



From Landscape to Life: An Ecolitical Reading of Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green*.

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ABSTRACT

The accelerating environmental crisis has compelled scholars to rethink the relationship between literature, ecology, and politics. While postcolonial Indian literature traditionally emphasized religion, region, and race, it often overlooked the environment as a site of cultural and existential concern. In the twenty-first century, however, the threats posed by anthropocentrism, modernity, and exploitative development have pushed writers to foreground ecological degradation and the urgency of preservation. Ecocriticism and ecofeminism, developed in the 1960s, first advanced eco-conscious readings of literature, but ecolitics extends these frameworks by interrogating the role of governance and institutional power in shaping environmental crises. Although unable to fully dismantle entrenched anthropocentric paradigms, ecolitics draws upon radical ecology, ecocriticism, and ecofeminism to articulate a more comprehensive critique. This paper examines Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* through an ecolitical lens, employing close textual analysis to reveal how the novel critiques ecological exploitation while envisioning possibilities for sustainable coexistence.

Keywords: Ecolitics, Anthropocentrism, Pseudo-development, De-anthropocentrization, *Gift in Green*.

Introduction

Anthropocentrism, perpetuated by modernity and exploitative models of development, has dismantled natural habitats and denied the ontological equality of all living beings. Pseudo-development, driven by human-centric priorities, transforms both nature and marginalized communities into instruments of production, producing deep ecological and social injustices. Although contemporary literature reflects these crises, mere representation cannot neutralize the destructive logic of anthropocentrism. In that case, rapid environmental degradation has been detected in the world. This rapid degradation of the natural environment is escalating threats to ecological sustainability on earth. It has prompted a renewed focus on the intersection of ecology, politics and human society. *Ecolitics* is the only approach that argues the interconnection of nature, human and politics; more precisely, the involvement of institutional governance in the unfolding ecological crisis. Other theoretical approaches such as ecocriticism and ecofeminism have heightened awareness of environmental degradation, yet their scope remains limited to critique rather than structural change. Ecolitics, by contrast, expands the discourse by confronting the entanglement of ecological issues with governance and institutional power. It insists on linking cultural critique with political accountability, thereby offering a framework that unites ecology, politics, and literature in the pursuit of sustainable futures. This study situates itself within that ecolitical framework to interrogate how literature can both reflect and resist the violence of anthropocentric development.

In the Indian context, ecolitics resonates strongly with indigenous epistemologies that foreground reciprocal relationships between humans and nature. The enduring conception of the earth as "Mother" and the naming of rivers and landscapes after female figures testify to a deep cultural consciousness of ecological care. These traditions offer critical alternatives to modern, exploitative development models and reveal how ecological knowledge is embedded in cultural memory. By incorporating such perspectives, ecolitics highlights how literature can both resist ecological exploitation and articulate models of coexistence. This paper examines Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* through an ecolitical lens, investigating how the novel

fictionalizes environmental degradation, displacement, and collective resilience. The narrative follows Kumaran, a self-styled progressive millionaire who returns to Aathi, the serene island of water bodies and mangroves, after twenty-five years and attempts to transform the rural landscape into an urban township, disregarding the community's longstanding water-based ecological traditions. The village's younger generation resists Kumaran's pseudo-development projects, recognizing how these initiatives exploit natural resources and undermine indigenous life ways. Through this conflict, Joseph exposes the complicity of state and institutional power in ecological destruction while simultaneously recuperating indigenous epistemologies as alternative modes of ecological consciousness.

Research Question

How does Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* employ ecopolitical principles to interrogate anthropocentric environmental degradation and propose alternative models of sustainable coexistence?

Objectives

1. To examine the ontological configuration of water-life (in *Aathi*) and analyze how *Gift in Green* portrays environmental degradation resulting from anthropocentric exploitation.
2. To analyze how indigenous epistemologies shape ecological consciousness and function as forms of resistance against anthropocentric exploitation.
3. To apply an ecopolitical framework to link literary analysis with broader discourses of governance and sustainability.

Literature Review

Scholarship on Sarah Joseph's works has consistently foregrounded the intersection of ecology, feminism, and socio-political critique. Niyathi R. Krishna and Pashupati Jha (2014) argue that ecofeminism is crucial in the Indian and postcolonial context, exposing how globalization and development exploit both women and nature. They situate Joseph's and Anita Nair's novels within this ecofeminist framework as resistance against patriarchal and ecological exploitation.

Priya K. (2016) interprets *Gift in Green* through a Taoist lens, emphasizing water as a symbol of life, renewal, and transformation, while highlighting how modernization threatens aquatic ecosystems. Similarly, Milon Franz (2016) reads the novel as an ecological allegory, where Aathi embodies harmony with nature until disrupted by urban forces, yet ultimately restores hope for ecological justice. Priyanka Selvaraj and Raichel Sylus (2017) stress that globalization disproportionately harms women, framing Joseph's women characters as ecofeminist agents resisting patriarchal violence in the name of development. Extending the ecofeminist discourse, Anjali Parmar (2018) reads *Othappu* as a narrative of women's search for identity and survival, linking women's oppression with ecological subjugation.

Several critics focus on the ecological vision in *Gift in Green*. Latha (2018) highlights its eco-spiritual critique of chemical pollution, while Krithika Devi (2018) emphasizes the coexistence of culture and nature, reading the novel's flood imagery as symbolic of nature's self-purification. Ravindran and Yogeshvaran (2019) underline Joseph's ecofeminist politics, linking her narrative strategies to cultural and radical feminism. Gopinath (2019) underscores how fact and fiction merge in Joseph's eco-conscious narratives, while Vijayan (2019) traces Joseph's literary trajectory from gender concerns to ecofeminist activism, showing how forests function as archetypal and political spaces across her works.

Research gap

Existing scholarship on Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* largely applies ecocriticism and ecofeminism, emphasizing symbolic links between nature and gender. However, little attention has been given to the novel's ecopolitical critique of governance, state complicity, and administrative failures in environmental preservation. Indigenous myths and epistemologies are often treated as cultural motifs rather than political knowledge systems resisting capitalist modernity. By adopting an ecopolitical framework, this study fills these gaps, positioning *Gift in Green* as both a critique of environmental degradation and a vision of sustainable coexistence.

Discussion

Ontological description of Aathi

The novel, *Gift in Green*, is set in the Island called Aathi, surrounded by water bodies and mangroves forest. Throughout the novel, Sarah Joseph presents two contrasting worlds: the utopian harmony of Aathi's traditional society and its gradual decay under the forces of modern development. Drawing on Derrida's concept of ontology, the novel's portrayal of Aathi is not a romanticized pastoral idyll but a critique of anthropocentrism and its destructive consequences. The transformation of Aathi's serene landscape illustrates how human-centered notions of progress imperil the sustainability of life on earth. Here, Kumaran, once a youth of Aathi, returns after twenty-five years not merely as an individual but as a bearer of modernity, developmental ambition, and the politics of power. His re-entry signals the intrusion of profit-

driven ideologies that destabilize the community's ecological equilibrium. At the outset, Aathi's way of life resonates with M. K. Gandhi's principles of non-violence and swaraj, grounded in self-reliance and symbiosis with nature. Every species is accorded equal rights to existence, and the community thrives on resources sustained by Kerala's backwaters. Joseph vividly depicts this aquatic ecosystem as one where human and non-human life coexists with dignity and equality:

"Environment of Aathi had provided everything to survive in this earth. If someone fish only till noon one could make enough to feed a whole family. Fish or mussels; enough to meet one's daily need. Add to this the two Pokkali harvests from the paddy field every year that anyone could reap. It was quite sufficient to live free from want. The rice that ate was of excellent quality. Everyone cultivated pumpkin, white gourd, spinach, and beans for their own use. Every household had a cow, a buffalo, hens, and ducks. People slept on mats which had woven by themselves. From the forest, a cool, soothing breeze blew over the backwater all night long" (Joseph 21).

The community's material culture embodies a sustainable relationship with the environment: mud-and-thatch houses, courtyards with lotus ponds, and the practice of bathing cattle in backwaters. A few hours of fishing sustain an entire household, while the twice-yearly Pokkali harvest ensures food security. This cyclical, labor-sharing system resonates with Elinor Ostrom's argument that local communities often develop effective commons governance institutions, ensuring long-term ecological resilience (Ostrom 90). Joseph's depiction thus extends beyond ecological aesthetics to document a political model of ecological democracy rooted in collective self-regulation.

Through the storyteller Noor Muhammad, Joseph evokes the mangrove forests as the "Green Bangle," symbolizing resilience and beauty. His narration underscores the sacredness of ecological spaces, which remain immune to the noise of modernity. Listening to "the subtle voice of the cosmos" as leaves drift into the backwaters, Noor Muhammad perceives a world where harmony and silence counter the violence of mechanized progress. While this ecological aesthetics may appear romantic, it carries a political dimension: as Rob Nixon argues, such representations resist the "slow violence" of environmental destruction that often remains invisible in dominant development narratives (Nixon 2).

Equally significant is Joseph's depiction of Pokkali rice cultivation, uniquely adapted to saline wetlands. The intricate processes of bund-building, salinity management, and seasonal timing embody inherited ecological knowledge that ensures intergenerational survival. Vandana Shiva interprets such indigenous practices as forms of ecological knowledge, particularly women's, that nurture life against industrial agriculture's destructive forces (Shiva 45). Bina Agarwal, however, cautions against symbolic ecofeminism and stresses the importance of women's material entitlements and decision-making power in ecological governance (Agarwal 142). Joseph negotiates both registers: she aestheticizes women's closeness to the land while simultaneously foregrounding their indispensable labor and ecological expertise as political acts of resistance.

Importantly, Aathi is represented as a space outside the reach of industrial modernity. There are no roads, bridges, or tall buildings; connectivity occurs solely through waterways. This isolation is framed not as backwardness but as preservation- a refusal of infrastructural enclosures that typically precede ecological dispossession. Robyn Eckersley argues that liberal-capitalist states often reproduce ecological crises by treating nature as an exploitable resource for markets (Eckersley 122). Joseph anticipates this critique: Aathi's resistance to roads and real estate projects exemplifies a rejection of growth-centric ecopolitics that reclassifies wetlands as wastelands.

In this sense, *Gift in Green* fictionalizes the core of ecopolitics- the struggle over who decides the value and use of ecosystems. Joseph presents Aathi not merely as an ecological sanctuary but as a political commons where questions of justice, participation, and rights unfold. Her narrative integrates ecofeminism, commons governance, and environmental justice into a literary space that challenges hegemonic development models. By weaving ecological aesthetics with political critique, Joseph advances what Andrew Dobson calls "green political thought," grounded in sufficiency, interdependence, and democratic ecological governance (Dobson 43).

Finally, Joseph emphasizes that life in Aathi is structured not by human dominance but by mutual respect across species. The backwaters symbolize not only livelihood but also an ethical space for all living beings. This articulation envisions an inclusive, biocentric worldview that resists exploitative anthropocentric paradigms and advocates for ecological justice as a guiding principle for both human and non-human life.

Anthropocentric engrossment in Aathi

Development is a western concept. But now it becomes hegemony of the whole world. In the name of development, nature has been abused, assaulted and destroyed by the male gender of the society. The anthropocentric male dominated society is - "the protection and conservation of nature for the good of humanity" (Nayar 74). In that sense male gender of the society, get the paramount power from the society to utilize the nature according to their will. By getting this power, natural resources has been over exploited in the name of Industrial development. According to some eco-centric exponent, this industrial development is only to fulfill the need of the male gender of the society. Vandana Shiva claims this development as "maldevelopment" (Shiva 275). As she asserts that-

Maldevelopment is the violation of the integrity of organic, interconnected and interdependent system that sets in motion a process of exploitation inequality, injustice, and violence. It is blind to the fact that

recognition of nature's harmony and action to maintain it are precondition for distributive justice (Shiva 275).

In the novel *Gift in Green*, Kumaran, the so-called progressive youth of Aathi, embodies what ecopolitical theorists identify as the ideology of pseudo-development. His vision of modernization and economic growth functions as a mask for ecological destruction and social displacement. Development, in this sense, aligns with what Wolfgang Sachs terms *maldevelopment*, a paradigm in which progress is measured by economic expansion at the expense of ecological stability and cultural continuity (Sachs 5). Kumaran's anthropocentric worldview dismisses the water-bound life of Aathi- its pokkali cultivation, mangroves, fisheries, and indigenous knowledge as stagnant and unproductive. For him, nature has no intrinsic value unless transformed through science, technology, and capital for human profit, reflecting Vandana Shiva's critique of the reductionist view of nature that severs ecological interdependence in the name of development. Shiva clearly points out this development with an example that – "A stable and clean river is not a productive resource in this view; it needs to be "developed" with dams in order to become so. Women, sharing the river as commons to satisfy the water needs of their families and society, are not involved in productive labor; when replaced by the engineering man, water management and water use become productive activities. Natural forests remain unproductive till they are developed into monoculture plantation of commercial species" (Shiva-274). As Kumaran himself questions:

"Should the son of a fisherman be only a fisherman? The offspring of a farmer nothing but a farmer? Immersed in water day after day, all year round, what can one hope to gain in life? What more than a few grains of paddy, some fish, a few oyster? Can one hope to build a decent house? Or move from a reed mat to a cot? Or dream of having decent clothes to wear? Or even of using street lights rather than a palm-leaf torch at night?" (Joseph 19).

Rejecting the traditional water-life of Aathi, Kumaran abandons both his homeland and his beloved Kunjimathu. Thirty-six years later, he returns with the ideology of scientific development and modernity, implementing projects that epitomize ecopolitical exploitation. The construction of a bridge, the dredging of riverbeds, the destruction of oyster habitats, and the invasion of mangrove forests exemplify what Ramachandra Guha terms the "ecology of affluence," where elite-driven development devastates both ecosystems and local communities (Guha 41). The bridge project alone disrupted the riverbed, destroyed oyster nests, and polluted freshwater, while the mangrove forest was cleared so violently that "the sky was at once overcast with a multitude of birds- white, black and gray- that took to their wings in terror" (Joseph 40). Though this technical intervention increase the life-style of the society to the western rank but by this cosmopolitan environment female gender and nature has lost their own natural procurement. This is the reason last few decades, increasing of the barrenness of female gender and nature has been detected.

According to patriarchal concept of development nature is unproductive without the intervention of industrial development. This mechanical intervention geared up the productive power of the nature but it disturbs the "food chain" of the nature. So this development is against the ecological principle. The development projects of Kumaran are extended beyond physical infrastructure to land dispossession. Kumaran illegally acquired three hundred acres of Ganesha Subramaniyam's backwater, displacing cultivators and disrupting livelihoods:

"All three hundred acres of Ganesha Subramaniyam's backwater being landfilled. When completed, roads and a township would come up there" (Joseph 156).

This seizure illustrates David Harvey's concept of "accumulation by dispossession," wherein local livelihoods are sacrificed to urban-industrial expansion (Harvey 142). The ecological impact was equally severe: fish, oysters, forests, and other species lost their habitats as the bridge stretched into dense mangroves (Joseph 156). Joseph fictionalizes this rupture through the magician's vision, where fertile landscapes vanish to be replaced by urban spectacle:

"The children, the young people, the women and the elderly were all dumbstruck. In an instant everything had vanished: the bank, the ferry boats, the water, the paddy fields, the canal, the pond, the wells, the palm groves and the mangroves. In the next moment, a new world appeared: huge buildings, broad roads, hotels, cinema halls, parks and glittering shopping malls, light...noise...teeming multitudes" (Joseph 42).

On the other hand, the uses and misuses of the natural world also handled by the anthropocentric society. This science and technology creates an artificial world where nature's principles are devalued. Due to this artificial world, household products, industrial pollutants, plastic and packaging wastes invades the homes of the first world woman threatening the reproduction of daily life, while direct access to food, fuel and clean water for many third world woman is imperiled by cash cropping on traditional homeland and by pesticides used in agribusiness (Merchant 194). Joseph depicts how that fast growing scientific development victimizes the nature and women.

Kumaran also transformed the Thampuram serene into a tourist place, constructing guest houses and converting cultivated land into prawn farms that relied heavily on pesticides. This intervention underscores Shiva's concern with industrial agriculture as a site of ecological violence, which destroys biodiversity and undermines traditional food systems (Shiva 22). In this sense, Kumaran functions less as an individual character and more as a literary embodiment of the extractive logic of global developmentalism. Despite, Kumaran's team devastates the ecological and cultural landscape of Aathi. Ecological destruction has been recorded by the novelist as follows:

“That was the day yellow butterflies perished in their thousands. On the ridge of the paddy fields, in courtyards and in front of Thampuram’s shrine, they fell dead and lay like withered laburnum flowers. It was the children who noticed them first, and it saddened them greatly. Sitting by dead butterflies they stroked with their index fingers the delicate wings of the tiny yellow creatures that had always eluded their hands. They tried to revive them by blowing in them. Then they dug little pit and buried them. They were unaware at that time of the tragedy that had befallen the green frogs that were their pets. Dead they lay in Kunjimathu’s Pokkali paddy field, their white underbellies exposed like mute metaphors of helplessness” (Joseph 177-178). The depiction of mass death among butterflies and frogs in the narrative serves as a powerful critique of chemical-based agricultural practices, revealing how toxic pesticides disrupt ecological balance and inflict irreversible damage on both human and nonhuman life. The scene in which “yellow butterflies perished in their thousands” (Joseph 177) across paddy fields and courtyards, underscores the vulnerability of delicate species to human-induced contamination. The children’s innocent attempts to revive the lifeless insects contrast sharply with the larger, unseen devastation, soon mirrored in the discovery of dead green frogs lying in Kunjimathu’s Pokkali fields, their “white underbellies exposed” (Joseph 178) as mute emblems of ecological suffering. This localized tragedy is traced to Komban Joy’s admission that he had mixed *Endosulfan* into the fields to secure the fish harvest for personal gain, a revelation that exposes how greed accelerates ecological collapse. The narrative’s portrayal of these deaths aligns with Rachel Carson’s seminal critique of pesticide toxicity; Carson warns that such chemicals “have immense power not merely to poison but to enter into the most vital processes of the body and change them in sinister and often deadly ways,” destroying enzymes, impairing organ function, and initiating carcinogenic transformations (Carson 16). Through this convergence of fictional representation and scientific insight, the text illustrates how chemical intrusion into ecosystems constitutes both an environmental and ethical crisis, revealing the far-reaching consequences of human exploitation of nature.

Joseph emphasizes that the incursions from external forces erode not only the physical environment but also the indigenous epistemology that sustained the community:

“Life in Aathi had begun to lose its serenity because of the continual incursions from the external world. Not only human beings but also animals, birds, and fish, were being affected” (Joseph 151).

Through Kumaran, *Gift in Green* critiques anthropocentric development, highlighting the entangled dispossession of both ecological and cultural systems and foregrounding the ecopolitical necessity of resisting maldevelopment. Indigenous people of Aathi raises voice against this toxic world by changing the method of production and disposal system of machines and trying to retained the mainstream cultural ethics on environmental preservation and conservation. These led to link between the ecology and politics and strengthen the ecopolitical principles to stand against all kind of anthropocentric dominations.

De-Anthropocentrization of Aathi.

Anthropocentrism, as a dominant worldview, has sanctioned the relentless exploitation of land, water, and air, reducing them to mere instruments of human utility. In Sarah Joseph’s *Gift in Green*, this ideology is postulated through development policies that are not neutral or benign but deeply implicated in the logic of power and capital. Such policies, crafted and executed by politically ambitious agents like Kumaran, embody what ecopolitical discourse identifies as the collusion between state power, capitalist expansion, and environmental degradation. Joseph situates Kumaran within this nexus of power politics, making him a literary emblem of anthropocentric domination.

At the same time, the novel showcasing the resistance that aligns with broader ecopolitical movements of the twentieth century. Historical parallels can be drawn with the direct-action environmental of the movement 1960s and 1970s, which opposed “an economy that profits from destroying forests, building nuclear weapons, and poisoning our foods and water” (Merchant 188). Such resistance, framed within ecopolitical discourse, challenges not only the economic rationale of development but also the epistemic violence of anthropocentrism itself. In *Gift in Green*, the characters Dinakaran, Ponmani, Shailaja, and Kunjimathu embody these counter-politics by confronting Kumaran and the local administration that legitimizes his developmental agenda. Their struggle reflects an ecojustice perspective that privileges the rights of land and water over the co-modifying logic of capital.

Joseph powerfully illustrates the villagers’ ecological and political resistance through a vivid scene of nonviolent protest. As the narrative unfolds, “the protesters who blocked the road did not flee or scatter under the police lathi charge,” and Shailaja witnesses their agony as they scream, “soaked in the blood gushing from their injured heads.” Their collective cry becomes an unmistakable declaration of defiance: “Kill us, kill all of us and bury us! We don’t want your mansions. Our earth and our water- that’s all we need” (Joseph 217). Through this portrayal, Joseph emphasizes the community’s unwavering commitment to protecting their land and natural resources, resisting both state oppression and development that driven displacement.

The villagers’ resistance to Kumaran’s prawn-farming proposal in Joseph’s novel can also be read through the lens of ecopolitical theory, which interrogates how power, development, and environmental governance intersect. Ecopolitics examines how ecological futures are shaped by political and economic interests, often revealing how marginalized communities bear the brunt of extractive development policies (Dobson 12). In this context, Kunjimathu’s refusal-“No one farms prawn in this place” (Joseph 174), functions as a direct

challenge to the ecopolitical regimes that seek to transform natural resources and convert communal lands into zones of capitalist production.

Komban's insistence on acquiring the paddy field is emblematic of a neoliberal development agenda, which frames environmental exploitation as inevitable and economically rational. Prawn farming has been promoted globally as a lucrative enterprise, often results in salinity intrusion, soil degradation, and the collapse of traditional agrarian livelihoods. By highlighting the pollutants inherent in the proposed project, "quicklime, poison, pesticides and fertilizers" (Joseph 174), Joseph foregrounds the ecological violence embedded within such ecopolitical decisions. This aligns with what environmental political theorists argue: that "development" is frequently a discourse masking structural power imbalances and ecological dispossession (Guha and Martinez-Alier 58).

Within this ecopolitical framework, the villagers' stance can be interpreted as a form of grassroots environmental governance a resistance that asserts the right of local communities to determine the fate of their ecological commons. Karthiayani and Devaki's defense of the paddy field underscores a political assertion of autonomy: their land "yields fish and rice for us almost by itself" (Joseph 174). This declaration challenges top-down resource control and emphasizes an eco-subsistence model in which land is valued for its regenerative capacity rather than its profitability. Such resistance aligns with ecopolitical arguments that sustainable ecological futures require decentralization, local stewardship, and respect for indigenous knowledge systems (Baviskar 102).

Here, the protesters' articulation of "earth and water" as non-negotiable necessities underscores what ecopolitical theory terms the *de-anthropocentrization* of life, where nature is not a backdrop for development but an active subject of rights and survival. The novel ultimately demonstrates that when the burden of exploitation exceeds ecological thresholds, nature itself enacts a politics of resistance. The climactic Gale that demolishes Kumaran's projects restores the waterways of Aathi, symbolizing the earth's autonomous agency against anthropocentric domination. Kunjimathu's remark- "It's the monsoon, after all. Let it have its full play" (Joseph 342) becomes a profound ecological statement that recognizes natural cycles as sovereign, irreducible to human control.

Finally, the novel *Gift in Green* reveals how Joseph's narrative engages deeply with ecopolitical discourse. It portrays rural communities not as passive victims but as active political agents who contest exploitative environmental governance. Their refusal to relinquish the paddy field asserts an alternative ecopolitical vision- one anchored in ecological balance, local autonomy, and the protection of natural systems from the ecological exploitations. Through this lens, Kunjimathu's resistance becomes not just a personal defiance but a nuanced ecopolitical act that challenges the dominant paradigms of neoliberal development. In that case, Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* operates as an ecopolitical intervention that exposes developmentalism as a form of pseudo-development driven by power-politics. By portraying the struggles of Aathi's people against Kumaran's exploitative projects, the novel underscores how resistance emerges not merely as a political act but as an ethical necessity to safeguard land, water, and community. At the same time, the narrative reasserts nature's own agency, demonstrating that ecological forces resist domination and restore balance when human interventions exceed sustainable limits.

Findings and conclusion

The findings are summarized in Table 1, which highlights the key environmental issues depicted in the novel, their impact on communities and ecosystems, and their literary representation:

Table 1 Key Ecopolitical Findings in *Gift in Green*

Novel	Ecopolitical/Environmental Issue	Impact on Community & Ecosystem	Literary/Narrative Representation	Key Quote
<i>Gift in Green</i>	Water pollution from infrastructure projects	Disruption of aquatic life, contamination of freshwater, loss of fisheries	Depicts bridge construction, dredging, and debris affecting traditional livelihoods	"The sky was at once overcast with a multitude of birds- white, black and gray- that took to their wings in terror" (Joseph 40)
	Land dispossession and real estate development	Displacement of farmers, loss of cultivated land, erosion of cultural practices	Land filling of backwaters and urbanization of Aathi's landscapes	"All three hundred acres of Ganesha Subramaniyam's backwater being landfilled. When completed, roads and a township would come up there" (Joseph 156)
	Loss of biodiversity and habitat destruction	Extinction or migration of fish, oysters, birds, and mangrove species; ecological imbalance	Transformation of mangrove forests and paddy fields into tourist and prawn farms	"Life in Aathi had begun to lose its serenity because of the continual incursions from the external world. Not only human beings but also animals, birds, and fish, were being affected" (Joseph 151)

In conclusion, *Gift in Green* functions as an ecopolitical text that critiques anthropocentric development, highlights the intertwined dispossession of ecological and cultural systems, and foregrounds the ethical and practical imperatives of resistance. Joseph situates human survival, community rights, and ecological agency as inseparable, asserting that sustainable futures require both social and environmental justice. By portraying Aathi as a political commons and nature as an active agent, the novel advances a biocentric vision, demonstrating that the struggle for environmental justice is both a political and ethical necessity.

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