

Echoes of eco-consciousness: an analysis of tribal community relationship with nature in tribal literature, on *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* by Mahasweta Devi, and *Ceremony* by Leslie Silko

Ecos da ecoconsciência: uma análise da relação da comunidade tribal com a natureza na literatura tribal, em Chotti Munda e Sua Flecha, de Mahasweta Devi, e Cerimônia, de Leslie Silko

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Abstract: Nature serves as the primary source of sustenance for humanity. The environment has the power to evoke emotions with its beauty of landscapes, the tranquillity of natural settings, and the splendours of flora and fauna, inspiring imagination, contemplation, and a resounding sense of connection. In modern times, technological advancements have propelled societies forward, improving efficiency, connectivity, and the overall quality of life. However, this progress has come at a cost, leading to environmental degradation or natural crises. The relationship between tribal communities and nature is reciprocal and symbiotic, as nature nurtures man, delivering indispensable resources similarly tribal communities strive to protect the environment. This research paper explores the eco-consciousness of tribal communities in Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* through the lens of ecocriticism, a literary theory that examines the relationship between literature and the environment. The study highlights the originality of Indigenous worldviews in these works, where nature is not merely a backdrop but an active participant in the survival and culture of tribal people. The findings illustrate how both authors vividly portray the interconnectedness of Indigenous identity and nature, showing how tribal people nurture and protect their environment in return for sustenance, underscoring their deep ecological insight. This research underscores the importance of integrating Indigenous ecological wisdom into contemporary environmental discourse and suggests that future studies could further explore how such insights can address modern environmental crises.

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Resumo: A natureza serve como a principal fonte de sustento para a humanidade. O ambiente tem o poder de evocar emoções com sua beleza de paisagens, a tranquilidade dos cenários naturais e os esplendores da flora e fauna, inspirando imaginação, contemplação e um senso retumbante de conexão. Nos tempos modernos, os avanços tecnológicos impulsionaram as sociedades para a frente, melhorando a eficiência, a conectividade e a qualidade geral de vida. No entanto, esse progresso teve um custo, levando à degradação ambiental ou crises naturais. A relação entre comunidades tribais e a natureza é recíproca e simbiótica, pois a natureza nutre o homem, fornecendo recursos indispensáveis, da mesma forma que as comunidades tribais se esforçam para proteger o meio ambiente. Este artigo de pesquisa explora a consciência ecológica das comunidades tribais em *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, de Mahasweta Devi, e *Ceremony*, de Leslie Marmon Silko, através das lentes da ecocrítica, uma teoria literária que examina a relação entre literatura e meio ambiente. O estudo destaca a originalidade das visões de mundo indígenas nessas obras, onde a natureza não é meramente um pano de fundo, mas um participante ativo na sobrevivência e cultura dos povos tribais. As descobertas ilustram como ambos os autores retratam vividamente a interconexão da identidade indígena e da natureza, mostrando como os povos tribais nutrem e protegem seu ambiente em troca de sustento, ressaltando sua profunda percepção ecológica. Esta pesquisa ressalta a importância de integrar a sabedoria ecológica indígena ao discurso ambiental contemporâneo e sugere que estudos futuros podem explorar ainda mais como tais percepções podem abordar crises ambientais modernas.

Palavras-chave: comunidades tribais; ecocrítica; ecoconsciência; literatura; natureza.

Introduction

“[t]hose who claim to love and protect Mother Earth have to love all of her, even the places that are no longer pristine” (Silko, 1991, p. 95).

Since the dawn of civilisation, human beings have relied on nature for their survival. The environment, with its breathtaking landscapes, serene natural settings, and diverse and vibrant flora and fauna, has the power to captivate the senses and stir the imagination. It brings a sense of peace and harmony that is hard to find elsewhere, inspiring introspection and a deep connection with the world around us. The relationship between humans and nature is a complex and interdependent one, with both parties nurturing and supporting each other. Nature provides us with life-sustaining resources, including air, water, food, and shelter, while our actions impact and shape the natural world. The delicate balance between human society and the environment is crucial for our collective survival, and we must strive to maintain it for generations to come. In modern times, technological advancements

have propelled societies forward, improving efficiency, connectivity, and the overall quality of life.

However, this progress has come at a cost, leading to environmental imbalances and challenges. Pollution, the depletion of natural resources, and climate change are a few examples of the negative consequences of technological progress, threatening the delicate balance of ecosystems and the well-being of future generations. According to an argument, Environmental disasters mostly stem from humanity's estrangement from the natural world, exacerbated by advancing technology and a philosophy of specialisation that neglects the interdependence of all entities (Dean, 1994, p. 1). The state has implemented particular policies and programs for the welfare and benefit of the Adivasi people, yet the situation of the tribal people is still appalling in spite of the stipulations of the constitution. Green movements have long worked as powerful pressure organisations in global politics, encouraging the protection of ecosystems and creatures and opposing ecologically detrimental technologies (Khan, 2019, p. 91). Despite laws prohibiting the alienation of lands from tribes to non-tribes, land, the life-support system of tribal people, is being transferred from tribes to non-tribes via encroachments, mortgages, leases, fraudulent transfers, and forced evictions (Xaxa, 2008, p. 8). Research contends that Deep Ecology principles emphasise that humanity must act as a responsible steward of the Earth and is not authorised to diminish or jeopardise global biodiversity unless to fulfil essential requirements (Tosic, 2006, p. 45).

According to an observation, "The rainforests are cut down, the fossil fuel is fast decreasing, the cycle of the season is at disorder, ecological disaster is frequent now round the globe and our environment is at the margin. Under these circumstances, there arose a new theory of reading nature writing during the last decade of the previous century called Ecocriticism. It is a worldwide emergent movement which came into existence as a reaction to man's anthropocentric attitude of dominating nature" (Mishra, 2016, p. 168). Ecocritical or environmental criticism likely originated from analogous concerns: current issues such as global warming, desertification, deforestation, unsustainable agriculture, and anthropogenic damage to the natural environment, along with the approaching repercussions of these emergencies, have catalysed movements for environmental protection, climate action, conservation, recycling, and animal rights (Khan, 2019, p. 90).

Ecocriticism is a critical framework that analyses the interplay between literature and the natural environment. It originated in the late 20th century amid a heightened consciousness of environmental issues, concentrating on the representation of nature, surroundings, and ecological concerns in literary

works. Despite the fact that William Rueckert was the one who initially used the term “ecocriticism” in his essay titled “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” in 1978, the term “ecocriticism” has been defined by Cheryll Glotfelty in the introduction to the book *The Ecocriticism Reader* as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.” Ecocritics examines how literature mirrors, shapes, and reacts to human perspectives on nature, environmental degradation, sustainability, and the interrelation of all living entities. Ecocriticism “takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies” (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). The study of ecocriticism looks at how nature is portrayed in literature and how this reflects or criticises how people interact with their surroundings. It also takes into account how literature might influence how we see sustainability, ecological catastrophes, and environmental ethics.

According to Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), ecocriticism is the study of the link between literature and the environment with a commitment to environmental practice (Buell, 1995, p. 430). In the process, ecocriticism often draws attention to issues, including the depletion of natural resources, ecological knowledge held by indigenous peoples, and the connection between humans and the natural world. This widely accepted idea, which is basically anti-anthropocentric or biocentric, says that all living things should be treated with respect and have the legal and moral right to exist and thrive, even if they are not useful to people (Naess, 1973). Eco-criticism is critical in comprehending how tribal communities, with their indigenous knowledge and cultural practices, execute a consequential role in preserving the natural environment. Drawing on generations of wisdom, Indigenous communities continually exhibit sustainable resource management, harmonious coexistence with nature, and a deep understanding of ecosystems.

The eco-consciousness of tribal communities represents the knowledge, practices, and values that these communities have developed over generations to manage their natural resources sustainably and adapt to changing environmental conditions. According to a study, “The modern ecological consciousness has a feeling that the balance between humans and the natural world must be maintained. A perfect ecology is one in which plants, animals, birds and human beings live in such harmony that no one dominates or destroys the other” (Frederick, 2012, p. 147). To Wordsworth, nature was a source of inspiration, a place of solace and spiritual renewal, as he beautifully expresses in his poem, “Tintern Abbey”, “The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,/The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul/Of all my moral being” (109-11). Since the tribes cannot fathom their way of life or distinctive identity without their connection to the land, trees, water,

minerals, hills, and other natural resources, their harmonious relationship with nature serves as the major indicator of their well-being (Rakshit, 2020, p. 201). The mainstream civilisation perceives what it names “resources” as commodities to be exploited for profit, but indigenous people’s culture regards them as vital sources of existence (Padel, 2016, p. 160). Eco-consciousness is a prevalent theme in Tribal literature, paralleling the ecosensitivity inherent in the mindset of tribal communities. A study quotes the definition of eco-consciousness, “The word “eco-conscious” was coined in 1988 and Merriam Webster dictionary defines “eco-consciousness” as marked by or showing concern for the environment” (Shobha & Nagaraj, 2013, p. 85).

The study will adopt a qualitative research methodology to examine selected novels, highlighting how fictional tribes manifest their love for the environment. This perspective enriches the literature analysis concerning environmental transformations through ecocriticism. The primary measure of tribal wellness is their harmonious relationship with nature since the tribes cannot envision their way of existence or distinctive identities without their connection to the land, woods, water, minerals, hills, and numerous other natural resources. The study will examine the literary works of Tribal Literature, *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* by Mahasweta Devi, and *Ceremony* by Leslie Silko to reveal how these interwoven works are literary portrayals of the reinforcement of cultural beliefs on eco-consciousness.

In *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, Devi portrays the Munda tribe’s struggle against colonial and postcolonial forces that threaten their land, while foregrounding their sustainable ways of life and deep connection to the natural environment. Similarly, Silko’s *Ceremony* presents the Laguna Pueblo’s intimate relationship with the land, where ecological balance and healing are central to restoring cultural identity disrupted by colonialism and war. Through a comparative analysis, this paper examines how both authors use mythology, folklore, and oral traditions to underscore the environmental ethics and eco-consciousness of these communities. The study also critiques modernity’s encroachment on these ecosystems, enticing engagement to the ecological and cultural consequences of such disruptions. By focusing on tribal literature, this research aims to contribute to the growing discourse on ecocriticism and indigenous knowledge systems, revealing the role of storytelling in conserving ecological consciousness and encouraging resistance against environmental degradation.

An ecological crisis occurs when the utilisation of resources and energy, as well as the emissions of waste, exceed the ecological capacity of the natural ecosystem. The ecological crisis breakout is a manifestation of the strained and

worsening interaction between humans and nature (Ling, 2014, p. 105). The study aims to emphasise the role of indigenous knowledge, storytelling traditions, and eco-criticism perspectives in shaping understanding of nature. In the context of selected works of tribal literature novels, the study shed light on the guiding lens through which to examine the responses of fictional tribal communities to shifting environmental conditions. By conceptualising the eco-consciousness of tribes within this framework, this study explores how tribal communities navigate environmental challenges while preserving their cultural identity, traditional knowledge, and sustainable livelihoods.

A study notes that “Perhaps, yet, it is clearly inadequate as an explanation of why humans sometimes husband living resources and at other times mercilessly exploit or destroy them. We may well grant the inverse, to wit, that to be ignorant of the plants, animals, and fungi in our midst is to guarantee that we will lack the motivation to conserve them” (Hunn, 2014, p. 147). While the modernised large industry enhances employment prospects for women, it also inflicts significant damage to the physical and mental well-being of women engaged in the manufacturing process. The frequency, intensity, and spatial scale of disturbances, including natural events such as wildfires, floods, and storms, as well as human-induced activities like deforestation and pollution, profoundly influence the resilience of ecosystems. Inevitable disruptions can act as catalysts for ecological rejuvenation and regeneration, while others have the potential to cause irreversible damage and result in the collapse of ecosystems.

Reproductive technology advancements enhance the integration of women into society and elevate their social standing. However, they also heighten the likelihood of female social exclusion, particularly in developing nations. Environmental stressors, including climate change, pollution, invasive species, and habitat degradation, threaten ecological resilience by altering ecosystem structure and function. Climate change, in particular, exerts widespread impacts on ecosystems through changes in temperature, precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events, leading to shifts in species distributions, phenology, and ecosystem services. Managing environmental stressors and their cumulative impacts is essential for safeguarding ecological resilience and maintaining ecosystem health. Women in Indigenous communities have historically played a crucial role in nurturing ecological resilience and adapting to shifts in the natural environment. Indigenous notions of resilience offer strategies for adopting a dynamic, systemic, ecological perspective on resilience.

In the face of increasing environmental problems, including the effects of climate change, habitat, and biodiversity decline, there is a rising acknowledgement

of the vital role that Indigenous knowledge systems may play in environmental protection. Numerous Indigenous populations encounter considerable vulnerabilities, as displacement from land dispossession, resettlement, and landscape fragmentation has jeopardised the continuity of Indigenous knowledge systems and weakened Indigenous institutions, exacerbated by the rapidity of environmental change (Ford et al., 2020). These vulnerabilities are intricately connected to colonisation, globalisation, and development trends, highlighting the need to address these widespread structural issues (Ford et al., 2020). Tribal peoples, who have coexisted with their natural environments for many generations, possess vast knowledge regarding their own regional ecosystems, ecologically sound resource management practices, and distinct cultural perspectives. Humans are seen as part of nature and not separate from it, which has allowed Indigenous peoples in Australia to maintain their cultural heritage and preserve the natural resources that sustain them (Arévalo, 2023). Indigenous perspectives often emphasise the importance of place and community in shaping ecological resilience. This knowledge can be crucial in shaping successful conservation strategies. Indigenous cultures hold distinct cultural viewpoints and employ sustainable methods for managing resources, which can significantly influence the development of effective conservation measures.

Indigenous agricultural practices, such as seed saving, crop diversity cultivation, and terraced farming, promote resilience and sustainability in agricultural systems. By preserving traditional crop varieties and cultivating resilient landraces adapted to local conditions, indigenous farmers enhance food security, genetic diversity, and agrobiodiversity conservation. Indigenous American communities possess a lengthy record of seed preservation, safeguarding traditional crop variations that have adjusted to specific regional temperatures and cultivation circumstances (Breen, 2015). As an illustration, the Hopi people residing in the southwestern region of the United States have been engaged in the practice of cultivating and preserving maize seeds that can withstand drought conditions for a significant period of time (Soleri & Cleveland, 1993). The heirloom seeds, which have been handed down for centuries, display genetic diversity and the ability to withstand environmental stressors. This contributes to ensuring food security and conserving agrobiodiversity in arid places (Carson et al., 2020).

In 2019, the Waorani people of the Ecuadorian Amazon achieved a significant legal triumph by successfully defending their land against oil drilling (High, 2020). The Ecuadorian government had planned to auction off their ancestral lands to oil companies for resource extraction, but the Waorani won a historic lawsuit against this decision. The court ruling was a recognition of the Waorani's right to prior

consultation and consent over development projects on their territory. This victory affirmed indigenous sovereignty and highlighted the importance of indigenous-led conservation efforts in protecting the Amazon rainforest and its biodiversity (Severns, 2020). The Waorani people of the Ecuadorian Amazon successfully defended their territory from oil drilling in 2019 through a landmark legal victory. The Waorani won a historic lawsuit against the Ecuadorian government, which sought to auction off their ancestral lands to oil companies for resource extraction. The court ruling recognised the Waorani's right to prior consultation and consent over development projects on their territory, affirming indigenous sovereignty and the importance of indigenous-led conservation efforts in protecting the Amazon rainforest and its biodiversity (Espín et al., 2020).

Literary Analysis of Tribal Man-Nature Relationship

Tribal literature novels depict indigenous communities' lives, cultures, and histories, often from their own perspectives and voices. Indigenous societies possess vast information regarding their immediate ecosystems, transmitted throughout many generations. Tribal literature is essential for understanding the impact of environmental changes, eco-consciousness, and women's critical role in promoting ecological resilience among Indigenous communities. Ecocriticism is most suited for a work where the landscape serves as a prominent character, highlighting a substantial relationship between the author and the setting, as well as between the characters themselves and the environment. Tribal narratives often highlight the deep connection between indigenous tribes and their environment, providing a unique perspective on the relationship between humans and the natural world. Landscape, by definition, encompasses the non-human components of a location—such as rocks, soil, trees, plants, rivers, animals, and air—alongside human perspectives and alterations.

Through analysing tribal literature, scholars can acquire a more profound comprehension of how indigenous societies have adjusted to alterations in their surroundings over time, as well as the pivotal contribution of women in promoting the well-being of nature. *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* by Mahasweta Devi is a captivating narrative that delves into the intricate existence of tribal communities and offers a lens to analyse eco-criticism, particularly in the context of tribal people's relationship with nature. Understanding the coexistence of indigenous peoples and the natural world requires studying eco-criticism, which examines how different cultures perceive, interact with, and sustainably manage their environments. This research paper aims to explore the thematic intersections and cultural representations in Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* and Leslie

Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* through the lens of tribal literature and indigenous identity. Both works, though originating from distinct cultural contexts—India and Native America—deal with the shared experiences of marginalised tribal communities, focusing on their resistance to colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial forces.

In *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, Devi constructs a narrative that chronicles the history and challenges of the Munda tribe in colonial and postcolonial India, emphasising themes of land confiscation, exploitation, and cultural erasure. Likewise, Silko's *Ceremony* focuses on the Laguna Pueblo people's struggle to regain cultural equilibrium after the upheavals induced by colonisation, warfare, and modernisation. This article will critically examine the characters Chotti Munda and Tayo as emblematic representations of resilience and cultural continuity, while also investigating the function of myth, folklore, and oral traditions in both books as mechanisms for safeguarding tribal histories and fostering ecological harmony.

By comparing these two works, the research will shed light on how Indigenous authors use literature to critique hegemonic narratives, substantiate the significance of Indigenous worldviews, and emphasise the intrinsic spiritual connection between land, community, and identity. This paper seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on tribal literature as a vital medium for cultural preservation and resistance in the face of ongoing sociopolitical and environmental challenges. The work utilises two lenses eco-criticism to examine how indigenous communities preserve their traditional knowledge systems, address environmental challenges, and sustainably govern nature. Ecocriticism, as a mode of environmental activism, serves mainly as a critical and literary instrument, aimed at revealing and enabling the examination of a text's relationship to both its imagined world and the reality in which it is constructed (Kern, 2003, p. 260). Researchers argue for the continued development of ecocriticism as a method by outlining its main issues. Scholars also look at the history of how people have interpreted nature based on their beliefs, aesthetics, and morals. A study also looks at the role of nature's images and metaphors in literature and other forms of culture, and how these thinking and picturing systems might affect our bodies and the natural and cultural ecosystems around us people (Gersdorf & Mayer, 2006, p. 10).

Chotti Munda and his community rely heavily on the forest for their occupations, as it supplies them with crucial necessities including sustenance, habitation, and handicraft materials. Beyond its physical attributes, the forest functions as a profoundly intertwined cultural and spiritual sphere, symbolic of the identity and customs of its inhabitants. The narrator articulates, "A tribal lives in harmony with the nature around him, with human beings, even intruders. With everyone.

So when he kills it is a necessary killing” (Devi, 2002, p. 19). The novel depicts the existence of Chotti Munda, a juvenile Indigenous male, and his quest for self-realisation in the midst of the intricacies of his rural environment.

The story highlights the ability of tribal people to adapt and thrive under challenging environmental conditions, such as deforestation, land degradation, and encroachment by external forces, which are transforming the surrounding area. Dhani says that the forest is “Our Mother”. He says to Chotti: “Let me learn ye t’ jungle. With jungle learnin’ ye won die starvin’. What isn’t there in the jungle” (Devi, 2002, p. 11). The novel emphasises the profound bond between indigenous peoples and their ecosystems by showcasing Chotti Munda’s interactions with his surroundings, which encompass his extensive understanding of the forest, its plant and animal life, and his adeptness in hunting with his arrow. The narrator asserts, “Chhoti says... before his land was very calm, ye know. As a kid, he’s shot a lotta yellow-green doves from behind green leaves. Now that land has become his life. His ma says He loves his land more than his son. His land’s his life” (Devi, 2003, p. 121). The narrative emphasises the eco-consciousness of tribal groups and their profound affinity with nature. The work delves into the indigenous ecologies of the tribal community, specifically focusing on the Mundas and their connection with nature.

The tribal people in this novel adhere to the tradition of naming their children based on the river. The protagonist derives his name from the river Chotti, renowned for its sacred water that bestowed blessings upon numerous generations of tribal people. Additionally, they practise the ritual of offering the first harvest to the Sun God after the Diwali Light Festival. It is also their belief to refrain from killing female animals or birds, as they consider the female members of the animal kingdom to be essential for the growth and continuation of life. Dhani Munda advises Chotti to refrain from hunting birds in excess of what is necessary for existence, “There’s a whole buncha bird in the sky? Kill ten?...Ten birds, ten mouths to feed at home.” (Devi, 2002, p. 15). The individuals possess an extensive and intangible bond with the tree named Sal, which holds significant importance in their culture and sense of existence.

The work also provides valuable observations that illuminate the presence of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) deeply ingrained in tribal cultures, transmitted orally and through direct experience across generations. Chotti Munda’s expertise in animal tracking, medicinal plant identification, and forest navigation demonstrates the many indigenous knowledge systems that contribute to sustainable resource management and enhance resilience in the context of environmental change. Furthermore, the story prompts readers to reflect on the influence of

external factors, such as colonialism, globalisation, and industrialisation, on tribal societies and their ecosystems.

Following the colonial era, the formerly balanced healthy environment of tribal people underwent a slow transformation due to ecological disruptions influenced by the ideology of control that permeated all aspects of life. Purti Munda falls prey to the exploited resources in his native area, at times due to coal and mica. Purti Munda witnesses the avaricious tendencies of the White men, the Dikus, The White Gorman, and landlords of Bihar and Bengal. Purti Munda thinks, “He remembers how White men and Biharis jumped at the sight of coal and mica, how instantly they disfigured adivasis areas with slums of tile-roofed dwellings. Who knows what such people will do if they see gold?” (Devi, 2002, p. 2). Chotti Munda is facing the intrusion of external forces on his lifestyle, such as the loss of hunting areas, depletion of natural resources, and erosion of cultural traditions.

Nevertheless, the landowners’ exploitation of the tribals and the establishment of monoculture plantations of teak and Eucalyptus have resulted in ecological deterioration, negatively impacting the tribe’s means of living and their relationship with the natural environment. There was no intention to include tribals in the Indian independence movement, which the Congress Party spearheaded. On the other hand, influential landowners such as Lala Baijnath and his son Tirthnath have the privilege to mistreat and intimidate the indigenous people who are trying to sell their meagre harvest. Whether these individuals are enslaved or not, they are compelled to pay a portion of their paltry harvest to the moneylender.

Throughout the course of the novel, outsiders are presented with the incursion of external entities, including landlords, government authorities, and industrial interests, into the customary territories and lifestyle of Chotti Munda’s community. Chotti Munda and his fellow villagers resist the prevailing pressures to cede their ancestral territories and embrace contemporary customs. In doing so, they unwaveringly assert their cultural autonomy, sovereignty, and right to self-determination. A profound affinity for their territory and a resolute commitment to safeguarding their cultural and environmental legacy for posterity are evidenced by their ability to withstand external pressures. The narrator mentions, “The August movement did not even touch the life of Chotti’s community. It was as if that was the Dikus’ struggle for liberation. Dikus never thought of the adivasis as Indian. They did not draw them into the liberation struggle. In war and independence, the life of Chotti and his cohorts remained unchanged. They stand at a distance and watch it all” (Devi, 2003, p. 96).

The novel also highlights the significance of safeguarding native crop diversity and traditional farming methods to ensure the resilience of agricultural systems. Indigenous crops, such as barley, millet, and traditional vegetables, exhibit superior adaptation to local conditions and possess greater endurance in foreign systems when compared to exotic crops. Chotti Munda exhibits an extensive comprehension of medicinal plants and their therapeutic attributes throughout the story. Chotti Munda's expertise in herbal medicine showcases the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into healthcare practices among tribal populations. This includes selecting herbs for wound treatment and collecting roots and leaves for treating illnesses. The fact that he depends on nature's medication highlights the significance of conserving biodiversity and indigenous plant knowledge for the health and well-being of the community.

Antara Saha in her study mentions, "Mahasweta Devi shows the Mundas' constant exploitation at the hands of the Dikus who isolate them from nature. With postcolonial issues, Mahasweta Devi also introduces environmental and feminist subjugation in this work of fiction. Environmental issues become very clear when Purti Munda and Dhani Munda both sacrifice themselves for the sake of their land and the well-being of the tribals" (Saha, 2023, p. 27) Notwithstanding these difficulties, the indigenous people endeavour to mitigate ecological deterioration and uphold a sustainable environment by virtue of their conscientiousness and ecological sagacity.

The narrative emphasises the Munda communities' empowerment by showcasing their archery culture, which affirms their identity and ability to take action and enables them to oppose the oversimplified viewpoints of capitalist society. Tirathnath and Harban Chadha are discontented with the scenario where the Chotti's group members possess a small portion of land, "Both Tirathnath and Harbans remain dissatisfied with Chotti's acquisition of land. It's not correct that Chotti and company should own even stony land... They may get a sense of property rights on land. That is not desirable. They should be kept like spectres without any recourse, without any materiality, forever dependent. Like those who are kept apart by earth, by water, by air. Unknown to each other, they both look at the matter of Chotti's land in their own self-interest" (Devi, 2003, p. 148).

The story emphasises the significance of indigenous perspectives in making environmental decisions and carrying out conservation initiatives. *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* serves as a sobering reminder of the tenacity, flexibility, and resourcefulness of indigenous cultures in overcoming environmental obstacles. By exploring tribal man and nature relationship within the context of the novel, readers gain a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of culture and

ecology, the wisdom embedded within indigenous knowledge systems, and the imperative of supporting indigenous-led conservation initiatives grounded in traditional values and practices.

Birsa Munda, Dhani Munda, Dukhia, and Chotti vociferously protest the ongoing oppression perpetrated by the property owners, white Gormen and moneylenders. Eco-criticism often scrutinises how literature illustrates the exploitation of natural resources by humans. In *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, the greedy white Gormen, landowners, and moneylenders' relentless pursuit of profit coerces them to exploit the affluent natural resources of the tribal lands, including forests and minerals. This exploitation is depicted as a form of colonialism, where the establishment's extraction and appropriation of resources directly contribute to the degradation of the environment and the displacement of indigenous communities.

Essentially, the story provides insight into tribal life and demonstrates the enduring connection between mankind and the natural environment. *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* delve into the indigenous ecologies of tribal society and their interconnectedness with the environment. The story emphasises the eco-consciousness of the Indigenous people, their profound bond with nature, and their endeavours to uphold a sustainable ecosystem in the face of obstacles arising from landlords' exploitation and the imposition of monoculture plantations. The novel also highlights the significance of conserving native crop diversity and traditional agricultural techniques to sustain resilience in agricultural systems.

A study mentions that the whole fictional oeuvre of Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi seems to be a pursuit of identity and validation for either women or tribal communities under the context of exploitation (Choudhury & Das, 2019). The novel intricately examines the impact of external forces on women's lives in tribal societies and wider environmental issues. It provides a perspective to examine the interdependence of gender, power, and ecology. The novel also offers enough opportunities for examining the real-life experiences of tribal women in connection with their surroundings. European colonisers have subjugated indigenous women and the natural environment, therefore eroding their existence. The European colonisers' desire for advancement is not only harmful to the environment but also demonstrates a lack of consideration for women. Both nature and women have become equal victims of the ensuing scorn (Farooq & Awan, 2018). Within the narrative, women in Chotti Munda's community are shown as essential contributors to the administration of natural resources and the support of their families. Women have a crucial role in harvesting forest produce, developing crops, and caring for livestock, which are essential for supporting life in their ecosystem. Their intimate bond with the land and its resources emphasises the mutually

beneficial link between women and nature, mirroring the ecofeminist viewpoint on the interdependence of gender and ecology. The narrator mentions, “Munda girls and Oraon girls go to Mission schools and still don’t get jobs.” (Devi, 2003, p. 96).

Shaban Kumar, or Romeo, engages in disruptive behaviour by forcibly removing veils from females and ripping off the edges of their saris while riding his bicycle. After consuming a significant amount of alcohol, he extends an invitation to a woman to engage in dancing. With intense anger, he forcefully leads her into the forest, commits sexual assault, and ends her life. Romeo realises that he has lost his virility and is unable to regain it. As a result, he seeks the services of a prostitute in hopes of finding a remedy. The narrator writes, “This prostitute had the reputation of raising an erection in a stone. Romeo promised to give her a gold chain. But when the prostitute fails, then in fierce frenzy Romeo presses on her throat soft as warm butter, presses on and on. This is so unexpected that the prostitute dies quickly.” (Devi, 2003, p. 202).

Women in the novel exhibit fortitude, autonomy, and defiance in the face of various forms of subjugation, as they strive to safeguard their communities and the environment. Despite the frequent destruction of their indigenous knowledge of healthy ecological communities due to maldevelopment, women continue to engage in everyday behaviours that facilitate the reinvention of this knowledge (Warren, 1997, p. 89). Women play a significant role in safeguarding their cultural legacy and ecological integrity, whether it be through protests, collective action, or regular acts of care and sustenance. Their opposition to unfair treatment of the environment and their support for fairness in society and the environment aligns with the core values of eco-consciousness, which include unity, empowerment, and responsible environmental management.

Similarly, Ceremony by Leslie Silko offers an in-depth examination of eco-criticism of the detrimental effects of colonialism and modernisation on both the environment and indigenous cultures. The narrative delves into the consequences of imposing Western values and industrialisation on the land, disrupting its natural equilibrium, and subsequent environmental damage. Silko underscores the interdependence of all living organisms and the significance of honouring the land and its ecosystems. Leslie Marmon Silko is affiliated with the Laguna Pueblo, who hold the belief that people are integral to nature (Perrin, 2019). The narrative emphasises the importance of environmental stewardship and the conservation of traditional ecological knowledge to maintain the planet’s well-being and vigour. When Silko published *Ceremony* in 1977, the Laguna Pueblo tribe started a protracted back-and-forth process with Anaconda Minerals Company to guarantee the safety of its mining site for habitation. War frequently results in extensive deforestation

as woods are removed for military objectives, such as the construction of bases, roads, and fortifications. *The ceremony* portrays the post-World War II period as a time when woods and natural ecosystems were severely damaged. This is evident in Tayo's recollections of the destruction wrought by bombings and the scorched earth resulting from battle. Deforestation not only causes ecological disturbances but also leads to soil erosion, biodiversity loss, disruption of water cycles, and, eventually, drought. Silko emphasises the experience of the Laguna Pueblo tribe's cultural values.

The story implies that a corresponding trauma for the environment also accompanies the trauma experienced by humanity during times of conflict. Silko underscores: "There was no end to it; it knew no boundaries; and he had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid. From the jungles of his dreaming he recognised why the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices [...] the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery's final ceremonial sand painting" (Silko, 1977, p. 228). The story posits that the anguish experienced by humanity during wartime is paralleled by the devastation inflicted upon the environment. The area is contaminated by both the physical devastation of the atomic bomb detonated at Trinity, near Tayo's reserve, and the psychological trauma of war, which has compelled Tayo to see the Japanese as adversaries, despite their familial ties.

Lee asserts that: "Silko uses nature not only to define the characters' landscapes and show how those landscapes are symbolically linked to the hero's regeneration but also to relate the very essence of human existence. In the novel *Ceremony*, "language (that unique characteristic that distinguishes humans from other animals) and nature are inextricably connected. The obligation of being human is to see the human connection to nature and to speak it, to tell the earth's story" (Schweninger, 1993, p. 47-67). The Barefoot Hopi, an advocate for the reclamation of indigenous lands, highlights a significant contrast between the perspectives of Native Americans and white Americans in relation to violence. He says, "Poisoning our water with radioactive wastes, poisoning our air with military weapons' wastes—those are acts of terrorism" (Silko, 1977, p. 734).

The novel examines the notion of nature's resilience to heal itself by focusing on the land's potential to recover and heal from human-caused traumas. Although colonialism and war have resulted in significant environmental harm, there are instances in the narrative where the land is portrayed as resilient and enduring. The protagonists in the narrative aim to restore equilibrium and harmony to the ecosystem by engaging in rituals, rites, and acts of veneration. Silko highlights

the tenacity of indigenous cultures and their profound comprehension of the land's ability to regenerate and rejuvenate. Native American conventions and worshipping for rainfall: "Josiah never told him much about praying, except that it should be something he felt inside himself. So that last summer, before the war, he got up before dawn and rode the bay mare south to the spring in the narrow canyon. The water oozed out from the dark orange sandstone at the base of the long mesa.... he had picked flowers along the path, flowers with yellow long petals the colour of the sunlight.... he heard the water, flowing into the pool, drop by drop..." (Silko, 1977, p. 86).

The Navajos had established a peaceful settlement in the hills, coexisting harmoniously with the land, until they were forcibly displaced by the white settlers. The story portrays the white man's negligent and harmful handling of animals, ranging from cattle to frogs to flies, as an indication of his lack of regard for the environment and nature. Betonie exemplifies "And it was then the Native American people understood that the land had been taken, because they couldn't stop these white people from coming to destroy the animals and the land. It was then too that the holy men at Native American and Acoma warned the people that the balance of the world had been disturbed and the people could expect droughts and harder days to come" (Silko, 1977, p. 172). Betonie informs Tayo about the white ranchers and loggers who systematically depleted the canyons of the earth, felled vast woods, and indiscriminately killed numerous animals for recreational purposes.

The devastation of tribal territory and communities has ensued from energy development in several regions. Indian people have suffered as a result of oil production, coal mining, and uranium mining and milling; nonetheless, they rely on these detrimental activities for revenue and jobs. The *ceremony* transforms into an apocalyptic narrative that exposes the desolate state of nature ravaged by humanity (Park, 2018, p. 78). The Native Americans saw their deed of exploding a bridge as a necessary measure to protect the Colorado River from being exploited, rather than an act of terrorist activity, "The brave eco-warriors focused all the energy of their beings to set free the river, and so they merged instantly in the explosion of water and concrete and sandstone. They are no longer solitary human souls; they are part of a single configuration of energy.... They love us and watch over us with our beloved ancestors" (Silko, 1977).

The novel *Ceremony* effectively showcases the interrelated subjugation of women and the environment. The female characters in the story frequently exemplify a profound affinity with nature and hold crucial responsibilities in preserving ecosystem. Silko questions patriarchal ideologies that prioritise the subjugation

and exploitation of both women and the environment. The story emphasises the necessity of a more balanced and respectful connection between humans and the environment by showcasing the characters' interactions with the natural world. It highlights the importance of acknowledging the wisdom and values associated with feminine perspectives. *Ceremony* encourages Native Americans to embrace the eco-family in order to live life to its fullest and to reconnect to their beautiful indigenous culture (Fahad & Sharif, 2022, p. 692). The novel also explores the traditional ecological knowledge of the Laguna Pueblo people and their deep relationship to the earth. Tayo's psychological makeup might be seen as mirroring a broader environmental context, since his disengagement and sense of grief may symbolise the human situation of being displaced and estranged from Mother Earth (Hoshino, 2008, p. 41). Silko depicts the Laguna people's deep respect for nature and their comprehension of the interdependence of all living organisms. By means of narrative and oral traditions, characters convey ecological knowledge and cultural principles that shape their relationships with the environment. The story emphasises the significance of indigenous viewpoints in conserving the environment and safeguarding biodiversity. Silko creatively illustrates an environmentally mindful lifestyle of Native Americans in the novel.

In Leslie Mormon Silko's work *Ceremony*, many individuals carry out particular rites that support coexistence and the preservation of the natural world (Dahal, 2024, p. 118). The way Native Americans see nature is different from how people in Western society see it. These views are based on the idea that Earth is an organism and that people depend on it (Descola, 2005). She demonstrates the numerous ways in which her characters are interconnected with the earth, but she refrains from reducing men and women to simplistic categories or implying that technology is inferior while romanticising nature (Orr, 1994, p. 145). Silko emphasises the value and depth of Native American customs, as well as their connection to the natural world, throughout the book. This drives home the point that being environmentally sensitive is essential to leading a blissful and Wholesome life. There is a contrast between the colonisers' and the Indigenous people's eco-consciousness of nature. The Betonie quotation, "the Whiteman sees no life when they look, they see only objects," (Silko, 1997, p. 113) emphasises the reductionist view of nature held by the colonists. They see nature just as a resource pool, or as "objects" to be used and abused. The environment, animals, trees, and rivers are devoid of their inherent spiritual worth and are seen as nothing more than dead objects to be subjugated and exploited. Indigenous peoples, on the other hand, believe that nature is alive and has spiritual meaning. The land, rivers, creatures, and trees are all a part of a living system that is intricately interwoven with human life rather

than being in isolation. Indigenous cultures, in which all of nature is revered as a living entity with whom people have a mutual connection, are deeply rooted in this holistic view. Nature is respected and appreciated for its role in supporting life, not “objectified”.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of Tribal Literature novels, specifically *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* by Mahasweta Devi and *Ceremony* by Leslie Silko, through the lenses of eco-criticism, reveals the intricate ways in which these narratives intertwine cultural beliefs with ecological practices. These literary works demonstrate the profound relationship between indigenous cultures and their surroundings and illustrate colonialism and modernisation’s effects on traditional ecological knowledge. Moreover, the eco-consciousness of tribes is highlighted as a critical focus, illustrating the ability of ecosystems and indigenous communities to withstand and adapt to environmental changes and challenges. These novels provide potent reminders of the pressing necessity to uphold and safeguard the earth’s ecosystems while paying homage to indigenous peoples’ cultural history and sagacity.

Moreover, the eco-consciousness of tribes arises as a key motif, illustrating the ability of both nature and indigenous groups to withstand and adapt to new changes and hardship. These novels provide potent reminders of the pressing necessity to uphold and safeguard the earth’s ecosystems while also paying tribute to Indigenous peoples’ cultural history and sagacity. Exploring Tribal Literature novels through eco-criticism improves comprehension of these literary works and strengthens recognition of the interdependence between culture and environment. These narratives prompt further research to contemplate men’s relationship and connection with the natural world and how insights from indigenous viewpoints foster a more sustainable and peaceful future for all living creatures.

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