

## EXPLORING CLIMATE FICTION IN THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

**Sanganand G Bagde**

Rashtrapita Mahatma Gandhi Arts,  
Commerce and Science College Saoli,

Distt. Chandrapur

Mo. No. 9764534840

Email: [bagdesanganand86@gmail.com](mailto:bagdesanganand86@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract :**

*This research paper explores the emergence and significance of climate fiction (cli-fi) in contemporary Indian English novels, examining how these narratives address environmental crises within the Indian socio-cultural context. By analysing key works from the 21st century, the study highlights how Indian authors employ cli-fi to depict the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather, and resource scarcity, while weaving in themes of identity, displacement, and resilience. Through a blend of narrative analysis and ecocritical theory, this study underscores the role of Indian climate -fiction in fostering environmental consciousness and imagining alternative futures in a rapidly changing world. This research paper focuses on six contemporary Indian English novels: *Everything the Light Touches* by Janice Pariat, *Latitudes of Longing* by Shubhangi Swarup, *The Butterfly Effect* by Rajat Chaudhuri, *Valli* by Sheela Tomy, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* by Sarnath Banerjee, and *Black River* by Nilanjana Roy. The study aims to analyze how these novels reflect the consequences of environmental crises, employ narrative strategies to intertwine ecological and postcolonial themes, and contribute to environmental awareness in India and beyond.*

**Keywords :** Climate Fiction, Anthropomorphism, Environmental Crises, Human-Nature Relationships

### **Research Methodology :**

The methodology involves a close reading of the selected texts, grounded in an ecocritical theoretical framework. The study seeks to position Indian cli-fi within the global environmental discourse, highlighting its unique contribution to articulating localized ecological concerns within a planetary context. The significance of this research lies in its exploration of how Indian English literature engages with the Anthropocene, offering narratives that underscore the urgency of climate action and envision pathways toward ecological harmony.

### **Introduction :**

Cli -fi, commonly referred to as climate-fiction, is an emergent literary genre that



foregrounds environmental crises, particularly climate change, as a central narrative concern. Cli-fi engages with the ecological, social, and cultural ramifications of global warming, offering speculative and realist portrayals of humanity's relationship with the natural world. By blending scientific insights with imaginative storytelling, cli-fi serves as both a warning and a call to action, urging readers to confront the Anthropocene's pressing challenges. In the context of contemporary Indian English literature, cli-fi has gained prominence as a vital response to India's multifaceted ecological crises, including rising sea levels, deforestation, water scarcity, and urban pollution. These issues, compounded by India's postcolonial history and socio-economic disparities, provide a rich backdrop for narratives that explore the intersection of environmental degradation and human resilience.

Climate fiction (cli-fi) has emerged as a global literary genre that addresses the escalating realities of climate change, blending speculative and realist narratives to explore environmental crises and their societal impacts. Pioneered by authors like Margaret Atwood and Kim Stanley Robinson, cli-fi gained traction in the early 21st century as a response to the Anthropocene's ecological challenges, encompassing themes such as rising sea levels, extreme weather, and biodiversity loss. Globally, cli-fi has evolved from dystopian warnings to include hopeful narratives of resilience and adaptation, reflecting diverse cultural and geographical perspectives on environmental futures.

Characterized most frequently by efforts to imagine the impact of drastic climatological change on human life and perceptions, cli-fi narratives can be set in the past, present, or near future of the planet. The styles and voices used in cli-fi range widely, but these works often pay marked attention to the perspectives of scientists, especially where these deviate from popular ideas about the environment. (Irr 2)

Modern Indian writing, particularly in regional languages, has long engaged with ecological concerns, as seen in works like Sundara Ramaswamy's Tamil novel *Tamarind History*, which explores deforestation's impact on rural communities. In Indian English literature, environmental consciousness surfaced prominently in the late 20th century, with authors like Ruskin Bond depicting the fragility of Himalayan ecosystems. However, the explicit categorization of cli-fi emerged later, catalyzed by global environmental discourse and India's acute vulnerability to climate change.

Key scholarship has shaped the study of cli-fi and ecocriticism in Indian English literature. Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement* (2016) is a foundational text, arguing that modern literature has largely failed to address climate change, relegating it to the margins of "serious" fiction. Ghosh's work calls for narratives that integrate ecological crises with human stories, a challenge taken up by contemporary Indian authors. Ecocritical studies, such as Ursula K. Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008), provide frameworks for analyzing cli-fi's global-local dynamics, while Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) highlights the gradual, often invisible impacts of environmental degradation on marginalized communities. These texts inform the analysis of Indian cli-fi, emphasizing its role in articulating ecological and social justice.

Existing analyses of the selected novels—*Everything the Light Touches* by Janice



Pariat, *Latitudes of Longing* by Shubhangi Swarup, *The Butterfly Effect* by Rajat Chaudhuri, *Valli* by Sheela Tomy, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* by Sarnath Banerjee, and *Black River* by Nilanjana Roy—tend to focus on their literary or socio-political dimensions rather than their contributions to cli-fi. For instance, Pariat’s work is often praised for its lyrical exploration of interconnectedness, but its ecological critique of uranium mining is underexplored. Similarly, Swarup’s novel is lauded for its poetic style, yet its depiction of non-human agency in climate-affected ecosystems lacks comprehensive ecocritical scrutiny. Chaudhuri’s dystopian narrative and Banerjee’s graphic novel are recognized for their speculative elements, but their cli-fi frameworks remain understudied. Tomy’s *Valli* and Roy’s *Black River*, while addressing deforestation and river pollution, are rarely analyzed as part of the cli-fi canon. This gap in scholarship underscores the need for a focused study that examines these works as cli-fi, highlighting their environmental narratives and narrative innovations.

### Discussion :

Ecocriticism examines human-nature relationships, foregrounding the interplay between literature and environmental issues. It provides a framework to explore how these novels depict the Anthropocene, a geological epoch defined by human-induced environmental changes, such as climate change and biodiversity loss. Central to this analysis is Rob Nixon’s concept of “slow violence” (2011), which describes the gradual, often invisible harm caused by environmental degradation, such as pollution or deforestation, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities. Ecocriticism enables an investigation into how these texts portray ecological crises, critique anthropocentric practices, and advocate for sustainable human-nature coexistence. In the introduction of his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), Rob Nixon writes,

In a world permeated by insidious, yet unseen or imperceptible violence, imaginative writing can help make the unapparent appear, making it accessible and tangible by humanizing drawn-out threats inaccessible to the immediate senses. Writing can challenge perceptual habits that downplay the damage slow violence inflicts and bring into imaginative focus apprehensions that elude sensory corroboration. The narrative imaginings of writer-activists may thus offer us a different kind of witnessing: of sights unseen. (Nixon 15)

Key analytical concepts include anthropomorphism, multispecies justice, and speculative futures. Anthropomorphism, the attribution of human-like qualities to non-human entities (e.g. rivers or forests), amplifies the agency of nature in these narratives, as seen in Roy’s portrayal of the Yamuna River as a living entity. Multispecies justice, rooted in ecocritical discourse, emphasizes ethical relationships between humans and non-human species, highlighting the novels’ focus on biodiversity and ecological balance. Speculative futures, a hallmark of cli-fi, allow authors to imagine alternative environmental scenarios, from dystopian collapse to resilient recovery, offering insights into potential pathways for ecological restoration.

The analysis is enriched by integrating Indian philosophical perspectives, particularly the concept of interconnectedness found in indigenous traditions. These perspectives view



humans as integral parts of the natural world, emphasizing harmony and reciprocity. Such ideas resonate with the novels' depictions of indigenous ecological knowledge, as in Pariat's portrayal of sustainable practices in Northeast India or Tomy's exploration of tribal resistance to deforestation. By combining ecocriticism with Indian philosophical insights, this framework provides a robust lens to examine how these 21<sup>st</sup> century novels articulate environmental narratives, critique ecological harm, and envision futures grounded in ecological and cultural harmony.

Janice Pariat's *Everything the Light Touches* masterfully interweaves human and non-human narratives, challenging anthropocentric scientific frameworks that prioritize human dominance. The novel serves as a poignant meditation on the symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature, celebrating indigenous ecological knowledge as a guide for sustainable living amid environmental crises. The novel's settings span Northeast India's lush hills, the Lower Himalayas, and global landscapes, portraying ecosystems as vibrant, living entities threatened by extractive industries like uranium mining. From Meghalaya's mist-laden forests to Himalayan slopes, these diverse locales highlight the universal stakes of environmental degradation, linking local struggles to global ecological concerns. Pariat's vivid depictions elevate these settings beyond mere backdrops, making them integral to the narrative's ecological vision. Pariat's fluid, multi-temporal storytelling blends personal and ecological histories, with incandescent prose that mirrors nature's rhythms. This approach creates a sense of continuity, suggesting that the human-nature bond is eternal yet fragile, demanding careful stewardship.

At the novel's core, Shai's journey embodies the rediscovery of indigenous practices, resisting uranium mining's devastation in Northeast India. Her spiritual reclamation of ancestral wisdom critiques industrial greed, advocating ecological harmony. Similarly, Grandmother Grace shapes young Evelyn's reverence for nature, personifying plants as sentient beings, fostering a discourse that transcends speciesism. Through these narratives, Pariat positions *Everything the Light Touches* as a cornerstone of Indian cli-fi, envisioning a future of mutual respect between humanity and nature.

"And she believed her, for Grandma Grace spent hours outside, in a hat and scarf, with a basket in hand, and she talked about her plants as though they were intimate confidants. 'My sweet peas are feeling poorly today,' or 'The pumpkin requests to be moved somewhere less shaded'." (Pariat 100)

Through heartfelt conversations with her peas and pumpkins, conducted with the warmth of a close confidante, Grace models a deep empathy that inspires Evelyn to emulate her attentiveness. This dialogue transcends speciesism, dissolving hierarchical distinctions that place humans above other life forms and fostering a vision of interconnected harmony where plants are equal partners. By granting plants a voice in this exchange, Grace's approach defies anthropocentric conventions, endowing them with dignity and presence. Pariat's poetic narrative not only deepens Evelyn's bond with nature but also invites readers to embrace ecological kinship, highlighting interspecies mutual respect as a vital step toward sustainability and a hopeful antidote to environmental crises.



Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing* weaves a poetic narrative that explores love, loss, and humanity's sacred bond with nature, spotlighting climate change's impact on fragile ecosystems. Challenging anthropocentric views, the novel celebrates non-human agency—trees and glaciers as vital voices—urging reverence for nature's resilient yet vulnerable spirit.

Set across the Himalayas, Andaman Islands, Kathmandu, and Karakoram Range, linked by a subduction zone, the novel's vibrant settings—from tsunami-struck islands to earthquake-scarred valleys—reflect planetary precarity and India's ecological heritage.

The novel opens with 'Islands,' where botanist Girija Prasad and clairvoyant Chanda Devi face a tsunami in the Andaman's ancient ecosystem. 'Faultline' follows Mary's reunion with her son Plato along the Burma-India fault, marked by ammonites. 'Valley' traces Thapa's journey through Kathmandu's earthquake aftermath, while 'Snow Desert' connects Apo's romance in the Karakoram with Rana's glacial ordeal. These disaster-linked stories highlight life's interconnectedness across time and space.

In *Latitudes of Longing*, Shubhangi Swarup illustrates how distinct geological spaces and their inherent characteristics challenge the fluid interconnectedness of human and non-human lives across time and space. Chanda Devi, a pivotal character in the 'Islands' section, powerfully embodies this dynamic, highlighting the tension between localized geology and broader ecological unity. Chanda Devi realises that she can communicate with plants, "Plants are the most sensitive spirits in the web of creation. They bind the earth to water and air, and they bind the different worlds together. They make life possible. Which is why they can see, feel and hear more than their forms, especially humans" (Swarup 109).

Rejecting conventional nature narratives, Swarup emphasizes emotional geographies and non-realist aesthetics, weaving cultural contexts like imperialism and nationalism to reframe earth's aesthetics. From Pangaea's drift to modern fault lines, the tsunami's ripple from Andaman to Myanmar underscores ecological and geological unity, positioning *Latitudes of Longing* as a luminous Indian cli-fi work, inspiring sustainable coexistence with the natural world. In *Latitudes of Longing*, the journeys of Chanda Devi and Girija Prasad ignite a narrative vision that transcends conventional social frameworks, guiding readers into a realm where rational thought gives way to a profound interplay of cognitive and subconscious connections with spacetime. Swarup's novel boldly reimagines geological time beyond human-centered perspectives, presenting non-human and inanimate geological entities as conscious agents that actively shape emotional and sensory experiences. Girija Prasad says to her grandson, "Son, I learnt more from observing my wife than I learnt from science journals. Just like I learnt about mountains by studying the islands. If you reflect upon it, you will see connections and relationships illuminating the most disconnected things" (Swarup 310).

By situating affect not solely within human beings but also within non-living ecological actors, Swarup invites readers to seek threads of interconnectedness across vast geological landscapes and temporalities, shifting affect from the physical body to a broader, trans corporeal dimension. Gaana Jayagopalan pointed out, "Scaffolding the cultural contexts



of imperialism, authoritarianism, and nationalism as political frames, the novel functions as a strong case to bring the aesthetics of the earth back to focus in its narrativization, while also highlighting the interconnected geology of human lives, and traversing paths of non-human agents” (Jayagopalan 172).

This ecological narrative fosters a heightened environmental awareness, encouraging readers to view ecoaesthetics as ethically significant. Such an approach cultivates a participatory ethic that challenges narrow, utilitarian views of ecology, promoting a deeper, more inclusive engagement with the natural world.

Rajat Chaudhuri’s *The Butterfly Effect* crafts a gripping eco-dystopian narrative that explores the dire consequences of genetic engineering and climate change, exposing the dangers of corporate greed and human arrogance. The novel serves as a stark warning, its tense storytelling depicting a world on the brink of collapse, where humanity’s reckless interference with nature triggers interconnected disasters—floods, pandemics, and genetic mutations. Chaudhuri’s sharp critique of technological overreach and environmental neglect, woven through speculative fiction, urges readers to confront ecosystem fragility and the cost of prioritizing profit over planetary health. As Anjan Saikia quoted Charles “the most significant changes in temperature and precipitation are expected to impact the poorest and most vulnerable regions of the world many of which lack the sociopolitical stability and technological resources to adapt to these climatic shifts” (Saikia 44).

Set primarily in a vividly portrayed Kolkata, drowning in floodwaters and urban decay, the novel extends to global dystopian cities crumbling under rising seas and pollution. These settings, from Kolkata’s monsoon-drenched streets to other metropolitan ruins, act as active narrative elements, reflecting the moral and ecological decay of a corporate-driven world. Chaudhuri’s Kolkata emerges as a tangible microcosm of global collapse, grounding the novel’s speculative horrors in a hauntingly real urban landscape.

Chaudhuri’s narrative style blends eco-dystopian thriller with speculative fiction, combining scientific detail with fantastical elements. His taut prose weaves complex plotlines, mirroring the chaotic interplay of disasters, while the thriller’s pace and prophetic tone—evoking bioengineered horrors and climate catastrophes—engage readers viscerally and intellectually. The novel integrates diverse characters, including detective Kar, geneticist Tanmoy Sen, North Korean sisters Jia and Jiyoo, music teacher Henry David, and policeman Captain Old, whose stories span India, the UK, South Korea, North Korea, and China, addressing civil war, geopolitical strife, and dangerous scientific experiments.

Henry passionately highlighted the risks of manipulating nature, sparking a compelling debate about the ethics of scientific experimentation. Instead of examining societal structures or ideological conflicts, the novel portrays a system blindly chasing economic profits and attempting to address climate change through technological fixes. “They called it progress, but we were just rearranging the deck chairs on a sinking ship” (Chaudhuri 267). False environmental progress is criticized in the quote. While “rearranging the deck chairs” refers to flimsy fixes like token reforms and greenwashing, the “sinking ship” represents a world in climate crisis. Chaudhuri exposes how prevailing notions of



progress overlook systemic ecological harm, cautioning that without profound, transformative change, symbolic actions will not be sufficient to avert planetary collapse. “Smoke curled from the poisoned river—the river that once buzzed with life and was now a graveyard for whatever floated on the surface” (Chaudhuri 223). The quote graphically illustrates how human activity has led to ecological collapse. The difference between a river that once “buzzed with life” and its current state as a “graveyard” emphasizes the permanent degradation of biodiversity, while the “poisoned river” represents industrial pollution and negligence toward the environment. Cli-fi’s warning that unchecked development turns natural lifelines into sites of death is reinforced by the image of smoke rising from water, which suggests toxic modernity and highlights the catastrophic cost of environmental exploitation.

Tanmoy’s defence of technological solutions as the sole remedy for environmental crises reflects a deep-seated ideological refusal to acknowledge the full scope of climate change’s devastating effects across multiple domains. Challenging this flawed approach, which hampers meaningful action, Henry’s alarm at the reckless harm inflicted on the planet underscores the gravity of the situation and the denial embedded in current policies. He warns Tanmoy that “the pursuit of endless expansion and rapid technological progress has pushed us to a breaking point,” emphasizing the urgent need to reconsider humanity’s approach to the earth’s limits. Henry explained,

“Greater or lesser, larger or smaller may not mean anything at all, Sir. I am a layman who doesn’t understand the workings of your science but I feel we need to strike a balance. We are not the only species on this planet. Nature has rusted because of our lack of care and the violence we inflict upon her. Don’t you hear how sea levels have been rising and then it rains in winter so much that we fear this country will be washed away? (Chaudhuri 158)

At its core, *The Butterfly Effect* illustrates the cascading effects of ecological neglect, drawing on chaos theory to show how small actions—genetic tampering, corporate exploitation—unleash global crises. Its focus on climate change and ecological devastation, explored through vivid incidents and debates, positions it as a vital Indian cli-fi work

*All Quiet in Vikaspuri* is a graphic novel by Sarnath Banerjee that blends satire, dystopian fantasy, and social commentary to explore the water crisis in contemporary urban India. Set in a near-future Delhi, the story follows Girish, an ordinary plumber, who embarks on an extraordinary underground journey in search of the mythical ‘source of the Yamuna’—a journey that transforms him into a prophetic figure. In this fictional world, water scarcity has reached alarming levels. The elite hoard water in private reserves while the poor suffer. The narrative critiques the commodification of natural resources, the failures of civic infrastructure, and the ecological degradation caused by unregulated urbanization. As Girish travels deeper underground, encountering strange characters and surreal landscapes, the story metaphorically explores spiritual, cultural, and ecological decay in modern India.

Banerjee employs a darkly humorous tone and minimalist illustrations to challenge readers’ perceptions of development and progress. The novel ultimately serves as a



cautionary tale, urging reflection on environmental sustainability, class inequality, and the consequences of severing our connection with nature. Sarnath Banerjee's *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* is a gripping graphic novel that immerses readers in a dystopian Delhi ravaged by water scarcity, urban decay, and socio-political strife, delivering a sharp critique of resource mismanagement. With biting satire and speculative fervor, Banerjee exposes the fragility of urban systems buckling under greed and neglect, where water becomes a contested prize fuelling conflict.

Sukanya Gupta quoted a statement of Sarnath Banerjee in an interview. He says,

“I don't like direct comment. I'm not an activist-artist”. Using an ecocritical approach and briefly discussing the theory of the graphic novel as it relates to Indian writing in English, this essay argues that In *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* Banerjee blends the cli-fi genre with the medium of the graphic novel to illustrate 'slow violence' that is perpetrated on nature in the name of vikas or progress.” (Gupta 145)

Set in a fictionalized Vikaspuri, Banerjee's Delhi is a chaotic urban landscape of cracked streets and dry reservoirs, a living entity reflecting ecological ruin. This haunting setting mirrors real-world urban crises, with towering concrete contrasting parched landscapes, amplifying the narrative's speculative dread. The city's descent into water wars captures the dire consequences of systemic neglect, grounding the story in a palpable reality. Focusing on the ripple effects of mismanaging water, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* stands as a vital Indian cli-fi work, demanding equitable resource policies to avert ecological and social collapse.

Sarnath Banerjee's *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* uses “short-termism” to critique developmental policies favoring short-term gains over sustainability, worsening ecological and social inequities in India. Through satirical visuals and storytelling, Banerjee exposes short-termism's toll—exploitative land use, urban decay, and environmental ruin—highlighting its disproportionate harm to marginalized groups. Examples like industrial land grabs, unstable slums, and Yamuna River pollution underscore systemic failures, positioning short-termism as a driver of urban and environmental crises. Sarnath Banerjee writes, “when industries take over agricultural land and dams drown entire villages and destroy settled communities to produce unjustifiably low amounts of electricity” (Banerjee 56).

Banerjee defines short-termism as reckless development, such as dams flooding villages for minimal energy, referencing projects like the Narmada Dam. This benefits elites while displacing rural poor, revealing skewed progress. Industrial expansion sacrifices sustainable land use, uprooting communities and fuelling ecological loss. In urban settings, short-termism appears in slums where floors upon floors are held together by optimism, housing displaced farmers while the wealthy, like Rastogi, enjoy luxury. This satire critiques urban planning's neglect of marginalized needs, perpetuating instability and inequity driven by short-term fixes. The Yamuna's pollution, drained for Delhi's needs and left thick with industrial effluents, symbolizes environmental short-termism. A surreal visual of a swimmer suspended mid-dive illustrates the river's toxic density, emphasizing ecological devastation.



Banerjee's cli-fi critique links these issues to climate vulnerability, urging sustainable policies for long-term resilience.

In *Black River*, Nilanjana Roy weaves a poignant and visceral narrative that lays bare the ravages of pollution, the anthropomorphic vitality of nature, and the profound struggles of marginalized communities ensnared by environmental degradation. The novel unfurls as a haunting elegy for the Yamuna River, once a life-giving artery now choked by industrial waste and urban indifference, while simultaneously serving as a searing critique of societal neglect and systemic inequities. Roy's masterful storytelling imbues the river with a soulful voice, transforming it into a living witness to humanity's betrayal, its currents murmuring tales of loss and resilience. Through this vivid ecological allegory, *Black River* compels readers to confront the devastating toll of environmental apathy, particularly on the disenfranchised, urging a reckoning with the urgent need to restore balance between humanity and the natural world.

The novel's setting is a starkly rendered Delhi, where the Yamuna River winds through an urban landscape scarred by relentless modernization and neglect. Once revered as a sacred lifeline, the river now languishes as a toxic sluice, its waters darkened by sewage, chemical effluents, and the detritus of a sprawling metropolis. Roy's Delhi is a city of stark contrasts—gleaming skyscrapers loom over squalid slums, while the river, both victim and silent observer, bears the weight of human excess. This urban tableau, with its crowded ghats and polluted currents, is not merely a backdrop but a central character, its degradation mirroring the marginalization of the communities that depend on it.

Roy's narrative style is a captivating blend of realism and ecological allegory, distinguished by her bold use of anthropomorphism to grant the Yamuna a voice that resonates with agency and sorrow. The river speaks, mourns, and remembers, its narrative thread weaving through the lives of human characters—farmers, laborers, and slum dwellers—whose stories intersect along its banks. Roy's prose is lyrical yet unflinching, capturing the river's ancient majesty and its current desecration with equal intensity, while grounding the allegory in gritty details of urban life. The interplay of human and non-human perspectives creates a rich, multi-layered narrative that bridges the personal and the ecological.

Niranjana Roy imagines Yamuna River as, "The river still exerts a half-felt pull on the capital's subconscious, infecting its citizens with watery dreams and silted nightmares from time to time. 'River of sorrows, river of tears, the river that swallows the world poisons,' Khalid sings to Rabia and Chand, 'she bears them in her own flowing body until even her waters can carry no more'" (Sharma).

At its core, *Black River* focuses on the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on marginalized communities, exposing the harsh realities faced by those who live in the shadow of Delhi's prosperity. The novel meticulously traces the consequences of industrial pollution and urban apathy, from contaminated water supplies to livelihoods destroyed by a dying river. Roy critiques the systemic indifference that allows corporations and policymakers to prioritize profit over people and nature, highlighting how the poor bear



the brunt of ecological collapse. Through characters whose lives are tethered to the Yamuna's fate, the narrative underscores the interconnectedness of social and environmental justice. As a luminous contribution to Indian cli-fi, *Black River* combines stark realism with allegorical depth, urging readers to recognize the urgent need for equitable environmental policies and a renewed respect for the natural world.

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) is a sprawling, kaleidoscopic novel that weaves a vibrant tapestry of marginalized lives, ecological decay, and socio-political upheaval in contemporary India, delivering a poignant critique of systemic injustices. With its lyrical prose and unflinching gaze, the novel traverses the fractured landscapes of Old Delhi, Kashmir, and beyond, blending raw realism with magical undertones to explore themes of love, resistance, and the search for belonging. Roy's narrative, both a lament and a celebration, centers on the resilience of those deemed "surplus" by society—outcasts, and rebels—while subtly foregrounding the environmental toll of unchecked development and militarization. The narrator remarks that, "On the city's industrial outskirts, in the miles of bright swamp tightly compacted with refuse and colourful plastic bags, where the evicted had been 're-settled', the air was chemical and the water poisonous. Clouds of mosquitoes rose from thick green ponds" (Roy 100).

Through its intricate interplay of human and non-human narratives, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* emerges as a profound meditation on survival and solidarity in a world marred by ecological and social violence. Old Delhi's Khwabgah, a crumbling haven for hijras, pulses with history and defiance, its crowded bazaars and decaying havelis a microcosm of India's cultural richness and urban neglect. In contrast, Kashmir's scarred landscapes—orchards razed by military occupation, rivers choked with debris—bear witness to ecological and human devastation, reflecting the intertwined costs of political conflict and environmental degradation. Roy's vivid depictions, from Delhi's smog-laden skies to the Yamuna's toxic currents, transform these settings into active participants, their decay a silent indictment of industrialization and state violence. This multi-layered geography anchors the novel's ecological and political critique, bridging personal struggles with broader systemic crises.

The novel follows Anjum, a hijra navigating identity and loss, and Tilo, a woman entangled in Kashmir's resistance, alongside a sprawling cast of misfits who converge in a makeshift "ministry" of refuge. Roy's use of letters, pamphlets, and found objects adds a collage-like texture, amplifying marginalized voices and critiquing the homogenizing forces of nationalism and capitalism. This narrative fluidity mirrors the restless flow of India itself, creating a story that is as chaotic and resilient as its subjects.

At its core, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* explores the intersections of ecological ruin and social marginalization, spotlighting the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on the vulnerable. The Yamuna River, polluted by industrial effluents, and Kashmir's ravaged ecosystems underscore the novel's cli-fi undercurrents, linking ecological violence to the oppression of hijras, Dalits, and Kashmiri rebels. Roy critiques the state's collusion with corporate greed, where "development" projects like dams and urban sprawl



exacerbate inequality and ecological collapse. The narrator observes, “Skyscrapers and steel factories sprang up where forests used to be, rivers were bottled and sold in supermarkets, fish were tinned, mountains mined and turned into shining missiles. Massive dams lit up the cities like Christmas trees. Everyone was happy” (Roy 98).

Yet, amidst this despair, the novel celebrates acts of defiance—Anjum’s Jannat Guest House, a cemetery-turned-sanctuary, becomes a testament to communal resilience. Gorakati Aruna writes,

“Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* explores the consequences of urbanization and environmental degradation, particularly their impact on marginalized communities. The novel portrays how development projects displace the poor, turning their homes into symbols of ecological destruction. The transformation of Delhi’s landscapes reflects the cost of modernization, where nature is sacrificed for urban expansion.” (Gorakati 201)

As a vital contribution to Indian literature with cli-fi resonance, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* urges readers to embrace solidarity and ecological consciousness, envisioning hope in the margins of a fractured world.

*Valli* (2022), a haunting work of eco-fiction by Sheela Tomy, is a poetic tapestry of indigenous resiliency, human-nature interaction, and intense struggle against environmental exploitation. The story, which takes place in Kerala's tropical Western Ghats, laments the unrelenting destruction of Wayanad's forests while honouring the resilience of its Adivasi inhabitants. Tomy's story is full of hope, grounded in the rebellious care of those who live in the forest, but it also resonates with urgency, revealing the wounds of greed-driven deforestation and the privatization of sacred land. *Valli* appears as a vibrant lament and an urgent appeal, encouraging readers to pay attention to the forest's whispers and respect its protectors through its striking depiction of environmental and social justice.

The setting of Wayanad's Kalluvayal village, which is tucked away in the Western Ghats, is a stunning but threatened Eden where lively Adivasi cultures historically coexisted with mist-covered hills and ancient karimaruthu trees. Tomy depicts a scene of breath-taking biodiversity, including verdant paddy fields, chattering fauna, and hallowed groves, all of which are now being destroyed by the tourism and timber sectors. With its disappearing woodlands reflecting the decline of indigenous ways of existence, this "land of paddy fields," once known as Bayalnadu, is a live protagonist rather than just a backdrop. “A forest that belonged to dragonflies, butterflies, cicadas, ants, termites, and a hundred thousand tiny creatures. Greedy two-legged creatures wielding axes had already made their stealthy entrance into the forest” (Tomy 35). The novel's ecological analysis is supported by Wayanad's shift from a lush, magical wilderness to a ravaged terrain of dried rivers and concrete resorts, making the landscape's fragility and beauty noticeable.

Through the diary of Susan, Tomy's narrative style is a captivating fusion of epistolary narrative, folklore, and lyrical style. In order to depict the rich cultural diversity of the area, this intimate framework weaves personal history with the Wayanad communal story



through the use of letters, Paniya songs, Biblical verses, and myths. The narratives of characters like Thommichan, Sara, Kali, and Kelumoopan, whose lives are influenced by the rhythms and betrayals of the forest, are captured by the novel's multigenerational breadth, which spans the 1970s to the present.

Fundamentally, *Valli* highlights the conflict between capitalist development and indigenous conservation by addressing the disastrous effects of deforestation and the Naxalite movement that emerged to oppose it. In order to highlight the Adivasis' symbiotic relationship with the land, the novel incorporates their mythology and rituals while chronicling their struggles against landlords, merchants, and industrial encroachments. The title "*Valli*," which in Malayalam means "vine, wages, land, and young woman," captures the complex symbolism of Wayanad as a caring but exploited creature. *Valli* is a significant contribution to Indian cinema, honoring the Adivasis' care while cautioning against the disastrous consequences of environmental negligence through its unwavering depiction of ecological destruction and tenacious resistance.

In order to create immersive worlds that compel readers to reconsider how humans relate to nature, each novel uses poetic and speculative narratives to intertwine ecological concerns with human stories. Indigenous cultures in *Valli* and *Everything the Light Touches*, urban poor in *Black River* and *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, and non-human phenomena like rivers and trees in *Latitudes of Longing* and *Black River* are just a few examples of the oppressed voices they emphasize. The disproportionate effect of destruction of the environment on people with limited resources is highlighted by this focus on the disenfranchised.

The novels critique anthropocentrism by rejecting human-centric supremacy and presenting nature as an active agency, whether by means of the sensitive ecosystems in *Latitudes of Longing* or the personified voice of the Yamuna in *Black River*. These pieces are effective tools for environmental and social campaigning because climate change acts as a unifying prism, shedding light on more general problems like corporate exploitation, social injustice, and cultural deterioration. These novels greatly enhance the cli-fi genre by striking a balance between regional and global environmental issues. They provide complex depictions of India's ecological difficulties and add to international conversations on resilience and sustainability. They explore universal issues of climate justice and ecological interdependence while grounding speculative futures in India's unique socio-cultural contexts, such as growing urbanization, indigenous knowledge, and the legacy of colonialism. Cli-fi is elevated beyond didacticism by their lyrical and speculative qualities, which encourage moral and emotional participation with environmental issues. Together, these works—from *The Butterfly Effect's* caution against technological hubris to *Valli's* celebration of Adivasi stewardship—advocate for fair, sustainable methods, establishing Indian cinema as a crucial voice in the worldwide struggle for planetary survival.

### **Socio-Cultural and Political Implications :**

India's environmental problems while criticizing the socio-political systems that support environmental deterioration. By illuminating the connections between climate change and social injustices, elevating underrepresented voices, and imagining sustainable futures



with their lyrical and speculative stories, these works establish Indian cli-fi as a crucial force in international environmental discourse. Through gripping narratives, these novels effectively depict India's serious environmental problems, such as pollution, deforestation, and water scarcity. *While Black River* turns the Yamuna into a sorrowful testimony to industrial pollution, its poisonous currents serve as an urgent warning of urban ignorance, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* depicts Delhi's water battles, revealing the disastrous results of resource mismanagement. *Everything the Light Touches* criticizes the destruction caused by uranium mining in Northeast India, while *Valli* laments the deforestation of the Western Ghats, describing the degradation of biodiversity and Adivasi livelihoods. *The Butterfly Effect* warns of floods brought on by climate change and genetic manipulation in Kolkata, while *Latitudes of Longing* depicts the vulnerability of Himalayan and Andaman ecosystems. The novels encourage readers to address the real effects of environmental neglect by rooting these issues in evocative places and human tales.

Together, the novels criticize colonial legacies, corporate greed, and anthropocentric policies that contribute to ecological deterioration. Characters like Tanmoy promote faulty technology solutions for climate problems, expressing "ideological denialism," while *The Butterfly Effect* denounces corporate exploitation and technological arrogance (Saikia 30). *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* parodies "short-termism" in practices like building dams, which uproot families for little benefit and are reminiscent of colonial land grabs (Banerjee 56). *Black River* criticizes urban policies that put profit ahead of river health, while *Valli* and *Everything the Light Touches* show how colonial and post-colonial extractive practices—such as mining and timber trade—erode indigenous territories. *Latitudes of Longing* illustrates how imperialism influences contemporary environmental concerns by incorporating colonial histories into its geological story (Gana 170). These criticisms highlight structural flaws that derive from colonial exploitation and anthropocentrism, calling for responsibility and long-term solutions.

As cli-fi, these novels use speculative narrative to envision just and sustainable futures, presenting perspectives that go against the grain. *Latitudes of Longing* suggests a trans corporeal ethic, encouraging readers to see affect in non-human beings, whereas *Everything the Light Touches* imagines ecological peace through indigenous customs (Gana 178). *Valli* promotes Adivasi-led conservation as a model for sustainability, and *The Butterfly Effect* forewarns of a dystopian collapse while hinting at group action to prevent it. *Black River* envisions a communal haven in the face of ecological destruction, while *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* employs satire to promote structural change. These books encourage readers to imagine and strive toward a world where social justice and ecological sustainability thrive by fusing fantastical possibilities with realistic realities.

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