

CONCERN FOR THE PRESERVATION OF FORESTS IN SELECT LITERATURES AND CULTURES

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ABSTRACT

The manuscript discovers issues related to conserving forests and trees. While the role of the forest is glorified and highlighted in both literature and culture, what is important is how human beings maintain and protect it as an integral part of a healthy and well balanced eco-system. Deforestation is a burning issue today all over the world. Environmentally, sustainable development is inseparable from the way the forest with its impact on human life is treated rationally and pragmatically. In our own literature and culture that give meaning to life, the importance of the forest is recognized from many angles- religious, spiritual, social, cultural and emotional. A few instances would bear it out. Such is the aesthetic appeal of the forest that it is invariably felt and appreciated across the globe. It is, precisely speaking, indispensable for human existence. Usefulness of the forest can be realized and acknowledged only by respecting its laws not inconsistent with social norms and community ethos. People are indebted to the trees and forests for their relevance and contribution to the enrichment of human civilization as reflected in literature and culture. Besides, climatologists, in the context of climate change and its global repercussions such as floods, drought, landslides and rise in the level of the ocean threatening the very survival of low lying countries, have become increasingly conscious of the role that the woods play in shaping a safer world and making the planet earth a better place to live in. They are how the animated characters, who are found in myths and fairy tales, appeal to their narrative.

Keywords: Forests, Literature and Culture, Relevance and Contribution, a Global Concern

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of climate change have revealed the interdependence between the Earth and the global economy. It is important to understand this interdependence to achieve sustainable development. Nature plays a central role in our research, particularly in terms of the services rendered by biodiversity. The ecological benefits provided by trees and forests cannot be undermined. Climate change, with its disastrous consequences, is a subject of global concern, particularly for people in underdeveloped countries. In the context of the United Nations (UN) Conference on Biodiversity, it is crucial to increase investment in the protection of trees and forests. However, nature has been misused, leading to

the endangerment of many species as well as the loss of millions of arboreal ecosystems. If this process is not controlled, [World \(2021\)](#) estimates that people in underdeveloped countries may lose about 10% of their domestic income. The significance of trees and forests should be recognized not only in environmental policies but also in literature and cultural narratives. A rational policy approach should align with the overall interests of humanity. Similarly, [Parsons and Daniel, \(2002\)](#) highlight the importance of woodlands, stating that "there is plenty of evidence to prove the significance of cultural or scenic preferences. The underlying subtleties of enduring survival value do not come under ecological studies that show contrast and variety in the landscape as embodying the diverse needs of life" (p. 60). Thus, the existence of trees and forests contributes to a sustainable landscape. Their ecology enhances our awareness of the harmful effects of deforestation. In fact, the impact of climate change on ecological balance is so severe that it threatens not only the beauty of the Earth but also the stability of natural systems beyond our planet.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The problem statement of this research highlights the necessity for individuals, both domestically and internationally, to recognize the value of forests and trees. The survival of all living creatures, whether they live on Earth or in space, is contingent upon a functioning ecosystem. This study employs a qualitative approach, engaging dedicated advocates for forest conservation. Forests and trees provide essential energy and resources that contribute to human well-being by counteracting negative environmental and health-related impacts. [Ostrom \(1990\)](#) illustrates that "local communities can sustainably accomplish shared resources, without state control or privatization" (p. 103). The methodology of this research seeks solutions to the degradation caused by unregulated and disruptive activities on land. Both literary and cultural perspectives play an effective role in preserving the aesthetic and ecological significance of forests and trees. Various ecologists, environmentalists, and theorists have proposed methodologies to support forest conservation. Among them, Aldo Leopold is renowned for his land ethic theory, which emphasizes ecological responsibility. [Leopold \(1949\)](#) asserts that "sustainable conservation and management strategies serve to preserve forests and trees" (p. 214). Ecological sustainability necessitates afforestation efforts in barren, degraded, and deforested landscapes. The restoration of forests and trees remains a fundamental strategy for rehabilitating ecosystems both on Earth and beyond. Its role often controls the balance of climate change. Apart from this ecological theory for balancing climate change, ethical, economic and activist methodologies also play a supportive role to preserve forests and trees.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Climate change and the degradation of trees and forests are interrelated. According to [Smith and Brown \(2020\)](#), deforestation significantly contributes to climate change by increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. To mitigate these effects, dense tree coverage is essential for carbon sequestration, as forests act as natural carbon sinks [Johnson \(2018\)](#). Protecting biodiversity and the environment is a crucial factor in economic progress and employment opportunities. As the United Nations Environment Programme [United \(2019\)](#) emphasizes, "Sustainable forest management is a key strategy for both economic resilience and climate adaptation" (p. 47). Therefore, coordination between the UN Conference on Climate Change and national units is necessary to ensure environmental protection. On a

local level, investments in community-driven afforestation initiatives can help minimize, if not fully control, the climate crisis [Williams and Patel \(2021\)](#).

The government of each country should implement appropriate policies to minimize the harmful effects of climate change by providing adequate subsidies. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [\(IPCC, 2019\)](#), policy interventions play a critical role in mitigating environmental degradation. A strategic governmental plan is essential to addressing the global climate crisis, which, in turn, can help reduce poverty in underdeveloped nations [World Bank \(2020\)](#). Policies should be environmentally sustainable, emphasizing long-term ecological balance over short-term economic gains [Johnson \(2018\)](#). It is crucial to take proactive measures to create a positive environmental impact. The [World Bank \(2020\)](#) has significantly increased its investment in climate action, recognizing the interrelationship between poverty, climate change, and biodiversity conservation. By preventing damage to trees, forests, and the earth, societies not only fulfill their environmental responsibilities but also contribute to sustainable economic development. As [Johann \(2018\)](#) asserts, "A sound policy framework for trees and forests is essential for ensuring ecological stability and economic resilience" (p. 56).

As we envision social and cultural values in relation to our attachment to traditional trees and forests, this connection fosters congenial and sustainable conditions for human civilization. In this context, [Jaspers \(1971\)](#) defines the various facets contributed by human culture and literature, encompassing society, community, myths, customs, religion, policy, nation, art, science, education, and philosophy. These segments serve as essential components of civilization and adhere to specific principles. [Jaspers \(1971\)](#) states: "How people deal with each other, with the environment, with the past and the future is the domain of culture. This amply covers the imperative treatment of forests and woodlands as culture," (75). These illustrations further demonstrate the unique arboreal imagery of this genre and its broader implications for literature, culture, and environmental sustainability.

3.1. FUNDAMENTAL FEATURES

Various facets of the natural world are imbued with crucial elements related to trees and forests. These elements often unify the natural and the supernatural, transforming them into narratives that depict trees and forests as both enchanting and mysterious. Trees and forests frequently serve as animated characters in magical woodlands, enhancing the fantastical and otherworldly appeal of such stories. Among these natural elements, trees and forests are prominently illustrated in various literary works. For instance, [Jones \(1996\)](#) analyzes these natural objects in *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*, stating that the presence of worldly creatures is omnipresent in "the Forests of Doom" (p. 72). Similarly, [Łaszkiewicz \(2017\)](#), in the essay *Into the Wild Woods: The Significance of Trees and Forests in Fantasy Fiction*, suggests that trees and forests represent fundamental aspects of world-building in literature and culture, enriching imagination and aesthetic appreciation. These natural elements function as guardians of ecological balance, emphasizing the necessity of preserving trees and forests. [Jones \(1996\)](#) further underscores their significance, noting that forests in fairy tales serve as realms that everyone is "obliged to visit during his or her journey" (p. 39). In this regard, [Łaszkiewicz \(2017\)](#) explores the depiction of trees and forests in epic and mythic fiction, illustrating their central role in literature and culture. The arboreal imagery in these works reflects a deep connection between nature, storytelling, and human experience.

Several examples illustrate the roles and functions of natural elements that depend on and contribute to the analysis of trees and forests. The significance of these elements is inherently arboreal, as they frequently appear in myths and fairy tales. [Eliade \(1958\)](#) highlights that "the sacred tree functioned also as a representation of the universe" (p. 273), emphasizing the symbolic connection between trees and cosmic order. Similarly, [Jung \(1964\)](#) describes the forest as "a place of transformation, where the hero confronts the unknown aspects of the self" (p. 112). Myths and fairy tales provide meaningful insights into the persistence and preservation of trees and forests, reinforcing their cultural and ecological importance. [Weronika \(2017\)](#) argues that forests serve as "places of transition and transformation that can be partially explained if we recognize the forest as a symbolic representation of the unconscious" (p. 41). Such narratives underscore a deep appreciation for trees and forests, highlighting their connection to a healthy and prosperous society, as well as their integral role in literature and culture.

Numerous folk tales describe sacred trees and forests across the world, emphasizing the close relationship between humanity and spirituality. In this context, [Eliade \(1958\)](#), in *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, acknowledges the clear and recurring images found in various representations of sacred trees. The themes and forms of sacred trees and forests hold a variety of revelations. [Eliade \(1958\)](#) states, "the deification of a tree was the result of significance that it engendered" (p. 280). Sacred trees were frequently used as altars, serving as focal points for religious rituals, including sacrifices and offerings to deities. Similar to sacred stones, trees helped create spaces for worship. [Eliade \(1958\)](#) refers to these places, communities, or sacred spaces as a "microcosm," explaining that they symbolically represent the nature of the cosmos, which is understood as a well-ordered whole. Furthermore, [Hornby \(1995\)](#) defines "cosmos" as a system in which elements are regarded as miniature representations of the universe. Within this framework, trees are seen as inverted structures, with their roots symbolically linked to the sky while their branches extend toward the earth. In a similar vein, [Eliade \(1996\)](#) states that universal representation was attributed to the functioning of a tree that was considered pure or unpolluted. Besides, the center of the universe was determined by the way the tree was located (p. 299). According to their cycles of growth, regeneration, and shedding, trees and forests are in "many cultures [are] regarded ... as a symbol of life, fertility, and resurrection" (pp. 283–296). Myths and folklores also affirm that "human life was connected to or, in fact, originated from trees and other plants" (pp. 300–303). The significance of trees today is well represented in the biblical story of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil". "The Tree of Life" narratives, appearing in the Old Testament and various other traditions—such as the exile of Lord Rama in the Ramayana and the Pandavas in the Mahabharata—portray trees as central to personal and spiritual transformation. In Scandinavian literature and culture, the cosmic ash tree appears in Yggdrasil mythology, where a massive ash tree in Norwegian and Scandinavian myths connects the earth, heaven, and hell. The presence of trees in universal myths and gods is deeply embedded in human imagination. According to [Sherman \(2008\)](#), this connection is evident in the "oak spirit" (p. 461), famous in Greek mythology as the dryad or as the Green Man, a spirit residing in oak trees. As a durable wood, oak is widely used for construction and furniture, serving both a practical and symbolic role. Similarly, [Hutton \(1993\)](#) observes that "the mystery of the trees and forests originates and identifies" (p. 314), enhancing artistic values and inspiring literature and cultural traditions.

3.2. PORTRAYAL OF THE FORESTS

Trees and forests occupy an important place in both literature and culture, dating back to early epics and myths, where the forest is portrayed as a site of survival and sacrifice. In the Babylonian epics, the Sumerian hero Gilgamesh ventures into a fragrant forest, where he is challenged by a giant guardian. [Doniger \(2006\)](#) explores the theme of monstrous guardians across various myths and traditions, emphasizing how protagonists face confrontations that often threaten the existence of trees and forests. [Doniger \(2006\)](#) cites examples such as the “Norse Myrkvidr—Mirky Wood” (p. 379) and the mysterious jungle of Brocéliande, both of which serve as cultural symbols of the questing knight. Trees and forests frequently appear in folk and fairy tales, representing spaces of transformation. Heroes, either by necessity or choice, attempt to escape from these wild landscapes or deliberately seek them out during periods of exile. Through perseverance and intelligence, they often emerge transformed. Moreover, those who bravely journey into the depths of forests demonstrate growth, intelligence, and newfound capabilities by the end of their narratives. This suggests that trees and forests function as metaphorical spaces for personal development, transformation, and transition. In this regard, Parfit and Price (1984) state: “Discussion, although morally questionable, takes place about the necessity of maintaining proper balance between human growth demographic sustainability and aesthetically delightful efforts of individual” (p. 21).

The transitional phase of the hero’s journey through dense forests and trees is acknowledged and addressed in folk or fairy tales and myths. For instance, the literary and cultural hero in Dante’s *Inferno* moves toward the dooms in the dense forest. [Hawthorne \(2009\)](#) Young Goodman Brown represents the wild forests as the abode of evil in the Puritan myth, illustrating that trees and forests serve as homes for heroes who, hopefully and forcefully, seek the bitter truth about their surroundings and communities. Furthermore, [Frost \(1922\)](#) poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, is a haunting piece that portrays the forest as “a symbol for eternal knowledge” (p. 47). Both culturally and in the literary domain, trees and forests are often used as common images suggesting something perilous and treacherous. The representation of trees and forests in literature and culture is evident in [Łaszkiiewicz’s \(1917\)](#) assertion that forests whether they can be viewed as evolutionary or revolutionary depend upon our ability to perceive it as manifestation of the unconscious. There are fears arising from forest that can be witnessed in children’s tales, indicating human tendency to obliterate reason altogether” (p. 112). Therefore, venturing into wild forests reveals natural secrets hidden beneath one’s self, where the unconscious mind remains entangled in fearsome imagery.

4. CONCLUSION

Literary and cultural myths and fairy tales don’t simply portray the trees and forests as a place of fear and terror. They represent the shelter and support as well, in which people discover their literature and culture in the forest suggesting many positive images. Trees and forests are a blissful place where people fearlessly reside in peace and harmony with wilderness and nature. Wilderness of the trees and forests is a significant stage in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. It is a comedy of errors that includes human beings and fairy creatures. Literally and culturally, the romantic poets unanimously convey their devotional beliefs and admiration for the natural world, which inspires them and their readers with lawful

and rightful spirit. The forest literature and its culture provide freedom and liberation from the corrupt society. The threat of the wild woods throughout the ages appeared as counter images. However, they revealed it as a space that delivers peace and liberty. They depict further an existence in which people can enjoy their lives and deaths without controversy. Some scholars, literary and cultural analysts examine the importance of forests and trees globally for the advancement of a healthy human population and environment. In contrast to the numerous authors who recognized the fallacy of myths and fairy tales, the role of woodlands is generally understood in a positive sense since they work for the world promoting growth and development. According to modern conception, trees and woods are also a storehouse for divinity, a source of trial and error, a motivator for the physical and psychological growth of the actor, and a significant force in the pursuit of a goal. In particular, they are depicted as the source of modern literature and culture. Their image can assume the form of a story that the researcher believes will highlight a significant point about how people interact with the natural world. The research supports the worldly elements that are linked to the genres of the arboreal imagery. Precisely speaking, forests are regarded as having a beneficial impact on the earth's environment.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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