

**Of Humans, Forests, and Belonging: A Comparative
Reading of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *আরণ্যক*
(*Aranyak; Of the Forest*) and Dhoniram Toto's *ধানুয়া টোটোর
কথামালা* (*Dhanua Totor Kothamal*)**

Nabila Haque Mitu*

[Abstract : This research explores the human-nature relationship in *Aranyak* (1939) by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay and *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala* (2021) by Dhanua Toto, focusing on cultural and ethical perspectives of environmental degradation and ecocide. *Aranyak* presents nature through a romanticized lens, depicting the forest as an untouched paradise. At the same time, *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala* offers an indigenous perspective, viewing the forest as sacred and integral to the community's existence. Both novels critique the destruction of forests by human activity, highlighting the consequences of deforestation, ecocide, and human encroachment. Drawing on ecocriticism and terrapsychology, the study analyzes how these works depict the psychological and cultural impacts of environmental loss. The research emphasizes the ethical imperative to recognize the spiritual and cultural significance of nature for indigenous people. It warns against the dangers of exploiting the environment for short-term gain. Through a comparative approach, this study underscores the role of literature in critiquing ecological destruction and advocating for environmental preservation.]

Keywords : Ecocide, Human-nature relationship, Environmental degradation, Ecocriticism, Indigenous perspective

Introduction

Nature and literature have long been intertwined, with countless poets and authors across cultures and eras exploring the profound connection between humans and the natural world. (Ahmed and Hashim, 2015). This relationship is complex and characterized by both interdependence and deep interconnection. (Sahu, 2014). In this paper, we undertake a comparative analysis of two novels, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak* (1939) and Dhoniram Toto's *Dhanua Totor Kothamala* (2021), both written in Bangla but emerging from vastly different cultural and historical contexts. *Aranyak* (Bengali: *আরণ্যক*, meaning "of the forest") is a Bengali novel by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, written between 1937 and 1939 and published in the latter year. Drawing from the author's experiences in northern Bihar's Purnea and Bhagalpur districts, the novel

* Nabila Haque Mitu : Graduate Student, Institute of Comparative Literature and Culture, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka-1342.

portrays the protagonist Satyacharan's journey through the contrasting realms of jungle and city life.

On the other hand, *Dhanua Toto'r Kothamal* (2021), written by Padma Shri recipient Dhaniram Toto, vividly depicts the struggles of the Toto community, highlighting their traditional customs, festivals, and linguistic practices. Centered around the character of Dhanua and set in 1972, the novel offers a glimpse into the lives of the Totos, a small indigenous group residing in West Bengal's Alipurduar district near the Bhutan border. While these novels share thematic concerns around the relationship between humans and nature, they diverge significantly in their portrayals due to differences in the authors' ethnicity, ideological backgrounds, and historical periods.

This paper adopts an eco-critical and post-colonial framework to explore how *Aranyak* and *Dhanua Totor Kothamala* represent the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world in distinct ways. Through a close analysis, it investigates the unique perspectives offered by each novel in portraying ecological destruction, or ecocide, while considering the socio-cultural and historical contexts that shape these narratives. By delving into the contrasting depictions of human interaction with nature, the study aims to uncover how each work reflects the environmental concerns and cultural ethos of its time, shedding light on the broader implications of ecological degradation in literature.

Review of Literature

Nature is prominently featured in both novels, portrayed in all its beauty, primitiveness, and complexity. The narratives explore how humans perceive nature, their relationship with it, and how they either value or devalue the natural world, highlighting the intertwined connection between life, livelihood, and the environment. In their study, Ghosal and Modak (2023), examine how individuals establish a deep connection with their surroundings, emphasizing place attachment, self-identity, and a sense of belonging in relation to the forested landscapes of Purnia, Bhagalpur, and Labtulia.

Mishra and Sarangi (2017), analyze *Aranyak* by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay through an ecocritical lens, focusing on the protagonist's journey toward self-realization about deforestation. Despite initially lacking affection for forest life, the novel explores how the character confronts his role in environmental degradation, contributing to ecocritical discussions in Bengali literature. Rahman et al. (2018), analyze the human-nature relationship in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak*, focusing on the author's eco-consciousness and the impact of capitalism on nature. Using Expressive theory, the study highlights how the novel portrays nature as a source of peace and emphasizes the need for environmental conservation. It also explores how Bandyopadhyay's personal connection to nature and his social context influenced his writing of *Aranyak*.

Furthermore, (Ataur, 2022; Kumar, 2023; Mishra, 2017; Sengupta, 2022) have extensively applied eco-critical frameworks to Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak*, focusing on its exploration of human-nature relationships, deforestation, and the ethical dilemmas of modernization. Additionally, Maria (2020), examines ecocriticism in *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide*, focusing on the conflict between anthropocentrism and biocentrism. *Aranyak* explores human-nature relationships and deforestation, while *The Hungry Tide* highlights human-animal connections and conservation. The study discusses how both novels address environmental issues and advocate for biocentric solutions.

Dutta (2022), examines the ecological and postcolonial themes in *Sky Is My Father* and *Aranyak*, focusing on the impact of British colonialism on indigenous communities

and the environment. Both novels address the destruction of land and forced labor, with *Sky Is My Father* depicting Naga resistance and *Aranyak* exploring the protagonist's guilt over deforestation. The study links these narratives to the concepts of Capitalocene and Plantationocene, highlighting the lasting ecological trauma caused by colonialism. However, Dhoniram Toto's *Dhanua Totor Kothamala* has received little to no scholarly attention from an eco-critical perspective, nor has it been studied in comparison with other works. To date, no comparative eco-critical analysis has been conducted between these two texts, despite their potential to offer complementary perspectives on environmental issues. This study addresses this gap by comparing the novels to uncover unique cultural and ecological insights.

Theoretical Framework

Eco-criticism serves as the primary theoretical lens for this study, offering a framework for analyzing literature's engagement with environmental issues and human-nature interactions. Emerging in the 1990s, eco-criticism challenges the anthropocentric worldview, which centers human beings at the top of the environmental hierarchy, advocating instead for an ecocentric approach. Ecocentrism recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings, positioning nature as a vital participant in the discourse of literary studies. As Garrard (2004), and Glotfelty (1996) argue, eco-criticism aims to reveal the ethical implications of the human relationship with the natural world and to uncover how literature reflects, shapes, and challenges human attitudes toward the environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). This framework enables an analysis of how *Aranyak* and *Dhanua Totor Kothamala* reflect ecological crises and human responsibility.

In this context, eco-criticism is used to analyze how *Aranyak* and *Dhanua Totor Kothamala* engage with ecological crises and human responsibility. Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak* (1939) examines deforestation and the moral dilemma of exploiting natural resources for economic gain, while Dhoniram Toto's *Dhanua Totor Kothamala* (1972) focuses on the environmental and cultural disruption faced by indigenous communities due to external pressures such as colonialism and modernization.

The study also incorporates the concept of *terrapsychology*, which was introduced by Chalquist and Barnwell (2024) to explore the emotional and symbolic connections between humans and the environment. Terrapsychology examines how natural landscapes influence human identity, psychology, and spirituality, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between humans and the land. Chalquist (2014) emphasizes that landscapes are not merely physical spaces, but are imbued with emotional and psychological significance, often reflecting the collective psyche of the communities that inhabit them. In both *Aranyak* and *Dhanua Totor Kothamala*, the forest plays a central role, not only as a physical space but also as a symbol of the characters' internal struggles, spiritual connections, and cultural values. These works illustrate how humans' psychological ties to their environment shape their interactions with the land, particularly in the face of ecological degradation.

In addition, the concept of *ecocide* is pivotal in this study. Ecocide, defined as large-scale environmental destruction driven by human activities, is a key concern in both novels. Higgins et al. (2013) argue that ecocide often occurs within a context of colonialism and capitalist exploitation, where ecosystems are systematically destroyed for economic gain. In *Aranyak*, the narrative of deforestation and its devastating impact on

both the environment and the indigenous communities reflects the broader process of colonial ecocide. Similarly, *Dhanua Totor Kothamala* addresses the ecological and cultural losses experienced by the Toto people due to external invasions, underscoring the links between environmental destruction and the subjugation of indigenous communities.

By integrating eco-criticism with the concepts of terrapsychology and ecocide, this study seeks to deepen the understanding of how *Aranyak* and *Dhanua Totor Kothamala* reflect broader ecological and cultural issues. The novels provide a nuanced critique of human responsibility in environmental crises, engaging with the ethical and spiritual dimensions of ecological degradation. Through these theoretical tools, the study explores how literature can serve as a platform for examining the ongoing struggles of indigenous communities and their relationships with the natural world in a post-colonial context.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, comparative approach to analyze the novels *Aranyak* and *Dhanua Totor Kothamala*. In comparative literature, four major approaches, topical, methodological, temporal, and spatial, are widely recognized (Hutchinson, 2018). This study adopts the methodological approach, which examines texts through a defined point of comparison and a specific critical lens.

The analysis draws on Eco-critical theory, along with Terrapsychology and the concept of Ecocide, to investigate representations of human–nature relationships in both texts. The study also employs close reading as an interpretive technique, allowing for detailed attention to language, imagery, structure, and thematic patterns. Close reading, as a foundational method in literary studies, emphasizes slow, attentive engagement with textual form and meaning (Richards, 2001). This combined approach provides a nuanced understanding of how the two novels articulate ecological and cultural concerns from differing perspectives.

Results and Discussion

1. Human-Nature Relationship

Aranyak (1939) is set in an isolated forest region in the Purnia district of Bengal. The narrative is primarily conveyed through a first-person perspective but is occasionally interrupted by a third-person omniscient narrator. Bibhutibhushan writes this novel from the viewpoint of Satyacharan, a Bengali manager, who perceives the jungle and its inhabitants as a romanticized realm. He views the plants, animals, and birds through a lens of idealism, depicting the jungle and its people as embodying the essence of a romantic narrative. Rimli Bhattacharya, the translator of *Aranyak*, comments on Bibhutibhushan's romanticism in her introduction to the translation:

"The whole is irradiated by a lost romanticism, Bibhutibhushan sees the world in a grain of sand, and in constellations that appear familiar from light years away, and shot through with ambivalence (Bhattacharya, 2017; viii)."

In contrast, *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala* (2021) highlights the history of the Toto tribe. This novel can be considered an autobiographical account of Dhanua Toto. This novel is narrated from a third-person omniscient perspective. It's illustrating the deep connection between the tribal people and the forest. Biplab Nayak, the editor of the novel, states,

"The history of the Toto people, their legends, the richness of their nature-based lifestyle, and the sorrow of its decline are uniquely portrayed from his perspective (Biplob, 2021; 1)."

So, from the comments of the translators and editors of the two novels, it is understood that although the novels are written about people and nature, various animals, plants, and everything is perceived differently by an indigenous person and an outsider. What is nostalgic for Satycharan is realistic for Dhanua.

Both Bibhutibhushan and Dhanuaram have seen the jungle in their own way. One is highlighting the diverse stories of the lives of tribal people through his own experiences. The other is also emphasizing the life of an urban Bengali among the tribal people. Although the experience of the forest is much more romanticized in *Aranyak*. In the prologue, the narrator describes:

"...wild flowers in glorious color on that beautiful stretch of rocky ground, and the dense forest, vibrant with the blood-red blooms of the Palash, I felt as if it were a dream of a world filled with beauty, dreamt in the half-awake slumber of a holiday evening. As if no such place could be found anywhere else in the world (Bandyopadhyay, 2017; 3)."

In contrast, in *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala*, Dhanua cannot imagine life outside the forest. According to him, without trees, birds, rivers, springs, vegetables, and fruits, how can people live on bricks and stones alone? That is why Dhanua says,

"He wonders how anyone could clear the woods. What would remain once the forest is gone? If the river dried up, it would become a lifeless pit full of stones. How could people survive in such an environment? Where would they find vegetables and tubers? Where could they establish a farm? Where would they obtain chalk? And where would they find wood to build a house? (Toto, 2021; 14)."

The Totos' lives revolve entirely around the forest, gathering food, medicine, and feed for domesticated animals. The forest is their food store, their medicine store, and a place to gather food for their domesticated animals and birds. They can't really think of life outside of it. However, in *Aranyak*, nature is frequently romanticized. Where Satyacharan appreciates nature, comparing the jungle scene to a Japanese painting. As seen in the first chapter,

"I went to stand by the window. There was a moon rising above the uneven line of the jungle far away. A branch from a wild Jhau struck out against the rising moon. Like a Hokusai print (Bandyopadhyay, 2017; 11)."

Conversely, *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala* portrays the forest as sacred and life-sustaining, central to the Totos' identity and survival. The invasion of outsiders, Bengalis, Biharis, and Nepalis, disrupts this harmony, turning the forest into a site of cultural and ecological violence. The Totos' resistance represents a moral and spiritual defense of their world. Both novels, therefore, turn the landscape into an ethical mirror, reflecting humanity's ambivalence toward nature: reverence and destruction existing side by side.

From an ecocritical perspective (Glottfelty, 1996; Garrard, 2012), Satyacharan views nature from a romantic position, meaning that the forest in *Aranyak* is represented through an anthropocentric lens. Here, the forest appears as an aesthetic landscape rather than a lived experience. In contrast, Dhanua's worldview aligns with what Terrapsychology describes as a land-shaped consciousness (Chalquist, 2009), where identity and environment are inseparable. Although *Aranyak* also hints at such an intimate connection to the land, it is visible primarily through characters like Ganu Mahato or the Dabru-Panna family of the Santal Raja. The intrusion of outsiders into Toto territory

reflects what scholars of ecocide describe as the intertwined destruction of ecology and Indigenous culture (Nixon, 2011).

2. Ecocide and Environmental Destruction

Ecocide, defined as “the destruction of large areas of the natural environment as a consequence of human activity” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), is a central theme in both *Aranyak* and *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala*. Ecocritical scholarship emphasizes that such destruction is not merely ecological but also ethical, reflecting the intertwined vulnerability of humans and nature (Nixon, 2011). While both novels depict forest exploitation, they approach its moral and cultural implications differently.

In *Aranyak*, Satyacharan experiences personal guilt over his role in forest destruction. He acknowledges his complicity:

“I had come here to settle new tenants in these forests. Having come to destroy the forestland, I have instead fallen in love with the beautiful forest maid” (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 114).

Later, he reflects on the broader consequences of human intervention:

“But these memories do not give me pleasure; they are filled with sorrow. By my hands, an unfettered playground of nature was destroyed. I know too that for this act, the forest gods will never forgive me” (Bibhutibhushan, 2017, p. 4).

The novel vividly portrays Narha-Baihar's pristine forests being replaced by human settlements, agricultural fields, and makeshift structures, accompanied by social and ecological consequences such as disease outbreaks. Here, *Aranyak* frames ecocide through personal reflection and remorse, highlighting an ethical consciousness tied to environmental loss.

In contrast, *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala* depicts ecocide as systemic and culturally destructive. The Totos' sacred lands are intruded upon and destroyed by outsiders, including Bengalis, Biharis, and Nepalis:

“...they do not stop the Totos from losing their land. What was sacred to the Totos did not prevent the Japens from destroying thousands of years of forest. The introduction of weapons brings the darkness of conflict, gnawing violence, and false prosperity. In that darkness, the king, ministers, and leaders thrive under the guise of democracy” (Toto, 2021, p. 47).

Here, forest destruction is inseparable from cultural erasure and systemic exploitation. *Dhanua's* narrative emphasizes resistance, portraying environmental degradation as both an ecological and moral crime.

Comparatively, while Satyacharan experiences personal guilt and aestheticized loss, *Dhanua's* account foregrounds community trauma and ethical resistance. These portrayals align with ecocritical and ecocide scholarship: forests are ethical and cultural spaces, and their destruction embodies both ecological violence and moral failure (Glottfelty, 1996; Garrard, 2012; Nixon, 2011). Dutta (2022) observes similar patterns in narratives like *Sky is My Father* and *Aranyak*, where colonial and economic forces exploit indigenous lands. Nayak (2021) further emphasizes that external intrusion enforces alien economic and cultural priorities, exacerbating ecological and social loss.

Together, the novels reveal the ethical imperative to preserve nature: ecocide is not merely environmental destruction but a violation of cultural memory, identity, and moral responsibility.

3. Psychological and Cultural Impacts

In *Aranyak*, the tension between Satyacharan's perspective and the indigenous peoples' worldview highlights the psychological and cultural dimensions of human-nature interaction. Satyacharan's experience as an outsider, a Bengali representing "the victorious race," contrasts sharply with the intimate, indigenous connection to the forest. He reflects:

"Banowari and I were representatives of that victorious race; old Dobru Panna, the youthful Jagru, and the maiden Bhanmati were representatives of the suppressed race. Both races now stood together, one facing the other, in the dark evening. I, with the pride of the Aryans, looked upon Dobru Panna of royal lineage as merely an old Santal, and Princess Bhanmati as just a Munda coolie woman. The royal palace they cherished and were so proud of appeared to me as an ill-ventilated, poorly-lit cave, a den of spirits and snakes. That evening, the great tragedy of history unfolded before my eyes" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 156).

This passage underscores not only the cultural hierarchy imposed by colonial and social structures but also the psychological tension it creates, as Satyacharan grapples with guilt, recognition, and moral awareness.

Similarly, in *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala*, the cultural disruption caused by the intrusion of outsiders affects the psychological well-being of the Totos. The narrator emphasizes their dependency on the forest and the deep-rooted trauma caused by its destruction:

"Their lives revolve around the forest and the land. Losing their rights to the forest and land threatens their very survival" (Toto, 2021).

When the Totos' land is taken over by outsiders, Dhanua reflects on the existential threat to their culture and lifestyle:

"The roots of the Toto's lives are deeply embedded in the forest. If those roots are uprooted, the life of the Totos will wither away" (Toto, 2021).

Both novels depict how the destruction of nature is intertwined with the erosion of cultural identity and psychological well-being. In *Aranyak*, Satyacharan's personal guilt reflects moral and emotional turmoil, whereas in *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala*, the Totos' struggle portrays collective trauma and anxiety over losing ancestral lands.

In ecocritical studies, place is essential for understanding how characters interact with their environment. Myths, stories, and symbols shape the characters' psyches and their relationships with the land, a notion that aligns with the concept of place identity in environmental psychology (Proshansky et al., 1983). Both novels have the presence of myths, stories, symbols, and psychological connections to such places. In *Aranyak*, mythological elements are woven into the narrative, such as the story of the forest god Tarbaro, revered by locals as the protector of wild buffalo herds:

"We have also heard stories of Tarbaro ever since we were children. Tarbaro is the god of wild buffaloes; he is always on the alert lest his herds lose their lives in any unnatural way" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 127).

Similarly, *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala* introduces a myth surrounding the village of Panchakanya, where five queens vanished into a pond to escape capture, endowing the village with its name:

"According to local legend, when Nawab Hussain Shah's soldiers attempted to capture the five queens of Kanteshwar Raja, the queens vanished into a pond to

escape captivity, and despite thorough searches, they were never found” (Toto, 2021, p. 38).

Both myths reflect a belief in protective, divine powers and the perception of land as sacred.

The psychological and cultural dimensions of both novels are rooted in moral awareness and collective memory. In *Aranyak*, the narrator’s guilt becomes a psychological manifestation of environmental loss; the destruction of the forest symbolizes inner emptiness and estrangement from nature. In contrast, *Dhanua Toto’r Kathamala* externalizes this trauma, portraying it as collective suffering and cultural erasure. Together, they illustrate that ecocide is not only an ecological event but also a psychological rupture, eroding both landscape and identity.

4. Indigenous Knowledge and Resistance

In *Dhanua Toto’r Kathamala*, the Totos’ deep ecological knowledge is emphasized through their everyday interactions with the forest. Their survival, sustenance, and cultural identity are intertwined with forest resources. For instance, during the forest collection scenes, the narrator observes:

“Dhanua’s basket is filled with his grandmother’s medicine, vegetables, fruits, tubers, and food for pigs” (Toto, 2021).

This demonstrates the Totos’ indigenous ecological knowledge, a form of environmental stewardship highlighted in scholarship on traditional societies (Berkes, 1999). Similarly, in the novel *Aranyak*, the Totos not only use the forest but also actively resist its destruction. Dhanua confronts those exploiting their resources, saying:

“Babu, stop selling the old trees in Totopara, the hills are collapsing, stop selling stones like that” (Toto, 2021, p. 50).

This reflects active indigenous resistance against ecocide, echoing studies on local ecological activism (Berkes & Folke, 1998). Resistance by indigenous people is also seen in *Aranyak*. However, it is not as direct as in Dhaniaram’s novel. In Bibhutibhushan’s narrative, this resistance takes various forms: they do not comply with all the demands of the landlords, they move deeper into the forest to live, the indigenous people do not surrender, and they ignore official notices, among other actions (Bhattacharya, 2017). This illustrates subtle forms of local resistance, as highlighted in ecocritical studies of South Asian literature (Maria, 2020).

Besides that, the novel also highlights indigenous peoples, such as Mahato, Santal, and Oraon, and their relationship to the forest. Ganu Mahato’s perspective, rooted in intimate contact with nature, contrasts with Satyacharan’s outsider view:

“Ganu had experienced life very differently. His words are not to be cursorily dismissed, for having spent all his life in intimate contact with nature, he was an expert on the wilderness” (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 25).

This contrast underscores the importance of local expertise and experiential knowledge, widely recognized in ecological anthropology and environmental ethics (Turner et al., 2000).

In both novels, indigenous societies and people are portrayed as experts in nature. Whereas the experience of Ganu Mahato is different from that of Satyacharan, the jungle for outsiders, like the Japens, is merely a source of profit, leading to its destruction, just as Satyacharan’s actions contributed to forest loss. Though Satyacharan’s remorse

highlights the ethical weight of encroachment, it transforms the forest from a symbol of peace into a moral battleground. This reflects the concept of moral responsibility toward nature in ecocritical theory (Garrard, 2012).

The contrast between Satyacharan's outsider perspective and Ganu Mahato's indigenous knowledge emphasizes how local expertise provides alternative ways of understanding and engaging with the forest, revealing both ethical and practical dimensions of environmental stewardship (Gadgil et al., 1993).

The representation of indigenous knowledge and resistance in these novels underscores the role of literature as an ecological conscience. By portraying the Totos' intimate relationship with the land and Ganu Mahato's deep understanding of the forest, both narratives reveal how indigenous epistemologies challenge exploitative modernity. As Maria (2020) notes in her analysis of *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide*, literature becomes a powerful medium for exposing the psychological and ecological consequences of human actions. The destruction of nature is not only external but internalized, shaping the collective psyche of communities.

Thus, *Aranyak* and *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala* together call for renewed ecological and cultural awareness. Their critique of ecocide speaks to contemporary environmental crises, reminding readers that the health of the land is inseparable from cultural survival. Both texts urge a re-evaluation of human progress, advocating for coexistence rather than conquest.

Through these narratives, both novels illustrate that indigenous communities not only rely on forests for survival but also play a crucial role in environmental preservation. Their knowledge, resistance, and cultural practices serve as critical counterpoints to human-led environmental exploitation (Berkes, 2012).

Limitations of the Study

This study is purely theoretical and lacks empirical data or case studies, which could provide a broader context for understanding ecological crises and human-nature relationships. Both novels, originally written in Bangla, are analyzed through translations: *Aranyak* in English and *Dhanua Totor Kothamala*, translated by the researcher. As a result, nuances in language, cultural idioms, and symbolism may be lost, potentially affecting the accuracy and depth of the analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak* and Dhoniram Toto's *Dhanua Toto'r Kathamala* reveals complex human-nature relationships shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological contexts. While Bandyopadhyay presents Satyacharan's romanticized view of the forest and his personal guilt over environmental destruction, Toto emphasizes the Totos' intimate connection with their land and the ecological and cultural consequences of colonial exploitation. By contrasting outsider and indigenous perspectives, these novels underscore moral responsibilities toward nature and highlight the ethical, psychological, and ecological dimensions of human action, offering readers a deeper awareness of environmental stewardship.

References

- Ahmed, H.Y., Hashim, R.S., 2015. Greening of resistance in Arabic poetry: An ecocritical interpretation of selected Arabic poems. 3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies 21, 13–22. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2015-2101-02>

- Anindita Ghosal, Arindam Modak, 2023. Unearthing ecological identities: an exploration of place/self in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak*. *Asiatic: IIUM Journal of English Language and Literature* 17, 140–152. <https://doi.org/10.31436/asiatic.v17i2.3002>
- Ataur, K.S., 2022. Marginalization of minorities and the environment: Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Pather Panchali* and *Aranyak*. In: S. Luthfa, M.T. Khan & M. Kamal, eds. *The Bangladesh Environmental Humanities Reader: Environmental Justice, Development Victimhood, and Resistance*. Rowman & Littlefield. Available at: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781498599146/The-Bangladesh-Environmental-Humanities-Reader-Environmental-Justice-Development-Victimhood-and-Resistance> [Accessed 12 November 2024].
- Bandyopadhyay, B., 2017. *Aranyak*. Seagull Books, Kolkata.
- Berkes, F., 1999. *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Berkes, F., 2012. *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- Berkes, F., Colding, J. & Folke, C., 2000. "Rediscovery of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Adaptive Management." *Ecological Applications*, 10(5), pp. 1251–1262.
- Chalquist, C., Barnwell, G., 2023. *Terrapsychology: Further inquiry into self, place and planet*. Taylor & Francis.
- Definition of ecocide [WWW Document], n.d. URL <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ecocide> (accessed 11.12.25).
- Dutta, S., 2022. Ecocritical post colonialism and Plantationocene: A comparative study of *Sky Is My Father* by Easterine Kire and *Aranyak* by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. *New Literaria* 03, 130–139. <https://doi.org/10.48189/nl.2022.v03i2.015>
- Gadgil, M., Berkes, F. & Folke, C., 1993. "Indigenous Knowledge for Biodiversity Conservation." *Ambio*, 22(2/3), pp. 151–156.
- Glottfelty, C., Fromm, H., 1996. *The ecocriticism reader: Landmarks in literary ecology*. University of Georgia Press.
- Higgins, P., Short, D., South, N., 2013. Protecting the planet: A proposal for a law of ecocide. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 59, 251–266. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-013-9413-6>
- Hutchinson, B., 2018. *Comparative Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Iftakhar Ahmed, 2025. Environmental mayhem in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak*: An ecocritical study. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Humanities* 70, 109–122. <https://doi.org/10.3329/jasbh.v70i1.82658>
- Kumar, A., 2023. Reading Bibhutibhushan's *Aranyak* in the age of ethical defacement, climatic catastrophe and human (self) destruction: An interdisciplinary approach. *International Journal of Creative Research Thought*, 11(77).
- Malpas, J., 2018. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*. Routledge.
- Maria, M.A., 2020. Environmental awareness through Indian green literature: An eco-critical reading of *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide*. Brac University. Available at: https://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10361/17233/15103055_ENH.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [Accessed 12 November 2024].
- Mishra, S.K., 2017. The marginalized vs. the civilized: An ecocritical approach to Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak*. *The Creative Launcher*, 1(6), pp.68–76.

- Mishra, S.K. & Sarangi, I., 2017. Role of literature in environmental awareness: An ecocritical study of Aranyak (of the Forest) by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. Unknown. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314395173_Role_of_Literature_in_Environmental_Awareness_An_Ecocritical_Study_of_Aranyak_of_the_Forest_by_Bibhutibhushan_Bandyopadhyay [Accessed 15 November 2025].
- Nixon, R., 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Panchali, P., Aranyak, Khan, S.A., 2022. Marginalization of minorities and the environment. *Bangladesh Environmental Humanities Reader* 221–230. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781978729551-ch-15>
- Richards, I.A., 2001. *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement*.
- Proshansky, H.M., Fabian, A.K. & Kaminoff, R., 1983. Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3(1), pp.57–83.
- Rahman, M.Z., Islam, M.S. & Hussain, M.A., 2018. Ecopoetic notions in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Aranyak. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, 24(6), pp.39–44. Available at: <https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.%2023%20Issue6/Version-1/E2306013944.pdf> [Accessed 12 November 2024].
- Sahu, G., n.d. Ecocriticism – understanding the relationship between literature and environment in Indian English novels. *Sai Om Journal of Arts & Education: A Peer Reviewed International Journal*.
- Sen, R., 1995. *Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyaya*. Calcutta: Paschimbanga.
- Sengupta, P., 2022. A study of ecocritical space in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Aranyak. *Symposium*, 13, pp.10–17.
- Teague, D., 1997. The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology ed. by Cheryl Glotfelty, Harold Fromm. *Western American Literature* 31, 401–402. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.1997.0009>
- Toto, Dhoniram, 2021. *Dhanua Totorer Kothamala*. Kolkata. Available at: <https://bibidhobawal.in/dhanua-totor-kathamala-dhaniram-toto> [Accessed 13 October 2024].
- Turner, N.J., Ignace, M.B. & Ignace, R., 2000. Traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia. *Ecological Applications*, 10(5), pp.1275–1287.
- Vakoch, D.A., 2022. *The Routledge handbook of ecofeminism and literature*. Taylor & Francis.

[সার-সংক্ষেপ : এই গবেষণায় বিভূতিভূষণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের আরণ্যক (১৯৩৯) এবং ধানুয়া টোটোর কথামালা (২০২১) উপন্যাসে মানুষ ও প্রকৃতির সম্পর্ক নিয়ে আলোচনা করা হয়েছে। আরণ্যক উপন্যাসে আরণ্যকে রোমান্টিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিতে তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। যেখানে আরণ্যের এক নির্ভেজাল স্বর্গের মতো স্থান। অন্যদিকে, ধানুয়া টোটোর কথামালা-য় আরণ্য উপস্থিত হয়েছে আদিবাসী দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে যেখানে আরণ্য শুধু প্রকৃতির অংশ নয়, বরং মানুষের জীবনধারা, সংস্কৃতি ও আধ্যাত্মিকতার অবিচ্ছেদ্য অঙ্গ। উভয় উপন্যাসেই মানবসৃষ্ট কারণে প্রকৃতির ধ্বংস এবং পরিবেশ বিপর্যয়ের সমালোচনা করা হয়েছে। মানুষ কীভাবে লোভ ও আগ্রাসনের মাধ্যমে আরণ্যে হস্তক্ষেপ করে এবং তার ফলে প্রকৃতিতে এবং মানুষের মানসিক ও সাংস্কৃতিক জীবনে কী রকম প্রভাব পড়ে, তা তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। এই গবেষণায় ইকোক্রিটিসিজম ও টেরাসাইকোলজির তাত্ত্বিক কাঠামোর মাধ্যমে এসব দিক বিশ্লেষণ করা হয়েছে। এই গবেষণায় দেখা যায় যে, আদিবাসীদের জন্য আরণ্য কেবল প্রাকৃতিক সম্পদ নয়; একই সাথে তাদের পরিচয়, বিশ্বাস এবং অস্তিত্বের সঙ্গে ওতপ্রোতভাবে জড়িত। তাই *আরণ্যকে* কেবল সম্পদ উৎস হিসেবে না দেখে তার আধ্যাত্মিক ও

সাংস্কৃতিক দিককেও গুরুত্ব দিয়ে দেখা দরকার। স্বল্পমেয়াদি লাভের জন্য প্রকৃতি ধ্বংসের বিপদ সম্পর্কে এই গবেষণা সতর্ক করে দেয় এবং প্রকৃতির সঙ্গে সহাবস্থানের নৈতিক গুরুত্বকে তুলে ধরে। তুলনামূলক বিশ্লেষণের মাধ্যমে এই গবেষণা প্রমাণ করে যে, সাহিত্য শুধু সৌন্দর্য উপস্থাপনের মাধ্যম নয়, এটি পরিবেশ রক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে একটি শক্তিশালী প্রতিবাদী মাধ্যম হয়ে উঠতে পারে।]

মূল শব্দ : পরিবেশ ধ্বংস, মানুষ-প্রকৃতি সম্পর্ক, অরণ্য অবক্ষয়, ইকোট্রিটিসিজম, আদিবাসী দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি