

**HARMONIZING DICHOTOMIES:
ECOSPIRITUALITY AND THE INTERSECTION
OF POSTCOLONIAL ECOCRITICISM IN *THE
BLACK HILL* BY MAMANG DAI AND *THE
MIRACULOUS TRUE HISTORY OF NOMI ALI* BY
UZMA ASLAM KHAN**

BY

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**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES,
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Khan**

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ABSTRACT

Title: *Harmonizing Dichotomy: Ecospirituality and the Intersection of Postcolonial Ecocriticism in *The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai and *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* by Uzma Aslam Khan*

This study critically analyzes two contemporary novels, Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* (2014) and Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* (2020), within the framework of postcolonial ecocriticism and South Asian indigenous ecospirituality. Through a close textual analysis, the study explores how these literary works address environmental issues retrospectively in the regions that were former colonies and propose solutions grounded in ecospirituality, emphasizing the indigenous role to bring harmony with nature in the future. The methodology involves a detailed examination of the narratives of both the selected texts and the depictions of human interaction with the environment in them in the milieu of pre and post colonialism contexts. The concept of ecospirituality until now has been explored and confined to Latin American and African imaginaries that serve as my departure point to see the level of ecospirituality practiced and present in South Asian countries due to its vivid reverence for nature. Theoretical frameworks of postcolonial ecocriticism by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin and concepts of ecospirituality by Vandana Shiva and Omid Safi provides lenses for understanding the texts' exploration of environmental degradation, colonization, and indigenous perspectives. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on environmental awareness and ecospirituality by examining how postcolonial ecocriticism and indigenous perspectives provide insights for sustainable behaviors in the context of South Asian literature. Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of ecocritical theory and practice, highlighting the role of literature in addressing ecological crises and promoting a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

Key Words: *Ecology, Ecospirituality, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Imperialism, Animism, Ecological Imperialism, Mamang Dai and Uzma Aslam Khan*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page No
THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM	iii
AUTHOR’S DECLARATION	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	viii
DEDICATION.....	x
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Statement of Problem	7
1.2 Objectives of Study	7
1.3 Research Questions	8
1.4 Significance and Rationale of the Study	8
1.5 Delimitation.....	9
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	11
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	30
3.1 Theoretical Framework	30
3.2 Postcolonial Ecocriticism.....	30
3.1 Ecospirituality	33
3.2 Research Methodology.....	39
3.3 Organization of Study	39
4. ECOSPIRITUALITY AND THE INTERSECTION OF POSTCOLONIAL ECO- CRITICISM IN THE MIRACULOUS TRUE HISTORY OF NOMI ALI	41
4.1 Introduction	41
4.2 Ecospirituality	47

5. ECOSPIRITUALITY AND THE INTERSECTION OF POSTCOLONIAL ECO-CRITICISM IN THE BLACK <i>HILL</i>	54
5.1 Introduction	54
5.2 Ecospirituality	59
6. CONCLUSION	65
6.1 Conclusion.....	65
6.2 Findings.....	66
6.3 Recommendations	67
WORKS CITED	69

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DEDICATION

To those who see the earth not as a possession, but as a sacred trust;
To the souls who hear the whisper of the winds and the wisdom of the waters;
To the stewards of forests, guardians of rivers, and keepers of the quiet balance;
To the hearts that ache at the wounds of the world yet remain steadfast in hope,
May your love for nature remind us all of our shared origin and destiny,
And may your devotion inspire generations to restore harmony where it is broken.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While South Asian cultures have historically emphasized a spiritual connection with nature, the region has also faced significant environmental challenges, often exacerbated by colonial and postcolonial legacies. The point that grappled my attention for this study is, why has the South Asian environment deteriorated so rapidly, with disastrous consequences for both the environment and human health despite its long-standing spiritual history. Historical records and spiritual teachings across this region demonstrate a deep reverence for nature, with spiritual leaders embodying ecospiritual principles. Beyond grand cultural and religious rituals, the believers of this region truly believe in spirituality. In contrast, urbanized environments, as Udoka (1984, 2006) observes, create artificial surroundings that alienate individuals from the natural world. People living in urbanized areas feel the lack of something natural due to their self-created artificial environment, highlighting a deep yearning for reconnection with nature (Emina 85-93). Furthermore, Perry (2009) points out that modern science, through its secularization, has stripped nature of its sacredness, rendering the cosmos opaque and devoid of spiritual meaning (Hettinger 81-98). This secularized understanding of nature has disrupted humanity's spiritual connection with the environment, a theme that is vividly explored in the selected novels. In this context, the contradiction between the region's spiritual legacy and its current environmental crisis raises important questions about the disconnection between cultural values and modern practices. The spiritual teachings that once guided a sustainable way of living seem to be overshadowed by the demands of economic development, often at the cost of ecological well-being. Ecospirituality, derived from the Greek *oikos*, meaning "house" or "surroundings," emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals, communities, and their bioregions (Hastings 85). It integrates an interior dimension, reflecting the communal aspect of a household, with an exterior dimension rooted in the geographical and ecological specificity of a bioregion. This bioregional loyalty fosters a sense of belonging within one's ecological home.

Such rationality is also explored by Bergmann, who asserts that humans are not independent entities but are deeply intertwined with their surroundings, embodying the notion that “I am the space where I am.” (Hettinger 89) This interconnectedness is evident in the lives of native characters like Kajinsha in *The Black Hill* and Nomi Ali in *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, whose identities and spiritual connections are inextricably linked to the forests and seas of their respective worlds. Olsen expands this perspective by highlighting the importance of “seeing nature” with both external observation and internal imagination. This duality not only reveals nature’s physical reality but also its deeper symbolic and spiritual dimensions, enabling individuals to reconnect with its sacredness. In *The Black Hill*, the forests of Arunachal Pradesh serve as spiritual sanctuaries for the Mishmi people, where nature is not just a backdrop but a living entity imbued with divine presence. Similarly, the Andaman Islands in Khan’s novel are more than a penal colony, they are symbolic of divine creation and unity, as exemplified by the scene where Haider Ali and the Doctor stand on a stone that transcends caste and creed, embodying the message of interconnectedness and spiritual equality. The very structure of the cosmos, as depicted in these settings, contains a spiritual message for humanity, underscoring the divine origins of creation and the sacredness of all life forms.

Ecocriticism and environmental humanities highlight different approaches to ecological studies in the Global South and Global North, shaped by historical, socio-economic, and political contexts. These differences are rooted in historical, socio-economic, and political contexts, leading to varying perceptions and approaches to environmental issues. Interestingly in the Global North, ecocriticism often focuses on wilderness preservation, climate change, sustainability, and the impact of industrialization. On the other hand, in the Global South, regions like South Asia, tends to approach environmental issues from a more immediate, survival-based perspective. Environmental degradation in the Global South is closely linked to the legacies of colonialism, where resources were exploited, often at the expense of indigenous populations and ecosystems. These differences underscore how the Global North often has the luxury of engaging with environmentalism from a theoretical or future-oriented perspective, whereas the Global South contends with the direct, often immediate

consequences of environmental degradation in the past and its consequences in the present. Both perspectives contribute to the broader field of ecocriticism, but the discourse in the Global South often centers on the interplay of survival, resistance, and environmental justice.

Survival strategies in the Global South, particularly in South Asia, demand a critical retrospective glance at the political history of the region not just to blame the colonizers and stuck in the past but to see the future possible measures to combat environmental hazards of the region. My research intends to cover retrospective and prospective glances to see the environmental crises faced today in this region and to foresee a sustainable future of the environment. Postcolonial ecocriticism serves as an essential framework for analyzing the environmentally destructive legacies of colonialism, focusing on the political dynamics of exploitation and degradation. However, there is another retrospective viewpoint grounded in the long-standing history of ecospirituality in this region, which I argue serves as a prospective lens and offers the most effective strategy for environmental preservation

The deep relationship with the environment resonates with the core of ecospirituality, which emphasizes the sacredness of the natural world and the belief that spiritual growth is intertwined with the environment. For Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), the seclusion of Ghar-e-Hira was a space of reflection and communion with the divine, long before the first revelations of Islam were received (Ahmad). This connection suggests that nature has always been seen as a space for spiritual awakening and transformation in Islamic tradition while in the Hindu tradition, earth regarded as a progeny of cosmic law, is composed of five elements: heat (Agni), water (Apah), earth/soil (Pṛthivi), air (Vāyu), and space (Ākāśa) collectively known as the pañcamahābhūtas (Vicziány 3). These elements, or bhūtas, represent both the material and spiritual dimensions of existence, embodying the idea that all living and non-living things possess a spirit. There is no dichotomy between culture and nature in the Hindu tradition. As Huberman states, "whereas the human-nonhuman divide has characterized much modern Western thought, which insists that personhood applies only to human beings, here we encounter an application of the concept of personhood that includes more than human beings, extending even to trees" (Vicziány 23). Similarly, in Christianity, God is

deeply connected to nature, which is seen as a reflection of divine power, creativity, and majesty. The book of Genesis in the Bible depicts God as the creator of the heavens, the earth, and all living things, establishing a profound connection between the divine and the natural world, with each part of nature reflecting God's will and design (James 221).

The colonial period saw Western anthropocentric powers exploit both the people and the lands they colonized, leaving enduring scars on the environment. These colonizers imposed an extractive and exploitative mindset on the region, which has persisted even after the end of direct colonial rule. I found that all these three major religions understand the current environmental problems dualistically through their scripture or religious books and exploitative mindset. South Asian postcolonial societies have often mirrored their former colonizers' destructive behaviors, leading to the ongoing plunder of natural resources. While religions may offer a framework for understanding the sanctity of nature, the impact of colonialism has overshadowed these spiritual teachings, contributing to the environmental crisis in the region. Here, I argue that if south Asia is to successfully mitigate the widespread environmental problems, colonized mindset, religious institutions and environmental activists must come together to provide a pluralistic solution that all contemporary Hindus, Muslims, and Christians can understand and embrace. This thesis, therefore, focuses not on the religious doctrines themselves, but on the people of South Asia and their role in both the degradation and potential restoration of the environment.

In contrast to earlier studies, which primarily focus on tribal unrest, symbolism, and historical retellings, my research delves into the intersection of postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality to address ecological crises. Scholars such as Mukherjee emphasize the relationship between environmental degradation and colonialism, urging us to see postcolonial environments as a reflection of historical exploitation and current socio-political dynamics. Ramachandra Guha critiques the deep ecology movement for its lack of attention to inequalities within human societies, arguing that the focus on wilderness preservation often ignores the environmental struggles of the Global South (Guha p.135). Similarly, Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence highlights the prolonged and often invisible environmental damage inflicted upon the poor, particularly in postcolonial contexts. Arne Naess, in discussing deep ecology, critiques Western

anthropocentrism while Anne emphasizes how the Third World is excluded from discussions on wilderness and environmentalism in favor of a more privileged ecological narrative (Nixon).

These scholars have each contributed to understanding how environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized communities, particularly in postcolonial regions. However, I have chosen to apply Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's postcolonial ecocriticism because their work not only bridges the ecological concerns of both the Global North and South but also critiques the persistence of colonial power structures in environmental policies. Their approach aligns with my focus on how colonial histories have contributed to ecological degradation, while also offering a framework that includes spiritual, ecological, and cultural perspectives elements crucial for addressing South Asia's unique postcolonial and ecospiritual landscapes. This dual lens of ecocriticism and spirituality offers a holistic understanding, which is vital for a future-oriented solution to ecological crises. (1-10).

To explore the spiritual connection of the inhabitants and the political history of this region, as reflected in fiction, I have selected two novels by authors from India and Pakistan, as the subcontinent constitutes 77% of South Asia (World Bank). I have selected Mamang Dai's who is the Indian writer and her novel *The Black Hill* published in 2014 serves the purpose of seeing retrospectively the colonial history and its impact on the environment and then Pakistani Anglophone writer Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* published in 2020 and I argue that these narratives critically examine colonial exploitation while proposing spiritual and ecological solutions for a harmonious and sustainable environmental future.

Postcolonial ecocriticism asserts that imperial powers exploited both human populations and nature, leading to widespread ecological destruction. In contrast, this thesis emphasizes the transformative potential of ecospirituality, which transcends historical grievances and promotes a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. It underscores the interconnectedness of all life forms and advocates for moral and ethical responsibility toward the environment, essential for healing and sustainable coexistence.

Both Mamang Dai and Uzma Aslam Khan explore ecospirituality in their works, critiquing the destructive actions of imperial powers while advocating for a deeper spiritual connection with nature. Dai's focus on the indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and Khan's portrayal of the Andaman Islands highlight the potential for spiritual and ecological harmony as a means to address contemporary environmental challenges. These narratives provide valuable insights into achieving cultural and ecological resilience through spiritual practices that honor the natural world. In contemporary postcolonial literature, spirituality often serves as a crucial lens for examining socio-political and cultural dynamics but through my selected fiction I want to prove that what has past has gone and now we have to look forward by learning lesson from the past. For Muslim characters in *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, spirituality is rooted in the oneness of God, cleanliness, and divine order, reflecting a connection to the land governed by purity and singular divine authority. In contrast, *The Black Hill* presents a Hindu spiritual narrative intertwined with reverence for multiple gods, the sanctity of the cow, and the cyclical nature of life and death. These contrasting spiritual frameworks shape the characters' interactions with their environment and offer critical perspectives on colonial and postcolonial realities. By juxtaposing these spiritual perspectives, this thesis harmonizes the dichotomies between Muslim and Hindu spiritualities, revealing their convergence with the natural world. This exploration highlights how ecospirituality functions as a critical site of resistance and resilience against colonialism and modernity, advocating for a future that emphasizes spiritual and ecological harmony.

To situate this study within the broader discourse, it is essential to acknowledge that the concept of ecospirituality has been predominantly explored within the Latin American and African contexts, with scholars like Bron Taylor contributing significantly to this field. However, these perspectives, while valuable, do not fully account for the unique spiritual and environmental dynamics present in South Asia. The ecological and spiritual landscapes of South Asia are distinct, deeply interwoven with the region's diverse religious traditions and cultural practices. Despite this, there has been a noticeable gap in scholarship that theorizes ecospirituality from a South Asian viewpoint, one that reflects the region's specific historical, cultural, and ecological realities. Recognizing this gap, I embarked on this research to contribute a much-needed South Asian perspective to

the global discourse on ecospirituality. This thesis aims to bridge that gap by offering a framework that not only resonates with the lived experiences of South Asian communities but also seeks to inspire a transformative understanding of ecospirituality that can address the region's pressing environmental challenges. In doing so, this research aspires to revolutionize the way ecospirituality is perceived and practiced in South Asia, offering new insights that are both regionally grounded and globally relevant.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Despite the growing recognition of the intertwined relationships between cultural identity, spirituality, and environmental stewardship, there is a noticeable gap in the examination of how narratives of ecospirituality intersect with postcolonial eco-criticism within contemporary South Asian fiction. While scholars like Bron Taylor have extensively explored ecospirituality in Latin American and African contexts, similar in-depth analysis is lacking in South Asia, where unique spiritual traditions and ecological challenges demand a distinct approach. This research addresses this gap by focusing on South Asian literature, aiming to uncover how these narratives can inspire transformative actions, shape environmental consciousness, and foster ecological resilience in postcolonial societies. In doing so, this study not only contributes to the academic discourse but also offers practical insights that can inform environmental policies and community practices in the region.

1.2 Objectives of Study

- To explore how the texts of both novels retrospectively depict the degradation of the environment and culture under colonial powers.
- To analyze how the narratives of *The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai and *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* by Uzma Aslam Khan explore the intersections of indigenous spiritual beliefs and environmental consciousness, elucidating the types of environmental consciousness under consideration.
- To investigate the ways in which the integration of ecospirituality in these texts fosters the development of environmental consciousness and advocates for

sustainable practices, considering their impact within diverse Global South and Global North contexts.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do the texts of both the novels retrospectively present the degradation of environment and culture in the hand of colonial powers?
2. How do the narratives of *The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai and *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* by Uzma Aslam Khan explore the intersections of indigenous spiritual beliefs and environmental consciousness, clarifying the types of environmental consciousness under consideration?
3. In what ways does the integration of ecospirituality in these texts contribute to the development of environmental consciousness and the promotion of sustainable practices within both Global South and Global North contexts?

1.4 Significance and Rationale of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the intersection between ecospirituality and postcolonial eco-criticism within the novels *The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai and *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* by Uzma Aslam Khan. By delving into these works, the research contributes to literature, environmental studies, and postcolonial discourse. It illuminates how these authors address ecological concerns and postcolonial narratives, offering fresh perspectives on the interaction between environmental and postcolonial studies amidst the global political dynamics between the south and the north.

This study also emphasizes the potential of ecospirituality as a mitigation strategy, highlighting how spiritual beliefs, practices, and philosophies can address ecological challenges in postcolonial contexts. By providing insights into the role of ecospirituality in fostering environmental consciousness and inspiring transformative actions, the research offers a nuanced understanding of how individuals, communities, and policymakers can integrate ecospiritual and ecological perspectives into their practices and decision-making processes which will support subnational struggles for regional autonomy.

By uncovering the potential of ecospirituality as a mitigation strategy, the research informs and inspires stakeholders to adopt more sustainable and harmonious relationships with the environment, promoting ecological resilience and social justice. The rationale for delimiting the research to Mamang Dai's novel *The Black Hill* and Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* lies in the need for a focused and in-depth analysis of specific literary works within the context of ecospirituality and postcolonial ecocritical approaches. By selecting these two novels, the research aims to provide a comprehensive examination of how these authors engage with environmental and postcolonial themes, allowing for a detailed exploration of the intersection between literature, ecology, and postcolonialism.

1.5 Delimitation

This research is delimited to two postcolonial novels with predominant themes of interconnectedness of Postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality. Novels chosen for this study are Mamang Dai's novel *The Black Hill*, have chosen from Indian literature and Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, have chosen from Pakistani literature. Conceptual framework utilized for this study of the selected works comes primarily from Postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality by Graham Huggan, and Helen Tiffin, Vandana Shiva, Omid Safi, and Bron Taylor respectively that aligns with the themes explored in the selected texts.

Additionally, limiting the study to these specific novels enables a more concentrated investigation, ensuring that the analysis remains thorough and cohesive. By delimiting the research to Mamang Dai and Uzma Aslam Khan's works, the study can delve deeply into the nuances of their narratives and characters, offering valuable insights into their portrayal of ecospirituality and postcolonial themes.

Furthermore, focusing on the ecospiritual and postcolonial ecocritical approaches of scholars such as Bron Taylor, Vandana Shiva, Omid Safi, Graham Huggan, and Helen Tiffin provide a theoretical framework that aligns with the themes explored in the selected texts. This delimitation allows for a more targeted examination of how these theoretical perspectives manifest within the literary texts, facilitating a deeper

understanding of their implications for environmental consciousness and postcolonial discourse.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part offers a critical analysis of academic and philosophical works that have already been published and are directly relevant to the current study. Understanding the history of this endeavor and its distinct place in the relevant knowledge is made possible by the representation of these works. Highlighting the research gaps that the current study attempts to fill also aids the reader in understanding the significance and reasoning behind this research thesis.

The intersection of ecospirituality and postcolonial ecocriticism has emerged as a critical framework for addressing the environmental crises exacerbated by colonial exploitation. Scholars from diverse regions have highlighted how colonial powers not only disrupted ecosystems but also severed indigenous spiritual ties with nature, resulting in a profound ecological imbalance. The Global South, particularly Latin America and South Africa, provides valuable insights into this intersection, where spiritual traditions and liberation movements converge to reclaim ecological and cultural sovereignty. By drawing on the works of influential theorists such as Leonardo Boff and Eduardo Galeano from Latin America and Desmond Tutu and Andrew Marais Smuts from South Africa, this review examines how ecospirituality offers a pathway for healing environmental degradation and fostering sustainable futures. These contributions emphasize the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world, advocating for a reimagined relationship rooted in respect, justice, and spirituality.

Leonardo Boff is a prominent theologian from Latin America whose concept of integral ecology ties environmental and social justice to spiritual ethics. In *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, Boff argues that ecological degradation stems from humanity's disconnection from the sacredness of nature. He critiques capitalist exploitation and emphasizes that the cry of the earth is inseparable from the cry of the marginalized. By advocating for a holistic worldview, Boff calls for the integration of indigenous ecological wisdom, such as Pachamama worship, into modern environmental efforts. Further, Boff's emphasis on interconnectedness resonates with Vandana Shiva's

concepts, making his work globally relevant. His critique of colonialism's role in disrupting indigenous ecospirituality is crucial for understanding ecological crises in postcolonial contexts. By linking spirituality with practical ecological solutions, Boff's insights are instrumental for developing an inclusive framework for environmental restoration in regions like South Asia (Leonardo).

Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America* explores the historical exploitation of natural resources in Latin America, highlighting how colonialism severed indigenous spiritual connections with the land. He critiques imperial practices that commodified nature, portraying them as acts of environmental and cultural violence. Galeano emphasizes that reclaiming indigenous spiritualities is essential for ecological and cultural recovery. His work resonates with postcolonial ecocriticism by exposing how colonial narratives justified environmental degradation. Galeano's insights highlight the need for spiritual and ecological reclamation, offering lessons for regions like South Asia where similar colonial legacies persist. His focus on cultural resilience aligns with efforts to integrate ecospirituality into contemporary environmental discourse (Eduardo 112).

Desmond Tutu's ecological philosophy is rooted in Ubuntu, emphasizing interconnectedness among humans and nature. He viewed ecological degradation as a spiritual crisis, arguing that environmental care is a moral obligation. Tutu's advocacy for climate justice highlights how environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized communities, linking human rights with ecological responsibility. Tutu's integration of spirituality into environmental activism aligns with the principles of ecospirituality. His work critiques colonialism's role in disrupting the ecological and spiritual balance in South Africa. Tutu's insights provide a foundation for addressing postcolonial ecological crises in contexts like South Asia (Desmond 123).

Andrew Marais Smuts from South Africa, in *Holism and Evolution*, introduced the concept of holism, emphasizing the spiritual and ecological interconnectedness of life. Smuts critiqued hierarchical systems that separated humanity from nature, advocating for a unified perspective where all life forms contribute to a greater whole. His philosophy complements Ubuntu and provides a theoretical basis for ecospirituality

in addressing ecological crises. Smuts's critique of colonial practices that fragmented ecosystems and communities offers a lens for understanding the enduring environmental impacts of colonialism in South Africa and beyond (Christiaan 223).

However, postcolonial ecocriticism in South Asian literature is a relatively new interdisciplinary field that emerged in response to the intersection of postcolonial studies and environmental concerns. It seeks to explore how South Asian writers, particularly those from countries with a history of colonial rule, address environmental issues and ecological themes in their literary works. The emerging of postcolonial ecocriticism took place in different phases. In its early stage, the origin of postcolonial ecocriticism in South Asian literature can be found in the works of early environmental thinkers and activists in the region. Even before the formalization of the field, South Asian writers, poets, and scholars were already engaging with environmental issues and the impact of colonialism on their natural surroundings.

Emergence of ecocriticism began to gain prominence in the late 20th century, focusing on the ecological aspects of literature and the representation of nature in literary works. During this time, scholars started to explore how colonialism, globalization, and socio-political factors affected the environment and found expression in South Asian literature. However, Postcolonial Studies and Ecocriticism in the 1990s and early 2000s, led to the development of postcolonial ecocriticism as a distinct field. Scholars started examining how colonialism shaped the relationship between humans and nature in South Asian literature, and how postcolonial authors responded to environmental issues and ecological challenges in their works which led to initiation of different movements such as Chipko Movement which is considered the rise of environmental movements in South Asia, and various initiatives addressing environmental degradation and climate change, further influenced the exploration of ecological themes in literature. Writers began to engage more directly with environmental activism in their works. Scholars like Amitav Ghosh, Vandana Shiva, Mamang Dai, Uzma Aslam Khan, and Arundhati Roy played a significant role in bringing environmental concerns into the forefront of South Asian literature. Their writings often interwove postcolonial themes with ecological consciousness, influencing the direction of postcolonial ecocriticism. As the field of postcolonial ecocriticism evolved, it expanded to include a broader range of voices from

different South Asian countries and linguistic traditions. It also started considering indigenous knowledge, oral traditions, and folklore in relation to environmental themes. Postcolonial ecocriticism in South Asian literature continues to evolve, with ongoing research, publications, and academic discussions exploring the multifaceted connections between postcolonial issues and environmental concerns in literary works. Ramachandra Guha argues that “deep ecology indicates a lack of concern with inequalities within human society” and how they are products of social structures and historical events (11). This actually made my case stronger to discuss in the domain of South Asia as the region and its environment deterioration as different and high level of deterioration in comparison to the Global north. With the existence of points of intersection, this thesis will heed to the call of reimagining of postcolonialism and ecocriticism to look at social justice of the environment and the anthropocentric while taking cognizance of the peculiar South Asian cultural and historical experiences of people of this area. Mukherjee asks us to think of “Postcolonial environments’ ... [as] the entire network of human and non-human material existence that is marked by the particular dynamics of historical capital at a specific stage and location” (Mukherjee15). Overall, this study explores the role of South Asian people, as depicted in literature, in both the degradation and potential restoration of the environment, focusing on cultural and ecological narratives rather than specific religious doctrines.

Dr. Sonia Irum’s study “The Case of Connection: A Bibliographic Essay on Emerging Human Ecological Criticism” offers significant insights when viewed through the lens of Ecocriticism. The article’s discussion on human, non-human and environment is directly engaging with the broader environmental themes that are central to my thesis. It emphasizes the relationship between humans and their environment, a core concern of Ecocriticism, which seeks to understand how literature reflects and shapes our understanding of the natural world.

In this context, Dr. Irum’s analysis of different researchers of 20th century, provides a compelling example of how literature can serve as a medium for environmental consciousness. The way the article highlights the depiction of landscapes and nature aligns with my argument that literary texts not only reflect but also influence ecological awareness. This is particularly relevant to my study, which examines how

Ecospirituality of both novels contributes to the discourse on environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, it also offers a valuable perspective that complements the theoretical foundation of my research. By addressing environmental or ecological concerns, the article adds depth to the discussion of how literature engages with pressing environmental issues. This intersection of literary analysis and ecological critique supports the interdisciplinary approach of my thesis, demonstrating how Ecocriticism can bridge the gap between literary studies and environmental advocacy.

In Dr. Irum's work enhances the scholarly conversation on the role of literature in shaping environmental narratives. It not only reinforces the arguments presented in my thesis but also broadens the scope of Ecocriticism by bringing environmental concern. This makes it a valuable addition to the theoretical framework underpinning my research, providing both contextual and analytical support for the study's objectives (Irum1-11).

Dey's study "Devastative Naturescapes and Superhuman Saviors: Analyzing Postcolonial Ecological Crises in Contemporary Times with a reference to Kornei Chukovksy's Doctor" engages with the intersection of postcolonial critique and ecological discourse by analyzing the colonial depiction of the natural environment in Kornei Chukovsky's poem Doctor Powderpill. The study scrutinizes how colonial narratives, historically entrenched in literature, continue to shape contemporary perceptions of nature and ecological crises. Dey critiques the anthropocentric and Eurocentric paradigms that have systematically devalued non-human life and the environment in the Global South, a perspective that aligns closely with the Postcolonial Ecocriticism discussed by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*.

Dey effectively utilizes Postcolonial Ecocriticism to critique how colonial powers, represented through the character of Doctor Powderpill, have historically constructed the natural environment of the Global South as wild, chaotic, and in need of control and order imposed by the colonizers. This reflects Huggan and Tiffin's argument that colonialism involved not only the exploitation of human populations but also the systematic degradation of the environment. Dey's analysis aligns with Huggan and Tiffin's concept of "ecological imperialism," where European colonial narratives justified

their exploitation by portraying colonized lands and peoples as primitive and in need of civilizing forces, thus legitimizing ecological destruction under the guise of development.

While Dey's study does not explicitly engage with Ecospirituality in the way that Vandana Shiva or Omid Safi might, the underlying critique of anthropocentrism and the call for a more interconnected and respectful relationship with nature resonates with the principles of Ecospirituality. The study's advocacy for rewording and rethinking the human-nature relationship parallels the ecospiritual emphasis on viewing nature as sacred and interconnected with human well-being.

Dey critiques the anthropocentric and hypermasculine portrayal of Doctor Powderpill, a character who symbolizes the colonial savior complex. This critique is central to Postcolonial Ecocriticism as it reveals how colonial narratives have historically positioned humans, particularly European colonizers, as superior to the natural world, thereby justifying the exploitation and degradation of both nature and indigenous populations. The study's discussion of the poem's reinforcement of human superiority over the natural world exemplifies the ongoing legacy of colonial attitudes in contemporary ecological crises, a theme that is crucial to both Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Ecospirituality. Dey's concept of rewording, which involves rethinking and reshaping the human-nature relationship, aligns with the idea of Ecospirituality as a potential strategy for addressing ecological crises. This concept suggests a shift from viewing nature as a resource to be exploited to recognizing it as a living, sacred entity that humans are intimately connected with. The call for a "human collapse" and the dismantling of hierarchical relationships between humans and non-human beings further echoes the principles of Ecospirituality, which advocates for harmony and respect between humans and the environment. So, in crux, Dey's study, through its critique of colonial narratives and its advocacy for a reimagined relationship between humans and nature, aligns closely with the theoretical frameworks of Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Ecospirituality. By exposing the anthropocentric and Eurocentric biases embedded in colonial literature, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how these narratives continue to shape contemporary ecological crises. Furthermore, Dey's call for rewording reflects a need for spiritual and ecological renewal, resonating with the ecospiritual emphasis on interconnectedness and the sacredness of nature (Dey 1-11).

The study “Postcolonial Nonhuman Blurring (B)orders in Migrant Ecologies: A Post-anthropocentric Reading of Amitav Ghosh’s *Gun Island*” by Samkaria offers a thorough analysis of Amitav Ghosh's novel *Gun Island* through an eco-critical lens. The focus lies on the novel's exploration of anthropocentric issues, environmental concerns, and the interaction between human and non-human entities. Samkaria adeptly integrates themes of migration, climate change, and the myth of Manasa Devi to delve into postcolonial non-human agency and challenge anthropocentric perspectives.

The introduction effectively contextualizes the central themes of the novel, emphasizing the Anthropocentric and the challenges faced by both human and non-human migrants due to ecological crises. Drawing on Amitav Ghosh's other works on climate change lends credibility to the author’s analysis. Subsequent sections delve deeper into the novel's themes, employing an eco-critical perspective to examine the postcolonial non-human. Particularly insightful is the discussion on the allegorical significance of the myth of Manasa Devi, which connects storytelling with environmental consciousness and climate change. The concept of trans-corporeality, as proposed by eco-critic Stacy Alaimo, further underscores the inseparability of the human body from the environment, challenging anthropocentric notions of disenchantment (Samkaria 1-5).

The study explores how the novel intertwines human, non-human, and more-than-human entities at physical, material, and embodied levels. It examines the relationship between human labor, cultural forms, and the environment, highlighting the interconnectedness of the human body, material surroundings, and cultural output.

Trans-corporeality challenges border by emphasizing the porosity and interconnection of human, non-human, and more-than-human actors in the world. Instances from the novel illustrate the blurring of borders between the human and non-human, where interactions with the environment impact cognitive processes and challenge body-mind dichotomies. The study also addresses how climate-induced displacement affects both human and non-human lives, exploring the intersectionality of climate migration with racial and ethnic oppression (Samkaria 2).

The textured materiality of the Sundarbans and its shifting terrains destabilize borders, challenging constructed dichotomies between groups and reinforcing the

interconnectedness of all living beings. The article highlights the agency of climate refugees in challenging nation-state boundaries and emphasizes how climate change impacts all living beings indiscriminately.

In conclusion, the study discusses Manasa Devi's role as an intermediary between humans and non-humans, advocating for certain borders to contain capitalist exploitation while recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and the earth. Overall, the research provides a profound analysis of "Gun Island" and its engagement with complex ecological and social issues, advocating for a relational approach to ecological sustainability.

In the research study "Visualizing Heterotopias in Urban Spaces in Select South Asian English Fiction" by Shweta Sur, the exploration of heterotopias in South Asian fiction is framed within the context of ecological and environmental concerns. Drawing on Foucault's concept of heterotopias, the research illuminates the representation of ecological consciousness in literature and its intersection with urban ecocriticism. Through the literary works of South Asian authors like Temsula Ao and Manjushree Thapa, the discourse on climate change and environmental crises is enriched, shedding light on efforts to green South Asian regions. The interdisciplinary nature of heterotopias is emphasized, highlighting their potential overlap with ecocriticism and their role as real-life utopias manifested in ecological sites (Sur 1-6).

Concrete examples from literary texts such as *Laburnum for My Head* and *Seasons of Flight* are analyzed to identify and explore urban heterotopias, particularly focusing on cemeteries and wetlands as examples. These spaces are portrayed as vital for maintaining biodiversity, fostering greenery, and mitigating the adverse effects of urbanization. Despite their significance, urban heterotopias face challenges such as encroachment, pollution, and lack of awareness, necessitating strategies for long-term sustainability.

The study advocates for multi-disciplinary approaches to the development of urban heterotopias, emphasizing collaboration between urban planners, ecologists, architects, sociologists, and other experts. It proposes policy interventions at various levels to protect and promote these spaces, integrating ecological considerations into

urban planning and development regulations. By fostering community engagement and promoting cultural values, urban heterotopias contribute to mental well-being and enhance urban livability.

However, the practical implementation of postcolonial ecocriticism, as elucidated by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin presents challenges that require concerted efforts from individuals, policymakers, and the world intelligentsia. It calls for a reevaluation of technology through an ecological lens, emphasizing the need for eco-friendly approaches to technological advancement. Education and awareness campaigns are essential to cultivate ecological consciousness among the masses and encourage responsible use of technology to protect the environment.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of ecological restoration and the potential of heterotopias to embody utopian ideals. It emphasizes the role of literature in educating individuals as integral parts of nature and advocates for collective action to address environmental challenges and promote ecological sustainability. The plot of both novels is based on Colonial India. Both writers depict the rule of the colonizers and their ill treatment of nature. They have not only colonized the people but the land too. A lot of research works have been done on the treatment of nature by the colonizers; the selected writers have raised the voices of the natives, contributing to postcolonial literature. Many researchers have examined these texts for postcolonial themes and issues. This research aims to build upon previous work to create a background for this study.

The study “A Study of Ecospirituality in Mamang Dai's Fiction” by Meghamala Satapathy explores the spiritual link of the characters to the environment. The researcher picks five short stories of Mamang Dai and with the researcher's critical analysis; the element of eco-spirituality is explored. In the fiction, “*The Sky Queen*” and “*Once Upon A Moontime*” refers to the beginning of life and the earthly things' connection with each other as she says, “At the dawn of life when there was nothing but endless blue, there sprang a civilization known as Kojum-Koja (Dai 1-4)”. The quotation shows the Divine justice in Nature and then how people's lives were constituted by the environment and their spiritual connection with each other. Further, the researcher mentions Dai's other stories which are again a blend between human beings, environment, and spiritualism.

The researcher refers to his theorist on Eco spiritualism who does believe in the reverence of nature similar to the traditional myth and religious beliefs, relating to Dai's short story "*How the World was Made*".

The story explores that before the creation of the earth, everything was water but, in the sky, two brothers decided on the existence of human beings on the earth, and then there was an explosion thus human beings were created equally with other creatures of the world, "They (the two brothers) called the wind from the four quarters. The east wind blew yellow dust. The south wind is red dust. The north wind black dust, and the west wind blew the dust round and round and mixed it up together until the earth was formed" (Dai 01). Then she continues to the creation of the moon and sun to explore the justice of nature. She starts her argument that in the beginning there was no existence of the moon but two suns, the elder sun, and the younger sun, who gave heat and light to the earth. Further, the researchers give quotes from Dai who argued that the moon and sun were the reason for both suns' conflicts when the younger sun decided to give more heat to the World than required. Then the elder son punished the younger by throwing it into the pool of mud. The mud left permanent marks on the face of the younger sun and thus it grew pale because of those marks and was named the moon. This tale carries the justice of nature and an instructor of spiritualism which always reminds human beings of the distinction between good and bad. Thus, the researcher finds the earth as a living creature through many examples and a deep connection between human beings, with the environment, and spiritualism (Satopathy1-7).

In the Research article titled "Re-Reading of Eco-Spirituality in Barbara Kingsolver's Prodigal Solver" by Binu V S, Dr. A Selvaraj conducted in 2020, the researcher figured out where eco-spirituality began. It was important to know about her that she is a Diaspora, moving to the east and west, her experience as a nomad, minority, faces the atrocities of power elites, and her family back to Pakistan in Zia's regime where the Islamization infested the people, have reflected in her works and she called it a journey from childhood to maturity age its origins to understand the relationship between eco-spirituality and ecology. Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* actualizes the thoughts in two different ways, "Nature as a cherishing", and "Nature domination" (V.S). Nature as a cherishing is like an ecocentric world in which it seems everything is bought

into it, which depends on each other. And nature domination is just human-centered in which it is considered humans are superior to everything that exists on earth. In the novel Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Solver*, Binu presents the first way as the belief of female character and the second way as the belief of males. Binu portrays the different beliefs and ideas of people in the way that they are linked with each other (V.S 1-4).

In the research study, the researcher figured out the reasons that spoil the environment, and the environment deteriorates when humans don't follow the rules of eco-spirituality. Further, finds out that the connection of eco-spirituality and ecology with humans has been proven through different writers' statements. According to them, spirituality and sacredness have been everywhere and for it; the relationship between human spirituality and ecology existed since the dawn of human existence.

According to Ishavasya Upanishad's first Mantra which is known as "Isavasyamidam Sarvam", through this Mantra, he makes it clear that the universe is part of a whole that is not separate from God and that all humans and animals living on this earth belong to the same family. He emphasizes that ecology and eco-spirituality are closely related. The person who is trying to know the connection between both then is spiritually awakened (V.S 1-4). Valerie in his interview about eco-spirituality and ecology in 2002 said that ecospirituality establishes a vital connection between humans and the environment.

Through this research study, the researcher wants to clarify that since time immemorial the animate and the inanimate have lived together on this earth with care and patronage. Earth was the center of all humans and animals, air, water, trees, and weather all were sacred and were meant for human beings. The industrial revolution replaced the beliefs of man in the excess of religion and science along with modern technology. With the change in the belief system, nature lost its connection with spirituality (V.S 4).

The title of the novel is similar to the Biblical short moral story of the *Prodigal son*. Like prodigal son, nature was also gifted to humans, but humans destroy it for their benefits and exploit all-natural resources that try their best to destroy nature in every way as a result all the wealth of nature is destroyed. Now nature is taking revenge according

to the law of nature, instead of repentance because of a negative attitude towards nature, thus nature is disconnected from spirituality (V.S 14).

Ecospirituality emphasizes the spiritual and ethical dimensions of our relationship with the natural world. It explores the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the environment. It encourages people to develop a sense of reverence and respect for nature, recognizing its intrinsic value and its role as a source of spiritual inspiration. It also promotes a deep connection with the environment by promoting a sense of unity and oneness with all beings. It advocates for responsible and sustainable practices, aligning human actions with ecological principles to protect and preserve the Earth's resources. Overall, ecospirituality seeks to integrate ecological awareness, ethical values, and spiritual practices to inspire positive changes in the way we relate to and care for our planet.

In the research work "Double Liminality and Double Marginality in Muslim Women's Narrative: An Investigation of Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, the researcher, Nasar Iqbal delves into themes of colonialism, subjugation, and marginalization within the Indian subcontinent, with a specific focus on Uzma Aslam Khan's novel. The researcher examines the concept of double liminality and double marginality as portrayed in the characters' experiences during the colonial era (Iqbal 1-8).

Central to the study is an analysis of how Khan depicts double liminality and double marginality, particularly concerning women characters. The article outlines the setting of the Andaman Islands during the colonial period and introduces main characters, emphasizing their suffering and oppression under the imperial regime. Specifically, it explores the concept of double marginality, highlighting the plight of women prisoners and local islanders facing denial of rights, sexual harassment, and marginalization (Iqbal 5). Moreover, the research addresses the concept of double liminality within the novel, focusing on characters like Shakuntala, Nomi Ali, and Prisoner 218 D. These characters navigate ambiguous positions in relation to British and Japanese occupations, facing liminality on multiple fronts. For instance, Shakuntala's

status as neither British nor Indian renders her doubly liminal, particularly as the control of the region shifts between colonial powers (Iqbal 03).

In conclusion, the research offers a nuanced analysis of *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, exploring the themes of double liminality and double marginality. It sheds light on the experiences of marginalized characters under colonial rule, revealing the intricate dynamics of power, identity, and oppression depicted in the narrative.

The research study, titled “Narrating the Silence of History: Mamang Dai’s *The Black Hill* by Dr. Supriya M. delves into the historical connection between Tibet and Christianity in Arunachal Pradesh, India, with a focus on the story of French missionaries Nicholas Kirk and Augustine Bourry. The missionaries played a significant role in introducing Christianity to the region before meeting their demise in 1854. Tibet and Christianity in Arunachal Pradesh have an old connection. French missionaries Nicholas Kirk and Augustine Bourry were killed on their way to Tibet in 1854. They sowed the first seed of Christianity in Arunachal Pradesh 165 years ago before they were killed on August 2 the same year at the Tibet-Arunachal border region by a Mishimi Tribe chieftain Arunachal; French Missionary Krick and Bourry”(Supriya 1-6).

The research also highlights Mamang Dai’s novel, *The Black Hill*, which is based on recorded historical events and explores the relationship between Father Kirk and a tribal woman named Gimur. It provides a detailed account of the missionaries’ journey and their unfortunate demise at the hands of a Mishmi Tribe chieftain near the Tibet-Arunachal border. It mentions efforts to canonize the two priests and the preservation of their mortal remains by the people of Somme Village. The author emphasizes the importance of the missionaries’ story in the cultural and historical context of Arunachal Pradesh. As Helen and Huggan examines the exchange of materials and ideas between the Old and New Worlds, highlighting the environmental impacts of European imperialism in settler colonies. In the case of *The Black Hill*, Father Krick represents the New World, while the old World is related to the tribal people.

Furthermore, the research discusses Mamang Dai’s novel, *The Black Hill* which revolves around the events of Father Kirk’s journey and his encounter with Gimur. The novel delves into the themes of spirituality, cultural clashes, and personal relationships. It

portrays Gimur as a strong and independent woman who defies tradition to be with Kajinsha, a native of Mishmi Hills. The author explores the complexities of their relationship against the backdrop of historical events and tribal customs. And with every word and sentence exchanged, they understood each other better. What drew Gimur to the priest was the beautiful music he played on his flute- a clear, pure, melody floating through the air, like someone urging the hills and trees to listen, and praying, waiting to hear someone would answer (Supriya1-6).

The research effectively combines historical information with the analysis of Mamang Dai's novel. It provides insights into the missionaries' motivations and the challenges they faced in their mission. Additionally, it highlights the significance of the novel in shedding light on the historical events and cultural dynamics of the region. In crux, the study provides an engaging overview of the historical connection between Tibet and Christianity in Arunachal Pradesh, as well as the literary representation of these events in Mamang Dai's novel. It effectively combines historical information with analysis, making it an insightful read for those interested in the cultural and historical context of the region.

In the research study titled "Sacredness of Words and Life: Indigenous Authenticities" Watitula Longkumer and Nirmala Memon delve into the themes of indigenous authenticity and the pivotal role of language in postcolonial literature, with a specific focus on the literary works of Mamang Dai, a distinguished writer from Arunachal Pradesh in India's North-East. The author critically examines the limitations inherent in canon debates within literary studies, shedding light on the marginalization experienced by smaller regions and their literary contributions. They contend that the dominance of colonial languages and the pressure to conform to broader national narratives serve to stifle the expression of indigenous cultures and languages.

The research underscores the significance of reclaiming and reinterpreting native languages within the realm of postcolonial literary discourse. Drawing upon Ngûgîwa Thiong'o's concept of a "cultural bomb," which elucidates the obliteration of pre-colonial cultures and histories through the imposition of the colonizer's language, the authors propose that postcolonial writers have the agency to either advocate for a revival of

indigenous languages or utilize the colonial language as a tool for subversion and reinvention in new literary forms.

Through the lens of Mamang Dai's works, particularly her novel *The Black Hill*, the research illustrates indigenous storytelling and the convergence of history and imagination. The authors explore Dai's adept incorporation of orality, myths, and folklore into her narratives, underscoring the intricate link between language and cultural experiences. The research argues that Dai's utilization of indigenous vocabulary and her engagement with mythology serve as acts of resistance against dominant postcolonial discourses, facilitating the reclamation of cultural heritage. Furthermore, the research delves into the portrayal of indigenous communities in Dai's works, highlighting the formidable challenges they encounter in preserving their traditions amidst the onslaught of colonialism. The inclusion of excerpts from the novel exemplifies characters' steadfast resistance against the encroachment of colonial culture, reaffirming the sanctity of their language and way of life.

In conclusion, the research advocates for the recognition and amplification of indigenous literature within postcolonial discourse. It underscores the imperative for indigenous voices to assert their languages, cultures, and histories while challenging the hegemonic narratives imposed by colonial powers. Through the prism of Mamang Dai's literary oeuvre, the research illustrates how indigenous authenticity can be articulated through storytelling and the reimagination of language (Longkumar 1-12).

In the research entitle "The Lioness Defending Her Clan in the North East: A Study of Ecospiritual Elements in Mamang Dai's Fiction" provides a comprehensive analysis of ecospirituality in the works of Mamang Dai, a prominent writer from North East India. The author explores the ecological attributes present in Dai's fiction and their significance in the spiritual journey of her characters. The article begins with a literature review, followed by a discourse analysis of Dai's five works of fiction, and concludes with suggestions for future research (Satapaty 1-4).

The research is well-structured, and the arguments presented are supported by textual evidence from Dai's books. The inclusion of a literature review at the beginning helps establish the framework of ecospirituality, providing a theoretical basis for the

subsequent analysis. The discourse analysis of the study demonstrates the presence of ecospiritual elements such as tribal folklores, creation myths, spiritual practices, and the connection between humans and nature. The research effectively highlights how these elements contribute to the overall theme of ecospirituality in Dai's fiction.

In crux, the research offers valuable insights into the presence and significance of ecospiritual elements in Mamang Dai's fiction. It contributes to the understanding of ecospirituality within the context of North East India and highlights the need for further research in this area. Readers interested in ecocriticism, spirituality, and regional literature will find this article informative and thought provoking (Nayak 1-4).

In the research named "Art and / as Ecology: Perception of Ecological Sustainability in Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*" by Mrs. Sini Jacob and Dr. Rositta Joseph Valiyamattom explores the concept of cultural ecology and its relation to ecological sustainability in Mamang Dai's novel. The research discusses how cultural ecology deviates from traditional ecocriticism by focusing on the interrelation between texts and external natural ecosystems. The research argues that literature, as a representation of culture, can act as an ecological force in the cultural system. The study provides a comprehensive introduction and contextualizes the need for a paradigm shift towards ecological thinking in response to the environmental challenges faced today. It highlights the significance of integrating ecology and culture and the productive outcomes of their cross-fertilization. Cultural ecology, as a discipline, is presented as an intermediary between anthropocentric cultural studies and nature-centered radical ecocentricism (Joseph 1-5).

The study reviews existing literature on the topic, discussing how art and literature offer imaginative spaces for generating and enacting ecological knowledge. They emphasize that literature can raise complex conceptual questions while offering models of sustainable living. The notion of sustainability is explored, including its relationship with cultural creativity and the preservation of natural and cultural ecosystems.

The research then focuses on Mamang Dai's novel, *The Black Hill*, as a case study to examine indigenous literature's role in fostering ecologically-oriented ontology.

The novel, set in Arunachal Pradesh, portrays the differences between dominant cultures and the sustainable indigenous communities. The research highlights the representation of the indigenous Adi and Mishmee cultures and their ecological wisdom, resilience, and harmony with nature. The study argues that Mamang Dai's work offers transformative sites for cultural self-reflection and evaluation of dominant beliefs and modes of human development.

Throughout the review, the study draws on the perspectives of various scholars, including Hubert Zapf and Rosi Braidotti, to support their arguments. They discuss sustainability as a regrinding of the subject in a materially embedded sense of responsibility and ethical accountability. The concept of resilience is also explored, emphasizing its relevance to coping with ecological and cultural changes.

The research provides a thorough analysis of Mamang Dai's novel, highlighting its themes of sustainability, resilience, and the clash between indigenous and dominant cultures. It underscores the importance of indigenous knowledge and practices in promoting sustainable societies. The authors conclude that literature, as a form of cultural creativity, can effectively demonstrate sustainable alternatives and contribute to ecological dialogues. Overall, the article presents a well-structured analysis of the chosen topic and provides valuable insights into the intersection of art, literature, and ecological sustainability (Jacob 1-8).

In the research titled "Exploring the Ambivalence of Tribal and Gender Narrative in Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*" by Tanmoya Barman, an in-depth analysis of Mamang Dai's novel, *The Black Hill*, is conducted, focusing on the theme of ecology and its intricate connection to identity construction. The author delves into how the characters within the novel blur the boundaries between the ecological self and the other within a post-colonial context. Furthermore, the research delves into the influence of the Adi community's mythical folklore on Dai's work and scrutinizes the novel within the context of deep ecology and the preservation of native traditions (Barman 1-4).

The introduction sets a clear scope for the study, introducing the concept of ecology as a multifaceted and interconnected aspect of life. The listed keywords aptly reflect the central themes discussed in the analysis. Subsequent sections explore Mamang

Dai's background as a writer and her deep engagement with the cultural history of the Adi community. The author underscores Dai's endeavors to safeguard and uphold the fading folktales through her writing. Additionally, the research skillfully integrates discussions on the ideological impact of colonialism on the Adi community, including the transition from pagan culture to Christianity.

Throughout the research, excerpts from the novel are seamlessly integrated to bolster the analysis. These excerpts adeptly illustrate the intricate relationship between the characters and their natural environment, underscoring themes of interdependence and mutual transformation. The incorporation of Arne Naess's principles of deep ecology enriches the discussion, furnishing a theoretical framework for comprehending the ecological consciousness embedded within the narrative. Furthermore, the study briefly touches upon the linguistic nuances of Dai's writing, exploring how the transition from oral to written literature shapes the vocabulary and structure of her work. Drawing comparisons to other writers from the northeast region adds depth to this observation.

In its conclusion, the research discusses the symbolism of the mountains in the novel, portraying them as emblematic of heritage preservation and territoriality. It also underscores the concept of an ecological self and the repercussions of environmental degradation. The parallel drawn between Gimur's journey and the conversion to Christianity in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* enriches the analysis with a comparative perspective. Overall, the research effectively scrutinizes the ecological themes in Mamang Dai's novel, furnishing a thoughtful analysis supported by pertinent excerpts. However, the article could benefit from a more structured organization and clearer transitions between sections. Additionally, providing a concise summary of the main points in the conclusion would serve to reinforce the key takeaways from the analysis (Barman 1-4).

The present position of research holds a unique stance by shedding light on a different aspect of the novels compared to previous studies. While previous researchers have primarily focused on themes such as tribal unrest, symbolism, identity, and historical retelling in novels like Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* and Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, they have overlooked the potential of

integrating postcolonial ecocriticism with ecospirituality to address past issues and pave the way for a more peaceful existence.

In contrast to previous studies, the current research aims to explore the intersection of postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality to tackle real ecological problems faced by the world today. Rather than solely analyzing tribal symbolism or historical narratives, this study seeks to delve into the deeper ecological implications embedded within the novels. By doing so, it aims to offer a fresh perspective on the texts, highlighting their relevance in addressing contemporary environmental concerns.

While previous researchers have focused on themes like transgenerational trauma or colonial legacies, the current study emphasizes the need to consider the broader ecological context within which these narratives unfold. It recognizes that literature has the potential to not only reflect societal issues but also to offer insights and solutions to pressing ecological challenges. Therefore, the current research endeavors to bridge the gap between literary analysis and environmental advocacy by examining how postcolonial literature can contribute to the discourse on ecological sustainability and spiritual interconnectedness.

In essence, while previous studies have provided valuable insights into the thematic elements of the novels, the present research aims to expand the scope of analysis by integrating postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality. By doing so, it seeks to uncover deeper layers of meaning and relevance within the texts, ultimately contributing to a more holistic understanding of the intricate relationship between literature, ecology, and spirituality.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an introduction and explanation of the theoretical and critical perspectives being used for this study. After the theoretical framework, this chapter also explains the methodology being used for this research.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Since this study is about the havoc of ecological misbalance and degradation of nature at the hand of the colonizers and the way out for the planetary mitigation strategies and for that reason this research explores the retrospective perspective of ecological misbalanced through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism. I intend delve into past, present and future to mitigate the environmental hazards and projects the idea of ecospirituality as the mitigation strategy.

The theoretical nexus of this study revolves around two theoretical concepts Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Ecospirituality. The Theoretical postulates of Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's view on Postcolonial ecocriticism and Vandana Shiva, Omid Safi and Bron Taylor's views on ecospirituality serve as the main theoretical underpinning for this study. For the sake of conciseness, only the most important and prominent theoretical sources will be introduced and discussed in this chapter. The detailed fundamental ideas that form the project's theoretical foundation are listed below.

3.2 Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Postcolonial ecocriticism bridges the concerns of postcolonial studies and ecological critique, recognizing the interconnectedness between imperialism, colonialism, and environmental exploitation. In this theoretical framework, I seek to understand how colonial powers not only ravaged natural resources but also systematically dismantled indigenous ecological knowledge, leaving enduring environmental consequences. Huggan and Tiffin underscore the importance of this critical lens, stating that the task of postcolonial ecocriticism is to investigate how Western ideologies of development

continue to serve the economic and political interests of the global North under the guise of progress “development as little more than a disguised form of colonialism, a vast technocratic apparatus designed primarily to serve the economic and political interest of the West” (Huggan & Tiffin, 27). This insight is integral to my argument that the environmental discourse of today remains deeply rooted in colonial power’s interventions at the name of development in the global south context.

Furthermore, the anthropocentric ideologies inherent in European colonialism played a pivotal role in justifying both the exploitation of natural resources and the subjugation of indigenous populations with it is environment. Huggan and Tiffin argue that European colonialism portrayed indigenous cultures as “primitive” and closer to nature, reinforcing a hierarchical worldview that placed European settlers above both nature and indigenous peoples “European colonialism sees indigenous culture as primitive, less rational, and closer to children, animals, and nature” (5). This perspective, I argue, not only facilitated the exploitation of natural resources but also the devaluation of indigenous knowledge systems, which had long nurtured a harmonious relationship with the environment.

By analyzing the colonial exploitation of both land and people, I assert that the degradation of ecosystems and the marginalization of indigenous communities are inseparable. The environmental devastation wrought by colonizers parallels the cultural and social upheaval experienced by native populations. Huggan and Tiffin observe, “The fate of the more-than-human world and the fate of human beings are inextricably linked” (26), a point that aligns with my argument that environmental and cultural degradation are mutually reinforcing processes. Colonial exploitation not only appropriated foreign lands and resources but also disrupted indigenous ecological balances, which had sustained both the environment and local communities for centuries.

The colonial enterprise did not merely alter physical landscapes; it fundamentally transformed the sociocultural and spiritual fabric of colonized societies. As Huggan and Tiffin illustrate, the arrival of settlers and their practices decimated local ecosystems, bringing irreversible damage to both the land and its people: “The local environment was destroyed by the arrival of settlers who brought harvests, flocks, and herds with them”

(8). Here, I argue that colonialism disrupted not only ecological systems but also the spiritual and cultural ecologies that had been integral to indigenous ways of life. By imposing foreign institutions and systems of knowledge, colonizers eroded the intricate relationships that had long existed between humans and nature in colonized regions.

Central to this study is the ongoing challenge of reconciling the environmental contexts of the global North and global South, a tension that postcolonial ecocriticism seeks to address. The disparities between these viewpoints, shaped by centuries of colonial domination, continue to hinder efforts toward ecological justice. Huggan and Tiffin highlight the complexity of this task, noting that efforts to harmonize these environmental ideologies must grapple with the underlying power imbalances “the interplay of environmental and political/cultural categories is fundamental to postcolonial and eco/environmental studies, necessitating a tracing of social, historical, and material coordinates” (144). This insight is crucial in understanding how the legacies of colonialism continue to shape contemporary environmental discourses and practices, particularly in the global South.

The recognition of these power dynamics reinforces the need for an inclusive approach to environmental restoration, one that incorporates indigenous voices, knowledge, and practices. Postcolonial ecocriticism advocates for the reclamation of these marginalized perspectives, emphasizing the importance of sustainable practices that respect the interconnectedness of all life forms. In this sense, my research aims to contribute to environmental discourse by promoting a more holistic and inclusive understanding of ecological justice, rooted in the knowledge systems and spiritual traditions of the global South.

In light of these discussions, my study extends the scope of postcolonial ecocriticism by proposing ecospirituality as a viable strategy for mitigating the environmental crises that colonialism has exacerbated. Ecospirituality, as championed by scholars like Vandana Shiva and Bron Taylor, offers a path toward healing both the planet and its people by integrating ecological and spiritual wisdom from indigenous traditions. By embracing this approach, I argue that we can begin to address the deep

ecological imbalances left in the wake of colonial exploitation, fostering a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

In crux, my study emphasizes the necessity of a global environmental discourse that not only recognizes the historical origins of ecological degradation but also advocates for restoring balance through inclusive, spiritually grounded approaches. By examining the intersection of postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality, I aim to shed light on pathways toward a more equitable and harmonious relationship between humans and nature, particularly within the South Asian context. Moreover, I contend that any hierarchical distinction between humans and nature is fundamentally flawed; a truly sustainable future demands that we reject notions of superiority and inferiority in our interactions with the natural world.

3.1 Ecospirituality

The theory of ecospirituality forms the cornerstone of the conceptual framework for this research. Ecospirituality, broadly defined, is the belief that nature, earth, and the environment are sacred entities, deserving of respect and care. This belief system transcends geographical and cultural borders, fostering a global paradigm shift towards environmental stewardship and spiritual interconnectivity. As this study focuses on South Asian literature, it is essential to ground the concept of ecospirituality within the region's specific cultural and spiritual context.

Vandana Shiva, a prominent South Asian environmental activist and scholar, provides a profound perspective on the sacredness of the earth, which aligns closely with the concept of ecospirituality explored in this thesis. Although Shiva does not explicitly frame her arguments within the terminology of ecospirituality, her views on the sanctity of the earth “In the ecospiritual worldview, the interconnectedness of all life is a fundamental principle. The sacredness of the earth lies in the realization that every being, every element, is part of a larger, living whole” (Shiva, 2005, p. 47), reflects a deep reverence for the interconnectedness of life and the inherent value of nature. She challenges materialistic and exploitative attitudes toward the environment, advocating for a shift in the way we relate to the planet. Shiva emphasizes that the earth is not merely a resource to be used, but a living entity that sustains all forms of life. This perspective

resonates with the core idea of ecospirituality, where nature is seen as sacred and deserving of respect (Shiva 47).

In her argument, Shiva underscores the fundamental interconnectedness of all life, stating that “the sacredness of the earth lies in the realization that every being, every element, is part of a larger, living whole” (Shiva 47). This holistic view mirrors the ecospiritual understanding that all aspects of the natural world are interconnected and that human well-being is deeply tied to the health of the earth. For this thesis, Shiva’s perspective reinforces the idea that respecting nature as sacred is not only a moral obligation but a necessity for our survival. The argument here is that colonial exploitation disrupted this sacred relationship, treating the earth merely as a resource to be controlled and extracted, rather than as a partner in existence. Shiva’s assertion aligns with the call for a shift from exploitation to partnership with the earth, which is central to both ecospirituality and environmental justice.

Shiva’s work also highlights the link between the sacredness of the earth and justice. She argues that environmental degradation not only harms ecosystems but also severs the spiritual and ethical bond between humans and nature. In her words, “Ecospirituality links environmental justice with spiritual awareness. It involves recognizing that the exploitation of nature affects not just ecosystems but the sacred bond between humans and the earth” (Shiva 115). This is relevant in the context of my study, which explores how the colonization of both land and people disrupted these sacred bonds. Colonizers imposed extractive systems that not only degraded the environment but also eroded the indigenous reverence for nature which used to be a part of beliefs in South Asian countries. By drawing from Shiva’s arguments, I contend that restoring this sacred connection is essential for fostering sustainable practices that are rooted in both ecological balance and spiritual consciousness. The intervention of colonizers disrupted the long-standing eco-spiritual traditions that had defined South Asian societies for centuries. Before colonial exploitation, these societies maintained a profound spiritual connection with the natural world, viewing it as a living entity rather than a resource to be dominated. This deep-rooted ecological consciousness reflects the region’s inherent reverence for nature, which must be revived to cultivate sustainable practices today.

Shiva's emphasis on the sacredness of nature is particularly significant in regions like South Asia, where diverse spiritual traditions have long revered the earth as sacred. Her call for a partnership with the earth reflects the ecospiritual principle that nature must be treated with respect and care, rather than as a commodity. This perspective supports my argument that postcolonial ecocriticism, when combined with ecospirituality, offers a powerful framework for addressing the environmental crises caused by colonial exploitation. By recognizing the earth as a living entity, as Shiva advocates, we can begin to heal the ecological damage left by centuries of colonial extraction and exploitation.

In conclusion, while Vandana Shiva does not explicitly use the term "ecospirituality," her work on the sacredness of the earth aligns deeply with the ecospiritual approach. By advocating for the recognition of the earth as a living, interconnected whole, Shiva calls for a fundamental shift in our relationship with nature, one that prioritizes respect, justice, and spiritual awareness. This perspective is critical to the argument of this study, as it offers a pathway toward healing both the ecological and spiritual wounds inflicted by colonialism, and toward building a future where humans live in harmony with the natural world.

In South Asian ecospirituality, nature is not merely viewed as a collection of resources but as a sacred entity that encompasses both living and non-living beings. This perspective aligns with Bron Taylor's notion of animism, which recognizes the personhood of all entities, whether animate or inanimate. For example, in many indigenous South Asian traditions, mountains, rivers, and trees are revered as living beings with their own consciousness and spiritual significance. The ecospiritual worldview challenges Western anthropocentric perspectives, which often regard non-living elements as inert and separate from human existence. By recognizing the interconnectedness of all elements in the cosmos, this spiritual framework emphasizes that non-living entities such as mountains and rivers possess an inherent life force, making them integral to the ecological balance and deserving of reverence and respect. However, Bron Taylor's concept of animism originates from a Western context, it provides valuable insights that resonate with and can be adapted to the South Asian understanding of ecospirituality. His work offers a framework that complements the region's traditional views on the sacred interconnectedness between humans and nature.

No history and no politics define this idea though it is a universal idea so it is workable here in the south Asian context. Taylor defines animism as the belief that all living things in the world possess souls or spirits, life energies, and consciousness. He argues that recognizing the personhood and intelligence of beings in nature leads to a moral imperative to respect and protect them. As Taylor states, “animism involves a shared perception that beings or entities in nature have their own integrity, ways of being, personhood, and even intelligence” (15). In the South Asian context, this concept can be expanded to include the region’s rich spiritual traditions that already recognize the sacredness of all life forms.

Omid Safi, *Radical Love: Teachings from the Islamic Mystical Tradition*, a contemporary scholar of Islamic mysticism, presents a complementary view of ecospirituality that aligns with the central themes of my study, particularly the spiritual responsibility humans have towards the earth. Safi’s perspective emphasizes that caring for the environment is not merely a moral obligation but a profound spiritual act. He frames the natural world as a reflection of divine beauty, asserting that to care for nature is to honor that beauty daily: “The world around us is a reflection of divine beauty, and to care for it is to honor that beauty in our daily lives” (Safi 202). This perspective resonates deeply with the core of ecospirituality, where humans are called not just to manage or exploit the earth, but to protect it as sacred, recognizing the spiritual significance in every element of creation. In the context of this thesis, Safi’s insights align with the idea that colonial exploitation violated this sacred trust by reducing the environment to a resource for extraction, thereby disrupting the spiritual and ecological harmony that had long existed in indigenous traditions.

Central to Safi’s philosophy is the concept of interconnectedness, a principle that underscores the ecospiritual worldview that all life forms are intrinsically linked. He argues that each part of creation is connected and reflects a divine order, noting, “In every particle of creation, there is a sign pointing us back to the divine, urging us to recognize the interconnectedness of all things” (Safi 178). This holistic view, ecospirituality, rejects any hierarchy of superiority and inferiority between humans and nature, calling for a balanced and equal relationship between all living beings. When applied to the postcolonial context of this research, Safi’s argument challenges the

colonialist mindset, which imposed a hierarchical structure that positioned colonizers as superior to both indigenous peoples and the natural world. The colonial approach to nature, rooted in dominance and control, shattered this sacred interconnectedness. Safi's view reminds us that no part of creation, including humans, should dominate others just as there should not be a hierarchy between colonized and colonizer, there should not be one between humans and nature. Safi's stance directly opposes the colonial framework that justified environmental degradation and exploitation through such hierarchies, highlighting how colonialism disrupted this spiritual and ecological balance.

In addition to interconnectedness, Safi emphasizes the concept of stewardship, which he considers a sacred responsibility entrusted to all humans. He asserts that humans are stewards of the earth, and this stewardship extends to the care of its lands, waters, and skies: "We are stewards of this earth, entrusted with the care of its lands, waters, and skies, and this stewardship is one of our most sacred responsibilities" (Safi 190). In many South Asian traditions, the environment has long been regarded as a sacred trust, one that must be protected and preserved for future generations. This notion of stewardship contrasts sharply with the colonial practices that saw land and natural resources as mere commodities to be exploited for profit. Safi's view of stewardship as sacred resonates with the arguments put forward in my study, where colonial exploitation is framed not only as an economic and political imposition but also as a profound spiritual violation of the relationship between humans and nature. The sacred duty of stewardship that Safi advocates for can be seen as a vital component in reclaiming and restoring the environment after the damage inflicted by colonialism.

Safi's view on the sacredness of nature also calls for a deep reverence for the natural world, emphasizing that nature is not simply a resource to be exploited, but a manifestation of divine essence. He states, "to see the world through the eyes of love is to see the sacredness in every leaf, every river, every mountain, and to act with reverence and care" (Safi 210). This profound respect for the environment encourages actions that protect and preserve the earth, aligning with the principles of ecospirituality that advocate for harmonious living with nature.

Furthermore, Safi concludes that true spiritual practice requires humans to live in harmony with the earth, recognizing that our well-being is deeply tied to the health of the planet, “true spiritual practice calls us to live in harmony with the earth, recognizing that our well-being is inextricably linked with the health of the planet” (Safi 230). This principle of harmony is critical, especially when considering the future of environmental sustainability. Safi’s argument provides a futuristic and restorative approach, where recognizing the interdependence between human well-being and the health of the earth becomes a strategy for addressing the ecological crises left behind by colonialism. His views suggest that only through restoring this balance can we hope to develop sustainable practices that honor both the spiritual and ecological dimensions of life.

In conclusion, Omid Safi’s ecospiritual perspective provides a vital lens for understanding the sacred relationship between humans and the environment. His emphasis on interconnectedness, stewardship, and reverence for nature offers a powerful counter-narrative to the colonial exploitation of both land and people. By framing the environment as a sacred trust and recognizing the spiritual dimension of environmental care, Safi’s insights align with the central arguments of this study. They propose a mitigation strategy for the future, where spiritual values guide sustainable practices, allowing humanity to live in harmony with the earth once again. This approach, rooted in ecospirituality, offers a path forward for healing both the planet and the spiritual wounds inflicted by colonialism.

For instance, Hinduism’s concept of five elements that compose the universe reflects an intrinsic animistic belief system where every part of nature is seen as imbued with spiritual significance. Similarly, the Sufi tradition within Islam, as reflected in Omid Safi’s work, views the natural world as a reflection of divine beauty and interconnectedness.

Thus, in this study, Taylor’s animism is not merely imported but is reinterpreted to fit within the South Asian ecospiritual framework, which inherently respects and venerates nature. By integrating animism into this framework, we can further understand the profound spiritual connections that South Asian cultures have with the natural world,

which are essential for fostering a sustainable and harmonious relationship with the environment.

3.2 Research Methodology

The design of this research is qualitative because I analyze the primary texts subjectively and descriptively. Textual analysis is the research method being employed, as the chosen texts have been carefully studied to be examined in the context of my chosen theoretical framework. Using the chosen theoretical concepts as a guide, I have analyzed certain lines and paragraphs from the selected texts. Textual analysis is all about the text itself and it is the most commonly used research method to analyze literary works. Catherine Belsey explains this method very effectively in her essay *Textual Analysis as a Research Method*. The main theoretical paradigm used for this study is Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Ecospirituality and concepts are grounded within this paradigm in order to analyze the primary texts.

In essence, this discussion of the theoretical framework should reinforce my analysis of the primary texts and further strengthen the foundation of my argument. On the other hand, this study's theoretical approach is inclusive and inductive in nature. My theoretical framework is not the only source of support but also presents a hopeful and optimistic suggestion for the futuristic mitigation of environmental hazards. The selected theoretical views on Postcolonial ecocriticism, ecospirituality and animism have been used as a reading lens.

3.3 Organization of Study

The thesis has a chapter structure similar to the one below.

The first chapter of the thesis introduces the background area of this study and also states the Problem Statement, Research Questions, Research Objective, and Significance of the Study, and Delimitation.

The second chapter comprises of the review of the related literature. This chapter addresses the theorists and their guiding principles with reference to the specified theories and provides a thorough summary of the aforementioned subjects. To support the claim that the subject is not just reflected by these selected writers but also by others, related

literature is also provided and other research works carried out on the selected novels have also been stated to present the research gap.

The third chapter is based on Qualitative Research Methodology. By carefully examining the theories of the selected area, I have selected Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's book *Post-Colonial Ecocriticism*, Bron Taylor's *Book Dark Green Region* and Vandana Shiva's *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*, Omid Safi's book *Radical Love: Teachings from the Islamic Mystical Tradition*, Ecospirituality to see how postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality are manifested in the novel.

The focus of Chapter four is the textual and content analysis of Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* under the theoretical lens of postcolonial ecocriticism and Ecospirituality, the relevant data is extracted and used to support the objectives and questions of the study in the light of the selected the theoretical lens.

The fifth Chapter involves the textual and content analysis of Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* under the theoretical lens of postcolonial ecocriticism and Ecospirituality, the relevant data is extracted and used to support the objectives and questions of the study in the light of the selected theoretical lens.

Chapter Six is about the Conclusion and Recommendations that suggests recommendation for the future research studies.

CHAPTER 4

Ecospirituality and the intersection of Postcolonial Eco-Criticism in *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*

4.1 Introduction

In *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, Uzma Aslam Khan critiques the colonial exploitation of both land and people, portraying the severe environmental and cultural degradation that followed. Set against the backdrop of the Japanese occupation and British colonialism in the Andaman Islands, the novel highlights the suffering of indigenous and marginalized populations due to imperialism and environmental destruction. Khan depicts the colonial powers' reckless use of natural resources, such as the bombing of elephants, which symbolizes the senseless destruction of life and the environment. This act, along with the island bombings, serves as a metaphor for the environmental degradation caused by the colonizers, who prioritized their military and economic interests over the preservation of ecosystems. The health crises among workers, who succumbed to diseases like dysentery and malaria, further reflect the colonizers' disregard for both human life and the environment, as they exploited the land without concern for its long-term sustainability.

In *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, the Andaman Islands are portrayed as more than mere geographical locations; they are imbued with spiritual personhood. For Nomi, the islands themselves are guides and protectors, reflecting a deeper connection to the land that transcends its material form. The novel's portrayal of these islands resonates with the ecospiritual belief that non-living entities, like islands, are living, conscious beings capable of influencing human lives. The islands are not passive elements in the narrative but active participants in the spiritual and ecological dynamics of the story. This perception challenges the colonial perspective, which viewed the land simply as a commodity to be exploited, rather than a living entity that holds the wisdom and power to restore balance to both nature and human communities.

Delving into *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* by Uzma Aslam Khan, I weave together postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality to illustrate how imperial

powers devastate the natural environment. The novel's characters embark on a journey toward peace and spiritual awakening, which I argue serves as a potential mitigation strategy for the political and environmental catastrophes brought about by colonial exploitation. As Vandana Shiva asserts, "To respect nature as sacred is to recognize that the well-being of the earth is inseparable from our own well-being. This respect demands a shift from viewing nature merely as a resource to seeing it as a partner in our existence" (Shiva 65). The narrative emphasizes that healing both the environment and human communities cannot arise from conflict but must be rooted in a deep spiritual reverence for nature.

This chapter analyzes the novel from two theoretical lenses. First, I examine how colonizers exploited the land, affecting both the environment and the colonized people. In this regard, I approach the novel through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism. The second lens I apply is ecospirituality, which I argue serves as a bridge and a potential remedy for environmental degradation caused by colonization. As Mukherjee rightly points out, colonizers are "intruders to the land who threaten the symbiotic network of the entire human and non-human fields of existence" (19). European imperial powers, driven by anthropocentric ideologies, exploited nature to expand their empires. Crosby emphasizes this point, explaining that European imperialism "plowed fields, razed forests, evergreen pastures, and burned prairies" with little regard for ecological balance (Crosby 42). These exploitative practices, justified by a claim of "development," transformed colonized landscapes according to the colonizers' needs, with severe consequences for biodiversity and sustainability. As Huggan and Tiffin note, development in colonial contexts was often "a disguised form of colonialism...designed primarily to serve the economic and political interest of the West" (27). These human interferences have significant effects on ecosystem, biodiversity, and overall sustainability of the environment without taking into account the long-term effects on nearby ecosystem.

As I explore in this chapter, the colonizers did not only disrupt societal structures but also imposed significant ecological harm as depicted in the narrative of the novel. I align with postcolonial ecocriticism in demonstrating how deforestation, agriculture, and military occupation upset the natural equilibrium of the colonized land, resulting in

irreversible damage to local ecosystems. Through the novel's characters, setting, and narratives, I argue that Khan presents a profound connection between colonial history and environmental degradation. For example, the bombing of the islands and the exploitation of prisoners serve as metaphors for the destruction of nature. In one instance, elephants are bombed, which symbolizes the senseless destruction of life: "Elephants cried out when the Japanese bombed it, but might it have been a finger pressed tightly to his lips?" (Khan 6). This quote highlights the universal violence of colonization, whether carried out by Europeans or Asians. The anthropocentric attitudes of the colonizers are clear; they destroy everything in their path, including the natural world, to achieve their goals. As Huggan and Tiffin state, European colonialism views indigenous cultures as "primitive, less rational, and closer to children, animals, and nature" (Huggan & Tiffin 5). Their objectives and goals for colonizing a country are nearly identical. They destroy anything that stands in their way and blow everything apart in the passage above. Their cries could be heard over sirens at a great distance, and they are blowing elephants with bombs. According to reports, they were also firing and bombing the water, upsetting the natural equilibrium. The text reflects the wounded heart of the islands by the anthropocentric ideologies of the colonizers is clear; they destroy everything in their path, including the natural world, to achieve their goals. The instances of colonial exploitation, highlights the significance of preserving the horrific history of the islands e.g the lives of Nomi, Zee, Shakuntala, and Aye, the picture of prisoners by opening their jaws with iron and thrusting pipes into their throats, mining, killing of inanimate, clearing of forests and silencing the voices in forest, and bombing illustrate the senseless misery caused by war and its repercussions on the environment where inanimate were killed which brings imbalance in nature.

Moreover, I explore how the novel presents military occupation as a metaphor for environmental destruction. The soldiers' presence and their careless actions, such as urinating in the bushes, reflect a broader disregard for the land. This act represents the colonizers' attitude toward the environment, treating it as something to be used and discarded, without any regard for its ecological or cultural significance "the sprinkles brushed her arms, a soldier was urinating in the bashes...this was their toilet" (Khan 9). This scene symbolizes how colonization normalized exploitation, not only of people but

also of the land, showing that the environment is an essential but often overlooked casualty of imperialism. Huggan and Tiffin's work supports this view, as they argue that "postcolonial studies understand environmental issues not only as central to European conquest but also inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism" (2). Their sole goal was to enrich themselves, so they blasted the island, slaughtered the prisoners, stole hens, and established enterprises using the natural resources.

Then the text mentions another instance of bombing "There were bombers everywhere even in the sky and battleships were in the sea" (Khan 1). Here the existence of bombers and strikers on an island represent the military occupation and their destruction to the natural resources as their strikes could kill the inhuman. Usually Islands frequently stand for remote, unsafe areas but the Andamnds Islands were rich of natural resources. Here the bombers and attacks on an island represent the military takeover of the islands by a colonizing force. Because of their riches, seclusion, and perceived strategic significance, islands have historically served as important landing sites for colonization. These strikes have huge impacts on the environmental. The immediate environmental destruction brought on by wartime is emphasized by the bombing and strikes on the island. Thus, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin explore how such acts influence biodiversity, ecosystems, and the means of subsistence for local communities while upsetting the delicate ecological balance on the island the local environment was destroyed by the arrival of settlers who brought harvests, flocks, and herds with them. In contrast, the human, animal, and plant specimens brought to Europe from these new lands were few and frequently lifeless in form (8).

The novel also illustrates the health consequences of colonial environmental exploitation. The laborers who die of dysentery, malaria, and scurvy reflect how colonial regimes exploited both human and non-human life. As Khan writes, "Workers began to die of dysentery, malaria, and scurvy" (Khan 54). This example aligns with my argument that colonial powers disregarded the well-being of the local population in favor of economic gain, leading to environmental degradation and public health crises. Huggan and Tiffin emphasize that "colonialism's environmental damage led to this discrepancy in health outcomes" and often disproportionately affected marginalized populations (196).

I argue that Khan's novel also critiques what Alfred W. Crosby refers to as biological imperialism (5), the manipulation of indigenous populations' biology and culture. The colonizers, both Western and Japanese, imposed their cultural and biological values on the islanders, resulting in profound cultural and ecological displacement. For example, Shakuntala's marriage to a British commissioner reflects the complex intersections of culture, biology, and imperialism: "Shakuntala went to Andaman Island as the wife of an Englishman" (Khan 194). Language, a key element of culture, is also manipulated by the colonizers, as seen when the British impose English and the Japanese impose their language on the locals "they were asked to say repeated Genki Desu. Ogenkudesuka?" (Khan 22).

In *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, Uzma Aslam Khan not only critiques the environmental devastation caused by colonizers but also highlights the cultural erasure that accompanies it. Khan's depiction of Andaman Island's history reveals the entangled relationship between environmental exploitation and cultural disintegration, where ecological imperialism depletes both natural and human resources. The colonizers' insatiable appetite for control over land, resources, and people is shown to have far-reaching consequences, extending beyond just physical domination it erodes cultural foundations, disrupts indigenous ways of life, and creates an irreversible loss of identity. As Huggan and Tiffin describe, "the exchange of materials and ideas between Old and New Worlds, highlighting the environmental impacts of European imperialism" (Huggan & Tiffin 5), this exchange is not just material but also ideological, where colonizers impose their worldview and exploit both the environment and cultural systems for profit and power. In this context, the struggles of Zee and Nomi to preserve their cultural identity amidst the chaos of colonization become symbolic of the broader consequences of imperial domination. The exploitation of nature and the subjugation of indigenous cultures are depicted as two sides of the same coin. Khan's critique, then, centers on the idea that the destruction of ecosystems is inseparable from the dismantling of cultural heritage a perspective essential for understanding the novel's critique of ecological imperialism and its enduring effects on both the environment and indigenous communities.

Further, it encompasses colonialism, environmental deterioration, power struggles, cross-cultural conflicts, and themes of displacement, which discuss the uprooting of indigenous people because of ecological changes brought about by outside influences. These armies set off on a journey of exploration and conquest. They carried ammunition, plants, animals, and microorganisms with them as they ventured into unknown territory. The Columbian exchange, or exchange of plants and animals, was one of the most significant effects of ecological imperialism. While leaving the native area abandoned, the colonists unintentionally brought species like wheat, sugar, and animals to their territories.

Hence, it is proved that whether the colonizers are Westerners or Asians, they brought destruction to the colonized land on the name of development as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin rightly mentioned “Development as little more than neocolonialism's covert form, a massive technical infrastructure created mostly to further the political and economic interests of the West” (Huggan & Tiffin 27). So, the Japanese also became like the Westerns by destroying the lands for their vested interest which clarifies the concept that the colonizers destroyed everything which create a hindrance in their way.

In conclusion, Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* vividly illustrates the devastating impacts of both Western and Asian colonialism on the environment and indigenous people. Whether under European or Japanese rule, the colonizers disrupted the balance of nature and society, leading to widespread exploitation. One of the most poignant examples of this is seen in the treatment of Prisoner 218 (D), whose brutal interrogation and torture reflect the colonizers' dehumanization of the island's inhabitants. The forced labor and physical abuse endured by prisoners highlight the disregard for human life, which parallels the environmental degradation carried out by the imperial powers. The bombing on elephants and the desecration of sacred spaces, such as the island's forests, further emphasize the violence inflicted on both the natural world and indigenous cultures. Khan's portrayal of these atrocities demonstrates how colonialism disrupted the symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment, severing the spiritual and ecological connections that had long existed. As Huggan and Tiffin rightly note, “Development is little more than neocolonialism's covert form, a

massive technical infrastructure created to further the political and economic interests of the West” (27). Through the lenses of postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality, *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* calls for a reconnection with nature, respect for indigenous cultures, and an end to the exploitative practices that continue to harm both the environment and humanity.

4.2 Ecospirituality

In *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, the quest for self-discovery is intricately tied to ecospirituality, where the spiritual and ecological realms merge. The novel fuses postcolonial experiences with ecospirituality, highlighting the deep effects of history on both humanity and the environment. Nomi Ali, along with characters like Zee, Aye, and Shakuntala, exemplifies a reverence for nature that contrasts sharply with the destructive practices of the colonizers. As I explore in my theoretical framework, this respect for nature represents an alternative vision of ecological harmony that transcends colonial exploitation, as Vandana Shiva emphasizes the sacred interconnectedness of all life.

Nomi Ali’s journey is one of awakening an ecospiritual transformation in which she reconnects with nature and, in doing so, reclaims her identity. Initially disconnected, she grows to see the natural world as a source of healing, aligning with Omid Safi’s ecospiritual philosophy. Nomi’s perception of nature is profound:

Nomi could hear rhythmic rumbling all around her if she closed her eyes and paid close attention. The islands had life. The world sounded like it was singing. She had never seen a white beach or pleasant surf, yet the sea was full of greenery and white sand beaches (Khan 6).

This connection illustrates Safi’s belief that “the world around us is a reflection of divine beauty” (Safi 202), and caring for it is a sacred responsibility. Nomi’s newfound appreciation of nature echoes the need to preserve its sacredness, as I argue in my study, emphasizing that her character counters modern disconnection by forming a spiritual bond with the environment. In this context, Nomi’s sensory experiences reflect her deepening connection to the land. The sounds of the islands and the imagery of “prayerful palm trees” (Khan 6) symbolize her desire to embrace the gentler aspects of

the universe, a yearning for peace and harmony that aligns with Shiva's ecospiritual framework. Shiva argues that respecting nature as sacred is a recognition that "the well-being of the earth is inseparable from our own" (65), which is evident in Nomi's growing sense of environmental stewardship. Her character becomes a critique of modernity's neglect of nature for material gain, an issue central to both postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality.

Nomi's interactions with the natural world are also a reflection of animistic beliefs, where the elements of nature such as the islands are seen as living, breathing entities. Her ability to feel the islands' vitality, and her perception of the world "singing," highlight her spiritual resonance with the cosmos, echoing Safi's idea that "in every particle of creation there is a sign pointing us back to the divine" (178). This ecospiritual viewpoint challenges the legacy of colonial exploitation, urging a shift towards recognizing the inherent life in nature and fostering a sense of reverence for it.

As I explore in the introduction, overcoming the colonial legacy requires embracing indigenous wisdom and sustainable practices, which Nomi exemplifies. Her journey of reconnection with nature represents the path forward an understanding that environmental stewardship is intertwined with spiritual fulfillment. The quote, "Nomi gestured down to the clearest of sands, where prayerful palm trees prayed" (Khan 6), underscores the sacredness of nature, reinforcing my argument that postcolonial narratives can inspire a return to ecospiritual values in addressing ecological crises. Nomi's growing bond with the islands becomes a metaphor for the broader healing needed between humanity and the planet.

Moreover, Nomi's experience with nature aligns with Shiva's criticism of modernity's focus on material gains at the expense of spiritual and environmental balance. Shiva contends that the modern world overlooks the spiritual aspect of nature, leading to environmental degradation. Nomi's character serves as a counter-narrative to this disconnect, embodying a holistic view of the world where the interconnectedness of all life forms is recognized and honored. Her deep connection to the islands, symbolized by the quote, "But Nomi felt that the islands were mushy this afternoon. All the delicate corners of the globe, she wanted to pull them to her" (Khan 6), reflects her inner need for

peace and unity with nature, a sentiment that resonates with Safi's belief that "we are stewards of this earth" (190).

The novel also portrays nature as a spiritual guide, a mentor that leads Nomi toward her true purpose. The animistic belief in the life of nature is reflected in Nomi's capacity to hear the islands breathing, further supporting the idea of an interconnected cosmos. Her ability to perceive these spiritual cues is consistent with animistic notions of communication between humans and the natural world, a perspective that my theoretical framework highlights as essential for healing the wounds of colonialism.

In conclusion, *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* presents ecospirituality as a powerful alternative to the legacies of colonial exploitation. Nomi's journey reflects the spiritual awakening that both Safi and Shiva advocate, where human beings must recognize their role as caretakers of the earth. Her bond with nature serves as a reminder of the sacred responsibility we have to protect and honor the environment. This aligns with the research questions in my thesis, where I explore how postcolonial narratives like this one offer alternative perspectives on environmental degradation and promote a deeper understanding of spiritual interconnectedness as a path to ecological sustainability. Through Nomi's character, the novel critiques modern disconnection from nature and provides a blueprint for the ecospiritual future I envision one where the health of the planet and human spiritual fulfillment are inseparable.

The exploration of ecospirituality in *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* extends beyond the character of Nomi. Other characters, such as Aye, embody ecospiritual principles through their actions and spiritual beliefs, aligning with the interdependence of all living things. Aye's way of life reflects a deep respect for nature, and his spiritual connection to the environment is evident in his choices to live sustainably and engage in eco-friendly activities. For him, ecospirituality is more than a belief system; it is a way of life that balances spiritual growth with environmental stewardship. Further, his connection to nature is illustrated when he spends time in the wilderness, deliberately isolating himself from the chaos of human conflict. In one instance, he helps Zee by guiding him through the dense forests, using his intimate knowledge of the land. This act not only demonstrates his survival skills but also his

belief in the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. Aye's respect for nature is not simply pragmatic; it is deeply spiritual, and he treats the environment as a living entity that provides guidance, protection, and sustenance. His connection to nature is emphasized in this quote "If it rained, he could shelter in the arms of the padauk trees, and if he grew thirsty, there was a small creek with sweet water" (Khan 116), which highlights his profound connection to the land. For Aye, the natural world is a source of comfort and spiritual nourishment, underscoring his status as an ecospiritual character. His actions invite readers to recognize how living in harmony with the environment reflects a deeper spiritual journey, emphasizing that true ecological stewardship is inseparable from personal and communal growth.

In this instance, Aye's interaction with nature reflects animistic beliefs, which recognize that natural elements, like trees and streams, possess life forces or spiritual energies. His relationship with the padauk trees and the creek is not merely functional but spiritual, symbolizing a reciprocal relationship between humans and nature. This aligns with Omid Safi's ecospirituality, which emphasizes that "the world around us is a reflection of divine beauty" (Safi 202), and caring for it is an essential spiritual responsibility. Aye's deep respect for nature mirrors the postcolonial ecocritical framework, which critiques the modern world's tendency to view nature as a resource for exploitation rather than as a living, spiritual entity. Aye's journey is further reflected in the passage: "For the first time since the war began, the island had spoken to him again. It had shown him his father as he had never seen him before" (Khan 29). His belief that the island communicates with him is deeply animistic, suggesting that nature is sentient and capable of providing spiritual insights. This connection is a key element of animism, which views all living beings as part of a larger spiritual ecosystem. As Bron Taylor suggests, animistic spirituality involves "recognizing the world as filled with life forces that speak to us if we listen" (Taylor 6). Aye's revelation about his father connects to the animistic idea of ancestor spirits, where the natural world serves as a medium through which individuals maintain relationships with their ancestors. This resonates with my theoretical framework, which emphasizes the importance of spiritual relationships with nature and ancestors as part of an interconnected ecological and spiritual whole.

The themes of ecospirituality are further explored through other characters, like Haider Ali and his wife, who embark on a journey to reconnect with the island's traditional customs. The quote, "Let's go up the mountain" (Khan 1), symbolizes their desire to seek spiritual fulfillment in nature, reflecting the ecospiritual belief in the innate unity of all beings, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. Their journey represents the human search for meaning and a deeper connection to the divine, which mirrors the God-Human-Earth concept in sacred cosmology. As they face existential challenges, their experiences reflect the tension between materialism and spiritual fulfillment a theme central to both postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality. In addition, this tension is also evident in Dr. Sing's reflection: "Let's enjoy our freedom on this rock, which is unrestricted by caste or creed" (Khan 34). His sentiment, supported by characters of different religious backgrounds, embodies the ecospiritual call for unity and harmony, transcending societal divisions. This idea aligns with sacred cosmology, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual realms. Dr. Sing's appeal for unity, despite differences in caste or creed, represents a step toward restoring the sacred balance between humans and the environment, a theme central to my theoretical analysis.

The minor characters in the novel also embody ecospirituality, quietly caring for the delicate ecosystems around them. Their subtle actions serve as reminders of the sacredness of nature. The quote, "The wind seemed to be calling this man by a strange name, Aoi! aoi!" (Khan 142), underscores the mystical connection between the character and the elements, particularly the wind. The repeated name suggests a deeper resonance between the character and nature, emphasizing the ecospiritual theme that all living beings are interconnected. This reflects the animistic belief in the spiritual consciousness of natural elements, which is a recurring theme in the novel.

The novel also critiques the modern, materialistic worldview, as seen in the portrayal of the imperial forces that disrupt the islanders' spiritual connection to the land. The opening line, "The soldiers arrived... when the sea was upswollen" (Khan 1), symbolizes the spiritual crisis of the modern world, where nature is exploited rather than revered. The upswollen sea, representing spirituality and consciousness, is a metaphor for the loss of spiritual balance in the face of colonial exploitation. This aligns with Safi's

critique of modern education, which prioritizes scientific and material gains over spiritual understanding, leading to environmental degradation.

The novel further explores the ecological and spiritual crisis through the characters' struggles to maintain their connection to nature amidst the pressures of colonialism. Shakuntala, Nomi, Sumsua, and Dr. Sing represent the conflict between indigenous spiritual beliefs and the modern, materialistic world. Their personal struggles to balance societal expectations with their spiritual aspirations mirror the broader spiritual crisis facing humanity. As Safi argues, "There is no room for spirituality in the secular perspective of nature that dominates the modern worldview" (205), a sentiment echoed in the novel's depiction of the islanders' loss of spiritual connectedness to their environment.

The narrative of Prophet Muhammad and the spider, narrated by Zee mother, "the prophet Muhammad looked [at the] spider... a spider began... her web across the cave's entrance" (Khan 26), further reinforces the ecospiritual theme of interdependence between humans and nature. The spider's role in protecting the Prophet symbolizes the sacredness of all creatures and their role in maintaining balance within the ecosystem. This aligns with the sacred cosmology and deep ecology concepts, which emphasize the interconnectedness of all life and the responsibility of humans to maintain ecological balance. In addition, this also links that how Muslims are spiritually linked to the nature and their religious beliefs are resonate to it.

In conclusion, the novel delves deeply into ecospirituality, exploring the interconnectedness between spirituality, the natural world, and human existence. Through characters like Aye, Haider Ali, Dr. Sing, and others, the novel emphasizes the sacredness of nature and the need to restore spiritual and ecological balance. This aligns with my theoretical framework, where ecospirituality offers a pathway to healing the wounds of colonialism and restoring harmony between humans and the earth. The novel ultimately calls for a resurgence of ecospirituality as a way to address the spiritual and ecological crises of the modern world, promoting a holistic view of life that honors the sacred connection between God, humans, and the environment.

CHAPTER 5

Ecospirituality and the intersection of Postcolonial Eco-Criticism in *The Black Hill*

5.1 Introduction

Ecospirituality emphasizes the deep connection between spiritual well-being and the health of the environment is proposing that the two are inextricably linked. This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of *The Black Hill*, where the characters' relationships with their surroundings highlight the importance of ecological balance. Living in harmony with nature is not just an ecological necessity but a spiritual practice that calls for an awareness of how human actions influence the world around us. Vandana Shiva aptly captures this sentiment, stating, "Living in harmony with nature is a spiritual practice. It requires understanding that our actions impact the sacred equilibrium of the earth and striving to live in ways that honor this sacredness" (Shiva 171). In the novel, this idea is reflected in the way the characters navigate the complex interplay of colonial exploitation and the preservation of their natural environment, demonstrating that true spiritual fulfillment is found in maintaining and respecting the delicate balance of the earth.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this chapter also follows two steps i.e. in the first step, I extract from the text that how the colonizers colonized land of the indigenous people and their treatment to the colonizers while I aim to examine this step of the text through the theoretical framework of Postcolonial ecocriticism. In the second step, I utilize ecospirituality as a mitigation strategy to address environmental turbulence and catastrophes, framing it as an essential component of ecological resilience.

Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* presents a profound exploration of the ecological and cultural impacts of colonialism in Arunachal Pradesh, emphasizing the connection between spiritual beliefs and environmental stewardship. The narrative centers on the historical events surrounding French missionaries and their interactions with indigenous tribes, highlighting the spiritual significance of the land and the deep-rooted reverence for nature within the local culture. Through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism, Dai

critiques the authorities' exploitation of natural resources and the adverse effects of colonial policies that have led to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and the erosion of indigenous knowledge.

In *The Black Hill*, Mamang Dai intricately weaves the notion of personhood into the portrayal of nature, particularly through the Mishmi tribe's relationship with the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh. These mountains are not merely physical formations but sacred, living entities that embody spiritual significance. The Mishmi people's reverence for these mountains underscores their belief that non-living entities possess a spiritual essence that humans must honor. The colonial mindset, which regarded these mountains as mere land to be conquered and exploited, stands in stark contrast to the indigenous perspective that views nature both living and non-living as an interconnected, sentient being. Through this lens, the novel presents the ecological destruction caused by colonial forces as not only an environmental tragedy but also a spiritual violation of the sacred personhood of the land.

One significant incident in the novel is the destruction of forests for agricultural expansion and logging, which serves as a metaphor for the larger colonial narrative that prioritizes economic gain over ecological integrity. The logging activities not only displace wildlife but also disrupt the spiritual connection that the local communities have with their land. The encroachment of modern development threatens the traditional practices of the tribes, who view nature as sacred and integral to their identity. Dai illustrates how colonial and postcolonial authorities impose an extractive mindset that disregards the ecological balance, leading to a loss of harmony between humans and the environment.

In contrast to this exploitation, Dai employs an ecospiritual perspective to advocate for healing and restoration. The narrative emphasizes the importance of reconnecting with the land and restoring the sacredness of nature through spiritual practices. Characters in the novel often engage in rituals and traditions that honor the earth, illustrating the belief that spiritual growth and ecological health are intertwined. By depicting the natural world as a living entity deserving of respect and care, Dai calls for a holistic understanding of ecological stewardship that embraces both environmental and

spiritual dimensions. Through this ecospiritual lens, *The Black Hill* not only critiques the historical injustices wrought by colonial powers but also offers a vision of healing and resilience rooted in indigenous wisdom and reverence for the earth.

In my analysis, *The Black Hill* intricately weaves narratives that observe the devastating impact of colonizers on the environment, portraying them as agents of degradation. The colonizers engage in deforestation, strip mining, and other destructive activities, seeing the land as nothing more than a resource for economic and political gain. This reckless exploitation leads to the loss of biodiversity, the erosion of landscapes, and the disruption of delicate ecosystems. The novel poignantly captures these consequences, particularly when it says, “Since the British had taken over Assam, these foreigners had unsettled the hills there by infiltrating farther and deeper and bringing presents of opium, salt, iron, and tobacco” (Dai 7). This echoes Huggan and Tiffin’s concept of “Ecological Imperialism,” where the imperial powers destabilize natural equilibriums to serve their own interests.

The British colonizers, in particular, adopted a paternalistic approach, claiming to “civilize” the indigenous population. However, as I see it, this was simply a guise to justify their exploitative activities. As Huggan and Tiffin argue, “the very ideology of colonization is thus one where anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism are inseparable, and also depict that European colonialism sees indigenous culture as “primitive”, less rational, and closer to children, animals and nature” (Huggan and Tiffin 37). European colonialism was driven by anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism, where they saw indigenous cultures as “primitive” and in need of European intervention. This justification allowed the colonizers to wreak havoc on both the environment and the local people. The novel highlights this with the portrayal of Captain Hamilton Vetch, whose sole purpose is to protect British interests, not the well-being of the indigenous population or their land: “He was tasked with monitoring the agitated tribes living in the hills and defending British interests” (Dai 7). This line illustrates how colonial administrators were more concerned with maintaining control and benefiting from the land’s resources than with any moral or civilizing mission.

It is essential to remember that colonial expansion did not happen overnight. As I explore the novel, it is clear that the colonizers employed various strategies over time, including making alliances, using force, or adopting technical tactics to maintain control. Their ultimate goal was to safeguard their interests, even at the expense of the local population and environment. The text emphasizes this when it states, “History had shown to them that, despite their friendliness, the British ultimately brought death and disaster to the land they captured” (Dai 31). This quote is crucial because it captures the slow but devastating realization by the indigenous people that the British presence, despite initial friendliness, led to widespread destruction. The “death and disaster” referred to here is not only the loss of lives but also the environmental degradation and cultural devastation brought about by British colonization.

This historical awareness among the indigenous people forms the backbone of their resistance. As I analyze Dai’s narrative, I see how the resentment toward colonial rule, cultural suppression, economic exploitation, and loss of identity fuel this resistance. The desire for autonomy and cultural preservation becomes central to the indigenous fight against colonization. The text reflects this dynamic by portraying the complex relationship between the colonizers and the colonized, as well as the disastrous impact of British policies on the land. The native people understood the long-term effects of colonial intervention, especially how it disrupted their natural environment and traditional ways of life.

From a postcolonial eco-critical perspective, *The Black Hill* illuminates the intersection of colonialism, environmental degradation, and indigenous displacement. In my reading, Dai’s work masterfully explores how colonial powers exploited natural resources without regard for the ecological or cultural consequences. The colonizers’ expansion into the region upset the balance between people and nature, leading to a catastrophic situation. As the novel describes, “The white men were traveling far and wide in their territory to seize that” (Dai 6), highlighting the relentless nature of colonial conquest. This quote encapsulates the pervasive effects of colonial expansion on both the environment and indigenous communities. It demonstrates how colonizers’ hunger for control extended deep into the land, altering ecosystems and cultural practices alike.

The colonizers' manipulation of the land is further emphasized through their materialistic mindset, which they passed on to the indigenous people. This shift is starkly depicted when the novel explores the changing attitudes toward land ownership,

What is the definition of land? People discussed land as a possession. They declared, 'My land extends from this stream to the edge of the jungle and up to that hill with white rocks.' Every inch of land was taken. The large tree, the lofty mountains, the river tumbling through chasms, the sharp rocks, and sheer cliffs waterways shifted their direction and dried up. Men killed each other in fights. Blood gushed (Dai 54).

This shift in perspective from seeing the land as a shared resource to viewing it as a possession directly leads to environmental destruction and societal conflict. The drying up of waterways symbolizes the broader ecological damage caused by the colonizers' greed and the introduction of materialistic values, disrupting the indigenous people's traditional relationship with the land. In addition, the novel also reflects how British colonization brought war and captivity to the indigenous lands, leaving a legacy of environmental and social ruin. The text sums up the effects of British colonialism by stating, "The British brought war and captivity to the land" (Dai 81). This captures the double-edged sword of colonialism, where violence and subjugation were used not only to control people but also to exploit the environment. I argue that this aligns perfectly with Huggan and Tiffin's view that postcolonial studies have come to understand environmental issues as central to the colonial project, driven by ideologies of imperialism and racism. The colonizers, in their pursuit of global domination, disregarded the ecosystems they invaded, leading to long-lasting damage (2).

Furthermore, as I analyze the portrayal of the British forces in Assam, it becomes evident that their presence failed to leave any positive, lasting impact on the land or its people. The novel poignantly observes, "The European who had entered the country had left no established mark in that kingdom" (Dai 30). This line underscores the superficial and exploitative nature of European colonialism, where the focus was on extraction and short-term gains rather than sustainable development. The British colonizers may have claimed to bring progress, but their legacy was one of environmental and cultural ruin.

To conclude, I argue that *The Black Hill* provides a nuanced exploration of the relationships between colonialism, environmental degradation, and indigenous displacement. By adopting a postcolonial eco-critical lens, I argue that the novel captures the destructive effects of ecological imperialism, where colonial powers manipulated natural resources for their own gain, leaving the environment and indigenous cultures in a state of devastation. Through its portrayal of characters like Captain Hamilton Vetch and its reflection on historical narratives of colonization, the novel illustrates how British expansion led to both environmental collapse and cultural disintegration.

5.2 Ecospirituality

In my research, the vision for an ecospiritual future, as illustrated in *The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai necessitates a profound transformation in human consciousness that transcends colonial legacies, advocating for peaceful coexistence with the environment and one another. This transformation is rooted in principles of sustainability and interdependence, moving away from exploitative mindsets that have historically dominated human-environment interactions. The text that I explore presents worldviews that emphasize ecological balance and the vitality of the natural world, highlighting the need for a global movement that honors nature and nurtures spiritual connections across cultural and national boundaries.

Dai's narrative emphasizes the spiritual significance of the natural landscape, calling for a reconnection with the earth as a means of healing the wounds inflicted by colonial exploitation. By framing ecospiritual principles within the context of this narrative, I argue that adopting such perspectives is essential not only for restoration and recovery but also for fostering resilience in the face of contemporary ecological crises. My study posits that ecospirituality serves as a vital tool for promoting world peace and ecological harmony, aligning with the postcolonial lens that critically examines the historical exploitation and its ongoing impacts on both people and the environment. In doing so, this text advocates for a holistic understanding of healing one that recognizes the intrinsic link between spiritual and ecological well-being in creating a sustainable future.

In line with my research questions, I explore how *The Black Hill* through characters such as Kajinsha, Gimur, and Father Nicola Krick, provides alternative perspectives on environmental degradation and sustainable development. These characters serve as portals for this ecospiritual outlook, presenting glimpses of a society that deeply values spiritual principles and the integrity of the earth. This exploration directly responds to my inquiry into how postcolonial narratives can inspire new human-nature relationships and contribute to sustainable practices.

The hill motif, recurring throughout the text, symbolizes my framework's argument that ecological balance and spiritual reverence are central to sustainability. The hill, as portrayed in the novel, becomes a microcosm of made-up ecology, where material objects transcend into something ethereal, highlighting the shift toward an ecospiritual future. For instance, the character Gimur's journey, starting and ending on the hill, demonstrates her transformation into an ecospiritual being who finds unity with the tribes and nature. Similarly, Kajinsha's deep connection to the cosmic dance of the universe reflects the overarching theme of spiritual harmony with the earth, which I argue is essential for healing the environmental scars of colonialism.

In my theoretical framework, I draw on Vandana Shiva's ecospirituality, which emphasizes the sacredness of nature and the interconnectedness of all life. Kajinsha's relationship with the moon in *The Black Hill* encapsulates this idea, as she seeks to merge her being with the cosmic forces that surround her. Shiva argues that "the whole universe is interrelated," and Kajinsha's dialogue with the moon, requesting it to enter her body, symbolizes her spiritual awakening and alignment with the universe's rhythms. This aligns with Shiva's belief that true ecological restoration requires a deep spiritual understanding of nature. Through Kajinsha, I illustrate how postcolonial narratives challenge dominant paradigms by advocating for a spiritual consciousness that promotes harmony with nature.

This idea resonates with my argument that ecospirituality not only provides a critique of colonial exploitation but also offers a way forward. Kajinsha's transformation throughout the novel emphasizes that achieving a sustainable future requires an ecospiritual perspective. As Shiva asserts, "to respect nature as sacred is to recognize that

the well-being of the earth is inseparable from our own well-being” (Shiva 65). The shift from exploiting nature as a resource to viewing it as a partner is central to my thesis, where I argue that the restoration of the spiritual bond between humans and nature is key to fostering ecological resilience and sustainability.

Additionally, Kajinsha’s ecospiritual healing is evident in the novel’s closing pages, where she reconnects with the land and the skies, embodying an interconnected worldview that transcends human-nature dualities. Her statement, “I am the earth, and Kajinsha is the sky” (Dai 289), mirrors the mythological accounts of the earth and Sky found in various South Asian traditions. In my analysis, these myths reflect a worldview where all living beings are part of a cosmic dance, a concept deeply embedded in my theoretical approach. By linking these mythological elements to the narrative, I underscore how this text uses spiritual frameworks to propose sustainable ways of living that align with my research’s goals.

Through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism, I explore how *The Black Hill* engages with the legacies of colonialism that continue to affect both cultural identities and ecological health. Kajinsha’s reflections on the moon, the wind, and the hill in *The Black Hill* demonstrate the characters’ spiritual ties with their environment, which ultimately leads to their spiritual awakening. This moment of reflection, where she listens to the wind rustling the ancient jackfruit tree’s leaves, serves as a metaphor for the kind of mindfulness and spiritual consciousness I advocate in my theoretical framework. Kajinsha’s awakening reflects the interconnectedness of all life forms, a central tenet of Vandana Shiva’s ecospiritual philosophy.

Kajinsha emerges as an ecospiritual character whose journey aligns with my argument that postcolonial narratives offer solutions for the environmental crises caused by colonialism. Through reflective moments in the narrative, Kajinsha symbolizes the ecospiritual path to sustainability, where humans are seen as integral parts of the natural world. This spiritual expansion is what I emphasize as the necessary shift in consciousness needed to restore ecological balance. By reconnecting with the spiritual essence of the land, Kajinsha embodies the future I envision one where ecological stewardship and spiritual awakening lead to a peaceful and sustainable coexistence.

Gimur's deep spiritual connection to the land, as previously discussed, directly correlates to the exploration of how the novels address the intersections of indigenous spiritual beliefs and environmental consciousness. His relationship with nature is more than symbolic; it exemplifies how indigenous spirituality and environmental stewardship are inextricably linked. This resonates with Vandana Shiva's ecospiritual framework, which emphasizes that all life is interconnected. Shiva asserts that "the sacredness of the earth lies in the realization that every being, every element, is part of a larger, living whole." Gimur's understanding of the land as a spiritual space aligns with this view. His actions, reflective moments, and respect for nature serve as a model of the ecospirituality that Shiva advocates, where human existence is deeply tied to the well-being of the earth.

In the context of postcolonial ecocriticism, Gimur's portrayal challenges the colonial narratives that often-reduced indigenous knowledge and spirituality to the background. As outlined in the introduction, I argue that colonial exploitation disrupted the spiritual harmony between humans and the natural world. Gimur's character reclaims this connection, showing how indigenous perspectives can offer pathways for healing and ecological restoration, which is a central theme in my thesis. His role as an ecospiritual character echoes my research objective to uncover how these postcolonial narratives can foster environmental consciousness.

The Priest, Father Nicola Krick, further embodies this intersection of spirituality and environmental stewardship, illustrating how the novels present alternative perspectives on environmental degradation and sustainable development. His non-violent approach to the land and its people is a stark contrast to colonial forces that exploited both for profit and control. His plea, "please. I have no soldiers or weapons with me. I'm by myself" (Dai 32), is not just a rejection of violence but an affirmation of peaceful coexistence with the natural world, which supports Shiva's concept of ecospirituality. The Priest's mission, as I argue, is aligned with the vision of a future where ecological sustainability and spiritual reverence are the cornerstones of human interaction with the environment.

This directly connects to my theoretical framework, particularly in terms of postcolonial ecocriticism as discussed by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin. They argue

that colonial powers viewed indigenous cultures as "primitive, less rational, and closer to children, animals, and nature" (Huggan & Tiffin 5). The Priest's character stands in contrast to this view by promoting spiritual awareness and respect for nature, not exploitation. His words, "whoever approaches in the name of the Lord is blessed!" (Dai 42), reflect a worldview where spirituality and environmental health are intertwined, a direct challenge to the colonial mindset that sought only to extract resources. This approach reinforces my thesis argument that postcolonial ecocriticism, when paired with ecospirituality, can lead to a more harmonious and sustainable future, as reflected in the introduction of my work.

By linking these characters, I argue that both Gimur and the Priest offer alternative perspectives on how humans can live in harmony with nature. Through their spiritual journeys, these characters reflect the potential of ecospirituality to guide us away from the destructive legacies of colonialism and toward a future based on respect for the earth. This echoes Shiva's assertion that, "To respect nature as sacred is to recognize that the well-being of the earth is inseparable from our own well-being" (Shiva 65). Both Gimur and the Priest illustrate this interconnectedness, providing a model for the kind of spiritual awakening that can lead to environmental stewardship and sustainability, a key point I make in my introduction.

The hill motif, which is central to the novel and discussed earlier in this chapter, is further tied to these characters' spiritual journeys. The hill, a sacred space where Gimur reflects and the Priest walks, becomes a symbol of the ecospiritual future I envision in my thesis. As I argued in the introduction, the spiritual connection to nature has been overshadowed by the colonial drive for economic development. Gimur and the Priest reclaim this lost connection, embodying the ecospiritual worldview that Shiva and my theoretical framework promote. This idea of spiritual restoration is central to the conclusion of my research, where I call for a global awakening that recognizes the sacredness of nature across cultures and time periods.

In conclusion, Gimur and the Priest reflect my thesis's central argument that ecospirituality, when intertwined with postcolonial ecocriticism, offers a path toward a more sustainable and spiritually awakened future. Their journeys align with the

theoretical framework that draws from Shiva, Huggan, and Tiffin, showing how indigenous spiritual knowledge and environmental stewardship are key to addressing the ecological crises caused by colonialism. Through their actions, they challenge modern materialistic perspectives and advocate for a reconnection with nature's sacredness, a theme that runs throughout my introduction, research questions, and theoretical analysis.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

This study critically examines Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* and Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* to explore how ecospirituality and postcolonial ecocriticism address ecological and cultural crises in South Asia. Both novels reveal and critique dichotomies inherent in colonial and indigenous worldviews, as well as other layered tensions such as anthropocentrism versus biocentrism, modernity versus tradition, and secular versus sacred understandings of nature.

The colonial exploitation depicted in both texts disrupted indigenous ecological harmony and spiritual practices. In *The Black Hill*, the Mishmi tribe's sacred connection to the forests represents a worldview where nature is revered as a living entity. This contrasts sharply with the colonial mindset that viewed land as a resource for extraction and domination. Similarly, *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* portrays the Andaman Islands as a microcosm of ecological and human exploitation, with its sacred landscapes scarred by imperial power. These dichotomies colonial versus indigenous, exploitative versus reverent underscore the dissonance caused by the imposition of colonial ideologies on spiritual and ecological harmony.

Ecospirituality emerges as a framework to bridge these dichotomies, offering a path toward harmony by recognizing the sacred interconnectedness of all life forms. By advocating for a non-anthropocentric approach, ecospirituality challenges humanity's perceived dominance over nature. However, even when it incorporates elements of anthropocentrism acknowledging humanity's role as stewards of the earth it remains relevant by emphasizing responsibility, humility, and coexistence. In both novels, characters like Father Nicola in *The Black Hill* and Haider Ali in *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* embody this transition toward a relational understanding of nature, where spiritual insights guide ecological care.

Beyond the colonial and indigenous debate, the novels address deeper dichotomies such as the tension between modern science and spiritual knowledge, as well

as the divide between humanity's material progress and its spiritual decline. Perry (2009) critiques the secularization of science for stripping nature of its sacredness, a theme echoed in both novels. The stone where Haider Ali and the Doctor stood symbolizes unity and divine creation, transcending divisions of caste and creed. Similarly, the forests in *The Black Hill* reflect the Mishmi people's spiritual sanctuaries, where humanity and nature coexist without hierarchy.

This study contributes to the discourse by demonstrating how ecospirituality harmonizes these dichotomies. It reimagines nature as a sacred space, addressing ecological and cultural dissonance through a lens that integrates postcolonial critique with spiritual ecology. Ecospirituality's non-anthropocentric stance remains vital for contemporary environmental challenges, providing a framework that respects the intrinsic value of all life forms while fostering a renewed connection between humans and their environment.

By analyzing these texts, this thesis highlights the transformative potential of literature to inspire ecological consciousness and cultural resilience. Both novels, through their settings and characters, advocate for a harmonious coexistence grounded in spiritual and ecological balance. In doing so, they underscore the relevance of ecospirituality as a tool to bridge the dichotomies of our world and envision a sustainable and spiritually enriched future.

6.2 Findings

The study reveals how both novels intricately portray the degradation of the environment and culture under colonial powers. In *The Black Hill*, the sacred relationship between the Mishmi people and their mountains symbolizes the spiritual and ecological balance disrupted by colonial forces. In *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, the Andaman Islands serve as a site of colonial exploitation, yet Nomi's connection to the land reflects the enduring resilience of indigenous spirituality. These narratives emphasize how colonial powers devastated ecosystems and marginalized local traditions, yet also highlight the strength of indigenous beliefs in resisting these forces.

The findings further illustrate the nuanced exploration of the intersection between indigenous spiritual beliefs and environmental consciousness. Gimur's spiritual

connection to nature and Nomi's inherent bond with the Andaman Islands exemplify how ecospirituality fosters resilience and ecological awareness. The novels demonstrate that spirituality is not only a response to colonial destruction but also a proactive framework for sustainable living. Additionally, the novels address the temporal dichotomy between retrospective critique and prospective solutions. Both authors critique the historical exploitation of land and culture while offering ecospirituality as a framework for ecological restoration. Dai's portrayal of the cyclical nature of life and Khan's focus on spiritual purity serve as reminders that past lessons must inform future environmental stewardship.

Through their characters, settings, and themes, the novels transcend critique to advocate for ecological consciousness and resilience. The integration of spiritual and cultural values into ecological practices underscores the potential of South Asian traditions to inspire sustainable solutions for both local and global challenges.

6.3 Recommendations

In the realm of literary interpretation, the richness of a text often unfolds through various lenses. The selected novels for this analysis offer a blank canvas for many points of view to be explored. The relationship between postcolonial ecocriticism and ecospirituality in the chosen literary works is one of the research's main areas of interest.

In particular, this study explores the concept of ecospirituality as a critical mitigating technique in the context of the selected literary works. The goal of the analysis is to reveal the deep ecological and spiritual elements that are there by breaking down the many layers of meaning that are ingrained in the stories.

Moreover, these texts offer a plethora of interpretative avenues, ranging from feminist perspectives to explorations of Diaspora, Marxism, and Orientalism. Examining the two-fold marginalization of women is a promising direction for future research, given the universality of both texts' South Asian roots and exploration of the complexity of colonization. A focused investigation could highlight the terrifying experiences these women went through, setting the stage for a comparative feminist study. Through this lens, women's distinct challenges and personal suffering within the stories would be

examined and understood, leading to a more profound comprehension of their positions within the larger socio-cultural context.

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