

Khadiza Akhter\*

## From Econationalism to Ecopsychology in Jibanananda Das' *Beautiful Bengal*

### ABSTRACT

This paper argues that in our contemporary age, when Bangladesh, a low-lying coastal country of South Asia, is threatened with global climate change, bringing an ecological consciousness to approach poems written by the Bengali poet Jibanananda Das is invigorating and rejuvenating. Das' poetry is famous for his ardent love for the natural flora and fauna of Bangladesh, especially of Barishal, and his poems often invoke a sense of one-ness with the geographical land and nature of Bengal before and after his death. Although Das refrains from preaching explicit nationalistic ideology in his poems, such an emotional outpouring of the poems drives readers to feel great pride and protectiveness towards their national natural resources, which aligns with the school of econationalism. The themes of many of his poems and their imagery depict his multifaceted communion with nature and nature's profound connection with the human psyche. This paper aims to examine Das' all-pervasive ecoconsciousness along with his umbilical ties with Barishal. For this purpose, his collection of poems, the *Beautiful Bengal (Ruposhi Bangla, 1957)*, translated into English by Fakrul Alam (2010), has been selected for the article. The textual analysis method has been adopted to explore the ecopsychological aspects and eco-aestheticism with a focus on the inherent nationalistic orientation of Jibanananda Das.

**Keywords:** Non-human nature; Human beings; Ecology; Nationalism; Psychology

Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) is one of the forerunners of modernism in Bangla literature, but he also showcases attributes of romanticism due to his inclination towards building a meaningful connection with nature. According to the date - March 1934 - recorded in his notebook containing

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\* **Khadiza Akhter:** Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Barishal, Barishal, Bangladesh.

the poems of the *Beautiful Bengal*, Jibanananda Das wrote these poems sometime in the 1930s. At that time, the world had already seen the First World War and was heading toward the Second World War. Therefore, recession, famine, violence, religious tension from communalism, and colonial suppression, are in the background of these poems. However, Jibanananda Das in *The Beautiful Bengal* is refreshingly a nature believer, meticulously observant of the multifaceted aspects of the world of nature woven in its intricate shapes and dark and luminous colors with a sense of inevitability of death. For this research work, the English translation of Das' poems from *Ruposhi Bangla (Beautiful Bengal, 1957)* translated by Fakrul Alam in the book titled *Jibanananda Das: Selected Poems with an Introduction, Chronology, and Glossary* (2010) has been used. Jibanananda Das did not publish this particular collection in his lifetime. Instead, it was published posthumously three years after his death. However, Fakrul Alam has noted that Das' brother Ashokananda Das claimed that "the poems were transcribed as they were" (42). Alam has conceded that he attempted to convey not only "Das's consciousness through [the] English versions of his poems but also something of the texture of the Bengali originals" (18). The study delves into the psychology that motivates the poet to write about a biodiverse world using vivid imagery, various linguistic elements, and a range of tones, moods, where nature is independent and interconnected with culture. The paper asks if Das' early life in Barishal broadened his imagination, leading him to find spiritual and physical connections with the natural world. In this way, this study attempts to establish that the *Beautiful Bengal* embodies the nationalistic, ecopsychological, and environmental philosophy of the eco-poet Jibanananda Das. The method used for the research involves close reading of the text using the theoretical insights gained from reading econationalism, ecopsychology, and a few other closely related ideas like deep ecology and ecopoetics.

As the theoretical lens, the platitudes of the schools of econationalism and ecopsychology have been applied in dissecting Das' poems of the *Beautiful Bengal*. Econationalism causes a synthesis of environmentalism and national identity. The ideology calls for preserving nature in its pristine and unpolluted form from the cultural malpractices of human beings. Das' *The Beautiful Bengal* inspires readers to cherish the rivers, plants, animals, sky, and air of Barishal, that is, of Bangladesh, and this aspect of his poems makes eco-nationalistic thoughts relevant to this research. On the other hand, ecopsychology is an interdisciplinary approach to study the interrelationship between ecology and psychology. The emotional bond with the earth's natural domain is paramount for human psychological well-being. Jibanananda Das writes passionately of Barishal's landscape in retrospect to

find solace for his gloomy mind, and thus, ecopsychology is essential for this discussion.

Furthermore, deep ecology speaks that nature has its inherent value and exists for itself. This approach advocates biodiversity and is different from the man-centered view of nature, where men or human beings are considered superior to nature. Finally, ecopoetics speaks of a third entity, a spirit(s), and it promotes the co-existence of nature, human beings, and spirits. These ideas will further assist in understanding the econationalism and ecopsychology of the poet and thus are essential to analyze Das's poems contained in *The Beautiful Bengal*.

In the twenty-first century, the world is plagued with climate change and eco-disasters, and countries like Bangladesh, especially its southern seaside regions because of their unique delta pattern and close proximity to the sea, will face the first brunt of ecological crisis. Under such circumstances, amid the profusion of toxic discourse and ecologically devastated narratives across the globe, this paper argues that reclining on poems that are saturated with delineation of the natural world in its pure, uncontaminated, and vibrant form is an effective alternative way of moving people to be committed to the preservation of the natural world. William Howarth informs that the prefix 'eco' and the suffix 'critic' have been derived from the Greek "*oikos*" and "*kritis*," and together, they mean – a house judge; therefore, an ecocritic is a person who judges the interrelationship of culture and nature while celebrating nature and criticizing action that harms nature and simultaneously, advocating political reformation to safeguard nature (69). Certainly, Das' poems desist from addressing pollution or global warming. However, this paper contends that his environmentalism is construed as a fervent love for the flora and fauna and a firm belief in continuing the natural world even when the person ceases to exist. For our contemporary readers, Das's poems in the *Beautiful Bengal*, by depicting a lovely and pictorial Bangladesh or, to be more precise, Barishal, envisage a world with its natural abundance and human beings and non-humans living in harmony. For these reasons, this study seeks to establish Das's relevance within ecocritical discourses.

Jibanananda Das was born in Barishal, a then-district town in East Bengal under the British colonial administration, now Bangladesh, on 17 Feb. 1899. Clinton B. Seely has located Barishal in the time of Das in his book *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das (1899-1954)*:

Barisal, the headquarters town for Bakhargunge District, sits upon one bank of the Kirtonkhola river on the northeastern fringe of Bangladesh's Sundarban jungle, named for its *Sundari* trees and home to the majestic Royal Bengal tiger. It is the only district headquarters in Bengal not serviced by rail, for the

British engineers (and the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis after them) found insufficient solid ground in this alluvial land crisscrossed by rivers and canals. (18-19)

Within such a pollution-free milieu and fertile ground surrounded by transparent water sources, such as ponds, canals, and rivers, he went to Brojomohon (B. M.) school and college in Barishal. After passing his intermediate examination, he got admitted to Calcutta Presidency College in 1917. Upon obtaining his degree in M.A. in English, he took jobs in the then Calcutta, now Kolkata, but failed to secure a permanent position. Later, there was a period of moving back and forth between different places in Bangladesh and West Bengal. Then immediately before the partition from the British Empire in 1947, he permanently settled in Kolkata, India, as many Hindus did then. Kazi Ashraf Uddin contends:

However, the place Barishal, the year 1899, and the faith system Vaidya-Brahmo have just remained as spatio-temporal and religious data. Jibanananda Das transcended the literary chronotypes and ideological parameters. He has penetrated our deepest untouchable psyche, touched upon the fundamental questions of existence, and left us in awe about his poetic signification. (74)

However, this paper argues that Jibanananda Das' poetic mind remained captivated by the beautiful topography of Barishal no matter where he went, and his euphoric exaltation of Barishal's natural beauty is a catalyst for his eco-nationalist sentiments. His poems reveal that his wandering mind meanders through many places of the wide world, but his final destination is to die and be reborn on Bengal's shores. He never directly mentions the place of Barishal in his poems. However, when he expresses his ardent praise for Bengal's nature, he means the arena of his birthplace, Barishal, which was a relatively simple, calm, and breath-taking place with its verdant land, idyllic pastoral life, compared to the urban, metropolitan Kolkata under the British regime. Debjani Chatterjee avers that Das is "justly famous for his eloquent poems celebrating the rural landscape of Bengal, particularly Barisal, where he was born and spent his childhood."

Also, Das has poeticized names of different places of Barishal in his poems. His relationship with Barishal was so deep that they had become the identity marks of each other. Muhsin Uddin from Barishal, in his article published by *The Daily Star*, expounds on the geographical location and real names of three rivers – *Dhansiri*, *Jalangi*, and *Rupsha* – mentioned in Jibanananda Das's poem "Beautiful Bengal". Uddin (2022) describes in his article titled "Jibanananda and Barishal":

The actual name of the river was *Dhansiddha*. It is only a 7-kilometer-long narrow river in the present district of Jhalokathi,

connecting a canal called Gabkhan to a narrow river called *Jangalia* of Rajapur. The Upazila town of Rajapur stands at its southernmost end on its bank.

Like *Dhansiri*, Jibanananda Das also changed the somewhat un-poetic name of *Jangalia* to *Jalangi*. Uddin(2022) adds:

The Ruposhia is a small tributary of the Dhansiri at its northern end. Nevertheless, there are people who like to identify the river with the *Rupsha* of Khulna district. However, that is unlikely because the deep and wide river Rupsha of Khulna is not supposed to be 'muddy' and, as the Rupsha is a river of a mighty current, 'a boy' is not expected to have the courage to row a boat in that river 'with torn sails.'

Thus, Jibanananda Das connected the beautiful territory of Barishal with the poetic beauty of Bangla literature by making slight changes in the original names of the rivers to make them sound lyrical to the ears and to fit them into the metrical patterns of his sonnets. His adoption of the rivers of Barishal in his poems is evidentiary of his adoration for Barishal. His experiences of other places, for example, the hustle and bustle of Kolkata's busy city life, noise from trams, and trains, smoke from motor vehicles, and the murky side of industrialized life made him only realize that he wanted to stay in Barishal forever. He has repeatedly expressed his adamant desire to live forever among the golden meadows, intersected rivers, many-hued flowers, dense trees, and agile animals of Bengal, that is, Barishal. In the poem "Go Wherever You Want to" (*Tomra Jekhane Sadh*), he states, "Go wherever you desire - I'll remain alongside Bengal's banks" (43-44). Das's steadfast attachment to Barishal to the point of his resilience and unwillingness to separate from this place is also illustrated in his other poems. One such poem is his famous "I Have Seen Bengal's Face" (*Banglar Mukh Ami Dekhiyachi*), where he vowed, "I have seen Bengal's face, and seek no more, / The world has not anything more beautiful to show me" (49).

Morgan Margulies defines econationalism as "a convergence of environmentalism and nationalism" (22). In his opinion, when constructing an awareness of nationalism and identity, land and ecology play a pivotal role (23). Margulies is skeptical of econationalism when it bends towards eco-fascism and far-right ecologism amid the present global environmental threats because concerted action is essential now to reverse the situation. Nevertheless, this study debates as Bangladesh is at risk because of global anthropogenic "atmospheric damage caused by excessive greenhouse gas emissions" (22). A bottom-up method of addressing the environmental problems by developing ecological pride and awareness of local and national

landscape is necessary to protect and be committed to the country's biodiversity. This necessity makes Jibanananda Das, whose root is deeply engraved in Bangladesh and whose poetry celebrates its lush greenery and rich animal world, myriad plants, and rippling rivers, or, in other words, whose body and soul are immersed in one tune with Bengal's natural world, of utmost importance. Seely (1990) has elucidated in the introduction to *The Scent of Sunlight: Poems by Jibanananda Das* the nationalistic value of Das' poems:

During much of the year 1971, when from the end of March through half of December, there raged in Bangladesh war of independence from Pakistan, lines from Jibanananda's *Bengal the Beautiful* sonnet cycle served to remind the freedom fighters, many of them educated, of what it was they were sacrificing and willing to die for. This was their Bengal, and this had been Jibanananda's Bengal, a place of birds and trees, a place that has a face, a place half-human, woman, and in the eyes of the poet beholder, beautiful beyond compare.

Chatterjee (2007) has called Jibanananda Das "the greatest Bengali poet of the post-Tagore era" and confirmed Seely's words, "The movement for independence in Bangladesh was to find rich inspiration in the works of Rabindranath Tagore and his younger contemporaries, Nazrul Islam and Jibanananda Das, among others" (194).

Nevertheless, a poet belongs to the wide world, not just to one particular place. The love of a poet for his hometown never makes his work static or his creation constrained; on the contrary, such patriotism bridges the gap among all patriots, irrespective of the spatial distance, and takes the poet and his poems to a transnational position surpassing the limits of culture or international borders. For Jibanananda Das, the macro world has consolidated and condensed itself within the micro space of Barishal. He repeatedly refers to the outside world and compares Bengal with it. The result of this comparison confirms his opinions of the paramount beauty and serenity of Bengal. Between 1929 and 1930, Jibanananda Das took a job at Ramjas College in Delhi. In the book *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das (1899-1954)*, Seely documents:

Jibanananda had seen little of the wider world but had been away from his Bengal for several months while in Delhi. That may have convinced him of his mofussil homeland's merits. A recitation of Bengal's vegetation, birds, and rivers becomes an incantation, conjuring up Bengal before the mind's eye. (92)

Consequently, in the poem "Nowhere Have I Seen" (*Kothao Dekhini, Aha*), Das insists on the matchless existence of Bengal's "desolate grass - at the

forest's edges" with their "soft, sad eyes," insects which can only be found in Bengal, for instance, "green beetles," and *shampoos*, along with ubiquitous butterflies who are swarming and flying on the grass (46). In addition, Jibanananda Das is well-known for his sensuous imagery, ranging from the visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile, and olfactory, comprising all five senses of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. Together all of his imagery is permuted in a philosophy of eco-aestheticism.

The nature poet from the British Romantic Movement, William Wordsworth's eco-nationalism encompasses his regard of the beautiful Lake District area as a "national treasure" and his concerns for its conservation from the tourists and foreigners and the native species of plants from the intrusion of non-native species (Hazucha 63). However, Das's econationalism emerges from his aesthetic philosophy of the immortal natural world of Bengal. His aesthetic philosophy has been shaped by romanticism on the canvas of modernism. The poems in *The Beautiful Bengal* celebrate the beauty of Bengal as well as make us wade through an interconnected world of human beings and nature, whereas, in the background of these poems, the outside world is tormented with doubt and industrial residue; accordingly, his aestheticism here is labeled as eco aestheticism. Cheng Xiangzhan believes that "human aesthetic appreciation of natural phenomena is profoundly linked to our ability to understand ecology, to appreciate our connectedness with the vast web of life on the planet" (786). The Eco-literariness of Das's poems is achieved through his understanding of the inexplicable connection between the human and the non-human and his perception that "nature is the eternal source of all beauty" (Xiangzhan 786). In the poem "Evening" (*Shandhya Hoi*), he uses kinesthetic images to portray the day-time rolling languidly toward evening time, "Evening descends - a serene silence all around; / Straw in its beak, a shalik flies quietly away / The bullock cart rolls down the country road" (56). He also evokes the evening cooing of doves in *hijol* shades. The lovers' hearts finally meet after a busy day and thus have painted a perfect evening panoramic picture of traditional Bengal. Dhurjati Mukherjee has quoted Buddhadeva Bose to describe Jibanananda Das as a "nature worshipper" who loves the elements of nature as they are and not for any symbolic significance or "patterns of perfection" (100). Mukherjee thinks that Das cherished the visually beautiful sights of Bengal, but "beauty, to him, was not to be seen but sometimes to be felt and nurtured" (98).

Furthermore, Jibanananda Das has claimed that the scents and smells of Bengali humans and non-humans are also exceptional and distinctive. In "As the Seven Stars of the Sky" (*Akash Sathi Tara*), he mentions "delicate smells of soft rice, *kalmi* plants, / Duck feathers, reeds, pond water, *chanda* and *sharputi* fish" (46). The smells of the natural world are matched with the

smells of “a girl’s hands, moist and cold from washing rice, / Of a boy’s feet redolent of the grass he trod on-” (46). The fantastical mind of Das believes that “Bengal’s heart [is] beating amidst these sights and smells” (46). Dhurjati Mukherjee expands further on Das’s concept of imagery:

Not content with merely seeing, Jibanananda must possess nature through the more savage senses of touch and smell; he loves the smell of birds’ wings and the warm smell of water in which rice has just been washed, and he wishes he could be born as grass in the deep sweet womb of some great, dark grass-mother. (100)

In these sonnets and other lyrics of the *Beautiful Bengal*, he uses language – words and sentences – to denote a symbiosis of men, women, and nature from the past and present. He has named so many obscure and famous rivers of real Barishal and from folklore, such as Dhaleswari, Rupsha, Kalidaha, Jalsiri, Ganguri, and others. Lists of names of birds and plants are drawn from the vast realm of wildlife of traditional, rural Bengal. The full moon and the waning moon, the calm, still river, the moon glade on river water, its ripples, and the dangerous, turbulent river during the six seasons of Bengal are daubed by him. He has created these different pictures in their many forms and shades from his experience living in Barishal.

Bangladesh has had around 230 rivers earning its title of a riverine country and flaring the imagination of Bengali poets like Jibanananda Das, but sadly a large number of these rivers and canals are now either polluted or occupied illegally, or not navigable or completely dead. Azad Majumder reports in *Reuters*, “Unabated encroachment that prevents the free flow of water, dumping of medicinal waste and waste of river passengers have compounded the problem, making the water unusable for humans and livestock.” Re-visioning and re-interpreting the culturally coded imagery of Das’s poems will incentivize Bangladeshi people to realize the gravity of losing the once mighty and living rivers by comparing and using imagination. Encouragement for rescuing the rivers and other endangered native species will come from within the praxis of environmentalism by relating it to local and regional micro-stories of trees, animals, and rivers, as illustrated in the *Beautiful Bengal*.

Additionally, the inimitable evening sky of “Bengal’s placid compliant blue” coupled with various sweet smells makes him envision “a maiden with flowing tresses” in “As the Seven Stars of the Sky” (*Akashe Sathti Tara* 45). This maiden presumably stands for Bengal, usually referred to as a woman in Bengali culture. Alternately, Jibanananda Das imagines Bengal’s nature as a female person, and through personification, he establishes nature as his muse and a source of poetic inspiration.

In this way, Jibanananda Das's portrayal of nature is often interspersed with myths, legends, fairy tales, and folklore drawn from Bengali cultural heritage. A spectrum of characters borrowed from the Bengali literary world appears in his poems amid the picturesque landscape of Bengal. Das has constantly referred to the Middle Ages Bengali poetic tradition of *Manasamongol* and *Chandimongol* whenever he finds them relevant. Behula's multifarious emotions containing love, sadness, hope, determination, and Behula's suffering and struggles find expressions in his masterfully crafted lines. Her epic journey to heaven to save her newly married husband, who got bitten by the snake goddess Manasa is reminiscent of an ideal Bengali wife's commitment and loyalty towards her partner and her joys and sorrows in love.

Nevertheless, Das's Behula as a Bengali woman, is also an inseparable part of Bengal's nature. Her rowing of the raft opens a window for Das to give readers a glimpse of the natural graphic scenes and sounds of the beautiful Bengal on both the riverbanks - the "countless *aswaths*, *bats* besides golden ricefields," "thrush's soft song" (49) are referred to in "I Have Seen Bengal's Face" (*Banglar Mukh Ami Dekhiyachi*). The poem goes on to proclaim Behula and Bengal's nature as part of each other by depicting the scene in heaven's court, *Amara*, where she danced before Indro, the king of gods and goddesses, and his courtiers, "...when she danced like a desolate wagtail, / Bengal's rivers, fields, flowers wailed like strings of bells on her feet" (49).

The snake goddess Manasa, Chand Saudagar, and his honeycombed barge on the mythological river Kalidaha appeared in another poem of Das, "Ah Bird" (*Hai Pakhi Ekdin*). The countless birds and gulls in the monsoonal season of *Ashar* flying above the Dhaleswari river make him go through a stretching and contraction of time and space in his mind where the past legends of Bengal merge with his present surroundings. He asks, "Ah bird, weren't you at Kalidaha once?" .Then he answers, "No - this Dhaleswari appears to be from another world - this sky too!" (47) Das' speaker in the poem "In the Midst of the Grass" (*Ghaser Bhitare Jei*) speaks of mermaids and their "watery world" (54), "Bhasan tunes" and "Mathura song cycles" in the poem "On One of Your Starry Nights Some Day" (*Ghumaye Poribo Ami* 50) and of "a female goblin / Tied up in a cluster of *kalmi* plants" in the poem "One Day I'll Lie Down" (*Ekdin Jalshiri Naditeer* 45). Bisalakshi (Goddess Durga) and her shrine are also among his favorite mythic characters and are spoken of in a number of poems like this one. In other words, Jibanananda Das's cogent contention is that Bengal's rivers, seasons, birds, plants, and sky are sprinkled with folk tales, myths, songs, and other cultural elements, or Bengal's culture has originated from Bengal's own realm of natural resources.

Conversely, the lyrics in *The Beautiful Bengal* are frequently tinged with a tone of melancholy and indolence. These melodies are sung by a sad and troubled soul. Clinton B. Seely has noted in *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das (1899-1954)* that during the first half of the 1930s, Jibanananda Das got married recently but was still unemployed (81), so the backdrop of his writing from around this time complex feelings of frustrations, dejection mingled with fatigue was looming heavily. The speaker(s) of a number of his poems from the collection is also apparently traumatized. A split in his psyche is evident from the diverged feelings toward the urgency of monetary needs and the beckoning of peace and solitude, living on simple means provided by nature, and his feelings of depression. A humble life with minimal demands and a well-balanced co-existence with nature is what the environmentalists advocate for the global population, and this is what the poet's soul has longed for. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud detected that an inseparable connection exists between the human mind and the external world at the initial stage of forming the ego. For many people, that feeling lasts for perpetuity into maturity too. In the poem "The World Busies Itself" (*Prithibee Raiyechhe Byasto*), the speaker says:

Somewhere people hustle for success and power,  
Somewhere lofty monuments rise high into the sky,  
Somewhere ship mastheads crowd clouds,  
Let them; I have built my home in Bengal's rural scene. (48)

Jibanananda Das, desperate for a job after completing his master's, roamed from place to place; although some institutions hired him, he got sacked a number of times for various reasons. He was highly introverted and often refused to discuss his writings and personal problems with others. Dealing with the harsh and pragmatic world must have been proven excruciatingly painful to him. He has written in the same poem, "Hearts full of care. Such grief has weighed me down too; / As glows of fireflies in Baichi bushes!" (48) He talks of "a soul saddened by the passage of time" in "As Long As I Live" (*Jatadin Benche Achhi* 4), in the poem "In the Midst of the Grass" (*Ghaser Bhitore Jei*), he notices "[s]oft sad smells rise from the pond" (54). Thus, sometimes, he projects his sadness and desolation on the mellifluous surroundings where griefs, sighs, brooding, regrets, and anxieties about objects or other species are sensed by him. However, ostensibly, such thoughts of one-mindedness with nature, together with its sensuous beauty, eventually bring him peace and tranquility.

Das's speaker is a solitary figure preferring the company of *nature*, *shashlik*, *sharputi*, *chital*, *bats*, *Hijo*, *jam*, and other features of nature to the crowd of people. Occasionally, we hear of a boy, a girl, children, and adults,

but these human beings never directly communicate with him. Instead, they appear as wisps or fragments of his thoughts depicted as a part of the earth but not as his primary focus. Marking the self-healing tendency of the natural world, Roger Duncan has stated that human bodies also demonstrate similar characteristics of self-healing, and this interlinking “therapeutic encounters between nature and the human mind or psyche” lays down the rationale for ecotherapy (36). Indeed, the pensive speaker feels comforted and revived only when he sits or lies down on the grass of Bengal or falls asleep under the starry night during the six seasons of Bengal, as Das proclaims in “One Day Your Child” (*Tomar Buker Theke*), “The scent of Ganguri’s waves – beauteous Bengal spread over me / And I supine underneath it like the God *Ardhanariswara*” (52). Theodore Roszak has declared that the connection between the inner psyche and the outer world is “something real, consequential, and inseparable” (14). For this reason, according to Roszak, in the past, psychologies immediately meant ecopsychologies:

Those who sought to heal the soul took it for granted that human nature is densely embedded in the world we share with animals, vegetables, minerals, and all the unseen powers of the cosmos. Just as all medicine was in times past understood to be “holistic” – healing of body, mind, and soul – and did not need to be identified, all psychotherapy was once spontaneously understood to be cosmically connected. (14)

The love for the living world and a longing for death, in other words, the conflict between *eros* and *Thanatos* in the psyche, is vital in Jibanananda Das. This tug of opposite feelings is related to his struggles against the outward materialistic world.

However, for Das, death is not the end of existence. Instead, it is an opportunity for him to transmigrate to different species or objects belonging to Bengal. The whole poem of “Beautiful Bengal” (*Abar Ashibo Phire*) is a heartfelt, sincere wish of a patriotic soul to die on Bengal’s land and rebirth as a non-human being, such as “a white-breasted *shankachil*” or “a yellow-beaked *shalik*” or “a morning crow” (51), in the next life. The belief in reincarnation plays a role in his consciousness to establish a substantial relationship with the natural world and thus alleviate his anguish.

Deep ecology, an essential area of ecocriticism, emphasizes the independent existence of human beings and non-human matters and their deep connection. The beings and the non-beings of Das’s natural world exist in their rights, not for any androcentric or androgenic superior reason. In the poem “While I Sat Down to Write These Poems” (*Ei Shob Kabita Ami*), he is aware that while he writes his poems, the natural world continues its routine, indifferent to the poet or his many moods – “[d]ew fell from

*chalta*,” “bat spread dark wings” (53). However, among these natural activities, suddenly appears the “fair one” among the “mango tree” and “custard apple,” and surrounding her are “bees” and a group of “maidens.” This fair one is interpretable as the goddess of nature or a wood fairy who seems to maintain the harmonious relationship between the poetic mind and the natural world. Concurrently, the poet says that he is writing these lines to commemorate and celebrate these apparitions. Roger Duncan suggests that scientific methodology or material causality “inadvertently leads to a deadening process of intellectual abstraction and closes the door to an emergent and hermeneutic experience of encountering imagined wisdom” (35). For a poet, his imagination is the strength of his creative mind, as evident from Das’ lines’ evocative power.

Oikopoetics is another distinct branch of ecocriticism that encompasses the spirituality of nature and believes that this spirit intends to maintain a co-existence between nature and human beings. As pointed out previously, the natural world of Das houses a spirit, as his perception of a magical maiden or “fair one” among the groves, forest, and meadows indicates. Das’ spirit has taken shape from the unique environmental terrain and mythic belief of Bengali people. Swarnalatha Rangarajan’s observation of present-day India’s losing “traditional economics – the traditional household wisdom of living harmoniously with the world” (528) due to civilization also applies to contemporary Bangladesh. Das’s sonnets from *The Beautiful Bengal* help readers find their way back to *Prakriti* (nature).

Dhurjati Mukherjee has explicated that Das’ poetic vision “unites man, nature and eternity into one complete existence” (99) as economic knowledge does. Furthermore, we find in his poetic lines that innumerable gods and goddesses of Indian mythology move, dance, glide, and float over Bengal’s fields, air, sky, and rivers. In the poem “There is a Land” (*Ei Prithibeete Ek Sthan*), he refers to the god of rivers, Varun, and the goddess Varuni and their “bounty on the rivers *Karnaphuli, Dhaleswari, Padma, Jalangi*” (53). His versions of the supernatural and magical figures are more destined with the natural world of the planet earth than with an extra-terrestrial celestial world. Opposed to the “heavenly spirituality,” ecocriticism is grounded on the Earth (Wess 1). Robert Wess contrasts earth-centric or geocentric ecocriticism with concentric transcendentalism:

Geocentrism, by contrast, directs our attention to life on earth, away from the heavens above. For geocentrism, the earth is a standpoint in the cosmos, nothing more. Geocentrism’s fundamental certainty is simply that life currently inhabits the earth. (3)

Das exhibits a similar geocentric firm footing within Bengal’s land and environment in his portrayal of the otherworldly beings.

To summarise, Jibanananda Das feels strongly about his childhood and part of his youth spent in Barishal. He repeatedly expresses his desire to die and be re-born in Barishal, away from the industrialized city life of Delhi or Kolkata. The paper claims this because his biographical information exposes that most of his contact with the world existing outside of Barishal came from his peripatetic life of working in different places up to the 1930s, and the poems of the *Beautiful Bengal* originated from this experience of parting from Barishal. The longing for Bengal's familiar rural sceneries arises from the poet's acute homesickness; the drowsiness and a wish for eternal rest are emblematic of his weariness with the uncertainty and problems in life in the broader world. Moreover, Das' identity consciousness and love for beautiful Bangladesh made him a source of inspiration for the liberation fighters in 1971.

The organic existence of Barishal's natural features and landscape is embellished by Das' diction, rhythm, and themes. Given that, Das is a wordsmith who has the power to transport readers to the once idyllic life of Eden-like Bengal, where nature was flourishing without any contamination from the carbon dioxide emanation. Savoring the denotative and connotative sense of his diction leads to an appreciation of eco-aestheticism with a comprehension of the deep connection between the mental health of human beings and the well-being of natural phenomena. Besides, he asserts in poems like "As the Seven Stars of the Sky" (*Akash Sathi Tara* 45-46) that he envisages a maiden or wood fairy amid natural scenes, and she creates a harmony between the natural world and poetic creativity. At the same time, nature itself eventually ameliorates his dejected mind. Das also refers to a spectrum of characters from Bangla literature and folklore, like Behula, Ballal Sen from Bengal's history, and numerous Indian mythological gods and goddesses because these cultural entities are deeply rooted in Bengal's nature. Thus, Jibanananda Das's eco-nationalistic ideology surfaces from his ecopsychological dependence on the natural components and topographical places of Barishal.

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