

## Chapter-IV

### Eco(nomic/logic) Oppression of the Earth/lings and

### Their Agonizing Echoes:

### An Ecosocialist Study of Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*

Vast parts of our country, that are the richest in terms of minerals, forests and water, are also where the poorest people live. Again I ask, again and again: what is wrong with our development model that the poorest people live in the richest lands of the country?

(Narain, Sunita. "Bullets Are Not the Answer to Development")

In her above statement, Sunita Narain, exposes the paradoxical situation of the "poorest" living on the minerally and ecologically "richest" heart-lands of India. Being one of the eminent socio-environmental activists of India, Narain aims to highlight here the shortcomings of the prevalent constructs of economic development- which has been severely damaging the social as well as the natural environments in all corners of the globe.

Ecosocialism, being an important strand of ecocriticism, opposes all the profit-intensive economic models propagated by the global corporate sectors that gravely disrupt our socio-cultural and ecological networks.

Mohanty's *Paraja*, a classic Indian fiction, thematizes the brutal subjugation of the dignified forest-dwelling tribes of Odisha on account of their economic destitute. Since it also exposes the most harmful ecological and social implications

of the politics of land acquisition and commodification of human and natural resources, I propose to study *Paraja* in this chapter in ecosocialist context.

Although *Paraja* fictionalizes the tales of the exploitation of the subaltern voices of the poor humans as well as of the earth herself in context of the feudal era of the pre-independent India, the eco-social insights it contains do offer rich imaginative scopes for an ecocritic to understand today the links among the position of the poor, conditions of the natural resources, and the narratives of the techno-scientific-economic progress being propagated across the global economic landscapes.

While discussing the importance of ecosocialist critical practice in India and on the global platform, the following first part of this chapter aims to outline its basic characteristics. Second part of this chapter focuses on the importance of studying *Paraja* in ecosocialist light, whereas the third part explores the differences and similarities one comes across in the varieties of ecosocialisms offered by Gandhi and Marx. Before throwing light on the Ecosocialist Manifesto, the fourth part traces the philosophical development and literary roots of concept of ecosocialism, and the fifth part is devoted to the discussion on the text under consideration.

#### **4.1 Salient Features of Ecosocialism: Contemporary Significance**

As the compound word itself suggests, ‘ecosocialism’ is a political philosophy that synthesizes ecological and socialist insights to understand environmental issues from a non-capitalist perspective. Works like *Paraja* have exhibited socialist concerns time and again across world literature; but critical appreciation of such works from ecosocialist dimensions have begun to be noticed in the post-industrial times- since when environmental urgencies have captured global attention.

Being an important segment of ecocriticism, since ecosocialism provides scopes to explore the links between environmental degradation and economic exploitation embedded in literary texts, I propose in this chapter to avail ecosocialist insights to analyze the select text to understand the ways in which economic hegemonies and insensitive law and order systems can conspire globally to strangle the local rhythms that lie between the social and natural ecological networks.

*Paraja* specifically focuses on the intricate and crafty ways in which the loops of economic oppression, debt-traps and discriminatory forest laws close in on a happy and self-reliant tribal family to ruthlessly expel them at first from their native soil- which- ultimately hurls them into the gloomy depths of impoverishment, psychological breakdown and moral degradation.

To prevent such tragedies in the independent India, the preamble of the Indian constitution has “solemnly resolved” to “constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC”; so that the national pledge of respecting the “dignity of the individual” and strengthening “the unity and integrity of the Nation” can be fulfilled (“Read the Preamble”).

In spite of the egalitarian spirit of Gandhian thought and the democratic ideals of the Indian constitution, as the following discussion would reveal, tribals in India are still being forced or persuaded to leave their ancestral lands; so that the collective resources of the forests and water reservoirs can be utilized on massive scales to facilitate capital-intensive operations like commercial tree-logging, mining, electricity-generation etc.

Themes of the expulsions of forest tribes from their ancestral soil and the attendant erasure of their eco-sensitive cultural wisdom do not fail to draw our attention towards the international environmental priority to follow UN policies and

programs to encourage sustainable development, preservation of biodiversity and protection of indigenous linguistic varieties.

In the post-global world, when ‘economic growth’ and ‘improvement in the life standards’ continue to preoccupy the socio-political psyche of the developing countries like India, in order to have a holistic view of the impact of the economic policies on socio-ecological networks, it sounds pertinent to look at the select text from ecosocialist perspective- which has a potential to lay bare the flipsides of the prevalent narratives of development.

To examine *Paraja* in light of the ecosocialist contexts, here I will take recourse to some literary and historical sources, field reports, press reports, and the ecosocial insights shared by some of the Western as well as India thinkers and environmental activists.

From the ecofeminist point of view, as discussed in the previous chapter, it is the gender-based-injustices propagated by male-centrism that undermines ecobalance of the planet earth; whereas, for ecosocialists, on whom Marxist influence is evident, it is primarily the wealth-centric, profiteering economic operations that disrupt social and natural environments.

So far as the gender-based socio-economic disparity is concerned, voices emanating from ecofeminism and ecosocialism do overlap and underscore one another, but the focus of ecosocialism, as we will notice in the forthcoming discussion, broadly remains on criticizing economic hegemony rather than cultural injustice- which constitutes the foundation of ecofeminism.

Although most of all contemporary ecofeminist voices agree with the non-anthropocentrism propagated by the deep ecologists (whose arguments will be discussed in the next chapter), many ecosocialists vehemently reject the deep

ecologists' spiritual and intuitive approaches to environmental issues, and their elitist claim which holds the growth in human population responsible for resource depletion.

Bookchin, the pioneer of ecosocialism in the twentieth century, believes that it is the unfair distribution of natural wealth rather than bigger families of the poor that intensify scarcity of resources. On the other hand, countering Bookchin's critique of scarcity narratives, ecosocialists of the twenty-first century acknowledge the need to control human demographics to deaccelerate the speed of resource depletion.

In spite of their disparate opinions and theories, ecosocialists of the post-global world unanimously criticize the politics that validates economic growth based on an unabashed suppression of the voice of the planet earth (which provides natural resources to sustain life) and that of the poor humans (who work hard to modify those resources to support human existence).

Ecosocialism exposes the links among neo-imperialistic industrial capitalism, socio-economic disparities, environmental destruction, extinction rates of biodiversity, globalization, and the consumerism being accelerated by the bourgeois society. Ecosociologists may turn to the history of the economic injustices to explain their cumulative impact on the present environmental scenario; and in order to mitigate the future ecological dangers, they also intend to alter the existing economic policies.

*Paraja* narrates a sudden impoverishment and a ruthless exploitation of a hard-working tribal family, followed by their brutal expulsion from their ancestral lands located in the eco-minerally-rich forest regions of Orissa.

It may be mentioned that Orissa, like its neighboring states such as Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh, is one of the richest Indian states in terms of minerals like Bauxite, Iron ore, Limestone etc.- wherein the poorest masses of India, as Narain has pointed out, have still been striving to eke out their living thorough agricultural labour, and by gathering food, fuel and fodder for their cattle from the forest resources since centuries.

Although the FRA (Forests Rights Act) of 2006 legally promises to protect the rights of the tribals on the MFP (Minor Forest Produce), due to the lack of its practical implementation, huge masses of the poor forest-dwelling people have still been going through incalculable suffering.

According to a report by Abhijit Mohanty, in the post-Covid financial doom being faced by the tribals of Odisha, it is the misinterpretation of the policy of the Compensatory Afforestation (CA), and the bureaucratic strategies of the forest department- which add to the impoverishment of the poor tribals. Power systems unabashedly violate the FRA provisions accorded to the local Gram Sabhas. Surveying this situation in July 2020, Abhijit Mohanty writes that:

Odisha provides a good example of all that is lacking in the implementation of the FRA. The state's forests cover around 37% of its topography. They are home to 62 Scheduled Tribe communities and 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups that make up nearly 22% of the state's population. At least 32,711 villages are eligible for the recognition of their rights to community forest resources (CFR) as they have forest lands within their revenue village boundaries.... [but] What is.... Frustrating [in this matter] is that the claim of the Kutia Kondh

community to that land has been recognised under the FRA and yet that area has been devoured by a CA project.... As far as the regeneration of degraded forests is concerned, there are any number of examples in Odisha where tribal communities have proven that they are the best guardians of the forest and die-hard conservationists.... In Odisha, large-scale commercial plantations have been initiated by the forest department in areas where forest rights have either been recognised under the FRA or where such recognition is still pending. ("Odisha's Tribal Communities Are Reeling Under a Land Grab Project Masquerading as 'Afforestation'")

Not only the forests of Orissa, which constitutes the setting of Mohanty's fiction, but the forest lands that exist anywhere in the lap of the Indian soil have still remained a "homeland to millions of India's tribal people"; but they have nevertheless historically remained a "dreamland to the corporate world" due to their commercial value, to borrow Arundhati Roy's words from the article discussed below. And, this is where the roots of the subjugation of the 'have-nots' as well as an indomitable extraction of natural resources by the 'haves' germinate, if one looks at that issue from the Marxist lenses.

In fact, the eruptions of the aggressive reactions of the oppressed tribals and apocalyptic forms of natural disasters the world frequently witnesses in the present times can be understood as natural corollaries to the intolerable subjugation and indomitable extraction of the subalterns- i.e., the marginalized humans and the silenced earth.

In her investigative article, Roy comments that the plights of the poor tribals have become even more aggravated after independence because of the constitutional ratification of the “colonial policy” which “made the State custodian of tribal homelands,” and which turned huge populations of tribes overnight into “squatters on their own land.” Therefore, as the story of *Paraja* would reveal, “the perennial problem, the real bane of people’s lives, was the biggest landlord of all, the Forest Department” which not only “denied them their traditional rights to forest produce” but also “criminalised a whole way of life” (“Walking with the Comrades”).

It may be noted in post 2000, when huge areas of the Chhattisgarh forest regions, which possesses 23% of iron available in India, had been procured by corporate giants like Essar and Tata to start their steel plants, they had been compared with the ‘loot of Columbus’ by a high-level-commission of India (28 Dhara Vaghadiya).

In light of the gruesome atrocities inflicted upon the wretched tribals of Chhattisgarh between 2005-2011 by ‘Salwa Judum’ (i.e. ‘purification hunt’- a government-supported organization), and the forced migrations of huge masses of the helpless tribals from the forests- in 2011 the Supreme Court severely criticized the state government for its “amoral economic policies” and the “culture of unrestrained selfishness and greed spawned by modern neo-liberal economic ideology” (Madhav Khosla).

Under the neo-liberal economic ideologies mentioned by the Supreme Court, not only the wretched conditions of the social environments but the other important issues such as the destruction of the natural ecologies and their biodiversity have also been systematically ignored by the authorities concerned. What exemplifies this matter is the fact that in the Annual Economic Survey of India, a section on ‘environment’ has been introduced as late as in the 1990s- i.e., in post-global era; and out of around 200 pages, Vaghadiya notes, the topic



of 'environment' has been allotted merely one or two pages; and these two pages seldom mentioned the connections between the processes of economic growth and the status of environment (36).

The terrible tensions engendered by continual violation of human rights and environmental ethics that disrupt eco-socio equilibriums are bound to aggravate enormity of Natural disasters on one hand, and Naxalist revolts in the tribal belts on the other.

In this context, study of texts like *Paraja* evidently assumes prime importance on the Indian critical scene today especially when the terms like 'self-reliance' 'sustainable growth' and 'preservation of biodiversity' and 'upliftment of the poor' have become buzz words in the contemporary glocal political and environmental scenarios.

Temporal connections among Mohanty's *Paraja* (1945), and observations provided above by Roy (2010), Narain (2016) and Abhijit Mohanty (2020) highlight the fact that whether it was pre or post independent era, the phenomenon of exploitation has continued to plague the poor tribes of India in multiple ways; and the roots of their wretched conditions lie in their forced expulsions from their native lands: a painful process which typically precedes industrial expansions into the tribal territories.

To describe the traumatic experience and the sudden spells of poverty the forest dwellers go through after their forced displacement from their native lands, Eco-historians Madhav Gadgil and Ramchandra Guha have coined a term 'eco-refugeeism' in their book *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* (1992) (P.C. George 28).

By documenting eco-refugeeism of a poor tribal family, *Paraja* has also drawn the pathetic trajectory of their starvation, deprivation and exploitation that mirror the conditions

of the tribals after their displacements- which have been taking place in different parts of the world.

Divya Maitreyi Chari has recently visited Okavango Delta. This region is also known as ‘Africa’s last Eden’ for being “the world’s largest inland delta where desert meets swamp.” Chari writes that she happened to meet a nomadic tribe called ‘San’ whose “deep and profound bond” with that region is as old as over 40,000 years. But in 1600s, they were hunted and almost exterminated by European settlers. Discovery of diamonds in the Kalahari has attracted diamond companies to this area, and since 1980s, forcible mass clearances of this San people from their native land has been monitored by the government. As a result, many of these- previously self-reliant and now dispossessed- communities are compelled to live in “settlement camps, a precarious existence dependent on government handouts and tourism.” It can be observed that for these original habitants of the region, “passage of time [or economic progress] didn’t make for a tale with a happier ending” (“A Journey by Air, Water and Road in the Okavango Delta”).

Neither for the tribals of *Paraja*, as we will discuss shortly, makes “for a tale with a happy ending”. Like Chari’s report, as the cursory look at *Paraja* in the following passage will show how its theme spotlights the fact as to how one-dimensional economic march can obliterate tribal societies from the face of the earth; and how this obliteration will result into a severe loss of ecosensitive tribal customs, songs, and sustainable modes of life- which can help the humans in preventing their de-humanisation on one hand; and de-accelerating environmental degradation on the other.

#### 4.2 *Paraja*: Expose` of the Colonial Gaze on the Natural Resources

‘Paraja’ is the name of a tribal clan, which is a most hardworking and yet the poorest, and one of the most dignified tribes of India. Out of Mohanty’s five novels available in English, his two novels- *Paraja* and *Ancestor*- portray lives of these ‘Paraja’ tribes. Stories of these novels are set respectively in ‘Koraput’ and ‘Lulla’ villages situated in the forests of the western Orissa. *The Dynasty of the Immortals*, Mohanty’s another novel, delineates stories of ‘Kondhs’ (or ‘Kandha’) tribe which is also the most primitive and the largest tribe of Orissa.

Set in the feudal setting of the pre-independent India, *Paraja* unfolds a poignant saga of a tribal patriarch called Sukru Jani. Middle-aged Sukru is emotionally attached with and totally dependent on his ancestral homeland for the sustenance of his family; and Sukru’s and his forefathers’ life-long arduous work has turned this land fertile. That is why, to him:

Land was not a patch of earth-it was part of his body. He knew every contour and depression in the land.... He had watered the land with his sweat and nursed the seedlings with the warmth of his own body. His four children had grown up on the soil and his wife Sombari had worked alongside him, bringing him his afternoon meal.... His children had helped him clear the land of rocks and he had told them: ‘Remember, the earth is your mother. Sombari and I are nothing: we are here today and gone tomorrow, but the land will remain.’ (193)

When the story opens, he is found dreaming about renting one more piece of land from the vast forest regions spread before him; so that his family can work still harder to collect the money he requires to marry his sons and daughters according to

the tribal customs. Having lost in the reverie of playing happily with his grandchildren on his native land in near future, this innocent and illiterate tribal, who has spent his whole life in the lap of nature, seems too credulous to trust his physical strength, honest labor and the powers of providence. Since we soon learn that Sukru's daydreams, as ecosocialists would observe, have made him forget the fact that after all it is the economic might which shapes destinies of the helpless masses in human societies- which are founded, as ecosocialists would claim, on unfair distribution of the collective natural resources.

While discussing the story of *Paraja* in the last part of this chapter, we will see how and why the protagonist of this epic tale and his entire family have been caught in a debt-trap and craftily severed away from their ancestral lands due to their poverty; and how this self-reliant family consequently loses their right to work on their own farmland- which was the only source of sustenance for them.

Due to the most beautiful poetic depictions of the hills, forests, seasons, tribal folk songs and dances, festivities, celebrations, the rituals exhibiting tribal reverence for their ancestors and for the forest deities, the sense of thrill and suspense created by the presence of the tigers during the collective hunts- Mohanty's fiction does assume purely romantic hues for the readers who have not been able to immerse themselves in the tribal lives lived in thick forests as Mohanty did. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that, as we will discuss in the last part of the chapter, Mohanty's strength lies in de-romanticizing various aspects of the tribal world. For instance, it is clear that the money lender lends money as well as grain-loans to the poor forest-dwellers only in order to exploit them afterwards; but Mohanty does not forget to remind that "A frequent reason for the tribesmen to seek loans from him was their marriage customs." No marriage could be solemnized unless the young

man pays around forty to sixty rupees as 'jholla' (bride-prize) - for which he has to take loan from the money-lender- and be prepared to "sweat for him year after year" (49).

Of course, the roots of the economic helplessness of Sukru are quite different, which compels him and his both sons to leave their own land unplowed, who have to become bonded surfs on the money lender's huge estates located in other villages. When they are thus forced to serve day and night in the money lender's large-scale agrobusiness; back home, in the absence of male members, Sukru's young daughters, in order to resist starvation, shift to a town nearby to work as daily-wagers in a road-construction project.

In the urban slums where these girls are now destined to live in unhygienic and claustrophobic conditions, the threat of starvation on one hand, and the lure of a modern life style on the other hand, impel these innocent tribal girls to be physically exploited by a lecherous labor supervisor.

Besides aggravating poverty of the farmers, corroding their value systems, and usurping their freedom, as *Paraja* documents, physical severance from one's own soil also intensifies the sense of alienation and shatters human dignity.

What constitutes the stimulus for the historical struggle between 'haves' and 'have-notes', according to Marx, does not just lie in the fight to procure only material benefits for social freedom; what propels the same is also the deep-rooted human aspiration to break free of the economic helplessness, enslavement and the sense of alienation which tend to dehumanize its victims when taken to its extremes.

Following the Marxist philosophy, ecosocialists opine that exploitation of the poor and of the natural resources being practiced in the current global economic scenario reflects perpetuation of the same extractive and colonial tendencies which

had predominated the slavery and feudal systems of the past. Hence, ecosocialists now propose to re-harmonize the ecobalance of the earth by correcting the global economic anomalies which tend to negatively influence the interlaced threads of socia-natural environments.

Before exploring different aspects of ecosocialism in the forthcoming discussions, firstly it would be relevant at this juncture to refer to an episode taken from an interesting poem *Gramya-mata* (i.e. The Mother of the Village) by the Gujarati Romantic poet Kalapi (1874-1900), since this poem closely corresponds with the ecosocialism embedded by Mohanty in *Paraja*.

Kalapi's poem opens with a beautiful village scene of a winter morning. Crimson rays of the rising sun are softly touching the cheeks of the poor kids playing near the fields in the cool breezes. Green abundance of sugarcane crop, and the green parrots flying in the clear blue sky exhibit the pleasant mood of the cool climate. An old couple of hard-working farmers are happily warming up near a hearth, while their faces reflect a deep sense of satisfaction on account of the hard work they have done for the soil they have tilled.

But the scene changes when a young man (political strength) riding on his horse (economic power) is seen through the swirls of dust. The thirsty horse rider dismounts from the horse, goes to the couple, and asks for water. Instead of water, to offer him sugarcane juice, the motherly woman (bountiful mother earth/suppressed voice of the poor) leads the stranger into the fields. A single stroke of her sickle on a sugar stick, and lo! an outpour of juice at once fills up the bowl for the young man! He drinks up it all. He asks for one more bowl, 'thinking' something.

The old woman readily turns to cut another cane; but, to their surprise not a single drop of juice tickles down this time! With tears in her eyes, the elderly

woman says, sighing: “Sterile the earth has gone, and merciless has gone the king; otherwise, this cannot happen indeed!” (Own Translation of Gujarati lines: “રસહીન ધરા થૈ છે, દયાહીન થયો નૃપ; નહિ તો ના બને આવું!).

Hearing this, the surprised young man bows down to the woman and offers his sincere apologies, admitting that while drinking the sweet juice, himself being the king of the entire territory, a thought of extracting more economic benefits from the land did flash across his mind. He did think of levying more tax on the farmer. But he repents for his mistake; and now he has banished the greedy thoughts from his mind. As soon as his heart becomes full of compassion and good wishes for his poor subjects, the scene changes. Again, the ‘Gramyamata’ goes to cut the sugar cane; and lo! his bowl overflows with the sweet juice once more!

What is praiseworthy about the poetic sensitivity of Kalapi is that in this poem, though himself being the king of an erstwhile princely state (Lathi) in real life, he describes here the paralyzing influence of the imperialistic greed on the ecological quality of the land, her resources and on the poor people connected with the soil.

In Kalapi’s poem, the end is optimistic for the poor farmers, but Sukru and his family are not so fortunate in *Paraja*. Predatory forces from the human world always seem ready to hunt and devour away the economically paralyzed, illiterate and faith-driven tribal people.

Foster notes that in *Das Capital*, besides concentration of industrial activities in city areas (as we see in case of Sukru’s daughters shifting to the city), Marx has also explicitly criticized capitalist mass-agriculture ( owned by the money lender of *Paraja*), since the combination of the “large-scale industry” and the “large-scale agriculture” creates an “irreparable” “metabolic rift” between man and Nature,

which drains the strength of the farmworker on one hand, and damages the land fertility, on the other (155,156). The material estrangement and emotional alienation of Sukru from his own soil, his community, his home, his village, his family could be understood in Marx's conception of alienation.

Communist ideology, as it will be discussed shortly, therefore suggests that there should be no private property at all. Sukru, being a tribal and a child of the forest culture, does not have the kind of a sense of possession as the money-lender does have. For him: All land belongs to God (i.e., in Hindi, 'Sab Bhumi Gopalki').

So, Master/Slave relationship does not exist in case of Sukru's bond with his soil. Since the tribals believe that the spirits of their ancestors protect the land they have been tilling for generations, they are emotionally and spiritually attached with their lands. In fact, instead of Master/Slave relationship with the land which the money-lender has internalised, tribals learn to look at the land as their motherly or elderly figure for the reason mentioned. So, when they have to leave their homelands to work on other's farms, they feel psychologically alienated.

The end of *Paraja*, which is marked with an unexpected explosion of a long-suppressed wrath of the helpless victims against the intolerable heights of injustice, puts one in the memory of the disturbing events of French Revolution on one hand; and on the other, it also stimulates historical memories of the colonial past of India.

*Paraja* revives the historical episodes of the oppression of the indigenous tribes of India by the British, and by the coteries of the Indian money-lenders and zamindars; and the tribal reactions against the same as they were surfaced under the leadership of the brave and bold Santhal tribes during the Deccan revolt of 1875. It epitomizes the constant clash that has been taking place between the haves and the have-nots, between the greedy and the needy- in different forms and degrees.



Resistance- what may be now termed as a kind of eco-social activism- against the economic and ecologic injustice could also be noticed taking place in various parts of the world. In contexts of India, two historical examples- one from the pre-independence and the other from the post-independent times- typify these phenomena: political resistance of Indian freedom fighters against the British colonialization of India and her natural resources; and secondly, the populist resistance the Indian government faced in form of the Chipko Agitation of the 1970s, which started against the commercial mass-logging carried out exclusively for the benefits of a sports-goods company.

Both these experiences have taught India that without acknowledging the need to establish equality across all sections of the society- especially in the matter of resource distribution, the collective dream of a welfare state could never be realized.

Indeed, just as Indian ecosociologists like Vandana Shiva and Ramchandra Guha suggest, India needs to be extremely cautious about her own socio-ecological-cultural-agricultural and economic colonization in the post-global era- wherein the crony capitalism (i.e. the collusion between the giant, profit-oriented corporate houses and the government bureaucracy) perpetuates exploitation of the collective natural resources on which the huge population of 'Paraja' depend traditionally for their subsistence.

Besides signifying title of a tribal clan as Mohanty's text does, the general meaning of the Sanskrit word 'Paraja' also means 'all people' in sense of the 'subjects' or 'citizens.' In India, this term also conventionally refers to the poor masses belonging to the lower social strata- who have historically faced sheer inequality almost in all domains of life. So, the title *Paraja* itself exhibits its ideological proximity with the essence of ecosocialist discourse which attempts to

accommodate majority of the masses who face socio-political injustice in various parts of the world.

The most important aspect of *Paraja* is its global relevance and its potential to open multiple layers of understanding about the most complex relationships between social ecologies and natural environments, which is exponentially influenced by economic considerations in the current times.

Sukru's predicament in *Paraja* does not just relate a story of an Indian tribal family, situated in some specific geo-political or temporal contexts. Nor does it stand only for the present plights of all the economically marginalized global communities. Besides all that, Sukru's economic helplessness also represents the subservient positions of the underdeveloped countries like South Africa or the developing countries like India against the First Nations on the international plane.

As discussed in the first chapter, so far as environmental degradation is concerned, keeping in view the present pace of their economic growth, the role of the industrially developed and techno-scientifically advanced nations like the USA or that of the European nations, has remained historically phenomenal. However, they do not seem to be much concerned about their moral duty to sincerely follow the environmental laws formulated by the UN.

So, while the theme of *Paraja* could be understood in light of various aforementioned issues, what is most pertinent is to notice that ecosocialist study of Sukru's socio-cultural subjugation and economic exploitation by the money-lender explains the analogous situation of the planet earth herself before the economic might of the global power structures.

### 4.3 Ecosocialism: Global Character- Local Contexts: Gandhi and Marx

Being global in character, as the discussion ahead will show, ecosocialist voices will undoubtedly be found opposing in unison those profit-intensive economic systems which tend to tacitly validate the famous Orwellian maxim that “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”

The issues of economic disparities and environmental problematic are of course global in character; however, it must also be noted that the roots of these issues, and theories and philosophical approaches to understand them are as diverse as their geo-cultural locations are.

For example, although the beginning of the environmental activism in America and in India share almost the same time frames, the root cause of the American and the Indian varieties of activism were fundamentally different.

In America, following Carson’s appeal in *Silent Spring*, it was predominantly the class of educated and economically non-marginalized citizens of the urban areas who became proactive in 1970s to protect the environmental well-being of their societies by rejecting the practice of using chemical pesticides utilized to multiply their agricultural produce; whereas, in case of the Chipko movement of India, it was mostly the forest-dwelling, uneducated, poor masses who fought in unison to stop commercial logging in order to protect their collective economic concerns which were intricately interlinked with the ecological welfare of the surrounding forests.

Not only the need-based ground realities or their local politics, but different cultural moorings also give birth to a great variety of ecosociologist approaches proposed by Natural scientists, philosophers, economists, artists, literary figures, and political thinkers belonging to different epochs of history.

Since it is the natural resources that provide the necessary material conditions to support subsistence to human communities and to strengthen economies of various nations, the inter/national politics to colonize natural resources has continued to dominate human history.

In fact, since nomadic times, in order to secure better modes of life, human communities across the world have struggled ceaselessly to maximize their dominion over natural resources, so that they can strengthen their economic and political structures through which social welfare can be assured.

It is the collective goal of human welfare which have driven region-specific communities to subscribe to certain ethics, values, norms and policies- which can help them govern their individual and collective behaviors with their fellow beings as well as with the natural resources which nourish them.

As a result, the global platform of ecosocialism has witnessed emergence of a perplexingly huge variety of agreeing and dissenting voices with regard to the ecosocialistic problems and the solutions to resolve them.

In this context, it is therefore pertinent to note that while sharing certain remarkable similarities in their deep concerns to resolve eco-sociological issues for the welfare of the deprived masses of the society, two great thinkers of our times- Gandhi and Marx- fundamentally differ in the solutions they offer to resolve socio-economic and ecologic issues.

Gandhi spiritualizes, and Marx materializes the politics of the natural-resource-distribution. Gandhi believes that moral robustness must guide humans to procure material growth; whereas Marx opines that material solidity would provide any society with a base for its moral development. One wants to use the power of the soul, and the other does not mind using brute-force to reach the same destination.

Gandhi asks for de-centralization of power through Gram-Swaraj; Marx wants the proletariats to centralize power to fairly govern resource management.

In the post-global world, it can be observed that especially in the developing nations, giant corporate houses are allowed by the government machineries to extract profits by dredging up more and more material from the natural resources with the help of the poor labour force.

Industrialists invest a part of their profit in introducing high-tech machines, which help them expediate exploitation of the natural resources on one hand, and minimize the demands/wages of human labour, on the other. Hard labour of the worker's class thus enriches the rich and impoverish the poor who work for them. Paradoxically, the labour class can neither claim equal share on the revenues they generate, nor they can exercise any control on the production processes in which they are directly and physically involved.

### **Marx, Gandhi and Ecosocialism**

Human history, as Marx has pointed out, is indeed replete with instances of gross injustices. Marxist theory of historical materialism does bolster the claims of the ecosocialists that whether it was primitive communism, slavery or feudalism of the past; or it is capitalism of the present- the representatives of the political and bureaucratic authorities have tended to tighten their socio-political dominion to expand the scopes of their economic hegemony, disregarding its environmental backlashes and victimization of the down trodden.

Besides satisfying the basic material needs of human communities, since natural resources exponentially influence the growth of human consciousness, poets, authors and activists across the globe have often acknowledged its significance from various dimensions.

Before Marx, many thinkers and philosophers from different parts of the world have of course explained as to how human consciousness with its ideals, virtues and conceptions of morality influences social formations, and thus shapes material conditions of world.

But Karl Marx's reversed those thinking patterns by proclaiming that that it is the material conditions that determines human consciousness; and, it is not vice versa. So, what needs to be changed first is the material conditions of the poor workers who would be able to collectively formulate societies based on socio-economic parity.

Marx has famously viewed entire human history as a series of antagonistic relations between the 'bourgeois' who possess private land, assets and property), and the 'proletariats' (i.e. the poor class of the surfs, artisans, landless labors, and factory workers) who have been selling their labor to their masters.

The hard work of the proles makes their masters richer and impoverish their own lot, as the master cream off the surplus value of the commodities they produce.

Gandhi was known for his determination to oppose all forms of slavery that usurps human freedom and dignity. The words inscribed on Marx's grave also reflect his oft-quoted observation that "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it." So, the popular English translation of another famous statement from the Marx's *Communist Manifesto* also urges to the down trodden this way: "Workers of the World, Unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

Hence, both Gandhi and Marx were determined to change the world, but the roots of their ideologies and the routs to reach their destinations were undoubtedly quite different.

Discussing Hegel's dialectical method, Sreekumar Nellickappilly explains that for Hegel, 'Geist' is an all-encompassing, ultimate spirit- the absolute idea- which is in the process of reaching its perfection, following a teleological path. He proposed that the truth is dynamic. It follows a dialectical process that takes place between thesis and anti-thesis. Every thesis, every process that happens within an entity, being imperfect itself, intrinsically contains an anti-thesis-i.e., its opposing force. Out of the interactions between the two, synthesis emerges- which becomes a new thesis to spearhead the process of development. These contradictions continue till they reach their final synthesis and identify them with the Geist- the ultimate reason- the whole truth (Lecture 24).

According to Shivakumar, Marx used Hegel's metaphysical concept of spiritual progress to explain the development of history through material perspective. Referring to the evolution of human history- i.e. from primitive communism-to-feudalism-to capitalism, Marx explained that every historical epoch "contained within itself the seeds of its perpetuation (thesis) and of its destruction (anti-thesis); this internal contradiction would ripen and lead to next epoch (synthesis)" (7.09. Lecture 24).

Establishment of the communism, which Marx envisaged, would be a natural development to be followed by capitalism -which contains within itself contradictory elements. For example, enjoyment of all pleasures of life by a small exclusive class at the cost of the basic needs of the majority of the poor is itself a self-contradictory phenomenon.

Since socialism is a natural corollary to capitalism, as in *Manifesto*, Marx suggests that workers of a country would take the means of production into their hands for some period of time, if needed- through a revolution. *Manifesto* concludes

with Marx's aggressive declaration on behalf of the Communists that "their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at the Communistic revolution."

When all socialist regimes of the entire world will unite, they would replace the existing modes of power structures and establish a communist society- which will be a stateless, classless society aiming to advance the social welfare of all citizens by administering economic justice.

"The final consummation of all wealth," according to Gandhi, "is in producing as many possible full-breathed, bright-eyed and happy-hearted human beings" (30 *Unto This Last: A Paraphrase*). Based on Ruskin's 'Unto This Last', Gandhi's conception of 'The Welfare of All' (Sarvodaya) also suggests that economic systems should function in order to give the first priority to the basic needs of the last man of the society. However, Gandhian socialism based on non-violence would never guide his followers to forcibly and violently overthrow the any systems of governance.

Gandhi has given programs to strengthen the self-reliance of village economies and cottage industries, which could de-accelerate the speed of urbanization and thus it would also lessen the attendant scopes of environmental degradation.

Govindbhai Raval has given interesting observation on Gandhi's socialism in Gujarati language in his compact book entitled *Sarvodaya Vichar*. He rightly remarks that Gandhi, who defined progress in terms of the socio-economic improvement in quality of the life of the last man of the society, had already envisioned the socio-environmental dangers of the blind acceptance of the Western



economic and technological models to resolve problems of the over populated, agricultural and poor countries like India.

Marxist method of adopting violence to establish economic equality was not approved by Gandhi, who was also against any kind of socialism that becomes dictatorial and allows concentration of economic and political power in hands of a few. Instead of focusing only upon material and economic equality, he also wanted to establish a system which would not usurp individual's freedom to make moral and spiritual progress. He did not want to exchange moral values against material progress. He protested against atomization in India because he thought that it would engender urbanization, break agrarian economy, impoverish lacs of people, and usurp their dignity by taking away their employment, alienating them from their physical labor and by divorcing them from their land.

The Gandhian principle of Trusteeship was an attempt to persuade economically powerful people to handle their surplus wealth as if they are the trustees (and not the owner) of that wealth- which should be willingly utilized for the social welfare.

Kishorilal Mashruwala, in his book *Gandhi and Marx*, explains as to how the Gandhian "principal of "pure means for pure ends" ensures equal rights and safeguards to everyone, and make true democracy possible." Mashruwala notes that the Gandhian conception of economic equality "did not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount. It simply meant that everybody should have enough for his or her needs." According to Gandhi, it is disgraceful to see that the poor villagers who produce food for others starve themselves. For any civilized society, economic progress should be measured in terms of its willingness and capacity to provide every member of the society with basic medical facility, simple clothes to wear, food to eat, a decent house to live in, and education for the children (Govindbhai Raval 95,114).

Although Gandhi would not support economic disparity which sounds like the difference between the mountain and the valley, his non-violence would certainly allow the economic gaps in the society so far as it does not go beyond the small difference one finds amid length of the five fingers of our palm (Raval15).

It was due to such all-inclusive and non-violent Gandhian philosophy, Raval rightly points out, that Vinoba Bhave's 'Bhudan' (i.e. Land-Gift) movement (1951) was able to kindle compassion among the zamindars, who voluntarily donated around "42 Lacs acres of lands" to distribute them among the landless farmhands. No laws imposed by any state or central authorities have yet been able to achieve this feat so far (14).

Schumacher, in the Gandhi Memorial Lecture he delivered in 1973 at the Gandhian Institute of Studies at Varanasi, rightly suggests that the Gandhian principle of non-violence which is mostly used to refer to the violence between man-man also needs to be applied to understand the situations in which an unbridled human violence has been inflicted upon the earth and her finite resources by the profit-intensive operations. Ecosocialists exactly attempt to do this in a variety of ways in different parts of the world.

In India, influenced by the all-inclusive political philosophy of the 'Father of the Nation', following the idea of participatory democracy based on non-violence-which has benefited local communities across times and cultures, the eminent Indian environmental activists like Ramchandra Guha, and Vandana Shiva continue to champion eco-socialist cause through their writings, activities and speeches by arguing that the cooperative management of commons does take care of the long-term, sustainable growth of the local communities.; and capitalist policies of granting private ownership of land and the short-term profit policies designed for

specific groups “strips people of their local communal resources” to use words from “Eco-Socialism.”

To achieve their goals, ecosocialists attempt to trace the historical roots of the contemporary economic disparities, and how they still continue to adversely affect ecologically important interlinkages amid the indices of techno-scientific development of certain nations, economic growth of particular social classes, resource depletion, human demographics, de-forestation, mining, carbon footprint, the spread of air and water pollutions, unemployment in rural sector, urbanization, militarization, impoverishment and mal-nutrition of a huge number of humanity etc.

The following part takes a brief survey of the growth of ecosocialism as a movement. In light of the contribution of some of the authors and activists mentioned in this part will help me explore the various aspects of the text- which would be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

#### **4.4 Tracing the Philosophical and Literary Roots of the Ecologist**

##### **Manifesto**

Shivakumar rightly observes that since egalitarianism is considered to be a virtue in Jainism, Buddhism and Christianity, all these religions can be called socialists in metaphysical sense of the term. However, if one considers socialism in its modern, economic context, it was first experimented by Jesuits in thirteenth or fourteenth century in Peru, which had lasted for almost about a century. All earlier forms of socialism eclipsed under the theories introduced by Marx (1818-1883). Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript* was published in 1848. All pre-Marxist socialist endeavors were ethical, aesthetic or moral reactions to the evils of private property and exploitative dimensions of capitalism. Although they were also characterized by a demand for justice and liberation from the bonded labor, they did

not raise economic issues the way in which Marx introduced (4.51, 11.57 “Socialists and Marx”).

Influenced by Marxism, socialism was interpreted in a variety of forms across times by activists such as: Saint Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (172-1837), Charles Sismondi (1773-1842), Kropotkin (1842-1921), Trotsky (1879-1940) Lenin (1870-1924), Stalin (1878-1953) etc.

Attention of all these revolutionary figures remained largely on critiquing capitalist influence on socio-economic rather than environmental issues. In this sense, as a social movement, ecosocialism was popularized in America in 1980s by the American eco-social philosopher and author Murry Bookchin (1921-2006).

In a seminal essay entitled “Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology,” Bookchin acknowledges that the revolutionary zeal of ecosocialism is:

rooted in the profound eco-anarchistic analyses of Peter Kropotkin, the radical economic insights of Karl Marx.... the enragés of the French Revolution, the revolutionary feminist ideals of Louise Michel and Emma Goldman, the communitarian visions of Paul Goodman and E. A. Gutkind, and the various ecorevolutionary manifestos of the early 1960s.

It is well known that Kropotkin whom Bookchin refers to, was a revolutionist, scientist and socialist, who had spent his life after amelioration of the working conditions of the peasants and emancipation of surfs.

In the article mentioned above, Bookchin rejects Malthusian linkages between resource depletion and human demographics, since he believes that it is not human demographics but the unfair and exclusivist distribution of the ample Natural

resources, and capitalist economy is responsible for the present ecological hazards, and the environmental collapse which might overtake humanity in future.

Besides damaging other aspects of human lives, capitalism and urbanisation also instil a sense of alienation into the humans in physical as well as spiritual sense of the term. John Foster in *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, discusses how Marx has integrated the “materialist conception of nature” with “his materialist conception of history” in *Capital* (1867) by applying the scientific concept of ‘metabolism’ (‘Stoffwechsel’) in socioeconomic contexts (141).

In the scientific domain, the term ‘metabolism’ stands for the life-sustaining biochemical natural processes that take place within organic systems through which different entities / cells convert their food into energy in order to carry out their various functions which are necessary to protect their survival. By explaining the term ‘metabolism’ in social contexts, Marx interestingly establishes the importance of the interactions (i.e. labour) that take place between man and the natural environs from the social/psychological/ecological and emotional viewpoints; According to Marx, capitalism severs the very process of ‘metabolism’ which is a necessary phenomenon to integrate man with nature physically, scientifically and psychologically (Foster 157).

It should be acknowledged that before Marx and Bookchin, since industrial revolution had begun to show its negative impact on society and on nature, socialist thought was introduced into the domain of knowledge by the authors and poets and essayists of English Romanticism (1750-1850) and American Transcendentalism (1830-1860).

For example, Wordsworth’s poem *The Reverie of Poor Susan* and Blake’s *Chimney Sweeper* project the conditions of the down trodden in the urban industrial

centers; whereas, Thoreau's *Walden*, which has influenced Gandhi, underlines significance of leading a dignified life by adopting sustainable, self-reliant and simple modes of living.

In Russian literature, works by Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Chekhov (1860-1904), and Tolstoy (1828-19) were appreciated for their deep social concerns; whereas Gorky (1868-1936) in particular has been known to have introduced socialist realism in novel writing.

In fact, besides Emerson's essays and speeches, the writings of the English authors like William Morris (1884-1896), George Orwell (1903-1950), and Raymond Williams (1921-1988) have also been acclaimed by scholars for their resistance to socio-economic inequalities.

One cannot ignore the fact that because of its inherent weaknesses and authoritarianism, along with the fall of Soviet Union in 1991, socialism has of course been practically and essentially replaced by the capitalistic free-market global economic policies across the world today.

However, the palpable and dramatic socio-ecological degradation noticed everywhere within the last five decades have inspired ecosocialist thinkers and their global associations like IEN (International Ecosocialist Network) to correct certain socialist ideologies in order to address the anomalies existing in the present pro-capitalist economic and political systems.

"Ecological Manifesto" announced in 2001 by Joel Kovel and Michael Lowy categorically declares that "the crises of ecology and those of societal breakdown are profoundly interrelated."

This pronouncement puts us in the memory of "Chimney Sweeper" by William Blake (1757-1827), which describes the dark sides of the industrial

revolution. The protagonist of the Blake's poem is a chimney sweeper. He is a poor motherless boy who has been sold to an industrialist by his impoverished father. It was a common phenomenon in those days that due to their intimacy with black coal powder, these children used to die early on account of lung cancer and other diseases. In a freezing English winter morning, instead of from the warmth of a cozy bed, the poor boy rises early from a cold black soot. Since early in the morning, he has to keep scraping the inside of the chimneys till the dark falls outside. Blake's poem shows how greed for money corrodes social values and human sensitivity for the children- the most innocent lot of humanity. Children of the poor are exploited by their families; and their families; by the economic hierarchies. *Paraja* raises the same issue in the socialist contexts.

M. K. Gandhi had cautioned against the condemnable outcomes of a blind imitation of the violent modes of the British industrialisation.

In an article published in "Young India," Gandhi reminds India as to how the "economic imperialism" of a "tiny.... kingdom (England)" kept entire earth "in chains". Now, if 300 million people of India would adopt such exploitative methods, then "it would strip the world bare like locusts" (Mkgandhi.org.).

However, historical trends of the global geopolitics would suggest that twin phenomena of territorial expansions and economic advancements are as intricately interlaced as are the issues of land acquisition and industrial development within the national borders.

Ecosocialists would support the argument that it is important for any society not to neglect the fact that economic and ecological issues cannot be treated in isolation.

In this regard, whether it is a global or local situation, the fallout usually remains the same: forced expulsions of the self-reliant natives from their ancestral lands as it is depicted in *Paraja*.

These issues pester not only India, but all developing economies have been struggling to minimize the harmful social and ecological influence of advancement of industrial capitalism.

Responding to these exigencies, modifying Marxist ideas to synchronize them with the current socio-political and environmental necessities, ecosociologists have been demanding to restructure economic and political systems in such a way which can help them recover economic parity and environmental balance.

### **Ecosocial Manifesto:**

#### **Transcending the Conventional Boundaries of Marxism and Socialism**

Greg Garrard, talking about Eco-Marxism and Social Ecology in *Ecocriticism* offers very interesting insights into this subject. He states that followers of the first ideology find “class conflict as the key political issue,” whereas the followers of the second ideology disapprove the power dynamics that torment all sorts of societies “be they capitalist or centrally planned socialist.” Therefore, instead of revolution of the proletariat, focusing on social transformation, social ecologists promote sustainable lifestyles and participatory democracy. Garrard notes that in spite of the role of eco-Marxism in the Third World is going to be very important in context of the environmental justice movements, its voice sounds marginal in the green politics of economically developed nations, whereas social ecology is becoming prominent in the anti-globalization and bio-regional movements. In spite of their differences, Garrard prefers to place both these positions under one rubric called ‘social ecology.’ (31-33).



Preferring to use term 'cultural ecology' instead of 'social ecology', Pimm and Smith propose that all the human problems pertaining to population control, scarcity of food, extinction of plant and animal species, and all the corresponding sociological and political implications could be considered ecological.

Michael Löwy, in his article entitled "Why Ecosocialism: For a Red-Green Future," explains in detail what happens when the volumes of production and rates of consumption are not synchronized. He remarks that although many commodities on the current market system are socially and practically of no use, they are launched to continue just to reach the targets of a rapid turnover- which adds to their 'exchange value'. However, "by contrast, in a planned ecosocialist economy," Lowy states, "use-value would be the only criteria for the production of goods and services, with far-reaching economic, social, and ecological consequences."

Like Bookchin and Gandhi, Lowy also stresses the need to introduce a "new model of robustly democratic planning" through which "society can take control of the means of production and its own destiny." He adds an important dimension to his discussion by suggesting that such democratic planning will reduce the working hours, and its "focus on authentic needs over consumerism can facilitate the elevation of "'being' over 'having.'"

Wayne Price explains how ecosocialism, following thoughts of Marx and Engels, envisions to establish a stateless, classless society of communism, wherein "the means of production would be held in common" and "work would be carried out due to social motives rather than for wages, and consumer goods would be available to all according to their needs" ("What is Anarchist Communism?").

### **Ecosocialist Manifesto: 2001/2018**

To lay out a roadmap to internationalize this movement, Koyel and Lowy came up with their famous ‘Ecosocialist Manifesto’ in 2001, which is of course based on the conviction that it is the “rampant industrialization” which “overwhelms the earth's capacity to buffer and contain ecological destabilization.” However, as the following quote from the manifesto implies, they clearly differ from the earlier socialist ideas which preferred authoritarian ways of adopting productivism without considering the limits of natural resources.

The manifesto explains that since capitalism thrives on constant growth of profitability, it “exposes ecosystems to destabilizing pollutants, fragments habitats that have evolved over aeons to allow the flourishing of organisms.” So, the biggest problem before the mankind today is neither terrorism, nor it is environmental tragedy, but it is “the internalized fatalism” which directs the humanity to believe that “there is no possible alternative to capital’s world order.” Rejecting this kind of pessimism, ecosociologists are determined to find out better substitute for the capitalist tendencies to empower their social welfare goals.

In order to attack the international human complacency in resisting the ecological ills of the capitalist imperialism, in the very beginning of their manifesto they express their determination to “reject all euphemisms” that conceal the brutality of capitalist exploitative strategies “under the names of democracy and human rights.” They clarify that capitalist-intensive industrialisation “squanders resources, and reduces the sensuous vitality of nature to the cold exchangeability required for the accumulation of capital.” Consequently, it has reduced “the majority of the world's people to a mere reservoir of labour power” and “expanded disparities in wealth and power to levels unprecedented in human history.” This present capitalist

system therefore needs to be replaced, and the previous forms of socialism which had failed due to its inherent weaknesses, need to be modified now to protect the environment. In this regard, Kovel and Lowy in the manifesto further clarifies that:

Ecosocialism retains the emancipatory goals of first-epoch socialism, and rejects both the attenuated, reformist aims of social democracy and the productivist structures of the bureaucratic variations of socialism. It insists, rather, upon redefining both the path and the goal of socialist production in an ecological framework. It does so specifically in respect to the “limits on growth” essential for the sustainability of society. These are embraced, not however, in the sense of imposing scarcity, hardship and repression. The goal, rather, is a transformation of needs, and a profound shift toward the qualitative dimension and away from the quantitative. (“Ecosociologist Manifesto”)

Löwy Michael succinctly describes the global significance, aims and the latest developments of the movement in his article published in 2018 in this way:

In synthesizing the basic tenets of ecology and the Marxist critique of political economy, *ecosocialism* offers a radical alternative to an unsustainable status quo. Rejecting a capitalist definition of “progress” based on market growth and quantitative expansion (which, as Marx shows, is a *destructive* progress), it advocates policies founded on non-monetary criteria, such as social needs, individual well-being, and ecological equilibrium. Ecosocialism puts forth a critique

of both mainstream “market ecology,” which does not challenge the capitalist system, and “productivist socialism,” which ignores natural limits.

("Why Ecosocialism: For a Red-Green Future")

When recovering ecobalance of the earth is a global urgency, India, whose cultural heritage descends from the ‘Aranyak Sanskriti’ (i.e. forest culture), is in a position to guide the globe through her eco-sensitive literature.

Here, one is reminded of the reverence the tribals exhibit for the Arjun tree in Mahasweta Devi’s short story *Arjun*. Under the shade of this stately tree, the tribals have celebrated their weddings, rituals and festivals for generations. This divine green deity symbolizes their existence. For them, as Manu Mangattu rightly points out, this tree is their “Leafy Sentinel.” They cannot think of a world without this green patriarch. Their rituals show the deep sense of gratitude they feel for this tree for its bounty and benediction- which symbolizes Nature.

Local politicians cum saw-mill-owners wanted to clear the space where Arjun stood in order to carry out a government road-construction-project. They try in vain to threaten and tempt the tribal youth to fell the tree; but not unlike the agitators of the Chipko Andolan of 1970s, the tribals called ‘Sabar’ also launch a successful struggle to save the Arjun tree from commercial logging.

The Sabars play a traditional trick. When the politician comes to fell the tree, he finds a huge mass of the tribals dancing around Arjun. The bewildered politician learns from someone that in a dream, Diga, a tribal youth, saw the forest deity in his dream, forbidding them to touch Arjun. Not only that, but the deity has commanded the politician to build a cement pulpit around Arjun. Seeing the people’s wrath and

its possible impact on vote-politics, the politician leave the place offering donation to build the pulpit to protect Arjun.

*The Ancestor*, the English translation of Mohanty's Oriya novel *Dadi Budha*, also talks about an ancient palm tree called 'Dadi Budha.' Quite close to Dadi Budha stands a termite mound called 'Hunka Budha'. Tribals revere these entities of nature as the palm tree is a symbol of tribal ancestors; and the mound, a symbol of an innocent tribal faith in nature.

Besides the primitive belief systems, it is the need-based survival realities which encourage the tribals to protect nature and her biodiversity by following their ancestors' advice to continue with their sustainable ways of life.

Like fictional accounts, many field studies have shown that tribals and other forest dwellers across the world have utilized natural resources for centuries with ecological discretion. Because they have helped the humanity in preserving the green covers and their flora and fauna to a great extent, humanity should treat them with utmost respect, and need to learn eco-resilient and sustainable modes of life from them. Hence, without making proper sanitary/housing/employment arrangements for the forest-dwelling communities well in advance, it is neither desirable nor it is advisable to forcefully exterminate them from their home lands. Quite contrary to this reality, due to their economic deprivation, tribal voices have been marginalized on the glocal environmental platforms.

#### **4.5 Ecosocialist Assessment of *Paraja*: Indian Contexts**

Mohanty's literary depiction of the drastic impact of oppressive policies on various aspects of tribal life is corroborated with the research data mentioned below- which throw light on the deep-rooted interlinks among the three glocal issues;

namely: widening splits between the rich and the poor, the declining graphs of human happiness, and the expulsion of the poor from their homelands.

*Oneness Vs. the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom* is the title of Vandana Shiva's recent book, which itself has captured the essence of the ongoing, global ecosocial issue. As if echoing the spirit of Shiva's book, Himanshu, in his article, "India: Extreme Inequality in Numbers," published in 2019, states that:

The top 10% of the Indian population holds 77% of the total national wealth. 73% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1%, while 67 million Indians who comprise the poorest half of the population saw only a 1% increase in their wealth. There are 119 billionaires in India. Their number has increased from only 9 in 2000 to 101 in 2017. Between 2018 and 2022, India is estimated to produce 70 new millionaires every day. Billionaires' fortunes increased by almost 10 times over a decade and their total wealth is higher than the entire Union budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19, which was at INR 24422 billion.

The graphs of economic growth and the average ecological destruction in India seem to be going in diametrically opposite directions. In their article "Economy Vs Ecology," Madhurima Nandy and Shristi Chowdhary have quoted the summary of the EPI (Environmental Performance Index of India) of 2018- which shows that India ranks 177 out of 180 countries in terms of her environmental health.

The statistics of the overall decrease in poverty in India sounds an optimistic note. However, in the Happiness Index of 2019, India stands 140 out of the 156

countries, as per the survey conducted by the UN-SDSN (Sustainable Development Solutions Network). In 2015, India was on 117 position in the same index.

Ratnapraya Barik, in the subsection entitled “Disadvantaged Developmental Policies” of a scholarly article (2016) informs that:

Tribal people who constituted 8.6% of the total population of India as per 2011 census also constituted 55.1% of the total development project-induced displaced persons up to 2010 on account of mega developmental projects like industries, mining, dams, wild life sanctuaries, parks and conservation of nature, etc...In this context take the Polavaram dam, which is to be built across the Godavari River which will displace around 400,000 people in the three states; Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa. Of them at least 150,000 are Tribals particularly vulnerable Tribal groups in terms of livelihood and preservation of distinctive cultural heritage are in shock and the rest [are] mostly Dalits dependent on minor forest produce for their livelihood. Displacement not only disrupts the lives of the individuals and families concerned, but also their entire communities and societies. In many cases, due to displacement, socio-economic systems and community structures break down. (160. “Human Rights and Constitutional Safeguards of Tribals in India: A Theoretical Perspective”)

Just as Barik’s scholarly article indicates, *Paraja* also succinctly fictionalizes drastic impact of the expulsion of a tribal family on the intimate bond they used to

cherish with the land they till; on the harmonious relationships they used to have with their fellow beings, and with the natural environs consisting of the beautiful hills covered with trees; with the silent valleys, the forest breezes, the pristine waterfalls, and the rivers that flow through the jungles of their Koraput district.

The statistics of the reports discussed above clearly suggest that in the developing countries like India, it must be taken into account that haphazard expulsions of the tribals from forests firstly deprive them of their traditional sources of subsistence. In search of jobs when they go to the industrial urban hubs, they add to the already overpopulated cities and their unemployed and unskilled masses. Ultimately this process turns dignified forest communities into helpless paupers who have to live on city-footpaths or in the slums wherein they are exposed to diverse kinds of exploitations.

A study of the characters of *Paraja* will also exhibit the fact that forced removal of the forest dwellers from their native lands will bring in its wake several undesirable social-cultural and ecological consequences. Firstly, it breaks tribal families economically since they depend on the collective forest produce for fuel, shelter, food and fodder for their cattle. Secondly, a physical divorce from the native soil certainly breaks people psychologically and emotionally too. And, most importantly- it certainly aggravates ecological destruction because along with the disappearance of the forest-dwelling communities and their cultural ethos, their sustainable life styles and ancient ecological wisdom also disappear.

Evictions of the tribes, it must be admitted, from forests result into erasure of the ecosensitive tribal ethos of the 'Aranyak Sanskriti' (i.e. Forest Culture) which exist in one or the other form in the tribal world existing in any part of the globe. Moreover, the links between the dramatic loss of the linguistic diversities of



indigenous cultures and the horrible rise in extinction rates of natural biodiversity in the post-global world are too obvious to be ignored.

The slower pace of the need-based, sustainable utilization of the natural resources by the tribals used to offer sufficient time to nature to recover its balance; whereas, as the ecosocialists would argue, the greed-based, fast-paced, automated extraction of the earth's resources has undoubtedly disrupted the global environmental rhythms and the social structures of the economically marginalized, local communities in multiple ways; and what supports this ecosocialist contention is the statistical data (mentioned in the first chapter) shows how dramatically the global environmental scenario in the post-industrial times has been deteriorated.

Political machineries of all nations, including India, aspire today to follow sustainable growth and strengthen self-reliance- but they evidently encourage consumerism and industrial capitalism in order to solidify economic development within their own territories by all means.

It cannot be denied that the industrial advancement that has taken place in the last five decades within India has been characterized by: a noticeable improvement in transportation and communication facilities, a dazzling rise in the prosperity of some corporate giants, and upgradation in the living standards of the middle class.

However, at the same time, India has also seen a dramatic hike in the ecological degradation due to urbanisation, and due to the excessive and intensive use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture. Statistics about pollution indices, unemployment, the number of industrial disasters, suicide rate of farmers and an incredibly widening economic gap between the rich and the poor do not sound optimistic notes.

It would indeed be interesting to assess in the following section as to how Mohanty had envisioned the afore-discussed issues more than seven decades ago in *Paraja*.

### **Ecosocialist Echoes in *Paraja***

Set in the feudalistic milieu of the pre-independent India, all was well with the middle-aged Sukru's world in the beginning. This hardworking man was living joyfully in a tiny hut situated in a small village called 'Sarsupadar', which falls into the Koraput district of Orissa.

In spite of their poverty, hardships, and struggles to cope up with changing socio-Natural environs, these guileless and credulous people live peaceful and sustainable lives; singing their folk songs in the moonlit nights; dancing together in the evening in the quiet woods; drinking their wines; enjoying the bonds of their cultural solidarity; celebrating their freedom under the open sky and continuing thus their ancestral modes of simple lives. The inherent pains and dangers of living in the forest regions seem to be thus diluted by the simple pleasures they enjoy in the lap of the forest lands.

The internal harmony of the jungle begins to be jeopardized as soon as the brutal duo of the outsiders from the modern world- a money-lender called 'Shahukar' (symbolizing economic hegemony), and an insensitive forest-guard cum revenue collector (repressive law and order enforcement) enter the precincts of the forest.

One part of Sukru's hut accommodates his family consisting of his two sons Mandia and Tikra, and his two young daughters Jili and Bili; and the other part of his hut stores grains, seeds and farming tools.

In their village, 'Barik' works as a messenger of the village; the 'Naika' (i.e., the headman) collects tilling-rents of the land on behalf of the Raja (i.e., the King), who owned some parts of the forests. Revenue Inspector is called 'Ribini.'

'Sahukar', a rich money lender, who offers grain-loans besides money, to the poor and illiterate tribals- for which he charges unreasonably exorbitant interest rates from them. He has close connections with all the officials of the police and the forest department, who used to come to roam the forests to have some fun. Sahukar imitates the Ribini called Garaja Sundara. People believe that the Robini has passed on his occult powers to the Sahukar. Both are in their fifties. Both keep similar moustaches – "bushy, and bristling like the hairs of a wild boar." Like the latter, the former wears heavy gold rings in ears, paints vermilion marks on the forehead to proclaim an air of sanctity around him, sits on tiger-skin and chants mantras with "mysterious gestures," smokes hemp and drinks liquor. Both are known to have "weakness for women" and both being "a terror among these hills" used to beat, curse and threaten the tribals at "slightest provocation" (195). Mohanty remarks further that the Sahukar follows footsteps of the Ribini just as a jackal follows the tiger's footsteps (196). Robini helps the Sahukar in doctoring land papers so that the mortgaged lands of the tribals could be converted to his name.

Another important character is the Forest Guard- whose duty is to supervise the agricultural activities and the logging carried out in the forest by the tribals. He has been authorized by the Raja to rent some stretches of forest lands to the tribals for agricultural purpose.

In fact, historical record says that the term 'Raja' also used to denote financially most powerful zamindars of India during the British rule; and a 'Sahukar' in those days, like that of in *Paraja*, was also one who was a tradesman as well as a

money lender. A Report on the Deccan Riots of 1957 states that one money lender had “charged over Rs 2000 as interest on a loan of Rs 100” (“Colonialism and the Countryside” 258, 276, 283).

The money-lender of *Paraja* sounds more dangerous than the historical Sahukars due to his lubricious gaze on the tribal women. Nor does the Forest Officer of *Paraja* legs behind this Sahukar in his lusty pursuits of the helpless tribal girls.

Mohanty intentionally uses capital letters throughout the novel to mention the ‘Forest Guard’ to satirize the inflated ego of this petty official. He exploits the helpless and innocent tribals on account of their fear of the written law and imprisonment.

In 2010, Arundhati Roy went into the forests of Chhattisgarh to have a close look into the lives of the tribal youth turned Naxalites to understand the causes of their too long violent reactions against the government and police authorities. In an interview, an Adivasi youth from the forests of Chhattisgarh, told Roy that:

Every morning, forest officials, even the most junior of them, would appear in villages like a bad dream, preventing people from ploughing their fields, collecting firewood, plucking leaves, picking fruit, grazing their cattle, from *living*.... People would be beaten, arrested, humiliated, their crops destroyed.... (Their sexual exploitation of women was just an added perk in a hardship posting). (“Walking with the Comrade”)

The Forest Guard of *Paraja* is also a lecherous man; whose eyes look for the “bathing beauties under the waterfall” (24). This man has been assigned a duty of collecting tax from the tribals for grazing cattle in the forest. He roams in the jungles with his gun to catch any poor forester- who collects honey without license

or cuts trees to build his shelter. One can spotlight the exploitation being carried out on account of the socio-economic hegemonies and the power-game played by them if one looks at the ways in which Mohanty juxtaposes the axe and the gun. To point out the dichotomies among Nature/Culture; Village/City; Oppressor/Oppressed- Mohanty introduces The Forest Guard in the following way:

He could easily be recognized as one from the civilized world, because in those hills, where people went about half-naked, he was dressed in shirt and shorts. In the eyes of the hill folk, he was a person in high authority, for he was a forest guard and it was his job to catch people felling trees in the jungle. He would bellow at them and even have them prosecuted.... although his rank in the official hierarchy was insignificant, they stood in awe of him. (9)

To point out the self-reliance and simplicity of the tribal world, Mohanty says, Sukru's "needs are simple: a bowl of mandia gruel every morning and again in the evening, and a strip of cloth four fingers wide to wrap around his loins- and these he has never lacked (2).

When the story opens, we learn that Sukru's wife Sombari was dragged away and killed by a tiger when she had gone to collect timber in the forest before three years.

Sukru and his sons, and his two daughters work too hard to support their existence. Sukru is around fifty now. His life-long slog, not unlike Saboor of Bhatt's *Oceanside Blues*, has turned his land fertile. He feels "restful and contented." In the evening the family gathers around fire, exchanging pleasantries and jokes. Sukru's heart is filled with "pride and confidence" as he looks at his treasure: his four children

and his small hut (2). According to their marriage customs, the boys need to offer bride-price to the girl's father and the groom, like the weaver-bird, must have built his own hut before the bride comes home.

To fulfill these conditions and to continue to eke out their living, the tribals work hard on the forest lands. In the eyes of the tribals, "everything grew on the hills and in the forests was theirs to use, like the sunlight and rain and air and water, whose use no one could restrict" (33). FRA of 2006 which grants access to the forest-dwellers to collect the forest produce for their daily life in fact echoes this reality.

After a day's profuse sweat and hard toil, when Sukru sits to smoke outside his home for a while, he often fondly remembers his deceased wife. He dreams of getting his sons and daughters married to play with his grandchildren afterwards. His elder son Mandia who is as robust as his father, dreams of marrying his sweet heart and fiancée Kajodi; his elder daughter Jili dreams of marrying Bagla; his younger children Tikra and Bili have not still decided their prospective life partners.

According to the tribal custom, as dark falls, that the young boys and girls go to sleep in their respective dormitories standing not far from each other. In the moonlit nights, like other tribal boys, Bagla also sing love songs addressed to his beloveds Jili lying awake in the other dormitory, trying to woo her while playing on their flutes; or twanging their 'dungudungas.' On festival days, they enjoy being with one another, dance and drink, laugh and hunt together.

But the pleasant colors of the seasons soon change in the lives of Sukru's family members as the dark shades of poverty begin to loom large, and "the dead trees sob in the wind for the passing of spring" (129).

Fate of Sukru's family takes a U-turn as soon as Sukru displeases the person standing at the lowest rung in the bureaucratic hierarchy. He rejects the obnoxious demand of the

Forest Guard to send his daughter Jili to warm his bed. Sukru's rage knows no bound when Kau Paraja, a young goti in his village, comes to him to pass on the the Forest Guard's demand. "A tribal roused to fury is like a beast of the jungle," Mohanty writes, "Sukru Jani was flushed and swollen with anger, his vision blurred" (31).

Consequently, on one fateful day, the petty-minded Forest Guard demonizes him and puts wrong blames on Sukru for clearing some patches of the forest without seeking his permission. As a result, Sukru has been fined heavily.

What scares this simple-minded tribal most is the scopes of imprisonment and the social stigma that follows it. Sukru's vehement requests to prove his innocence fails before the officials as some of his fellow tribesmen, intimidated and tempted by the Forest Guard, offers wrong witnesses and false proofs, although they know that Sukru is innocent and too poor to pay the fine of thirty scores (around sixty rupees).

So, for paying the exorbitant fine, Sukru is compelled to borrow money from the greedy and wealthy money lender Ramchandra Bisoi, called 'Sahukar' - who makes the illiterate tribal put a thumb on a fraudulent contract. Focusing on the exploitative designs of Sahukar, in Marxian way, Mohanty describes Sahukar in this way:

He has his own ledgers, filled with strange scribblings in red and blue ink, the mysteries of which the bewildered goti can never unravel. And the magic figures in the ledgers grow and grow, and the goti's debts increase from year to year, and his bondage never ends.

From every hill the red tracks came down and converged at the Sahukar's house like the thread in a spider's web, and along these tracks came many a tribesman from the remotest hills.

Some brought their wives' ornaments to the Sahukar, wrapped in bits of rag. Others brought the produce from their fields. Others again had nothing to pledge but their own bodies. Others had nothing to pledge but their own bodies, And the Sahukar's house swallowed everything up, and nothing that entered ever came out again; and the house grew and bulged. (123)

Marx's *Communist Manifesto* does not approve of the "icy water egoistical calculation" of capitalism which has "resolved personal worth into exchange value" (8). Besides opposing dehumanization intensified by capitalist systems, *Manifesto* also criticizes, not unlike Gandhi, such systems which make one man dependent on the other; villages dependent on towns; and the developing nations on the developed economies (12). It rejects the ideas of "agglomerated production" due to which property is concentrated in a few hands (13).

So, a thumb on Sahukar's contract papers overnight turns Sukru and his son Tikra, once the free land-owners, into Sahukar's bonded labors called 'Gotis.' Mandia works hard on his farm with his sisters but they are barely able to sustain themselves. Mandia's plan of paying the debt of Sahukar and of collecting money for the bride-price to bring his Kajodi home can be fulfilled only if he gathers some money. Not knowing how to collect that amount, he starts brewing liquor. Someone from his tribe informs the excise team, which catches Mandia and fines him. To pay the fine, again Mandia has to seek loan from the Sahukar- against which he becomes 'goti' to join his father and his brother.



Then, Sahukar bogs Sukru and his family down into an ineluctable depth of compound interest, which, like a boa constrictor, begins to coil around, squeeze and then strangle Sukru and his whole family.

‘Gotis’ are bound to work for their masters’ land and house and cattle for unlimited number of hours while following the master’s dictates without raising a single question against any sort of injustice or intolerable amount of persecution that might be inflicted upon them. Aged around fifty-three, this money-lender sets his predatory eyes on Sukru’s nubile daughter Jili as well as on his fertile land.

Bikram Das, the translator of *Paraja*, rightly observes that the killing of his wife by tiger certainly upsets Sukru; but he somehow tolerates this blow as fighting against the wild nature was a part of the tribal life. What was difficult for him was to understand designs of the wolf-like human beings like Sahukar, who lends him a small amount of money to pay the fine charged wrongly by the Forest Guard. According to Das, what is beyond the understanding of Sukru’s simple soul, is

the infinitely convoluted process by which he and his children are transformed from free man into ‘gotis’.... for ever. He cannot comprehend why a man should be arrested and fined for cutting down trees in the jungle. Sukru Jani and his children can only gape as the coils tighten around them. (vii.

“Translator’s Introduction”)

Authenticity of Mohanty’s fiction lies in his de-romanticized portrayal of the collective human psychology which is governed by the ostensible reciprocities that exist between the temptations of grabbing more and more money and the dreams of status and comfortability they induce. The sense of status even in this tribal world is based on the material possessions the community members have. When the male

members of the family leave home and the farm to serve as gotis, though struggling against the starvation, when Jili go to the communal dance, Mohanty remarks:

she seemed to be commiserated with, rather than welcomed.

Here, as elsewhere, the attitudes of the community to the individual depend entirely on the known extent of his possessions. Only in this primitive world, the individual's wealth is measured in terms of the quantity of grain in his attic.

On the surface, there is little evidence of class snobbery or prejudice, but sooner or later its existence becomes inescapably obvious" (118).

Sahukar, the exploiter, who has been compared with clearly represents the evils the economic hegemony can engender. But, Sukru's psychology, who is a victim of economic exploitation, also thinks of expanding his agricultural operations over larger stretches of land by de-foresting the jungle.

For example, surveying the hills before him, Sukru would also often think:

How vast the forest is!... how nice it would be if all these trees could be cut down and the ground completely cleared .... to raise our crops.... After all, no one can own the forest. Land can be owned by anyone and the owner can grow crops there. God created all these lands for human beings-what a shame that man prevents his fellow men from putting them to their proper use! (22, 23)

Of course, unlike the modern, high-tech chain-saws, Sukru and his three sons with their axes, could not clear the jungles as quickly as the modern corporate houses can do today. And, the difference between need and greed has also to be

considered impartially in such cases. It can be understood that it is the greed that governs Sahukar's actions and it is the need for money to be spent after bride-price and other tribal customs that activate tribals like Sukru Jani to work hard on forest lands.

Besides the daughters and wives of the tribesmen, when the Sahukar's preying eyes fall on the fertile lands of Sukru's villages, not unlike the capitalist owner of a corporate house today, he unfolds his narrative of growth before the suspecting villagers to convince them about the shower of benefits which will fall upon them once he enters their village as owner of large stretches of land. He says he will set up a warehouse of grains to offer loans of paddy and mandia; he will offer them jobs as laborers on his orchard; he will build roads and a water tank inside the village. "You will see," he proclaims, "how I change the face of the village" (253). In fact, the face of the village and lives of the tribals like Sukru do change- but they change for worse.

Sahukar's 'gotis' get together in the evenings to whisper away their hushed-up wrath for Sahukar- who makes them work like animals even when they are sick, keep them in most unhygienic conditions, does not grant them a single leave when they need them most, snatches tribal girls away from their home and kick them the next day without worrying whether she drowns herself in the river for the disgrace she has brought.

"The great ones of the earth," comments Mohanty, "are unconcerned about the opinions that such insignificant folk hold about them." They remain blind to the "ashes remaining from the holocaust" which "they themselves have caused." They cannot see "the fire that smoulders underneath. And the fire feeds on itself and waits (127).

Following lines taken from Umashankar Joshi's well-known Gujarati sonnet "Jatharagni" (જાથરલગ્ન), like Mohanty, also warn the well-fed class of people whose utter smugness make them turn deaf ear to the pathetic cries of the poor homeless people dying of starvation, who paradoxically works to produce grain and to build palaces for the rich. The poet thus forewarns the 'haves':

Build, build you may, temples touching the sky  
 And, build tall minarets, and build palaces high!  
 Embellish them with crystals, and hang chandeliers  
 Rejoice you may the sprinkles of the water fountains!  
 - - - [but]  
 How long will the future hold on the soul-smothering boulder?  
 And, to bring an end to the mockery of the paupers when  
 The fire of the hunger  
 of the starving tongues will flare up,  
 stretching out its myriad tongues;  
 Not an iota of the ashes of the crumbled ruins could be  
 traced!  
 (Own Translation)

By narrating the pathetic situation of the poor with Gandhian sympathy, and by projecting its dire consequences of the same in Marxist fashion, Joshi's above lines and Mohanty's afore-mentioned comments attempts effectively to the whole humanity to respond to the need of addressing socio-economic balance before it is too late.

Sahukar curses Sukru and does not grant him leaves, when Sukru pleads with his master to allow him to go to his village for a few days to reach in time to harvest

his fields, and take care of his unplowed land. Sukru is rightly worried about the empty grain-jars in his house and the starving daughters he has left behind. Consequently, the land-taxes on him pile up and his daughters have left their village to work as daily wagers in a town nearby where their supervisor molest them- which drags them into a kind of prostitution. “In the evenings”, Mohanty writes, “they would both come out dressed in their best and with their hair groomed and plaited and garnished with flowers.” And, sometimes, they “would gloat over: the “treasures they had accumulated.” These treasures contained “coins, whole rupees, brand new sarees, perfumed soap, bottles of scented oil for the hair, and beads and rings”. They felt “They were rich. And life was full... there was no time to think” (225,224).

Back in their village, to mend matters, Sukru buys freedom from his serfdom by mortgaging his fertile land to Sahukar- indeed a “bitter humiliation...to return to the village where once [he] walked with heads held high” (231). It is decided that he would be able to redeem his land when he pays twenty-five rupees to Sahukar. It is a word-of-mouth agreement based on tribal faith. Sukru calls on the “Dharmu-the Just One, and the earth Goddess Dhartini to be his witnesses” (233).

In a stormy night, when he comes back to his deserted house, he sees “gaping holes in the thatch,” crumbled mud-walls, floor with grass and weeds grown out of it, broken dungdungas in the corner, and tatters of his daughter’s garments (231,234).

Mohanty, not unlike Thomas Hardy, also aptly uses descriptions of the seasons and eternal objects to project the moods and situations of his characters throughout the novel. In the small paragraph given above, the “night” is “stormy.” The walls of Sukru’s house, like the foundation of his family, are crumbled. The ‘broken dungdungas’ indicates broken hearts of Mandia and his sister Jili.

Following Mandia's reticence, which was enhanced due to his inability to pay the bride-price, his dream girl and fiancée Kajodi jilts him and marries Bagla- who was Jili's suitor and would-be-husband.

Old Sukru is now alone as his two sons, being gotis, are still away; and daughters have also gone to the city. Knowing not what to feed them, thinking of bringing his daughters back, "As he lay there in the darkness of the evening, shadows from the past crept into his mind. Everything he had tried to build had crumbled to dust---why? He could find no reason." Listening the weeping of his dead wife in the winds howling outside, he breaks down, crying out to the Gods: "How cruel you are!" But the wind only howled the louder" (234). Sukru may not be able to discover the roots of his tragedy or the source of cruelty which have ruined his life. But-as we discussed above-ecosocialists would surely claim that the roots of his tragedy lie in the economic disparity and hegemonic relationships it engenders.

Wading his way through the forest in the stormy night, Sukru somehow reaches the town and finds out his daughters' hut. Being dressed up for the evening, recognizing his father's voice, his daughters rush to him. He just stands in the door; motionless, letting his tears flow; his daughters clinging to his shoulders (237). "A Paraja girl works only for her father or her husband" A girl of his tribe, working as a paid labor was an affront to his ancestors. Soon they return to their village but their land has already gone to the Sahukar.

Sukru somehow persuades the headman to let him work on an unclaimed land which is some distance away from his village. Nandibali, a poor Parja boy, shows readiness to work as his goti against the payment he has to pay for the bride price for Bili.

On the other hand, waiting to be free from their serfdom, working hard, Mandia and Tikra live lives of gotis in a wretched condition. Mandia is not able to forget Kajodi, whose smiles still make him sob in his dreams. Both brothers stay together in a broken cattle-shed-like shack with rotten grass thatch and where snakes, scorpions and white ants visit frequently.

One day, a goti, crying his heart out, when shares a shocking news with Sahukar that his brother whom the Sahukar had sent to graze his cattle in a tiger-infested area was killed by a man-eating tiger, instead of offering him solace, Sahukar shouts at him: “ Now stop that- you idiot ....Never mind about your [dead] brother, I must have my money back. You must repay your brother’s debt, or I shall take to court and have your land and oxen sold.” Not paying any heed to their protests, Sahukar now orders Tikra to go along with his buffalo to the same forest. Mandia decides to perform this duty instead of Tikra. Seething inside with anger but being a debt-bound slave, Mandia becomes prepared to carry out the new duty, “with bowed head and downcast eyes, obsessed with his own suffering” (271).

Sahukar comes to stay in Sukru’s village to survey the agricultural activities being carried out on land Sukru has mortgaged to him. Sahukar goes on bribing Madhu Ghashi, a tribal youth, to convince Jili to go to his hut. The unbearable vacuum in Jili’s life, the insult she has faced from her own community members on account of their poverty, the money and sweet words being sent by Sahukar through Madhu, and the prospects of a happy life succumb Jili to Sahukar lust at last. After all, it was a Paraja custom that a girl has freedom to live with anyone she chooses as her husband. When Kau Paraja breaks this news to Sukru, Sukru again gets a severe blow to his pride. Brooding over the lost honor of his Paraja tribe, he feels

he has now lost his face; and “The Sahukar has robbed him of his last possession” (310).

To save herself from Sukru’s wrath, Jili goes to stay with the Sahukar, and the latter says in a public meeting that he is ready to pay the bride price. Nandibali tries to persuade Sukru to accept the bride-price, but Sukru does not accept this offer. Already having his wife and children at home, Sahukar shifts Jili to a farmhouse located in a village which is not far from Sukru’s village.

The news of Jili’s elopement with Sahukar enrage Mandia and Tikra. To free themselves from the clutches of the Sahukar by all means, taking a risk of imprisonment, they brew and sell liquor to the tribals during a festival, and gather enough money to pay the debt to Sahukar at a stretch. But, along with some village elders, when the father and the sons go to meet with the Sahukar offering him money, the Sahukar, who is not willing to leave that fertile land, throws a net of a variety of excuses onto the gullible villagers. He says the money being offered to him by Sukru and his sons must have been stolen from somewhere- for which he must report to the police. Sahukar also shocks Sukru by revealing the news that Sukru has given his land to Sahukar for thirty years; and it is written in the deed. Moreover, Sahukar demands more money for the sum he has invested in the land mortgaged by Sukru (336).

Nothing gets settled, and not being able to harm the money lender, on returning home, sons blame the father for picking a quarrel with the forest guard in the first place; and Sukru blames Mandia for the fine they had to pay to the excise officer for brewing the liquor without permission. Finally, going to court is the only option left for them.



They spend money after appeasing their own fellow tribesmen with wine and coins, who show readiness to offer witness in their favor. They pay charges to the Petition-Writer, who works in the court of Koraput. But, with the help of Madhu Ghashi, Sahukar manages to extract promise from the headman and the Barik and other important men of the tribe to speak in favor of him. Although now being tired of Jili and thinking of shunning her now, the Sahukar even later on convinces Jili as to how her father and brothers are bent upon usurping her land. The Revenue Inspector, Garaja Sundar, is his old friend- who had appointed the headman. Sahukar can afford to keep a lawyer, but Sukru cannot.

In the court, the magistrate fixes a date of hearing, and asks both parties to bring their witnesses on that day- failing which Sukru's claims will become null and void. Illiterate tribals cannot remember the days and the dates and their figures as literate people do. So, Sukru trusts the Petition-Writer and his friend called 'Pujari' in this matter, who teach them what they will speak on the day of the final hearing. The Sahukar of course manages to bribe them both- who share the details of the date of the final hearing in a way that confuses Sukru's tribal mind. Sukru returns home along with his sons, anticipating their victory.

When news reaches Mandia that Sahukar tries to win over their witnesses, he gets flared up. In a drunken state, furious Mandia tells Sukru he does not know how to handle the Sahukar. "I am going to cut him up into little bits and burry the pieces in that land.... I'll kill that dog..." (361).

Sukru and his sons and their nine witnesses start walking three days in advance to reach Koraput, but on reaching there they are shocked to find the Petition-Writer telling them that the date of hearing was gone. And their case stands

dismissed since the Sahukar, who was present in the final hearing, has told that the matter is settled between him and Sukur.

The community members who return with them to their village try to console the speechless Sukru that still they can go to the Sahukar to request him to honor the actual terms of their contract and return their land. When they ask furious Mandia not to pick a quarrel with the big man like Sahukar and trust the fate decided by the Dharmu, Mandia tells them clearly that he will go to have last word with the Sahukar the next day, will offer him the money as decided; and if he doesn't accept it, he will go and till his own land without bothering about Sahukar's claims on it.

When on the daybreak, the father and his two sons leave for the village where Jili live with the Sahukar as his kept- they nurture a distant hope that perhaps if they fall at the Sahukar's feet, weep, and beg for mercy, the stony heart of Sahukar may melt.

On reaching Sahukar's home, all the three prostrate before Sahukar, crying, praying, begging him to accept the money and return their piece of land- the only hope for their survival- their bowl of rice. But, the Sahukar's rage knows no bounds. He goes on cursing and kicking the poor Parajas. When they call out to Jili, the Sahukar threatens them that the way he has confiscated their land and grab Jili, he will also take away Bili and their wives too. He will make them run from court to court, and make them his gotis forever to see them rubbing their nose in the dust.

Raising his fists, addressing them as sons of whores, when the Sahukar tells the trio how "blubbering like women" they have come to him, "Inside the heads of the Parajas, something snapped. Their eyes glazed, and they trembled all over. Mandia Jani leapt forward with a roar like a wild beast" (372).

Mandia's axe raises, and falls on the Sahukar's head. The other two join the scuffle. Blows after blows are delivered on the Shahukar, who falls like "an axed tree." Their axes drip and clothes drench with blood; only the splash of blood on their faces bring them to their senses. Putting their arms around each other, they weep, "their tears mingling with their blood." That afternoon, they go to the police station, surrender themselves admit their crime (373).

In the concluding lines of the story, Gopinath's depiction of the rise of the "scarlet" sun going up through the mist- turning everything into red- predicts in 1945 the rise of the Naxalist movement across the heartlands of India in 1960s and afterwards.

As it has been discussed here, although ecosocialists have succeeded to a great extent in highlighting the most harmful, socio-environmental impact of the extractive practices on the economically marginalized humans, their major limitation, according to the followers of deep-ecology, is that they exclude from their purview the question of the human impact on the ecological well-being of the non-human world.

While appreciating two texts by Bhatt in light of the deep ecological thought, the next chapter attempts to understand as to how and why the supporters of the deep ecological movement insist upon incorporating into the environmental discourse the issue pertaining to the drastic human impact on the non-human world.

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