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**Ecological Resistance and Feminine Sovereignty: An
Ecofeminist Analysis of Tishani Doshi's *Small Days and
Nights***

S. PRATHIBA

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English
Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India

K. RESHMI

Professor, Department of English
Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India

Abstract: Ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary framework that highlights the intersectional relationship between women and ecology. It critiques the systemic oppression of women and nature within the patriarchal structure. This study presents an ecofeminist analysis of the Indian English writer Tishani Doshi's novel *Small Days and Nights* (2019), offering a profound critique of the interconnected systems of patriarchal and colonial domination over women and nature. Interlinking material ecofeminism and the concept of slow violence, the analysis traces the protagonist Grace's journey from alienation to stewardship of her disabled sister, Lucia and the eroded coastal landscape of South India. The text strongly challenges patriarchal domination through ecological and feminine intervention. Ultimately, this study demonstrates how Doshi's ecofeminist vision transcends general environmental awareness to an inclusive portrayal of class, disability, gender, and the colonial legacy in contemporary, Anthropogenic India.

Keywords: *Ecofeminism, Intersectionality, Anthropogenic India, Colonial Domination, Stewardship, Environmental Awareness*

Introduction

Tishani Doshi's *Small Days and Nights* (2019) captures readers with its portrayal of the complex relationships between women and ecological degradation, as well as the politics of care in contemporary India. The novel is set against the backdrop of coal plants and rapid industrial development. It brings the life of Italian and Indian heritage woman Grace and how she navigates between her responsibilities to look after her disabled sister and coping with the threats of environmental and social transformation around her. The narrative investigates how the power structures make both women and nature more vulnerable.

Ecofeminism is an emerging theory first coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. This theoretical framework intersects the domination of women and nature in the glitches of the patriarchal system that prioritise the masculine over the feminine, culture over nature, and mastery over stewardship. As Greta Gaard has articulated, ecofeminism interconnects gender with environmental issues and also voices against the interrelated system of domination against women and nature. It believes that this domination is not rooted in metaphorical but structural force, which constructs both nature and women as passive and readily available resources for the exploitation of masculine atrocity. Doshi's novel strongly reflects the intimate relationship between the characters and nature, as well as the characters' inextricable bond to their landscapes. Grace's bond with Lucia challenges the conventions of care by presenting disability as a form of wildness that resists patriarchy. This research paper traces Doshi's ecofeminist vision across the narrative through the systematic analysis of the novel. The study critically analyses themes such as the construction of the mother-nature parallel, the politics of displacement and uprootedness, the ethics of car labour, restoration and resilience, and the tension between domestic enclosure and freedom.

The evolution of ecofeminism within the Indian literary canon has achieved worldwide acclaim, from grassroots activism to twenty-first-century movements. *Small Days and Nights* shifts in a new direction, away from a romanticised view of the relationship between women and nature. The author shifts the novel to highlight the harsh materialist reality of the world. Unlike the foundational discourses, Doshi's narrative is closely connected to the Materialist ecofeminism propounded by Bina Agarwal, who argues that the bond between women and the environment is not a biological one but rooted in the material conditions of labour. Furthermore, her work holds a prominent position in contemporary Indian English literature of the Anthropocene. Notably, the authors like Arundhati Roy and Amitav Ghosh focus on addressing planetary climate change, but Doshi offers an intimate Anthropocene. She suggests that the domestic crisis also plays a vital role in the degradation of the environment, like the looming global catastrophe.

Doshi also brings forth the postcolonial ecofeminist framework through this novel. She highlights how the colonial impulse to conquer the land is mirrored through the male character, especially Giacinto's attempt to subordinate women and their lives. Ultimately, the study offers an intersectional approach that examines how class and colonial attitudes complicate women's connection to the environment. Doshi redefines her protagonist as a steward rather than a goddess.

The most compelling part of this novel is its nuanced treatment of the mother and her connection with nature. The traditional practices expected both women and nature to remain silent and be non-exhaustible resources. This attitude is projected through the protagonist, Grace, and her mother. The opening scenes establish this through how the protagonist's mother disappears every Thursday in the name of "the ritual of absence". This periodic absence challenges the patriarchal constraints and expectations that a mother must be infinitely available. This absence is seen as a form of resistance through the ecofeminist standpoint. From an ecofeminist standpoint. The mother recognises that the constant act of unexpected caring leads her to depletion; to regain her sanity, she asserts her own right through her regeneration. This scene subverts the traditional conservative attitude that a woman should be self-sacrificing. However, Doshi's treatment of the mother character is notably critical. The novel not only celebrates the mother's resistance but also the repercussions of her absence in the family setup. The father Giacinto's behaviour typically shapes the narrative's lens; whenever the mother is absent, he takes the mother's role and starts nurturing his children. This act vividly shows that men are perfectly capable of nurturing when circumstances require, but they take on the responsibility only in their wife's absence.

The setting also plays a vital role in delineating this novel through an ecofeminist lens. The beach serves as a major liminal space for the protagonist, Grace, and her father. They find joy and connection only when they leave the domestic walls. At the beach, they find that the rigid rules and hierarchies are dissolved. The solace at the beach becomes a partial liberation for them. Moreover, Giacinto's migration from Italy to India plays a crucial role in his domination over his family members. As a displaced man he struggles to dominate his land, Giacinto's journey exemplifies this situation. He constantly tries to assert his ownership of his land and his family members.

The house in this novel operates as a powerful symbol that creates tension between patriarchal control and nature. The author reflects how the house functions both as a sanctuary and a cage, offering solace and protection during the time of chaos of the outer world and at the same time confining women within the patriarchal system when they yearn for freedom. The protagonist, Grace, beautifully compares the pressure of domestic space and the forced roles to a pressure cooker. Moreover, another distinction between the garden and the wilderness adds a more critical dimension to the ecofeminist

lens. A well-maintained garden represents how nature has been tamed to meet the family's expectations. Meanwhile, the harsh driving of Grace's mother on the hill roads projects how a woman returning to the wilderness to find solace and power that the home denies her.

The ecological and emotional displacement of the protagonist from the coastal plains of Madras to the Mountain range of Kodaikanal shapes the life of Ma in a distinct way. Giacinto's urge to move to new places resembles the patriarchal impulse toward conquest, which stands in contrast to the feminine relationship with place and nature. Ma finds it very hard to cope with the new environments and feels uprooted from her established landscape. She believes that the new place is like a cage rather than a sanctuary. The author genuinely reflects the frustration of understanding that women's lives are buried under domesticity. Moreover, Giacinto's poetic inclination allows him to enjoy and explore the new landscapes, but in contrast, Ma's hardship in adjusting to the new places highlights her emotional weight of relocation. This perfectly reiterates how patriarchal freedom results in the confinement of women in the family.

Doshi also represented the filthy nature of the patriarchal system and critiqued the extractives. The threats of land grabs and coal plants created an emergency for both the ecosystem and the women who largely depend on it. This adds a new dimension to the novel and creates awareness of how environmental degradation disproportionately affects the lives of women and the marginalised people. The power system takes the land from the poor people for their own benefit, and people are sacrificing their living community for the production of energy to benefit unknown consumers. One of the most important aspects of this novel is its complete breakdown of the Great Chain of Being. The immaculate relationship between Grace, Lucia and the various dogs portrays how women were more connected to nature and animals. In the same way, Lucia's strong relationship with the pets is evident throughout the novel, especially with the pets Raja and Bagheera. Lucia's treatment of pets as her family members breaks the anthropological assumptions. She maintains a genuine love and bond with the multi-species collective that challenges the patriarchal power structure. The interspecies communication in the novel dissolves the boundary between human and animal. Lucia's character mirrors the different ways of relating to the natural world by strongly standing against societal stereotypes.

The cardinal relationship with dogs reminds Grace that survival is about our connection with nature. This pack challenges the capitalist society. Grace loses her temper against the mass killing of animals, and she realises that the logic behind the mass killing revolves around the marginalisation of women, too. She stands against the master's right to decide who is valuable to society. She strongly believes in trans corporeality that our lives will never be separate from the environment. At the end, the protagonist chooses to care for her family over the luxurious life given by the urban patriarchy. The

text presents the wildness of disability that resists being subdued by the taming nature of patriarchal society. In a neoliberal patriarchal society, life is valued by its productivity; the lives of disabled and nonhuman entities are underrated. Grace never follows the rigid boundary of the patriarchal system in her house; this act helps to dismantle the binary between the home and the world. Lucia's character plays a significant role in challenging the conventional narratives of care and acceptance. Through her character, the author explores the real happiness of the outside world. She brings the possible outcome when one is freed from the boundaries of patriarchal society.

Lucia never fits into the constraints of patriarchal society, though Grace feels the weight of taking care of her sister, who the society has marginalised. This marginalisation allows Lucia to explore the different relationships with the world. She is not restrained like her sister Grace; she starts howling on the beach and communicates happily with nature in her own way. Her vibrant and optimistic nature challenges the real boundaries constructed between the human and the natural world. This character proves that disability is actually a continued connection to the natural world rather than the human world. The novel strongly suggests that healing comes not from the constraints of the institutional system but from the connection with ecological processes. The novel also highlights the tension between institutional care and organic care. The medical prescription to Lucia's wildness suggests how the medical institution tries to subdue the bodies that refuse to conform to the standard productivity. The intervention of the psychoanalyst represents the dominance of external patriarchal authority in the domestic space, and Grace's attempts to protect her sister and her right to exist in her own world without being corrupted bring her resilience towards the man-made constraints. Grace always validates Lucia as a part of the natural world and never controlled by patriarchal systems.

Eventually, Doshi critiques Grace's settled life in Venice, which complements the text's reflection of displacement and rootedness. Life in Venice acts as a crucial counterpoint to the Indian landscape; the protagonist constantly searches for her belonging in the strange geographical and cultural land. Her unwilling confinement in her father's apartment creates a sharp contrast to the liberal space of the Indian coast. She adapts to the limited environment in Venice; this adaptation to the unwelcoming environment mirrors the feminine adjustment to patriarchal environments. She fails to appreciate the sensory and artistic beauty of Venice, succumbing to the tension between aesthetic appreciation and lived experience. Her encounter with Daniel, another vulnerable child, a boy with Down syndrome, disturbed and reminded her sister Lucia and herself of her selfless love. This incident creates a sense of attachment that transcends geographical distance. Doshi's novel offers an ecofeminist awakening through the protagonist's realisation that taking the role of caretaker for the disabled and nature is not a burden but a form of ecological stewardship. The author underscores that the only way

to live peacefully in this dangerous modern world is to find solace in the wildness of nature, which the power system seeks to erase for their ease.

The novel also projects another important aspect to look at. The protagonist seeks solace on the beach while the Adivasis hunt mice for their sustenance. She understands that the environment not only gives peace of mind but also offers an important source for the lives of many. The developer's greedy nature to turn the beach into a resort without considering the lives that are bound to the environment mirrors the consumerist attitude towards nature and women's bodies. Ultimately, the Grace relationship with Lucia is also disturbed due to the recurrent violence against the animals and women; she loses her sanity and behaves violently with her own sister. The external threats reflected in her intimate relationships lead to her internal ecology collapsing. This incident can be viewed through the ecofeminist lens of how women are cornered by patriarchal violence. For instance, the celebration of the Bhogi festival represents the Ecological funeral, and the toxicity of the modern world is represented through the burning of the belongings. As per ecofeminism, the environment is our entire existence, like the air we breathe; the pollution of the environment reflects the toxicity of the modern world. Grace's whole world is being incinerated along with the old items.

The final chapters shift from trauma to resilience, highlighting the ecofeminist views of restoration. Grace comprehends that restoration is not a return to innocence but a mode of resilience. She accepts that the vulnerability is a strength rather than a weakness. The grave digging for dogs performed by Mallika, Lucia and Grace represents the first step for Ecological Mourning. Doshi made a significant contribution to ecofeminist literature by intersecting gender, ecology and social justice. Through the complex portrayal of characters like Grace and her sister Lucia, the novel eventually mirrors the shift from despair to resilient action. This comprehensive analysis beautifully captures the essence of ecofeminist concerns.

Small Days and Nights represents a significant contribution to the growing tenet of ecofeminist literature that examines the intersections of gender, ecology, and social justice. Through the complex portrayal of Grace and her relationship with her sister Lucia, the novel mirrors the transformation from despair to resilient action. This comprehensive analysis demonstrates the peculiar treatment of parallel domination throughout the text. The novel's treatment of resistance that the women characters develop within themselves resembles the power of ecological resistance. They assert their autonomy and refuse to submit to domestication.

Moreover, The projection of the house both as a sanctuary and a prison highlights the contradictory position of women in a patriarchal society. Furthermore, the examination of domestic space as both sanctuary and prison illuminates the contradictory position of women within patriarchal

societies. The author tries to draw the attention of the readers through her complex portrayal of domestic space. It is neither rejected entirely nor accepted completely, but rather creates a home that serves as a caring space rather than an isolated one. The engagement of extractive capitalism through the threat of coal plants, violence against women and the degradation of coastal areas reflects the author's intentional analysis of the vital role of nature and women. The violence against animals, nature and women is the reflection of harsh realities. This exploration purely projects the intimate bond between women and nature. In the same way, Doshi suggests that literary texts have the power not only to serve as a site for the development but also to disseminate the ecofeminist consciousness. This analysis offers novelty in the canon of ecofeminism in Indian English writing. Even though the specific form of domination against women and nature carries across the nation, they share the same common roots. The idea of intersecting the concept of environment with women, disability and animals opens up the space for possibilities for analysing ecofeminism beyond the human-centred approach.

The novel flawlessly pinpoints how women and nature are cornered by the patriarchal society and their willpower during the peaceful small days and the stormy big nights. The contrast depicts not only the temporal rhythm of coastal life but also the trauma of violence. In the end, the novel ventures into practical optimism through its handling of trauma and the problems caused by the external system. The women characters start to cherish nature amidst their trauma. The author strongly stresses the importance of ecological balance and human roles in preserving the beauty of nature and women.

Conclusion

The critical exploration of ecofeminist elements in Tishani Doshi's work *Small Days and Nights* brings a new perspective to the field of ecofeminist literature. The study reimagines the beautiful relationship between the human spirit and the eroding nature. The research echoes the profound penetration into the world and how it yearns for survival around the patriarchal and capitalistic greed. Doshi does not engage her readers with her simple narrative on nature, but by her philosophical enquiry into the Anthropogenic India. The author powerfully dismantled the logic of domination that has justified the act of exploitation against women and nature. By tracing the protagonist's navigation from the sterile environment of Venice to her visceral landscape of India, the readers can witness the process of transformation from alienation to stewardship. The success of the novel lies not in its treatment of complex subjects but in its powerful representation of women's sovereignty. The protagonist Grace's eventual sovereignty lies not in her resistance against the greedy capitalist society but in her decision to care for her family and the world, which is losing its life.

The most striking part of this novel is the projection of motherhood; the novel transgresses the conventional expectation of patriarchy. The mother character and her ritual absence present an impactful critique of the traditional constraints on women that a woman must be available for the family, from the ecofeminist framework that this kind of absence represents the woman's role in the preservation of ecology. Like how nature needs withdrawal for its regeneration, the women also require a sort of withdrawal from the domestic pressures to regain their sanity. Doshi reclaims that the self-reclamation needs to be validated in society to build a strong nation.

The prominent ecofeminist power in this novel is Lucia; she represents the real power of women and their selfless care towards nature. Her wildness is forcefully characterised as a bridge to connect the women and nature. Through this character, the readers can comprehend that disability is not worrisome or tragic; instead, it is the source of productivity. The representation of women, especially those who were marginalised, gained huge attention among the readers. This is the best example to understand that women are more connected to the environment than men. In spite of her disability, Lucia takes care of her dogs and the beauty of nature, too. The narrative revolves around the intimate Anthropocene, while the major literature concentrates on the impact of melting glaciers and rising global temperature. The novel captures the problems of planetary shifts that manifest in the small days of our lives. The impact of land grabs and coal plants is not a reflection of environmental issues but the violation of the genetic bond between people and their landscape. The employment of the Bhogi festival metaphorically mirrors the incineration of our history and our nature. The toxicity of the external world and the patriarchal system are beautifully replicated in the lives of the characters. The protagonist Grace's initiative to preserve her sanity indirectly projects the earth's struggle to maintain its balance. The mastery of the author is reflected in her power to evoke the feeling of the reader and also makes the reader feel that the destruction of nature is as intimate as the devastation of a home.

Consequently Doshi provides a roadmap for an inclusive ecofeminism that is needed to cope with the complications of modern India. The text proves to be the silent revolution against the violent actions towards nature and women. It leaves the reader in the dark wood where the boundaries among nature, animals and humans are blurred. Throughout the work, the author reminds us that the sovereignty of women is inextricably tied to the well-being of our environment. To live a peaceful life, one has to protect the wild within themselves and the wild around them. Doshi finally informs that the dissemination of love and care is vital in this world of domination. The study embarks on the journey of how radical empathy is essential for the path to a sustainable future. It is not enough to coexist with the environment, but we need to realise that our lives are intertwined with nature.

The main concern of the study is to project that the small steps we take to protect our environment, starting from nurturing the disabled and caring for animals, are the very foundation for a sustainable future. It urges us to move beyond and see nature as a breathing organism that deserves our respect and stewardship. Ultimately, the narrative structure elevated the reader's conception to a spiritual and political act. The theory applied in the study is not the abstract one but a lived one. The study concludes that the novel acts as a significant document of our times, which meticulously reflects the repercussions of our own emotional and ecological degradation. Everyone must be sensitive to their environmental problems and act responsibly to preserve the beauty of our world.

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