treatment of women as animals and land. In order to elaborate the parallels between women and nature, I have also engaged with the recurring image of the ocean to trace the similarities between women's bodies and nature. Furthermore, I have teased out the trauma of patriarchy's victims in detail. Moreover, naturalization of women and feminization of nature have created binaries that resulted into war.

Nayomi Munaweera is a Sri Lankan American writer. She was born in Sri Lanka in 1973, and moved to Nigeria when she was only three years old and, after that, she headed towards America. Currently, she lives in Oakland and teaches in Mills George College and Ashland University. Munaweera's family left this place to escape war. Though Munaweera did not grow up in Sri Lanka during the years of terror, she crafted the history of Sri Lanka dexterously in her works. She produced two literary pieces: *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and *What Lies Between Us*. The former won the Common Wealth Regional Prize and was nominated for Man Asian Literary Prize. The writer shows her concerns for the sufferings of women and health of the environment in her native land, Sri Lanka. Hence, I move forward to probe Munaweera's text under the following sub-headings:

- Tracing Verticality of Naturalized Women in Patriarchal Society
- War as “A Beast”
- Violation against Body

4.2 Tracing Verticality of Naturalized Women in Patriarchal Society

I take the idea of verticality from Sylvia Plath’s poem “I am vertical.”² Being vertical means being up and straight. Humans shape is vertical and plants grow in vertical dimension too. The lines of this poem are laid out on horizontal plane and the reader’s vertical stance interprets them. According to my understanding of the poem, the poetess is not vertical and she confirms my stance in the next line by saying that “I am not a tree.” Death hovers in the poem that is quite depressing. Out of bitterness, she wishes for death. Horizontality³ is equivalent to death and no one wants to die before death. In horizontal position, one is passive like land. When you are vertical then you are prominent. The true essence of poem is that the poetess wants to be vertical. I’m talking about women’s upward mobility that’s why I have used the term verticality.

Munaweera’s *ITM* brims with vivid details where women are within certain confines and they don’t have access to privileged positions within patriarchal society. There is a deep relationship between hierarchy and subordination. There is no verticality in the lives of subjugated women. Therefore, I aim to figure out the vertical movement of marginalized creature despite severe constraints. The aim of ecofeminism is to dismantle the hierarchy of patriarchy in order to liberate women from the oppressed group of society. Gaard divides humans in two groups: the privileged, and oppressed. She believes that sexism, racism, and classism mutually strengthen the system of oppression. Men are privileged and women are oppressed. What are the reasons that women lag behind men? It seems that they have been marginalized by the patriarchs. I discuss this area under the following four headings.

- A Glance at Intricacies of the Marriage Market
- Mapping Animality in Women to Justify Domination
- Ocean as a Recurring Symbol
- Verticality in Women’s Sphere

4.2.1 A Glance at the Intricacies of Marriage Market

In order to carry out the analysis, I have chosen *ITM* to see how Sri Lankan writers talk about the exploitation of women and the destruction of landscapes. The basic question this

dissertation explores meticulously is the environmental exploitation as a feminist issue that I tried to answer in this section. Being a South Asian writer, Munaweera has shown a sharp interest in Sri Lankan culture, by addressing institutional issues with astonishing clarity of mind. Munaweera naturalizes women in their search for match, love affairs, and marital crisis.

As the novel opens, Munaweera makes an attempt to inform the reader about the values of fresh meat in South Asian countries, especially Sri Lanka. The fishermen's struggle to keep the flesh of octopus fresh in order to attract the customers' attention highlights the modern men's dilemma to find women who are in their early twenties. Like fishermen, mothers do not want to attach the stigma of staleness with their daughters and want to marry them off at an early age. The fear of growing old and bitter always simmers in women's hearts. Keeping in mind "indigenous patriarchal structure," (Spivak 42) Yasodhara's mother wants her to marry young. The apprehensions of a mother sews the seeds of many complexes in the minds of their daughters; therefore, they do whatever society expects from them. Munaweera succinctly puts that there are "obvious reasons" (18) for Alice being unmarried. First of all, she is humped and secondly, she has an illegitimate child, however, she is stale. This example is enough to explain my stance that no one intends to buy stale meat. Women possibly have a subordinate role in society and Munaweera presents that how society treats them differently from men. It seems that some of them are "wedded to patriarchal thinking" (hook 2). However, despite Sunethra being a teacher, she is cognizant of this patriarchal fact that girls should stay at home. Similarly, Beatrice also bears some grudges against her daughter Mala, who is black by birth. Sylvia Sunethra herself got married when she was only 15 and after the death of her husband, she prepares Visaka for the marriage market by making her "familiar with the intricacies of the Colombo marriage market," (Munaweera 31) and her statement "Amma won't be here to take care of you forever" (Munaweera 35) reinforces the idea that unmarried women need protection. She captures the concerns of mothers being worried about the settlement of their daughters. Catherine Belsey's emphasis on the role played by cultural knowledge helps in understanding the complexities of the marriage market. The search of Munaweera's characters for a proper match is pivotal in the text, crossing the barrier of 26 is alarming for women in South Asian countries. Munaweera herself got married in her late thirties with a foreigner that makes me skeptical that most probably at this age, she was not acceptable in any eastern family.

As stated earlier that Gaard believes that naturalization of women devalues them, and in *ITM*, they are treated as an object -a natural ingredient. Like nature, if women are charming, everyone cherishes them. Once they lose that charisma, they are thrown away. There are

different criteria to measure the beauty of women, and Munaweera compares the beauty and ugliness of women with nature. Some natural ingredients are delicious and precious whereas others are worthless. While looking for a match for their sons, the mothers scrutinize the women from all angles. For example, one woman is “round-faced and dark like a plump fig, succulent” (Munaweera 16) that showcases her ugliness. At another point “one girl too plump, another too gaunt, and a third’s eggplant curry an insult” (Munaweera 31). Munaweera makes an attempt to capture that being tall, slim and elegant, qualify women to be compared with lunar, a symbol of beauty. Similarly, Munaweera cherishes the beauty of Alice “fair skinned face, round as the full moon, long, she-deer eyelashes” (17). The narrator’s mother, like a gem miner, “search[es] the riverbank for hidden sapphires” (Munaweera 31). The girls are like precious metal and at times, it is hard to find them. Being a woman, one is not allowed to give vent to the most private feelings and emotions, for instance, Yashdora wears white Sari and “hold[s] a bouquet of white roses trimmed to look like lotus buds” (Munaweera 166). Women present themselves as an object commercialized in its best form for marketing. Men are destroying nature and men are destroying women as well, because they are beautiful and sensitive like lotus buds. This makes me conclude that if women are beautiful, they are readily acceptable within the marriage market. Otherwise, they suffer a lot throughout their life. This struggle shows that marriage is a dilemma of modern men. However, after marriage, the lives of women are not serene and Munaweera’s work blazes with the vivid details of the idea of marital dissatisfaction.

Along with discussing the search for better match, Munaweera documents the heap of some uninvited glitches and considers marriage a trap for women. Initially, everyone considers marriage a bliss but it reveals its darker side gradually. Like plants, women should most probably bear some fruits to their husbands; otherwise, they are considered discarded items. The society expects nature and women to grow. People value and appreciate only those plants which give fruits; otherwise, these plants are cut down for other purposes, like warming the houses or making furniture. Similarly, women who fail to produce children, their in-laws torture them physically and emotionally. This is seen as a women’s identity to produce offspring. When Mala fails to conceive even after a complete decade of marriage, her in-laws renounce her. Munaweera brings nature as the utmost companion of women in sufferings. “[U]nable to conceive, [she] delves into the sex lives of plants” (Munaweera 76). Mother-in-law adds with double venom that “what is the point of making plants grow when nothing is growing inside of [you]” (Munaweera 76). As Gurpreet Kaur’s “Postcolonial Ecofeminism,

Women and Land in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*" also discusses that women's close association with nature depends on this foundation that "[they] bring forth life from their bodies, undergo the pleasures and pains of pregnancy, childbirth and nursing" (102). These societal strictures that all women face who are unable to reproduce. Juan Li's article "Verticality, Horizontality, and States of the Self: Cognitive Metaphors for the "Spatial Self" in Chinese Autobiographical Writings" also discusses the concept of horizontality and verticality. He believes that "[h]appiness are conceived in terms of an upward movement towards the deictic center whereas negative emotions such as sadness are described as a downward movement away from the deictic center" (Li 82). Therefore different characters under discussion are at horizontal planes because they are at subordinate positions in patriarchal society.

When Mala conceives, Munaweera positions her growing body with nature. The news of being pregnant makes Mala radiate with excitement, and in great delight, she pulls dead leaves off the "airborne bromeliads" to profess that she wants to shake off the tag of infertility. Shedding off leaves give space to new leaves to grow as an embryo is nurturing inside her. She observes new colors and odors in nature and detects the freshness in the air and listens to the bird's songs as life is "unfurling in the cave of Mala's body," (Munaweera 79) and "she feels full of sap, like a plant" (79). Mala is a plant, fertilized egg is taken as a seedling while her body is interpreted as the earth, where seeds grow and nurture. The garden is the symbol of joy, "where green things shoot out of the ground, thick flowers explode into fruit, ferns unfurl themselves like plumage" (Munaweera 67). This description echoes the birth of Mala's child. Mala is like a flower and now she explodes into fruit. The way Munaweera talks about the opening of her labia is aligned to the unfurling of ferns in the garden. The spilled foliage's red color is compared to the birth mechanism. However, Munaweera sketches parturition in these words:

The large cruel knuckled fingers of fear and grief are forcing apart her labia lips, reaching into pink, then breaking into red, tearing through her smooth curved cervix into the sealed chamber where her forming child lies dreaming. (90)

Like leaves, the child leaves the body of Mala. Life lingers even when death continuously hovers in the surroundings. War demolishes everything, though dreams survive in war and the child in Mala's body symbolizes hope even in the worse situations. The life that is surviving inside Mala hopes for the best though the present circumstances might have shattered her dreams. It shows that life may also come out of the dead scorching earth. The greenery and

plants may grow out of this land and pollution free atmosphere might be created, as Mala was also considered barren.

In the same pattern, panic and pandemonium breaks out for the woman who finds out that her husband is in an illegitimate relationship. Yasodhara, the narrator of the novel, suffers endlessly in matrimonial relationship. While her husband shares certain information related to his other intimate partner, different images pop up in her mind and riddle every ounce of her being. Hence, the curses of an unsuccessful marriage make her weep. However, she considers herself as “discarded, unwanted, unlovable, and easily replaced” (Munaweera 170). Returning to the words of Greeta Gaard, we need the efforts of men to protect motherland and both genders should work together. In my opinion, there is not only patriarchy that makes Yasodhara suffers but matriarchy is also hiding the curtain causing havoc. Yasodhara’s husband ignores her because of another woman and he marries contrary to his wish just for the sake of his parents. He has committed a hideous crime in agreeing to marry Yasodhara thus making her life miserable. This man deceived both ladies.

This work of Munaweera attempts to justify the exploitation of women and land in the hands of patriarchy. Though Yasodhara also marries contrary to her wishes and for the sake of parents, her childhood’s love still broods and walks in the corridor of her mind. This thought adds gashes to her festering wounds that boy, “who still frequented [her] dreams” (Munaweera 179) is in the felicitous company of her sister. The haunting of love is also a prominent theme in *The God of Small Things*. However, contrary to her husband, Yasodhara struggles to mend this breaking marriage rather than seeking comfort in the company of her childhood love. She suffers in love only because of patriarchy. At times, marital dissatisfaction results in divorce. The situation for divorcees is even worse and Munaweera calls divorce a “Death knoll” (206). This word causes woman’s fragile heart to knock at her ribs, therefore, Yasodhara finds it difficult “to imagine leaving [her] life, [her] marriage with all its tyrannical love, to go across the world and teach amputated children to play with color” (Munaweera 178). The struggle of this women to survive in this drudgery relationship highlights the market value of divorcees. Society refuses to accept the women with the stigma of divorce.

For Munaweera, marriage is a house and husband’s illegitimate affairs shake Yasodhara’s house like an earthquake and breaks away every single tie of their sacred bond. Jack De Stefano and Monica Oala also hold the same stance that “man is consistently associated with infidelity” (13). Their relationship falls apart because of “ill-constructed foundations” (Munaweera 172). The writer captures the pain of Yasodhara’s heart and after attack,

“[f]issures and cracks appearing in the walls as if earthquake rocked, tsunami washed” (Munaweera 172). The earthquakes smash the established communities and the broken marriages mirror up a ramshackled house that has collapsed because of an earthquake. The earthquakes in the marital life of Yasodhara makes her life colorless. Nature and women share this common bond. The harsh weather withers away the beauty of snow clad mountains, as Munaweera writes:

In an astonishingly short time, the pleasant softness of her body melts away, corroded by relentless sun, salt air, and marital dissatisfaction. Overnight she becomes gaunt, her nostrils pinched, her gaze sharp as knives. (13)

The use of the word “relentless” for sun is quite significant. Humans are using certain products that are harmful to the ozone layer and eventually the harmful sun rays directly hit the earth. The softness of a body melts away like the snow melts in harsh weather. In the same way, marital dissatisfaction, like a relentless sun, withers away the beauty of women. Yasodhara’s distant husband gives no attention to his wife, however, time heals the wounds and eventually she ceases to miss his breathing presence in her room. The fissures appear and become too wide to bridge. Eventually she decides to fall in the familiar patterns of her own self by deciding to move to Sri Lanka. In the preceding section, I discuss how women are oppressed as animals.

4.2.2. Mapping out Animality in Women to Justify Domination

Greta Gaard lays out the comprehension of animalization of women by discussing the domination philosophy and she devalues whatever is associated with women. The species of animals in Munaweera’s world are mostly confined to aquatic, territorial and areal level, while she showcases the treatment of women as birds, insects, domestic and wild animals. From an androcentric point of view, these categories dehumanize women and open them up to exploitation. As animals are considered inferior to humans, this strategy puts women being compared with animals at vulnerable position and the use of different similes and metaphors make the situation more vivid in the novel. Thus, this dissertation sets out to investigate more than just pictorial presentations of these images but to discover the treatment of women in Munaweera’s hand. This is a sort of discrimination, and it needs to be addressed in critical terms. In this work, she makes an attempt to encapsulate the patriarchal thoughts of society by describing women in animalistic language.

The imagery of birds in *ITM* brightens the theme of ecofeminism. Comparison with birds is a derogatory construction for women and in some cases birds are pets too. In this novel,

Munaweera takes dance moves as water is pouring and rushing over the skin and she presents the movement of arms like a bird fluttering in the air. This fluttering in the air may be interpreted as a call of all caged up women, crying for freedom. In *A Doll's House*,⁴ Ibsen also gives certain bird names to Nora that is love on the surface but actually he dehumanizes her. While feeding her children with rice and fried fish, Munaweera presents Beatrice as a “bird” and her children as “chicks” and she is like “a bird feeding its chicks” (9). This attitude of the writer places women on the same pedestal as nature. They share a common bond with nature, caring and nurturing, eventually, vulnerable to exploitation. The animals also possess the same quality as they feed and take care of their kids. This shows that the only duty of women is to bring up children and nurse them. As Rodriguez also holds much of the same stance that the bird’ metaphors focus on “the senses of small size, youth, domesticity and entertainment” (86). This is how Beatrice is domesticized. Being small in size, like a bird, she does not do anything great rather than feeding and nursing her children, however, she is imprisoned by patriarchy.

There are some birds that are eatable and this eating of meat is related to sexuality. Munaweera’s comparing of women with birds, however, seems to present them as sexual objects. She describes Miss Rajasingham’s saree that has “thin gold border in the shape of swirling peacocks,” (Munaweera 141) rather seductive, and her husband comes to see her in the school. The seductiveness of attire reinforces my argument that women are sexual objects that’s why they are presented as birds. Catherine Belsey’s statement in research methodology explains that knowledge from elsewhere helps in the interpretation of the text, and the following secondary sources strengthen my claim. Margaret N. Barasa, and Isaac Nilson Opande in their article titled as “The Use of Animal Metaphors in the Representation of Women in Bukusu and Gusii Proverbs in Kenya” write that the chicken nourishes our body and the small size bird signals towards edibility. Being small, women “must serve the men in all capacities; including serving as meat (the term meat has sexual innuendoes)” (Barasa and Opande 96). Being nothing more than an object of desire, the women are, therefore, represented as birds and they don’t have any presence like Margart Aswood’s Handmaids who have to marginalize their feelings and emotions in order to work as producers for commanders (Atwood).

Women are birds and this association positions them for subjugation. The writer has used very powerful images to strengthen the theme of ecofeminism. At another point in the novel, Munaweera writes that “[a]t water’s edge, a flock of women gather, loud as birds” (22). The array of my ideas help in pluralistic interpretation, therefore, there could be another

interpretation of this image that women are loud. When they meet, they always gossip about others and, they cry out loud like birds. Similarly, Munaweera gives another example: in America “the voices of kids like those of seabirds echoing across the water” (108). It demonstrates that women are immature like children. Similarly, Friedrich Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, writes that men have treated women like birds and the reason for this treatment is that they are “more vulnerable, wilder, stranger, sweeter, more soulful –but also like something that has to be locked up to keep it from flying away” (127). The writer’s use of bird images in the text demonstrates that women, just like birds, are caged up and they want vertical mobility in this world.

In *ITM*, Nayomi Munaweera’s characters proffer an insight into the nature of men as hunter. They hunt those things that are inferior to them and this is how they satiate their appetite of supremacy in the world. Fishing has been the profession of men from time beginning. In the novel, Nishan has a soft corner for Radhini who is “jerked upward like a fish plucked out of water by a cormorant’s skewering beak” (Munaweera 25). This treatment like fish showcases that she is vulnerable to exploitation. Being fragile, she is unable to defend herself against Sinhalas who considered her Tamil. Steve Harvey in *Act like a Lady Think like a Man* also discusses the nature of men as hunter and he states that “[m]en are, by nature, hunters and women have been put in the position of being the prey” (70). Most similes show that women and fish both suffer in different contexts. Apart from fish, some other images of octopus and “exiled mermaids” (Munaweera 108) are used for major tasks, first of all, to build a deep relationship between women and nature and, secondly, to affirm Greeta Gaard’s claim that this association devalues women, and these positions allow men to dominate women and nature.

Munaweera illustrates that women are too sensitive to survive the harsh weather and they may wither away. Ananda assumes that summers “will be hot enough to turn [his nieces] into dried fish,” (97) and that is quite derogatory. Saraswathi, the second narrator of the novel, also considers herself a fish and hears the curiosity in voices “like open fish mouths just under the surface of the water” (Munaweera 156). However, the arrival of hunters gives fish a fright under the water. She further considers herself a parched fish being “stranded in the paddy fields after a storm. I drink and drink, but always, my throat is dry” (Munaweera 156). Drinking water does not quench her thirst and her parched throat highlights the sufferings of women. Munaweera writes that “[w]hen she falls asleep, it is in exhaustion, like losing a wrestling match or drowning” (44). The one who loses the match is not a man, but a woman. At one point

in the novel, Munaweera writes that the fishermen wrestle with the turtles and in the same way the patriarchs wrestle with women in different domains of life.

The sea, which is a source of many edibles, is polluted. Greeta Gaard emphasizes that environmental degradation results in poor quality of life and Munaweera's character suffers because of water pollution. Fish used to be a healthy food, but war has made the situation worse. The water is germ-infested because of dead bodies being dumped there that "whoever eats lagoon fish gets sick and vomits for days" (Munaweera 137). Thora is expensive fish and Beatrice Muriel buys Thora fish, and they eat fish with great festivity. People don't have healthy food to eat. Many people, who are less fortunate, eat dried fish. Munaweera writes that these fish have become completely extinct. Many aquatic animals suffer terribly because of water pollution. However, it seems most appropriate to interpret the title of the novel here with reference to the image of fish as this is the very first thing that instigated me to investigate this text in ecofeminist terms. The title of the novel is open ended and has multi-interpretations, and Munaweera has imbricated different references in the layers of this text. According to Munaweera: "I like titles that have multiple meanings, so that as you read the book, you also discover these" (Munaweera Online interview). In ITM, Munaweera embeds certain ideas that reinforce ecofeminist themes. In the novel, the word "thousand" is used for the school of fish that signals towards the abundant fish in the ocean. Mirror reflects light and the closing of eyes shows that the humans are not in a position to face reality, but we need to face it. There are a thousand mirrors and all these mirrors scream to wake us from lethargic slumbers. The environmental degradation is the image of what we have done to our environment.

Munaweera gives powerful position to men while talking about the soldiers seducing the young girls. Visaka, being obsessed in love, thinks about Ravan all the time and envisions that "[w]ould he bite with those perfectly white, slightly wolfish teeth?" (Munaweera 40). At another point in the novel, she subverts this power dynamics relationship and makes an attempt to map out women's vengeance. For example, being ferocious, Visaka, even in her dream tears her rival's belly and exposes her entire circulatory system "like the veins of a leaf, surging with green envy, bright yellow rancor" (Munaweera 45). The molestation of circulatory system is compared with the structure of leaf, however, it proves that like men, women may also exploit women. Similarly, the transformation in Saraswathi's character is hard to overlook. She says that "I am fearless. I am free. Now, I am the predator" (Munaweera 185). Her acts make her a predator from a prey when she kills soldiers ruthlessly. Saraswathi envisions that her duties heal the wounds of her family that are inflicted by her being spoiled, and she feels that her

struggles have made her parents proud “from now on, they will see me as I am, a Tiger with teeth and claws” (Munaweera 192). This may be considered vertical mobility on part of Saraswathi, though it contains disastrous outcome. I have discussed in detail how patriarchy is responsible for this immense change in Saraswathi’s attitude in the section titled as Violation against Body.

At a domestic level, Munaweera treats women as cats, dogs and cows. Women are sexual object that’s why they are carefully examined. While scrutinizing a girl for marriage, her physical beauty is taken into consideration and women are being rejected, based on the reason that “her eyes are perhaps bigger than usual, her face a little more feline” (Munaweera 54). Alice’s son resents cats as they always congregate wherever he goes. Cats are like a mother “and [he] pushes them gently away with a pointed toe, an impatient foot” (Munaweera 64). When he joins the army, the cats mourn at his departure openly “raising their whiskered faces to the sky and yowling outside the opening of his hut, refusing to eat even the fisherman’s best tidbits for weeks” (Munaweera 65). The mourning of cats may be compared with Alice mourning for her son in the opening of the novel. This brings women and cats at the same pedestal. Munaweera writes that “[l]ater we lie like replete kittens on our mothers’ bellies” (59). The kittens are not powerful, they need the warmth of their mothers’ lap.

The image of a dog shows loyalty and dependence but its interpretation varies from culture to culture. Saraswathi is being gang raped, and this incident devalues her in her own eyes and she considers herself a “Tiger Bitch;” (Munaweera 152) the word that is related to promiscuity. Rodriguez also discusses that in some cultures the word bitch shows ugliness and promiscuity and even in South Asian culture, bitch has negative connotation. Mala is represented as a pet and women think “like a puppy dog,” (Munaweera 75) she is always after her husband. Similarly, Yasodhara’s mother calls her daughters, doggies and asks them to come and kiss her “with your dirty little dog breath, your filthy little doggie teeth” (Munaweera 113). This image illustrates women as filthy and dirty. A mother uses such disparaging expressions for her daughter to perpetuate patriarchal thinking. In the light of Greeta Gaard’s concept of animalization, Munaweera animalizes Parvati’s mother that she “mak[es] a noise like a wounded dog” (143) over the death of her daughter. Her representation as a dog symbolizes her as an uncivilized being. In Catherine Belsey point of view, interpretations vary from culture to culture as discussed earlier in detail the symbol of a dog underestimates women. Munaweera puts women in a place of control. These images also restrict women to the boundaries of their houses.

In the novel, attention has also been paid to treatment of powerless humans as insects. Grandmother keeps check and balance on her grandchildren and “pins [Shiva] like an insect” (Munaweera 62). Pinning him like an insect confirms that he is not powerful. Similarly, insects are not powerful, therefore human forces crush them mercilessly. The Tamil and women are powerless, therefore, marginalized and being treated like insects. At another point in the novel, “[t]he girls are giggling at this grown man struggling like an upturned insect” (Munaweera 183). It seems to me that whoever is in a vulnerable position is animalized. Here women are powerful and want to kill the soldier, therefore, the warrior begs for his life. He is being compared to an insect. It seems the play of power. Whoever is powerful subordinates the other but largely women are animalized as birds, insects, wild animals, domestic animals and aquatic animals in Munaweera’s work, and this animalization mirrors up the subjugation of women in the hands of patriarchy.

Women are being compared to fish that is the major food in Sri Lanka and other continent as well. This demonstrates that women are to be consumed. Munaweera’s attention to Sri Lankan cuisine at great length highlights her pivotal interest in her culture. All the time, wherever the word food is mentioned, it is used with mother, either she looks for food or she cooks food. A mother struggles to buy lagoon fish for the family. The narrator of this novel writes that her mother and Shiva’s breastfed them. We get food from nature and mothers breastfeed their children that demonstrate Mother Nature of nature, and women. Rachel Alsop ethnographic method helps in scrutinizing the behavior of both groups. However, Shiva’s and Yasodhara’s mothers are from different sects: Sinhala and Tamil, but motherly attitude towards their children is the same. The women nurse their children like nature. Mother breast-feed her children and Mother-Earth also feeds the children of the earth: human beings. This is how nature is feminized and women are naturalized.

As far as the question of eating of animals is concerned, it is quite conflicting and different schools of thoughts are debating over it. Since I am looking at these text within cultural context, therefore I hold this stance that we should eat animals. Lion kills and eats other animals this is how the eating of animals is justified. Women are not animals and animals are not humans. We eat animals not to dominate them but for survival. “Our survival depends on some form of subordination” (Gaard 298) like we eat salad and animals. Vegetarian diet involves least amount of subordination. For Example, Mala is vegetarian but when she conceives she eats meat. Meat eating is justified here because she does not eat to dominate these animals but this was her need for survival.

Women and animals are mammals, though different too. There is no natural connection between women and animals. Louri writes in her essay “Dismantling Oppression” that the connection between women and animals is not natural. It is “a constructed connection that has been created by patriarchy as a means of oppression” (Louri 61). We should deconstruct the binaries in term of their treatment. They both should be treated with kindness and respect and we need to revise our thinking pattern. We may only liberate women and nature by changing our attitude. It is impractical to treat animals like humans. At least we should not treat them like garbage. They love and care humans. We should maintain natural balance. We should not kill animals for pleasure. We all are connected in one way or the other. We even don’t treat humans like humans, then it would be a bit challenging to treat animals like humans. The human and animal instincts are different. We should love them but that does not qualify them to be dolled up like humans. We cannot go against nature. There are different spheres specified for animals and humans, and our physical and mental make-up are different. The animals’ brains are programmed differently by the creator. At least we should give them animal’s rights and we should not torture them unnecessarily. We should not come up with something that is impractical. “As for animals, by all means let us be kind to them. But let us not lose perspective. We are all different order of creation form animals. Not higher, necessarily, just different” (Coetzee 74). If we started treating animals like human that would be annoying for them. The focus should be on animal rights.

4.2.3 Ocean as a Recurring Symbol

It is discussed previously that women are naturalized and it is further extended while tracing association between ocean and women. Munaweera connects women and nature through the recurring image of the ocean that is, perhaps, the central node of the book. The writer presents women bodies, love making, and the birth mechanism in comparison with the ocean. Moreover, she discusses the soothing effects of ocean on the nerves. The immersed readers observe the treatment of women and ocean as an object in the same vein.

The embedding ocean in *ITM* is quite significant and I make an attempt to figure out the presentation of women’s bodies as an ocean. While talking about the youth of Visaka, Munaweera writes that the eternal devotion notes could not cause “the slightest ripple in her slumbering biology” (39), however, a Tamil boy does so. Women like the ocean are deep and intense and they hide many secrets in their hearts. The sight of rival moving side by side, along with her husband, creates great turbulence in the ocean of Visaka’s body and “her ire swells and surges” (Munaweera 58) like waves in the ocean because of some storms. Firstly, ocean

water is salty, so is the women's womb. Munaweera talks about the conceiving mechanism in this novel as she writes that Beatrice Muriel at the ripe age of sixteen "finds herself bloodless and nauseous" (10). Like the ocean, virgin mother is giving birth to life. Munaweera captures this beautifully: "[w]ith a final effort, a great gush of red, another child slips headfirst from salt water into the wide, airy world" (10). Yasodhara and Shiva are born on the same day and Munaweera compares the flowing blood with waves. "We enter the world on waves of our mothers' iron-flavored blood" (Munaweera 59). Women's bodies are like an ocean as they conceive and nurture children inside their bodies. Similarly, different living entities survive in oceans and there is a whole life over there. The use of the word "salt water" positions women with nature, sea water is also salty and Munaweera acknowledges this fact in the same chapter that Visaka has memories of sea salt and jasmine's scent.

The rivers swell each year when the level of water rises. In case a storm breaks out, all people wish for it to remain peaceful. The narrator shares that three years after her birth "[her] mother swells again" (Munaweera 62). The mother wishes for her belly to remain patient and peaceful. Gaard's essay discusses that pollution results in poor quality of life for women that echoes the theme of ecofeminism. Munaweera gives blazing details of these problems in the novel under consideration and she writes that a woman "delivered something minute and malformed" (90). These malnourished and malformed children are the result of inhumane activities of human. There is a resemblance between ocean and women bodies, therefore, the ocean is also a source of comfort for women.

Munaweera supports the healing nature of nature. Being a healer, ocean is a true companion of hard times and it heals shattered women's wounds. In turbulent days, Sunethra, "the mother-ghost," (Munaweera 34) goes for a morning walk. Visaka along with her mother "listen[s] to the waves rising in the darkness" (Munaweera 33). Like Offred of *Handmaid's Tale*, Sunethra visits the sea and recalls all her good and bad memories. The ocean assuages pain of her mother as she mounts up the rocks and faces ocean. As Sylvia Sunethra does not cry at night, however "the sea and Visaka are the only witnesses" (Munaweera 34) of her erupting tears during morning walks. "The tears are falling, mixing with the salt spray, the sobbing lost behind the water's roar" (Munaweera 34). The ocean water is salty, so is the womb water, and the water that streams down our cheeks is also saltish. It seems that salt is elixir of life.

The memories of sea water are deeply embedded in *ITM*. While in America, the narrator's family terribly misses the gushing water of the ocean of their native land, the

“glorified bathtub cannot satisfy [their] water desire” (Munaweera 109). Munaweera’s writing blazes with vivid details of the ocean as she writes in appreciation that “[t]he ocean we grew up with was as warm as bath water, pulling you in to hold you tenderly; you could fall asleep in such water, lulled and embraced, the temperature at one with that of your own body” (111), like a child is being lulled in tenderly embrace of her mother. Then after losing her sister in a battlefield, Yasodhara does not have any thread of life left to follow in her native land as she thinks that “[t]he ocean does not call [her]. [She] no longer long for those myriad shades of green” (Munaweera 226). Moreover, she does not disclose anything about the tragic history to her daughter. In shock, she avers that “[t]hese days I do not even speak of that place to myself” (Munaweera 226). This statement of Yasodhara seems quite contradictory to me. What I believe is that every tincture of that place haunts her. Yasodhara’s own statements elsewhere in the novel are enough to rebuttal this claim as she names her daughter after the ocean “Samudhra. She calls herself Sam” (Munaweera 227). As the novel moves forward, she herself asserts “[i]t is the ocean that I long to show her most of all” (Munaweera 237). Yasodhara calls her daughter a “child of peace” (Munaweera 237) because war ended in 2009. Now, she may visit the place where her parents grew up. She imagines her daughter emerging from the ocean water, however the water is there to purify her innocent soul from all the shadows of the past. In concluding section of the novel, Munaweera has successfully naturalized Sam: “[s]he drips seawater. She has grown so tall, into a young woman with wild and snaking hair studded with drops of silver water. Her skin is shining dark, polished by sun and salt” (237), then she concludes her work with a positive note that “[t]he waves lick away her footsteps, the sand retaining no record of what came before her” (237). The water has the power to swipe away all the horrors, hence, there is a dire need to protect it from pollution and other disinfectants. The naturalization of women and feminization of nature allows the dominant groups to subjugate the nature and women in different spheres of life. So far, I discussed the horizontality of women in different sphere. Because of their horizontal positionality, women want to go vertical. Being in horizontal sphere, they are perhaps unable to do something productive. However, women need verticality. In the next section, the dissertation discusses vertical mobility of naturalized women within different domains of life.

4.2.4. Verticality in Women’s Sphere

The women in Munaweera’s world, being mothers, take care of family and they also excel in professional fields. While moving vertical, they break binaries. Being a teacher, Sylvia Sunethra is quite vigilant and studious and her students’ remark that “she has two eyes in the

back of her head” (Munaweera 14) complements her professional competence. She is multitasking and her duties are not confined only to teaching and rearing her children up. She has perfected this art to handle the difficulties of life. The judge sells the land “in order to fund his house-building obsession, he has emptied all the accounts, sold all the lands” (Munaweera 33). This selling of land is, perhaps, directly linked with looming cauldron of troubles for the family. Women have close association with nature and land; therefore, it may be assumed that by selling the land, Judge sold out all the pending happiness from Sylvia Sunethra’s life. The judge, husband of Sylvia Sunethra, rips and uproots his garden a few days after this incident “the mutilated branches send forth vines” and “[b]irds return once again to build nests in the outstretched arms of the trees” (Munaweera 16). This showcases that it is hard to suppress women, and like these plants, they show upward movement in different spheres of life. They are empowered when they are vertical.

Tackling hard circumstances highlights women’s power to handle difficulties in life. After the death of her husband, unlike other woman of Colombo, Sylvia Sunethra grows very strong, even the other women endorse her strength: “If it was me, I would just die” (Munaweera 33). However, the death of the Judge leaves the family in great turbulence and the mocking attitude of relatives teaches Sylvia Sunethra some remarkable lessons of life: “she will carry with her into adulthood and whisper into the ears of her children” (Munaweera 34). Similarly, women implant different ideas in the minds of new generations. In Greeta Gaard’s light, Munaweera destabilizes the binaries by elevating Sylvia Sunethra’s status. Though these incessant incidents incredibly perturb the serenity of Sunethra’s life, she still solves these overwhelming problems dexterously. She dismisses the servants and tutors of her children. She sells all her dowry on the black market; she rents the upper portion of her house to Shivalangam, a Tamil.

There is, however, a dire need to talk about the intellectual growth of women. Within the layers of the novel, Munaweera ruminates over this idea of vertical mobility of women. Women are marginalized in education and the pivotal focus of the family is to marry off their daughters. This contrasts sharply with men’s approach to education across the borders who, unlike women, study medicine and engineering. Sunethra has been taught patriarchal thinking through her society, therefore she treats both her children differently. Bell hook’s “Understanding Patriarchy” explicates the same idea that “[o]ur sense of gender roles was learned from our parents, from the ways we saw them behave” (1). The “jewel in Sylvia Sunethra’s crown,” (Munaweera 31) Ananda, studies medicine in England. Similarly,

“Beatrice Muriel dreams of the day her son will enter university” (Munaweera 14). The marginalization of women devalues them.

These shades of disenfranchisement of women are being reflected in the text in a clandestine way. The birth of Mala, a black girl, in Sinhala’s family deconstructs the binaries based on skin color. The people of her own community treat her differently, even the women marginalize and criticize her “scrawny” figure and dark complexion. The family considers her “the boy’s twin and shadow, remains as stubbornly dark as at birth” (Munaweera 21). She is not allowed to go out all alone and stays with her mother at home while men go wandering. This is a patriarchal rhetoric that women should be confined within four walls, and they should not participate in a productive way. Val Pulmwood, in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, claims that women are imprisoned in their traditional roles of mothers and they are invisible creature in all domains of life (41-69). This aspect positions women with nature, therefore they are vulnerable to exploitation. This is a “tragedy of feminism” (Spivak 48). Munaweera treats Mala as a “dreamy doctor,” (21) and her brother a “scholarly boy” (21). This stereotypical generalization figures forth women fit for domestic chores only. Similarly, the profound expression in the text highlight men’s superiority over women. Though Seeni Banda is one legged fisherman, he has a rifle, a symbol of power.

Mala’s vertical movement emancipates her thoughts regarding educational field and the marital institution. There is immense transformation in Mala, and “a different Mala awakens” (Munaweera 21) with a different view of the world. She comes out of the patriarchal walls and plays cricket with boys and climbs trees nimbly. When Mala gains admission in university, her family undermines her success, but “[i]n her happiness, she blooms like a forest orchid” (Munaweera 49). The flower indicates happiness and the young spirit of Mala blooms in her discipline. Though flowers are beautiful, they don’t stay fresh all the time, this is how women are categorized and disenfranchised. Mala transcends the traditional binaries specified for women, “to marry whatever smelly uncle was chosen for them” (Munaweera 76). Contrary to this idea, she marries the man of her own choice. Mala’s decision of adopting a Tamil girl highlights Gaard’s focus to liberate women from the oppression of racism and sexism. Being insecure in the hands of her father, Poona’s mother throws her at Mala’s gate just to save this little girl from her brutal father. In Aslope’s light, it helps me analyze the social condition of Poona’s mother to throw her daughter at Sinhala’s gate. While scrubbing the child, Mala discovers “bruises and Lacerations everywhere” (Munaweera 68) and she accepts the girl. However, “[e]very fortnight, her father comes to spew filth in Tamil” (Munaweera 68). The

voice of the father causes this little child to be scared, she hides under the table. This “malnourished, dirty little thing” (Munaweera 68) shows “epistemic transformation” (Spivak 41) and comes out of a “static culture” (Spivak 42). Mala swells with pride at the immense achievements of her adopted girl, as a university professor. Women’s vertical movement within education is a threat to their traditional roles as Malathi de Alwis takes into account these potential threats. She writes that “[t]he education of women, their employment outside the home, their agitation for political rights, their assumption of political office, etc., have been perceived as potential threats to women's "traditional" roles and status within Ceylonese society at various moments in Ceylonese history” (Alwis 675). Mala recalls the time people considered her decision to adopting a Tamil child as madness. They assuming: “she would murder [her] in bed. But now they come with proposals for [her] girl” (Munaweera 204). Mala’s emancipated thoughts make Poona’s vertical movement possible. In doing so, she deconstructs the existing binaries of sexism that is what Gaard expects for the betterment of this planet. Being an ethnographic reader of the selected text in Rachel Alsop light, I closely observe the behavior of Tamil and Sinhala’s family towards their daughters.

Munaweera seems to be incorporating the idea of deconstruction of binaries and the birth of Sri Lankan nation is based on the deconstruction of binaries, perhaps the binaries are social construct, just to legitimize the power of the stronger over the weaker. Munaweera’s characters of third generation transcend binaries to come out of traditional patriarchal interests. Visaka’s falling in love with a Tamil boy, Ravan, dismantles the binaries of Tamil-Sinhale. Ravan destabilizes binaries while proposing Visaka by referring to her aunt who married a Sinhala and “[t]here’ll be an uproar for some time, and then they’ll forget” (Munaweera 43). This reinforces the idea that love between Sinhala and Tamil is there for ages, despite being quite distinct from one another and “this difference [is] as wide as the ocean” (Munaweera 62). For instance, Munaweera writes: “who believe that they are descended from the lovemaking between an exiled Indian princess and a large jungle cat,” (6). In the prologue of this novel, there is a vivid description of lovemaking between two opposite casts: Sinhala and Tamil and that is materialized at the end of novel. Munaweera’s characters intermingle with foreigners, the introduction of a burgher girl, Nishan’s love, in her story manifests that these categorizations are a social construct. This proves that beyond Tamil and Sinhale, we are humans. At the end of novel, Yasodhara marries a Tamil boy and Munaweera wonders at child “who is both American and Sri Lankan, but beyond this, also Tamil and Sinhala” (233). The novel teems with the construction and deconstruction of binaries. These binaries result in war

and two groups fight for supremacy. They destroy natural landscapes and humans, especially the women, who suffer a lot. In the next section, I discuss the exploitation of natural landscapes in terms of war and its effect on the women.

4.3. War as “A Beast”

Munaweera’s *ITM* was published in 2012 and it concentrates its attention on the condition of Sri Lankan people in the span of 26 years of war. War eventually ends up polluting the atmosphere and all natural resources. It is the rape of land. The blazing details of war embedded in the work under consideration rejuvenate the sense of ecofeminism. Alsop’s ethnographic stance helps analyze the reasons of civil war. The Sinhala are insecure in the presence of Tamils, their verdict is that Tamils take their jobs, lands and “If [they] let them they will take the whole country” (Munaweera 25). The war between Tamil and Sinhala appears in the novel in a concrete form. For Munaweera, “the war is a living creature, something huge, with a pointed tongue and wicked claws” (130). However, the postmodern man, who in search of nothing, creates chaos in the world and spreads violence. War engulfs thousands of people and shatters them in blasts. The brutal forces throw people to the seas and burns them in tyres. Land mines make people crippled. Such horrors make this world quite suffocating, a living hell. The earth mourns at the damage that is done by men. The soldiers fight in war and they have, perhaps, become an integral part of Sri Lankan people’s lives. As people are accustomed to them, for them, the soldiers’ absence creates a hole in society. We need to pay attention to these problems in order to find some viable solution. Humans are fighting with humans and consequently men, women, and children are suffering. In the forthcoming pages of this project, I shall reveal the brutalities of Sinhala and Tamil.

Munaweera opens *ITM* with the departure of colonizers significantly demonstrates the destruction of Sri Lanka that is ruined by powerful forces. During the colonial period, colonizers attacked Sri Lankan landscapes and demolished its beauty. When they left this place, their ships were “groaning.” Munaweera mourns over the plundering and looting of this place where nothing is left to preserve, even English men have taken away the history of this place, and seemingly this place vanished in terms of culture and history. Munaweera terms it as a “Vanishing Island” (5). In the novel, land is laid out as a victim and its treatment mirrors up the treatment of subjugated women. Just like Sri Lanka, women are small in size, as compared to men and are not more muscular. Sinhala’s youth besets fire on a Tamil woman and “beat[s] her with sticks and then, laughing as if at a fair or some other amusement” (Munaweera 27).

Houses are looted on fire during war in the same pattern, a woman is set alight. Additionally, Munaweera naturalizes Yasodhara's pain: "My body quaking, underground fissures rupturing in my eyes, my skin cracking open, earthquakes within me" (223). War raptures the earth and fissures appear at the spot of a bomb blast. However, for Yasodhara, these fissures are hard to rectify. Patrick Curry's *Ecological Ethics: An Introduction* states: "same habitual structures of thought, feeling and action that devalue and harm women," (95) also harm nature. By representing the earth as female, Munaweera shows the abasement of nature as helpless and passive like women.

Munaweera incorporates the theme of natural annihilation. In 1981, 'Jaffana library burning' was soul shattering event in Sri Lankan civil war that lasted almost 25 years. The burning of Jaffana library is similar to the activities of colonial rulers, who, while leaving this country took away everything with them. Sinhala soldiers burned the library; the real source of knowledge. Brutally, they ripped off the books and set them all on fire. This attempt shows that they wanted to erase the history of the Tamils. While doing this, Sinhala participate equally in destroying the order of the world. Munaweera, being a Sinhala writer, expresses her concerns for the brutalities done by the people of her own ethnic group. "For weeks afterward, torn, blackened pages fly over the lagoons and salt marshes, the onion and chili fields" (Munaweera 77). This is sheer exploitation on part of Sinhala.

While talking about the damage done by Sinhala soldiers, Munaweera once again brings readers' attention to the issues of environmental destruction in the lap of war. Catherine Belsey states that cultural criticism does not exclude history, therefore I discuss Sri Lankan civil war between two ethnic groups. The Sinhala's soldiers "set fires on front lawns, threw in furniture and children over the wailing of mothers (Munaweera 83). The burning of bodies smitten the area with stench, all places reek of an unbearable odor, unpleasant for human senses. Moreover, the Sinhala damage the properties of people, burn the cars, "looted textile factories from which bolts of cloth lick the sky like dragons' tongues, towers of garbage, bodies blackened beyond recognition, orphans, torn women, and destroyed men" (Munaweera 91). The soldiers burn houses and drag out the older people. The atrocities of Sinhala people displace Tamils and they abandon their property over there. As Munaweera captures the hideous nature of the situation in this statement:

Arteries, streams, and then rivers of Tamils flow out of the city. Behind them they leave: looted, soot-blackened houses, the unburied or unburned bodies of loved ones, ancestral wealth, lost children, Belonging and Nationalism. (91)

These lines are self-explanatory and do not demand an extended analysis. War demolishes the land and human beings suffer. I move forward to briefly discuss violence on children and women.

Munaweera seems to demonstrate the idea that society makes a nation turn hostile, otherwise all humans by nature, are innocent. By the end of chapter two, she foreshadows the upcoming events in the life of a Tamil boy, who turns out to be the leader of Tamils and speaks up for the rights of his ethnic group. Munaweera captures the picture of his innocence when he was four. At that time, he had “perhaps no fangs in this mouth, no incipient claws in evidence” (Munaweera 27) but the great upheavals in society changed him into a person “with blood-drenched claws and ripping fangs” (Munaweera 28). The writer believes that children don’t loath on the basis of sects and she validates this stance through some other examples. Meena goes to school with Sinhala’s children and plays with them and trusts them as friends. Strangely, she observes the riots of 1983 and perceives her family being thrown out of house then burned to ashes in the garden, which is a symbol of growth. Initially, there is no hatred in her heart, but this incident has strewn some seeds of hate and now the talk of that incident makes “her eyes shine with hatred” (Munaweera 182). This shows that society is responsible for inculcating an immense amount of hatred in her heart. Furthermore, the leaders take children, train them; their minds easily moulded to the ways of the leaders. The Tamil Tiger, Saraswathi, along with her group takes children, from every family and dictates sermons, for those families who resist Tigers’ demands. “I hate ripping a child from his mother’s arms, but it must be done. This is war and to fight we need bodies” (Munaweera 189). Sinhala soldiers treat Tamil in the same way that amplifies their sufferings. Similarly, Sinhala children open their eyes by the lagoon, not playing with the soft toys but, “shreds of uniform, ripped flak jackets, hard round helmets like buried skulls. Sometimes our toes catch on sharp fragments of bone” (Munaweera 144). The dead soldiers have left these things behind them as their legacy. These images are carving on children’s blank minds and they carry them into next generation. Innocent souls lost their limbs at land mines. The decision of La to visit Sri Lanka to teach these amputated children symbolizes her mother nature and she tries to teach them how to be independent in life. However, both Tamil and Sinhala’s children suffer in war.

The war invades the normal life and makes it hard for people to imagine living outside this war zone. Munaweera presents the sufferings of Tamil victims through Saraswathi, as it is difficult for her to envision life before war. “It is that world with plenty to eat and no air strikes that is alien to me” (Munaweera 130). It seems that war pollutes the land and makes it deserted.

Before war, there was plenty to eat. When Saraswathi comes back home from the camp then her mother serves her the best food available in the market: pittu and dried fish. Saraswathi considers “these bits of fish like tiny shreds of wood,” (Munaweera 192) that signifies the extinction of fresh fish in the seas. This conveys the message that people don’t have ample fresh food to eat during war. In this war trodden area, thunders of war interrupt slumbers. In the middle of the night, parents drag children to the trenches. As Saraswathi articulates that “the whole earth is moving, bucking and pushing against us as if it rejects us, wishes to spit us up into the air where the low-flying planes will see us and narrow in with bombs aimed at our head” (Munaweera 135). The war makes people crippled, they can’t move and Saraswathi’s father “drag[s] the useless leg in the midst of the world being destroyed” (Munaweera 136). The earth also trembles by looking at the cruel behavior of humans against humans.

While describing her nightmares, the narrator focuses on the brutalities of war and consequently environmental destruction. Families suffer and pay an immense price to the “demons of war” (Munaweera 223). It seems Yasodhara collects images of bomb blast for nightmares and she calls it “a circle of hell” (Munaweera 222). For the surviving family members, pandemonium breaks out and the sight of dead bodies makes their voices choke. Saraswathi has three brothers and two sisters and her mother suffered a lot during these war years. Two sons, Krishna and Balaram, are killed in war and this is heart wrenching for a mother that “she will not even have an empty grave to cry over” (Munaweera 134). Kumar, her last son, is also taken away by the soldiers and the helpless mother could do nothing, except wait. The mother’s wait makes one wonder the number of wounds festering in her heart. However, it seems that Saraswathi’s family has nothing left to mourn. For some families, the token of luck is to collect the pieces of a body as “[a] lot of the other people have no body. Only pieces of flesh to burn or bury” (Munaweera 224). There are many families whose sons fight and die, unacknowledged. The grief-struck mothers suppress simmering anger deep down in their hearts and they may not give vent to their wounded feelings. Moreover, the rape of daughter adds more gashes to the blistering wounds of mother that I will discuss in detail in the next section titled as “Violation against Body”

The feelings of violence perpetuate by looking at the Sri Lankan flag. The Tiger is a Tamil symbol and the Lion is a Sinhalese symbol. These various symbols show that equally corrupt forces fight and in order to balance this argument, Munaweera gives two narratives. There are four symbols on the Sri Lankan flag: a tiger, a green strip, orange strip and cat. “But in the decades that are coming, race riots and discrimination will render the orange stripe

inadequate” (Munaweera 7). This image of violence speculates that the coming days would be full of fear and horror. These two ethnic groups seem to be corrupt and full of vengeance and politics. The setting plays quite significant role in interpretation and the meaning making process. On the surface, the Island provokes the feelings of serenity and calmness; but, it seems rather ironical because there is no serenity in novel. For Munaweera, war is a living entity that may engulf and devour thousands of people in one attempt. In this war riddled area, it is hard to dream big. Saraswathi considers war a beastly animal who eats the world mindlessly. The next part extends the analysis to the marginalization of rape victims and exploitation of land in the hands of patriarchy.

4.4. Violence against Body

Munaweera in her work, *ITM*, naturalizes women’s bodies, and my concern is to see their treatment. In the previous section, I discussed war as beast, and in this section I discern and elaborate with critical eyes the treatment of women in patriarchal society, especially in war context. Being ravished, it is probable to consider the rape victims as discarded. The way these soldiers attack the innocent is just like a hungry jungle wolf who eats his prey ravenously. The Sinhala’s atrocious attitude towards Tamil is ostensibly central in the novel for investigation. Like women’s bodies, soldiers assault landscapes too. As a result, the earth retaliates. Perhaps women, being the sensitive figures, suffer more because of this exploitation of land. The naturalized image of women is reflected in women’s character to demonstrate the subjugation of women in a patriarchal society. Hence, I set forth to see naturalization of rape victims to draw parallels between the subjugation of nature and women, this is the main essence of my project.

The nimble dreams of rape victims are shattered like glass by the brutes of war. Saraswathi, who is seventeen years old, has big dreams. Primarily, she wants to be a teacher and desires to marry “a young man, as straight and slim as a sapling” (Munaweera 147). In contradiction to her dreams, the soldiers inculcate terrors in every ounce of her body, however, now these pending dreams make her tremble. After assault, the soldiers put Saraswathi in “a back room with bullet-riddled, broken cement walls, no roof, overhead only a perfectly framed square of sunlit sky” (Munaweera 152). The situation of this house could be compared with the exploitation of rape victims. As there is no roof on top of that building, similarly, when Saraswathi returns home, after this incident, her family fails to provide her with shelter and forces her to join the Tigers. The situation of raped Saraswathi is, however, just like this house.

Parents screech on the kidnapping and molestation of their daughters. Similarly, Sylvia Sunethra grinds her teeth at the Tamils for stealing her fruits, therefore, in disgust she “hires little boys to skim up the tree to collect red, yellow, or even hard, pubescent, green mangoes” (Munaweera 38). The hiring of little boys demonstrates soldiers, who exercise themselves on Saraswathi’s body in pubescent age of early teens and make her body a speck of blister on the flesh of fruit. The smell of soldiers on Saraswathi’s body is exactly similar to the “reek of [mangoes]” (Munaweera 38) in Sunethra’s house. The collecting of every type of mango (red, yellow or hard) signifies women of all ages being raped. The description of mangoes “first heady and pungent and then overripe and rotting” (Munaweera 38), is similar to the transformation in Saraswathi personality from a high potential student to a wreck. The Tamil boys steal mangoes and Sinhala’ soldiers kidnap Tamil’s women. Like Mangoes, the women are plundered and molested by soldiers. In Gaard’s light, naturalization of women has served as justification for domination, therefore, we need to liberate both women and nature simultaneously.

Under the disguise of pregnancy, Saraswathi blows herself up. She does not consider her effort a complete waste. She thinks that a tree will grow out of her scarlet gushing blood. Mango was the fruit she enjoyed the most in her childhood days; hence, she expects mangoes to grow on this tree. The tree “eats up [her] body until [she is] gone. But [she is] no longer important” (Munaweera 191) for her family. “[Tree] will provide cover for us and give us roots to anchor us in this land where we are displaced and despised” (Munaweera 191). This demonstrates that her sacrifice provides anchorage for her family and makes her family financially more stable. Most of the time, the family of a suicide bomber is provided with a colossal amount of money, hence Saraswathi wonders at the fruit of her labor. It seems that Saraswathi refers to her parents who will feed on her blood because their averted eyes compelled her to join the Tigers. Ghosh also interprets the attitude of family members towards the rape victims and he writes that the “body is negotiated for sustaining family honor” (195). Munaweera has not only naturalized her but also animalized her, to justify her subjugation.

Greta Gaard emphasizes the animalization of women and that essence oozes out in the comparative study of the wrestling of fishermen with sharks and the physical molestation of Tamil girl, Saraswathi. Women in the novel are abducted by soldiers who manifest power over weaker. It demonstrates that rape is not only about physical obliteration, but power, this molestation reduces them to an object. The fishermen, being powerful, exert power on sharks and turtles. The fishermen are ruthless with the flesh of sharks likewise the soldiers are with

women. Women are not considered as living beings but an object to satiate soldiers' beastly desires. Munaweera unravels the sufferings of turtles that "bleed slowly, drip salt tears from the corners of their ancient eyes" (8). This bleeding of turtles symbolizes the loss of innocence of Saraswathi in the ramshackled house, away from her home. She is completely broken and tears flood out of her deep eyes. Patriarchy is, perhaps, rooted in rape. This incident has changed the personality of Saraswathi to a great extent.

Nayomi Munaweera's capability of keeping an eye open to the sufferings of rape victims and environmental distortion makes it possible to perceive that to what extent patriarchy is involved in the exploitation of both. The incident of rape "precludes the possibility of marriage within [Saraswathi's] context" (Jayasuriya 200). In this patriarchal society, the husband has to showcase the virginity of his wife that "he has married a good girl, an unspoiled girl," (Munaweera 57) and for this reason, he examines the sheets carefully "to find the splotch of blood that indicates her honor" (Munaweera 57). This makes me think that society is complicit with rapists. For males, the virginity of the female is everything that makes the life of rape victims worse. As Yasmin Tambiah writes in her article titled as "Sexuality and Women's Rights in Armed Conflict in Sri Lanka" that "a sexually compromised woman or girl foregoes the chance of marrying" (80). Munaweera's use of word "unspoiled" focuses on the purity of women. Saraswathi's concept of this world is quite innocent; and initially, she wonders at the word "spoiled," but, later on she realizes what it means to be spoiled when she herself experiences. The glance at Parvati's dead body makes Saraswathi think that "they must have a different girl, a stranger" (Munaweera 144). Later on, being "ravaged by the street dogs," (Munaweera 157) she fails to identify her image in the mirror. Her long serpentine like hair now looks like "oily curtains" (Munaweera 157). The dark shadows beneath her eyes and "the dark blossoming marks on [her] wrists and neck" (Munaweera 158) make her horrified. The use of the word "break" makes her an object: "a toy" (45). From the stand point of Catherine Belsy, cultural knowledge plays an important role in the interpretation of sufferings of these victims of patriarchy who undergo traumatic experiences.

Being in trauma, when Saraswathi closes her eyes, she smells the odor of soldiers all over her; it is hard for her to forget those nightmares. Even in the camp, she has nightmares and considers herself a flawed object, useless, good for nothing. Unable to sleep, she clutches her fists tightly that "the nails ripping into [her] flesh so that the pain keeps [her] from falling back into that pit of men" (Munaweera 156). This is how she exhibits the symptoms of post traumatic disorder. According to Chariss K. Walker, those emotional scars trigger pain even

the unintentional words of others “set off a chain reaction in us. We feel the hurt and fear all over again” (3). The old woman sends flowers for Saraswathi and the floral scent replaces the smell of soldiers. The crushing of hundreds of flowers in Saraswathi’s hand foreshadows the incident of the bomb blast.

Mary Wollstonecraft⁵ treats women as emotional beings who always become the victim of unconditional responses, therefore, the authorities and robust people instigate them to explode themselves. Leaving behind the lamenting families in turmoil, the bomb blast takes away hundreds of lives with it. Initially, under the burden of glitches of rape, Saraswathi cries all night long but gradually the tears dry up and “[she is] tearless now” (Munaweera 160). The past incident of rape inspired her to believe that the hatred between Sinhala and Tamil is real, and she learns a great deal about the ferocious history of these two ethnic groups. She comprehends her existence worthless and prepares herself to fight against those who have molested her body; and resultantly blasts bomb to kill Krishnan Ponniah in Central Colombo. In this incident, humans are being killed like flies. The shambles of dead bodies look like the flies and the spot of bomb blast pictures the image of hell. The horrible episode turns the straight figure into lumpy shapes and the burned flesh and chunks of body parts make it difficult to identify loved ones.

Munaweera, through her text, provides a deep insight into how society treats raped victims. Saraswathi’s bomb blast creates a great turbulence in the lives of many Sri Lankan people. She is, perhaps, equally responsible for polluting the earth. However, there are some other forces involved in transforming her character. The attitude of father and society exhilarate her miseries. In the beginning, Saraswathi’s father is always full of high praise for his daughter, but once she is assaulted by soldiers, the shades of her father’s attitude change immediately and he does not even want to see her face. After this, silence shrouds this home and “from the moment [she] staggered into the house, lame, bleeding, wild-eyed, he has not talked to [her]” (Munaweera 155). The father avoids the eyes of Saraswathi as if she has committed a hideous crime. The avoiding of his eyes is quite disappointing for the family. It illustrates that he is ashamed of Saraswathi, being his daughter. Munaweera captures the treads of Saraswathi’s father when he returns to “this house of grieving women” (155). The “reluctance in his step” (Munaweera 155) is not over the loss of Saraswathi’s innocence, but it is over the loss of glamour to shine with pride that is, perhaps, shattered into pieces. This attitude is a sort of torture for the victim. Jayasuriya holds much of the same stance in “Representing Violence in Sri Lankan Fiction”:

Saraswathi is thus victimized twice, once due to her ethnicity and again due to her gender. With apparently no other option left to her, she joins the LTTE and ultimately undertakes a suicide mission, dressed as pregnant woman with explosives wrapped around her belly. (200)

On one hand, these victims lose their innocence; and on the other hand the family's attitude adds gashes to their intense wounds. This is how these assaulted figures are doubly marginalized. Similarly, Parvati is ravished by a soldier and, after assault, she withers and "her head droop[s] like a heavy flower on a fragile stem" (Munaweera 143). Munaweera sketches the thought patterns of society, that people; including her father, stopped talking to her but "they never stopped talking about her" (143). The father is shrouded in silence and refuses to attend her funeral. The assaulted figures are tortured through silence. Along with soldiers, the fathers are equally responsible for ruining their daughters and making the situation worse. In our society, no one ever agrees to marry the survivor of rape; when their families are not ready to accept these victims, the only option for them is to end their lives.

While fighting back, Saraswathi has raped the earth and the bomb explosion is directly related to environmental pollution and violence. Saraswathi has, though, exploded the bomb and ruined lives but this flame is ignited by soldiers and her father's attitude is fueled within his silence. Therefore, maybe, these males are more responsible for compelling victims to end their lives. According to my understanding, Saraswathi's decision to fight back is retaliation rather than political. Malathi de Alwis writes about the woman who join the Tigers: "her outer body is marked as masculine; her hair is cut short and she wears a beret, combat fatigues, boots, and a cyanide capsule around her neck (just like her male counterparts) but no make-up or jewelry" (683). For this mortified figure, Saraswathi, there was no option rather than becoming a Tiger as she is not in a position to pursue her teaching career and influence others. She takes a turn for the worse. This is a protest against the injustice of her body.

The way women are naturalized provides an insight into how the sufferings of raped victims are explicated by Munaweera through her text. Society treats these raped victims as untouchables, the wounded bodies of the assaulted figures fester over the reactions and degrading remarks of the society that makes their survival difficult. Overwhelmed by pain, questioning eyes, and the changing attitude of family, the victims kill themselves. The actions of such victims raise questions to patriarchy that what is the mistake of ruined creatures. They might have been treated like normal human beings. Perhaps, the culprit of raped victims' suicide

are the soldiers and their fathers who refused to talk to them. If society would have treated them normally, they might have survived and lives of hundreds of people would have been saved. This incident makes me conclude that largely patriarchy is involved in spreading violence and distorting natural landscapes.

The involvement of women in blasts demonstrates that both groups are equally involved in the exploitation of land. Therefore, in Gaard's light, we all need to work together as humans to protect natural resources. I don't hold this view point that only one gender is exploiting landscapes and another is protecting it. Women are vulnerable to exploitation and they show more concern for environmental protection. They may also exploit natural landscapes. To put the blame, in my opinion, on the shoulders of one gender is wrong. Men are much harsher towards environment than women. The feeling of frustration oozes out upon observing the exploitation and treatment of raped victims. My stance provides much-needed attention to the idea that one should eradicate violence rather than fighting against violence. It seems that violence leads to more violence. This creates an endless vicious circle of violence.

Being a participant observer (as a reader of ethnic text), I observe the attitude of both groups towards different situations. Resultantly, Munaweera comes to this conclusion that it is hard to decide who is right and she supports my ethnographic stance: "[i]t is a war between equally corrupt forces" (233). Mia M. Bloom's article "Ethnic Conflict, State Terror and Suicide Bombing in Sri Lanka" also confirms the same stance that "[t]his civil war has lasted for 20 years, with grave human rights abuses committed by both sides" (Bloom 74). My argument is strengthened by her writing style, though she is Sinhala; she gives space to Tamil by bringing the view point of Saraswathi. In Munaweeraian term, war is "a beast" (12) and she observes that the war will be "waged between related beasts" (7). Munaweera states that "[s]ince the book is about a civil war I'm playing with the idea of mirrors, as in the enemy on is fighting is, the self" (Munaweera Online Interview). The Tamil and Sinhala share the same history. The mirror is a reflection of one's own figure, therefore, war is among two forces who are mirroring each other's brutal behavior.

The title *Island of Thousand Mirror* refers to the islands of Sri Lanka and its significance is also ecofeminist as it provokes nature. The mirrors reflect the memories of an Island that has been ruined by environmental crises. The theme of ecofeminism once again appears in the context of war. The pollutions are, in one way or the other, exploitation of the landscape. This exploitation is also rape that I have discussed earlier. Munaweera opens her novel with a quote "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against

forgetting” (1) from Milan Kundera’s *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, published in 1979. The reference of Milan Kundera shows that whatever Munaweera writes about episodes that seem autobiographical. Milan Kundera is also an autobiographical. This forgetting could be interpreted to forget the brooding hatred among different groups and start a new project for the protection of this land and resources that are constantly depleting.

4.5. Conclusion

ITM by Nayomi Munaweera illustrates the ecofeminist concerns in the lives of Sri Lankan people. The ecofeminist approach causes me to search the embedded sufferings, the root causes and eventually the consequences of these problems in the lives of all humans, especially women. This guides me in seeing who is responsible for such hideous activities and how we may overcome them. These issues are worsened by war in Sri Lanka. The characters in this novel are exploited like landscapes. Different wounds are inflicted on the bodies of vulnerable creature by putting them in the position of animals. The purpose of naturalizing and feminizing is to show that women and nature both possess the same qualities and they are vulnerable to exploitation. The victims of rape retaliate by exploding bombs that highlights their wrath and anger against the violence on their bodies. There is a dire need to take a step against this exploitation, otherwise there would be chaos and it would become impossible to find order in this. It may be concluded that it is unjustified to put the blame on the shoulders of any single group like Tamil/Sinhala, and Male/female. To end environmental crises, we have to acknowledge the existing culture of binaries that is the root cause of all problems. Furthermore, we need to envision alternatives to this overwhelming problem. These groups are equally involved in this process of environmental destruction. Therefore, all groups, irrespective of these racial, gender or religious status, may work for environmental protection.

Endnotes: Chapter 4

¹ Henceforth I will be using ITM as an abbreviation of the novel across my work.

² “I am Vertical” is famous poem written by Sylvia Plath, in 1961. For details, see “I am Vertical.” Neurotic Poets, <<http://www.neuroticpoets.com/plath/poem/vertical/>>

³ Deleuze and Guttari also discuss the horizontality of thoughts that is postmodern arboreal concept. I have not relied on their concept of horizontality while interpreting my text. The rhizomes have no center they spread out and out, like internet. For details, see their book, *A Thousand Plateaus*, published in 1980.

⁴ See *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen (1985: 61)

⁵ See Mary Wollstonecraft's “The Vindication of Rights of Woman”

CHAPTER 5

DEROMANTICIZING THE “LANDSCAPES”¹: AN ANALYSIS OF *HEAVEN’S EDGE*

“If only we could live in a world that valued its children, and protected their childhood.”

Romesh Gunesekera, *Heaven’s Edge*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an analysis of Romesh Gunesekera’s *Heaven’s Edge*² by employing Greta Gaards’s theory of ecofeminism. Though this project does not intend to cover all details of ecofeminist concerns worldwide, but it provides plethora of naturalization of women and feminization of nature in Sri Lankan fiction to enable readers to fully comprehend the justifications for domination of women and non-human objects. Based on Gaard’s theory, it draws upon interconnectedness between sufferings of women, war and environmental degradation. It begins with the examination of naturalized women and extends its insight into the sexualized nature. The oscillation of Romesh Gunesekera’s narrative between present and past makes the reader compare the feminized landscapes of both times that eventually highlights the gradual degradation in fragile ecosystems. I have treated women’s bodies as landscapes. The rest of the chapter explores war, pollution, and their causes and how we may overcome these problems. It also allows an insight into the behavior of different genders in protecting this blighted environment. Moreover, the study apprehends how coalition-building strategies are critical for our success. In order to address these critical issues, the academic generation of literary writers talk about this subject in detail.

Romesh Gunesekera is an Anglophone Sri Lankan writer and he may be broadly placed among South Asian writers. He was born in 1954, he spent his early years of life in his native land, and afterwards relocated to Britain in 1972 (Kundu 93). At present, he lives in London and he has published books: *Reef*, *Monkfish Moon*, *The Match*, *The Prisoner of Paradise*, *Noontide Toll*, *Heaven’s Edge* and *Suncatcher*. In this chapter, I examine Romesh Gunesekera’s *HE* that has been selected for Best Booker Award. The basic question that I attempt to explore is the projection of feminist issues and environmental concerns in the selected text. I have divided this chapter into following four sub-parts for cohesion and coherence:

- Womanhood, Motherhood, and Mother-Earth
- Mapping Horrors in the “Circle of Hell”
- Pollution in Deromanticized Landscapes
- Coalition Building Strategies to (re)make the world

5.2 Womanhood, Motherhood, and Mother-Earth

Greta Gaard’s approach to analyze women-nature relationship in *HE* highlights the interventions of Sri Lankan writers in ecofeminist paradigm. This project is generally concerned with linking women bodies with nature, and in return, women are stimulated to protect nature. Romesh Gunsekera’s narrative meticulously shows women’s strong association with nature; he uses nature rather positively. Greta Gaard’s idea of anthropomorphizing mother earth subjugates it. While anthropomorphizing, we project “human characteristics onto nonhuman environment” (Gaard 305). Romesh Gunsekera’s capability to magnify the nurturing and protecting nature of women and nature situates them at the same pedestal that reinforces the theme of ecofeminism.

Embracing Gaard’s ecofeminist perspective of naturalization of women and feminization of nature, Gunsekera deconstructs the binaries based on gender by making his women characters advanced in many aspects of life. Gunsekera’s central character, Uva, is an ecowarrior. Uva is the name of a mountain in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, ovaries and Uva are quite similar, and it seems that her name is derived from ovaries that produce and mature eggs for fertilization. Thus being symbol of nature, Uva connotes fertility and peace that is quite productive. The patriarchal soldiers, perhaps, exploit natural landscapes in war and the abduction of the “jungle spirit”³ demonstrates that they want to dominate women. The soldiers’ demolition of the sugarcane field and its growing over and over again highlights the exploitation and surfacing of women in harsh circumstances. The emergence of Uva from sea water shows her upward mobility, like sugarcane trees, and it also signifies her close association with nature. The negativities like armed forces fail to demolish this positive soul. As the novel progresses, the picture of Uva’s close association with nature becomes more vivid.

Uva utilizes nature very positively and tries to restore it. Like an agent of nature, she protects wildlife and builds many sanctuaries for birds. Moreover, she has farms in deep jungle. A farm is created by humans and it is a profession. Uva’s thoughtful uncovering of a secret woven nest for Marc shows that the place is not secure, and all forces are savage. Daimari writes in “Landscape in Romesh Gunsekera’s *Reef*, *The Sandglass*, and *Heaven’s Edge*” that

“failing effort of Uva alone to preserve the natural resources –flora, fauna and birds of the island is projected to show the savage culture of Sri Lanka” (61). Uva protects nature like a mother protects her child from dangers in the world and she prefers death to becoming an exploiter of nature. In this retrospect, women seem to be the most positive sign, who produce a new generation. They must not be suppressed just because of this attribute. Therefore, productivity is associated with them and they influence others through their positive attitudes.

Women have this power to exude such vibes in order to revive all objects of nature and human beings. Embracing Greeta Gaard’s perspective, Romesh Gunsekera elevates the status of Uva and deconstructs the binaries based on sexism. Uva affects Marc’s life at a great deal. Initially, Marc looks at a demolished picture where there is no flora and fauna and the whole scenario seems lifeless and static. The arrival of Uva changes the whole setting and signifies life for him. He gets engrossed in her beauty and starts observing the beauties of nature he was oblivious of previously. Marc himself admits that Uva’s grasp of the past is far beyond his confusion. Marc has inferiority complex and he acknowledges her superiority because she comprehends what he could not. Being intelligent, Uva is able to grasp the language of children, unlike Marc who has a language barrier when he lands in this land. Jaz (who acts as translator for Marc) and Marc’s conversation underpins the fact that Uva is ahead of them in all walks of life and she has this power to merge people into a community.

After meeting Uva, Marc looks at things with a different angle he even rejoices in harsh surroundings. For example, the cancerous sun looks a little kinder and sand seems good and bright blue. Uva guides him and serves as a source of information for Marc. In Gaard’s light, Marc naturalizes Uva. The search for beauty within a landscape is replaced by the beauty of this woman. For example, he articulates that “she was not what I had come looking for but her appearance made me feel I might discover something of what I had been missing” (Gunsekera 20). This woman replaces the beauty of nature and the gloomy place alters for Marc since he met her. The only meeting with Uva changes the mindset of protagonist, Marc. After departing from Uva, his eyes search for trees and ash dove which he has perceived in her company. In her absence, he comments that “there were none of her feathered souls anywhere to be seen” (Gunsekera 50). Being optimistic, he believes that “they (birds) would reappear, re adored, singing for greener world” (Gunsekera 50). Later on, Marc grows a garden.

There is a heated debate: who planted the idea of plantation in Marc’s mind Uva or Eldon. Different scholars hold different viewpoints, Daimari’s stance is that the idea of planting comes to Marc from his grandfather, Eldon. According to my understanding of this novel, the

idea was not up there in his mind when he lands on the land of his ancestors. I may not completely agree with Daimari's argument, because Marc grows a garden and takes care of the dying monkey in the memory of Uva, an ecowarrior. In contestation with Daimari, I hold this stance that both Eldon and Uva have mutually influenced Marc's gardening taste. Though Marc learned some skills of gardening from his grandfather, Uva nurtured them with love and care. The ideas were not fresh in his mind, as his grandfather passed away several years ago; however, I argue, Uva is the most thrilling influence on Marc. This is most significant that under the power of these influences, he greens the world. In Gunesequera's world, nature is presented as human. The next part engages with the idea of anthropomorphizing: Mother Earth.

5.2.1. "Anthropomorphizing" the Mother Earth⁴

According to Greeta Gaard, feminization of nature serves as justification for domination. In *HE*, nature, like mother, protects its inhabitants in harsh surroundings. Gunesequera's different characters get shelter in the cave during unpleasant weather. Romesh Gunesequera writes that "[i]t felt safe, perhaps because it offered us shelter. Sitting there though despite the dark, I felt there was something more to it. Something more benign" (83). Munaweera uses the word "cave" for mother womb that protects the baby and Gunesequera's grown-up characters get lodging in caves. Marc's emergence from the tunnel, in chapter two, reinforces the essence of this dissertation that nature protects living creature like mother in difficult circumstances. Moreover, being afraid of attacks, the villagers hide in jungles this highlights nature's mother like nature, who comes to the rescue of the victims of powerful forces. For example, "[s]everal women emerged out of the bush" (Gunesequera 105). They hide in bushes and protect their children from such catastrophes. The "makeshift community" was "hidden behind the trees: a large thatched hut with a few pieces of tatty furniture purloined from the school house down the road" (Gunesequera 105). The women of a makeshift community emerge from the jungle, and they protect their children from all dangers in the jungle, no men were present. Similarly, Romesh Guesequera writes for a woman that "they all looked prematurely aged: the nearest, a white-haired mother with small child tugging at her" (105). As there is no space safer than the lap of a mother, therefore children always remain in the company of their mothers. Women and jungle both protect children.

Food is a means of subsistence and a source of joy. In the novel, different characters, who are victims of war, get food from the environment. In literature, food is a conspicuous activity even in William Shakespeare's plays⁵, there are feasts and celebrations. Eric Maria's

novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front* may be compared with the situation of Gunesekera's characters in the novel under investigation. The soldiers in Maria's novel also look for food. Similarly, in Shaw's *Arms and the Men*, the chocolate cream soldier carries chocolates rather than cartridges. Food provides energy and, perhaps, most of the time people suffer in war because they don't have enough food to eat. Gunesekera structures vegetarian and non-vegetarian characters in this work. Kris brings a bat to eat, and Jaz does not eat meat though he is famished⁶. In a makeshift community, the word rice brightens up their faces. Gunesekera elevates the status of woman that "she can see we are hungry for rice" (106). Being a keen observer, Marc immediately recalls the source of these rice. The war makes the fields barren and harsh blazing weather exacerbates the environment as there is no cultivation. Karuna explains that they store things in secret places for the time of danger. The brutal forces leave nothing but still the people of this community move from one village to another to collect whatever is left behind. The human is an intelligent being, when it comes to survival. The woman serves rice that she gets from the paddy fields. Both nature and woman show giving attitude and serve mankind at subservient positions. Lori Gruen also holds the same stance in her article "Dismantling Oppression" that the primary role of women is to provide food.⁷

It is observed in the novel that Uva and Marc collect fruits and eggs from the farm, and they prepare salad or sandwiches out of cucumber, tomato and village bread. In case there is a war, it turns upside down and consequently human beings suffer. Later on, in the novel, Jaz passes around cereal bars and he asserts that "something decent to eat at last" (Gunesekera 130). This statement magnifies their sufferings. Romesh Gunesekera seems to embed this idea that nature's mother like nature is the same for both genders, hence, in Gaard's light, the religious obligation of both genders is to protect nature the way it protects all genders, without any discrimination. In chapter five of the novel, wounded Marc's situation is extremely miserable; blood streams down his body and makes him numb. As Romesh Gunesekera states in the opening paragraph of this chapter that "there was comfort in the heavy smell of warm water, the fecundity of low-lying leaves, steaming chlorophyll, and hot moist air raddled with pollen" (171). Gunesekera includes the healing power of nature briefly and its soothing effects on Marc. Uva comes back and she is a wreck, therefore Marc wants to treat her and make her free of all wounds of the past with the help of "a hundred pails of water to wash away those tears, her wounds" (Gunesekera 216). Uva seems to be the most prized possession of Marc. The disappearance of Uva at the end of chapter one erupts volcanos in Marc's life and his search for her makes him sexualize nature, that I shall explore in forthcoming pages.

5.2.2 “Sexualizing” the Mother Earth

“Mother Earth” carries the stereotypical connotation and Greeta Gaard discusses “sexualization” of nature at length in her essay “Towards Queer Ecofeminism.” She believes that “sexuality itself is a socially constructed phenomenon that varies in definition from one historical and social context to another” (4). The nature is feminized and eroticized. Greeta Gaard writes in “Ecofeminism and Native American Cultures: Pushing the Limits of Cultural Imperialism” that “whatever cannot be controlled take[s] the feminine pronoun; when applied to nature, “she” still carries the connotations of femininity” (303). Women’s motherhood is used to oppress women, and ‘Mother Nature’ metaphor subordinates nature. According to Biblical myth, the forbidden fruit could be interpreted as an object of desire. When Eve convinced Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, she became part of human agency to treat nature as an object of desire. In that sense, symbolically, the forbidden fruit tree was an objectification of Eve herself and, thus, it was sexualized. In Ecofeminist argument, since both women and nature are exploited at the hands of human agency (largely patriarchal) the sexualization of nature and naturalization of women have got convincing parallels. We may say that, on symbolic plain, sexualization of nature is rooted in Biblical Eden in the sense that sanctity of overprotected forbidden fruit tree was destroyed when it was looked at as an object of desire and the forbidden fruit was eaten. While sexualizing nature, Gunesequera presents nature as a passive object that is subordinate like a woman. Romesh Gunesequera sexualizes nature at length in feminized aura and the notion of sexualized nature is succinctly reflected in the text under investigation.

Marc searches for Uva and reminisces the time he spent in her felicitous company. Marc’s failure to find this woman makes him sexualize nature. Replacing nature with Uva resonates with his physical desires. The search for companionship is a great focus in the novel for both humans and animals. Gunesequera writes in chapter two “Maravil” that “high above drongo Circeled, crying for its mate” (53). Marc, just like drongo, searches his intimate companion. Marc reveries about Uva and “[he] was unable to hold on her, the essence of her, seemed to slip away; disappear, just as each time [his] fingers moved towards a patch of colored bubbly water, it floated further out of reach” (Gunesequera 134). Like nature, she slips out of his memories and does not stay longer. He wants to cherish the exquisite landscapes of this place, but he could not do so because it had been despoiled by the warriors. Similarly, “[he] simply could not clasp her, cherish her, as [he] wanted to” (Gunesequera 134). Marc’s feeling that something of Uva “straddled [his] innermost nerve,” (Gunesequera 134) echoes his

sufferings because of a harsh environment. At points in the novel, his mouth is parched and he contents himself by drinking contaminated rain water. Furthermore, he adds that “[h]er skin was sometimes as tight as a drum” (Gunesequera 134). If we closely observe the lands of Sri Lanka, the harsh weather has also made this place hard and impenetrable just like Uva’s body.

The picture that Gunesequera paints excluding women is quite dark and gloomy. The novel has exhibited another old jilted figure with loose breasts; quite unattractive. There are parallels between this old lady and earth. The earth is petrified, and the old lady is petrified too, by time. After Uva, this is the first old woman who appears in the novel. When she appears, the landscapes are rather deromanticized. Marc ignores that old lady and struggles to find Uva, as Uva is young beautiful and attractive. His response after meeting this old woman is similar to his initial response to the landscapes of Sri Lanka, where he fails to find anything attractive. This attitude of Marc makes me skeptical and I may conclude that men only cherish the beauty of women, once they lose that charismatic look, they are no more fascinating objects for them. Initially, Marc searches for the beauties of nature, desperately.

Romesh Gunesequera describes Marc’s excessive care of his garden as if he were caring for a woman. The sixth chapter of *HE*, Chrysalls, opens with the fragrance of a blooming garden successfully planted by Marc in Uva’s memory. Marc takes care of this garden as if it were a delicate woman who needs protection, love and care. In order to cherish the beauty of this garden, he yearns for different birds, bees and squirrels and he wants them “to bring Uva with them, and if she could not come here, I wanted the garden to become her” (Gunesequera 193). The search for Uva is deeply felt by Marc, and he searches for her scent in the fragrances of flowers. Gunesequera writes that “she had just passed by, leaving a spoor- and urgent pheromonal odour – for me to follow” (120). Assuming that nature might know about Uva’s abode, Marc wants wind to carry his messages for her, he feels her presence everywhere in nature. Sharae Deckard holds the same stance in *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* that “Uva is human embodiment of nature, a bird woman perpetually described in connections with doves, butterflies and flight” (178). Gunesequera supports Marc’s enthusiasm and asserts that he observes Jaz “catch(ing) Uva’s moist perfume in the cracks between the petals” (193). This shows that Gunesequera makes an attempt to fill the void in Marc’s life by nature. Moreover, Marc’s statement that “[he] could feel their wings against [his] bare skin, brushing soft glitter on [his] arms and chest” (Gunesequera 201). The use of word bare skin is very significant over here. This is how Marc materializes Uva’s company through flowers and insects. Marc’s search for Uva throws a side light on his physical

desires for her. Gunesequera further “Sexualizes Nature” (Gaard 138) as Marc wants to have a sexual relationship with nature:

I see her curled up in a basket of leaves; her head turned in, her neck bared. My arms are empty; they encompass nothing but air, thinning with each passing moment, and yet I can feel the shape of her being from our last embrace: imperfect but strong.
(Gunesequera 120)

Later in the novel, when Marc meets Uva, “[s]he pulled [his] whole body around hers even as she enfolded mine” (Gunesequera 212). This is similar to what he imagines to do with the air. Fertilization is the natural process of fusion of gametes and all living organisms go through this procedure for the continuity of their lives. Romesh Gunesequera figures in the novel that “[he] felt sure Uva was dead. [he] wanted to plunge into her darkest, thickest jungle to die too and rot; fertilize her wretched earth if nothing else” (184). If Uva is dead then it is hard to trace her whereabouts, therefore he prefers to replace her with the earth that becomes a breathing presence for him. Uva’s showing him the eggs of turtles demonstrates the continuity of non-humans through the fertilization of eggs. This is how Gunesequera gives feminine attribute to nature.

Viewed from an Eco-critical perspective, Shalini Jain’s article “Romancing the Environment: Romesh Gunesequera’s *Reef* and *Heavens Edge*” draws attention to the dwindling beauty of Island and its relationship with humans. She makes a comparative study of Gunesequera’s two novels: *Reef* and *HE*. Shalini Jain mentions that in both novels, the protagonists are obsessed with landscapes. Furthermore, she analyzes the romantic relationship between Uva and Marc at length. For Shalini Jain, the political circumstances do not have any importance for the narrator and “Marc response is instead exclusively focused upon his physical desire” (29-49). The narrator is here to look at the beauties of the Island, but he is caught looking at Uva, who is a symbol of nature. The paper has exclusively focused on the growing feelings of love between these two characters. I agree with Shalini Jain’s arguments, as physical attraction is a natural human instinct, but conversely, I hold this stance that there is a relationship between women and nature as well that is undermined by Jain. Uva is nature for Marc and he materializes all his physical, emotional and sensual desires through it. This is how I incorporate Gaard’s stance of naturalization of women.

Romesh Gunesequera seems to be incorporating the vulnerable nature of women in his work. In fact, Gunesequera’s explanation of change in Uva’s body is identical to the land

exploitation. Marc restructures and re-greens the earth and likewise he handles the exploited and ruined Uva. He writes:

I wanted to speak to her, even as she slept, to soothe her; to bring her into the world. I had retrieved and to disarm the demons of her past. This will be our refugee, I whispered and kissed the blisters on her lips. I wanted the words to enter her and assuage the pain of her slow recuperation, replenish her memory with my own. (Gunsekera 204)

Marc is intrinsically linked to his project of protection of land. He makes effort for earth's recuperation and his struggles green the earth and make birds sing melodious songs that awakens the sleeping earth from mourning. The explosions have done some damage to Uva's ears, therefore, she initially neither speaks nor listens. She gradually comes back towards life because "the explosions in her ears had died away" (Gunsekera 220). Gunsekera writes optimistically about Uva that "as her skin healed, a residue of that sparkle I had first seen in her by the pond near the Palm Beach Hotel slowly returned to her eyes" (Gunsekera 220). Much in the same way, war invades the singing and chirping of birds. Marc grows a garden and makes Uva take interest in life matters. This is how, in Gaard's light, Romesh Gunsekera naturalizes women and feminizes nature. A further dimension of this aspect is engaged in the dissertation through the exploration of exploited female bodies.

5.3 Mapping Horrors in the "Circle of Hell" ⁸

My work primarily envisages the naturalization of women and feminization of nature and has briefly touched upon the exploitation of humans in war. The violent elements of civil war endanger the Sri Lankan peace. The people of Sri Lanka largely follow Buddhism, a religion of peace, and they are supposed to follow the non-violent path prescribed by their religion. Contrary to the teachings of their religion, violence spreads everywhere in the novel. The violent climate stretches over two decades and leaves everything in shambles. My project discusses war and focuses to explore the obliterated Island that is being spoiled by brutal warriors. Gunsekera believes that all living things are interdependent. Human activities disrupt the natural flow and eventually humans suffer. In *HE*, Romesh Gunsekera's elaboration of the landscapes is deromanticized and this destruction reinforces the basic assumption of Gaard's theory that devalues whatever is associated with women. However, there is a connection between women and nature and, because of this association, they both are treated in the same pattern. I compare the landscapes of present and past to find better view of

the deromanticized picture of Sri Lanka, along with the exploitation of women. This section entails the interpretation of the title as well.

I use the word “female bodies” for both nature and women, and men are involved in the depredation of both. In order to highlight the changing relationship of men and nature, Gunesequera gives vivid descriptions of Sri Lankan landscapes of present and past to focus on its deromanticized picture. The writer romanticizes the past rather than present. Marc’s intense desire to meet someone who has experienced past events personally throws light on his adherence to the comparison of present and past landscapes. He meets Mukti, who is almost ninety years old, and the conversation between them reinforces the idea that the land was not polluted decades ago. Most probably people did not pay any serious attention to this matter at that time and now they face disastrous results in the form of pollution. Gunesequera apprehends that, if we continue with the same attitude, our future would be worse than wars. Every incident in this native land, Sri Lanka, makes Marc think of his parents and their attachment with this place; however, he tries to capture his ancestors’ past by recalling a video made by his father for him. In that video, “fresh yellow leaves fill the screen. Birds trill between them in a pulsing tapestry of songs more real to me than the rattle and squeak of the tape itself as it plays” (Gunesequera 151). Marc’s father “zooms in on a tree full of bright yellow flowers” (Gunesequera 151) and “[d]ozens of different birds come to it” (Gunesequera 151). Like these past landscapes of Sri Lanka, Uva is beautiful who appears, in the beginning of novel, full of vigor to restore natural order. When she emerges out of the woods, Marc is completely engrossed in her beauty the way he is absorbed in the films made by his father. While Marc recalls this video, he compares deep down the brutalities done by people to disintegrate this natural order.

In the present times, as highlighted in the text, the lands are barren and infertile, and there are no trees for comparison and there is no fresh air to breathe. In the present case, the resources are insufficient and different characters in the novel don’t have abundant food. Meat, fruits, and vegetables are not available and Gunesequera’s characters see wood apple rotting and “a shrunken waterhole.” Lyn white writes, in “Historical Roots of Ecological Crisis,” that change in human ways affects non-human nature. Man’s relation with nature has been profoundly changed. Formerly man had been part of nature and now he is an exploiter of nature. Man and nature are two different things and man is the master (White 15-30). The comparison between present and past distorts the thinking capacity of Marc and these sabotaged images make his vision clouded. Furthermore, different references of death underpin the deromanticized picture of Sri Lanka. Whenever Marc faces a tough time, he recalls several

deaths: sometimes his father's death; sometimes grandfather's; and at times, he prefers death to this hollow life. Moreover, he closely observes soldier's death in Kris workshop. After Cleo's death, Marc sees himself in limbo. Death is symbolic; it is unknown and initially shocking. There is transition from one place to another place, therefore he contemplates life after death and the descriptions of nature are also deadly.

In this city of pearls, there are no birds, no fresh flowers or other signs of natural beauty. The past seems to be more colorful and enchanting than the present, which is bizarre, blurred and colorless. War has obliterated the real picture of Sri Lanka and it is deromanticized. The reason for this deromanticization is that the country has been embroiled in war for decades. Sharae Deckard states that "[t]he very land that is at the heart of conflict is being destroyed by the conflict" (178). The atmosphere is deadly and scary. Marc lands on the island with flamboyant images of the place in his mind and it is difficult for him to grasp this truth that the war has engulfed Sri Lanka. Gunsekera is primarily concerned about the weather of this place that is "bleaker and dryer" (48) and makes Marc drowsy, however he appreciates the beauty of land only in Uva's presence. The vehicle's seat is smeared with oil and dust, and air is suffocating (hard to breath). "The whole place was in a stupor" (Gunsekera 60). There is no cleanliness, and everything is caked in dust. The deserted and desolate places are shielded with cobwebs. It is observed in the text that the streets of Maravil are strewn with garbage and litter. That is, in fact, molestation of mother earth. However, it seems appropriate to interpret the title of the novel here in ecofeminist terms before divulging into further analysis of deromanticized picture of Sri Lanka.

Whenever we think of "Heaven," the idea of Adam and Eve immediately surface in our minds. Allah created them and they migrated from heaven together. The cause of this migration was disobedience to God's commands. God sent them down on earth to populate it and grow different vegetables. This shows that God wanted people to make this world greener rather than plundering it. Different religions, however, have diverse interpretations for this belief. In Romashian terms, humans are at the edge of heaven and this edge may push them into hell. We are at the edge of that paradise, hence the title *-Heaven's Edge*. Being cautious of Catherine Besley's idea of secondary sources, I quote Esther Daimari's interpretation of this title to reinforce my reading. He asserts that "[m]yth and memory seems central to Gunsekera's presentation of landscape. The picturesque images of "sea", "beach", "coral reefs", and "island" emphasize the island's tropical beauty and become important symbol that reinforce the myth of Sri Lanka as an ideal paradise" (55). Myth is something that is not true. My

interpretation suggests that we need to take some steps to protect this land, otherwise soon it will slide into some inferno then it would be difficult for humanity to survive. The landscapes in the selected work do not make one feel comfortable rather invoke feelings of fear and one fears what the future might hold. Gunsekera writes that “when we reached the edge of village, she said, I must go now” (23). This may be interpreted as Marc’s meeting with Uva is heavenly and he considers himself at *Heaven’s Edge* while saying goodbye to this woman. He further asserts that “all I had been looking for was in front of me” (Gunsekera 28) and this is how Uva materializes the beauty of nature. The ecofeminist reading of the title compels me to explore the ecofeminist elements in *Heaven’s Edge*. Overall, the environment is rather deromanticized and in the same pattern women are obliterated, in the novel.

Gunsekera’s capability to make women and nature’s close association surpasses its boundaries. He successfully grounds greenery in this novel, and I observe that women don’t appear frequently, therefore it is plausible to assert that women are absences, like greenery, in the novel. The picture that Gunsekera paints excluding women is quite dark and gloomy. Marc’s states that “[he] could not see any women there” (Gunsekera 96) and there is no greenery as well. When Gunsekera’s characters are out of the city, the road was rough and “there were no plantation, no houses, no huts that I could see” (80). In other words, the land is barren and there is no fertility because there is no women.

Romesh Guesekera portrays the treatment of women just like landscapes. Uva is captured by soldiers and mutilated like the landscapes of Sri Lanka. When she returns at the end of the novel, she is a completely different person with no interest in nature. Gunsekera writes that “[s]he could find nothing amusing in the bird call, or in anything else in our lives anymore” (212). The catastrophic events of life change her from an ecowarrior to an aloof person. The writer presents her lackluster figure like the demolished landscapes full of pollutants. Jaz observes “[the] place is really deserted” (Gunsekera 129) several layers beneath, it seems that this is a comment on Uva, who is also deserted of all novel ideas to protect nature. Circumstances change her body like the land. She doesn’t speak and “her finger were thin and bony; her nails sharp, uneven and torn” (Gunsekera 212). The brutish forces change her shape from a fragile flower to this barren land. Her lips are as hard as a dead earth that is devoid of greenery and water. It seems she is land. There are cracks in her body and the earth is also lifeless in the novel even when it rains. The perpetrators of violence have molested Uva and “[t]here were scratches and grazes on her cheeks and forehead” (Gunsekera 202). At the end of novel, when Uva appears, it is hard for Marc to accept her damaged portrait. She is

not the same woman, who used to take care of birds and her “voice was like a disengaged motor” (Gunesekera 203); no more melodious. Romesh Gunesekera writes:

Her naked body, stretched out before me, looked as though it had been mauled. There were bruises all down her side, her thighs, her breasts, and sores cast like nets on both her shoulders. Every time she breathed the wounds swelled with her expanding skin, oozing a yellowish pus. . . . Her face hardly flinched. (204)

The capitalist patriarchal men exploit women and exercise their power on their bodies. Uva’s body is exploited and the above quoted description is an instance of extreme violence to her body. Buddhist denounce violence as Mahinda Deegalla’s “Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka” also elaborates rejection of physical violence in The Dhammapada and he considers “[p]hysical torture, verbal abuse and written accusations are forms of violence” (5). Contrary to the teachings of religion, war exploits land and the inhabitants of land too. I will discuss the environmental degradation in another section titled “Pollution in the Deromanticized Landscapes.” Romesh Guesekeera also introduces another wounded woman in the novel and he describes this woman in these words:

The bony hand with its gnarled fingers, its dry crinkled skin, looked petrified. Tentatively I moved another clump of leaves and exposed the rest of the body: that of a hunched woman with a known of hair steeped in blood. The blood had just about congealed along the slit cut into her neck. (137)

The land is dry and crinkled too. I stay alert to Greeta Gaard’s idea and observe how the selected text devalues whatever is associated with women and elevates in statues those components associated with men. Women and nature are devalued and exploited in the hands of patriarchy in war decades. The pollutants congeal and choke the flowing river.

In the novel under investigation, the houses are abandoned and children are obliterated and moreover, women suffer at home when men go to fight in battlefield. Being fatherless and brotherless because of war, Cleo comes to England following her brother, who gets into the RAF. The death of her brother makes her insecure, however Eldon provides her with much-needed protection. Being a pacifist, he does not participate in war and Cleo’s decision to marry him highlights the insecurities and sufferings of women in war decades. Later on, Marc’s mother also suffers at home when Lee goes on an expedition and his death even makes the situation worse. Lee intends to make this place a peaceful country so that one day his family could join him but Cleo has to give verification to Marc for his departure.

In war decades, women live all alone in their houses and are exposed to tremendous risks. They become food provider in unfamiliar terrain. For example, Karuna group is a band of mothers and children and there are no men because “[t]hey’ve been killed or have gone to fight as rebels. They rarely return” (Gunesekera 107). Thiruchandran in his book *Emergence of Female-Headed Households in Eastern Sri Lanka* also points out the adverse conditions of widows lives. The widows apart from losing their loved ones also support their families financially and emotionally (Thiruchandran 18-20). While translating these episodes for Marc, Jaz voice tails off. The looters trespass the territories; steal the older kids; the weaker ones are butchered and “the women who are caught are raped” (Gunesekera107). Moreover, this picture explains horrors of war that support my claim that women suffer in war. On one hand, they are alone in a make shift community; on other hand, they have to move after dismantling their huts so that the enemy won’t find any trace of their existence. As Gaard asserts women are animalized. Women are not animals and animals are not women though we need to treat them with kindness. There is a dire need to spread kindness and, ultimately, that would create an endless chain of kindness. Women protect nature, therefore nature also warns them of the upcoming dangers. It is observed that the “cry of the banshee-bird was believed to be a harbinger of catastrophe” (Gunesekera 114). Marc comments on the people of this makeshift community that “they have lived in terror all their lives” (Gunesekera 114). Daimari observes the “[d]eserted houses and villages, distressed women, hopeless children and inhabited jungles” (59). The anthropogenic activities subvert the ideal of paradise. I agree with Daimari’s view that Sri Lanka has changed into an inferno due to human endeavors. The soldiers and other forces are savage, however, Uva and Marc seem to conserve the natural environment.

Unhealthy mental propensities of the soldiers ruin children’s fragile bodies. Losing children in war is heart wrenching for mothers. Romesh Gunesekera’s discussion on the evils of war in great depth invokes the feelings of fear. Uva shares her experience that how a blast rips off Kadu’s arm, Muwan’s head explodes in front of her, and “[p]ieces of him went everywhere” (Gunesekera 210). The children in war are being treated as if they are non-living objects. This experience freezes Uva in horror. Being a woman, she shows her empathies with the children and narrates another incident when “Pambu’s stomach was sliced open. He was trying to hold it together but the stuff was spilling out of his hands” (Gunesekera 210). Uva demonstrates her motherly nature towards this boy by calling him “My baby” (Gunesekera 210). However, the mutilated body of the child wracked with pain forces Uva to shoot him and “[she] had to pump the bullets into his brain to stop his pain” (Gunesekera 210). The pains of

mothers are far beyond Uva's agony. The message of Buddhism is not translated in the lives of these soldiers who kill these children. Romesh Gunesekera's ultimate message is that we should protect children. It is revealed to the reader that Uva is traumatized and fears communicating after facing horrible incidents, however silence speaks and screams about her traumatic experience. It brings me back to Gaard claims when she establishes connection between feminism, animal liberation and environmentalism by documenting the effects of pollution on lives of women and animals, it is also a form of suppression. Uva undergoes traumatic experience in war and then she does not speak her mind. Silence rules this Sri Lankan territory and this dead silence is, in fact, mourning. Women suffer because of war and war also poisons the landscapes of Sri Lanka. The conclusion that I may draw from these arguments is that the patriarchal forces are probably responsible for this wanton destruction. Like earth is passive, women are naturalized this demonstrates that they both are devalued. Romesh Gunesekera grapples with the problems of war that ultimately pollutes the environment and consequently all living species suffer. The comparison of landscapes of present and past makes me conclude that feminized landscapes of present are deromanticized in the novel. The immediate effects of war are observed within the natural environment of Sri Lanka. Therefore, in the forthcoming pages, in order to figure out the deromanticized picture of the Island, my analysis gears towards the polluted environment.

5.4. Pollution in Deromanticized Landscapes

I observed in the previous section the exploitation of humans in war and I also scrutinized how nature is also exploited in the same pattern that we may further see in the form of environmental pollution. Romesh Gunesekera focuses on the rapidly dwindling beauty of the Island as the environment of the novel is blighted by invaders and it seems that war accelerates environmental degradation. He takes into account different types of pollution: water, air, and land pollution. Being human, we question the causes of pollution and learn how we may tackle these problems with efficacy. Everyone has their own way of contributing, therefore writers write their concerns to these problems and I investigate these issues in Romesh Gunesekera's *HE*. As I have already discussed polluted landscapes in comparison with the manipulation of women's bodies, therefore in order to avoid repetition, I do not intend to discuss it here. However, I have divided this part into the following three streams for better understanding of the overwhelming issue:

- Air pollution

- Water Pollution
- Effects of Pollution on Humans' Health

5.4.1. Air Pollution

Air is vital for survival and it is impossible to survive without it. While breathing, we inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. This exchange of gases is crucial to existence. People fall prey to certain diseases because of poisonous atmospheres. The polluted air adversely impacts the health of all living creatures, especially homo sapiens. It is observed that the air is polluted in *HE* as there are tangles of trees and no one weeds out these places. The trees play an important role to moderate temperature. Furthermore, the flowers are blanched and plants are not looked after properly. Romesh Gunsekera, perhaps, invokes the awareness to conserve forests. Furthermore, Marc adds that “[t]here was no sign of anybody around” (Gunsekera 101). This highlights that pollution has engulfed the people of this place and they might have been disappeared, just like the jungle. Environmental pollution is at the peak and the portrayal of landscapes is tainted. The sky is filthy and there is dust everywhere- phosphorous dust. “[Marc] lay[s] down looking out for the stars [he] knew must still be sparkling somewhere” (Gunsekera 183). This shows that the air is too polluted to look at the stars, and his life stagnates. Gunsekera observes “the rusted earth, the trees, the glimmer of the pond on the other side of the road stuffed with big grey leaves rotting in the heat” (101). This is a deromanticized picture of Sri Lanka captured by the writer. Women intervene at certain places, similarly nature appears in less bleak form at a few locales. The fresh air bellow by the end of chapter 2, however, it is palatable to deduce that metropolises are more polluted.

Wordsworth-ian nature, however, is now an imaginary entity. The rushing streams, the high mountains, and a long-lass girls are, perhaps, the treasures of the past.⁹ Unlike Wordsworth, Guesekera deromanticizes the landscapes and makes an attempt to ensnare the odious panoramic view of Sri Lanka. Romesh Gunsekera has a naturalistic approach towards life; he looks at perverse things like Emile Zola; the exponent of naturalism. Sharae Deckard's *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* takes into account the highest rate of deforestation in Sri Lanka, and he believes that during British colonial rule “the highlands were cleared for plantation and the development of industry further stripped the jungles” (180). The situation was aggravated during civil war. It seems to me that Gunsekera intends to dispatch this message, if we really want to enjoy fresh air, we need to conserve

forests because trees are a major fountain of oxygen. Trees purify the air. It seems that the main cause of pollution is deforestation.

5.4.2. Water Pollution

Romesh Gunesekera takes fresh water pollution and ocean pollution quite seriously. Fresh water is the basic necessity of life and different characters in *HE* drink contaminated water. Marc's "mouth was dry" (Gunesekera 76) and in urban areas, "[t]he water was thick with rubbish" (Gunesekera 59) and the aquatic pools are rimmed with scum. Gunesekera writes that "a layer of green and brown duckweed covered most of the surface" (12). Mukti's statement that "yesterday's water was bitter but better" (Gunesekera 110) demonstrates the worsening situation of this world and moreover it implies the outcome of war. Similarly, in chapter 3, Marc's recalling the time when he watered his grandfather's garden which can be linked with his present situation. Now he does not have water to drink. As Romesh Gunesekera writes that "those roses need water" (Gunesekera 88) and water is vital for survival to both humans and non-humans. Men should take measures to protect this ecosystem from collapsing.

It is impossible to survive without oxygen. Trees are the reservoirs of oxygen. The environment is not healthy and these problems dramatically saturate every day. Disappointed Marc wants to get rid of this stagnant environment where there is no move towards improvement. It seems that he wants the nation to get rid of "the flat, calm water (which) was as still as paint" (Gunesekera 91). The water should be rushing through the streams, it should be free of pollutants and it should be fit to drink. Different pollutants obliterate the natural order that is in fact violence. *Robin Nixon's Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor* defines slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). Gunesekera wants his nation to get rid of the environment that is slowly violated and replace it with green, healthy and sustainable flora and faunas.

In chapter two, there is no green space. This novel is written in aura of war and I observe that different soldiers dispose dead bodies in oceans to remove all traces of murder. Moreover, the litter and garbage choke the oceans. Blood drains away in the water where it unsettles sea creatures. Fish are eaten by humans and consequently the whole web is disrupted. The river is also polluted by human's activities and it does not flow smoothly. He describes the river as: "a river of slow moving green goo" (Gunesekera 52). I stay alert to Catherine Belsey's idea of cultural criticism that helps me read Sri Lankan civil war. These unhealthy social problems

have degraded the environment. Romesh Gunsekera mourns over the deteriorating condition, and he wants to invoke environmental consciousness among the people. It is observed that the sunrays stream that area and they are so intense that “even the oily water of the canal seemed to seethe in the heat” (Gunsekera 59). This is how the water is polluted by humans in the novel, and this pollution is painful for the sentinel beings. These different types of pollution are, in fact, the exploitation of land and Uva’s body is also exploited in the same fashion as discussed earlier: “Mapping the Horrors of War in the Circle of Hell”

The stance of my project is that men and women need to work together to protect motherland. The activities of both may harm the health of the earth. Gaard believes that environmental pollution effects the lives of women and animals. Unlike Gaards’ view point, environmental pollution in Romesh Gunsekera’s *HE* not only effects women and animals, but also men. I have tried to trace the effect of pollution on the lives of humans. Fresh air is not available and Marc feels dizzy, he has a headache, the heat is so intense that it burns his skin, “[his] eyes hurt” (Gunsekera 171) because of poisonous gases and “[his] leg wouldn’t move. There was no wound to be seen; no pain. But slowly, as it revived, blood seemed to bruise the flesh” (Gunsekera 171). Henry David Thoreau writes in *Walden* that “to the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery” (Henry 157). Marc’s health issues are caused by pollution. Different diseases breakout due to pollution. Marc sees himself at the point of death. Humans suffer emotionally and physically because of these environmental issues.

Dreams are a projection of our thoughts, however Marc’s dreams render his body tired as his arms and thighs hurt. Marc himself interprets his dream that is a “warning about maladies and fatal infections, the rows of repellents and prophylactics I had ignored at the chemist back the terminal before I set off, whizzed around mocking me” (Gunsekera 185). Gunsekera wants to invoke people to protect natural landscapes and minimize the use of prophylactics as they make the situation worse. He further adds that “[m]y skin was burning, itching, retreating. I flung off the sheet and saw my body had erupted” (Gunsekera 185). Marc has been exposed to blazing hot sun and unfavorable environment, therefore, his body shows rage over the environmental degradation. Different pollutants obliterate the real picture of lands that is the rape of land.

Environmental issues in *HE* are pivotal, in the whole text, Gunsekera hasn’t, perhaps intentionally, mentioned anywhere the name of his country, Sri Lanka. The reading of literary scholarship on this novel broaden my vision and I ruminate over the reasons in author’s mind for not using the word Sri Lanka, overtly. Esther Daimari, demonstrates Sri Lankan essence in

the landscapes of *HE* and he states that, “the place is not named as Sri Lanka, is filled with Sri Lankan imagery-plantation landscapes, valleys, ocean etc” (50). Though Romesh Gunsekera has not ignored Sri Lanka, he paints a picture leading us to believe it is. The spirit of Daimari’s argument is that Sri Lanka is no more a paradise. Its beauty is ravished, and, perhaps, it is hard to recreate that image of Sri Lanka once again. In align with Daimari’s stance, I believe that Gunsekera is ashamed of what the brutal forces have done to the paradise of his ancestors. For this reason, he does not mention Sri Lanka in the text. Though these environmental issues persist worldwide, the only possible solution to these worldwide problems is to remake the world.

5.5. Coalition-Building Strategies to (Re)make the world

I have discussed earlier that environmental pollution that is, perhaps, created by war, effects the health of all living creatures and humans. Gaard’s inclusive approach towards the environment does not exclude men from their duties to protect nature. It is not like one gender is protecting nature and other one is exploiting it. Men, women and children need to participate equally as humans to “save the earth” (Gaard 5) from apocalypses. I discuss this under the following sub-headings:

- Nature, Women and Children
- Interconnectedness of all lives

5.5.1 Nature, Women and Children

Drawing a connection between women and nature, Gunsekera involves all his characters in rebuilding this planet. The opening of lily at Uva and Marc’s meeting spot is rather significant; it foreshadows the role played by them in greening the world. Uva is an ecowarrior and a secret farmer. Uva’s father is “an early ecologist,” (Deckard 180) and she inherits several qualities from her parents. As Uva’s parents want to build a new life in Farindola and the “life that would flow down across the whole Island, right down to the coast, like a great river of alluvial water” (Gunsekera 213). Uva’s mind is pregnant with many ideas and she wants to grow a garden full of butterflies. There are some reasons for her deep affiliation with these insects; firstly, she has a butterfly knife; secondly, she wishes the clouds of butterfly like flowers in the air; and, thirdly, she desires to keep the spirit of parents alive. The spirit of her parents is “what is gone must one day come back” (Gunsekera 39). However, she wants to restore beauty and the peace of island. This sentence may be interpreted in context

of environmental concerns as the natural beauty has vanished and Gunesequera seems to suggest that if people put effort into what they have lost they may regain it.

Moreover, Marc's taking care of a dying monkey makes him human in true sense. The only "slow, deliberate, difficult breathing" (Gunesequera 186) of a "small brown huddle" (Gunesequera 186) makes him approach the wounded living creature. Being overwhelmed, he strips off his own shirt to use it as a sack to carry this monkey home. Filtering through Gaard's idea of coalition building strategies, Marc treats this animal and dismantles human/animals binaries. As Jane Goodall writes in *My Life with the Chimpanzees* that "[m]y mission is to create a world where we can live in harmony with nature" (Goodall 30). It seems, like Goodall, Marc's motto of life is "to help the animal to survive" (Gunesequera 187). He cleans the wounds with lime and gunpowder extracted from a cartridge. The way Marc treats this animal is the same as we treat a human new born. He makes a cradle for this fragile being and "[t]he monkey was too feeble to do anything. [He] gave it water, and tried to feed it fruit" (Gunesequera 187). The monkey becomes his companion to compensate for Uva's absence in his life. He talks with him calling him, "my speechless companion" (Gunesequera 190). With the efforts of Marc, the monkey recovers and survives. Marc shares that "it never wanted to stray very far" (Gunesequera 190) that shows that this non-human is familiar with the hovering dangers in this place. Patsy Hallen quotes Marge Piercy's words in her essay "Recovering the Wilderness in Ecofeminism" that "you can die of poison that kills beetle and the slugs" (Hallen 225). To take an example, Marc respects this "common living dirt" (Hallen 225) and he does not poison the mice rather he prefers to drive them away. Guesequera writes that "I felt a bond. Evolution was not the survival of the fittest. Our evolution must come from the survival of the weak, retrieved against the odds, I realized" (186). Guesequera talks about the evolution of environment and the deromanticized picture would evolve into a greener one and he has taken a step by protecting these natural species. As the monkey has survived, this event makes Romesh Guesequera an optimistic writer though he has painted a deromanticized picture.

Guesequera exhibits children as leaders of the future generation. We need to bring them up by implanting positive ideas in their minds. Children work alongside women to grow different crops and "[t]he children are secret farmers" (Gunesequera 106). In the concluding chapter of the novel, the idea of children emerges again. Being innocent and immature, they need care and attention to grow strong and healthy. Similarly, nature also grows baby plants; they need care and protection. Greeta Gaard considers humans the children of earth in her essay "Ecofeminism and Native American Culture." The ideas implanted in the minds of children

stay with them forever. Romesh Gunesekera suggests that “if only we could live in a world that valued its children, and protected their childhood” (210). Implicitly, Romesh Gunesekera seems to embed this idea that plants are the children of this land and they require protection. If we really want to build a healthy planet, we need to raise our children in a healthy environment. It is not only women who are marginalized and need protection. Along with women, men and children also need support and protection to sustain a healthy environment.

5.5.2. Interconnectedness of all lives

According to biologists, a cell is the basic unit of life and living creatures are made up of cells. All living beings are, therefore, interconnected. Allah created man from clay that reinforces the idea of interconnectedness of all lives. As the title of the essay serves as a theoretical framework, it also strengthens the concept that life is interconnected in one way or the other. Gaard crafts the title as “Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature” and Gunesekera also makes an attempt to convey the same idea in his novel *HE* by emphasizing the interconnectedness of life in these words: “How could I have felt anything meaningful for Uva, if we were only the random firing of some scattered neurons; the accidental binding of chemicals in a pointless law of cosmic efficiency” (186)? This demonstrates that men and women are created in the same way, therefore they may show the same attitude towards nature.

In the third chapter of *HE*, Romesh Gunesekera has mischievously used the word “moth” for three characters: Jaz, Marc and Kris. He uses the same word in the beginning of the novel by referring to the poem “Kill not moth nor Butterfly”. Here he uses ‘moth’ word for non-human animals. It means both human beings and other species are worth keeping. It seems to me that non humans are as important as humans, therefore we need to protect them and take care of them. Peter Bein also discusses the epigraph of this novel in detail in his article titled as “Romesh Gunesekera: *Heaven Edge*” that was published in *World Literature Today*. In this article, he claims that Gunesekera fails to meet the promise of theme. Peter Bein considers the epigraph, Kill not Moth nor butterfly, as a sardonic one. The butterflies migrated at the end of novel, when Uva and Marc kill the intruders. I agree with this statement of Peter Bein that by the end of novel all “examples of peaceful innocence are killed horribly” (91) but I don’t interpret the novel in a pessimistic way. Contesting Peter Bein, I argue that the ending of the novel is not completely bleak or dark. Romesh Gunesekera writes that “then the butterflies migrated. We all did. From one world to another, sometimes” (94). We all migrate from one place to another place and it is the law of nature, unavoidable. Adam and Eve also migrated from heaven to earth. Therefore, the ending of the novel is justifiable. The whole novel revolves

around the one philosophy that one should kill the killer to save the lives of the innocents. Romesh Gunesekera writes about Marc's grandfather and his hunting but he never did it for pleasure, politics or vengeance. The writer writes that "[h]e'd hunt a leopard to save a deer, and sometimes a deer, to save the herd" (Gunesekera 37). At the end of the novel, though butterflies fly away, there are many other animals, plants, and living creatures that are saved. Gunesekera uses the word moth for Jaz, Marc and Kris and at the end of the novel some characters survived. The epigraph of the novel is a command and it does not promise that there would be no killing of innocent creatures. Implicitly, it conveys that there are some people who are working to protect nature and they are ready to sacrifice their lives.

Romesh Gunesekera gives human attributes to nature and Munaweera gives nature's attributes to humans. The web of nature not only consists of humans and plants but also insects and other small animals that are part of this web which support the flow of life. Gunesekera writes "don't you think the clouds are full of tears" (81) and "the sky is crying" (81). These examples show human's attribute in nature and reinforce the idea that humans and nature are the same. Marc transcends a vicious circle of violence and is concerned about mice and ants as well. Marc ponders and questions his grandfather, "do ants drown?" (Gunesekera 89) and the response is affirmative. Then, Romesh Gunesekera captures Eldon's contemplation on: "whether they had noses and nostrils. Lungs that might fill with water" (89). Humans breathe and they have nostrils for this specific purpose of exchanging gases from the lungs to the nostrils and then into the air. Ants are living entities therefore they deserve to live their life. It seems to me that killing someone deliberately is an unforgivable crime and, maybe, it should be avenged. Eldon has never killed any ant deliberately even the Buddhist teachings elucidate "notion of protecting all form of life and avoiding violent activities derives from the fundamental conviction that as one's life is worthy for oneself, others also have a similar position with respect to their own lives" (Deegalla 5). This attempts to give a mutual respectful position to humans and non-humans. All creatures live on earth and, therefore, they should mutually protect this land from disasters.

Adam and Eve were the first humans on the face of earth and Gunesekera states that they had wings like birds. This shows that humans, animals, birds and nature are all intrinsically connected right from the beginning of this world; they are not different. Uva shares with Marc that near "green mansion,"¹⁰ Adam and Eve "had been awakened by butterflies splashing dew at the dawn of time" (Gunesekera 93). Romesh Gunesekera mentions that they were awakened to look at the beauties of nature. Catherine Besly's stance on cultural knowledge comes in

handy for the interpretation of these beliefs. As the first humans of the world were not only women, they were both male and female, therefore, both genders need to work together for environmental protection. From Gaard's ecofeminist perspective, it is crystal clear in the text that binaries are social constructs and, for the progress of our society, we need to transcend these binaries. As King also writes in article in "The Ecology of Feminism and Feminism of Ecology":

Life on earth is an interconnected web, not a hierarchy. There is no natural hierarchy; human hierarchy is projected on to nature and then used to justify social domination. Therefore, ecofeminist theory seeks to show the connections between all forms of domination, including the domination of nonhuman nature, and ecofeminist practice is necessarily anti-hierarchical. (King 151)

Gunasekera suggests certain solutions to invoke environmental consciousness in order to sustain a healthy planet. The problems are quite complex and intricately woven, however this work perpetuates the catastrophic events and comes up with viable solutions.

5.6 Conclusion

HE by Romesh Gunasekera illustrates the naturalization of women and feminization of nature in Sri Lanka in great depth. This analysis, as a whole, endeavors to show how environment and natural landscapes in Sri Lanka have been mauled by authorities. The oppression of women and nature leads to the environmental crises that invokes environmental consciousness. This consciousness allows people to look for alternative ways to deal with the unavoidable problems like war, perhaps the main cause of all problems. It is the human responsibility to protect the health of nature. If we fail to notice climate change, we may face drastic consequences. To sum up, in order to protect natural resources, men should work in collaboration with women to protect this planet from catastrophic events. One should not struggle aimlessly to control nature that may be wild at times. The rigorous exposition highlights the issues that escalate and become worse day after day. This chapter may be concluded that the environment of Sri Lanka is getting increasingly and gradually downgraded. Here Romesh Gunasekera wants to emphasize this fact: we had better focus on the future rather than the past in remaking the world. We must go for the principle of sharing because when we don't share problems become magnified and unaddressed. There is a need to learn ethical principles. We need to take action against these crises by keeping in mind what Caryol Merchant calls "partnership ethics" (63). Considering human as equal partner with the non-

human may help resolve some problems. The next chapter sums up my research as a whole and briefly elaborates the findings of my research.

End Notes: Chapter 5

¹ I have italicized the term landscapes because it is not only for natural landscapes but also for women bodies.

² Henceforth I will be using *HE* as an abbreviation of *Heaven's Edge* across my work.

³ Sharae Deckard calls Uva “a Jungle Spirit” in *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden*

⁴ Greta Gaard uses the term “Anthropomorphizing the earth” in her essay “Ecofeminism and Native American Culture” and she explains that projecting our human characteristics onto a nonhuman environment is disrespectful in the same way that racism is disrespectful.

⁵ See *Macbeth* by Shakespeare (1993: Dover publication)

⁶ See my critical discussion on eating meat in chapter 4 under the section Tracing Animality in Women.

⁷ For Details, See Louri, “Dismantling Oppression,” page 72.

⁸ Munaweera calls the shambles of dead bodies a “Circle of Hell” in her novel *Island of Thousand Mirrors*. I have borrowed her words in order to relate it with the situation of Sri Lanka, after these war years. (2012: 222)

⁹ “The Solitary Reaper” is the famous poem written by romantic poet, William Wordsworth in 1807. For details, see “The Solitary Reaper.” Poetry Foundation, 29 Dec, 2019. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45554/the-solitary-reaper>

¹⁰ Sharae Deckard has used the word “Green Mansion” for Samandia in his book *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* (New York, 2010)

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In order to conclude my research project, it would be instructive to hark back to my basic research premises. In chapter one, I started off with the basic assumption that contemporary Sri Lankan novels depict environmental crises and marginalization of women, especially in the wake of war. I selected Nayomi Munaweera and Romesh Gunsekera's fiction. The thesis opened with the assumption that the subjugation of women and nature have parallels. In order to understand the issues of women and land exploitation, I largely relied on Greeta Gaard's theory of ecofeminism as it allows insights into the naturalization of women and feminization of nature in my primary texts. Therefore my study kept its focus on exploring these two main concerns, and under these umbrella terms, I attempted to investigate how women's bodies and nature get deromanticized as *landscapes*. Moreover, I attempted to trace verticality, animality and violence in my selected texts.

While reviewing the literature available, I focused on scholarly articles available on Sri Lankan fiction and the selected two novelists. Though many reviews were available in international newspapers and magazines, I focused only on available books and articles. While reviewing books, I selected a few relevant articles and, at times, I only read the introduction of some books that seemingly covered the whole book. I did literature review in order to locate and contextualize this dissertation and also find out the gaps. The literature review showed that there is not much critique available on my area of study. Moreover, the chapter explored the gaps in existing body of critical corpus and helped me select the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter three focused on theoretical framework and research methods that provided conceptual base and methodological grounds to my dissertation. Gaard focuses the concept of naturalization of women and feminization of nature and discusses that how these two ideologies suppressed women and nature. The rest of the chapter was devoted to differentiate between research method and methodology. After that, I geared my work towards the selected research methods like Belsey's method of textual analysis and Alsop's ethnographic method to interpret the texts. However, the ethnographic method was employed only for the interpretation of Munaweera's work.

Having established the ground for ecofeminist study, I did a systematic analysis of Sri Lankan fiction by keeping in mind three research questions and Gaard's concept of ecofeminism as my theoretical framework. The questions were in line with the research and helped me analyzing the selected fiction in an acceptable dimension. In the light of research questions, I examined the parallels between women and nature and scrutinized the exploitation of them in war and, finally, I concluded that largely androcentric supremacist norms are responsible for destroying them both. I raised three research questions and answered them systematically while analyzing the texts. The first research question dealt with the writers' stance on the treatment of women and environment. The second research question focused only on the degradation in Guneskera's work while the third one investigated women's treatment in Munaweera's hand. I tried to answer the following question after reading the selected novels several times:

How are feminist issues addressed in terms of war and its effects in the selected novels?

This question was answered in the concluding sections of chapter four and five where I discussed different feminist issues with reference to war in respective chapters. The question posited initially turned out to be an affirmative statement at the end of my analysis and I was able to vindicate that the selected works addressed the feminist issues in terms of war and these explored issues affect humanity at large. Romesh Guneseekera embedded the factors of environmental degradation in his work and addressed these issues by comparing the landscapes with the bodies of women. My analysis affirms the exploitation of women bodies treated like landscapes in the wake of war. Furthermore, Guneseekera has highlighted feminist sufferings by discussing the victimization of children in war and my analysis endorses that the bodies of women and children were mauled in war decades. Gunesekera presented woman as a garden which was destroyed by soldiers at the end of novel. Moreover, he has anthropomorphized and sexualized the Mother Earth by associating certain feminist qualities with it.

While analyzing Munaweera's *Island of Thousand Mirrors*, I followed a pattern slightly different from that followed in *HE*. Nayomi Munaweera engages with feminist issues in the wake of war, most specifically, she deals with the exploitation of rape victims at the hands of patriarchal soldiers. The raped victims ended their lives by committing suicide. The writer has further naturalized the deteriorating condition of assaulted victims by comparing them with different objects of nature. Furthermore, analysis of chapter 4 has also taken into consideration the stance of both ethnic groups by invoking Alsop's

ethnographic method. Though Munaweera has not addressed all feminist issues in the context of war, she naturalizes women in different ways that I have discussed while answering the second question as under:

In what ways are women animalized and nature feminized in Nayomi Munaweera's novel?

The analysis of Nayomi Munaweera's *ITM* has demonstrated that society largely treats women as non-human objects. Women and nature both are subjugated and exploited in almost identical ways. I observed that direct contact with nature allows women to develop a relationship with it that is used by patriarchal men to oppress them. Munaweera naturalizes them with the recurring symbols of ocean, plants, and animals. The naturalization of women extended to the issues of marriage, infidelity, and literacy in Sri Lanka through some of her characters who are naturalized and oppressed in almost all institutions. Munaweera's characters lead me to conclude that this world is a house of grieving mothers. Furthermore, she presents belittlement of women to the level of domestic animals, wild animals, and even to the level of insects. This animalization put them in a vulnerable position. Different oppressed characters, who are naturalized and animalized, move vertically in the novel despite severe constraints that demonstrates their empowerment. Now, I move forward to discuss how I tried to answer the third question:

How does Romesh Gunsekera embed environmental degradation in Heaven's Edge?

Chapter five critically addresses the third question in the concluding two sections and I primarily concerned myself with investigating the exploitation of landscapes. The analysis exhibits the deromanticized landscapes where the whole environment is full of different pollutants. Vandalizing the environment eventually affects the health of all living beings. Unlike Gaard's stance, Romesh Gunsekera illustrates the effects of pollution on the health of not only women but also men. I have observed that there is a lot of pollution in *HE* and this pollution is in-fact the rape of land. At points, Gunsekera highlights the treatment of women's bodies as landscapes. I have been able to testify that all forms of oppressions are interlinked, and in order to liberate women and nature, there is a need to dissolve the binaries of human and non-human. However, there was no critical difference in the attitude of Uva and Marc towards nature's protection. Romesh Gunsekera imbricated this idea, as projected by Greeta Gaard, that all lives are interconnected therefore men, women and children need to work as humans to protect motherland form distortion. Resultantly, I linked answers to these question with my thesis statement that exploitation

of women and nature are parallel and the coalition building strategies are, may be, critical for sustaining a healthy planet and to rescue them both from the clutches of patriarchal interests.

The selected writers used their fiction to communicate their vision worldwide for environmental protection. Gunesekera has not mentioned the name of Sri Lanka that also gives this novel a universal significance. Nayomi Munaweera has also been to Nigeria, US and Sri Lanka and has observed these environmental crises and communicated them worldwide. The purpose of this project was to reveal the manifestation of environmental issues along with the treatment of women specifically in Sri Lankan fiction. I could not ignore the fact that society is largely dominated by patriarchal interests, the males exert their monopoly over women and nature. To truly address the natural obliteration and women crisis, I willingly exposed the bitter reality that patriarchy has damaged them both largely. I proved that the writers of this place addressed women's issues and made their latent convictions universal. I argued that these writers want women to break the shackles of patriarchy, the patriarchs exploited them the way they have exploited the landscapes. In *HE*, there was only one male narrator while in *ITM* there were two female narrators. This once again demonstrated that Munaweera reinforced her stance through two different perspectives as if the authenticity of her single female narrator might be questionable.

I have also studied Sri Lankan writers and, at the end, I concluded that Munaweera, being a female writer, has failed to highlight the environmental degradation at length but Romesh Gunesekera did that quite immaculately in his work *HE*. Women writers, however, are far less likely relegated nature and gave pivotal attention to the sufferings of women. While male writer's main focus was exploitation of landscapes. I concluded that women's approach towards these issues is a bit different. Bill Phillips, in his article titled as "when ploughs destroy'd the green," writes that women poets are less likely to downgrade nature (Phillips 53-60). It is the didactic message that is important not who is writing. Children's literature is not written by children similarly it does not mean that feminist concerns would only be addressed by women. Men may also talk about these concerns in detail. Though the purpose of Gunesekera and Munaweera was to preserve the equilibrium of nature, they linked women's body with land to spread the idea that we need to protect nature and women. The rigorous analysis of these two works helped me learn something substantial. Following are the findings of my work:

6.1. Findings

This research is qualitative in nature and it has explored two Sri Lankan novels to trace the ecofeminist concern of South Asian writers. The findings of this study cannot be generalized as the selected writers are only from one territory of South Asia and at times the cultural contexts influence the meaning-making process. Reflecting on the analysis of primary texts, the findings allow Greeta Gaard suitable lens for the selected works. However, as suggested by Greeta Gaard that naturalization of women and feminization of nature do not remain the only reason behind subjugation, war has also exploited women and nature and destroyed the infrastructure of this place, Sri Lanka. Both Nayomi Munaweera and Romesh Gunesequera come up with issues who seek attention worldwide and the findings of my research affirm that it is the capitalist man who, as stated earlier, feminizes nature by treating landscapes and environment like women. Resultantly, my research also concluded that we need to work like humans to save this earth from apocalypses and we need to deconstruct the binaries of classism, racism, and sexism for the health of this planet.

After the analysis of selected texts, my first finding is that we need to treat all living creatures equally, with kindness. According to nomenclature, we put both animals and plants under the same of category, living things. This categorization is not on the basis of superiority and inferiority. This grouping is for a better understanding of the diverse forms of life, nor is it to undermine them. Darwin's theory says that humans evolved from animals, therefore it does not exclusively talk about women. However, some ecofeminist try to trace the similarities, more particularly, between women and nature because of the nurturing nature of nature that, in fact, validates their domination by patriarchs. Being human, we need to struggle in order to find a viable solution out of the ramifications of these problems that surmount day by day. There is a dire need to unearth certain rotten ideas and all humans, regardless of gender and race, should work together to protect the other existing living entities on earth.

Another finding of my analysis is that binaries are social construct and create several problems for humans that result into war. I found that women alone cannot save the earth and there is a dire need to relinquish these confines of male female. Therefore the first and foremost thing that needs attention worldwide is to destabilize the existing culture of binaries in order to dissolve the concept of superior-inferior, Tamil-Sinhala, male-female

then everyone irrespective of their race and gender could work to minimize the overwhelming problems of women and nature. The inequality in different roles is the root cause of creating an imbalance in society. This brings me back to the main argument of my thesis that being human we should work together for the betterment of our society and take steps to save the world from pollution and other environmental crisis. I believe that we share this planet with animals and plants, therefore we had better not create binaries.

While analyzing the texts, I found that writers gravitate their attention to the idea that, somehow, wars and patriarchy work in unison to destroy the environment. They intend to make people cognizant of these facts in order to stop further degradation and exploitation. Their efforts imply that humans, the central beings, need to make an attempt to “remake the world” (Guneskera 213). The world is moving towards disorder; therefore men should look up for ways to gear the routes towards order “in the world of mounting disorder” (Guneskera 155). In the forthcoming passages, I discuss Guneskera’s suggestions one by one.

Firstly, Gunesekera implies that future itself is not pollutant but the human activities are likely to pollute it. In hard times, different characters, however, struggle to forget the past in order to start life afresh. By focusing on Uva’s future, Marc intelligently brings her back to normal life by asking these simple questions: “Which of them [plants] will flower tomorrow, and which next week? Which will produce fruit? And when?” (Gunesekera 219). Elsewhere Marc asks her: “what will happen than what had happened” (Gunesekera 219). These simple queries reinforce the argument stated above. Moreover, Romesh Gunesekera’s intrigues one to think critically and evaluate one’s role. He believes that descendants suffer because of the misdeeds of ancestors. Our future lurks somewhere in the danger zone and we have to struggle to find some viable solution to avoid the disastrous results.

Secondly, while writing *HE*, Gunesekera suggests that we should use material that we could easily discard and one should avoid the use of polythene materials. He writes that “[t]o be utilitarian – to recycle, to waste not- seemed undeniably right, and yet required a measure of ruthlessness which seemed mercenary” (Gunesekera 188). It is human nature to control, the powerful bourgeois, always want to dominate the powerless proletariat. As Guneskera writes that “[t]o be controlled is to be debased” (203). Similarly, to dominate the nature and be at a privileged position is to disgrace nature. Furthermore, men want to

control women and this is equivalent to the degrading women. This debasement results into hostility that eventually hatches into crises.

In terms of Romesh Gunsekera's views, I found that we should struggle to educate the masses through whatever means are available, such as educational institutes and media. We may eradicate these evils that are embedded in our social fabrics. Though it is impossible to change overnight, we need to build a harmonious relationship with the environment. In order to make our future safe, we need to make our present cleansed of all contaminants. While making any decision, the authorities need to think critically about the past, present and future of the country. However, this is the responsibility of every citizen to negotiate issues rather than waging wars. We need to protect the environment for future generations. We urgently need to rethink of other ways of protecting our motherland. Lives of all living creatures are interlinked, thus supporting the web chain. Therefore, in order to maintain a balanced and a healthy environment, we should take care of them all.

6.2. Recommendation for Future Research

This critical inquiry has enabled me to suggest some further areas of research in this field from diverse perspectives. I believe that my research has broken the grounds for other researchers focusing on Anglophone Sri Lankan fiction from the perspective of ecofeminism. At the same time, this study paves way for the study of Sri Lankan fiction that is largely an untapped area after the literature of Bhutan and Nepal. This project might kindle the interests of different university professors and scholars in this domain and I expect them to investigate these two writers from another perspective that would allow in-depth analysis of such fictional works. While reviewing literature, I came to know that not much has been written on these two writers. My suggestions would open new avenues of research for the academic scholars and critical thinkers in this area. This dissertation, I hope, inspires future researchers.

As my work employs Gaard's lens of ecofeminism, future researchers may choose other theorists, such as Val Plumwood and Caryol Merchant, in order to explore fiction from other peripheral South Asian locations. Like Sri Lanka, Maldives is also a marginalized territory in term of its literary production. There is a dire need to encourage the writers of such peripheral areas. The future researcher may struggle to trace the sufferings of women and environmental distortion in Pakistani context. The Pakistani author, Bilal Tanveer's *The Scatter Here is too Great* is full of terrorist activities and

bombings that eventually distort natural harmony. His fiction can be analyzed to see the adverse impacts of war on environment and women. There are some other Sri Lankan writers who engage with civil war and ecological issues. I believe that Sivanandan's novels may also be analyzed with the same critical insight as he engages with the issues of war and consequently the sufferings of women. Similarly, Shayam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* also perpetuates violence that distorts natural order. Nihal De Silva mirrors up the flora and fauna of Sri Lanka in his writing. Ecofeminism may be applied on Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies*, Shayam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* and Nihal De Silva's *The Road from Elephant Pass*.

South Asian writers' postmodern ecofeminist concerns is an unexplored area in these two works. The writing style of both writers reflects postmodernist concerns. Munaweera's novel begins with an ending similarly Gunesekera's narrative straddles between the timeless boundaries of present and past. Furthermore, the diaspora reading of these novels is also possible, I urge fine potential researchers to read these works and analyze them accordingly in this light. The research scholars may contemplate the meaning of "Home" in these two texts. The scholars may also look at Sri Lankan culture in Nayomi Munaweera's work, most importantly with references to Sri Lankan cuisine. Her ample references to Sri Lankan cuisine make her an indigenous writer. This may be compared with the references of food in Jhumpa Lahiri's work. A comparative study of these two writers is a promising area of research. Furthermore, in *ITM*, the potential scholars may choose the character analysis of two women of different ethnic groups within psychological paradigm. Another favorable research area is to employ trauma theory on Munaweera's text. These novels have not caught the attention from these perspectives yet. I hope that my study becomes a reference point for future researchers and is helpful in generating further research.

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