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Research article

Locating Empire and Capitalism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times*

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Abstract

Amitav Ghosh entitles the opening section of his nonfiction on climate change *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2017) as "Stories." Here, Ghosh highlights the significance of stories and storytelling practices in re-imagining our age of global warming and climate change. He displays how stories function as stimuli for the resurgence of our imaginative power to re-cognize the "unthinkable", the non-human world and the intricate relations between humans, nonhumans and the natural environment. Drawing upon the insightful studies of the ecological aesthetics of stories and storytelling in the age of Anthropocene, the paper discusses how environmental storytelling as part of indigenous orality is reinvented by Ghosh in his latest fiction *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2022) which tends to look at the Anthropocene through the prism of empire and capitalism.

Keywords: storytelling, Anthropocene, empire, ecocentric, ecological imperialism, capitalism

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS **Climate Action, Life on Land**

Introduction

Storytelling is a pivotal aspect of humanity predating any sort of civilization. In our ever-evolving society, it has arguably transcended from being a mere recreational activity to an instrumental force that profoundly shapes our actions, cultures, and ideologies. Humankind's earliest stories have been about the Earth's creation (Buell 2005, 1) and how human and the more-than-human world was created out of an interconnected assemblage of material and nonmaterial forms. Our ancient stories tell us about the Earth as one being that is not inert and passive but a great vital force. Moreover, such tales demonstrate an undebatable acknowledgement of the agential capacities of the 'matter' as well as the nonhuman creatures besides the human race's physical and intellectual powers. In these stories, the mountains, the rivers, the trees, the volcanoes and the world of animals and birds are represented as integral to human existence and at the same time are endowed with independent intrinsic value in their states. It is the "non-mechanistic and vitalist modes of thought" (*The Nutmeg's Curse* 38) that Amitav Ghosh argues have been lost and need to be reinstituted for ecological rebalancing. Ghosh, like environmental historian Donald Worster (1993) and ecocritic

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Lawrence Buell (1995), asserts, "the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of imagination." (*The Great Derangement* 12) Stories that interweave the life conditions of human, nonhuman and matter and show how they all coexist in a world of constant struggle and change are in fact contributory to our collective fight against the Anthropocene primarily at the cultural level. It is in this perspective that the paper explores the potential of storytelling in framing our understanding and addressing the challenges of the Anthropocene, a term originally coined by the atmospheric scientist Paul J. Crutzen and limnologist Eugene F. Stoermer (2000) to define the current geological epoch wherein humans have become the greatest cause for climate crisis. According to them, we are living in the "Anthropocene" in which "human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales," (484) have played the central role in bringing about geological and ecological changes. Crutzen and Stoermer seem to argue that the multiscale anthropogenic destructions of our earth have placed humans both as biological and geological agents.

In the 21st century, we are more self-convinced than ever that we have not just entered but have moved much further in the age called "the Anthropocene" where incidents of floods, droughts, landslides, cyclones, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions have become regular features of our world. These effects of the cataclysmic changes to our climate no longer seem as extraordinary events because of their casual visibility. We live in a society where our immediate environments are characterised by the presence of toxic waste, mountains of garbage, polluted pools of water, stinking drains and toxic bodies. It references an age where human activities have been so pervasive and influential that they're shaping the Earth's natural systems. Most importantly, these tales of our remote past teach us about how and when our earth started facing acceleration in anthropogenic destruction. Stacey Balkan argues that Ghosh's recent works – the Ibis Trilogy and *The Great Derangement* – about ecological violence and climate change move beyond "the conventional rebukes of capitalism" to incorporate "questions about empire, colonialism, and ecological imperialism into an otherwise familiar discussion of the Anthropocene." (42) The story of the Living Mountain tells us that the colonial invasions upon native ecologies and people along with industrial capitalism caused environmental violence at an unprecedented scale. Not only these two factors are rooted in our history of ecological crisis or what is now called the era of the Anthropocene, but also, they change humanity's ways of living, thinking and even seeing the world as well as the immediate environment which surrounds us as individuals. Ghosh contends:

> In accounts of the history of the present climate crisis, capitalism is very often the pivot on which the narrative turns. … However, I believe that this narrative often overlooks an aspect of global warming that is of equal importance: empire and imperialism. (*The Great Derangement* 117)

In essence, we perceive and interpret our experiences and the experiences of others as a series of interconnected narratives. We construct identities, cultures, moralities, and histories predominantly through stories. Therefore, when we consider the Anthropocene, it becomes apparent that storytelling plays a critical role in comprehending the scale of human influence on our planet. Countless narratives have been weaved to grapple with the disquieting reality of the Anthropocene. From dystopian fiction across literature and cinema that present a grim tableau of a desolated future to hopeful stories of resilience, restoration and reform – storytelling allows us to envisage the implications of our actions, facilitating a more profound understanding of the gravity of the situation. A true eco story that is said to have been born out of the Anthropocene would challenge the ontology of "human exceptionalism" (Alaimo

2011, 283) and would portray 'matter', hitherto conceptualized as inanimate, inert lump of mass, as an agentic, living force that interacts with human lives. For Dipesh Chakrabarty econarratives are the source of hope in the Anthropocene. He writes, "if there is one source of hope, it lies in human creativity and resilience. Its expression will take multiple narratives and forms. A crisis is indeed a time for renewed creativity." (113)

Furthermore, storytelling encourages empathy, bridging the gap between humans and the nonhuman environment and expanding our circles of moral consideration. However, the stories of the Anthropocene aren't merely alarms that awaken us to the urgency of the situation; they are also blueprints that can inspire and incite change in our modes of being and living. As Alexa Weik von Mossner has suggested "storytelling—in fiction and nonfiction—can do not only that, but can also achieve something even more important: it can help us to imaginatively experience the impact of that geophysical force that is the human." (84) Therefore, in the context of the Anthropocene, storytelling becomes a tool for fostering sustainability and resilience while encouraging collective action against the environmental crisis. As we grapple with our place in the Anthropocene and the responsibility that comes with it, the role of storytelling is irrefutable. Our narratives hold the potential not only to chronicle the realities and repercussions of the Anthropocene but also to shape its course. Storytelling, in the context of the Anthropocene, moves beyond its role as an age-old means of expression and education, becoming a manifesto for action and transformation.

Empire, Capitalism and the Anthropocene

This study examines ecological responsiveness in Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2022). The fable portrays "the uncanny intimacy of our relationship with the non-human" (*The Great Derangement*, 43) and informs us how our disregard for the natural world has endangered the existence of all life forms on earth. As a text located within indigenous oral traditions, it educates us to rediscover sustainable relationships with the material and the more-than-human world. The Living Mountain provides critiques of colonising cultures, capitalist modernity, human greed and unsustainable economic development. It is a story within a story which allegorises the history of ecological imperialism, indigenous resistance, neocolonial co-optation of the later generations and the "epistemic violence" (Spivak 1988) of the eurocentric discourses in the suppression of native knowledge and value systems. The book tells a tale about the Great Mountain called "Mahaparbat" which lies deeper into the Himalayas in Nepal. The narrator had heard the tale from her grandmother in childhood which she recalled in a dream vision. The story of the Mahaparbat functions as a mobilizer for human beings to oppose the instrumentalization of nature and to resort to 'sustainable living' by "regain[ing] an intuitive feeling for the Earth's vitality." (*The Nutmeg's Curse* 205) It depicts an ecocentric vision which demands for a rethinking of humankind's relationship with the surrounding environments and solicits human acknowledgement of the rights and agency of nonhuman life. As the title suggests, it is a fable that mirrors our age of the Anthropocene.

The story depicts two opposing groups of people called the Anthropoi and the Varvaroi. Symbolically, the Anthropoi represent the Western colonial invaders and their capitalist mercenaries who had come to the Valley for the extraction of the minerals and the material resources whereas the Varvaroi stand for the indigenous and the aboriginal communities. In just thirty-five pages, Ghosh has encapsulated a very long history of

environmental destruction by the colonial empires of Europe and the capitalist regimes which commodified nature and alienated the native peoples from their immediate environments. The story accounts for the serious ecological repercussions of 'othering' nature from culture which viewed nature as a realm to be conquered and controlled for the survival and the supremacy of the human race. The colonial discourse on nature which instrumentalised man's relationship with nature and nonhuman species was considerably influenced by the movements of Enlightenment and Humanism. Ghosh marks the ontological distinction, in the beginning, between the Anthropoi and the Varvaroi in terms of the very conception of the 'human.' Helen Tiffin, in his "Introduction" to the edited volume *Five Emus to the King of Siam: Environment and Empire* (2007) differentiates between the Western and non-Western worldviews,

> Where Westerners apprehended relations between themselves and 'their' land as one of ownership (or, at best, stewardship), many other peoples understood their humanness as constituted and expressed through it, rather than, as in post-Enlightenment Western philosophies, against it: place was not so much crucial to identity as actively constituent of it. The modern West, it is said, exists in relation to nature; other peoples had often existed as 'nature' … Enlightenment reification of Reason reinforced earlier Western notions of nature and, in particular, cast 'wilderness' as the antitheses of 'civilization'. The closer to nature a people, the less deserving of ethical concern they were. Nature conceived of as the antithesis of the human (or human culture) was thus a 'naturally' inferior realm inhabited by 'savage' species of all kinds. (xiii)

The tale of the Great Mountain evinces how colonial discursive formulations of man-nature relations purposefully obliterated and hegemonized the indigenous environmental ethos. Maansi, the narrator, recounts that though the Valley comprised "a cluster of warring villages" (7) the people displayed uniformity in their reverence for the Great Mountain they called Mahaparbat which, to them, was the most sacred form of life. To these people, the Mountain was not an inert object of nature but "a living being" (7) and a sustainer of life in the Valley. The Valley dwellers both loved and feared the Mountain. The villagers were bound to the duty of protecting and caring for the Mountain also of telling stories about it, and dancing for it "but always from a distance." (7) The Mountain nourished a tree "that grew along the streams that descended from its slopes." (8) This tree was unique not just to the Valley but also to the lowlands. It was called the Magic Tree because of some miraculous properties that it was embodied with. The narrator informs,

> Its leaves kept insects away; its wood was impermeable to water; its roots nourished rare mushrooms; its flowers produced exquisitely scented honey; and its fruit was delicious to eat. (*The Living Mountain* 8, hereafter TLM)

Despite the intermittent episodes of inter-communal strife, the Valley people were united against the strangers from the lowlands who were not allowed to enter the premises of the Valley. The lowlands people who traded with the Valley people for nuts, fruits, herbs, honey and other similar goods were to be detained at the portcullis of the Valley. After their trade for the season was over, the local guards of the Valley would ensure that all the outside people retreated down to the Valley. This is how the Elderpeople of the Valley whom the younger generation would address as "our Adepts" for their strategic wisdom and environmental knowledge had guarded their place for centuries until one day a stranger from some foreign land arrived at the portcullis accompanied by the traders from the lowlands. The stranger was bent on going further inside the Valley to do the mapping of its material riches. The natives

refused to accept his demand and instead agreed to brief him about the most valuable treasure in their Valley – the Living Mountain, which they called Mahaparbat.

The stranger turned back but promised to return one day. For two years since his visit, no sign of threat was either seen or felt by the Valley dwellers. But then there came a day when the first sign of "the Cycle of Tribulation" (*TLM* 13) became visible in the shaking and heaving of the Mahaparbat. The tremors caused avalanches which "came roaring down its slopes and rifts opened up the Valley." (13) The Great Mountain communicated to ? the Adepts of the Valley that, "Strangers are coming from afar, a horde of them, armed with terrible weapons." (13) The premonitions turned into tragic truths when "an army of the Anthropoi" had entered the Valley after storming the portcullis. The army of the Anthropoi signifies the arrival of the white colonists who not only plundered the 'natures' of the colonies but also transformed the local environments on an unprecedented scale by introducing foreign species of flora and fauna as well as of animals. The transportation of plants, trees, birds, animals and diseases from one place to another and from one continent to another proved disastrous to the local natures and cultures. Ghosh has attempted to encapsulate in this fable the anthropogenic history of "ecological imperialism" (Crosby 1986) and capitalist development. The process by which the European colonial powers built neo-Europes all over the Americas, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Argentina is, as Amitav Ghosh suggests, equivalent to the terraforming of other planets like Mars. Ghosh dedicates the fourth chapter of his non-fiction *The Nutmeg's Curse* to discussions about "terraforming" as a process of 'planetary reengineering', "coined by the science fiction writer Jack Williamson in a novella published in 1942." (53) The project of 'colonizing Mars' and other planets as alternative extraterrestrial spaces where life can be sustained are the outcome of our contemporary planetary crises which have recently compelled the world powers into searching for places other than the planet earth. In science fiction since the 1970s, terraforming has been used in context of 'extraterrestrial' land-making or moulding. In the chapter entitled "Terraforming?", Ghosh revisits the concept of "terraforming" which literally means "land-making" or "land-molding." He argues for the applicability of 'terraforming' to the transformation and modification of our Earth. Ghosh calls attention to a direct, intricate relationship between 'terraforming' and the Empire by establishing a link between the making of 'neo-Europes' and 'neo-Earths'. He writes,

> The science- fictional concept of terraforming is thus an extrapolation from colonial history, except that it extends the project of creating neo-Europes into one of creating neo- Earths. Consequently, narratives of terraforming draw heavily on the rhetoric and imagery of empire, envisioning space as a "frontier" to be "conquered" and "colonized." The concept's deep roots in the settler-colonial experience may explain why it has such wide appeal in the English- speaking world, not just among fans of science fiction, but also among tech billionaires, entrepreneurs, engineers, and so on.18 It suggests an almost poignant yearning to repeat an ancestral experience of colonizing and subjugating not just other humans, but also planetary environments. (*The Nutmeg's Curse* 54)

The Anthropoi took control of the Valley and its people. They created their own army of soldiers they called Kraani to maintain the subjugation of the natives and their ancestral lands. The Anthropoi unleashed 'epistemic violence' over indigenous songs, dances, ethics, values, customs and pieces of knowledge. Once the objective of enslaving the native mind was achieved "by conjuring up terrifying illusions of omnipotence" (*TLM* 17), the Anthropoi converted the Varvaroi into a labour force that was "essential for their assault on the Great

Mountain." (18) The foreign invaders depended upon the locals as they had to be supplied with human labour and the provisions for their climbing expeditions. For centuries, the Anthropoi went on to plunder and exploit the gems, metals, minerals, and the biota of the Mahaparbat. One day the Great Mountain ceased to heave and speak to the natives when the code of conduct was breached by the sacrilegious acts of hiking, trekking and climbing its ridges, slopes and the top. The continuous dismembering of the Great Mountain ruptured the age-old bonding between it and the netizens. The news of the invaluable treasure of the Great Mountain invited people from very far and wide places. Maansi displays how mass mountaineering for the precious goods of the Mountain precipitated a sudden change in the region's climate which endangered life in the Valley. The Mountain slopes had become littered with trash and tons of human faeces slid into the crevasses which formed on the Mountain's surface because of the excessive weight of the climbers. The heavy pieces of snow slipped down the rocky slopes creating avalanches that buried hundreds of people down in the villages of the Valley. The temperature of the Mountain continued to rise resulting in the melting of the glaciers. Here, Ghosh ironically implicates the obsessive desire of our age for mountain climbing as part of neoliberal adventure tourism. The narrator recounts the situation as felt by the Varvaroi who having undergone neocolonial co-optation join the Anthropoi as the climber-exploiter,

> As we ascended we noticed that the Anthropoi's savants were signalling again, not pointing downwards this time, but towards the mountain itself. This puzzled us and we began to tab and probe as we climbed; we saw that strange crevasses were opening up everywhere, that each step was setting off a mudslide, some of which were sweeping even the Anthropoi away. But still we kept going, faster and faster. (25)

Later when such calamities multiplied owing to the mad race for the wealth of the Great Mountain and for adventure sports, the savants among the Anthropoi who represented the Western geologists, climatologists and ecologists began to mobilize the people of the Valley to take up measures of the Great Mountain's conservation. They proposed to limit the number of climbers to put a check on the melting of the ice which if gone uncontrolled would flood out the whole Valley below the Mountain. The studies conducted by the Anthropoi which revealed imminent disasters to the Valley left the Varvaroi awestruck and in a state of self-deception. The natives had already been coopted into Western knowledge systems. Soon they replicated the ways and practices of the colonizers who had told them that their beliefs and pieces of knowledge were false and irrational. The Anthropoi rejected the indigenous beliefs as superstitions and taught the Valley people that the Great Mountain is just a mountain like many others – a material form on earth that has no life and is available for humans to conquer and utilised. The beliefs that the Great Mountain was sacred and alive, and that it would always speak and guide the people of the Valley about sustainable ways of living in nature no longer made sense to the Varvaroi whose "attitude towards the Mountain began to change" and their "reverence slowly shifted away from the Mountain … to the spectacle of the climb." (18-19) The ethos of "sacred groves" was supplanted by the colonial-capitalist notions of nature as inert object and capital. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010, 2015) argue how Eurocentrism rationalised the conquest and exploitation of nature and the non-human actors by naturalising anthropocentrism.

> The very ideology of colonisation is thus one where anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism are inseparable, with the anthropocentrism underlying Eurocentrism

> being used to justify those forms of European colonialism that see 'indigenous cultures as "primitive", less rational, and closer to children, animals and nature' (2003: 53).
>
> Within many cultures – and not just Western ones – anthropocentrism has long been naturalised. The absolute prioritisation of one's own species' interests over those of the silenced majority is still regarded as being 'only natural'. Ironically, it is precisely through such appeals to nature that other animals and the environment are often excluded from the privileged ranks of human, rendering them available for exploitation. (5)

However, when the failure of the Anthropoi in promising the sustenance of life with the existing status quo was recognized by the Varvaroi they felt compelled to retrace the forgotten history of their ancient traditions and cultural forms which had ensured the survival of their ancestors for many centuries. A return to one's rejected and suppressed historical past was needed to repair the broken chords of one's relations to the Great Mountain. It was the umbilical cord between the Mahaparbat and the Valley's people which had kept them tied to everything that existed in the Valley. When the natives regretfully turn to self-introspection, they realise about the Mahaparbat,

> How could one refute something so self-evident? How indeed, except in the way the Mountain had done it, without words, without reasoning aloud? Could it be true then, we began to wonder, that our Mountain's mode of reasoning could only be understood, as our Adepts had always said, by listening carefully, and using not our brains but the souls of our feet? (*TLM* 26-27)

The Varvaroi soon realised that the Anthropoi were not to be entrusted with the regeneration of the Great Mountain's ecosystem. The Mountain had never been sacred to the foreign invaders and they never sang and danced for it. The later generations of the Anthropoi were fascinated with climbing the Mountain for adventure and for the reinforcement of white supremacy. They had come there as colonizers, explorers, scientists, and tourists and the Mountain was not a part of their cultural heritage. The Varvaroi concluded that the Anthropoi, guided by hubris, were not to be expected to give up the climbing, "for it would have meant disowning their past and their ways of thinking and climbing. It would have meant accepting that their savants knew a lot about how things work, but nothing about what they mean." (31)

The hopeful efforts for a change in the attitude of the Anthropoi towards the Great Mountain seemed an exercise in futility. But even for the Varvaroi – as they replicated their masters' models of development and had been corrupted by the values of Western capitalism – it was impossible to stop the ascent and climb down the Mahaparbat. However, there came a stage when the Kraani forced the Anthropoi into digging up the riches of the Mountain for the accumulation of great wealth. The Kraani soldiers and their leaders decided to leave the Valley and move to a safer place after sucking all the remnant resources of the Mahaparbat. The Kraani's leaders are the neo-colonizers and the global corporatists who have continued to colonise the people and the environments for the human and material resources. Once the resources like oil, minerals, metals, sand, water, forests, and wildlife are exhausted and the ecological imbalance increases to the level of serious climate disasters, the colonialists and corporatists are always the first to flee the ecologically devastated territories and shift their enterprises to new locations. Ghosh attacks this colonial mindset of the world's economic powers who, like locusts, after having used up the resources of the colonised spaces move to other territories without taking the responsibility of ecological destruction. (Amitav Ghosh

interviewed by Rohan Datta 2022) It was at this moment that the Anthropoi and the Varvaroi came together to resist the neocolonial forces. The two formerly opposing sides, the Anthropoi and the Varvaroi, "joined hands and embraced" (*TLM* 33) to save the Mahaparbat. The environmental scientists and thinkers of the Anthropoi eventually began to acknowledge the ecological wisdom of the indigenous ecocultures and art forms such as oral tales, dances and musical performances. There was a strong advocacy for the retrieval of old stories, songs and dance forms which the foreign invaders had brushed aside as superstitious beliefs. The native Varvaroi discovered that they had forgotten all their stories, dances, songs and rituals as they had stopped performing their ancient art and cultural forms. Maansi narrates,

> But, to our dismay, we found that we had forgotten the old stories and songs and dances. We too had come to believe that they were foolish and fantastical and had no place in the Age of the Anthropoi. And so began a frantic search for someone, anyone, who remembered anything at all about our old ways. (34)

Ghosh asserts the need to revive our indigenous ecocultures in order to address contemporary environmental challenges. Commenting upon the ecological aesthetics of stories and songs, he claims in his non-fiction *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021) that, "The planet will never come alive for you unless your songs and stories give life to all the beings, seen and unseen, that inhabit a living Earth — Gaia." (84) While acknowledging the indigenous environmental cultures as epistemic resources of eco-conservation and protection, Salma Monani and Joni Adamson (2017) state that,

> Indigenous practices have often been sidelined as "superstition" by those who consider mainstream Western sciences "objective" and superior. However, in collaboration with Indigenous communities, ethnographers and Indigenous studies scholars have continued to collect the oral astronomical, ceremonial, cultural, agro-ecological, and ethno-botanical pieces of knowledge of diverse ethnic groups around the world and consider them legitimate and scientifically sound. Such oral knowledges are understood more and more as "archives," or sophisticated "cosmographies" (Walls 2009, 212), that have allowed communities to express their own "scientific" literacies about ecosystem connections. (9)

The tale's ecotopian vision flares up when the Varvaroi's quest for someone who still knows the Valley's "old ways" (*TLM* 34) ends with "an old woman who had once been an Adept." (34) Maansi further relates that when she started the old dance, "a strange, miraculous thing happened: we could feel the Mountain reverberating under our feet as though in answer to the dance." (34) Ghosh states in an interview that "Anyone who imagines that Earth is a sleepy and well-intentioned thing is terribly mistaken." (Dutta 2022) The Mountain stopped communication with the indigenous Valley dwellers because the old channels were superseded by the new so-called scientific and rational systems. The Mahaparbat turned vengeful when people crossed the lines that had been drawn to sustain the Valley's ecosphere. But when the Valley people practised the old ways, the old relations between them and the Great Mountain were restored and the learned scientists, environmental thinkers and public intellectuals of the Anthropoi roared to their amazement:

> 'You were right! The Mountain is alive! We can feel its heartbeat under our feet. This means we must tend to it, we must care for it.' (*TLM* 35)

At this, the old lady exploded with anger and shouted that the Mountain is a vital force on its own and nobody can speak to the Mountain as if it were a helpless lowly entity and the

human beings its masters. The Mountain need not be pampered like a child. We must acknowledge its force, its power and its energy. Ghosh is critical of those conservationists, ecologists, geo-engineers and green thinkers who demonstrate a patronizing attitude towards nature. He wants us to shed off supercilious tendencies and become humble and respectful to nature and all other life forms. Rather than providing a background setting to the narrative action, the Mountain registers its presence as a larger-than-life character. Its destruction by anthropogenic activities coincides with the decaying state of human and nonhuman life in the Valley. The story asserts how social history is intertwined with environmental history and that the two can't be looked at separately in our age of climate crisis. It is in this sense that The Living Mountain is an 'environmental story' since it fully conforms to the four-point checklist proposed by Lawrence Buell (1995) for a literary work to qualify as an "environmental text." He described an environmental text thus,

> *1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history … 2. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest. … 3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation. … 4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text*. (7-8, italics in original)

Conclusion

Ghosh's 'ecostory' of the Mahaparbat tends to argue that environmental storytelling as part of indigenous orality is crucial for fostering a comprehensive understanding of the Anthropocene and for eliciting the requisite societal response. While the destructive power of human influence revealed by the Anthropocene may be terrifying, the power of storytelling provides us with a beacon of hope. It serves as a compass that directs our energies towards positive transformation - a testament to the human spirit's inherent capacity for resilience and renewal in the face of adversity. Thus, as Alexa Weik assumes that storytelling enables us "*imaginatively experience* the impact of that geophysical force that is the human … through psychological activities that narratologists and psychologists of fiction call *transportation* and *performance*." (84 italics in original) When judged by the notions of transportability and experientiality as suggested by Alexa Weik, Ghosh's story of the 'Living Mountain' generates environmental literacy by raising environmental awareness and resistance to the anti-environmentalist and anti-people – especially the poor and the marginal – forces of neo-imperialism and global capitalism. The story about the destruction and the later regeneration of the Great Mountain effectively transports the reader to an alternative world where she learns through acts of imagination about what caused the collapse of the Valley's ecosystem and how one can bring life back to it. It is definitely through the combined imaginative power of the story reflecting in the reader's active response to the crumbling ecosphere that the crisis of 'culture' could be moderated if not eliminated. Thus, it is integral to recognize and harness the unprecedented significance of storytelling in the Anthropocene epoch, for it is not just about how we tell our stories, but also about what stories we tell, how we listen, and ultimately, how we act on them. Lastly, Ghosh's fable of the Mahaparbat is part of postcolonial "ethographic storytelling" which presents "others' lives in new and consequential ways, stories that cultivate the capacity for response." (van Dooren and Rose 89) *The Living Mountain* is not just an oral retelling but also a powerful ecostory that humanity must heed.

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