

BIOREGIONALISM AND ECO-CONSCIOUSNESS IN ANURADHA ROY'S THE FOLDED EARTH

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ABSTRACT

Based in ecological theory, the concept of bioregionalism emphasizes the relationship between human communities and their surrounding ecosystems. Deeper ecological awareness and sense of belonging to the land are fostered by bioregionalism, which promotes the sustainable management of resources within the physical boundaries of biological systems rather than political divisions. This research explores the foundations of bioregionalism and how it might raise eco-consciousness about environmental issues in both individual and community settings. This study explores how literature can represent and uphold the concept of bioregionalism through an analysis of Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth*, which is set in the Indian Himalayan foothills. Place-based knowledge and ecological resilience are important concepts that Roy emphasizes through her realistic depiction of landscape and the relationships between her character and their surroundings.

Keywords: Bioregionalism, Eco-consciousness, Bioregion, Life-place, environment

1. INTRODUCTION

Bioregionalism is a way of thinking and living that focuses on the idea of organizing society around the natural boundaries of ecosystems rather than political boundaries. In order to encourage environmental protection and awareness, Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann first launched it in the 1970s. This idea recognizes that the environment, culture, and economy are interconnected and should be considered holistically. Allan Van Newkirk coined the word "bioregion", which denotes a deep awareness of the relationship between geography and life. The term "life-place" which was coined, highlights the

complex interaction that exist between living things and their surroundings. This idea was developed by biologist Raymond Dasmann in his *Environmental Conservation*, a textbook from 1984. Robert L Thayer Jr. described a bioregion as follows in a recent study, *LifePlace; Bioregional Thought and Practice*: "A bioregion is literary and etymologically a "life-place" – a unique region definable by natural boundaries with a geographic, climatic, hydrological, ecological character capable of supporting unique human communities." (Thayer3)

A fundamental component of bioregionalism, living-in-place influences our social, cultural, and individual identities. Individual who comprehends and cherish their environment cultivate an intense sense of location and possession. By doing this, communities are strengthened. People can acquire a sense of place and take ownership of their living space when they are aware of their local surroundings, as well as when they feel valued and have a strong sense of identity derived from this bioregional knowledge. *The Folded Earth*, by Anuradha Roy is a gripping illustration of how the term living in place is deftly incorporated into a story, enhancing the reader's experience and expanding their comprehension of the character and their surroundings. Maya, the main character, and her spouse Michael have a strong bond with the Himalayan terrain. Michael's intense passion for hiking and mountaineering, demonstrated by his fixation on the Roopkund journey, is indicative of a bioregional mindset. This dangerous trek to a lake some 16,000 feet above sea level in the Himalayas represents his deep connection to the bioregion. Through Mayas comment, Roy encapsulates Michael's love of mountains and his sense of identity: "Her rival in love- not a woman, but a mountain range" (Roy, *The Folded Earth* 6). Michael's commitment to his enduring love and allegiance to the bioregion.

Animal cohabitation is basic fundamental in bioregionalism, which draws attention to the intricate network of interactions among ecosystems. The mutualistic relation between animals that share an environment are highlighted by this concept. Paul Shepard, a prominent bio-regionalist, observed the evolving relationships between human societies, specific places, animals, "Being human has always meant seeing ourselves as part of a circle of animals", (Shapard13). The characters of Charu and Puran in *The Folded Earth*, effectively illustrate this concept. Charu has a close relationship with her

animals, especially Gouri Joshi, her Jersey cow, which she grazes in Dhobi Ghat. Charu finds comfort in Gouri's company when she's upset, suggesting a strong emotional bond. Likewise, Puran, also referred to as "Sanki Puran," has an even stronger connection to animals. His relationships with birds, bats, monkeys, and other creatures show his affinity for animals' contrasts with his trouble with humans. Roy's portrayal of Puran's quirks emphasizes a peaceful and compassionate relationship with animals, supporting the bioregional notion of animal coexistence.

2. ECO-CONSCIOUSNESS

Eco-consciousness is an environmental awareness and worries about the state of the environment. In literature, eco consciousness refers to the literature which explore themes related to the environment and human relationship with nature. The late 19th and early 20th century environmental movements are credited with giving rise to eco-consciousness. Visionaries like John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Rachel Carson were instrumental in this time period in bringing environmental issues to the public's attention and promoting conservation and stewardship. Literature is a potent instrument for increasing eco-consciousness because it promotes empathy for the natural world, increases awareness of environmental challenges, and motivates action for sustainability.

Since environmental awareness serves as the cornerstone for sustainable behaviors and practices, it is the primary component of eco-consciousness. People are more inclined to adopt sustainable practices and reduce harm when they are aware of how their actions affect the environment. As Rachel Carson eloquently highlighted in *Silent Spring* that "civilization progresses with great speed, but at its end lies disaster" (Carson 144). This awareness fosters a deep appreciation for the natural world, motivating individuals to protect and preserve it. Moreover, education is essential to increasing public understanding of environmental issues. Diwan Sahib, a character in *Folded Earth*, is a wonderful example of environmental management and consciousness. Diwan Sahib is a native of his area and is well-versed in the flora and animals of the area. His deep affinity for the natural world is demonstrated by his ability to imitate the noises of animals and birds. Diwan Sahib is committed to teaching the next generation about environmental issues, as demonstrated by the fact that he organizes a school play that highlights the

exceptional benefit of residing in an area where wildlife encounters and predators coexist together. The teaching of Diwan Sahib, who told the students that "they must put their ears to the earth and rocks and hear them breathe" (Roy, *The Folded Earth* 168), emphasize the value of ecological consciousness and the inextricable link that exists between people and the natural world.

A key component of eco-consciousness is a shift in lifestyle that reflects a desire to coexist peacefully with natural world. The natural world has the innate ability to calm and soothe people's minds. People who have a strong bond with nature are more inclined to live more environmentally conscious and sustainable lives. Strong relationship with nature increases the likelihood of sustainable and ecologically aware lifestyles. In *The Folded Earth*, Maya experiences a

profound transformation as she leaves the busy city of Hyderabad and seeks comfort in tranquil hill village of Ranikhet. The simplicity of nature and the close-knit community aid in her life's reconstruction after it was broken. As she says, "a time had come when I became a hill-person who was only at peace where the earth rose and fell in waves like the sea," (The Folded Earth 21). Maya's transition is clear. Nonetheless, it is impossible to overlook how industrialization has affected people. Vandana Shiva in her book *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*, she emphasizes, how contemporary growth upset the delicate equilibrium between human life and the natural world, resulting environmental damage as well as the loss of spiritual and cultural values. She recalls us with the following phrase, drawing on the knowledge of indigenous cultures: "the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to earth." (Shiva1) highlighting the need of harmonious coexistence. When Kundan Singh relocates from his peaceful village of Ranikhet to the dirty city Delhi, this theme is reflected in his experiences. Kundan's longing for the pure air and scenic splendour of his native hills is evident in his correspondence with Charu. His statement, "This city is so crowded that my eyes cannot go beyond the next house. I feel as if I cannot hear any birds here, or cows or goats." (The Folded Earth 5). Roy emphasizes the need of sustainable living and the preservation and urbanization on the environment and quality of life via Kundan's experience.

3. CONCLUSION

In the novel *The Folded Earth*, Anuradha Roy skilfully weaves together themes of cultural identity, localism, and environmental stewardship to offer a sophisticated analysis of bioregionalism and eco-consciousness. By analysing the novel through the perspective of bioregionalism, one can see that Roy's writing is a profound commentary on the innate bond between people and their natural surroundings. The idea of bioregionalism highlights how important it is to live within a place's natural and cultural constraints. Roy's evocative depiction of the Himalayan village of Ranikhet perfectly encapsulates this essence. The lives of the individuals are intricately entwined with the landscape, demonstrating a peaceful coexistence with their surrounds.

The novel's portrayal of eco-consciousness entails a profound understanding of how interdependent humans are with their surroundings. A spirit of respect and accountability permeates the character's ties with the earth. The *Folded Earth* also emphasizes the value of conventional ecological knowledge and methods in promoting a long-term, healthy relationship with the environment. The lifestyles of the villagers, which are based on age- old tradition and knowledge, provide insightful lessons on sustainable living.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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