



SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PEOPLE OF AATHI IN GIFT IN GREEN BY SARA JOSEPH

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ABSTRACT

Humans are inherently dependent on nature, which is divine, in all facets of their lives. Natural resources provide plenty of things that are used by people. Nevertheless, a lot of resources are running out quicker than they can be replenished. In this case, sustainability is the key term to withstand natural resources for the benefit of both current and future generations. Sarah Joseph's novel Gift in Green is written from a sustainability standpoint. Accordingly, she uses the backdrop of an ancient village Aathi, which becomes a legendary and ethereal setting. There, people and the natural world coexist peacefully to maintain sustainability. However, there are challenges of meddling commercial and urban forces that disturb this balance. The plot closes on a positive note by outlining the triumph of primal forces over contemporary commercial agents through resistance. The aim of the article reveals the challenges encountered by the people of Aathi, for sustainability to promote ecological justice, wherein all species are accorded equal rights and respect.

Keywords: sustainability, human, primordial, Aathi

Introduction

Humans are blind to the reality that nature watches everything and will take revenge on those who damage it. They are blind to the kindness of nature, which has given them everything, yet they consistently display their treachery to it because of human greed. Here, literature plays a vital part in the development of environmental consciousness. Accordingly, it reveals that the environment is essential to human life, and it is to be preserved for the benefit of all living things, both now and in the future. It can be mentioned that the process of sustainability is fostered by well-being through literature. Humans today share a level of environmental concern never seen before. Since nature is the only place where humans can live, it provides food, water, and air for all living things. When there is no disruption to the natural cycle, the environment is healthy. In contrast, any disruption of nature's balance will have a complete impact on the environment, which might endanger human and other living things' lives.

The aim of the current study is to reveal the balance between humankind and the environment in Sarah Joseph's novel *Gift in Green* (2011) in order to promote the sustainable growth of Mother Earth. The study demonstrates how the 'Aathi', the heritage village, is transformed into a consumerist culture. Many living and non-living species rely on the village to survive and it also supports people who come looking for survival. The study objectives are:

1. To realise environmental concerns from the perspective of today.
2. To comprehend how literature contributes to raising environmental consciousness.
3. To examine environmental deterioration and to favor in sustainable living.

Hypothesis

Humans are always in pain because complete human suffering is painful. They experience not only financial loss, mental agony, and physical ailments but also their basic requirements, such as Natural resources. Human pain comes in many forms; however, one of the most common is maintaining the sustainability of Natural resources. The theme in *Gift in Green* is unique fiction that shows humans' immense suffering as the terrible results of man's brutality towards the natural world. The theme is centred on the idea of sustainability and draws inspiration from the numerous environmental problems that Kerala has faced. These issues also have consequences that affect millions of marginalized people globally. Therefore, the hypothesis is that the human relationship with soil has changed because of the transition from agriculture to agribusiness. The study thus bridges the critical gap that humans are in no way higher than other living species.

The Notion of Alternate Development

Many crises are seen in the modern world due to the devastation of nature, which turned it from fertile to infertile. Sustainability is in a terrible position because of man's greediness in trying to dominate nature. The earth is confronting depletion in such a dire state that a strong ecosystem is essential to its existence. Humanity has a significant duty to shape human behaviour in order to live in harmony with its natural surroundings. Every single creature of God must cooperate with one another to live sustainably. Therefore, there is a need in all walks of life to highlight this social issue. It is reflected in contemporary literature to create awareness among the readers. Hence, writing about Nature is an essential component of Indian writing in English. India has developed a strongly critical attack on environmental concerns in addition to the canon of literature. Many Indian novels stress the need to develop an ecological consciousness while addressing the current environmental problem. These novels have taken center stage in the worldwide discourse. Not to mention, Sarah Joseph describes the ethical, cultural, and social struggles of the area.

The nontraditional storyline of Sara Joseph's *Gift in Green* depicts Aathi's deterioration, demise, and revival. The marginal community in Aathi cannot afford the damaging development that Kumaran, a person who is greed of humanity undertakes in the story. The people have enough nutrition from their indigenous culture and way of life. They have a happy, self-fulfilled existence. Later, due to Kumaran's greed cleared woods, disturbed biodiversity, and contaminated and landfilled water bodies, all threaten the customs of their community way of life. The plot challenges the prevailing conception of development and proposes a few alternative paths forward that take the environment and regional demands for natural resources into consideration.

The study depicts Aathi becomes a representation of the resourceful, which is devastated by corporate power structures and global tycoons. The study foreshadows and warns those who face the depletion of natural resources that things will get worse if action not taken to protect it. The domination turns nature and humans into silent victims. The omniscient narrator's words vividly capture the intimate bond that exists between humans and nature. The narrative therefore moves through the domains of local pollution and misuse concerns before reaching a global danger and international threat from the powerful countries.

The traditional concept of development in Aathi defined the inclusive growth that maximizes wellbeing for the greatest number of people. It avoids detrimental effects on the environment, which is the source of the people's existence and means of subsistence. It achieves what is known as sustainable development in current parlance, a delicate balance between human and the environment. This well-balanced system is unsettled by the incursion of modernity, represented in Kumaran's story, with its own concept of growth based on the material possibilities of a few powerful corporations, and it unscrupulously abuses the bounty of Aathi. The deterioration of the land is unreliable since the contemporary concept of development disregards the obligations it owes in return. The developed Aathi is now a dirty backyard and dumping site for large cities instead of being the verdant gift of nature.

The Aathi people's spiritual decline began when young people, primarily men, developed an interest in farming and fishing. In *Short Glimpse to Sarah Joseph's Gift in Green* (2011), Indian critic Depaika Pandey glorifies this novel as a "fusion between nature and civilization." (13)

People all around the world have already noticed imbalances in their daily lives, which are the result of environmental injustice. The way that people are harming the environment suggests that there will be difficulties in maintaining the planet. Modern civilization is at high risk due to carbon emissions, environmental degradation, shrinking green spaces, scarcity of water, and growing unplanned urbanization. Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* explores commodity culture and contemporary imperialism. Based on the historical framework, the analysis explores how globalisation transforms into a new form. The analysis highlights the idea that coexisting with Nature is essential to human life. Since Man pushes the boundaries of Nature's influence, it has the ultimate ability to subjugate him.

The study reveals the interaction between humans and the environment, which highlights the greed of contemporary humanity while also capturing the beauty and suffering of the people. The industrial-scientific paradigm of Kumaran's development plans sees Aathi as a vault to be exploited. In contrast, to the strong sense of connection and rootedness that exists between the area and its inhabitants. Kumaran ignores the intrinsic significance of Aathi's ecosystems in his attempt to realise his vision of development. Therefore, he views it as an adversary that he must subdue and subjugate in order to make money in the capitalist system. Kumaran's notion can be compared to Dean Curtin's view in *Chinnagounder's Challenge: The Question of Ecological Citizenship* (1999), where he argues that "a minor portion of the world's population has autonomy over resource consumption dynamics, while the majority is confined to the periphery." (35)

Aathi eventually devolves into a waste yard with hazardous materials. The main means of existence is taken away from the ecosystem, which depends on the limited resources in its immediate environment. Thus, the narrative closes with fruitless attempts to resist driven proponents of modernity's advancement taking over its heritage, culture, and spirituality. Progress is essential as it determines the nation's growth, but sustainable development is urgently needed. *Gift in Green* supports the entire ecosystem while taking development strategies.

Resistance to the Invasion of Land and Life

The novel creates opportunities for life practices based on love and care for one another and respect for Mother Earth by describing the distinctive customs and environmentally conscious culture of the Aathi people. Stories of Aathi, the land being bought and sold exclusively to the residents, the refusal of greedy developers to set foot on the property, the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources, etc., serve as avenues for the people's resistance to the invasion.

Sarah Joseph brilliantly captures women's deep connection to the natural world. It can be observed from the research that not a single woman's character hurts the environment. After being abandoned by Kumaran, Kunjimathu sets out to find the water life stead. Despite facing several challenges, she never gives up easily. She is an advocate for the environment and its health, and she is in perfect harmony with the natural world.

Shailaja is another outstanding character who is unable to tolerate the disgusting and unclean atmosphere of Aathi. Layer upon layer of crap covers the wells, ponds, channels, streams, and backwaters that extend out in front of the home like an ocean. Shailaja, ever the independent woman, stands at the forefront. She tries her every nerve to save Nature from getting depleted. Ultimately, Aathi decomposes into a putrefaction and pollution carrier. A small minority group vehemently opposes the destructive inclinations incidentally, these are people born out of historical turmoil. For this little group, Porinchu Chakramakkal and Advocate Grace Chaly provide a solid support system. Advocate Grace, who appears frequently in the plot, comes to Aathi, and removes all the trash and plastic that has been left on the property.

The analysis creates opportunities for life practices based on love and care for one another and respect for Mother Earth by describing the distinctive customs and environmentally conscious culture of the Aathi people. The people may gain independence and empowerment through many means, such as storytelling evenings in Aathi, land sales and purchases restricted to the facility's prisoners, preventing avaricious developers from establishing a foothold on the property, and preserving and responsibly using natural resources.

Kumaran wants to build a bridge in the community. As a matter of fact, that bridge would not improve the wellbeing of the farmers. For a small group of people like Kumaran, who wish to demolish the village's many natural and environmental treasures, it would only result in financial gain. Nevertheless, Ponmani, Kunjootan, and Shailaja

are among the characters who are against building the bridge. “We must not allow the bridge to be complete,” Ponmani declared. “Resist it by all means and, if need be, bring it down.” (153) By placing the most value on the distinctive, the plot creates opportunities for harmony with Mother Nature and the lovely customs and eco-friendly culture of the Aathi people. The people did not succumb to the act of selling the land to outsiders, preventing avaricious developers from setting foot on the property and preserving and using natural resources sustainably.

Conclusion

The last several decades of human history have demonstrated the transition where humans ruled the Earth. The capital system disregards the natural and survival economies, which operate independently of the dynamics of simple production and consumption, in the service of a development paradigm centered on material and economic progress. The advancement based on the growth of material wealth ignores the intrinsic values ingrained in both living and non-living things since it views everything in terms of its use. Such expansion frequently ruins the environment’s purity and holiness. The tale of Aathi’s transformation from a tranquil estate to a hazardous waste site reveals an urban-industrial growth strategy and its unintended consequences. The study reveals that it is risky on several fronts to maintain such a model of growth as the norm. In addition to degrading the environment, the resource-intensive growth pattern benefits a tiny percentage of the population economically while destroying the resources necessary for the rest to survive. The majority of the population bears the environmental costs of resource use, while a small but significant portion of the population benefits from it. To substantiate the above statement, the sustainability of the people of Aathi has been explained for the awareness of the protection of the environment.

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