

# THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL PLANT HUMANITIES



organised by  
THE GLOBAL PLANT  
HUMANITIES NETWORK

KATHMANDU, NEPAL  
2-3 MAY, 2025

VENUE:  
**THE MALLA HOTEL**



HOSTED BY  
**MEDHAVI COLLEGE**  
(AFFILIATED WITH POKHARA UNIVERSITY)

Nulungu Research Institute, University of Notre Dame, Australia; Sadhan Chandra Mahavidyalaya, India (affiliated with the University of Calcutta); Santalum Album Academy, Nepal; Sundarban Mahavidyalaya, India; Women's Christian College, India; Gifts from the Sentient Forest, Finland



# THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL PLANT HUMANITIES



## Conference Program

Thurs, 1 May 2025 (online)  
Fri-Sat, 2–3 May 2025 (hybrid)

Hosted by Medhavi College  
Pokhara University  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
at  
The Malla Hotel

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# WELCOME NOTE

*MEDHAVI COLLEGE, POKHARA UNIVERSITY*



*Chair of the International Conference,  
Chief Guest Hon'ble Ain Bdr Shahi Thakuri,  
Minister for Forests and Environment,  
Distinguished guests on the dais,  
National and international keynotes speakers, panelists, and presenters,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

It is my great honor and privilege to have a chance to welcome you to the *2nd International Conference on Global Plant Humanities* as the Host Institution, Medhavi College, affiliated with Pokhara University. We are truly honoured to host this mega and significant event which unites brilliant minds and passionate individuals across the globe.

As we gather here today, we find ourselves at the intersection of science, culture, and the environment, united by our shared interest in the interdisciplinary field of plant studies. This conference is not merely an opportunity to share knowledge; it serves as a platform for collaboration, innovation, and the exchange of ideas that can shape the future of our understanding of plants and their significance in our lives even in the lives of all living beings.

During this two-day international conference, we will engage in a comprehensive program featuring 5 keynote addresses, 4 plenary sessions, and 33 panels. We are privileged to welcome speakers from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Hong Kong, the United States, Australia, and many other parts of the world. Their diverse perspectives and expertise will undoubtedly enrich our discussions and inspire new avenues of research and inquiry.

We are enthusiastic about the prospect of collaborating with each of you during this conference. Your participation is vital to the success of our gathering, and we encourage you to engage actively in the sessions, share your insights, and connect with fellow delegates. Together, we can explore the intricate relationships between plants, culture, and humanity, and work towards sustainable solutions for the challenges we face in our environment.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our chief guest, the Honourable Minister for Forests and Environment, for gracing us with your presence and support. Your commitment to advancing science and environmental stewardship serves as an inspiration to us all.

In conclusion, I wish you all a fruitful and enjoyable conference. Let us embark on this journey of discovery and collaboration, and may our discussions lead to meaningful outcomes that benefit our communities and the world at large.

Thank you, and welcome once again to the *2nd International Conference on Global Plant Humanities!*

*Jay Ram Khanal*

*Campus Chief*

*Medhavi College, Pokhara University*

*2nd May 2025*

*The Malla Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal*

# WELCOME NOTE

## *FROM THE GLOBAL PLANT HUMANITIES NETWORK (GPHN)*



Welcome to the 2nd International Conference on Global Plant Humanities (GPH25), held online and at The Malla Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal, 1–3 May 2025! Our hope is that the conference will further the important conversation between the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, opening up new perspectives on – and approaches to – the botanical world and human-flora relations.

As many of us know, humankind is deeply interconnected with botanical life. As sources of sustenance, agents of healing, and symbols of wonder, plants are vital to our lives. While offering us materials essential for existence, flora also inspires community identity and expresses cultural heritage. Nourishing, life-supporting, and ever-present, plants represent about ninety percent of the Earth's biomass. In the current era of intensifying ecological crisis, however, the future of many plant species and communities remains uncertain. If left unchecked, habitat loss, land use shifts, and climatic disturbances will continue to accelerate botanical decline worldwide.

Highlighting cross-cultural, transnational understandings of botanical life, the conference focuses on developments in interdisciplinary plant humanities scholarship across the globe but with emphasis on the biocultural diversity of South Asian countries with special emphasis on Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The GPH25 program comprises an impressive 5 keynotes, 4 plenary sessions, and 33 panels with speakers from across the world, making the conference one of the largest, most inclusive, and most comprehensive plant humanities events in the history of this new and exciting field of research, pedagogy, and service.

Our special thanks to Medhavi College, affiliated with Pokhara University, for hosting this year's conference in Kathmandu. Please see the Acknowledgements section of this program to learn more about the generous individuals, organizations, and institutions who have made this landmark event possible. Once again, on behalf of the Organizing Committee, welcome to GPH25!

*Dr. John C. Ryan*

*Associate Professor and Senior Research Fellow  
Nulungu Research Institute  
University of Notre Dame, Australia*



# SCHEDULE



Waterfall Near Pokhara, Nepal. Photo Credit: John C. Ryan (2024)

# THURSDAY, 1 MAY 2025, 4–9.20PM NEPAL TIME

## Zoom Link

<https://notredame-au.zoom.us/j/83920686623>

Passcode: 642735

Meeting ID: 839 2068 6623

4–4.50pm

**Keynote 1** by Daya Dissanayake (*Main Zoom Room*)

Chair: Supatra Sen

5–6.20pm

**Session 1** (*3 online parallel panels*)

Panel 1a: Vegetal Ontologies in Indian Narratives (*Breakout 1*)

Panel 1b: Challenging Botanical Normativities: Plant-People Intersection (*Breakout 2*)

Panel 1c: Sentient Plants, Speaking Trees, and Arboreal Personae (*Breakout 3*)

6.30–7.50pm

**Session 2** (*3 online parallel panels*)

Panel 2a: Vegetal Liveliness in Literature, Dance, and Music (*Breakout 1*)

Panel 2b: Mediations of Plants and Fungi in Film and Television (*Breakout 2*)

Panel 2c: Botanical Agencies in Contemporary Design & Cultivation (*Breakout 3*)

8.00–9.20pm

**Session 3** (*2 online parallel panels*)

Panel 3a: Creative Engagements with the Vegetal World (*Breakout 1*)

Panel 3b: Cultivating Resilience: Flora, Farms, and Foodways (*Breakout 2*)

Panel 3c: Plant Narratives in Folklore, Fiction, and Film (*Breakout 3*)

9.20pm

**End of Online Sessions**



FRIDAY, 2 MAY 2025, 8.00AM–5.00PM NEPAL TIME

Zoom Link

<https://notredame-au.zoom.us/j/83920686623>

Passcode: 642735

Meeting ID: 839 2068 6623

Venue: The Malla Hotel  
Lekhnath Marg, Kathmandu

- 8–8.45am Opening Ceremony (*Malla Plaza*) (*Main Zoom Room*)  
Chief Guest: Honorable Ain Bahadur Shahi Thakuri (*Minister for Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal*)
- 8.45–9.35am **Keynote 2** by Ram Prasad Chaudhary (*Malla Plaza*) (*Main Zoom Room*)  
Chair: Dhruva Karki
- 9.35–9.45am Tea Break
- 9.45–11.05am **Session 4** (*3 in-person parallel panels + 2 online panels*)  
Panel 4a: Plant-Based Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Farming (*Malla Plaza*)  
Panel 4b: Representations of Flora in World Literature and Film (*Business Centre*)  
Panel 4c: Ethnobotanical Approaches to Trees and Societies (*Cocktail Bar*)  
Panel 4d: Significance of Botanical Life in Ancient South Asian Cultures (*Breakout 1*)  
Panel 4e: Phytocritical Readings: Plants, Identity, and Colonialism (*Breakout 2*)
- 11.05am–12.25pm **Session 5** (*3 in-person parallel panels + 2 online panels*)  
Panel 5a: Flora, Technology, and Sustainability: Critiquing the Convergence (*Malla Plaza*)  
Panel 5b: Plants in Nepali Music and Poetry (*Business Centre*)  
Panel 5c: Posthuman Plants: Narratives of Vegetal Agency (*Cocktail Bar*)  
Panel 5d: Arboreal Ecocriticism: Human-Tree Relations in Literature (*Breakout 1*)  
Panel 5e: Orchids & Others: Plant Cultures of West Bengal and Jharkhand (*Breakout 2*)
- 12.25–1.15pm Lunch near The Malla Hotel
- 1.15–2.05pm **Keynote 3** Online by Penny Hay (*Malla Plaza*) (*Main Zoom Room*)  
Chair: John C. Ryan
- 2.05–3.25pm **Session 6** (*2 in-person parallel panels + 1 online panel*)  
Panel 6a: Indigeneity, Plants, and Narratives of Healing (*Malla Plaza*)  
Panel 6b: Plants in the Literary Histories of Nepal and Beyond (*Business Centre*)  
Panel 6c: Technological Assemblages: Data, Digitality, and Plant Life (*Main Zoom Room*)

3.25–3.35pm	Tea Break
3.35–4.55pm	<p><b>Session 7</b> (<i>2 in-person parallel panels + 1 online plenary</i>)</p> <p><u>Panel 7a</u>: Transcultural Phytocriticism: Comparative Readings of Plant Texts (<i>Malla Plaza</i>)</p> <p><u>Panel 7b</u>: Indigenous People's Relationships to Plants and Place (<i>Business Centre</i>)</p> <p><u>Panel 7c (Plenary 1)</u>: Sacred Landscapes &amp; Environmental Consciousness: Dark Green Religion, Feminine Subjectivity &amp; Solastalgia in Contemporary Media (<i>Main Zoom Room</i>)</p>
5.00pm	Closing of Conference Day 1
7.00–8.30pm	<p><b>Special Online Evening Session 8</b> (<i>3 online parallel panels</i>)</p> <p><u>Panel 8a</u>: Vegetal Philosophies, Mythologies, and Symbolologies (<i>Breakout 1</i>)</p> <p><u>Panel 8b</u>: Conservation Ethnobotany: Towards Human-Plant Kinship (<i>Breakout 2</i>)</p> <p><u>Panel 8c</u>: Gendered Flora: Investigating Identity, Myth, and Violence (<i>Breakout 3</i>)</p>

# SATURDAY, 3 MAY 2025, 8AM-4.30PM NEPAL TIME

## Zoom Link

<https://notredame-au.zoom.us/j/83920686623>

Passcode: 642735

Meeting ID: 839 2068 6623

## Venue: The Malla Hotel Lekhnath Marg, Kathmandu

8–8.50am	<b>Keynote 4</b> by Amma Raj Joshi ( <i>Malla Plaza</i> ) ( <i>Main Zoom Room</i> ) Chair: Motikala Subba Dewan
8.50–9.05am	Tea Break
9.05–10.25am	<b>Session 9</b> ( <i>2 in-person parallel panels + 1 online plenary + 1 online panel</i> ) <u>Panel 9a</u> : Flora in Bengali Culture and Literature ( <i>Malla Plaza</i> ) <u>Panel 9b</u> : Phytocritical Approaches to the Literature of India ( <i>Business Centre</i> ) <u>Panel 9c (Plenary 2)</u> : Green Consciousness: Plants for Human Wellness ( <i>Breakout 1</i> ) <u>Panel 9d</u> : Memory, Mourning, Medicine: Narratives of Vegetal Agency ( <i>Breakout 2</i> )
10.25–11.45am	<b>Session 10 (Plenary 3)</b> ( <i>Malla Plaza</i> ) ( <i>Main Zoom Room</i> ) Ecocritical Pedagogy, Phytocriticism, and Indigeneity
11.45am–12.45pm	Lunch near The Malla Hotel
12.45–2.05pm	<b>Session 11 (Plenary 4)</b> ( <i>Malla Plaza</i> ) ( <i>Main Zoom Room</i> ) Orchids, Camphor Tree and Atmasia: Unruly Plants Agencies and Plant-Human Relationships
2.05–2.20pm	Tea Break
2.20–3.40pm	<b>Session 12</b> ( <i>2 in-person parallel panels + 1 online panel</i> ) <u>Panel 12a</u> : Arboreal Humanities: Collaborating with Trees ( <i>Malla Plaza</i> ) <u>Panel 12b</u> : Ecofeminist Intersections: Plants, Women, and Culture ( <i>Business Centre</i> ) <u>Panel 12c</u> : Sacred Transformations: Plants & Indigenous Societies ( <i>Main Zoom Room</i> )
3.40–4.30pm	<b>Keynote 5 Online</b> by Gregory Tague ( <i>Malla Plaza</i> ) ( <i>Main Zoom Room</i> ) Chair: John C. Ryan
4.30pm	Conference Closing Ceremony ( <i>Malla Plaza</i> ) ( <i>Main Zoom Room</i> )

# SUNDAY, 4 MAY 2025, 9AM–3PM NEPAL TIME

9am–3pm

Optional Visit to the National Botanical Garden of Nepal at Godawari  
Reservations Required: [globalplanthumanities@gmail.com](mailto:globalplanthumanities@gmail.com)



CLICK [HERE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GARDEN.



# SESSION 1

## THURSDAY, 1 MAY 2025

### 5.00–6.20PM NEPAL TIME

#### PANEL 1A (ONLINE)

##### **Vegetal Ontologies in Indian Narratives**

**Chair: Debojyoti Dan**

Locating Plant Imageries in Bengali Dalit Narratives

*Shubhadeep Jana*

Rethinking Plant Ontology and Ethics in Janice Pariat's *Everything the Light Touches*

*Namrata Pathak*

The Other Narrative: Fictions of Planetarity from India's North East

*Kalpana Bora*

#### PANEL 1B (ONLINE)

##### **Challenging Botanical Normativities: Plant-People Intersections Beyond West Science**

**Chair: Debojoy Chanda**

The New Plant Science and Trans Women of Color Fiction

*Katie Hogan*

Dystopian Ecologies: Exploring the Intersection of Identity and Environment in *Hearts Still Beating*

*Subhangi Bahuguna*

Sacred Remedies: Intersections of Plant Life, Tantra, and Religious Medicine

*Sudipta Chakraborty*

#### PANEL 1C (ONLINE)

##### **Sentient Plants, Speaking Trees, and Arboreal Personae**

**Chair: Sibendu Chakraborty**

Sacred Trees and Cursed Forests: The Botany of *The Lord of the Rings* and *Elden Ring*

*Agastya Chakrabarti*

The Voice and Interlocutions of the Arboreal Non-Human in Elif Shafak's *Island of Missing Trees*  
*Maheshwari Suresh and Mily Elizebeth*

Vegetal Sentience and Affective Plant-Human Bonds in Percy Bysshe Shelley's "The Sensitive Plant"  
*Merve Günday*

# SESSION 2

## THURSDAY, 1 MAY 2025

### 6.30–7.50PM NEPAL TIME

#### **PANEL 2A (ONLINE)**

**Vegetal Liveliness in Literature, Dance, and Music**

**Chair: Annapurna Palit**

Residual Plant Memory in Beethoven's Song Cycle "An die ferne Geliebte Op 98"

*Debojyoti Dan*

Plants in the Compositions of the 15th Century Telugu Poet Thallapaka Annamacharya: An Exploratory Study

*P. Hari Padma Rani*

Flora-Fauna Interactions: An Ecocritical Reading of Select Dance-Dramas of Rabindranath Tagore

*Sudeshha Das*

#### **PANEL 2B (ONLINE)**

**Mediations of Plants and Fungi in Film and Television**

**Chair: Debojoy Chanda**

A Phytocritical Reading of the Film *The Ritual* (2017)

*Pooja Bangar*

Ecologies of Power: Exploring the Plant Humanities Through the Cinematic and Supernatural Landscapes of *Tumbbad* (2018)

*Pallabee Dasgupta*

Mycelial Networks and Post-Human Futures: Fungal Agency, New Species, and the Reconstruction of Human Existence in HBO's *The Last of Us* (2023)

*Abhishek Chakravorty*

#### **PANEL 2C (ONLINE)**

**Botanical Agencies in Contemporary Design and Cultivation Practices**

**Chair: Suparna Bhattacharya**

Plants as Affective Co-Habitants: Semiotic Ecologies of Care in Human-Building Interaction

*Manni Cheung*

Humans, Plants, and Other Agents in the Permaculture Garden

*Judit Farkas*

Jadav Payeng: The Global 'Green Man'

*Nidhee Meshram-Bhowate*



# SESSION 3

## THURSDAY, 1 MAY 2025

### 8.00–9.20PM NEPAL TIME

#### **PANEL 3A (ONLINE)**

##### **Creative Engagements with the Vegetal World**

**Chair: Francis Joy**

Learning from Algae through Deep Past and Collaborative Futures

*Jennifer Parker*

Plant Sentience in the Song “This I Know”

*Priya Parrotta*

Solastalgia, Mourning, Resilience, and Memorialization: Unsettling Presences in the Photographic Series, *Anchor in the Landscape*

*Leora Farber*

#### **PANEL 3B (ONLINE)**

##### **Cultivating Resilience: Flora, Farms, and Foodways**

**Chair: Goutam Majhi**

Between Land and Sea: Exploring the Resilience of Mangroves in Indian Cultural and Ecological Literature

*Chaitra Nagammanavar*

Caring-with as Embodied Solidarity Practices: A Study of Peasant Month Farm Visit Organized by Southeast Asian Migrant Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

*Teresa, Chan Sin Yuk*

Poster Presentation 1: Community Resilience and Cultural and Biological Diversities Entangled: Analysis of Seed and Traditional Foodways Narratives from Indigenous Knowledge Holders and Italian Farmers

*Arina Melkozernova*

### **PANEL 3C (ONLINE)**

#### **Plant Narratives in Folklore, Fiction, and Film**

**Chair: Diganta Bhattacharya**

Rooted in Story: The Evolving Narrative of Trees and Arboreal Beings in Folk Traditions

*Sangeetha Verma*

Bioregional Belonging in *Thinner Than Skin*: A Plant Humanist Study

*Tanmoyee Sarkar*

The Struggle of Nature vs. Nurture in the Cinematic World: A Critical Response to the Netflix Series

*Kaala Paani*

*Abhishikta Bhattachajee*

# SESSION 4

## FRIDAY, 2 MAY 2025

### 9.45–11.05AM NEPAL TIME

#### PANEL 4A (IN-PERSON)

**Plant-Based Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Farming**

**Chair: Ram Chandra Paudel**

**Room: Malla Plaza**

Seeds of Resistance: *Kalamkathi*

*Joyeeta Banerjee*

Nexus of Biska Jatra and Plants in the Newar Community of Bhaktapur

*Rajan Phelu*

Love for Nature: The Tree Hugging Movement

*Pragya Milind*

#### PANEL 4B (IN-PERSON)

**Representations of Flora in World Literature and Film**

**Chair: Sanjaya Mishra**

**Room: Business Centre**

Ecological and Postcolonial Dimensions in *Lord of the Flies*: Interactions of Flora, Fauna, and Fungi in Nature's Allegory

*Motikala Subba Dewan*

*Pollination, Plant Agency, and the Posthumanism: Interpreting Maja Lunde's The History of Bees*

*Nitish Kumar Gupta*

Roots of Reverie: Exploring the Interconnectedness of Humanity and Plants in Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams*

*Roshan Shilpakar*

#### PANEL 4C (IN-PERSON)

**Ethnobotanical Approaches to Trees and Societies**

**Chair: Hemanta Raj Dahal**

**Room: Cocktail Bar**

Trees of Tradition: The Socio-Economic and Religious Role of Mahua, Banyan, and Bamboo in the Tribals of South Gujarat

*Jitendrasinh Parmar*

Sacred Groves Speak: A Tale of Nature, Culture, and Conservation

*Subha Sasi*

Gija Jumulu's Journey: Arboreal Ecocriticism, Indigenous People, and the Cultural Analysis of Trees

*John C. Ryan*

## **PANEL 4D (ONLINE)**

**The Significance of Botanical Life in Ancient South Asian Cultures**

**Chair: Namrata Pathak**

Tamil Nadu's Thaaazhampoo and Nepal's Kharuwa: Plants That Betrayed or Were Betrayed?

*Nithyashree Narayanan*

Reclaiming Nature's Voice: Plant Consciousness in Indian Literary Landscapes

*Kalpana Purohit*

Cannabis and Humans: Analyzing the Complex Relationship

*Saumya Krishna*

## **PANEL 4E (ONLINE)**

**Title: Phytocritical Readings: Plants, Identity, and Colonialism**

**Chair: Saswati Halder**

Sacred Wilderness and Trauma Recovery in Stephen Alter's *Becoming a Mountain*

*Meenakshi Kulkarni*

The Entangled Aspects of Colonialism, Violence, and Expropriation in Amitav Ghosh's *The Nutmeg's Curse*

*Moumita Sahu*

Ecology, Umwelt, and Human Identity in *Latitudes of Longing*: Reimagining Subjectivity Through Plants

*Shravya Shruti*



**SESSION 5**  
**FRIDAY, 2 MAY 2025**  
**11.05AM–12.25PM NEPAL TIME**

**PANEL 5A (IN-PERSON)**

**Flora, Technology, and Sustainability: Critiquing the Convergence**

**Chair: Lucas Scriptor**

**Room: Business Centre**

The Trees Will Not Save Us, or, Fake Mechanical Trees

*Evander Price*

Posthuman Ecologies: Reading Plant Autobiography and Listening to Plant Radio

*Sanjit Sarkar*

Creative Practices Engaging Plants in Sustainable Green Libraries

*Dola Ghosh*

**PANEL 5B (IN-PERSON)**

**Plants in Nepali Music and Poetry**

**Chair: Dhruba Karki**

**Room: Malla Plaza**

Laligurans in Nepali Songs: A Symbolic Exploration through the Plant Humanities

*Mani Prasad Dumre*

Plant-Human Agency through the Kabhra-Peepal Binary in Swapnil Smriti's Poem "Story of Kavra Tree on Round Chautari"

*Nabaraj Dhungel*

The Placement of Feelings in the Anthropocene: The Tree as a Persona in Avinash Shrestha's Selected Poems

*Mahesh Paudyal*

**PANEL 5C (IN-PERSON)**

**Posthuman Plants: Narratives of Vegetal Agency**

**Chair: Abhi Subedi**

## **Room: Cocktail Bar**

Vrikshayurveda: The Indic Science of Healing Diseased Flora  
*Manorama Upadhyaya*

Traversing Arboreal Humanities and Spiritual Ecology in Select Himalayan Writings on Trees  
*Jagriti Upadhyaya*

Plant Consciousness and Subalternity: An Ecofeminist Analysis of *The Vegetarian*  
*Shristi Mehta*

## **PANEL 5D (ONLINE)**

### **Arboreal Ecocriticism: Exploring Human-Tree Relations in Literature**

**Chair: Madhumita Majumdar**

The Anthropocene, Post-Apocalyptic Landscape, and Computing Ecological Potentials: Ecocritically Mapping Nature's Existential Tension in *The Road*, *Moana*, and *Waiting for Godot*  
*Prasanta Ghoshal*

Replacing Natural Trees with Artificial Trees: An Analysis of M Mukundan's Short Story "Unnikatha"  
*C. Mary Prashanthi and P. Hari Padma Rani*

The Symbiotic Relationship Between Trees and Humans: A Reading of Manoj Das's "Tree"  
*Ankita Swetaparna*

## **PANEL 5E (ONLINE)**

**Title: Orchids and Others: The Plant Cultures of West Bengal and Jharkhand, India**

**Chair: Debojoy Chanda**

Spreading Roots of Orchidelirium: Fungal Liminality and Assemblage of Death, Desire, and Orchid Fascination  
*Laxmi Sarma*

Tree Preservation Through the Karma Festival: An Inquiry  
*Jubinarosa S. S.*

Human-Tree Relations of the Bon Bibi Cult of the Sundarbans  
*Ratrayee Bhowmick*

# SESSION 6

## FRIDAY, 2 MAY 2025

### 2.05–3.25PM NEPAL TIME

#### PANEL 6A (IN-PERSON)

**Indigeneity, Plants, and Narratives of Healing**

**Chair: Jib Lal Sapkota**

**Room: Malla Plaza**

Of Coexistence, Affect, and the Plant-Other: Reading Narayan's *Thenvarikka* and Kallen Pokkudan's *Life Among the Mangrove Forests*  
*Rajitha Venugopal*

Plants as Medicine in the Rajbanshi Community of North Bengal  
*Chittaranjan Barman*

Plants as Medicine: Navigating Eco-medical Practices of the Paniya Community in Sheela Tomy's *Valli*  
*Chandana Rajbanshi*

#### PANEL 6B (IN-PERSON)

**Indigenous People's Relationships to Plants and Place**

**Chair: Anand Sharma**

**Room: Business Centre**

Indigenous Peoples' Relationship to Nature in *Waterlily* and *The Whale Rider*  
*Kul Bahadur Khadka*

Plants, Land, and Indigenous Philosophy: Poetics of Ecosphere in Rituals of Tharu  
*Mohan Dangaura*

Raising a Palm and Propagating a Culture: The Age-Old Relationship Between the Eastern Himalayan Sago Palm (*Arenga micrantha*) and the Puroik People of East Kameng, Arunachal Pradesh, India  
*Mansi Dhingra*

#### PANEL 6C (ONLINE)

**Technological Assemblages: Data, Digitality, and Plant Life**

**Chair: Anamika Chakraborty**

Sensitive Tree Infrastructures: Artistic Representations of Critical Zone Science

*Daniel Irrgang*

Digital Plant Ecologies in Modern Greek Poetry (19th–20th ce.)

*Nikoleta Zampaki*

Greening Data: Digital Plant Humanities, Rhizomatic Epistemophytology, and Re-reading Literary Narratives

*Paromita Patranobish*

Poster Presentation 2: Phytosemiotic Design for Collective Well-being: Technological Mediation of Human-Plant Semiotic Exchange in Architectural Space

*Chaeyeon Lim*

**SESSION 7**  
**FRIDAY, 2 MAY 2025**  
**3.35–4.55PM NEPAL TIME**

**PANEL 7A (IN-PERSON)**

**Transcultural Phytocriticism: Comparative Readings of Plant Texts**

**Chair: Rishiram Ghimire**

**Room: Malla Plaza**

Forging Phytophilia in the Anthropocene: Plants as Perceptive Agents in Contemporary Indonesian and Nepalese Poetry

*Henrikus Joko Yulianto and Ruly Indra Darmawan*

What's in a Flower: A Feminist Ecocritical Reading of Dee Lestari's *Aroma Karsa*

*Sri Sumaryani and Imas Istiani*

Plants as Metaphor for Young Adults' Resilience in Alice Hoffman's *Green Angel*

*Hukum Thapa*

**PANEL 7B (IN-PERSON)**

**Plants in the Literary Histories of Nepal and Beyond**

**Chair: Krishna Chandra Sharma**

**Room: Business Centre**

The Interconnectedness of Nature and Humans: The Representation of Plants in the Ramayana

*Rupsingh Bhandari*

Exploring the Interconnection between Humans and Plants: Plant-Human Relationship in Sanskrit Discourses

*Bhim Nath Regmi*

An Ecological Study of Bessie Head's *Looking for a Rain God* and Lekhnath Paudyal's *The Parrot in the Cage*

*Prabhu Ray Yadav*

**PANEL 7C (PLENARY 1 ONLINE)**

**Sacred Landscapes and Environmental Consciousness: Dark Green Religion, Feminine Subjectivity, and Solastalgia in Contemporary Media**



## Chair: Queen Sarkar

Towards a Vegetal World: Dissecting Feminine Breathing to Construct Subjectivity and Sensible Transcendence Concerning the Natural Environment and Belonging in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*  
*Amrita Das*

Solastalgia and the Anthropocene: Exploring Psycho-Cultural Distress Through Art and Literature  
*Ananya Mishra*

Dark Green Religion: Analyzing Environmental Spirituality in Film, Literature, and Art  
*Queen Sarkar*

# SESSION 8

## FRIDAY, 2 MAY 2025

### 7.00–8.30PM NEPAL TIME

#### **PANEL 8A (ONLINE)**

**Vegetal Philosophies, Mythologies, and Symbologies**

**Chair: Gregory Tague**

Critical Plant Studies and Anticolonialism: Intercultural Perspective on Phytocentrism and Biointegration

*Maria Elisa Bonaudi and Federico Comollo*

Floral Thanatology: Plant Death, Biosemiotics, and the Ethics of Euthanasia

*Kalyani*

Poppy and its Metaphorical Connection to Power and Control in *The Poppy War*

*Shailja Nimavat*

#### **PANEL 8B (ONLINE)**

**Conservation Ethnobotany: Towards Human-Plant Kinship**

**Chair: Madhumita Majumdar**

Sustainable Environmental Policy for Protecting Plants in South Asia Through Regional Cooperation

*Nisanka Sanjeewani Ariyaratne*

A Study of Ethnomedicinal Plant Use Among the Banjara Tribal Community in Bargarh District, Odisha

*Ramesh Naik*

Towards a Decolonial Phytocriticism: Kadamba Tree, Plant-Human Kinship, Colonial Erasure, and Decolonial Reclamation in Bengali and Santal Ethnobotanical Praxis

*Debayan Das*

#### **PANEL 8C (ONLINE)**

**Gendered Flora: Investigating Identity, Myth, and Violence**

**Chair: Arijit Mukherjee**

Forest Allegories: Ecological Violence and Tribal Resistance in Sheela Tomy's *Valli*

*Subarna Talukder Bose*

Blossoming Identities: The Historical Interplay of Flora, Gender, and Sexuality

*Apeksha Gandotra*

Verdant Voices: Flora as a Symbol of Gender, Myth, and Ecofeminism in Indian Literature

*Dhananjaya Sodha*

# SESSION 9

## SATURDAY, 3 MAY 2025

### 9.05–10.25AM NEPAL TIME

#### PANEL 9A (IN-PERSON)

**Flora in Bengali Culture and Literature**

**Chair: Susmita Talukdar**

**Room: Malla Plaza**

The Role of Hindu Traditions, Rituals, and Belief Systems in Environmental Conservation: A Study in Kolkata, West Bengal

*Priyanka Ghosh and Tania Chakravarty*

Traditional Socio-Religious-Cultural and Educational Aspects of the Dalit-Bind Community in West Bengal in the Face of Disaster: A Case Study

*Prodip Adhikari*

Eco-Aesthetics and Sustainable Living: Deconstructing the Culture/Nature Binary in Sumana Roy's *How I Became a Tree*

*Kumari Gunjan and Sanjeev Kumar Vishwakarma (online)*

#### PANEL 9B (IN-PERSON)

**Phytocritical Approaches to the Literature of India**

**Chair: Rishikesh Kumar Singh**

**Room: Business Centre**

Monoculture Indigo Plantation and the Rape of the Land in Dinbandhu Mitra's *Nil Darpan* (1872): A Green Postcolonial Study

*K. M. Arefin*

The Whispering Woods: Unraveling Phytopoetics, Phytocriticism, and Phytosemiotics in Tagore's Nature-Infused Narratives

*Sujoy Paul*

Plants, People, and the Planet in Anuradha Roy's *All the Lives We Never Lived*

*Shibani Krishnatraya*

## **PANEL 9C (PLENARY 2 ONLINE)**

**Green Consciousness: Plants for Human Wellness**

**Chair: Supatra Sen**

Green Care: Combating Stress with Plants

*Supatra Sen*

Ecopsychology: 'Green'-ing the Psyche for Mental Health

*Rakheebrita Biswas*

From Thinkers to Learners: Teaching Green Education in Classrooms

*Sharmistha Pramanik*

## **PANEL 9D (ONLINE)**

**Memory, Mourning, Medicine: Narratives of Vegetal Agency**

**Chair: Diganta Bhattacharya**

Investigating Ahmad Safa's *Pushpa Briksha O Bihangapuran*: Applying Critical Plant Studies Perspectives

*Liton Chakraborty Mithun*

Trauma, Memory, Plants, and the Ecology of Identity in *The Nix* and *The Goldfinch*

*Ananya Chand*

Of Trees and Trauma: Ecological Mourning in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

*Anup Kumar Mitra*

SESSION 10  
PLENARY PANEL 3  
SATURDAY, 3 MAY 2025  
12.45–2.05PM NEPAL TIME

PLENARY 3 (IN-PERSON)

Ecocritical Pedagogy, Phytocriticism, and Indigeneity

Chair: Rishikesh Kumar Singh

Room: Malla Plaza

Neuroecoaesthetical Perspectives in Phytocriticism: Indigeneity and the Indian Academic Discourse

*Rishikesh Kumar Singh*

Phytopoetic Readings of Select Poets from Jharkhand: Analyzing the Interplay between Nature, Culture, and Poetry

*Richa*

Plants, Play, and Childhood: A Plant Studies Perspective in Indian Children's Literature

*Raj Gaurav Verma*



**SESSION 11**  
**PLENARY PANEL 4**  
**SATURDAY, 3 MAY 2025**  
**10.25–11.45AM NEPAL TIME**

**PLENARY 4 (HYBRID)**

**Orchids, Camphor Tree, and Atmasia: Unruly Plants Agencies and Plant-Human Relationships**

**Chair: Zimu Zhang**

**Room: Malla Plaza**

Orchids in Dialogue: Exploring Plant-Human Interaction Through a Plant-Centred Approach, Practice and Presentation

*Park Ji Yun (online)*

Caring for Plant Stories: Reimagining Heritage Conservation through Plants in Hong Kong—A Case Study of Green Hub (KFBG)

*Karmen Zheng (in-person)*

Plant Allergy as Transcorporeal Eco-event

*Zimu Zhang (in-person)*

# SESSION 12

## SATURDAY, 3 MAY 2025

### 2.20–3.40PM NEPAL TIME

#### PANEL 12A (IN-PERSON)

**Arboreal Humanities: Collaborating with Trees**

**Chair: Raj Kumar Gurung**

**Room: Malla Plaza**

Standing With the Trees, Singing For the Trees: How an Ecosong from the South East Australian Forests Arrived at the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan  
*Corinne Gibbons Starr (in-person) and Robin Ryan Cruse (online)*

Arboreal Atmospheres in Urban Spaces: Reflections on Hong Kong's Banyans  
*Lucas Scriptor*

Aspen Arborglyphs, Juniper Mistletoe, and "Wild Apples": Pedagogical Partnerships with Plants  
*English Brooks*

#### PANEL 12B (IN-PERSON)

**Ecofeminist Intersections: Plants, Women, and Culture**

**Chair: Rudra Poudel**

**Room: Business Centre**

Of Tulsi and Timur: Kitchen as a Site of Socio-Cultural Power in India and Nepal  
*Sakshi Chanana*

Botanical Symbolism and Gender: Analyzing Ismat Chughtai's Female Characters Through the Perspective of the Plant Humanities  
*Deepak Pati and Ashapura Dash*

The Agency of Trees in Aparna Sen's *Sati* (1989) and Srijit Mukherjee's *Nirbak* (2015)  
*Susmita Talukdar*

#### PANEL 12C (ONLINE)

**Sacred Transformations: Plants and Indigenous Societies Worldwide**

**Chair: Nikoleta Zampaki**

Phytometamorphosis: An Ontology of Becoming in Amazonian Women's Poetry about Plants

*Patrícia Vieira*

Rowan – Supporter of Life, Protector of the Sacred in Northern European Tradition

*Åsa Andersson Martti and Janne Sirniö*

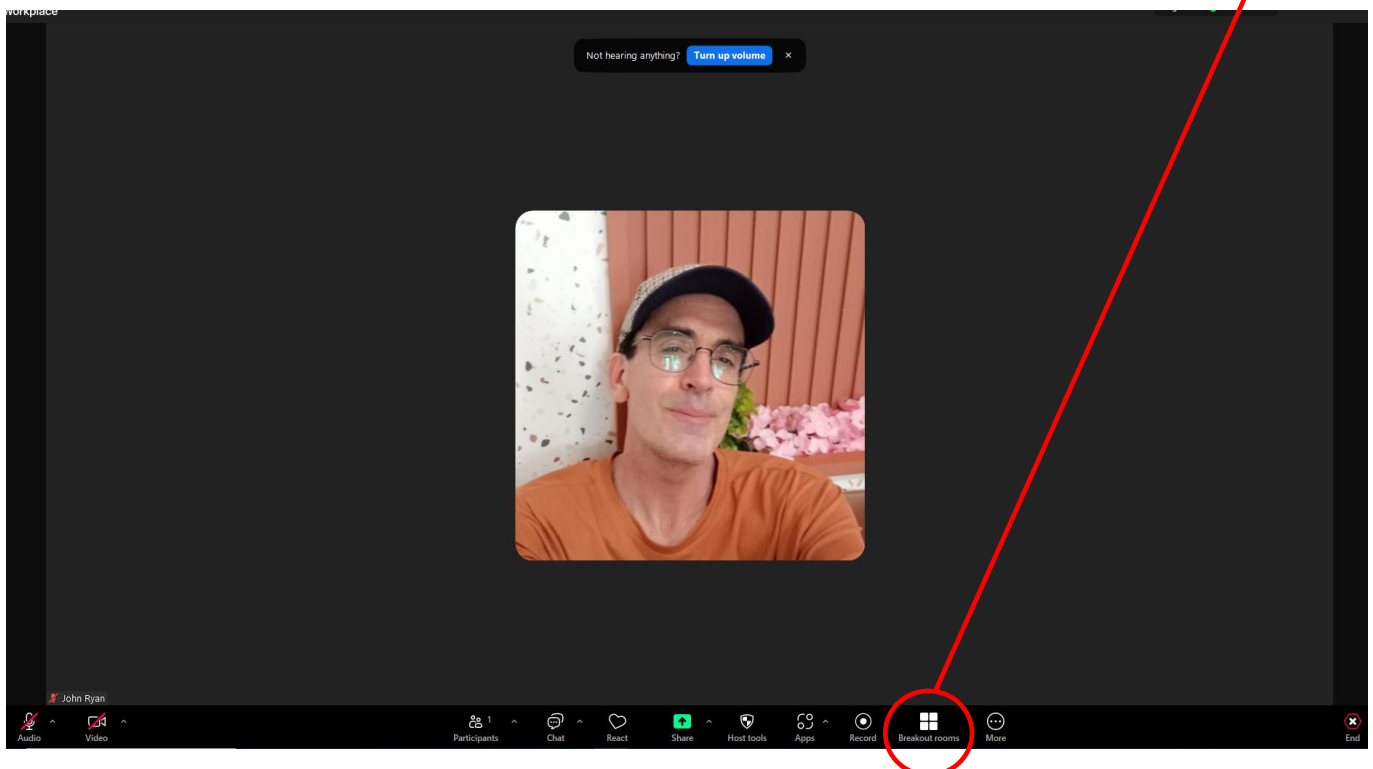
The Role of Nature and Plants in Slavic Paganism and Mythology

*Lucia Slováková*

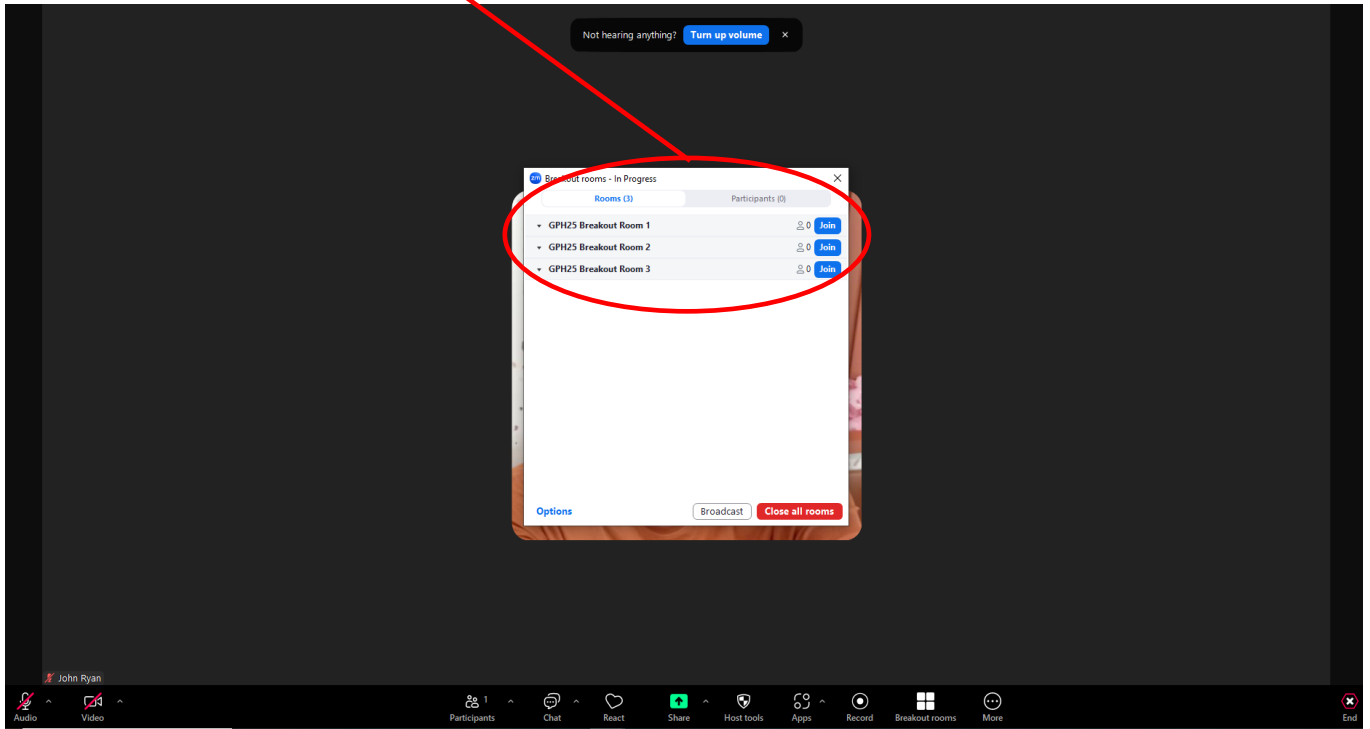
# INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS



- Paper presentations should be a minimum of 15 minutes and a maximum of 20 minutes.
- Poster presentations should be a minimum of 5 minutes and a maximum of 10 minutes.
- In-person presenters are requested to bring their slides (PPT files) to the conference venue on a flash drive and also to have a backup copy available online (for example, on Google Drive).
- The panel chair should allow at least 20 minutes for discussion at the end of the panel.
- The opening ceremony, keynotes, and plenary sessions of the in-person segment of the conference will be made available to online participants through livestreaming.
- Online presentations will take place on Zoom using breakout rooms. Please follow this red line to the location of breakout rooms in Zoom.



- Select the breakout room assigned to your panel according to the conference schedule at the beginning of this program. Or ask your Zoom host to assign you to the panel you wish to attend.



- Poster presenters should provide a 5–10 minute verbal summary of their research, allowing their online audience to view the poster before the panel shifts into the Q&A period.
- Where possible, all chairs, presenters, and audience members in the Zoom main room and breakout rooms should keep their cameras on. Please make sure your full name is visible in Zoom so that chairs and hosts can address you accordingly, if necessary.
- For online participants, please remember to keep your microphones muted unless you are presenting your paper or asking a question during the Q&A period at the end of each panel.
- Use the “raise hand” icon in Zoom to let your chair know you wish to ask a question. Alternately, write your question in the Zoom chat for the chair to read to the presenter.
- For in-person participants, all tea breaks will take place at The Malla Hotel. Lunch, however, will be served both days at a nearby restaurant.
- Any questions during the conference? Please email <globalplanthumanities@gmail.com> or ring/text Professor Goutam Majhi at +91 90515 34490.

# KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS



Pashupatinath Temple, Kathmandu. Photo Credit: Goutam Majhi (2024)



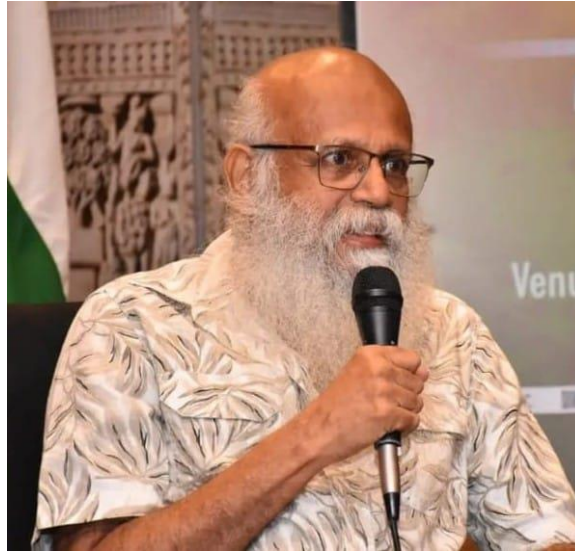
## KEYNOTE 1

### Vriksha Devata

DAYA DISSANAYAKE

Distinguished Sri Lankan Novelist and Poet

daya@saadhu.com



Early humans would have been worshipping trees long before they became literate and we would never know when the practice began, where it began, how the practice spread. The belief would have arisen because people believed the trees to be alive and that they were almost immortal, especially the giant trees, which we call *vanaspathi*. Because people felt the majesty of the awe-inspiring trees, a few would have begun to plead for help from the trees. When sometimes they received what they pleaded for, they would have realized the tree had listened to them, thus confirming the trees were also sentient beings. Later as humans began to believe in supernatural forces, and the god idea was conceived in their minds, they may have found it more practical to believe in tree deities who resided in these trees, so they could relate better to the concept of a being who was created in humankind's image. We find such tree deities all over the world, and in South Asia we call them *vriksha devata*, sometimes also known as *yakshini*. Such beliefs are proof enough for most people to accept trees as sentient beings, as we find in our literature from very early times and even today. In a grove of *vanaspathi*, a group of *vriksha devata* could be a very powerful supernatural entity making it a real sacred grove. Such trees could be offering protection to each other, to all other life around them, including human beings.

**Keywords:** vanaspahi, virksha devata, protection, sacred groves

**Daya Dissanayake** is a bilingual writer who won the SAARC Literary Award in 2013 and the Sri Lanka State Literary Award for the Best English Novel, for three out of six novels published in print in Sri Lanka. He shared the

award for the first ever Swarna Pusthaka for the Best Sinhala Novel. He has published 10 novels and 1 poetry collection in English and 6 novels in Sinhala. He published the first Asian e-novel in English and also the first Sinhala e-novel. He is Former Country Coordinator, International Conference on Buddhist Archaeology in China and South Asia, and former Coordinator in Sri Lanka for the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL). For more information: [www.saadhu.com](http://www.saadhu.com)

## KEYNOTE 2

### Implications of Ethnoecology in South Asia: Understanding Relationships Between Plant Humanities and Human Well-Being

RAM PRASAD CHAUDHARY

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

ram.chaudhary53@gmail.com



Plant diversity makes our existence possible. It underpins human well-being and peoples' livelihoods. Plant humanities, an interdisciplinary field, combines research in the areas of science and humanities to understand relationships how plants have influenced human culture and vice versa. Human beings are deeply interconnected with the botanical world from time immemorial. Ayurveda, a system of traditional medicine, builds onto the foundation of plant humanities referring to medical knowledge in South Asia. Europeans who began systematic collection of plant species from India and neighboring countries have further made valuable additions to the plant humanities by assessing how plants contribute to society through history, art, literatures, and philosophy. South Asia and Hindu Kush Himalaya are biodiversity and cultural diversity hotspots; and the important center of the Indus Valley Civilization (i.e., Harappan Civilization, c. 3300–1300 BCE) serves as the center of origin of some important crops; however, the countries in the region are under poverty traps. Therefore, it is essential

to assess issues related to the triple planetary crisis (biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change), relationships between human well-being and ecosystem services the nature provides, and social-ecological systems that protect and govern the resources. The presentation will explore the interdisciplinary connections between plants, human culture, history, and society from plant humanities and human well-being perspectives, as well as discuss how ethnoecology serves to bridge organizations, forums, and media with society, academia and government to formulate and effectively implement policy that best serves the need of society and conserves the biological and cultural heritage of South Asia.

**Keywords:** ethnoecology, ethnobotany, biodiversity conservation, South Asia, Himalayas

**Ram Prasad Chaudhary** is an Emeritus Professor at Tribhuvan University (TU), Kirtipur, Nepal, and Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS). He obtained Ph.D. Degree in Plant Systematics and conducts research in conservation biology, and plant-environment relationships and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples' and Local Communities (IPLCs). Prof. Chaudhary has over 45 years of experience in teaching, research, and academic administration at the Central Department of Botany, and Research Centre for Applied Science and Technology (ReCAST), Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur. He also served as a member of the National Planning Commission of Nepal; Chair of the Board of Governors of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Lalitpur; Trustee of the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Lalitpur; team leader of national, regional transboundary (Bhutan, China, India and Nepal) and international (Norway, Italy, USA) biodiversity conservation collaborating programmes. He has contributed to policy formulation for the Government of Nepal (GoN) in the fields of biodiversity and environment; and has widely travelled on foot in the mountains of Nepal Himalaya. A new plant species from Nepal, the *Saussurea ramchaudharyi* (Asteraceae), is named after him. He has edited, authored, and co-authored books and has published well-cited articles.

## KEYNOTE 3

### Ecological Imagination

PENNY HAY

Bath Spa University, UK

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Forest of Imagination is a long-term transdisciplinary research and public pedagogy project in the UK. The project shines a light on the importance of ecological imagination in the face of the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Forest of Imagination highlights the importance of global forests through the material and affective relations between plants, people, and ecologies. Forest of Imagination offers an alternative, creative approach to learning, through researching experimental sites for pedagogical innovation that focus on nature connection and our collective imagination. These new spaces of inquiry, engage artists, researchers and educators in creative and reflective practice that places ecological imagination, creativity, the arts and wellbeing at the heart of a future pedagogy. Our ecological and imaginative relationships with the more-than-human world are vital for our future planet. A new aesthetic imaginary, the Forest of Imagination is a living, breathing classroom, inspiring curiosity, and a deeper connection with the natural world. Forest of Imagination is a creative ecosystem for art and participation. Spaces in an urban context are reinvented to inspire spontaneous play, unleash imagination, heighten our engagement with nature in the city environment, and shine a light on the importance of forests' capacity to inspire creativity in everyone. The concept of collective ecological imagination challenges us to re-imagine our relationship with nature, moving beyond anthropocentrism and towards a more relational, ethical, and sustainable understanding of the natural world as inspiration for collective action and transformation.

**Keywords:** aesthetic imaginary, forest imagination, global ecologies, art, participation

*Penny Hay* is an artist, educator and researcher, Professor of Imagination Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries, Reader in Creative Teaching and Learning, Bath Spa University and Founding Director House of Imagination. Signature projects include School Without Walls and Forest of Imagination. Penny's doctoral research focused on children's learning identity as artists. Penny is strand leader for Creative Pedagogy in the Policy, Pedagogy and Practice Research Centre, and co-chair of the eARTh research group focusing on education, arts and the environment. She was recently the co-investigator on an Erasmus+ project Interstice in Europe researching the space between art, children and educators, and artist researcher on the AHRC funded Rethinking Waste Compound<sup>13</sup> Project in Mumbai. Penny was awarded an Honorary Fellowship at Arts University Plymouth and a Fellowship in Imagination at the Centre for Future Thinking; she is a National Teaching Fellow and Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching.



## KEYNOTE 4

# Woods and Words: Reimagining Plant-Human Relationship Across Time and Culture

AMMA RAJ JOSHI

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

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*One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.*

(William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned")

The vegetal world with its transformative power from season to season and time to time possesses immense potential, wisdom and knowledge to offer to the human world. William Wordsworth rightly articulates how the vernal wood, the vegetal nature, with its renewable and transformative power and beauty acts more like a wise Sadhu and gives knowledge of good and evil. This wisdom that humans gain from the vegetal world has been an eternal phenomenon dating back the creation of planet earth. Water and plants have shaped human life, culture, and civilization. Myths, history, religions, philosophy, art, literature, medical science, politics among others reveal plants' essence literally or figuratively across place, time, and culture. Forest groves and hermitages of saints have been sites of solace, learning, revered religious devotion nurturing human life, values and ethics. Trees have saved life, may it be through the process of photosynthesis, supply of life-saving food, provision of drugs for curing

human bodily ailment, offering a shade and resting place to meditating Sadhu determined to achieve salvation renouncing mundane materiality. Plants play emotive, aesthetic, and symbolic roles and transpire the vegetal world in the human word used by the creative mind to show how “the earth laughs in flowers” (Emerson). The plant world has been central to supplying life-saving medicine and body-nourishing food, enhancing global trade, world’s economic dynamism and at times for evoking colonial lust at the odd end as well. Plants, humans and environment do have a sophisticated interconnection, and human relation with the vegetal world has become more critical in Anthropocene era with escalating environmental threats making human existence perilous on planet earth. The *Chandogya Upanisad* maintains that “the essence of being and non-being is the earth; the essence of the earth is water; the essence of water is plants; and the essence of plants is a person” (337-38). Plants serve as the essence for humanity leading the body, speech, hymn and chanting to an ultimate contemplative or soteriological state where aesthetic, material or divine fulfillment is achieved. My deliberation brings in anecdotes from myths, histories, religious thoughts, cultures and civilization, philosophical thinking on life and existence across place, time and cultures, and ponders over plants’ life-saving worth and their socio-cultural, political importance to signpost the urgency of rethinking and reimagining the importance of plant humanities. I conclude with an assertion that the air and food for living bodies on earth, including humans, are under immense threat unlike ever before due to environmental hazards in this era guided by scientific optimism. At such a juncture, it is imperative to reimagine plant-human relationship, spurning anthropocentric hubris, or else be ready for imminent impending annihilation.

**Amma Raj Joshi** is a Professor of English, former Head of the Central Department of English (CDE), Tribhuvan University, and Former Vice Chancellor of Far Western University, Nepal. He is a literary critic, poet, story writer, and translator educated in Nepal, India, and the USA. He holds a Ph.D. degree in environmental literature. He is a Writing Fellow of Iowa University, USA, where he was trained in creative writing. While working as a faculty of Tribhuvan University, he has been the Chair of the English Subject Committee, a Member of the Faculty Board, a Member of the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, a Member of the Academic Council, and Senator of the Tribhuvan University.

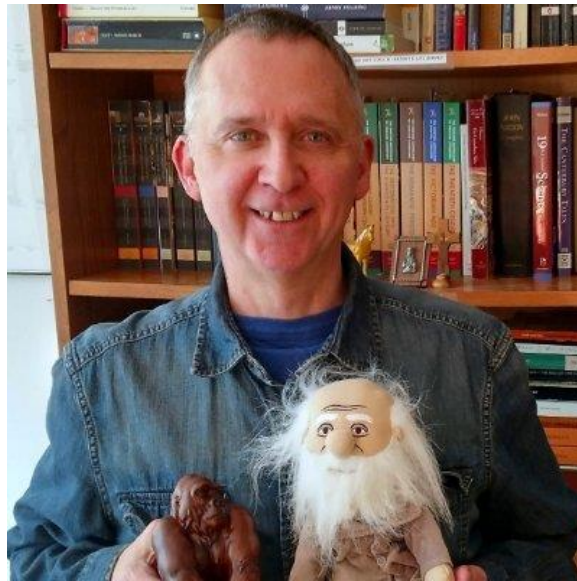
## KEYNOTE 5

### Forest Sovereignty as an Ecological and Social Good

GREGORY F. TAGUE

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Forest sovereignty is a viable political theory that could help all living organisms. Specifically, climate as regulated by forests is a social good. Looking at the environment from the perspective of wildlife should matter. Profound changes in how industrialized nations view nature are in order, an outlook that could impact all aspects of social life from the individual up through the institutional level in human consciousness and conscience. We can continue to abuse forests and pollute so as to reap economic gains, banking funds for our children and grandchildren; or we could protect the environment now, at some cost, for the sake of our children and grandchildren. Understandably, there are many developing and economically struggling nations that chafe at environmental concerns when their pressing issues are about boosting their economies. In that vein, how have Western ideas failed the environment? With more countries beginning to understand the value of forest conservation, rich countries could offer financial assistance in many ways, from direct aid to debt relief.

On one hand, I offer a critique of Enlightenment political philosophy from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke up to John Rawls and Robert Nozick; on the other hand, we can explore anthropocentric political philosophy to offer a theory of forest sovereignty using the very ideas from these seminal Western thinkers. Criticizing the Western tradition does not imply that all its positions should be discarded. Typically, following Locke, political philosophers argue that what exists in nature becomes human property with added value once labored over by people. This is a colonialist and settler mentality that has fostered deforestation and wildlife degradation. Controversially, we could say that

the natural world mostly belongs to plants and animals since they have adapted in and helped evolve great forests as lungs and watersheds of the world. This line of thinking does not exclude, however, Indigenous people who typically establish meaningful relationships with wild flora and fauna.

Since the earth's forests provide clean air, water filtration, carbon sinks, rainwater catches, etc. as life givers they and not people should be governors of the planet. Modern humans are, essentially, foreigners to the social compact of the forest because they have not consented to but break the contract. Rather than a state of conflict, the natural state is one of mutualism. In nature, accounting for species struggle and privation, organisms in any ecosystem work and live close together in symbiotic feeding relationships. A hungry tiger has little choice as an obligate carnivore. Even so, his feeding behavior creates forest population equilibrium: what he does not consume is nourishment for birds and small mammals, microorganisms, and bacteria. Eventually, the bones of the carcass become minerals in soil and sediment that help flora, fungi, and fauna develop forests and contingent wetlands and grasslands as global air and water purifiers. In contrast to most human developments, nothing is wasted in forest habitats.

There are important considerations to remember. Ecosystems are collections of organisms and soils responding to energies and forces in complex and mutual relationships for stability in bio-networks of shared welfare. Because flora, fauna, fungi, microorganisms, etc. engage naturally in ecosystem engineering to sustain their biomes and by default the biosphere of Gaia, we could consider granting them forest sovereignty. Nature allocates resources in balance among forest inhabitants; humans take unfairly from nature and do not distribute evenly. Without technology and relying on evolved adaptations to resources, there were many forest organisms well before any humans tending, seeding, and tilling the earth, the main point and a major claim for sovereignty in the forest state of Gaia. Just as there are human rights, so too there can be forest rights that protect the sanctity of earth's life-supporting plants and animals.

Systems of morality should not consider only humans since the natural world is entitled to rights. Without question there is currently conflict between humans and forest flora, fauna, and fungi; this conflict must be ethically resolved for the sake of all life. We are not morally obligated to preserve museums that house stuffed animals. We are ethically obligated to preserve living forest wildlife upon which the health of earth depends. There's an ethical claim in saying forests have incalculable value because their intrinsic qualities of growth, metamorphosis, and decay are instrumental in creating and maintaining any number of ecosystems that constitute earth's biosphere. In the final paragraph of *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin talks about a tangled bank as an orderly system supporting multiple species and structures. In nature, the secret to success is not dominance but interdependence.

In preparation for a discussion, though not required, program participants could read in advance Professor Tague's July 2024 American Philosophical Association essay (about 2,480 words), "The Wildlife State of Gaia," available here: <https://blog.apaonline.org/2024/07/11/the-wildlife-state-of-gaia/>

**Keywords:** forest sovereignty, Gaian ethics, Western philosophy, ecological good, morality

**Gregory F. Tague**, Ph.D. (1998 NYU), is Professor Emeritus, St. Francis College, N.Y., where he founded the Evolutionary Studies Collaborative and hosted Darwin-inspired Moral Sense Colloquia. His most recent books include *An Ape Ethic and the Question of Personhood* (2020) and *The Vegan Evolution* (2022). His new book, *Forest Sovereignty: Wildlife Sustainability and Ethics*, is scheduled for release in 2025. Tague's current interests focus on environmental and animal ethics. Visit him at <https://sites.google.com/site/gftague/>

# PLENARY PANELS



View from Kathmandu University. Photo Credit: Goutam Majhi (2024)

## PLENARY PANEL 1

### Sacred Landscapes and Environmental Consciousness: Dark Green Religion, Feminine Subjectivity, and Solastalgia in Contemporary Media

#### PANEL CHAIR

Queen Sarkar, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), India

#### PANEL PRESENTERS

Amrita Das, Sarvajanic College of Engineering and Technology, India

Ananya Mishra, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), India

Queen Sarkar, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), India



This panel brings together innovative perspectives on the representation of nature as a sacred, spiritual force within contemporary literature, art, and film. The panel explores how these media illuminate the intersections of environmental spirituality, human-nature relations, and existential crises in the Anthropocene. The first paper, "Towards a Vegetal World: Dissecting Feminine Breathing to Construct Subjectivity and Sensible Transcendence in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*," examines how the protagonist's transformation into the vegetal world redefines feminine subjectivity, highlighting nature as a space for survival, identity, and spiritual transcendence. The second paper, "Solastalgia and the Anthropocene: Exploring Psycho-Cultural Distress Through Art and Literature," investigates "solastalgia"—the grief of witnessing environmental degradation—through literary and visual expressions, exploring how art captures the emotional toll of ecological destruction. The third paper, "Dark Green Religion: Analyzing Environmental Spirituality in Film, Literature, and Art," builds on Bron Taylor's work to explore how contemporary media frame nature as sacred, intertwining spiritual narratives with environmental consciousness to address pressing ecological crises. Together, these papers argue that contemporary cultural expressions—whether through narrative, visual imagery, or performance—are crucial in fostering a deeper understanding of the sacredness of nature and the necessity of spiritual and ecological reawakening. This panel highlights the power of artistic and literary works to challenge conventional human-nature paradigms, urging both individual and collective action in response to the environmental crises of our time.

**Keywords:** dark green religion, environmental spirituality, feminine subjectivity, solastalgia, Anthropocene, literature, art, film

## PLENARY PANEL 2

### Green Consciousness: Plants for Human Wellness

#### PANEL CHAIR

Supatra Sen, Asutosh College, India

#### PANEL PRESENTERS

Supatra Sen, Asutosh College, India

Rakheebrita Biswas, Institute of Education (P.G.) for Women, Chandernagore, Hooghly, India

Sharmistha Pramanik, Shimurali Sachinandan College of Education, India



The awareness of the green world is a significant step to overall wellness and well-being in humans. The surrounding green not only keeps us physically fit but also mentally calm and stress-free. Phytoncides obtained from plants improve human immunity while forests serve as immunity zones combating pandemics. To further our knowledge, humans must be aware of the different techniques and processes of green care—ecopsychology, ecotherapy, biophilia, and more. Ecopsychology aims to green the mind or psyche while ecotherapy targets the interconnectedness of body, mind and soul. Hence, ecotherapy may be taken as the applied practice of ecopsychology. While the first two papers highlight green care and ecopsychology with their potential benefits, the third paper concentrates on the teaching-learning aspects of green education in 21<sup>st</sup>-century classrooms. With environmental education becoming an integral part of the academic curriculum worldwide, it is absolutely essential to think of innovative as well as feasible practices of including green education in our daily lives and living. The overall target of the session is to enable all around healthy humans to live in peaceful coexistence and harmony with the surrounding natural world, thus paving the way to fruitful conservation and upholding the richness of biodiversity.



## PLENARY PANEL 3

### Ecocritical Pedagogy, Phytocriticism, and Indigeneity

Organized by EFSLE (Ecosophical Foundation for the Study of Literature and Environment),  
New Delhi

#### PANEL CHAIR

Rishikesh Kumar Singh, Founder President of EFSLE

#### PANEL PRESENTERS

Rishikesh Kumar Singh, Founder President of EFSLE, India

Richa, Patna College, India

Raj Gaurav Verma, University of Lucknow, India



This panel is uniquely designed as it includes three distinguished research papers which will be presented in the form of a workshop that includes interactive sessions with the participants engaging them with various activities. All the three papers are seeking to find a way where the study of the plant humanities in relation to Indigenous culture and their academic adaptation and textual interpretations evolved in this contemporary era, selecting the actual content from the native sources of their own plant based narratives. The study of Indian Indigeneity is not the reflection of any environmental imaginations. The Indian tradition compels us to ponder the existence of humans with/within nature and eventually it establishes a radical difference in the orientation of the worldview as Kant sees it as *Die Weltanschauung* but to get the real picture of the Indian Indigenous tradition, this view must be seen in the specific context of *Die Naturanschauung*. The ethnocultural orality of dissonance and concurrence in different texts, phytopoetry and critical texts is sought.

## PLENARY PANEL 4

# Orchids, Camphor Tree, and Atmasia: Unruly Plants Agencies and Plant-Human Relationships

PANEL CHAIR

Zimu Zhang

The Education University of Hong Kong

PANEL PRESENTERS

Park Ji Yun, City University of Hong Kong

Zheng Jiawen, The Education University of Hong Kong

Zimu Zhang, The Education University of Hong Kong



This panel examines the dynamic plant agency and complex plant-human relationships in East Asia, tracing how specific plant stories entangled with environment history, societal change and conservation cultures. PARK Ji Yun works closely with orchids using a "plant-centered" methodology that combines experimental botanical visualization and ecocinema to manifest orchids' worldings amidst the Anthropocene crisis and human conservation endeavors. ZHENG Jiawen rethinks heritage conservation through the lens of plant storytelling, using case studies from Hong Kong's conservation NGO and traditional villages to discuss plant-based cultural heritage as a creative means and more-than-human care for multispecies co-flourishing. Zimu ZHANG examines plant allergies in China as a "transcorporeal eco-event," tracing how socialist-era afforestation campaigns and urban greening initiatives inadvertently transformed human bodies into sites of ecological negotiation, revealing the agency of plants like *Artemisia* and poplar in co-shaping urban environments. Together, these papers challenge anthropocentric frameworks in medicine, art, or heritage, proposing more inclusive ways of seeing, sensing, and caring for plant lives. By bridging environmental history, cultural heritage, and creative arts, the panel invites us to understand the unruliness of plant agencies and calls for a deeper understanding of our entangled futures.

# PAPER PRESENTATIONS



View from Pokhara, Nepal. Photo Credit: Goutam Majhi (2024)

# Traditional Socio-Religious-Culture and Education aspect of Dalit-Bind

## Community in West Bengal in the Face of Disaster: A Case Study

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The Bind community is a marginalized community belonging to the Dalit of Bengal and came to Bengal approximately 250 years ago in search of work and food as “Internal Displacement People” from Bihar, India. And they chose as a settlement the forested land along the banks of the Hooghly-Bhagirathi-Ganga River, which was largely remote from civil society due to which their identity was almost unknown to the civil society of Bengal for a long time. Although the mother tongue of the fishermen Bind community is Bhojpuri, they learned Bengali language after coming to Bengal which was exclusively for carrying on business and their own work. But the Bind community is comfortable in their mother tongue Bhojpuri to communicate among themselves within their society. The problem starts with educational and socio-religious-cultural questions. A total of 60 communities belong to Scheduled Caste in Bengal. And in terms of literacy among these 60 communities under SC, the Bind community is at the bottom (57) and the literacy rate is only 48.60% while the total literacy rate in West Bengal is 77.08%. Some of the socio-cultural and religious customs or events of the Bind community are Baba Kashibaba Puja (Kashibaba is the Kul devta of the Bind Community), Maa Vindhyavasini Devi (Vindhyavasini Devi is the Kul Devi of the Bind Community) Puja, Satyanarayan Puja, Chhatpuja, Lagantip, Kanyadan, Sindurdan, Kolarghar, Auratia, Chumna during marriage, pig hunting, etc. Although some religious ceremonies or customs are observed, most of the customs are under the influence of Bengal and the people of this society are on the way to forget it. People of this society are losing the traditional wedding song also. Bind villagers of two villages (Char Jatrasiddhi Village, Char Jajira Village) of the Bind-dominated Nadia district of Bengal are selected using the simple random sampling method for the qualitative ethnographic case study research with only 16.53% literacy rate (according to census norms by Govt. of India). The main reasons for the overall backwardness of the people of Bind community of these two villages have been revealed in this study as their lack of awareness, keeping themselves hidden from the people of the civil society for a long time, the tendency to marry at a very young age, the medium of instructions in the school, the discriminatory behavior of the people of civil society towards them, the lack of opportunities in education and workplace etc.

**Keywords:** marginal, internal displacement, Dalit, Bind, identity crisis, plant-based cultural heritage

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# Rowan – Supporter of Life, Protector of the Sacred in Northern European Tradition

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The rowan tree (*Sorbus aucuparia*) is a guardian of thresholds, a protector of homes, and an identity marker in Northern European traditions. Kiruna, Sweden—a town recognized for its multitude of rowan trees—reflects a cognitive landscape where cultural memory and environmental cognition intertwine. Despite industrialization and mining-induced relocations, rowan persists, challenging dominant narratives of industrial landscapes and reminding us of resilience and rootedness. Our presentation explores rowan's role as a living presence as an attributed anthropomorphic agency in cultural and ecological systems as we discuss Indigenous epistemologies, plant-human relationships, and oral traditions. Inspired by Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think* and Juha Pentikäinen's work on shamanic landscapes in northern ecologies, we examine ritual engagement with rowan through a method based on reciprocal relationships between people and trees. Rowan's survival in urban and disrupted spaces offers insight into resilience and rewilding under the neoliberal demands of growing industrialisation. The rowan invites us to rethink conversions, both spiritually and how we perceive and engage with landscapes in times of ecological uncertainty. Northern Scandinavia's eight seasons, as the annual rhythm, reinforce rowan as a carrier of cyclical wisdom and capacity to guide humans toward more harmonious living. Our research also delves into the ecological contributions from sustaining bird populations with its berries to connecting water currents in the underground realms.

**Keywords:** rowan, cognitive landscapes, ritual ecology, plant humanities, urban resilience, anthropomorphic agency, mythopoetic traditions

**Åsa Andersson Martti** is an Indigenous Sámi and Tornedalian artist, healer, and academic researcher based in Kiruna, Swedish Sápmi. She is founder of the historical and animistic pilgrim trail 'Sámi Trail of Tears' based on her mother's childhood memories. **Janne Sirniö** is also a member of the Sámi Trail of Tears project.

# Monoculture Indigo Plantation and the Rape of the Land in Dinbandhu

## Mitra's *Nil Darpan* (1872): A Green Postcolonial Study

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The study investigates the function of the indigo plant as a symbol of colonized territory in the lands of Bengal portrayed in Dinbandhu Mitra's realist drama, *Nil Darpan* (1872). The drama illustrates the oppression of the British colonizers during the 1860s and the Indigo Revolution. It depicts the story of the Basu family in 'Shorpur' and their destruction following the colonizers' greed for a monoculture plantation of indigo. Through a green postcolonial lens, the paper analyzes the forceful monoculture indigo plantation and the revolution of the natives. Using a qualitative approach, this explorative research follows a textual and thematic analysis. Firstly, this study frames the indigo plants as the colonizer's capital that works as the primary catalyst for destroying the agriculture and peasant families of 'Shorpur.' Secondly, it points out the contemporary British administration that has sheltered the Indigo colonizers; which motivated the perpetual oppression of the Anglo-Indians and lead to the infertility and rape of the land. This has been symbolically and indispensably shown through the rape incident of pregnant Khetromoni. Finally, the research thematically analyzes the natives' response to the revolution portrayed in the drama and characterizes *Nil Darpan* (1872) as an anti-colonial resistance narrative.

**Keywords:** green postcolonialism, indigo plantations, Dinbandhu Mitra, *Nil Darpan*, resistance narratives

**K. M. Arefin** is currently working as a Lecturer in the Department of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has published several research articles in the areas of Postcolonial Studies, Translation Studies, and Feminist Discourses. He envisions a world of sustainability, equity, and environmental justice.

# Sustainable Environmental Policy for Protecting Plants in South Asia

## Through Regional Cooperation

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Plants play a tremendous role in improving human life; their contribution to the earth is priceless. It is clear that even in the fourth industrial revolution era people fulfill their basic needs through plants, and there is no other alternative to replace them. Nowadays plants face enormous hazards including illicit felling of trees, deforestation, agriculture, farming, urbanization, etc. For instance, most megacities in South Asia are victims of environmental threats due to the mismanagement of plants. The danger is not limited to one country or one city, but encompasses our whole sub-continent. The principal objective of this research is to examine the importance of introducing a sustainable environmental policy for protecting plants in the South Asian region. The main research problem of this study is, why countries fail to follow collective sustainable environment policy to protect plants. The selected research approach is descriptive for this study. It is important to note that the South Asian region faces several challenges because of negligence about plants. Overpopulation is one of the foremost challenges to the region, and that issue is directly connected to plants and their sustainability. Hence it is essential to formulate a South Asian policy agenda for protecting our plants for future generations.

**Keywords:** plants, policy, protection, South Asia

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# Dystopian Ecologies: Exploring the Intersection of Identity and Environment in *Hearts Still Beating*

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*Hearts Still Beating* is a zombie apocalypse novel that not only delves into the description of the dystopian society of Southern California but also shows the bond between the lesbian couple Mara and Rory. With these as the primary elements of the novel, one cannot overlook the descriptions of the environment and the dystopian representations of the surroundings while taking us through the beautiful bond of the couple. The descriptions given by the author, Brooke Archer, in the novel of the bond of the couple depicts their survival of the zombie apocalypse while carefully setting the environment in the backdrop of a dystopian society. This paper dives into the representations of the flora and fauna, the dystopian society of the novel along with the beautiful bond shared by the couple Mara and Rory. It will look into how the surroundings are represented in the novel, particularly how the author describes the flora and fauna of a dystopian society.

**Keywords:** dystopianism, gender, lesbianism, fauna, flora

**Subhangi Bahuguna** is a Research Scholar at Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University researching in gender studies.



## Seeds of Resistance: *Kalamkathi*

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*Oryza sativa* commonly known as rice, is more than a staple crop of India. It embodies centuries of cultural heritage, identity, religious practices, ecological wisdom, and agricultural traditions. The film *Kalamkathi*, directed by Biplab Das and showcased in the environmental category of the 29th Kolkata International film festival, explores the intricate connections between agriculture, ecology and cultural identity. The film's evocative cinematography documents the farmers' struggles, the challenges posed by corporate interference and the role of ecofeminism. The plot of *Kalamkathi* revolves around the effort to revive indigenous varieties of rice using traditional farming practices. A scientist and his team nestled in a remote village are trying to challenge the prevailing dominant discourses on modern agriculture. The themes of environmental stewardship and resistance have been weaved together in the fabric of the film. This paper explores how visual storytelling can serve as a medium for preserving indigenous agricultural system and practices, foster ecological consciousness, and give tangible shape to the discourse on sustainable agriculture. This paves the path for reinforcing the deep-rooted relationships between humans and plants which is the purpose of the film and the study too.

**Keywords:** Kalamkathi, rice, eco-feminism , traditional farming, food sovereignty

**Joyeeta Banerjee** works at Nikunjapur High School, Bankura, West Bengal as an Assistant teacher, teaching English as second language to first generation rural learners. Her interest in research was kindled when she received the National Child Rights Fellowship from Child Rights and You (CRY) in the year 2012. She has published papers on education, gender and has written in blogs like Café Dissensus and KFI, Kolkata and in Anustup. She is the recipient of Fulbright Distinguished awards in Teaching program for International Teachers 2024–25.

# A Phytocritical Reading of the Film *The Ritual* (2017)

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This paper examines the Swedish forest in *The Ritual* (2017) as a silent yet powerful witness to human suffering, intensifying the psychological horror of guilt and grief. The ancient, towering trees—ever-present but voiceless—mirror protagonist Luke's struggle with his friend Rob's death, merging natural and emotional landscapes. Using a plant humanities framework, the study contends that the forest's dense pines and overgrown thickets serve as posthuman archives, absorbing and echoing the group's anguish and terror. The ritualistic killings, where victims are hung on tree branches, further cast plants as active participants in the narrative, collaborating with the Jötunn's retribution. Applying phytocriticism, the paper analyzes how this botanical environment disrupts human-centered survival stories, drawing parallels to South Asian sacred groves as spaces of divine justice. *The Ritual* advances global plant humanities by portraying flora not merely as backdrop but as engaged actors in an ethical and environmental discourse.

**Keywords:** botanical witnesses, *The Ritual*, psychological trauma, phytocriticism, posthuman ethics

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# Plants as Medicine in the Rajbanshi Community of North Bengal

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The Rajbanshis are one of the aboriginal peoples of North Bengal. This area is a treasure house of biodiversity. The community has a vast knowledge of the uses of medicinal plants. Since time immemorial, they have been using plants for the treatment of common diseases of this area. These plants are said to have cured many ailments and in the context of modernization of treatment, it is still very much popular in practice among the group of Rajbanshis as well as outsiders. Even the people from urban areas take admission in the Kabiraji centre especially for the treatment of bone fractures, arthritis, jaundice, rheumatism and other ailments. But it is observed that the present generation of Rajbanshis are not interested in their inherited plant knowledge and local resources of plants for therapeutic purposes as they were earlier in the region. So, research and documentation are required to preserve the ethnomedicinal knowledge of the community and to conserve the fast depleting plant resources. This paper explores uses of ethnomedicinal plants of Rajbanshi people of Coochbehar district in West Bengal to awaken them and others to the plant knowledge and community health.

**Keywords:** Rajbanshis, ethnomedicinal, plants, treatment

*Chittaranjan Barman* has been serving as Assistant Professor of the Department of Bengali at Mekliganj College, Coochbehar, W.B. for eight years. His area of interest includes folk literature, environmentalism, and literary theory. He has published papers in different national and international journals.

# Interconnectedness of Nature and Humans: The Representation of Plants in the Ramayana

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This paper explores the intricate relationship between nature and humanity as depicted through plants in the ancient Hindu epic, the Ramayana. The Ramayana transcends mere storytelling, embodying profound ecological wisdom and illustrating the interconnectedness of all living beings. The narrative emphasizes the sacredness of the natural world, with forests, humans, and animals serving as vital settings and integral characters in the journeys of Rama, Sita, Laxman, and Hanuman. This study highlights how flora is portrayed not merely as backdrops to human action but as essential to the narrative, reflecting deeper philosophical and cultural significance. Plants symbolize life, wisdom, and sustenance, intricately tied to the characters' journeys and moral dilemmas. By examining various botanical representations, this paper analyzes and interprets the ethical and spiritual messages in the epic regarding ecological consciousness, employing the principles of deep ecology as articulated by Arne Naess, Bill Devall, and George Sessions, such as ecological self, biocentric equity, and self-realization. Additionally, it discusses how these representations resonate with contemporary ecological concerns, illustrating the Ramayana's lessons on the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world. This research advocates for a holistic understanding of nature in literature, emphasizing the necessity of cultivating a harmonious relationship and ecological balance.

**Keywords:** interconnectedness, ecological consciousness, deep ecology, biocentric, nature

# The Struggle of Nature vs. Nurture in the Cinematic World: A Critical

## Response to the Netflix Series *Kaala Paani*

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The longstanding debate of nature versus nurture—the interplay between genetic predisposition and environmental influences has been a debate which finds significant representation in cinematic narratives. The Netflix series *Kaala Paani* (2023) presents a compelling narrative of this duality, depicting survival, moral dilemmas, and human adaptability in the face of an apocalyptic health crisis on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This paper critically analyzes how *Kaala Paani* navigates the struggle between nature and nurture. In *Kaala Paani*, nature manifests primarily through the uncontrollable biological threat—a deadly waterborne disease that dictates human fate regardless of social class, background, or personal choices; while the governmental authorities and scientists rely on institutional knowledge and research to find a cure and the marginalized individuals, driven by past struggles and learned survival tactics, adapt in more instinctive and unpredictable ways. It portrays nature as an indiscriminate force, demonstrating its dominance over human constructs such as law, ethics, and societal norms. The disease's aggressive spread underscores nature's unyielding power, reinforcing the argument that human survival is, at times, dictated by biological determinism. The nurture aspect is reflected in the actions and decisions of the characters who struggle to maintain order, morality, and humanity amidst chaos. These contrasting responses highlight nurture's influence in shaping behavioral patterns and survival instincts. This paper argues that *Kaala Paani* ultimately presents a balanced view of the nature versus nurture debate to reflect on the delicate equilibrium between inherited traits and learned behaviors, making it a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on nature versus nurture in cinematic storytelling.

**Keywords:** nature, nurture, cinema, environment, dystopia, survival

# Human-Plant Relations of the Bon Bibi Cult of the Sundarbans

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The Sundarbans is the largest mangrove forest of the world, which extends across the borders of India and Bangladesh. It is the home of diverse plant ecology. The limited agrarian possibilities and harsh environmental setting of the lower Bengal delta have inspired the development of oral traditions like lore and myths of venerating supernatural forces, gods, godlings, spirits, and demons. In general the folk rituals and rites of Bengal are closely related to seasons, agricultural cropping, rivers, fertility cult, and magic. The folkloric traditions that issued around the livelihood of the islanders reflect human-plant relations, their cultures, social settings, and exposes their harsh living conditions. Bon Bibi is the most popular female deity of the Sunderbans cultural zone. And the allegory of Bon Bibi is more than a story for the community who venerate her. The cult of Bon Bibi is of non-Aryan origin. The folklore and cults of Bengal are mostly composed of spirits, supernatural forces, gods, and their symbolic representations. The idea of worshipping sacred groves is universal, especially for the forest dwelling communities. And the practice of worship, customs and traditions of these communities can be defined as a emotional response to the fear of unknown and thus seeking protection. Even today the parable lives among the Sundarban folk communities, an admixture of Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Adivasi communities.

**Keywords:** human-environment interactions, environmental adaptations, religious ecology, cultural resilience, folk religion

*Ratrayee Bhowmick* graduated from Loreto College, Kolkata. She developed an interest in cultural history and unconventional aspects of perceiving history. Her first paper presentation was "Oral Traditions as Unconventional Sources of History" for Loreto College. She completed her post-graduation from Nalanda University. Her dissertation work was entitled "Women's Question in 19th Century Bengal." Her curriculum included the holistic study of environmental history, ethno-archeology, world history, theories of archeology, international relations, Buddhist historiography, and trends of historiography. She has actively engaged in extra-curricular events during her studies, and with SPIC MACAY in Nalanda University.

# Ecopsychology: 'Green'-ing the Psyche for Mental Health

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Life is not always smooth sailing. Human life is full of ups and downs. We become easily perturbed and distressed while we face any sort of problems in various facets of our lives. Sitting idle we can not really solve our problems but, we need to try our level best to control our emotional equilibrium in such a way so that we can try to find out the most pertinent solution to reduce our stress and to solve our problems as and when required. Our very own environment/nature sometimes enacts very effectively in our stress management and reduction process if, we shall be able to connect with the nature truly from the core of our hearts, It is nothing but a kind of healthy reciprocation between the humans and environment/nature where they live in or even interact with each other for the attainment of an overall betterment. This healing mutualism among the humans and environmental components can be termed as *ecopsychology*, which basically treats people psychologically by bringing them spiritually closer to the nature.

**Keywords:** ecopsychology, healing mutualism, well-being, mental health

**Rakheebrita Biswas** (Gold Medalist), alumnus of St. Xavier's College and Ph.D. University of Calcutta is an Assistant Professor (W.B.E.S) and Academic Counsellor of IGNOU and NSOU, with 40 academic publications in botany, environment and education. She has authored 8 books and 5 SLMs (NSOU) in the fields of teacher education and education. She is associated with an ISSN peer-reviewed multidisciplinary journal *Harvest* as a coordinator.

# Critical Plant Studies and Anticolonialism: An Intercultural Perspective on Phytocentrism and Biointegration

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The philosophy of plants opens several possibilities for the intersection between perspectives and cultures. As botanical organisms have often been relegated to a passive role in much of Western theory (despite notable exceptions), both theoretical and practical efforts to emancipate these organisms and recognize their agency and moral status can be deeply intertwined with the struggle of non-Western epistemologies and ontologies, which frequently offer alternative interpretations of other-than-human and other-than-animal organisms. In this paper, we aim to illustrate how the phytocentric paradigm proposed by the philosopher Michael Marder (2014) and the concept of biointegration by the Quilombola thinker and activist Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2023) can resonate. Indeed, these two viewpoints converge, creating a perspective in which we can recognize our vegetality and, consequently, adopt an ethical framework founded on the shared principle of growth that resounds in all living beings. Plants better represent the latter; thus, caring for plants means caring for the entire biosphere, eliminating the division between species and even between nature and culture since “everything is nature” and, at the same time, “everything is growth.”

**Keywords:** biointegration, phytocentrism, critical plant studies, intercultural philosophy.

*Maria Elisa Bonaudi* is a PhD candidate in Intercultural Philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and a member of the Interculturalia research group. Main research interests include intercultural philosophy, Afro-Brazilian philosophy, Afro-Latin American studies, and intercultural hermeneutics. *Federico Comollo* is a PhD candidate in Sustainable Development and Climate Change at IUSS, Pavia, and Ethics and Politics of Plant Conservation in the Anthropocene at LUISS, Rome, Italy. His research interests are biosemiotics, phytosemiotics, philosophy of plants, and environmental ethics.



# The Other Narrative: Fictions of Planetary from India's North East

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When Bengt Karlsson remarks that “the unruly can be frightening, but arguably also a space of hope,” he locates a moment that makes possible the deep ties between the human and the non-human tied together, seamlessly, by the invisible threads of kinship and shared lives. Such histories of in-betweenness “where anything can happen and everything can be lived” are embedded within the cultural geographies of the region, and facilitate a ‘worlding’ that pivots on the idea of planetarity evident in contemporary Anglophone writings from India’s North East. These works narrate stories of entangled relations that connect the living world of the human with other life forms. This paper offers a reading of such (select) fiction and argues for an alternative reading of the non-human environment that, to borrow from Marcell Proust, provokes the reader to “not only to see new things but to see things in new ways” and thus comprehend the belligerent relations between the human and the non-human by connecting indigenous history with ecology. The paper aligns with the theoretical formulations of alternative colonial epistemologies advocated by Quijano (2007) and Mignolo (2000) to engage with the environmental concerns of fiction as it arrives at an ecological understanding of the human and non-human landscape to make possible a distinct genealogy that is intrinsic to the collective history of the region.

**Keywords:** worlding, planetarity, North East India, ecology, environment

**Kalpana Bora** teaches in the Department of English, Cotton University, Assam, India. She engages with narratives of the urban, the interstices of space and literature, gender, postcolonial literatures, environmental literatures and writings from India’s North East. Her recent publications include “Maximum City: Bombay, Spatial Politics, and Representation” (2020) and “Through the Postcolonial Lens: Reading the Environment in Narratives from India’s North East” (2021), and “this Cloud, this crust, this doubt, this dust”: Reading Queerness into Sarah Waters’ *The Little Stranger* (forthcoming).

# Forest Allegories: Ecological Violence and Tribal Resistance in Sheela

## Tomy's *Valli*

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South Asian literature has often underscored the simultaneity of destruction of forests and obliteration of tribal communities by centuries old feudal systems. These novels have often posed the complicated problem of ecological devastation and its complicity in extracting tribal labor. In this context, what counts as the plant humanities often presents a wide spectrum that involves the politics of extraction from both forests and tribal lives. Novels portray how exploitation of the forests led to the exploitation and enslavement of the forest people – the Adivasis. As the forest dwindled, so did the Adivasis' culture, their way of life, even their language. In this context, I posit that Sheela Tomy's novel *Valli* (translated from the Malayalam by Jayashree Kalathil) interrogates the very premise of the plant humanities by situating the novel in Bayalnad – the old name of Wayanad in northern Kerala, India. Spanning over four generations, *Valli* captures the ever-changing and depredation of forest ecosystem and tribal lives under the feudal dominance of landlords. Here, I examine how *Valli* characterizes the flora and fauna of Bayalnad to depict the ecosystem of social, political, and ecological violence. I especially read this characterization of flora and fauna as a forest allegory through which the novel underscores the social complexity of forest ecosystems in South Asia. In conclusion, this paper sheds light on the imbrication and ever-expanding meaning of the plant humanities and tribal lives in the systemic feudal and neoliberal exploitation.

**Subarna Talukder Bose** is an independent scholar, writer and researcher based out of California, USA. She holds an MA in English Literature from Portland State University (PSU) and a double BA in English from University of Calcutta, India and PSU. She has participated in global conferences like Northeast Modern Language Association (NEMLA) and PAMLA, where her work has focused on the intersection between literature, marginal resistance, and forest ecosystems in South Asia and Africa.

# Aspen Arborglyphs, Juniper Mistletoe, and “Wild Apples”: Pedagogical

## Partnerships with Plants

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The distinction between teaching students about plants and teaching them with plants may not always be a firm or sharp one, but there are significant differences between these two pedagogical approaches, ones that may matter beyond the constraints of our classrooms, and the explicitly-stated learning outcomes of our various humanities curricula. This presentation explores several experiments in engagement with plants over the course of ten years of interdisciplinary humanities teaching at a small residential campus in the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau bioregions of western North America. In particular, I focus on three examples. First, the role played by arborglyphs (tree carvings) within a multi-year community project transcribing oral history recordings of Basque, Diné, Mexican, Peruvian, and white sheep workers. Second, various approaches to integrating juniper mistletoe (*Phoradendron juniperinum*) into humanities field studies curriculum. And third, explorations in the relative “wildness” of apples, involving orchard work, virtual mapping, and cooperative gleaning practices. Throughout, I note the application of traditional “honorable harvest” and other protocols of reciprocity. In all cases, I also emphasize the ways in which these particular learning partnerships trouble conventional/Western boundaries between subject and object, wildness and domesticity, parasitism and mutualism, and the physical and metaphysical.

**Keywords:** arborglyphs, pedagogy, reciprocity, Kimmerer, Thoreau

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# Sacred Trees and Cursed Forests: The Botany of *The Lord of the Rings* and *Elden Ring*

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Literature and video games reinterpret folkloric plant myths to construct immersive worlds rich in ecological meaning. This paper examines how *The Lord of the Rings* and *Elden Ring* draw from myth and folklore to shape their botanical landscapes, particularly through sacred and cursed flora. Engaging with E.O. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis and Timothy Morton's dark ecology, this study explores how these works reimagine plant mythology and folklore across media. The White Tree of Gondor and the Erdtree echo Yggdrasil, the Axis Mundi and other sacred groves, embodying renewal and divine favour. As Michael Marder argues in *Plant-Thinking*, trees participate in historical and cultural memory, reinforcing narratives of power and decay. Conversely, Fangorn Forest and the Rot-infested Lands evoke myths of vengeful nature, aligning with Donna Haraway's Chthulucene, where human and nonhuman forces intertwine in complex, sometimes unsettling ways. Both works also engage with herbalism, healing, and decay, blending medieval botanical traditions with alchemical lore. Integrating Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think*, this study demonstrates how fantasy literature and video games shape our cultural perceptions of flora, myth, and environmental ethics, encouraging deeper ecological awareness.

**Keywords:** Plant mythology, folklore, fantasy literature, video games, ecological storytelling

**Agastya Chakrabarti** is currently a student doing his M.A at EFLU, Hyderabad. He graduated with a B.A in English with Honors from RKMRC, Kolkata. He has presented papers on modernism, queer studies and videogame narratives and is interested in the study of unconventional narratives, postmodernism, and interactive storytelling.

# Sacred Remedies: Intersections of Plant Life, Tantra, and Religious Medicine

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The conceptualization of plant life as something sacred and therapeutic remains at the center of Indic religious consciousness. In the Vedic culture, especially in Atharva Veda, the medicinal values of the plants are specifically mentioned. The herbs and their therapeutic power later became the object of veneration and religious devotion. Therefore, an awareness of plant life and its significance has been acknowledged and celebrated in Indic religious tradition. The first reference to plant life and its therapeutic power occurred in Atharva Veda. Later, in the formulation of tantric medicine, we came across the preoccupation with plant life, which has become an integral part of religious rituals and medicine. Tantra, as a religious strand within Hinduism, provides not only spiritual awareness but also actively participates in the discourse of religious medicine and, therefore, embraces plant life as an integral part of religious ritual and healing. Far from being an insentient object, in tantric metaphysics, the plant is viewed as an expression of divinity and, hence, is endowed with healing power. This paper aims to interpret the discourse of religious medicine with specific reference to medicinal plants and their efficacy in Tantra.

**Keywords:** Tantra, Atharva Veda, Medicine, Plant, Healing

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# Mycelial Networks and Post-Human Futures: Fungal Agency, New Species, and the Reconstruction of Human Existence in HBO's *The Last of Us* (2023)

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Merlin Sheldrake, in the introductory portion of his text *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures* (2020), states, “Fungi are everywhere but they are easy to miss. They are inside you and around you. They sustain you and all that you depend on. As you read these words, fungi are changing the way that life happens, as they have done for more than a billion years”. In this context, this paper explores the representation of fungal agency and its implications for post-human futures in HBO’s *The Last of Us* (2023). Through the figure of the Cordyceps fungus, the series interrogates the boundaries between species, the fragility of human exceptionalism, and the ecological entanglements that shape existence. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from posthumanism, ecocriticism, and fungal biology, this analysis examines how mycelial networks function as narrative devices that challenge anthropocentric perspectives. The emergence of new species and modes of survival within the show destabilizes traditional notions of humanity, offering a speculative reimagining of human subjectivity. By centering the agency of the fungal other, *The Last of Us* presents a vision of apocalypse that is not solely an end but a transformation—a restructuring of ecological and social relations. This study ultimately argues that the series prompts critical reflection on human resilience, ecological dependency, and the possibility of coexisting with non-human life forms in a shared planetary future.

**Keywords:** Fungal Agency, Ecological Entanglements, Posthumanism, New Species, Planetary Future

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# Caring-with as Embodied Solidarity Practices: A Study of Peasant Month Farm Visit Organized by Southeast Asian Migrant Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

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This paper is developed from my participation and collaboration with migrant domestic workers in organizing a farm visit for Peasant Month with farmers in Hong Kong. Peasant Month is a yearly event in which migrant domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia jointly commemorate peasants' struggles against land grabbing and landlessness, sometimes together with farmers in Hong Kong, who are faced with land expropriation by mega development plans. This paper studies a farm visit for Peasant Month 2024 to reflect on the attempts in connecting farmers across the Philippines, Indonesia and Hong Kong by acts of caring. Caring acts such as sharing of food, planting sweet potatoes and sharing stories about each others' hometown subtly cultivated a kind of solidarity that is embodied in practices. Based on participatory observation and visual records of the visit, this paper describes how the activities practiced care about/for the land across ethnicities, and nurtured care with each other as well as with plant species. With reference to María Puig de la Bellacasa's discussion on solidarity in *Matters of Care*, this paper also explores the potential for a kind of solidarity that thrives with divergence in the embodied practices of caring-with.

**Keywords:** care, solidarity, Peasant Month, migrant domestic workers, Hong Kong

*Chan Sin Yuk, Teresa*, is a researcher and a practitioner in the fields of environmental humanities, community building, and community arts. Teresa has a M.Phil. degree in Cultural Studies. She has participated in the making of collective spaces in Hong Kong while practicing gardening at the same time.

# Of Tulsi and Timur: Kitchen as a Site of Socio-Cultural Power in India and Nepal

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India and Nepal share not only the 1950 Peace and Friendship treaty, open borders, religious ties or Roti-Beti connection, but also a deeper and yet silent socio-cultural dynamics. The Kitchen in both countries is a feminine space which is imbued with a subtle discourse of resilience, cultural preservation and social connection. This paper argues how kitchen inspite of being a confined domestic space, is also a locale for women to assert their social-cultural power equipped with botanical traditional knowledge, masala recipes, and its appropriation in daily lives. It will utilize symbolic interactionism to showcase how through continued and sustained interactions with plants and herbs in the kitchen, women become custodians of cultural and generational memory as well as transmitter and preserver of cultural culinary heritage. This constant engagement becomes a site of meaning making and cultural continuity. For instance, herbs like tulsi (basil) and timur (Sichuan pepper) are not just culinary or medicinal in nature but are also cultural signifiers laden with meanings aligned with healing, rituals, purity and protection. This symbolic use of plants and herbs preserves culinary and spiritual traditions, creates family bonds and promotes oral traditions of storytelling passed across generations. Further, this qualitative research would engage a small sample of 15 women, and analyze respondents' responses as text utilizing Voyant- a Digital Humanities tool to show how shared patterns and symbolic meanings of plants, herbs and spices enable women solidarity, and a subtle rise in their socio-cultural power.

**Keywords:** cultural lens, plants and herbs as site of power in kitchen, symbolic interactionism

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# Trauma, Memory, Plants, and the Ecology of Identity in *The Nix* and *The Goldfinch*

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Nathan Hill's *The Nix* and Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch* explore trauma and identity through protagonists whose fractured memories and dislocation are deeply intertwined with their environments. This paper examines how inherited mythologies, ecological metaphors, and shifting landscapes function as sites of trauma and memory, shaping Samuel Andresen-Anderson's and Theo Decker's psychological journeys. Drawing on Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, this study argues that both novels portray trauma as fragmented and belated, manifesting through symbols of nature and history. In *The Nix*, Norwegian folklore and the spectral nix act as mythic and ecological metaphors for intergenerational trauma, reflecting Mircea Eliade's notion of myth as a vehicle for cultural memory. Timothy Morton's "dark ecology" explains how these natural elements become haunting, destabilizing forces entangled with human suffering. The eponymous painting of *The Goldfinch*, representing a bird tethered to its perch, is synonymous with captivity and tenacity, reflecting Theo's imprisonment in memory. The novel's changing settings, from the rigid architecture of New York to the barren desert of Las Vegas, highlight trauma's link to displacement and shattered identity. By examining trauma as an ecological force that, like plant and animal life, undergoes cycles of decay and regeneration, this paper engages with the plant humanities, highlighting literature's role in exploring nature's imprint on human memory and identity.

**Keywords:** Trauma, memory, identity, ecological metaphor, myth, dark ecology, displacement

**Ananya Chand** is a research scholar in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Christ University. With a special interest in trauma, memory, and psychoanalysis, she has published in journals of international repute. Also, she has attended and presented at several conferences. Ananya is GATE qualified, reflecting her academic prowess and commitment to her field.

# Plants as Affective Co-Habitants: Semiotic Ecologies of Care in Human-Building Interaction

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This paper reimagines plants as affective co-habitants within institutional architecture—agents that participate in shaping the emotional atmospheres of educational life. Drawing on interviews and diary studies with university students in the UK, we explore how flora, space, and emotion become entangled through interpretive encounters. Using a biosemiotic lens, we examine how students read plant presence—not as passive stimuli, but as signs that co-construct affective meaning. Situated within Human-Building Interaction (HBI), our study reveals a layered semiotic ecology in which buildings, plants, and human bodies mutually mediate perception and care. Informed by thinkers such as Wendy Wheeler and Eduardo Kohn, we consider how nonhuman beings participate in communicative processes that shape human experience. We also reflect on cultural semiotic ideologies, drawing attention to how interpretations of “natural” care are socially and historically shaped. By integrating design research with multispecies semiotics and architectural theory, this project contributes to the plant humanities by proposing speculative, relational futures for institutional space where flora and architecture collaborate in the making of emotionally attuned environments. We offer this work as a contribution to both ecological design and more-than-human approaches to wellbeing in educational settings.

**Keywords:** plant agency, biosemiotics, affective atmosphere, semiotic ecologies, human-building interaction

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# Residual Plant Memory in Beethoven's Song Cycle

## "An die ferne Geliebte Op 98"

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In song cycle "An die ferne Geliebte Op 98," Beethoven invoked the residual memory of the tree under which the lovers kissed. What creates a botanical rhizome in Beethoven's symphony is the sexual bond between the "murmuring breeze" and the floral substance that creates a difference to the anthropocentric lovers. Understanding the teleology of "An die ferne Geliebte" is going beyond human memory. Thus we see one such scene is evoked in Sehnsucht, by Beethoven. Beethoven's botanical musicology shows the residual plant memory of how plants used abiotic means to transport sperm for reproduction, utilizing water and wind. Thus the murmuring breeze is more than a Romantic noema but a hyletic data in the sexual memory of the plant. The male gametophyte remember the protection of sperm during the process of transfer and Beethoven's Lenore presides the metaphor. The Fifth Symphony brings in how the angiosperms have distinctive reproductive organs called flowers with carpels and the gametophyte is greatly reduced to a female embryo sac with as few as eight cells and the male gametophyte develop from the pollen grains.

**Keywords:** botanical musicology, sensory data, time-object, melody-in-existence

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# Plants, Land and Indigenous Philosophy: Poetics of Ecosphere in

## Rituals of Tharu

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This paper studies the interrelationship between plants, land and the production of indigenous philosophy of Tharu community of in their rituals. The study focuses on interpreting the varied representation of environmental humanities engaged in the rituals of Tharu community to show how they realize life as ecological creature through overlapping myth, culture and meaningful physical environment. The study tries to address the often un-examined relationship of environment sustainability to meaningful daily life. The production of philosophy from the meld of human and meaningful nature is what American pragmatist Charles Sanders Pierce and German biologist Jakob Joann von Uexküll define as ecosphere. Ecosphere involves a meld of physical and cultural communication, which can be considered spiritual as well as material. It helps to inspire ecological restoration efforts of today by considering the indigenous knowledge and their philosophy to interpret nature. The Indigenous community of Nepalese Tharu weave their fairytales, myths and cultural norms in close appropriation of nature and its elements to justify the land and *umwelt* (meaningful environment) they live around as the spiritual entity. Tharus being agrarian tribe employ multiple layers of myth and cultural norms to their performance of seasonal rituals throughout the year. They worship plants, earth, water and *umwelt* to engage the ecological wisdom of non-modern cultures and immaterial ecologies. Thus, this study argues that by closely observing the entwinement of ecology and semiotics of rituals of Tharu, we as humans can realize our societies as ecological communities.

**Keywords:** Ecosphere, ecosemiotics, Tharu rituals, immaterial ecology

**Mohan Dangaura** is an Assistant Professor of English Literature at Nepal Sanskrit University and a PhD scholar at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. His academic and literary pursuits focus on themes of identity, subalternity, and cultural preservation, with a particular emphasis on the Tharu community. A prolific writer and researcher, Dangaura has contributed significantly to Tharu and Nepali literature, blending scholarly insight with creative expression. Through his work, he advocates for the representation and empowerment of marginalized voices, establishing himself as a key figure in Nepal's academic and literary spheres.

# Towards a Vegetal World: Dissecting Feminine Breathing to Construct Subjectivity and Sensible Transcendence Concerning the Natural Environment and Belonging in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*

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This research paper unearths a new way of being and existing of women through the understanding of the vegetal world that provides air along with other natural elements. Highlighting the importance of air that provides life's endurance, this paper focuses on breathing with and through plants to have a similar vegetal psyche where women and nature share the same breath to subjectify each other. Going beyond the ecocritical concept of the women-nature interconnection, this paper explores woman's survival and self-discovery through imposing herself with plants. Han Kang's novel *The Vegetarian* showcases the survival and rediscovery of the self through the understanding of nature, plants and animals. The novel witnesses the protagonist's entry into the vegetal world, sharing her breathing with nature, and her understanding of sensible transcendence where her transformation into plants generates her wonder and incarnates her existence about her original energy. This paper intends to show the importance of plant life through the cultivation of the sensory perceptions of women where both encompass their autonomy through the theoretical lens of Luce Irigaray.

**Keywords:** breathing, sensible transcendence, vegetal world, subjectivity, autonomy

**Amrita Das**, Assistant Professor at Sarvajanik College of Engineering and Technology, Surat, recently submitted her Ph.D. thesis on contemporary Indian women's novels. An alumna of the University of Calcutta, she specializes in Western philosophy, gender studies, and women's language. She is fluent in English, French, and Rabindra Sangeet.

# Towards a Decolonial Phytocriticism: Kadamba Tree, Plant-Human Kinship, Colonial Erasure, and Decolonial Reclamation in Bengali and Santal Ethnobotanical Praxis

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The kadamba tree (*Neolamarckia cadamba*) has always held a very special place in the cultural imagination of the Bengali and Chotanagpur regions, amongst the Bengali Hindu and Santhal ritualistic traditions, in various ways, including celebrations, spirituality as well as everydayness. Within Bengali Hindu-Vaishnavite literary traditions, the kadamba tree's shade is conceptualized as a sanctified socio-religious space, emblematic of Lord Krishna's flute performances. Conversely, in Santhal cultural narratives, the kadamba is imbued with sacrality, frequently situated proximate to sacred groves (Jaher). Its phenological cycles, particularly floral blooming, hold critical significance in eco-literary discourse, shaping representations of monsoon seasonality and, thus, agricultural temporality within ecological and literary world-making frameworks, simultaneously impacting the cultural shaping of gendered norms in relation to bodily maturation in human and non-human realms. In a way, one can say that the kadamba's biochemistry and monsoon phenology structured precolonial Bengali and Santhal lifeworlds, where it functioned as a "non-human kin" in feminine religio-cultural rites and eco-agrarian stewardship. Later, British commodification of the tree as railway timber, alongside Brahmanical sanitization of its association with Dalit-Adivasi reproductive labor, severed these multispecies entanglements. Focusing on cultural texts from Bengal as well as Chotanagpur region paradigmatically, this article mobilizes John C. Ryan's phytocriticism—an analysis of vegetal agency in cultural production—to theorize the kadamba as a polyvalent site of decolonial resistance and gendered worldmaking, also unravelling how contemporary praxis reanimates its material-semiotic power.

**Keywords:** phytocriticism, decolonization, multispecies ethnography, gender, caste-ecology nexus

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# Flora-Fauna Interactions: An Ecocritical Reading of Select Dance-Dramas of

Rabindranath Tagore

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Nobel Laureate Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore envisioned nature as an integral part of human existence—a vision that went beyond his literary creations and led to the formation of Viswa Bharati at Santiniketan, an institution focusing on his philosophy of human-nature proximity. Tagore's engagement with nature is well-explored in his poetry, prose, and essays. However, his dance-dramas, an innovative genre popularized in Bengal, have been less investigated in the field of research, except for their performative aspects. It is often overlooked how nature has taken a significant role in the dance-dramas and how Tagore has synchronized the rhythm of trees, rivers, flowers, and birds (flora) with the movements of the human characters (part of fauna). In light of the above argument, this paper attempts an ecocritical analysis of select dance-dramas, namely *Valmiki Pratibha*, *Chitrangada* and *Mayar Khela*. Vandana Shiva's concept of *prakriti* and *purusha*, in the context of Indian cosmology, will be taken into account to examine the dynamic relationship between flora and fauna. Further drawing on the idea of ecofeminism and ecomasculinity, the paper will offer a gendered dimension to the ecological themes in relation to the human characters of the respective dance-dramas.

**Keywords:** dance-drama, flora, fauna, interactions, ecocriticism

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# Ecologies of Power: Exploring the Plant Humanities Through the Cinematic and Supernatural Landscapes of *Tumbbad* (2018)

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Rahi Anil Bharve's 2018 directorial venture *Tumbbad* showcases a gripping narrative about the human nature and character while presenting a tale as old as time i.e., the downfall of human avarice and desires at the hands of a vengeful nature and dark malevolent supernatural forces. The paper aims to read the cinematic landscape and narrative of the film, through the lens of the plant humanities, an emerging interdisciplinary field that focuses on the primacy of natural vegetation in all its forms in all human culture, ethics, and symbolic and artistic expressions. The paper aims at critically analyzing the role of trees and forests in the film which function not as a passive background but has cultural, symbolic, and ecological significance. In *Tumbbad*, menacing plants and grim forests serve as metaphors for the core theme of the movie, i.e. moral decay, spiritual corruption, and greed. The forest and the cursed trees around the fort of the demonic god, Hastar, become reflections of the inner turmoil of the characters as they are drawn into the insidious cycle of exploitation, death, and decay. It is the natural environment which holds the most power in the relationship between human greed and love for excessive consumption and the moral decay and death which inevitably waits for him at the end. This paper therefore also attempts to expand the scope of plant humanities to include plants in cinematic narratives such as *Tumbbad* to showcase how plants can exist on material, moral and spiritual realities, and function both as symbols and agents of supernatural transformation

**Keywords:** plant humanities, *Tumbbad*, folktales and ecology, environmental ethics, Indian cinema

**Pallabee Dasgupta** is currently working as an Assistant Professor in India. Her research interests include environmental studies, speculative fiction, urban anthropology and dystopian studies. Besides this, she also has relevant experience in gender and women's studies, English language teaching and translation studies. She has participated in several pertinent conferences and workshops and published in her research areas and hopes to engage in the same with much alacrity in the future.



# Ecological and Postcolonial Dimensions in *Lord of the Flies*: Interactions of Flora, Fauna, and Fungi in Nature's Allegory

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William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is often analyzed as a psychological exploration of human nature, but it also offers a profound commentary on humanity's relationship with the natural world. Set on an uninhabited island, the novel weaves the lives of its characters with the flora, fauna, and fungi around them, creating a microcosm of ecological interconnectedness. The lush vegetation, the hunted pigs, and the decaying pig's head symbolize humanity's struggle to dominate nature and the consequences of such attempts. The island's ecosystem, with its cycles of decay and renewal, mirrors the boys' descent into savagery. Additionally, the novel carries subtle postcolonial undertones, as the boys' intrusion disrupts the island's natural balance, reflecting colonialism's destructive impact on indigenous environments (Golding, 1954; Crosby, 1986; Shiva, 1997). This paper explores the ecological and postcolonial dimensions of *Lord of the Flies* by analyzing the roles of flora, fauna, and fungi. Using textual analysis and applying ecocriticism (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996) and postcolonial theory (Said, 1978), the paper highlights how the novel critiques humanity's exploitative relationship with nature. This study contributes a fresh perspective, linking the novel to broader environmental and postcolonial discourses, and highlights the enduring relevance of Golding's critique of humanity's place in the natural world.

**Keywords:** ecocriticism, postcolonialism, flora, fauna, and fungi, human-nature relationships, environmental allegory

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# **Raising a Palm and Propagating a Culture: The Age-Old Relationship Between the Eastern Himalayan Sago Palm (*Arenga micrantha*) and the Puroik People of East Kameng, Arunachal Pradesh, India**

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Since time immemorial, the Puroik people of Arunachal Pradesh have cultivated a multi-stemmed palm through vegetative propagation. It stores starch in its trunk, referred to as sago, and serves as their staple food. Beyond sustenance, the palm is integral to their material culture and mythology. Using taxonomic and ethnobotanical methods, we characterized the species, its varieties, and its growth environment. Through semi-structured interviews, and participant- and non-participant observations with Puroik elders and cultivators in five villages of Sawa Circle, we analyzed different aspects of the sociocultural importance of the palm. We also recorded oral literature from knowledgeable elders and shamans to understand the cultural status of the palm and the antiquity of their relationship. There are sixteen locally recognized varieties of the palm, adapted to the climate and geography of the Eastern Himalaya, with their biological traits—vegetative propagation, clustering habit, resilience to water and temperature stress, and unique rooting system—making them a reliable food source. We suggest that this ecological reliability, in addition to the history, geography, and the cultural transmission of the grown varieties, is possibly the reason the species has historically or prehistorically become central to Puroik culture. The Puroik people of Sawa also collectively share a sentiment of resisting the loss and replacement of the palm in their lives, highlighting its enduring cultural and ecological significance. This has major implications for the land-use, traditional ecological and cultural ecosystem services and their management, and the food security for the Puroik communities of East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.

**Keywords:** ethnobotany, traditional ecologies, Indigenous knowledge, oral literature, socioecological transformation

***Mansi Dhingra*** is a researcher at the Archives at National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bangalore, India, working on the archive of Puroik oral literature. She holds a master's degree in wildlife biology and conservation from NCBS, with her principal research interests lying in ethnobotany and people-plant relationships. This paper presents her master's dissertation work in collaboration with the Puroik people of East Kameng, Arunachal Pradesh, northeastern India.

# Plant-Human Agency Through the Kabhra-Peepal Binary in Swapnil Smriti's

## Poem "Story of Kavra Tree on Round Chautari"

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This paper explores and analyzes how the kabhra-peepal binary generates plant-human agency in Swapnil Smriti's poem "Story of Elephant Fig Tree (Kavra) on Round Platform (Chautari)." The symbolic antithetical trees kabhra and peepal play a significant role in reflecting socio-political cultural, religious and cognitive aspects of the people. The study projects how Smriti initiates and highlights the resistance and renarrativization movement in literature, culture, politics and society through the representational use of the trees kabhra and peepal where kabhra stands for history, culture, nature, love, communal life, pillar of faith and time and season indication of the Kirat community of the eastern Nepal but peepal the imperialist, oppressor, autocratic Hindu culture, religion and politics of the so-called father of national unity-Late King Prithvi Narayan Shah who adopted policy of territorial expansion and colonization rather than emotional and cultural integration with respect to Unity in Diversity. This paper displays how the poet daringly fights to dismantle the colonized and otherized identity and attempts to re-establish the original ethnic identity with freedom, equality and equity raising the voice of the voiceless, the marginalized and the oppressed through plant narratives. This paper proves that binary of the trees kabhra and peepal contributes in making the poem a sparkle of counter-establishment movement planting the seed of counter-hegemonic consciousness within the culturally displaced and exiled people specially the Kirat of the Eastern Nepal. To prove the argument, the idea of plant agency by Matthew Hall and the concept of binary opposition by Ferdinand de Saussure have been used in this paper. This research can be a contributing source to lead a resistance and re-establishment movement for reviving the politico-cultural identity of the ethnic communities of the whole world through plant-human agency.

**Keywords:** plant-human agency, binary, representation, resistance, renarrativization

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# Laligurans in Nepali Songs: A Symbolic Exploration through the Plant

## Humanities

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Laligurans (a rhododendron) is the national flower of Nepal, having a deep ecological and cultural significance. It is not only known for its natural beauty but also carries symbolic meanings that resonate strongly with Nepali people. This paper aims to explore the symbolic representation of laligurans in selected Nepali songs through the theoretical framework of the plant humanities, a scholarly field that examines the dynamic relationship between plants and human culture. The research seeks to understand how laligurans transcends its botanical characteristics to convey broader emotional and cultural meanings within the context of Nepali identity. By analyzing six Nepali songs that reference laligurans in their titles, the study uses a qualitative approach to investigate the recurrent themes of love, beauty, and national identity associated with the flower. The findings suggest that laligurans functions not merely as a botanical entity, but as a powerful cultural metaphor, symbolizing love, beauty, and national pride. The findings highlight the flower's dual role in both the ecological and cultural landscapes of Nepal, contributing to a broader understanding of the plant humanities by revealing the deep connections between flora and human sentiment.

**Keywords:** cultural metaphor, laligurans, Nepali identity, plant humanities, symbolic representation

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# Solastalgia, Mourning, Resilience, and Memorialization: Unsettling Presences in the Photographic Series, *Anchor in the Landscape*

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In this paper, I discuss Adam Broomberg's and Rafael Gonzalez's (2023) series of photographic series depicting portraits of olive trees in occupied territories of Palestine, many of which are 1000 years old. Titled *Anchor in the Landscape*, the photographs serve as a visual testament to the solastalgia, mourning, and memorialization of the Palestinian people in the context of ongoing conflict. The olive tree signifies Palestinian identity, belonging, tradition, culture and resistance. Economically, they support the livelihoods of more than 100,000 Palestinian families. They are also of juridical value to Palestinians because if an olive tree older than ten years is on the land it means that is Palestinian land. Consequently, they are a prime target of destruction by Israeli authorities and illegal settlers, who have burnt down or uprooted over 800,000 of them since 1967. I draw links between plant matter, belonging, crises and artistic historiographies by focusing on the Palestinian olive tree as a carrier of cultural, social and political meaning. My intention is to show how these trees, which act as fixed—yet vulnerable—points in an historic and highly contested landscape, enable a multifaceted understanding of materiality in the field of tension between ecological, geographic and human trauma.

**Keywords:** solastalgia, mourning, memorialization, testament, historiographies

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# Humans, Plants, and Other Agents in the Permaculture Garden

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The word *permaculture*, a portmanteau of *permanent* and *agriculture*, is defined as “a design system for creating sustainable human environments, whose underlying ethical principles are the protection of the Earth and its human inhabitants and the fair distribution of goods.” Permaculture is an approach and practice that thinks in terms of systems, rejects the hierarchical relationship between humans and nature, and attaches special importance to cooperation with nature. The permaculture habitat is created with the active participation of all living beings (plants, animals, microorganisms, fungi etc.). It is based on the idea that these beings know what is good for them, and they know how to cooperate with other existences. If they are allowed to function in this way, it is mutually beneficial for the entire system. That is, plants are also viewed as subjects with intention. I have been doing cultural anthropological research in Hungarian ecovillages for nearly 15 years. I encountered permaculture during this research and integrated it into my topics. The theoretical framework of my research is based on new approaches that have been greatly influenced by contemporary ecological problems. Plant ethics (Kalhoff, Di Paola, and Schörghenheimer 2018, Marder 2013), multispecies ethnography (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010), and the multispecies commoning (Baynes-Rock 2013, Ostrom 2010) provided relevant frameworks for understanding permaculture's relationship with plants. In my presentation, I will show this understanding of plant agency and the practices that are based on cooperation with plants through examples of permaculture farms in Hungary.

**Keywords:** permaculture, multispecies commoning, environmental humanities, biodiversity, system thinking

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# Blossoming Identities: The Historical Interplay of Flora, Gender and Sexuality

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The symbolism of plants in gender and sexuality is a rich and complex subject that has appeared throughout history, literature, mythology, and various cultures. Plants often serve as metaphors for fertility, gender roles, and sexual expression. Their meanings can vary widely depending on the cultural context, historical period, and specific plant in question. From the lotus in ancient Indian and Egyptian cultures symbolizing spiritual and sexual awakening, to the oak tree revered in Greco-Roman and Celtic traditions for its representation of male strength and virility, flora has been deeply intertwined with gendered meanings. Similarly, fruits like the pomegranate and apple have been central to narratives of eroticism and sexual awakening, while plants like the willow and hemp have transcended binary gender roles, symbolizing fluidity and adaptability. Gendered labour associated with plant cultivation and use has also reflected societal roles, with herb gardens linked to feminine nurturing and forestry dominated by masculine strength. These symbolic associations varied across cultures and time periods, highlighting the dynamic ways in which nature has been used to articulate human experiences of gender and sexuality. This paper historically explores how plants have served as a canvas for projecting ideas about gender and sexuality, blending mythology, practical use, and cultural values.

**Keywords:** flora, gender, sexuality, symbolism, history, culture

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# Creative Practices Engaging Plants in Sustainable Green Libraries

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Sustainability has become a leading concern globally. All organizations, including libraries, are engaging in various initiatives to obtain green certifications, thus increasing their reputation and credentials. The concept of a Green Library is not entirely new, but it has turned into a pressing topic for contemporary libraries. According to IFLA, "A Green and sustainable Library is a library that considers environmental, economic, and social sustainability." In this discussion, environmental sustainability within libraries will be the main focus. To achieve sustainability, libraries are implementing numerous green initiatives where plants play a significant role. Various Green Building certification programs available globally offer checklists that include air quality and energy consumption, which libraries must comply with to receive certification. For a library to be considered green, it should possess features such as a Green building, a reduced carbon footprint, environmentally educated users and staff, environmental awareness programs, and a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) environmental management system. In addition to these elements, the presence of plants in libraries contributes to a clean, stress-free, and aesthetically pleasing environment for users, boosting creativity. This paper will illustrate how libraries are integrating plants as essential components to achieve sustainable attributes.

**Keywords:** green library, environmental sustainability, green practices, sustainable design, eco-friendly environment

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# The Role of Hindu Traditions, Rituals, and Belief Systems in Environmental Conservation: A Study in Kolkata, West Bengal

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India has a rich floral and faunal diversity, a great deal of which has been preserved by people's traditional ecological knowledge, rituals associated with religion, and belief systems. This paper examines the role of Hindu traditions, rituals, and belief systems in plant conservation and preservation of green space in Kolkata, West Bengal. The metropolis of Kolkata has passed through different phases of development since its establishment as a colonial city in the 17th century. As a hub of British trade, Calcutta or Kolkata grew as a cosmopolitan city. Yet it boasted a sizeable Hindu population and became the hub of Hindu religious activities. For example, the 1891 census of Calcutta recorded 428,762 Hindus as compared to 189,226 Muslims and 26,405 Christians (Report on the Census of Calcutta, 1891). Innately associated with the worshipping rituals of the mother Goddess, Kolkata has many temples dedicated to worshipping Goddess Kali and Durga. Besides the famous Kalighat and Dakshineswar Kali temples, the city's landscape is dotted with numerous small and medium-sized temples associated with several Hindu deities. Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to study the interrelationships between the Hindu traditions, rituals, and religious practices with awareness of environmental conservation and benefits of tree plantation in present-day Kolkata.

**Keywords:** biodiversity conservation, religion, traditional ecological knowledge, plant conservation, Kolkata

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# The Anthropocene, Post-Apocalyptic Landscape, and Computing Ecological Potentials: Ecocritically Mapping Nature's Existential Tension in *The Road*, *Moana*, and *Waiting for Godot*

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This paper analyzes the conflicting representations of nature in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, the movie *Moana* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, through the interdisciplinary lens of ecocriticism. The research question is how do these works deploy emblematic representations of nature to grapple with issues of ecological destruction, human resilience, and ecological renewal? *The Road*, McCarthy's post-apocalyptic world, devastated by man-made environmental degradation, represents the destructive power of the Anthropocene. Based on eco-Marxism, the novel decries capitalist exploitation and its devastating consequence for nature. *Moana*, on the other hand, depicts an upbeat ecology of renewal, where the heroine's quest to reestablish her relationship with the ocean demonstrates nature's potential to heal. Drawing on Bruno Latour's actor-network theory and Jane Bennett's vibrant matter, the film remaps nature as an active, relational force, subverting anthropocentric frameworks. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, with its "dried tree," serves as a metaphor for nature's conflicted presence—dead yet alive—of existential tension. From phenomenological and ecocritical perspectives, the tree is a symbol of nature's resilience in face of human rejection and abandonment, providing a site of potential rebirth. This paper examines how these texts mirror, resist, and redefine modern environmental discourses, providing a critical examination of ecological breakdown and regeneration.

**Keywords:** ecocriticism, Anthropocene, resilience, renewal, paradigms, trees

**Prasanta Ghoshal** has been a visiting faculty at Sister Nivedita University from 2019 and is a lecturer at Sir Gurudas Mahavidyalaya, a government college affiliated with the University of Calcutta for the last fifteen years since 2010. Besides, he is a coordinator and visiting faculty of colleges affiliated with Calcutta University, West Bengal State University, NSOU, DODL Kalyani University, IGNOU etc. He is also a NAAC Coordination Committee Member, and participant in Academic Staff Committee self-development workshops and UGC-HRDC, University of Calcutta. He completed his M. Phil. on trauma, mother archetype and Bengal partition and his doctoral degree is on the literature of the apocalypse. He has critical research on partition and contemporary politics, trauma studies, Foucault studies, crisis psychology, tribal life and women, and doomsday studies. He has chaired and presented several papers in national and international seminars and workshops.

# The Forgotten Healers: Documenting and Analyzing Traditional Botanical Knowledge Systems Among Communities of Jangalmahal of Bankura Purulia District

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In the state of West Bengal, Jangalmahal is a tribal and forest dominated area. The Jangalmahal region of West Bengal includes Purulia, Bankura, Paschim Medinipur and Jhargram districts. Majority part of the Janglemahal is an undeveloped area but rich in forest and hills and full of natural resources. So, the people who live there are various tribal groups and their everyday lives and livelihoods depend on the forest. As the people of this region live by hard work so health is very important to them. The medical facilities are also more expensive in these areas. So, they try to live a healthy life by using the environment and forest in and around of them. They consume natural resources, as each and every step of their life support is “eco logic.” The forest controls their material, social and spiritual needs also. The main objective of this paper is to gather knowledge about the inhabitants on the medicinal plants of this area and how they are used by the people of the Janglemahall region to treat various health issues and diseases. They use different parts of the plant like flowers, fruits, bark, and root. This paper draws attention to how traditional Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants plays an important role in the community of Janglemohal of Bankura and Purulia district.

**Keywords:** healers, Jangalmohal, tribal people, traditional health paradigms

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# Vegetal Sentience and Affective Plant-Human Bonds in Percy Bysshe

## Shelley's "The Sensitive Plant"

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Shelley's "The Sensitive Plant" presents a garden tended by a lady standing as a figure of primal fusion for the garden's vegetal subjects, filling them and simultaneously being filled by them with a sense of non-hierarchical Oneness. Following the lady's death, the garden loses its harmonic state and turns into a dissonant space invaded by a variety of weeds. Discussing the poem from a post-anthropocentric perspective, this study likens this divorce between the plants and the lady to the separation of the human subjects from the nonhuman within the context of humanist discourse and argues that the plants' fall into mourning and transformation into a heap of weeds in the absence of a human subject and the human subject lady's fall into death in the absence of these nonhuman plants imply the inevitability of human-nature affective interaction. Drawing on the notions of the Lacanian affect and plant sentience in its discussion of the plants' mourning over the departure of the lady, I contend that the death or the waning of desire simultaneously observed in the lady and the plants at the moment when they are separated from each other points to their simultaneous vibration in the asynchronic layers of bios-zoe.

**Keywords:** Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Sensitive Plant," plant sentience, the Lacanian affect, post-anthropocentrism

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# Eco-Aesthetics and Sustainable Living: Deconstructing the Culture/Nature

## Binary in Sumana Roy's *How I Became a Tree*

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This paper explores the intersections of literature, plant biology, aesthetics, and sustainable development through the lens of plant humanities. For such intersections, Sumana Roy's *How I Became a Tree* (2017) provides a unique perspective on human-plant relationships, challenging anthropocentric views and advocating for a slower and organic way of living, inspired by the lives of trees. Roy presents an alternate vision of life that is non-capitalist, non-materialist, and non-hierarchical that is totally different from the present neo-capitalist and neoliberal human world-order. In this book, Roy has dismantled the instrumentality of humans as the defining figures of all humanist narrations and subverted it with the identity, worldviews, and agency of plants. Roy further delineates how the life of trees is defined by stillness, slow growth, and an intrinsic connection to their environment and the complex entanglement between humans and trees. By analyzing Roy's arguments and examining how the representation of plants shapes human perspectives in her book, this paper challenges the very notions of human agency defined by its hierarchy over all forms of living and non-living objects that is conditioned through the binary of "culture/nature" where "culture" is the representative of the superiority of humans over nature. Additionally, this study examines how plant representation in Roy's book cultivates an interconnectedness of lives (neutral and non-hierarchical), encouraging a shift from anthropocentric narratives to a non-speciesist ecocentric narration by acknowledging the agency of plants in dismantling the conventional modes of narration in which humans are protagonists. Drawing its research framework from environmental humanities and eco-aesthetics, this paper argues that engaging with plant narratives and the study of their cultural perspectives within the human-plant world leads to a more holistic approach towards ecologically sustainable living.

**Keywords:** eco-aesthetics, sustainable living, culture/nature, plant humanities, agency of plants, anthropocentric views, eco-centred narratives, environmental consciousness

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# Pollination, Plant Agency, and the Posthumanism: Interpreting Maja

## Lunde's *The History of Bees*

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This paper examines Maja Lunde's *The History of Bees* (2015) through the lens of posthumanism and plant humanities, emphasizing the complex connections between humans, animals, and plants. The novel's coherent narratives, spanning past, present, and future, underscore the vital role of bees in sustaining ecosystems and highlight the catastrophic consequences of their decline. By shifting the focus beyond human-centered concerns, this study explores how Lunde visualize a world where the collapse of pollinators disrupts the delicate balance of multispecies coexistence. The research problem centers on the ongoing pollination crisis, which threatens biodiversity, food security, and ecological stability. Using an ecocritical and posthumanist methodology, the study examines how the novel portrays the agency of bees and plants alongside human struggles, questioning the exploitative structures that govern human-animal-plant relationships. The analysis reveals that *The History of Bees* critiques extractivist practices while urging a shift toward multispecies coexistence and planetary care. By bridging literature, philosophy, and ecocritical/animal studies, this research argues that Lunde's novel offers a crucial intervention in rethinking pollination and plant agency, reinforcing the urgency of ecological awareness in the Anthropocene.

**Keywords:** posthumanism, pollination crisis, plant humanities, multispecies ethics, ecocriticism

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# The New Plant Science and Trans Women of Color Fiction

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Judged by Western religious, aesthetic, and scientific cultures as inferior to animals/humans, plants have historically been treated as sluggish, immobile beings—despite their capacity to sustain life on the planet. An entrenched hierarchal scientific order is often the culprit when it comes to the abuse and disregard of plants—and the underestimation of their creativity and remarkable will to survive and flourish. I draw on humanities plant studies, the new plant science, and literary critical plant studies as powerful lenses for illuminating trans women of color fiction that imagines trans-plant kinships and collaborations to defy portrayals of plants and trans women as insignificant and inferior. Jia Qing Wilson-Yang's *Small Beauty* and Kia Cheng Thom's *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* articulate that plants matter, trans women of color matter, and literary trans-plants relations matter. What connects the two novels to the new plant science is the proposition that humans and more-than-humans are interwoven, and that the connection between plants and the trans women of color main characters in these novels is not merely symbolic; it is literal. Zoë Schlanger, the author of the highly acclaimed *The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth*, argues that in a visceral way, our lives, bodies, and world depend upon plants—“This is crushingly literal.”

**Keywords:** trans, women of color, kinship, fiction, plant science

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# Sensitive Tree Infrastructures: Artistic Representations of Critical Zone

## Science

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The paper discusses a “thought exhibition” developed by Bruno Latour, in collaboration with various co-curators, for the ZKM Centre for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany: “Critical Zones: Observatories for Earthly Politics” (2020–22). The critical zone marks the “thin biofilm” (Latour) of Earth, from the tree canopies and molecular traces in the lower atmosphere to the biogeochemical processes in the soil demarcated by the bedrock. This zone is “critical” for life to exist and is itself generated and maintained by biotic processes. Based on the author’s first-hand knowledge of the exhibition planning and collaboration with Latour, the paper discusses the conceptual basis of the project. The critical zone presents an alternative to the monolithic Nature-Culture dualism and its separations by offering a notion of environment characterized by fragile, reactive interdependencies of life forms. The paper focuses on the installation “CZO Space” (2020–22) by Alexandra Arènes and Soheil Hajmirebaba, a centrepiece of the exhibition, to show how interdisciplinary groups of scientists collaborate in Critical Zone Observatories (CZOs). Here, assemblages of technological, human, and plants—i.e., tree canopies as detectors and molecular filtering agents for pollutants—compose a scientific “sensitive infrastructure” (Arènes) to monitor the anthropogenic effects on the critical zone.

**Keywords:** Latour, critical zones, art, technology, trees

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# Locating Plant Imageries in Bengali Dalit Narratives

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Dalits, the former untouchables, have emerged out of the Indian caste based social system. They suffer discrimination in all possible ways. Their writings are the testimonials of their voices against caste based discrimination, sufferings and injustices they face in their day-to-day lives. Their narratives certainly contain environmental issues, non-human imageries and other environmental aspects. Lately, the plant humanities emerges as a field of study to emphasize the representation of plants and analyze their relation to the society, its history and culture, communities, literature and other arts. Plant as major imagery play pivotal roles in Dalit narratives. From Bama's *Karukku* (meaning *Palmyra Leaves*) to Madhopuri's *Changiya Rukh* (meaning *Distorted Tree*), plants document Dalit experiences. Plants in Dalit narratives reflect their socio-cultural, economic aspects, their history of subjugation and the environmental injustices. This paper takes into consideration one of the finest Bengali Dalit autobiographies, *Amar Bhubane Ami Benche Thaki* (translated as *Surviving in My World: Growing up Dalit in Bengal*) by Manohar Mouli Biswas and Anil Gharai as well as Matua short stories like "Khara", "Banshful," and "Kathbadamerful." While Biswas' autobiography will show how Dalit lives are like water hyacinth—uprooted and floating—Anil Gharai's story will present plants against poverty, unfulfilled desire, and misfortune. This study aims to highlight the sufferings of the lower caste presented through plant imageries. It will further elucidate how the plants transcend mere representation, emphasizing their existence as full entities and thus present a scope for reading Dalit narratives through the lens of the plant humanities.

**Keywords:** plants, imagery, representation, caste, Dalit literature

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# Tree Preservation Through the Karma Festival: An Inquiry

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Celebrated mostly by the tribal groups in Jharkhand, India, the Karma Festival is an important religious and cultural occasion that reflects values of respect for the environment and the preservation of nature. The celebration, which is usually held in late August or early September, honors Karma, the god of development and agriculture who represents the connection between humans and the natural world. Usually, participants participate in ceremonies that honor trees, especially the Karma tree (*Karam*), which is frequently decked out in vibrant decorations and flowers. This gesture expresses appreciation and respect for the natural world. The community enthusiastically participates in the celebration, encouraging a sense of shared responsibility for environmental protection. Themes of harmony with nature are emphasized through the performance of traditional songs and dances. Participating in these customs with the community raises awareness of the value of protecting the environment. During Karma, trees are revered as a reminder of their ecological importance, which includes their ability to mitigate climate change, preserve biodiversity, and provide oxygen. The festival supports environmental conservation initiatives by encouraging the planting of trees and preserving native plants. In addition to encouraging sustainable behaviors and raising awareness of the need to maintain natural resources, this paper emphasizes the close relationships that exist between tribal groups and their surroundings.

**Keywords:** Karma festival, flora, sustainability, biodiversity, ecology, trees

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# Floral Thanatology: Plant Death, Biosemiotics, and the Ethics of Euthanasia

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Death is one of the inevitable concepts in this world for both the human and the non-human forms. However, death is orchestrated by nature as an essential, intentional act, as seen in the tranquil fall of an old tree, the wilting of flower, or the slow disintegration of autumn leaves. Unlike the human struggle with mortality, where euthanasia remains a problematic concept, a plant approaches death as a transition rather than an end, communicating through chemical signals, programmed cell death, and ecological self-sacrifice. This research explores the concept of floral thanatology through the lens of phytosemiotics and the process of self-regulated deaths in plants and if these processes can give an insight into the medical and ethical debates surrounding euthanasia. Drawing from biosemiotics theory, this paper studies, how the processes of apoptosis, senescence, and allelopathy deliver a form of “natural euthanasia” in plant life. This counters the established anthropocentric understanding of death as an absolute negation, in lieu, insinuating an ecological and semiotic framework of “death as communication”, which may help us rethink human suffering and ethical self-determination. The research examines how literature and philosophy have woven nature into the intricacies of human mortality. Through an ecosemiotic literary analysis, this study explores how these texts construct euthanasia narratives using plant metaphors, reframing voluntary death not as an act of despair but as an assertion of autonomy and dignity.

**Keywords:** floral thanatology, euthanasia, biosemiotics, phytosemiotics, apoptosis

**Kalyani Mehta** is a research scholar and an aspiring academician in English literature with medical humanities as her primary research field with wider interests in areas of ecofeminism and posthumanism. Previously, she has published two research papers and attended seminal conferences on a range of topics.

# Indigenous Peoples' Relationship to Nature in *Waterlily* and *The Whale*

*Rider*

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The research analyses Native American novelist Ella Cara Deloria's *Waterlily* and Māori novelist Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider*. The main purpose of the study is to reveal Indigenous peoples' relationship to plants to enhance the implications of reciprocity and intertribal solidarity. The study highlights the significance of interconnectedness and interdependence for ecological healings. In this light, Indigenous ecocritical perspectives have been employed. Robin Kimmerer's plant perspectives enhance the analysis of human-plant bonds. Similarly, Kyle Powys Whyte's kinship time and Enrique Salmon's kincentric ecology perspectives have tremendously contributed to the development of the study. To reveal the overlapping Indigenous literary similarities, which strengthens a sense of pan-Indigeneity, Chadwick Allen's trans-Indigenous insights have been employed in the research. The major findings include that the primary texts address human-nature relationships through Indigenous peoples' affinity with plants, animals, and nature as a whole. These results contribute to the domain of Indigenous literary study for seeking a different trajectory to observe human-nature relationships. The research encourages global Indigenous literary study. In particular, it reveals Native American and Maori adoration of nature. It further disseminates the responsibilities and reciprocal relationships Indigenous communities locally and globally observe.

**Keywords:** Indigenous knowledge, human-nature bond, kincentric ecology, trans-Indigenous, intertribal reciprocity

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# Cannabis and Humans: Analyzing the Complex Relationship

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Cannabis plants are a subject typically surrounded by controversy and social stigma. However it possesses a significant and long standing historical background that is firmly embedded into its relationship with the human race. The primary objective of this paper is to elucidate the intricate narrative encompassing the relationship between cannabis and humans throughout history with a special focus on India. The paper aims to examine the historical sources to track the progression of cannabis from being a well-regarded herbal treatment to its present-day repute. An essential focus of the paper will be the examination of the therapeutic attributes ascribed to cannabis within the framework of Ayurveda to understand its deeply rooted relationship with humans. The paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the pharmacological properties of cannabis, focusing on the bioactive constituents that contribute to its medicinal efficacy and exploring their possible application in contemporary medical procedures. The cultural and religious relationship of cannabis and humans is sometimes subject to misinterpretation. The paper aims to investigate the historical and cultural connections between cannabis and spiritual rituals, with a particular focus on its role in the worship of Lord Shiva. Through an examination of its historical origins, therapeutic uses, and cultural importance, the paper will develop a fuller comprehension of cannabis within the framework of traditional Indian medicinal procedures, therefore facilitating the development of a more informed viewpoint on the plant.

**Keywords:** cannabis, relationship, medicine, culture, history

**Saumya Krishna** recently graduated from the masters programme of the School of Historical Studies, Nalanda University, Rajgir. Prior to Nalanda, he pursued a bachelors from Delhi University, batch 2019-2022. His interests include multidisciplinary fields which connect, international relations with history alongside, maritime history, archaeology, cinema and economic history, medicine and the history of technology.

# Plants, People, and the Planet in Anuradha Roy's *All the Lives We Never Lived*

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In recent years, plants have become crucial in understanding ecological history, creating environmental awareness, and reconfiguring people-plant relationships. To this end, the paper aims to analyze and present plant perspectives from Anuradha Roy's *All the Lives We Never Lived* through a close reading of the text and drawing on the insights from the field of critical plant studies. Set against the backdrop of British colonialism and the nationalist movement in India, the novel takes shape through the vagaries of war and nationalism, personal loss and trees. The paper will examine the question of proprietorship in plant-people relationships and probe the ways in which the novel gives a vegetal understanding of the socio-political and personal events as it moves through plant landscapes, plant products, tree time, and memory. The paper will also study the connection between personal grief with the planetary grief of ecological degradation, thereby highlighting the linkages between plants, people and the planet.

**Keywords:** vegetal, plant landscape, people-plant relationships, grief

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# Sacred Wilderness and Trauma Recovery in Stephen Alter's *Becoming a Mountain*

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Stephen Alter's *Becoming a Mountain* is a memoir that explores the profound connection between human spirituality, memory, and the natural world. This paper examines his journey through the lens of trauma recovery and the process of healing through ecological immersion. Following a violent home invasion, Alter embarks on pilgrimages to three sacred Himalayan peaks—Bandarpunch, Nanda Devi, and Trisul—transforming physical ascent into spiritual renewal. Through detailed analysis, this paper explores how Alter reinterprets spirituality through embodied experiences with mountainous landscapes rather than conventional religious frameworks. This paper examines how Alter establishes a profound dialogue between human spirituality, memory, and landscape. As Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, "In some Native languages, the term for *plants* translates to 'those who take care of us,' which strikingly emphasizes the idea of nature as an active, nurturing presence rather than a passive object, a perspective that resonates deeply with Alter's evolving relationship with the Himalayan environment. His narrative challenges anthropocentric Enlightenment traditions by embracing a neo-animistic perspective, where natural elements are recognized as communicative subjects rather than passive objects. Mountains, trees, and rivers serve as reservoirs of personal and cultural memory, fostering a spirituality rooted in trans-corporeal exchange rather than material transcendence. In Alter's memoir, this neo-animistic perspective, manifests through his treatment of Himalayan peaks not just as geological formations to be conquered, but as entities with which he establishes meaningful, transformative relationships during his healing journey. The mountains become active participants in his recovery rather than passive settings. This paper draws on memory studies, environmental philosophy, and trauma theory to examine how Alter's immersive practices—intentional walking, summit pursuits, and contemplative solitude—enable recovery beyond traditional therapeutic frameworks. His unique position as an American-born writer raised in India adds complexity to notions of belonging and spiritual authenticity within postcolonial discussions of Himalayan place-identity. By immersing himself in solitude within natural landscapes, Alter cultivates a deeper sense of connection and reflection, fostering a transformative process of healing. This solitude becomes a vital medium through which personal and cultural memories are renegotiated and revitalized. Ultimately, *Becoming a Mountain* constitutes more than a personal healing narrative; it represents a significant contribution to ecocritical literature that recognizes wilderness as sacred space. Alter's work advocates for a radical reconceptualization of human-nature relationships where ecological consciousness becomes the foundation for psychological and spiritual restoration.



**Keywords:** ecocriticism, trans-corporeality, anthropocentric enlightenment, memory studies, neo-animism, Himalayan ecology, spiritual geography; solitude in nature, phenomenology of nature

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# Plant Consciousness and Subalternity: An Ecofeminist Analysis of *The Vegetarian*

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Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* offers a compelling intersection of ecofeminism, subaltern studies, and plant humanities. It presents a narrative of resistance through silence and critiques the subaltern position occupied by women and plants in the patriarchal structures. The paper intends to examine the protagonist's journey as both subaltern and vegetal beings through the blurred line between human and non-human life highlighting the existence of their double marginalization. Drawing from Spivak's subaltern theory, it explores how the protagonist's withdrawal from speech reflects the misrepresentation and denied agency of women. The bodily metamorphosis and transformation from a human to a plant-like consciousness aligns with plant philosophy challenging anthropocentric notions of intelligence and agency. The rejection of meat consumption by the protagonist displays not merely a dietary refusal but also an act of resistance against masculine control highlighting the gendered oppression. An ecofeminist perspective critiques the bodily metamorphosis displaying how women's bodies like nature are controlled and violated in the patriarchal structures. The study merges the philosophies of ecofeminism and plant humanities through a subaltern perspective with an attempt to critique how both female and vegetal life are controlled and reduced to passive entities.

**Keywords:** ecofeminism, plant humanities, subaltern, patriarchy, resistance

**Shristi Mehta** is a Ph.D. Research Scholar in English Literature at the Department of English, Patna University (India). Her research interests broadly fall under the larger field of ecofeminism with various intersections. She is interested in exploring new genres and theories and is inclined towards philosophy. She has also worked on a research project under UGC (India).

# Jadav Payeng: The Global 'Green Man'

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The world has seen many superheroes. A few are born to impact the world with their simple yet glorious and extraordinary approach. Jadav Payeng is one such person who has contributed diligently towards nature. His instinctive concern regarding the destruction of nature and the environment and its inhabitants is no less than a fairytale narrative that expresses the life of this iron man who single-handedly has contributed to the evolution of a forest amid a sandbar in Assam. Assam's Molai forest stands tall and dense to suggest that if a man can think creatively about the future disaster that can happen to earth and practice engaging as a sole partner to collaborate as an agent to supplement ecological value to earth. This is so generations in the future will not be deprived of flora and fauna as extinct and preserved virtually in films. Jadav Payeng instead has captured the essence of preserving nature and its environment with his green thumb and has exhibited and expanded his vision of capturing nature in his heart by generating a world that shall always be thankful to the superman that he is and has inspired solely the current generation and posterity that things can materialize in actuality if there is a will. This paper is a tribute to the savior for showcasing his humanitarian approach by transforming an environmentalist.

**Keywords:** Payeng, forests regeneration, conservation in India, environment, sandbars, trees, ecosystems

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# Love for Nature: The Tree Hugging Movement in India

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Indigenous people have always created and developed an affectionate relationship with nature. Women are active protector and preserver of the nature in India. The Chipko Movement that was awarded the Right Livelihood Award in 1987 has a great significance towards conservation and protection of nature. The forest conservation movement began in the Chamoli district of the Uttarakhand state of India in the year 1973. It was launched by Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunder Lal Bahuguna to preserve forests from deforestation. Indigenous women were made aware of the ecological threats. They actively participated in the movement and hugged the trees to save them from cutting by the timber contractors. Due to the efforts of these Indigenous people, the movement led to the efficient management of nature and forests. The movement became successful and got the recognition at the global level. The historical and ecofeminist approaches have been applied to study the relationship between indigenous people and nature. The research paper highlights the significant contribution of Indigenous people especially women in Chipko Movement. The research paper also puts forth some innovative ideas for the conservation of forests and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, nature, Chipko movement, forest conservation, sustainable development

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# Solastalgia and the Anthropocene: Exploring Psycho-Cultural Distress Through Art and Literature

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This paper aims to review the convergence of deep ecology, psycho-cultural distress, and plant humanities focusing on “solastalgia”—a term coined by Glenn Albrecht to explain the ailment springing up from the erosion of “home.” Central to this discourse is Abdelkader Benchamma’s monochrome murals, drawings, and installations, *Solastalgia: Archaeologies of Loss*, an effective envisioning of geological epics at the precipice of transformation. Similarly, Sumana Roy’s *How I Became a Tree* gives a meditative take on how the Anthropocene paradigm can be challenged by reimagining identity through a vegetal lens. Roy’s work offers a nuanced look at not just the aesthetics of nostalgia as a mere yearning for the past way of life, but rather as an ingenuous way to root oneself in the natural world. Employing a comparative case study, which incorporates visual analysis of Benchamma’s geological and symbolic timescales, and literary analysis of Roy’s work, this paper creates an elusive topography that centers on our interconnectedness with the natural world, both revealed and concealed.

**Keywords:** deep ecology, plant humanities, solastalgia, Anthropocene, psycho-cultural distress

*Ananya Mishra* is pursuing her Ph.D. in English literature at KIIT, Deemed to be University. Her research interests are based on the Anthropocene, plant humanities, popular culture and the interstices of memory and space. She is currently studying how affective” relations challenge conventional paradigms, fostering a profound dialogue between nature and modernity.

# Investigating Ahmad Safa's *Pushpa Briksha O Bihangapuran*: Applying

## Critical Plant Studies Perspectives

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Bangladeshi author Ahmad Safa's semi-autobiographical Bangla-language novel *Pushpa Briksha O Bihangapuran* (*The Narrative of Flowers, Plants, and Birds*) offers insights into the agency and autonomy of plants among other entities. It foregrounds the intricate and evolving relationship and interaction between plants and human beings in an evocative language. Oftentimes, literature demonstrates the plant-human relationship in an anthropocentric way, from the perspective of human characters/narrators. Plants are viewed as of lesser importance in the hierarchies of beings, and different binary configurations, such as human/nonhuman, culture/nature, and animal/plant reinforce that lower status. However, this novel subverts these dichotomies and provides plant perspectives in a radical manner. The sentience and agency of plants are duly acknowledged as catalysts for transformation and development in the human protagonist, Ahmad Safa, throughout the text. Safa and the plants engage in a dialogic and reciprocal relationship that undoes our anthropocentric bias and prejudice and opens up a space for conversations around multispecies justice in a world confronting existential crises due to climate change and ecological degradation. Drawing on insights from critical plant studies and analyzing the novel, this qualitative paper seeks to subvert anthropocentrism, promote vegetal agency, and champion better human-plant interaction.

**Keywords:** critical plant studies, vegetal agency, sentience, interaction, anthropocentrism

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# Of Trees and Trauma: Ecological Mourning in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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This study explores the ecological and cultural role of trees and flora in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, analyzing their function as witnesses and participants in human trauma and memory within postcolonial Kerala. The research addresses the phenomenon of “ecological mourning,” drawing on Rob Nixon’s concept of slow violence, which emphasizes the prolonged and often invisible impacts of environmental degradation on marginalized communities. Framed within postcolonial ecocriticism and affect theory, particularly Judith Butler’s idea of grievable lives, the review highlights the symbolic and material significance of flora in landscapes scarred by colonial histories. Using textual analysis, the study reveals that trees and plants are not passive elements but active agents of resilience and memory, deeply entangled with the cultural and emotional lives of the characters. By situating Roy’s narrative within these theoretical paradigms, this research underscores the ethical imperative to recognize flora as integral to postcolonial trauma and ecological ethics. These insights contribute to broader discussions on the role of plants in articulating cultural memory and environmental justice, emphasizing their agency in global ecological discourses.

**Keywords:** cultural memory, ecological mourning, postcolonial ecocriticism, slow violence, trauma

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# Between Land and Sea: Exploring the Resilience of Mangroves in Indian Cultural and Ecological Literature

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Mangroves, as liminal spaces between land and water, serve as both ecological protectors and cultural signifiers in Indian literature. This paper examines how Indian writers depict mangroves as sites of resilience, survival, and Indigenous knowledge, emphasizing their role in climate adaptation, spiritual traditions, and environmental justice. By analyzing Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*, Janice Pariat's *Boats on Land*, and Tony K. Stewart's *Needle at the Bottom of the Sea: Classic Bengali Tales from the Sunderbans*, this study reveals how mangrove forests function as narrative landscapes that reflect colonial environmental exploitation and Indigenous ecological resistance. Drawing on Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's postcolonial ecocriticism, this paper argues that the historical colonial extraction of mangroves parallels the erasure of Indigenous environmental epistemologies. In contrast, Bonbibí myths in the Sundarbans, the spiritual reverence for Thillai trees in Tamil Nadu, and Indigenous mangrove conservation practices offer a counter-narrative of ecological stewardship rooted in sacred traditions. By positioning mangroves as both ecological barriers and cultural archives, this paper highlights the need for decolonial conservation models that integrate traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) with modern sustainability efforts. Ultimately, this study contends that Indian literature frames mangroves not just as vulnerable ecosystems but as active participants in a broader environmental resistance movement, reinforcing their role as agents of resilience and cultural identity.

**Keywords:** postcolonial ecocriticism, mangrove narratives, Indian literature, Indigenous ecological knowledge, environmental humanities

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# A Study of Ethnomedicinal Plant Use Among the Banjara Tribal Community in Bargarh District, Odisha, India

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This paper explores the use of medicinal plants among the Banjara Tribal community in Bargarh district, Odisha, India. The Banjaras are a nomadic group who live in the Bargarh district as well as in Odisha. They migrated from different regions like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Gujarat and settled in the different districts of Odisha. They have a strong connection to their environment. The community follows unique practices related to health, childbirth, and prenatal and postnatal care, as well as using medical services. The Banjara people contribute to the ethnic heritage (ethnomedicine) of Odisha. Despite the availability of modern medical facilities, the Banjara community continues to use traditional medicine. Medicinal plants play an important role in treating various diseases, and many of these plants are also used as food. Bargarh is home to a rich variety of plants, some of which are used for their medicinal properties. Ethnomedicine in the Bargarh district is deeply rooted in traditional healing practices. Local experts and healers (*vaidyas*) of the community rely on Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants to treat various diseases. These plants, often used for both medicinal and nutritional purposes, play a vital role in the health issues of the people in this region.

**Keywords:** Banjara, ethnomedicine, ethnic, nomadic people, medicinal plants

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# Tamil Nadu's Thaazhampoo and Nepal's Kharuwa: Plants That Betrayed or Were Betrayed?

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A flower once whispered secrets to the gods, now banished from divine offerings. A plant that thrived undisturbed in the wild, now feared as a harbinger of ruin. When did plants, voiceless and rooted, become accused of treachery? Thaazhampoo (screw pine) in Tamil Nadu and kharuwa (toxicodendron) in Nepal, once entangled in sacred ecologies, now bear the weight of betrayal. Thaazhampoo, condemned in a cosmic trial, was stripped of its place in Shiva's worship, while Kharuwa, entangled in folklore, became an omen of misfortune. But did these plants betray faith, or did faith betray them? This paper challenges whether their exclusion stemmed from the erasure of pre-Vedic botanical wisdom, the suppression of non-Brahmanical spiritualities, or colonial taxonomies that rewrote Indigenous plant-human relations. By tracing phytosemiotic storytelling, resurrecting their lost materialities through sensory ethnography, and reconstructing their ritual presence through performance analysis, this study repositions them not as cursed relics, but as witnesses to forgotten histories. Through visual and sonic archival reconstruction and an inquiry into plant agency in artistic expression, it asks not only how plants are remembered, but what their silence reveals.

**Keywords:** phytosemiotics, ethnobotany, mythology, ritual exclusion, colonial botany

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# Poppy and its Metaphorical Connection to Power and Control in

## *The Poppy War*

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This paper examines the symbolism of opium or poppy in R.F. Kuang's *The Poppy War* trilogy and its metaphorical connection to power, control, and self-destruction. The paper analyzes how opium addiction mirrors the protagonist Rin's internal conflict and her dependency on god-like abilities. Her journey from hero to anti-hero parallels her moral decay and loss of agency. In the trilogy, opium becomes a symbol of power's corruptive influence, illustrating how addiction weakens individuals and entire societies. The study explores how Kuang uses opium as a tool of control, both on a personal level—through Rin's psychological decline—and on a broader scale, connecting it to the historical manipulation of nations during the Opium Wars. The paper also discusses the significance of the author's exploration of addiction as a commentary on colonialism and imperialism, linking it to broader historical and political dynamics.

**Keywords:** poppy, Opium Wars, Chinese history, Southeast Asian studies, colonialism

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# Transmuting Cathartic Photographic Texts: Depicting Encroachment on the Flora and Fauna of Indigenous Life-Places

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Indigenous memory is genetically archived and underpinned through its oral tradition. It protrudes into the innumerable veneer misconceptions and stolen historical traces in India. Memory has always been their strong suit reflecting resistance against any social barrier in all timelines. In the contemporary era, memory is the only identity left for them to hold on, through several apprehensions, social consternation and strategic hamletting of the government and mining corporations. The book *Our Forest Dreams* contributed by the Adivasi communities of Ooty is one such expression depicting the photographic texts cogitating voice-over of their identity directed towards the world in order to sustain not only an ecosystem but their own community. Thus, using medical humanities as the point of theoretical departure, this paper tries to identify the compressed layers of the Adivasi community's forced displacement and identity dispersion. The paper also identifies and accentuates the contemporary positioning of the Indigenous thought process reassessing their representations.

**Keywords:** bionomics, identity dispersion, memoryscapes, voice-over

**Ranjini Gandhi Parimalam** is a Ph.D Research Scholar (SRF) from the Department of English, Ethiraj College For Women. She has received three 'Best Paper Awards', in an international, national conference and in a research funded externship with a cash prize. She has three publications, and has presented papers at 17 conferences from various universities such as IIT, NIT, JNU and EFLU from 2023-2025. She has also presented in INMS (Indian Network for Memory Studies) at IIT-Madras in 2024, along with presentation in the NeMLA convention recently conducted by Ganon University, Philadelphia. Her current research deals with Indigenous studies in India.

# Learning from Algae through Deep Pasts and Collaborative Futures

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This paper explores the critical role of the Algae Society Bio Art and Design Lab (<https://algaesociety.org>) within the emerging field of the plant humanities. Algae, representing a significant yet often overlooked botanical lineage, offer unique perspectives for understanding the relationships between human culture, ecological sustainability, and life. The Algae Society explores algae as co-educators, co-creators, and ecological companions through interdisciplinary collaborations, community engagement, and creative inquiry. This paper highlights how the Algae Society employs algae-centric artistic projects to foster ecological literacy, cultural awareness, and environmental responsibility. By bridging art, science, and public engagement, the Society articulates vital connections within ecosystems, inviting reflection on biodiversity, ecological ethics, and the human-nonhuman relationships critical to planetary futures. Ultimately, the Algae Society exemplifies how the emerging field of the plant humanities can deepen our collective understanding of botanical resilience, agency, and the profound interdependence that shapes life on Earth.

**Keywords:** algae, bioart, community engagement, ecological ethics, plant humanities

***Jennifer Parker*** is a Professor and founding Director of the OpenLab Collaborative Research Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. As a media artist, Parker is recognized for her innovative work investigating issues of biology and technology, combining art, ecology, and design. Through multi-sensory and interdisciplinary collaborations, she engages scientific and creative practices to explore the sensorial world of humans and beyond the human world of species living on and off planet. As an educator, Parker carves sites for collective engagement between disciplines. Facilitating, identifying, and determining the boundaries of a complex, multidimensional space with the aim of developing a sense of community to encourage learning and inform and develop the practice of its members. Her methods of inquiry build on lab and studio visits, literature reviews, and conversations with faculty and students across disciplines, triggering a heuristic learning process that leads to creative research for exhibitions and publications. Parker received a BA in art from the University of California Santa Barbara in 1990 and an MFA in sculpture from Rutgers University in 1992. She has been part of the faculty at the University of California Santa Cruz since 1999 in the Art Department as faculty for the Environmental Art and Social Practice MFA program since 2021.

# Trees of Tradition: The Socio-Economic and Religious Role of Mahua, Banyan, and Bamboo in the Tribals of South Gujarat

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The tribal communities of South Gujarat have long maintained a deep socio-cultural and economic connection with the region's native flora. Among these, mahua (*Madhuca longifolia*), banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*), and bamboo hold significant economic and religious importance. Mahua plays a crucial role in tribal livelihoods, serving as a source of food and medicinal products and an integral component in traditional liquor production, which is both a cultural and economic asset. The banyan tree, revered for its spiritual and sacred associations, serves as a central gathering place for religious ceremonies and community gatherings, thereby reinforcing social cohesion. Bamboo, on the other hand, is a versatile resource, widely used in housing, handicrafts, and daily utilities, contributing substantially to the economic sustenance of tribal households. The paper explores the multifaceted roles of these trees within the tribal economy and belief systems, illuminating their enduring significance in contemporary times. Through ethnographic studies and field observations, the research highlights how these botanical elements are woven into the tribal identity, traditions, and economic framework.

**Keywords:** mahua, banyan, bamboo, South Gujarat, tribal communities, economic significance, religious significance, ethnobotany, traditional practices, cultural heritage

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# Plant Sentience in the Song “This I Know”

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This interdisciplinary talk explores the ways in which music can be used to foster awareness and empathy towards plants which were destroyed and/or exploited in the process of settler colonialism. Drawing from the fields of ecomusicology and environmental history, the presentation discusses the ways in which the sovereignty and selfhood of plants have been undermined in the legal systems and prevailing cultural trends which are part and parcel of conquest and settlement in ‘frontier’ locations. I will then present a critically-acclaimed original song titled “This I Know” to explore the political and cultural horizons which can be opened up by embracing environmental music as a form of solidarity and protest. This section of the presentation will draw from Indigenous perspectives on the importance and dignity of plants. I demonstrate how embracing these Indigenous perspectives in both historical investigation and musical practice can result not only in a renewed affirmation of the sentience of plants, but also a deeper conversation about what an equitable, multispecies public sphere might look like.

**Keywords:** sentience, ecomusicology, music, settler colonialism, plant dignity

**Priya Parrotta** is an environmental historian and composer dedicated to fostering ecological consciousness and solidarity across borders. She is a Senior Fellow at the Safina Center and the author of *The Politics of Coexistence in the Atlantic World*, as well as a manuscript titled *To Dream Again: Island Environmentalism through Music*.

# Rethinking Plant Ontology and Ethics in Janice Pariat's *Everything the Light Touches*

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In the context of climate change and botanical crisis, referring to the plant world that mostly occupies two reductive extremes (as objects of aesthetic appeal and products of consumption), John Ryan asks, "considering plants both as primeval sources of carbon and as modern carbon sinks, and as beings inextricably linked to human survival in the Anthropocene, why do they seem to languish in the background of the stories we tell about climate change? And do they in fact languish? Has there been a failure to narrativize plants and, if so, what are the reasons for these narrative blind spots that privilege the experiences of animals and humans?" Addressing these questions further, my paper attempts to throw light on these "narrative blind spots" by restructuring the discourses of agency and power that blow away normative standpoints of plants as subservient beings in Janice Pariat's *Everything the Light Touches*. My paper looks at plants as moral agents that reorient Indigenous ethics in the backdrop of unethical mining and threat of extractivism in Meghalaya, a state torn by violence and unrest. The paper examines Pariat's treatment of plants' bodily nature, or morphogenesis, the idea of symmetry-asymmetry in botany by roping in the critical perspectives of theorists like John Ryan, Werner Ingensiep, Christopher Stone, and Alessandra Viola. The paper engenders "notable differences in the distribution of bi-laterality in the whole" and also bio-centrism through "more participatory approaches to the design of plant-human interactions" in both naturally wild and artificially engineered landscapes.

**Keywords:** Indigeneity, plant humanities, ethics, orality, North-Eastern Indian Studies

**Namrata Pathak** is an academic, critic, and writer. She was a recipient of FCT-Ford Foundation Fellowship and UGC-Associateship by IAS, Shimla. She has five books to her credit with reputed publishers like Routledge, Sahitya Akademi, etc. She was a Charles Wallace India Trust Fellow at SOAS-University of London, 2022–2023.



# Botanical Symbolism and Gender: Analyzing Ismat Chughtai's Female Characters Through the Perspective of the Plant Humanities

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The study will endeavour to take and analyze some short fiction by Ismat Chughtai, a seminal Urdu writer, and investigate how she weaves her stories using botanical aspects to transmit nuances of the untold realities of women. Chughtai is one of the earliest women writers in the South Asian Literary Canon who asks society to see life from a woman's perspective, accepting all her truths. A subtle thread links flowers, plants, and women, highlighting their shared struggles, resilience, and vitality. The lingual brilliance of a writer can effectively show that link. It generates various emotions in the minds of the readers, communicates an idea, and effects a needed change. Hence, the study will read into stories like *The Quilt*, *Gainda* and *Touch-Me-Not* along with many other references to understand how botanical aspects help understand nuances underlying human behaviour. Through a feminist reading and using linguistic analysis, this study will try to understand the connection between plants and women.

**Keywords:** botanical symbolism, plant humanities, gender and nature, floral symbolism, Ismat Chughtai

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# Greening Data: Digital Plant Humanities, Rhizomatic Epistemophytology, and Re-reading Literary Narratives

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This paper will engage with the emergent field of digital plant humanities by focusing on three virtual projects that situate themselves at the intersection of botanical science, especially specimen collection, ecoarchiving, and database building, cultural studies, and narrative praxis, particularly visual and literary storytelling. By closely examining the fluid linkages and dynamic crossovers between varied disciplinary paradigms, research methodologies, representational mediums, aesthetic and formal principles, and intended audiences that inform all three: the Plant Humanities Initiative database, a comprehensive and evolving digital repository of scientific, cultural and artistic information about global flora; the Native American Ethnobotanical Database, a digital archive of Native American botanical species that documents through the use of multimedia resources their names, distribution history, conservation status, and cultural significance for indigenous knowledge systems, including medicinal uses; and the Herbarium 3.0 website, a participatory open access citizen science initiative. My analysis will demonstrate how such digitization initiatives not only make available new knowledges about plant species, but also posit alternative frameworks, pedagogical tools, and cultural imaginaries with which to rethink vegetal life, its role, and the norms and conditions of its appearance within the domain of cultural representation. I will argue that the digitization of vegetal matter, knowledge and botanical scientific and cultural histories have conceptual implications for how knowledge itself is understood. Using Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the rhizome as a mode of democratization of knowledge and meaning systems, and the resurgence of a philosophical and epistemological rhizomatics in conjunction with plant behavior and physiology in the work of Michael Marder, Luce Irigaray, J.C. Ryan, Monica Gagliano, and Giovanni Aloï, my paper will critically analyze these botanical digitization projects as congruent with what Marder (2016) calls "epistemophytology," hybrid, communitarian, decentralized, ambivalent, egalitarian, ethically oriented, and nonhierarchical ways of knowing that derive from plants themselves, and challenge the imperial logic of dominant discursive paradigms of science. I will also argue for the need to be cognizant of technology's own carbon footprint and its dark legacies of association with neoliberal extractivist agendas. I will then go on to analyze Janice Pariat's novel of cultural botany, *Everything the Light Touches* (2022), as a rhizomatic narrative that uses storytelling as a practice of ecoarchiving and epistemic decentralization. By examining the narrative structure, particularly its fluid grafting of multiple temporalities, system of continuities and repetitions, amalgamation of science, fantasy, speculation, and myth, and a rich citational web of intertextual references, cross-pollinations, and reimaginings, my paper will conclude by suggesting how the new modes of epistemic engagement, attention, affectivity, expression, and action occasioned by digital botanical worlds can offer productive ways of reading literary narratives. The paper thus wishes to bring together in generative dialogue digitization technologies, vegetal

epistemology, narrative practices and ways of reading cultural texts under the rubric of an emergent digital plant humanities.

**Keywords:** digital plant humanities, Janice Pariat, rhizome, technology

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# Placement of Feelings in the Anthropocene: The Tree as Persona in Avinash

## Shrestha's Selected Poems

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Avinash Shrestha is among those few contemporary poets of Nepal who have given voice to current ecological concerns in their verses. Shrestha's poems traverse from the scientific reality of environmentalism to the mythical, cultural and even religious conceptualization of nature, vegetation being one of its dominant part. In many of his poems collected in *The Dust Draws Its Face on the Wind*, a translated collection, Shrestha makes trees a persona who speak directly as nature's representatives. The voices of the tree personae dominantly echo Eastern religious overtones, especially those from the Hindu and Buddhist belief systems, and seek to destabilize the human-nature dichotomy and difference. By lending his voice to the tree personae, the poet is attempting to evoke empathy in his readers. This paper analyzes some of these poems that employ the tree as the persona and conducts a close-reading, borrowing insights from the assumptions of affective ecocriticism, especially those developed by Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino. The study hypothesizes that personifying trees and letting them echo human-like woes is an effective way of evoking environmental empathy in the readers.

**Keywords:** tree personae, affective ecocriticism, empathy, Anthropocene, environmentalism

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# The Whispering Woods: Unraveling Phytopoetics, Phytocriticism, and Phytosemiotics in Tagore's Nature-Infused Narratives

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This paper explores the application of emerging plant-centric literary theories—phytopoetics, phytocriticism, and phytosemiotics—to the nature-infused narratives of Rabindranath Tagore. By examining Tagore's works through these innovative lenses, the paper aims to uncover new dimensions in his portrayal of the vegetal world and its relationship with human existence. Through vivid imagery, metaphors, and personification, Tagore's literature offers a rich terrain for exploring how plants shape narrative structures, convey symbolic meanings, and function as active agents in literary creation. The study examines Tagore's writings within the framework of phytopoetics, looking at how his use of plants in his poetry and prose challenges the conventional anthropocentric interpretations. It then applies phytocritical approaches to analyze the representation and thematic significance of plants in Tagore's narratives, particularly focusing on his critique of environmental exploitation in works like "Red Oleanders" and "Banabani" ("Voice of the Forest"). The study goes deeper into Tagore's usage of plant-based symbolism in his writings, revealing his ecocentric philosophy and his vision of human-nature interconnectedness. Thus, this research contributes to the emerging field of plant humanities in literature, offering a novel perspective on Tagore's works and highlighting the potential of plant-centric theories in enriching our understanding of nature-themed literature.

**Keywords:** phytopoetics, phytocriticism, phytosemiotics, environmental exploitation, human-nature interconnectedness

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# Nexus of Biska Jatra and Plants in the Newar Community of Bhaktapur

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The present paper aims to explore Biska Jatra in relation to plants within the cultural backdrop of the Newar community in Bhaktapur, Nepal. Bhaktapur is a city with unique festivals, fairs, cultures, languages, and religions. Ancient art and culture have been a part of Bhaktapur and its inhabitants' lives since the very beginning of civilization. Numerous festivals are celebrated every month, bringing unique colors, messages, fraternity, humanity, and delight into people's lives. One of the most well-known festivals in Bhaktapur is Biska Jatra, which is observed annually with the hope of world peace and happiness, the well-being of all living things, and the downfall of enemies. For Bisket Jatra, a tall *Lingo* (a wooden pole) is brought from the Sallaghari forest in Chittapole, Suryabinayak Municipality, to Yongsikhel in Bhaktapur, along with the ritual performance. By erecting and demolishing the Lingo on the last day of the Nepali year and the first day of the new year, respectively, Biska is essentially known as Lingo Jatra. Since the Lingo represents Bhairava, this Jatra belongs to Bhairava. At Biska Jatra, the locals pull Bhairava Bhadrakali's chariot as paramount deities. In addition, there are a lot of wonderful cultural events held here at Biska, including local-level Jatras of Ashtamatrika and other Goddesses. This paper examines the visual aspects of Biska Jatra as evident from the perspective of ritual and performance. This study argues that the celebration of festivals depicts its rationality and significance in the socio-cultural lives of the residents of Bhaktapur owing to their association with the plants.

**Keywords:** Bhaktapur, Biska Jatra, performance, plants, ritual

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# From Thinkers to Learners: Teaching Green Education in Classrooms

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Various pedagogical approaches can be executed by teachers to make learners more aware and concerned about the environment. Teachers can apply both learner-centered and teacher-centered methods. According to Kolb's Learning Style theory, accommodator learners engage through role playing, games, laboratories, recalling past experience, and group work. Assimilator learners prefer demonstration videos, brainstorming, and considering ideas from multiple perspectives. Divergent learners imbibe concepts through reading, creating models, group work, and projects. Converger learners prefer to do hands on activities, case studies, etc. Experiential learning including field trips, citizen science projects, local community engagement develop a sense of responsibility and belonging to the environment. Project based learning attempts to face real-life problems to find feasible solutions. Learners can participate in interactive simulation and games, which apply augmented and virtual reality to explore life-like environments. Flipped classroom activity uses didactics through debates, discussions, group activities and laboratories. Group discussions, open discussions, seminars workshops, exhibitions, hands on training, and demonstration methods motivate learners to be actively pro-environment. Communicative, analytical thinking and collaborative skills by case based learning hone environmental stewardship. Interdisciplinary methods apply literature as skits or role playing, storytelling to develop vision and imagination power thus correlating real life scenarios.

**Keywords:** environmental awareness, green education, learning style, pedagogical approaches, teaching modalities

**Sharmistha Pramanik**, alumnus of Lady Brabourne College and M.Phil. from University of Calcutta, is an Assistant Professor-in-Zoology with national and international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary academic publications. She has keen interest in techno-pedagogical innovations. Her areas of interest include environmental education, science education, educational technology, and pedagogy of science.

# Replacing Natural Trees With Artificial Trees: An Analysis of M Mukundan's Short Story "Unnikatha"

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This paper analyzes the Malayalam short story "Unnikatha" by M Mukundan. This story deals with an incident where an old huge natural tree is replaced by an artificial glass tree. This thought-provoking story is narrated by a grandson to his grandmother. Unlike the typical stories the grandmothers tell their grandchildren, which often present a positive picture of nature, this story is narrated by a grandson to his grandmother to put her to sleep. This projects a reversal situation where the reversal of roles parallels the reversal of the perspectives on nature. Usually, the main reason for environmental destruction is said to be humans' greed. However, this story does not focus so much on the dimension of human greed but on the unthinking actions of humans, motivated by reasons other than greed, that have devastating consequences to the environment. The story makes readers ask questions about the causes and consequences of such mindless human actions on the environment. The story hints that these actions in Indian context are the result of Westernization.

**Keywords:** trees, nature, artificial, Westernization, ecological harmony

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# The Trees Will Not Save Us, or, Fake Mechanical Trees

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This paper examines the ethical dimensions of the promise of reforestation. The idea that the trees can save us as a sound means of carbon capture and storage (on a geoengineering scale) is an alluring promise that resonates among popular audiences and is consistently included as one tool in various global warming mitigation models (i.e., the IPCC). The promise of reforestation is further bolstered by cultural narratives: James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009); Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* (1971), Jean Giono's *The Man Who Planted Trees* (1953); the American myth of Johnny Appleseed; the Norse myth of Yggdrasil, the World Tree; and worldwide Indigenous traditions harkening back to animist traditions. At Arizona State University, Professor Klaus Lackner is actively engineering his “mechanical tree”, a metal contraption for filtering CO<sub>2</sub> out of the air. I argue that the reality is, by contrast, dark. Lackner's engineering efforts reveal a perverse geoengineering ethos. In fact, the promise of reforestation is what Lauren Berlant (UChicago) calls “cruel optimism,” or what Naomi Oreskes calls “Human Adaptive Optimism”—the belief in the power of human ingenuity to save us with some just-in-time technology that does not exist, and, perversely, further impels us towards a catastrophic future blinded by the faith that such technology negates any necessity of changing business-as-usual.

**Keywords:** environmental humanities, Anthropocene, geoengineering, trees, deforestation

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# Reclaiming Nature's Voice: Plant Consciousness in Indian Literary

## Landscapes

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The intricate connection between human life and nature is undeniable. Beyond being an aesthetic or artistic entity, nature forms the foundation of life itself, sustaining existence and nurturing creativity. Revered as “Mother Nature,” it has inspired knowledge, art, and spirituality since time immemorial, establishing itself as a primal force in shaping human thought and culture. Ancient texts, especially the Vedas, provide vivid glimpses into early forms of nature worship and ecological awareness, revealing that the relationship between humans and their environment was deeply cherished. The Vedas, as the most ancient repository of knowledge, serve as a crucial source for understanding humanity’s first contemplations on nature. The concept of ecology is far from being a modern concern—it has been integral to human consciousness since the dawn of civilization. However, the exploitation of nature over time has turned the Earth’s beauty into a metaphorical wasteland, as famously depicted in T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. In the modern era of globalization, the need to protect and preserve biodiversity (flora and fauna) has become a shared global responsibility. Indian literature, from Vedic hymns to contemporary works, has continuously explored the interdependence between humans and their natural surroundings. As a subcontinent rich in ecological diversity, India’s topography and biodiversity have inspired countless literary expressions. Writers have celebrated this biodiversity while addressing pressing ecological concerns. This endeavour traces the evolution of Indian literary discourses, exploring how ecological sensibilities have shaped literary narratives across eras, from the Vedic period to modern times, and highlights how literature reflects ecological awareness, celebrates the natural world, and raises concerns over its degradation. Through exploring literary landscapes, this enterprise seeks to offer a comprehension of humanity’s enduring connection with nature and the relevance of ecological consciousness in literary traditions.

**Keywords:** ecocriticism, Indian literature, nature, ecology, sustainability, Vedas

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# Plants as Medicine: Navigating the Eco-medical Practices of the Paniya

## Community in Sheela Tomy's *Valli*

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This paper examines the eco-herbal and medical practices of the Paniya community in Wayanad, Kerala, as portrayed by Sheela Tomy in *Valli* (2019). It highlights the vital role of eco-medical knowledge within the community, illustrating how these practices foster both physical and mental well-being across generations. The Paniya community employs various herbal remedies, such as *vathamkolli* and *vathakkodi* for treating arthritis, and engages in holistic practices like green meditation, *shinrin-yoku* (forest bathing), and tree-hugging, alleviating stress, depression, and anxiety. Through the lens of Howard Clinebell's "ecotherapy" and Henri Leclerc's concept of "phytotherapy," this paper offers a critical interpretation of Paniya's therapeutic methods in *Valli*. The study exposes the threats posed by the advancements of tourist and the timber industry to these traditional healing practices, exacerbating the decline of medicinal plants. The paper advocates for the revitalization of the Paniya community's eco-medical knowledge, promoting a holistic approach to health that prioritizes community well-being, environmental sustainability, and the preservation of Indigenous knowledge. Ultimately, the paper calls for the safeguarding of these therapeutic practices to maintain a balanced relationship between human health and the natural environment.

**Keywords:** Paniya community, phytotherapy, ecotherapy, traditional eco-medical knowledge

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# Plants in the Compositions of the 15th Century Telugu Poet Thallapaka

## Annamacharya: An Exploratory Study

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The present paper seeks to explore how plants are depicted in the compositions of the 15th century Telugu poet-composer Thallapaka Annamacharya, also known as, Annamayya. The poet is said to have composed lakhs of songs of which only about 14,000 survive today. Using the digital humanities approach, the paper examines the entire corpus of the composer's repertoire for the varied references to plants and trees in them and analyzes the instances to understand what light they throw on plants. No such study has been conducted to date to understand the treatment plants and trees receive in the poet's compositions. The study will be significant as it can potentially offer insights into the status and importance of plants during the 15<sup>th</sup> century Telugu society. The insights thus gained can also potentially guide us in the present towards a harmonious coexistence with the plant community.

**Keywords:** Thallapaka Annamacharya, Vaggeyakara, digital humanities, plant synonyms in Telugu

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# Exploring the Interconnection Between Humans and Plants: Plant-Human Relationship in Sanskrit Discourses

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This paper explores the deep, multifaceted relationship between humans and plants, examining historical perspectives. Throughout history, plants have played a critical role in human survival and culture. From early civilization, plants have been integral to human life and have significantly shaped civilization. Ancient societies esteemed plants for food and medicine, marking a pivotal moment in human development. Representations of plants in literature often carry deeper meanings, which are essential for combating climate change, contributing to biodiversity, and preserving ecosystems. The paper also addresses ethical and environmental implications of human activities, focusing on the importance of conservation efforts that explore the symbolic relationship between humans and plants. Plants described in the Sanskrit discourses ensure the evolution of life on Earth. Sanskrit discourse asserts that plants must be treated as “...पुत्रास्ते धर्मतः स्मृताः” (care as children), ensuring the evolution of life on Earth. The green theories developed by Gagliano, et al., Marder, and others examine the relationship between humans and plants, unveiling the multifarious possibilities within Sanskrit texts. Critical plant studies or plant-human studies will be employed here to discuss the inevitability of plants by reassuring an interdisciplinary discourse, and envisioning a non-hegemonic relationship between humans and non-human plants.

**Keywords:** civilization, Sanskrit discourses, interconnection, non-hegemonic, plant-human

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# Phytopoetic Readings of Select Poets from Jharkhand: Analyzing the Interplay Between Nature, Culture, and Poetry

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Plants, while being aesthetic, are essential to human civilization in ways we often overlook. From food and shelter to clothing, plants are crucial to our survival. However, in an anthropocentric view, their significance is often neglected. But there are some tribal poets of Jharkhand who maintain a profound connection to plants and trees, as they are integral to their culture and livelihood and this connection is starkly reflected in their poetic output. This paper explores the poetry of Grace Kujur, Anuj Lugun, and Jecinta Kerketta, with a focus on plant imagery in their works. For these poets, plants go beyond mere symbolism; as mahua, sal, palash, peepal and many such plants appear not only as references but also as central themes. At times, they refer to nostalgia, at times to grief, and at times to the ongoing struggle with capitalism, globalization, and urbanization. In her poem, "Bichaulion ke beech" ("Between the Brokers"), Grace Kujur speaks of a child tied to his mother's back while she carries grass, revealing how this labor fails to provide a better life. Similarly, Anuj Lugun's poetry consistently reflects concerns for the environment, highlighting the devastating effects of forest destruction on Indigenous communities. Jecinta Kerketta mourns the cutting of a mango tree to widen a road in her poem "Usse Mera Sambandh kya hai?" ("What is My Relation With That?")—a poignant reflection on ecological loss. The works of these poets engage with vital questions about the presence and absence of plants and nature, emphasizing the inseparable relationship between nature, culture, and survival in their poetic worlds. A phytopoetic reading brings out a series of valid questions and distinct areas of enquiry.

**Keywords:** phytopoetics, tribal poetry, plant humanities, new aesthetics, nature/culture

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# Gija Jumulu's Journey: Arboreal Ecocriticism, Indigenous People, and the Cultural Analysis of Trees

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This paper furthers the theorization of 'arboreal ecocriticism' as the cultural analysis of trees. Informed by postcolonial ecocriticism, decolonial studies, critical plant studies, and the science of vegetal cognition, arboreal ecocriticism attends broadly to human-tree interactions, as represented in literary and cultural works. Empirical studies demonstrate that trees are not passive objects but, instead, exercise percipient faculties to negotiate ecological niches and forge interdependencies with other organisms. Burgeoning scientific evidence of arboreal intelligence informs arboreal ecocriticism as a transdisciplinary critical practice concerned with tree ethics, rights, and justice. After theorizing arboreal ecocriticism, the paper will point to some possible focus areas—species conservation, invasive trees, botanical gardens, seed banks, genetic engineering, and plant sentience, among others—through a case study of Gija Jumulu, a boab tree trucked 3,200 kilometres from the Kimberley region of Western Australia to the capital city of Perth. At 36 tonnes and 750 years old, the boab was extracted and replanted to make way for a highway bridge in the Kimberley. Taking place in 2008, the relocation of Gija Jumulu is considered the longest land-based journey of a tree of its size in recorded history.

**Keywords:** arboreal ecocriticism, plant intelligence, trees, ecocultural analysis, Australia, boabs

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# The Entangled Aspects of Colonialism, Violence, and Expropriation in

## Amitav Ghosh's *The Nutmeg's Curse*

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*The Nutmeg's Curse* chronicles the Dutch colonial expansion on the Banda Islands of Indonesia during the seventeenth century narrating the events that led to the establishment of an empire and securing a trade monopoly on the nutmeg spice. Nutmeg was a highly sought-after spice that gained its popularity due to its exotic flavor and medicinal properties and thus carried an enormous economic potential. The paper aims to highlight how a plant like nutmeg played a significant role in shaping the present geopolitical order that had its roots back to the colonial times through implementation of various insidious strategies. The colonial logics spawned myriad forms of violence perpetuated on the land as well as on the natives that reflects the extractivist mindset of the colonizers impacting not only its specific milieu but on a planetary scale at large through different means of socio-ecological politicization. The paper also discusses how plantations are influential in transforming the planetary geographies through scales of extraction and control, all contributing towards making nutmeg an unfortunate symbol of colonialism and violence.

**Keywords:** colonialism, nutmeg, plantations, planetarity, violence

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# Spreading Roots of Orchidelirium: Fungal Liminality and Assemblage of Death, Desire and Orchid Fascination

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Orchids—the very name of the plant has wrapped itself with an enigmatic connotation throughout the ages. They might easily allure you, but this allurement does not come only from their beauty, strangeness, and heterogeneity; rather, it stems from a long socio-cultural molding of their existence. Within the trope of killer plant/carnivorous plant, orchids have carved out their own place in literary and creative imagination. Beginning from H.G. Well's *Strange Orchids*, they never turned back—continuing to grow in a rhizomatic way, forming its own world that taps into the deepest human desire in relation to the natural world. The paper historicizes the global literary imagination that has cast this botanical entity in a dark and malign aspect and pins down to local imagination of the same, asking how do local beliefs, stories, and characters reshape this portrayal? The paper argues that anthropocentric perspective struggles to accommodate the unfathomable nature of orchid life. The struggle originates from the colonial-dominant endeavor of exploring/knowning the natural world as something separate to the human world. Consequently, this fuels a fascination towards the unknowable—life of orchids. The paper refers to two contemporary Bengali short fictions, Himadri Kishore Dasgupta's "Mawsmoi Orchid" and Saikat Mukhopadhyay's "Orchid Rahasya," which imagine orchids within a mysterious milieu where the plants demand human blood to thrive and reclaim the mystical power. Both narratives shift their focus to the process and moment of collection and the initial events. In dialogue with the first story, I use the term *fungal liminality* to suggest the ball-like orchid's capability of creating a liminality between life and death through a tangled, fungal-like existence where it not only consumes human blood but also provides something in return—mysterious youth. In dealing with the second story, I argue that the whole assemblage of orchid life (with its adaptation capability and the ecological reality) overpowered the colonial figures presented in the story, preventing them from uprooting the orchid from its "native space" and transforming it into an "exotic" entity. Instead, the colonial figures ultimately become part of the assemblage. The outcome intends to present how a single botanical entity has situated itself within an expansive creative imagination, emphasizing the interaction between human desire for immortality and fame and a fungal network of life, death, liminality and becoming

**Keyword:** orchids, plant humanities, desire, liminality, botanical narratives

**Laxmi Sarma** is currently working as a Junior Research Scholar at the Department of English, Visva-Bharati University. Her Ph.D. proposal moves around the botanical representation in the post 2000s Indian English writing and a major part of the study deals with conceptualizing arboreal agency. She has presented her work at various national seminars and international conferences, and has published a chapter in the edited volume titled *Human-Nature Interface: An Ecocritical Study*.

# Sacred Groves Speak: A Tale of Nature, Culture, and Conservation

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Sacred groves are remnants of past forest landscapes protected through cultural norms and beliefs. They serve as vital ecosystems where nature, heritage, and conservation intertwine. These sacred spaces, found across India and particularly in Kerala, function as species refuge basins, preserving rare plant and animal species that otherwise might have lost due to deforestation and urbanization. Besides these, they also carry out valuable ecosystem services such as soil and water conservation, nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration, and regulation of microclimate of the region. Beyond their ecological significance, sacred groves hold deep cultural and religious importance, with traditional communities safeguarding them through rituals, folklore, and ancestral wisdom. Despite their resilience, modern threats such as land encroachment, changing societal beliefs, and environmental degradation endanger these invaluable ecosystems. However, renewed conservation efforts, legal recognition, and community-driven initiatives provide hope for their survival. This paper explores the profound role of sacred groves in maintaining ecological balance, sustaining cultural identity, and contributing to contemporary environmental conservation strategies. By understanding the messages these ancient groves convey, humanity can reconnect with traditional ecological knowledge and adopt sustainable practices for the future.

**Keywords:** sacred groves, biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage, ancestral wisdom, and sustainable living

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# Standing With the Trees, Singing For the Trees: How an Ecosong from the South East Australian Forests Arrived at the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan

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The lyrics of “I Stand with the Trees” echo an ancient story in which humans walk in relationship with other-than-human life, our voices joining in a great conversation with trees by slowing down to touch nature. The paper considers the motivation, eco-compositional process, mega-event inclusion, and online diffusion of this singular item inspired by a documentary film exploring the intertwined fates of trees and humans through the life of environmentalist Bob Brown. Following her live contribution to COP28 held in Dubai in 2023, singer-songwriter Corinne Gibbons Starr was invited to launch “I Stand with the Trees” with an online Global Youth Choir at COP29 held in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2024. Robin Ryan Cruse deconstructs the lyrics and hip-hop rhythm of this ecosong composed by Young Monument in Bega Valley, New South Wales to motivate greater care of old-growth forests. It is through the physical power of live performance that emotional relationships between humans, and humans and their environments can be cogently articulated. “I Stand with the Trees” yields a corrective to our simplistic understanding of planet. The song became available as a video card immersing viewers in forests from across the world to raise funds to save old-growth forests: <https://vimeo.com/1029558285/126f54624d?share=copy>.

**Keywords:** old-growth forest, conservation, ecosong, Global Youth Choir, COP29

**Corinne Gibbons Starr** of Bega, New South Wales on Yuin Country is an award-winning artist, environmentalist, educator and champion for children’s voices. Motivated by her profound respect and love for nature and culture, Corinne facilitates transformational experiences using music as a powerful tool for connection, resilience, and social change. **Robin Ryan Cruse** of Eden, New South Wales is a Visiting Fellow at The School of Music, The Australian National University, Canberra. She applies her love of music and nature to ecomusical themes and has co-published several articles with Indigenous performers who derive their music from Country.

# Posthuman Ecologies: Reading Plant Autobiography and Listening to Plant Radio

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Long ago, Jagadish Chandra Bose, a great scientist, proved that plants are living beings with feelings and emotions and developed a device for the plants to write their own script, *Tarulipi*, an autobiography in their own handwriting that expresses the hidden history or the unsaid, or the unspoken of the plants. He wrote, "All around us, the plants are communicating. We just don't notice it." He observed how plants grew more quickly when exposed to nice music and gentle whispers and poorly when exposed to harsh music and loud speech. He even mentioned how plants became depressed when exposed to polluted air and darkening skies. Recently, modern Plant Radio has been developed for humans to listen into a plant, and the device deeply sensitizes the entangled relationship between humans and plants in symbiosis for co-survival. The paper discusses how reading plant autobiography and listening to plant radio can play a role in deepening the understanding of human-plant relations for a unified, embedded, interconnected, and organic living on the earth, and how that interaction sensitizes humans to a post-human mindset rejecting human exceptionalism and reconceptualizing plants from passive ones into living sentient beings.

**Keywords:** autobiography, plant radio, exceptionalism, posthumanism

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# Dark Green Religion: Analyzing Environmental Spirituality in Film, Literature, and Art

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This study examines the portrayal of dark green religion—a framework recognizing nature as sacred and intrinsically valuable—across three influential media: literature, film, and visual art. Building upon Bron Taylor's seminal work, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*, the research employs qualitative analysis to explore how these mediums depict environmental concerns and human-nature relationships. In literature, Richard Powers' *The Overstory* is analyzed for its depiction of trees as sentient beings interconnected with human life, promoting environmental conservation. In cinema, films such as *Kantara* depict Indigenous communities' reverence for forest deities, symbolizing a spiritual connection to the land and highlighting the tension between traditional ecological wisdom and modern interventions. Visual art is explored through the works of artists like Andy Warhol and Arunima Choudhury. Warhol's "Endangered Species" series raises awareness about threatened wildlife, while Choudhury's art intertwines nature with femininity, reflecting a deep engagement with environmental themes and the complex relationship between nature and feminine sensibilities. The study reveals that these media collectively serve as vital platforms for expressing and fostering dark green religion, encouraging audiences to reassess their relationship with the environment and contributing to a growing cultural consciousness aimed at addressing environmental challenges.

**Keywords:** dark green religion, environmental ethics, literature, film, visual art

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# Bioregional Belonging in *Thinner Than Skin*: A Plant Humanist Study

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The concept of a bioregion surpasses the geographical, political and cultural limitations of the constructed spatial divides. Bioregions are governed by the respective ecological systems, soil types, river basins, species distribution, and the climate of a bio-geographical space. In an age which is characterized by models of violence on the voiceless—the subaltern, the forests and animals—a study through the bioregional lens helps to locate the human-nature relationship and how a biocentric approach alleviates ecological consciousness and preservation. This paper explores Pakistani writer Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *Thinner than Skin* in the light of belongingness that one feels towards a bioregion. Through this paper, the anthropocentric hierarchies will be critically observed, particularly the power binaries constructed within the human populations. The dichotomies between nomads and settlers, the diasporic and the autochthonous population, and the nature-dwellers and nature destroyers will be discussed. The novel is set in two distinct geographical locations: the Northern Pakistan region and San Francisco. It discusses the ecological diversities appealing to the feelings of belonging and nostalgia. Plant humanities will be used to study these environmental entanglements.

**Keywords:** bioregion, plant humanities, biocentrism, ecological consciousness, anthropocentrism

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# Arboreal Atmospheres in Urban Spaces: Reflections on Hong Kong's

## Banyans

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Hong Kong is home to numerous old banyan trees (*Ficus microcarpa*) that are quite literally entangled with the concrete built environment of the sprawling metropolis. With their multitudinous offshoots deeply enmeshed with the human stonework, these aged trees contribute to the atmosphere of the city. The aesthetic and atmospheric significance of such historic vegetation is one of the reasons, I suspect, why there has been concern for bouts of disease killing off these old trees, threatening to strip Hong Kong of some of its beloved plant life. In this paper, I will consider from the standpoint of philosophical aesthetics how urban trees generally—taking Hong Kong's banyans as an example—contribute to the felt sense of a place. Drawing on the atmospheric aesthetics pioneered especially by Gernot Böhme, I want to consider how the integration of trees into urban space contributes to its atmosphere(s). More specifically, adapting Georg Simmel's theory of the aesthetics of ruins and taking Hong Kong's urban banyans as a focal point, I will argue that certain arboreal atmospheres make palpable a sense of historical scale by preserving trees in the process of their undoing human creation.

**Keywords:** atmospheres, urban aesthetic, urban trees, banyan trees, Hong Kong

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# Green Care: Combating Stress with Plants

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Exposure to nature can be both physically and psychologically healing and effective in combating stress in our daily lives. The Stress Recovery or Reduction Theory (Roger Ulrich, 1991) is applicable to both micro and macro environments, i.e. at home or office and also to towns and cities. Adding trees, indoor plants, and green spaces can significantly contribute to sustainable urban planning. Attention Restoration Theory emphasizes exposure to nature can remove fatigue and restore attention, enabling better focus on work improving quality and productivity. Plants release volatile organic compounds, or phytoncides, which when inhaled boost happy hormones in humans, such as serotonin and endorphins. Plants and greens reduce stress hormone cortisol levels. Inhaled phytoncides improve body immunity increasing the number of 'natural killer' cells and fighting microbes. Forests can thus be designated as regions of immunity and crucial for pandemic management. Ecopsychology targets the psyche while ecotherapy focuses on the total mind-body-spirit relationship. Biophilia (Wilson, 1984) proposes human affiliation with nature on physical, mental and social levels. The desire to seek interactions with nature during a period of stress is a manifestation of 'urgent biophilia', suggesting that humans consciously seek contact with nature to strengthen their resilience during crisis. Together they constitute 'green care' or 'green combat'.

**Keywords:** green care, phytoncides, stress management

**Supatra Sen**, alumnus of Presidency College and Ph.D. University of Calcutta, is an Associate Professor, with 125 academic publications in botany and environment. She is the Founder and Chief Editor of an ISSN peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary journal *Harvest*. She has two poetry anthologies *My Autumn Sonata* and *Sojourns in Autumn*.



# Roots of Reverie: Exploring the Interconnectedness of Humanity and Plants

## in Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams*

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Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams* (1990) presents a profound meditation on humanity's relationship with nature, weaving together ecological, spiritual, and cultural themes. Through the lens of plant humanities, this paper explores the way Kurosawa employs plants as symbols of memory, destruction, and renewal across the film's vignettes. Segments such as "The Peach Orchard" and "Village of the Watermills" illustrate the cultural and spiritual significance of plants, while dystopian visions in Mount Fuji in "Red and The Weeping Demon" serve as cautionary tales of environmental degradation. By examining the agency of plants in shaping human experiences, the study highlights *Dreams* as an ecological and philosophical text that urges a harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural world. Kurosawa's film not only visualizes environmental ethics but also aligns with broader discourses in plant humanities, advocating for an awareness of plants as living, cultural, and moral entities.

**Keywords:** plant humanities, *Dreams*, environmental ethics, human-nature relationship, ecological symbolism

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# Ecology, Umwelt, and Human Identity in *Latitudes of Longing*.

## Reimagining Subjectivity Through Plant Life

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This paper explores human identity in *Latitudes of Longing* by exploring how plant life and ecological landscapes shape human subjectivity in times of environmental crisis. Through characters like Chanda Devi, whose deep attunement to plant life reflects a heightened ecological consciousness, the narrative reveals how flora mediates human-environment interactions and the psychological toll of climate change. Using David Abram's ecophenomenology, the study examines how sensory engagement with plants fosters new ways of perceiving and responding to ecological shifts. Additionally, Uexküllian phenomenology is employed to analyze the characters' *umwelt*, highlighting how plant life structures their lived experiences. Biosemiotic insights from scholars such as Wendy Wheeler, Morten Tønnessen, Kalevi Kull, and John Deely further illuminate how plants function as communicative and interpretative beings, influencing human resilience and adaptation. Ultimately, this paper argues that *Latitudes of Longing* positions plants as key figures in negotiating human subjectivity, reminding us of the Earth's aliveness and the deep interconnections between human and vegetal worlds.

**Keywords:** climate anxiety, plant humanities, ecophenomenology, biosemiotics, umwelt, human-plant relations

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# Neuroecoaesthetical Perspectives in Phytocriticism: Indigeneity and the Indian Academic Discourse

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In the Indian context, both the terms *phytocriticism* and *neuroecoaesthetics* are still perceptible as neophytes within the academic discourse, specifically the ecocritical one. Neuroecoaesthetics provides a gateway to study aesthetics with a neurological lens in a peculiar ecosystem, whereas phytocriticism enhances the experience of this aesthetical journey along with plants, trees and the different elements of indigenous flora with/beyond textual context. The Indian Indigenous culture is, quintessentially, a representation of human-nature *bonhomie* portrayed through their various plant-based narratives, mostly in oral tradition, expressed in the forms of their songs, ceremonies, rituals, and spiritual practices. Most of the texts related to ecocriticism prescribed in a number of academic institutions within the country, in fact, don't communicate with nature rather just represent the natural landscapes and geographical terrains. In fact, we have been listening to our own stories from the other narrators which enrapture mostly the internecine strife, conflict, dissensions and discords. The outsider narrators brought a significant structural transformation to Indigeneity in the name of economic development and for the sake of bringing them into the 'mainstream'. This paper critically examines such esoteric and recondite questions of an atypical academic dilemma where it's really difficult to find out the 'actual' text explicitly representing the Indigenous cultural sovereignty and their epistemological adherence to phytocriticism in relation to neuroecoaesthetics.

**Keywords:** phytocriticism, neuroecoaesthetics, epistemological sovereignty, ecocritical, pedagogical discourse

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# The Role of Nature and Plants in Slavic Paganism and Mythology

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Throughout history, various Indigenous cultures worldwide have centered their spiritual traditions around nature and plants, emphasizing the deep connection between human life and the natural realm. These traditions reflect ecological knowledge while also showcasing deep reverence for plants as sacred entities. As a person of Eastern European origin, I aim to explore the concept of pre-Christian Slavic paganism. Through the introduction of selected mythological creatures and tales, the main objective of this paper is to underscore its deep ties to the botanical world while also focusing on the importance and role of nature and plants in traditional Slavic beliefs and rituals. For example, Perun, the thunder god and the highest deity in Slavic Paganism, was linked to mighty oak trees, bringing storms that nourished the land. Lada, goddess of love and fertility, symbolized blooming flowers and agricultural prosperity. Morena, the goddess of winter and death, marked the end of the growing season while also representing renewal. Rusalka, the water spirit of rivers and lakes, embodied both life-giving and ominous forces. Therefore, Slavic mythology portrays nature as a living force, represented and embodied by deities and spirits governing fertility, seasons, and life cycles. By examining this concept through the lens of the plant humanities, this paper aims to highlight the cultural heritage of Slavic traditions, honoring nature while offering insights into sustainable coexistence and the timeless human-nature interconnection.

**Keywords:** Slavic paganism, mythology, spirituality, traditional beliefs, human-nature interconnection

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# Verdant Voices: Flora as a Symbol of Gender, Myth, and Ecofeminism in

## Indian Literature

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"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home" proclaims Gary Snyder, emphasizing the deep connection between humanity and the natural world. This paper investigates the ways in which plants, in addition to their biological functions, play a significant role as influential narrators in the formation of cultural narratives concerning gender and ecofeminism. In Hindu mythology, certain plants, such as the tulsi and the banyan tree, are depicted as exemplifying gendered characteristics that serve to reinforce societal standards through the performance of rituals. Traditions such as the Vat Savitri puja serve to accentuate the gendered ideals that are presented in the Ramayana and other legendary writings. These texts portray plants as living embodiments of femininity. Furthermore, the use of plant-based metaphors in literary works gives a voice to more profound issues such as fertility, purity, and gendered power structures, transforming flora into an active participant in the expression of narratives. The combined oppression of women and nature under patriarchal regimes is critically analyzed through ecofeminist study, with movements like Chipko highlighting how women reclaim agency through plant protection and environmental activism. The purpose of this enterprise is to highlight the transformative power of plant symbolism in envisioning gender equity and environmental justice by weaving together cultural and ecological narratives.

**Keywords:** flora, gender, mythology, ecofeminism, Hindu rituals

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# What's in a Flower: A Feminist Ecocritical Reading of Dee Lestari's

## *Aroma Karsa*

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Various Indonesian cosmetic businesses are managed by female leaders. Most of them claim to employ local plant-based ingredients. This phenomenon is illustrated by an Indonesian female writer, Dee Lestari, in her twelfth novel, *Aroma Karsa (Scent of Will)*. Lestari centred the narratives around the endeavor of two main female characters to find a magical yet mysterious flower named *puspa karsa* (flower of will) which had power to control human's will and produced the strongest fragrance. The writer employs local ecological terms and references that help explain the power of the flower. This paper aims to identify how the flower influences and simultaneously transforms the life trajectory of two female characters who manage perfume companies. We employ theories of feminist ecocriticism to draw relationships between the main flora and the female protagonists. The Indonesian mythological knowledge surrounding sacred plants and their habitats are used as supporting data. The findings revealed that while the flower, symbolizing nature, has power to inspire women to create advancement, any attempt to take massive advantage of it would ultimately result in their downfalls. The novel could serve as criticism of the beauty industry which relies solely on exploitation and neglects the preservation of nature.

**Keywords:** ecocriticism, feminist theory, Indonesia, fiction, women

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# The Voice and Interlocutions of the Arboreal Non-Human in Elif Shafak's

## *Island of Missing Trees*

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This research paper explores the arboreal interlocutions of the fig tree that pivot the memory, trauma, and solastalgia in Elif Shafak's *Island of Missing Trees*. The novel represents the fig tree as the silent spectator, witnessing the environmental degradation and societal degeneration, an archiver of human history. Narratives of human and non-human arboreal entities focus on the anthropocentric view, instigating ecological consciousness with an essence of ecocritical discourse. The current study explores how an arboreal entity withstands war and thrives hard to survive the displacement and climate change due to environmental deterioration, symbolizing resilience and stubbornness to bear the loss of the arboreal self with humans. This current research paper is a qualitative study, and the researchers apply the theoretical framework of Sullivan's interpersonal psychoanalysis to investigate the surreal interlocution of the non-human entity with humans sustaining a human-like relationship that embodies the collective generational trauma of both sides, challenging the trans natural and transcultural boundaries. Charles (2021) ascertains that in *Island of Missing Trees*, "a surprising narrator" creates a sense of connection with surreal events. Shafak (2021) says in one of her interviews that "we have to learn from trees," and "the wounds unhealed, the past is alive." The fig tree carries the traces of all emotions, memories, and unhealed traumas, which is not a 'bygone affair' and serves as an interlocutor of human relationships. This study contributes to the growing fields of environmental humanities and ecopsychology, demanding the urgent need to care and follow ethics for the non-human entity that transcends species boundaries.

**Keywords:** arboreal, interlocutions, solastalgia, memory, interpersonal psychoanalysis

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# The Symbiotic Relationship Between Trees and Humans: A Reading of

## Manoj Das's "Tree"

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Manoj Das is a bilingual writer of international repute writing in both English and Odia. Born in a small village in Odisha, India, he has a rich understanding of the life of his people. The story "Tree" woven around an age-old banyan tree of a village, vividly portrays the behavioral and psychological responses of its inhabitants at a critical moment, when the tree is uprooted and carried away by the river in spate. The old and ageless tree standing at the edge of the village since time immemorial has been a mute spectator of changes in culture and civilization. Considered holy and sacred by the villagers, it has always been an integral part of the life in the village. This old tree, symbolizing the past, present and the future is deeply connected to the villagers and their way of life. They cannot bear the nerve-racking incident of the tree being swept away by the flood and even think of the rebirth of the tree in thousands. This paper attempts to highlight how, for countless Indian villagers, a tree is not just a collection of branches and leaves but a profound symbol of life, heritage, and continuity.

**Keywords:** ageless trees, village life, culture, human-arboreal connections

**Ankita Swetaparna** is an Assistant Professor of English at VIT-AP University who enjoys interdisciplinary research and has a keen interest in plants, exploring their cultural, historical, and ecological significance. She sees this conference as an opportunity to discuss plant narratives, environmental consciousness, and sustainability while engaging with scholars on ecological ethics and human-plant relationships.

# The Agency of Trees in Aparna Sen's *Sati* (1989) and Srijit Mukherjee's *Nirbak* (2015)

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My paper studies trees in the Bengali films *Sati* (1989, Dir. Aparna Sen) and *Nirbak* (2015, Dir. Sreejit Mukherji) as the most vocal protagonists through their silent yet non-human vocal performances which challenges anthropocentric narratives and acknowledges the sentience and relational existence of this planet, and thus underscores life in its vibrant manifestations. In Aparna Sen's *Sati*, Uma, the mute protagonist is married to a banyan tree, which in its non-verbal communication focuses on an alternative entity of life in a world that has marginalized her as she fails to attest to the cultural norms of the society. Mukherji's *Nirbak* is a patchwork of four tales of silent love involving one woman, a tree, a dog and three men, with one common link binding the woman. The tree, in this movie too, becomes an active performer both as a silent witness to fleeting human emotions and in its non-verbal gesture of love for the woman. In both these films, the trees' non-verbal communication resonates with plant theory's challenge to logocentric/language-dominated existence, focussing on Marder's idea that plants exist in non-verbal and affective communication. Plant theory also challenges human-centric idea of death, and both the films celebrate existence of life by presenting a tree's decay as part of regeneration into new life. Both films in their visual representations of trees have projected interconnectedness of life and death, suggesting that death is not an end, rather a process of becoming with nature. In its subtle and critical analysis the paper argues that *Sati* and *Nirbak* advocate for the agency of trees that both critiques anthropocentric narratives and underscores symbiotic nature of life.

**Keywords:** anthropocene, trees, silent, life, agency, plant theory, films

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# Plants as Metaphor for Young Adults' Resilience in Alice Hoffman's

## *Green Angel*

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This paper analyzes how plants stand as metaphors for young adults' resilience in Alice Hoffman's *Green Angel*. It explores how plants reflect emotional growth, healing, and personal transformation. It analyzes how plants' role in *Green Angel* resonates with the process of healing after trauma and how this is linked to the resilience of young adults. This study argues that plants serve as metaphors for young adults' resilience, manifesting themes of growth, recovery, and transformation. The protagonist, Green, rebuilds her life after a devastating tragedy, with her connection to plants symbolizing her emotional journey. Her gardening and relationship with the natural world mirror her ability to endure, heal, and adapt. Plants embody the cycles of life and regeneration, paralleling Green's inner strength and capacity to overcome loss. For this purpose, this research employs the lens of ecocriticism of Cheryll Glotfelty, psychology and archetypes of Carl Jung, and Resilience Theory of Michael Ungar. This study hopes that the findings of this research open doors to explore ecopsychology in literature, resilience frameworks, nature in curriculum, and human-nature relationships in young adult and non-Western literature.

**Keywords:** plants as metaphors, young adult resilience, emotional growth, healing and personal transformation

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# Traversing Arboreal Humanities and Spiritual Ecology in Select Himalayan

## Writings on Trees

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“The tree sums up nature’s perfection which can be seen in every leaf, flower, seed, and creatures great and small. We do not stop learning from the natural world. The earth, the seas, the heavens have still so much to tell us. Nature’s notebook is never closed” (*Green Notes, Ruskin Bond-Book of Nature*, p. 274). In the introduction to *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben, Pradip Krishen states that trees have memory, hearing, language and they have their own circle of friends and they can ‘see’ colours. He further states that it is difficult for human beings to accept that trees have sensory abilities but if we break them down to their basic neural/molecular components we find that trees feel hurt when nibbled at and send out electrical signals just like human tissues do. In the 1990s, an American doctoral researcher Suzanne Simard of the University of British Columbia discovered how symbiotic fungi play a pivotal role in the dynamic mutualism of carbon and nutrient exchange and called it the “wood wide web” in the journal *Nature* and this has completely transformed our understanding of these arboreal communities. My paper explores an aspect of the environmental humanities which is the arboreal humanities in select Himalayan writings, particularly those by Ruskin Bond and Stephen Alter. Trees are in the air these days. Forest ecologists describe how trees communicate with one another, as well as laying out the complex interdependency of trees, plants, and fungi and how tree writings and poems on trees can be read as tropes for environmental problems, such as climate change and the Anthropocene and how trees and forests themselves are alive. Both Bond and Alter write that Himalayan forests are complex arboreal communities that compete, collaborate and coexist in much the same manner as human society. The pivotal question here is: how will new modes of knowing and being, like the arboreal humanities call for, enable environmentally just practices and eco-ethics? The answer lies in the realization of the interconnectedness of everything in nature. John Stanley and David Loy in their essay “At the Edge of the Roof: The Evolutionary Crisis of the Human Spirit” in *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth* contend that Indigenous human communities have always had a sacred and spontaneous affinity with nature but in the advanced globalized society religious symbolism that earlier put reins on human greed and aggression, now cannot compete with technology-driven advertising industry manned by giant corporations.

**Keywords:** arboreal humanities, mutualism, Anthropocene, eco-ethics, spiritual ecology

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# Vrikshayurveda: The Indic Science of Healing Diseased Flora

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Green spaces, composed of plants, trees, shrubs, etc., play a pivotal role as producers, as sustainable sources of nutrients (*aahaara*) and medicines (*oushadhis*). Recognizing the significance of plant bio-resources in human life, the Rigveda says: “Sham Na Oushadhir Vanino Bhavatuh” (Rigveda: vii.35.5). This means be gracious to forests enriched with medicinal plants. Ancient India recognized the importance of conservation and caring for biological resources for survival, sustenance, and the promotion of health. Several texts on the science of plant life—Vrikshayurveda—were written. Vrikshayurveda is a compendium of knowledge about plant physiology, taxonomy, horticulture, pathology, and treatment. The identification of diseases in flora is done through the lens of Ayurveda, the ancient Indian science for treating humans, for identifying plant health and determining the causes and treatment of illness. *Vatta*, *pitta*, and *kapha doshas* (imbalances) are identified as internal causes of diseases while insects, harsh weather, cold, etc., are regarded as external causes. Vrikshayurveda, not only identifies the ailments but also suggests treatment in form of *kunapjala*, organic pesticides and fertilizers. This paper strives to discover one more aspect of the global plant humanities by bringing forth the ancient knowledge of Vrikshayurveda—the science of healing flora.

**Keywords:** plant diseases, Ayurveda, Vrikshayurveda, vatta, pitta, kapha, healing

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# Of Coexistence, Affect, and the Plant-Other: Reading Narayan's *Thenvarikka* and Kallen Pokkudan's *Life Among the Mangrove Forests*

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This paper will examine the emerging field of plant humanities in the Indian context, by critically analyzing two texts from Malayalam (the regional language of Kerala): *Thenvarikka* (*The Jackfruit Tree*) and Pokkudan's *My Life*. These texts have been read in the past as subaltern writing and life narrative, or perhaps activism (in the case of Pokkudan). But they have not been explored as intertwined human narratives with the vegetal lives. Both the texts provide insights into the ecological, cultural, and social dimensions of plant-human interactions in the cultural context of Kerala. *Thenvarikka* centers on affect and the centrality of a jackfruit tree to a family's history, while articulating the challenges posed by socio-economic changes. Pokkudan's life narrative, *My Life*, recounts his mission devoted to the protection of mangroves in northern Kerala, presenting the mangroves not only as vital ecological entities but also as cultural and political symbols of resistance against caste and environmental exploitation. This paper argues that the two texts work as testimonies that challenge dominant discourses of development and modernity by foregrounding Indigenous ecological wisdom and the agency of plants in shaping human lives. It argues that *Thenvarikka* and *My Life* exemplify the interconnectedness of plant and human histories in India, offering alternative frameworks for understanding environmental justice, sustainability, and multispecies coexistence. By engaging with these narratives, the paper contributes to the growing field of plant humanities, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary approaches to address the intertwined ecological and social crises of the Anthropocene in the Indian subcontinent.

**Keywords:** plant humanities in India, environmental justice, literature, life narratives, Kerala

**Rajitha Venugopal** teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune, India. Her areas of research expertise and interest include environmental humanities and related discourses, Indian literature in English and translation as well as narratives about Kerala. She is the recipient of the ASLE translation grant for the translation of *Pachaviral* (the life narrative of Dayabai, a social and environmental activist) from Malayalam to English.

# Plants, Play, and Childhood: A Plant Studies Perspective in Indian Children's

## Literature

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Trees and plants have been deeply embedded in Indian knowledge systems since classical times. They are often attributed to different qualities and values. Plants, being more accessible symbols of nature, serve as an initial point of connection between children and the divine, nature, soul, life, creativity, and art. For children, drawing plants, flowers, or fruits is often their first artistic expression and can be equated with the divine act of creation. Nature was seen as essential in children's maturation and as a critical component of human physical, emotional, intellectual, and even moral development. Children's literature helps to develop a connection between children, plants, animals, and the environment. R. White expresses concern about the extinction of the childhood experience and their interaction with nature due to various sociocultural factors like "culture of fear," "stranger danger," and "biophobia" that has developed in the urban population. Addressing this problem as inevitable in the posthumanist world Zoe Jaques connects the questions of human identity, ecology, gender, and technology with children's fantasy, disclosing how such fantasy can build upon earlier traditions to represent complex issues of phytoanthropic bonds to younger audiences (Jaques 2014). Many books have plants in the background, as objects, as central metaphors, or as companions establishing a connection with the child both 'inside' the text and 'outside' the text. This paper explores the response of the writers of children's literature in India in identifying and re-establishing the connection between children, plants, and trees through the perspective of plant studies.

**Keywords:** children's literature, ecocritical pedagogy, phytoanthropic bond, plant-text cordiality.

*Raj Gaurav Verma* is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. His areas of interest include Indian literatures in English, children's literature, diasporic literature, literary theory, critical plant studies, and critical animal studies.

# Rooted in Story: The Evolving Narrative of Trees and Arboreal Beings in Folk Traditions

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The intricate tapestry of human interactions with the natural world has long been woven into the fabric of literature and folk tales, particularly in the reverence shown towards trees and the arboreal creatures that inhabit them. This exploration highlights the evolution of such narratives from a perspective rooted in ethnocentrism to understand the cultural roots of symbiosis with nature. Trees are far more than mere backdrops in storytelling. They emerge as potent symbols of wisdom, growth, and interconnectedness, reflecting human emotions and societal dynamics within a broader ecological context in folk narratives. The portrayal of arboreal beings not only enriches these narratives but also serves as a commentary on the human condition, inviting readers to rethink their relationship with the environment. In examining various literary works and folk traditions, this paper seeks to illuminate the vital roles that trees and arboreal creatures play in shaping cultural identities and moral lessons, advocating for a deeper ecological awareness in the reflections of human experience. Ultimately, this study contributes to a growing discourse that challenges anthropocentric perspectives and honors the vital interdependencies between human beings and the arboreal ecosystems that cradle their stories.

**Keywords:** arboreal, human-nature interaction, cultural narratives, folklore, ecological awareness

*Sangeetha Verma's* area of specialization is the literature of environmental movements at the grassroots level organised or spearheaded by women activists. Her thesis was on select writings of women environmental activists from India, Australia, USA, and Africa. The greatest challenge that human societies face today, is to evolve a value system profound enough to change the mind-set of people from destruction to conservation of life on earth. Ecological crisis anywhere is never an isolated event because of its roots in a materialistic civilisation. The fight to safeguard natural resources begins at the local level, but it should not limit itself there. By linking local struggles to a national and then to a global context, an ecologically viable paradigm for future development can be envisaged based on sustainability, peace, and social justice. My interest is in exploring women's role in sustainable development. She is also interested in travelogues and is currently working on the interstices of culture, geography, politics, and myth of North-East India.



# Phytometamorphosis: An Ontology of Becoming in Amazonian Women's

## Poetry about Plants

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Metamorphosis is central to Indigenous Amazonian cosmologies, which often posit a period in the past when transformations from one being into another proliferated. This time gave way to the relative stability of the present that always runs the risk of going back to an ongoing process of transmutation. In this talk, I highlight the significance of plants in Amerindian ontologies of becoming as catalysts of metamorphic movements through their entheogenic effects, through their curative properties and as the ancestors and teachers of humans. Beyond being the facilitators of other entities' transformations and the virtual grandparents of all beings, plants are also masters of metamorphosis, displaying much more plasticity in adapting to their surroundings than animals. I argue that contemporary Amazonian women's poetry translates the multiple transformations of vegetal life into literary form. I analyze the poetry of Colombian author Anastasia Candre Yamacuri (1962–2014) and Peruvian writer Ana Varela Tafur (1963–) who emphasize the metamorphic potential of plants and the ontology of becoming at play in Amazonia. I contend that women's writing on plants reflects evolving views on both plants' and women's roles in Amazonian societies marked by rapid social transformation and environmental destruction.

**Keywords:** Indigenous cosmologies, Amerindian ontologies, Amazonian women's poetry, metamorphosis, entheogenic plants

**Patricia Vieira** is Research Professor at the Center for Social Studies (CES) of the University of Coimbra in Portugal. Her fields of expertise are Latin American and Iberian literature and cinema, utopian studies and the environmental humanities. She currently heads the European Research Council Consolidator project "ECO – Animals and Plants in Cultural Productions about the Amazon River Basin" and co-coordinates the Gerda Henkel Foundation funded project "Resilient Forest Cities: Utopia and Development in the Modern Amazon." For more information: [www.patriciavieira.net](http://www.patriciavieira.net)

# An Ecological Study of Bessie Head's *Looking for a Rain God* and Lekhnath

## Paudyal's *The Parrot in the Cage*

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This research examines the dynamic interaction between plants' unique sensory attributes and creative expression in art and literature. It explores how artists, researchers, and designers engage with human and natural (botanical) elements, as exemplified in Bessie Head's *Looking for a Rain God* and Lekhnath Paudyal's *The Parrot in the Cage*. They focus on the issue of ecology. These works use plants to objectify local knowledge and maintain the balance between nature and humanity. Through a qualitative approach, this study highlights how plants serve as a source of inspiration, emphasizing both their visible and invisible roles in artistic and literary creation. The research further explores how these creative practices not only enhance artistic value but also critically deal with ecological, ethical, and sustainability concerns. By employing nonhuman perspectives, the selected literary works reveal how artistic expression fosters ecological awareness. Finally, this study underscores the role of literature and art in shaping sustainable goals through the interplay of human and botanical life.

**Keywords:** humankind, botanical life, nonhuman perspectives, ecological concerns

**Prabhu Ray Yadav** is Assistant Professor of English, Patan Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

# Forging Phytophilia in the Anthropocene: Plants as Perceptive Agents in Contemporary Indonesian and Nepalese Poetry

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Domestic plants are the ancestors of one's native land. Tropical countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Thailand have native plants such as banana and cassava. These plants are relatively robust ones since they can grow in any place without special treatment and much water compared with other tropical plants. Rice is another tropical plant that might need more special treatment and proportionate water and sunlight to grow well and to produce good crops. Meanwhile, Nepal might also have ricefields but also other various herbal plants and exotic trees as the local vegetation. Among these exotic ones is lily or *lilium nepalense* or the lily of Nepal. The banana and paddy become the phyto-images in contemporary Indonesian poems of Afrizal Malna and Mario Lewi, while the lily serves as the mythic arboreal image in a contemporary Nepalese poem of Bhuwan Thapaliya. The poets are mythologizing the phyto-images by means of placing the plants as the sacred subjects rather than inanimate objects. Their use of local colors of their native land juxtaposed with their experimental poetics through form and content stand as their trajectory in mythologizing the plants as the sources of life. Similarly, the synergy between the mythic and ecopoetic rendition of the plants evokes a kind of postmodern ecological vision that aims to raise one's ecological consciousness to cherish the plants.

**Keywords:** mythic arboreal image, banana, paddy, lily, plant mythology

**Henrikus Joko Yulianto** is a teaching staff at the English Department of State University of Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. He got his Ph.D in English (Poetics) at University at Buffalo, NY in February 2018. He wrote his dissertation about Beat poetry entitled *East Meets West: Spontaneity in Beat Poetry as Buddha-Dharma and Visions of Spiritual Ecology*. He has been a member of BSA (Beat Studies Association) since 2016 and also a member of ASLE-ASEAN (Association of the Study of Literature and Environment-South East Asia) since 2017. He wrote some papers about Beat poetry for some international conferences in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and abroad. He has some book chapters published by Springer (2022), Routledge (2023), and Lexington (2025). His research interests include postwar America (The Beat Generation), Black Mountain College, and environmental humanities.

***Ruly Indra Darmawan*** is a lecturer at the Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia. He holds a Master of Humanities (M.Hum.) degree from Universitas Sanata Dharma. His primary research interests lie in the analysis of indigenous literature through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism and the intersections of nature, technology, and literature.

# Digital Plant Ecologies in Modern Greek Poetry (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> ce.)

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The exponential growth of digital technologies in recent years has permeated every aspect of our life (e.g., Ellul 1964; Feenberg 1999) 'transforming' us into a society living and working in digital environments. We are under 'oceans' of Big Data (Taffel 2019) described in terms of "data warehouse," organized collections of data extracted by many web sources (Green et al. 2006, 161). The latter introduces the digitization of human-nature relationship and its changes in the turn of the 21st century (the so-called Digital Anthropocene), emphasizing the inseparability between life-forms and digital technologies (McLean 2020, 160). Digital Plant Ecologies in Modern Greek Poetry (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> ce.) is the first research done in Modern Greek literary and cultural studies, using an English-built open access digital tool named Juncture to create the first in Greek (polytonic and monotonic) digital repository of plant references found in various Modern Greek poems of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> ce., proving that an English-written tool can 'read' other than English languages, and 'revitalize' the textual plant world through interactive and augmented texts, by bringing symbiotically the digital and natural world.

**Keywords:** digital plant ecologies, digital Anthropocene, Modern Greek poetry, Juncture, nonhuman world

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# Plant Allergy as Transcorporeal Eco-event

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This paper presents an ongoing research project that examines the phenomenon of plant allergy in China through the lenses of environmental history and creative arts. The prevalence of hay fever—often referred to as the “malady of civilization” (Mitman 2008, 4)—has been rising significantly in China each year (Tang et al., 2015). Pollen from artemisia and poplar trees ranks among the most allergenic factors in Northern China, a phenomenon deeply intertwined with the history of socialist monocrop planting, anti-desertification campaigns, urban greening aesthetics, and the complexities of climate change. The urban plant allergy landscape traces back to the scientific and engineering endeavors of Chinese socialism in the 1950s and 1960s, when aerial seeding, the cultivation of new species, and railway infrastructure were boldly implemented across desert and urban-rural regions. This paper also engages with artist Liu Chuang’s experimental film *BBR1 (No. 1 of Blossom Bud Restrainer)* (2015) as a creative narrative that critically explores the plant allergy phenomenon and the prevailing reliance on technological solutions. Drawing on historical archives, contemporary media discussions, and artistic narratives, I interpret plant allergy as a “transcorporeal” eco-event (Alaimo 2018). By engaging with both the “extrinsic” and “intrinsic” languages of plants (Gagliano, Ryan, & Vieira 2017, xvii), it reveals the deeply entangled human-plant relationships.

**Keywords:** plant allergy, China, plant-human relationships, transcorporeality, art

*Zimu Zhang* is an environmental humanities scholar working on visual culture, eco-cinema and ecofeminist arts. She is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Literature and Cultural Studies, The Education University of Hong Kong. She is the recipient of the 2022 Landhaus fellowship at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, LMU and 2023 VisitANTS fellowship in Critical Studies of Biodiversity and the Anthropocene Research at University of Oulu, Finland. Along with her academic research, Zimu also practices filmmaking and curation.

# Caring for Plant Stories: Reimagining Heritage Conservation through Plants in Hong Kong—A Case Study of Green Hub (KFBG)

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This paper explores plant-based cultural heritage practices in Hong Kong, emphasizing often-overlooked relationships between humans and plants in heritage conservation. Using Green Hub—formerly a colonial-era police station revitalized by Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden—as a case study, it illustrates how careful, attentive restoration saved an endangered camphor tree initially marked for removal. Now thriving, the tree serves as sanctuary for local birdlife and living legacy to more-than-human care, and symbolizes the integration of ecological and cultural values in cultural heritage preservation and education, embodying Donna Haraway's 'multispecies co-flourishing' and Christof Mauch's 'slow hope.' Typically, cultural heritage discourse in Hong Kong prioritizes architectural preservation while neglecting surrounding plant life. This research advocates an inclusive approach, positioning plants as integral to heritage conservation. Highlighting other examples like the neglect faced by culturally significant trees, such as Lam Tsuen's wishing tree, and some other current initiatives like local Register of Old and Valuable Trees, it also argues for transcending purely scientific approaches by emphasizing narrative-based, community-engaged storytelling in cultural heritage discourse. Ultimately, incorporating storytelling into heritage practices fosters emotional connections, strengthens cultural identity, and promotes every day and individual plant conservation. Such narratives challenge anthropocentric heritage paradigms, encouraging ecological responsibility and a co-flourishing future.

**Keywords:** plant-based heritage, plant significance, storytelling in plant conservation, Hong Kong plants, slow hope

*Karmen Zheng* is an independent researcher interested in environmental humanities and cultural studies. She coordinates the "Comparative Cultures of Care" project at the Faculty of Humanities, the Education University of Hong Kong. Committed to bridging academia and community action, she explores creative methodologies to foster ecological awareness and more-than-human care.

# Orchids in Dialogue: Exploring Plant-Human Interaction Through a Plant-Centred Approach, Practice, and Presentation

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This project explores alternative dimensions of plant-human interactions through transdisciplinary research and artistic practices with orchids. Plants in research have often found themselves confined to human history and culture in ethnobotany, or relegated to being purely part of creative expressions in artistic projects. In this study, orchids stand at the forefront of research as central agents of ecological relationships within plant humanities. Throughout this research, orchids are recognized as Indigenous beings of Hong Kong, who have been surviving under human colonization of ecosystems. To interview orchids and participate in their multispecies communities, this study employed extended botanical illustration and audio-visual documentation, based on ethnographic methods informed by conservation ecology. Such an approach has resulted in “experimental botanical visualisation,” a fieldwork framework that provides practical guidelines for humans to interact with orchids away from anthropocentric bias. The culmination of this work is *(Welcome to) The Planet of Orchid*, a cinematic anthology that presents the lives of wild orchids of Hong Kong. This ecocinema portrays a “plant-centred perspective” that challenges typical human understanding of the more-than-human realm. As protagonists of the film, orchids unfold the complex dynamics of their lives, revealing profound connections between plants and humans.

**Keywords:** plant-human interaction, extended botanical art, ecocinema, plant-centred perspective, transdisciplinary fieldwork

*Park Ji Yun* is an artist-researcher exploring multispecies ecospheres through practices grounded in ecology, critical plant studies, and ecofeminism. Her recent ecocinema work *(Welcome to) The Planet of Orchid*, culminating her PhD research at City University of Hong Kong, premiered at the 50th Seoul Independent Film Festival.



# POSTER PRESENTATIONS



View from Pokhara. Photo Credit: Goutam Majhi (2024)

## POSTER PRESENTATION 1

# Community Resilience and Cultural and Biological Diversities Entangled: Analysis of Seed and Traditional Foodways Narratives from Indigenous Knowledge Holders and Italian Farmers

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The topic of seeds and traditional foodways is relevant to the plant humanities because it arises from the interdisciplinary perspective on community resilience to colonial practices that target traditional ecological knowledge manifested through reciprocal relationships between humans and their places. This poster discusses the responses to the transformation of the traditional foodways and heritage seeds stories of the communities in southern Italy and the U.S. Gulf Coast that originated from their places, into the universal dietary guidelines superior to the diverse local diets. The case of branding the Mediterranean diet (MedDiet) in the US echoes the stories of knowledge holders from the MOWA Tribal Band of Choctaw Indians from Alabama, USA, that documented colonial suppression of their traditional lifestyles. Our research compares the underlying narratives of community resilience manifested in their work to preserve traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) against the scope of a canonical scientific study of the MedDiet. We applied diverse scholarly approaches such as Indigenous research methods, ecofeminist framework, and digital humanities to the narrative analysis to map the communities' TEK. This poster highlights the invisible work of women farmers who reintroduced stories of healing to their communities by connecting them to the lifecycle of seeds. Our findings empower the community's efforts to restore reciprocal relationships with the land and emphasize the importance of the place-based foodways narrative entangled with cultural diversity and biodiversity for building communal capacity and reimagining the future of their places.

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, traditional ecological knowledge, Mediterranean diet, foodway narratives

*Arina Melkozernova* has a multidisciplinary background including art, science, Environmental Humanities, Digital Humanities, educational technology, and instructional design. As a researcher, Arina collaborates with communities to restore their "place-embodied" narrative. She contributes to building new research pathways within academia with criteria for inclusivity, data transparency and epistemological flexibility.

## POSTER PRESENTATION 2

# Phytosemiotic Design for Collective Well-being: Technological Mediation of Human-Plant Semiotic Exchange in Architectural Space

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This research proposes a novel phytosemiotic framework that reconceptualizes architectural space as shared sign systems where humans and plants engage in technologically-mediated semiotic exchange. Current biophilic design approaches remain predominantly anthropocentric, with limited consideration of plants as semiotic agents and design participants. Through competitive analysis of contemporary phytosensing installations and biophilic designs, this study examines how design interventions can enhance the semiotic agency of both human and plant species. By employing Peircean semiotics, the study analyzes how the meaning of well-being is co-constructed with a triadic relationship between sign, signifier, and interpretant across species boundaries. The findings were synthesized into two-axis semiotic dimensions with human engagement (passive to active) and plant agency (functional to ecological), generating four design modalities. Within each modality, the technology operates as a semiotic mediator across a spectrum from documentation (passively recording botanical signals) to augmentation (actively facilitating cross-species communication and care). This framework emphasizes interspecies semiosis and more-than-human ethics, establishing mutual flourishing as the normative goal of phytosemiotic design. By positioning plants as semiotic entities with technologically-mediated capacities, this research provides practical co-design guidelines and envisions architectural spaces as biosemiotic platforms that foster collective well being, advancing plant humanities discourse and creative design practices beyond anthropocentrism.

**Keywords:** plant-human interaction, phytosemiotic, semiotic agency, co-design framework, more-than-human design

*Chaeyeon Lim* is a human-nature interaction researcher at the intersection of cognitive science and affective computing. With a background in psychology and current MSc studies in human-computer interaction, her work explores neuroaesthetic and biosemiotic approaches to develop more-than-human interaction design and epistemological frameworks, challenging anthropocentric perspectives in built environments.

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Medhavi College, established in 2013 and located in Shankhamul, Kathmandu, has been a cornerstone of quality education and holistic development. From its humble beginnings, the college has expanded its offerings and facilities to become a prominent institution in the region. Over the years, Medhavi College has nurtured a reputation for excellence, offering a wide range of programs and state-of-the-art facilities. Our commitment to innovation and student-centric learning has consistently attracted aspiring individuals looking to thrive academically and professionally.

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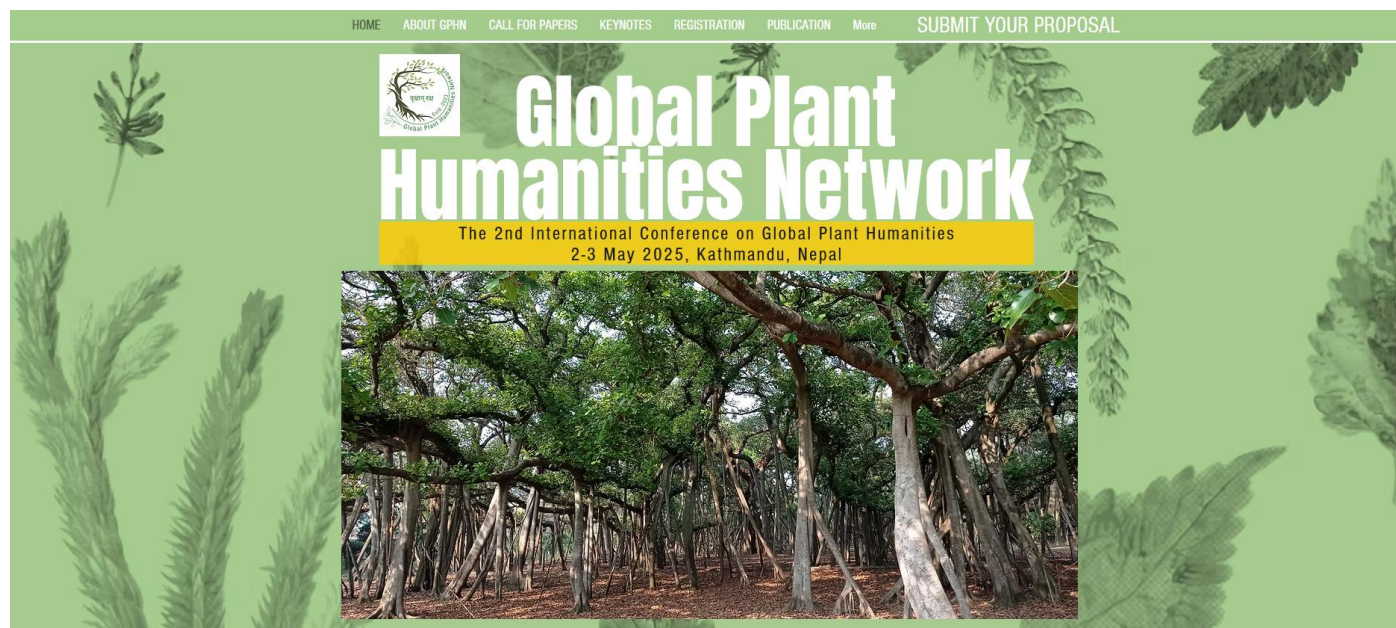


# Global Plant Humanities Network (GPHN)

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The idea for GPHN germinated among environmental humanities scholars during the *1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Global Plant Humanities*, which took place at Sadhan Chandra Mahavidyalaya (a college affiliated with the University of Calcutta) in West Bengal on the 12th of December 2023, attracting participants from around the world. The inaugural Keynote Speaker was Professor Tim Entwisle, Former Director of Royal Botanic Garden, Victoria, Australia.





# Nulungu Research Institute

## University of Notre Dame, Australia

### Broome, Australia

<https://www.notredame.edu.au/research/institutes-and-initiatives/nulungu>

Located in Broome, Western Australia, Nulungu provides an Indigenous research and academic focus for the entire University – including the Notre Dame Fremantle and Sydney Campuses – and operates at local, regional, national and international levels. Nulungu encourages the pursuit of excellence in research through valuing community-based Indigenous knowledge. Our research expertise across the team covers a wide range of disciplines. Nulungu focuses on the core research themes of Culture Country and Language; Transformational Education; Aboriginal Wellbeing; Sustainable Lifeways and Social Justice; and Policy, Practice and Evaluation. A key feature of Nulungu's research approach is our collaboration with national and international academic institutions, teaching and research communities, government and industry - all within an Indigenous context. Nulungu has demonstrated the capacity to establish and maintain successful engagement across disciplines and professional fields, secure funding from a range of sources, and complete projects of relevance and priority to Indigenous communities.

Acknowledgment of Country: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as the first peoples of this nation, are the holders of ancestral knowledge, law and wisdom. We acknowledge First Nations people from across Australia, particularly the Yawuru people of Broome where Nulungu is located, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation in Fremantle and the Gadigal people of the Eora nation in Sydney where our University has campuses. We pay respects to Elders past and present across the Kimberley, with whom we live and work closely, and extend that respect to all First Nations people who we collaborate with nationally.



**Sadhan Chandra Mahavidyalaya**  
**Affiliated with the University of Calcutta**  
**West Bengal, India**  
[www.scm.ac.in](http://www.scm.ac.in)

Sadhan Chandra Mahavidyalaya, established in 2007, is an undergraduate college in Harindanga, West Bengal, India, recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC). Sadhan Chandra Mahavidyalaya, a premier institution affiliated with the University of Calcutta, is a shining example of academic excellence and inclusive education. Located in the Falta block of South 24 Parganas district, it serves as the sole general degree college in the area, catering to the educational needs of rural and marginalized communities. The institution offers a wide range of academic UG programs, including BA Honours and BA Multi-Disciplinary Courses. They are committed to providing a holistic education that nurtures students through meticulously planned curricular and co-curricular activities. These activities are designed to help students achieve predefined outcomes and reach their full potential. Aligned with the University of Calcutta's curriculum standards, their UG degree programs span three and four years, distributed over six and eight semesters. The curriculum is tailored to facilitate learners in meeting their educational objectives, incorporating various measures to support self-defined learning goals.





# Santalum Album Academy

Panauti, Nepal

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+977 11-662522

[www.facebook.com/p/Santalum-Album-Academy-100064932210256](https://www.facebook.com/p/Santalum-Album-Academy-100064932210256)

Established in 2062 B.S (2005 A.D.), Santalum Album Academy is located in the very peaceful location of Shreekhandapur with its own land and building. The Principal is Agni Prasad Gnawali. The school has achieved excellent results during its twenty-year history.



**The Malla Hotel**  
**Lekhnath Marg, Kathmandu 44600, Nepal**  
**[www.themallahotel.com](http://www.themallahotel.com)**  
**[gm@themallahotel.com](mailto:gm@themallahotel.com)**  
**+977 9801880001**

On the outer edge of the busy tourist hub of Thamel, The Malla Hotel also has a long and storied past. Its rooms have all been newly renovated to provide modern, up to date comforts, and whether you're here for business, leisure or an event, this is not just a place to stay, but a bit of history to savor. Wander in the beautiful garden, take a dip in the pool, try your luck at the casino, or visit the newly updated Shanti Spa, equipped with five massage rooms and a renovated steam and sauna room. Extensive yoga and meditation services are also available, for an unforgettable personalized experience. When you stay at the Malla Hotel, you open the door to a vibrant and unexpected experience that mirrors the city itself. Connect with our team for local culture, shopping and heritage. Discover our powerhouse collection of dining, spa and swimming experiences. For an unforgettable experience the hotel offers extensive yoga and meditation services. The lobby has been newly polished and painted playing with the colors of the traditional Nepali architecture, which mainly focuses on woodwork. They have added traditional Nepali colors like maroon and gold by incorporating them in the hotel's refurbishment.





# PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES

The organizers are pleased to offer participants a range of publication opportunities including:

- 1). A Special Issue of the peer-reviewed journal *International Journal of Contemporary Humanities* on “Global Plant Humanities” (*CFP in development. No publication fees will be charged to the contributors*).
- 2). A Special Article Collection of the peer-reviewed, Scopus-indexed journal *Cogent Arts & Humanities* on “The Arboreal Arts and Humanities: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Trees, Forests, and Human-Sylvan Relations” (*Articles are due 23 January 2026. Publication fee waivers and reductions are available by application through Routledge*).
- 3). An Edited Book Collection in the *Lexington Books* (Bloomsbury) series “Critical Plant Studies” (*Potential contributors from the conference will be invited individually by the editor. No publishing fees will be charged to the contributors*).
- 4). Ongoing open article submissions to the journal *Plant Perspectives* (*open submissions with no publishing fees charged to contributors*). Articles should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words including references. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Dr John C. Ryan, one of the conference organizers, is the Editor of the journal.