



James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009): An Ecocritical Study of the Na'vi Culture and their Relationship with Nature

Dr. Purnanshu S. Dudhatra

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Abstract— *Though thousands of species exist on our planet, it is ruled by only humans. Our greed to expand our domination has disturbed the ecology. When technological advancement doesn't result in sustainable development, it brings environmental destruction. Man's senseless misuse of nature results in his own downfall. Avatar(2009) is such a science fiction film that portrays man's anthropocentric attitude towards the environment. The research paper explores environmental concerns in James Cameron's Avatar(2009). The human and nature relationship is depicted in depth in the film. Ecocriticism is the study of how nature is represented in literature. There is a lot of emphasis on how human relationships with the environment are depicted in a work of art. It aims to make people aware of the need to alter their thoughts and actions in order to avoid environmental degradation and enhance environmental conservation in the modern day.*

Keywords— *Ecocriticism, Ecofiction, Environmental consciousness, Ecocritical study*

Since the beginning of literature, the depiction of nature has been dominating the text. Regardless of the author's point of view, nature is always present in literary works. Most of the time, nature is employed as a background, such as the depiction of a specific location as the setting where a significant event occurs, or as a metaphor to praise the scene's magnificence and splendor. In literary theories, ecocriticism is a relatively recent field of study. Ecocriticism focuses mostly on work about nature and environmental issues. William Rueckert coined the term "ecocriticism" and was introduced his article in 1978. The article explores the literary representations of human and nature interactions. Ecocriticism requires us to alter our lifestyles in order to live in peace with the environment. Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism in his book titled *The Ecocriticism Reader. Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (2009)

What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of

modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty, xviii)

A variety of definitions exist for Ecocriticism. Their fundamental interest is the same. In general, it concentrates on human relationships with the environment.

When we think about movies, the first thing that comes to mind is: can movies be critically read or analysed? Movies bring excellent portrayals and additional aspects can be discussed using a critical theory. Films, although being fictitious, have an impact on the actual world and its issues. Movies embody an interconnection between human reality and virtual reality. Climate change, as well as global warming, were major themes in a number of films. Environmental issues have been growing continuously. Because of our carelessness, we were unable to stop it. Films with a strong environmental message also educate viewers about various sorts of environmental issues. Many thoughts and criticisms of environmental concerns have been expressed in TV series too. David Ingram states in the book titled *The Oxford handbook of ecocriticism* (2014) about ecocritical film studies,

Over the last decade, ecocritics have insightfully addressed the representation of ecological issues in film and have also begun a vital environmentalist critique of the political economy of the audio-visual media by assessing the ecological effects of their production. The field now has its own Ecomedia Wiki and an extensive bibliography and is sufficiently developed to garner retrospective scrutiny. Adrian Ivakhiv's 2008 essay in ISLE, "Green Film Criticism and Its Future," is an excellent assessment of the state of what he calls "eco-cinematicism" at the end of its first ten years. What have not always been explicitly addressed in such works are questions of film theory and methodology. This essay is therefore concerned with the theoretical and methodological assumptions which inevitably shape all ecocritical writings on film, and seeks to identify possible future directions for research in the subject. (Ingram, 459)

James Cameron's *Avatar*(2009) transports viewers to a planet where the Na'vis appreciate nature above everything else. James Cameron's environmental philosophy is present in most of his films, showing how people destroy the earth with guns and authority. The film highlights the value of nature and the preservation delivered by a native tribe. *Avatar*(2009) is a film about the interrelationship between mankind and nature and specifically concerns a futuristic environmental civilization, since the film opens in 2054, depicting a futuristic scenario. With the use of these visual pictures, he draws attention to the contaminated state of the universe.

The Omaticaya people's connection with nature is shown in *Avatar*(2009) in a way that is fundamentally different from that of humans with nature. Aside from a few people, most humans are shown as the bad who threaten to destroy Pandora's important tree and ecosystem, while. Deforestation is highlighted in the film. The Colonel and a few other characters believe that nature is for commercial usage and that it exists only for the benefit of humans. Quaritch's destructive nature and his attitude towards nature is shown when he commands his soldiers in the following way:

For you poguees, this is a banshee. A small one. See, they like it when I bring fresh meat out here. And this clear-cutting really stirs up the hornet's nest. So keep your head on a swivel. If it moves, shoot it. If you're not sure it's moving -- shoot it! If it looks like a bunch of flowers you want to take home to Sally Rottencrotch -- SHOOT IT! What're you gonna do?

TROOPERS

Shoot it, sir!

Cameron shows how *Avatar*(2009), with its powerful ecological concerns, may be viewed as one text that interacts with the context of nature. The film shows that humans need to dominate and take advantage environment and talks about resource degradation.

The inhabitant of Pandora, on the other hand, are devoted to and worshipful of the natural environment. Humans used to live peacefully with the environment and had a close relationship with it. These ties and interdependencies have all but vanished in the current situation. Nature has been completely and utterly ruined as a result of human activity and growth. Humans and other living creatures are completely ignored by industrial progress, commercialism, and the rise of vast mining activities. Cameron's portrayal of the Na'vi, the native residents of Pandora, is an attempt to demonstrate how far humans have gone away from the natural environment. The Pandorans are revealed to have a neurological system that links them to all of Pandora's creatures and planets. In contrast, mankind seems to have lost its connection with nature.

The Na'vi can utilise their Tsahaylu to connect with one another which allows them to feel and think like other trees and animals. Humans of the current generation want to completely disconnect from the natural world. Humans have damaged all natural resources in the name of development and prefer to attach their brains to technology. It is undeniable that a variety of gadgets have been developed to link humans to electronic equipment. In contrast to human desires for technological dominance, the Na'vi prefers a natural order. In many ways, the Pandora inhabitants are very in tune with the natural world. Cameron intends to show the closeness of the Na'vi to the natural world in his films. For them, the wildlife, flora, and Pandora itself are all very much a part of their daily lives. Most notably, Neytiri is shown as an immensely strong lady who is continually shown to be related to the elements of the natural world.

In the year 2154, the Earth's natural resources have been substantially decreased. So the RDA has discovered a precious and pricey resource — unobtainium — on Pandora, a faraway moon. Man has developed a means to convert oneself into genetically and technically blended Avatars on Pandora. With this mission, Colonel Miles Quaritch aims to connect the Na'vi and man. In order to establish trust with the attractive Neytiri, Jake is trying to establish trust. If Jake obtains information about the Na'vi, a vast arboreal known as Hometree, the firm has guaranteed to rehabilitate his legs to their original condition.

Cameron also makes a point in the film on the dangers of deforestation. The RDA administrator and Colonel have come to exploit Pandora's natural wealth, and they intend to do just that. They want to cut down the Na'vis Hometree in order to further their mining operations. They use every trick to eliminate the Na'vis from the area. They are protected by the Home Tree, the largest tree in the world. The Hometree is respected by the Na'vis more than any other object. They are not interested in receiving any materialistic reward from other people. Environmental assets are important to them, and they wish to protect them for generations. In Dr. Grace's opinion, removing the Home Tree from Pandora will impact negatively them. Na'vi uses the Tree of Voices to connect with the link, pray, and occasionally have their requests fulfilled. Utraya Mokri is the name given to this tree by the locals. During the time that Jake made his bow with wood from the Hometree.

Flora and fauna are treated with great dignity by Na'vis on Pandora. The Na'vis do not show dominance over other life forms. It is their belief that each species has an inherent opportunity to exist on Pandora. As a result, they do not harm anyone.

When Neytiri has to kill the wolf as it was in very pitiful condition. She addresses the wolf in a very adorable way as,

“Forgive me, my brother.”

It shows her ecocentric tendency towards other creatures living on her planet. She killed the wolf as she could not see the wolf in a state of pain. She even offers her prayer as following,

“Forgive me. May your spirit run with the Great Mother.”

With this prayer, she killed the wolf in order to end the pitiful cries with great sadness.

Another one of their core values is not to waste the natural wealth on their planet. The first time Jake and Neytiri meet, it is clear. Nature is often depicted as an all-powerful and supreme entity in Pandora. When Jake was attacked by the dogs, he attempted to divert the dogs with the help of a torch. To help Neytiri make her way through the darkness, he threw a flashlight at her. However, when the torch was turned off, the plants, as well as the wildlife of Pandora, were activated in the same way that the light was turned on. One of the most astonishing and major aspects of Pandora is its ability to self-illuminate itself at night, which is one of its most astounding and noteworthy characteristics.

There is something magical about how the forest of Pandora can light up during the night on its own. Jake was taken aback by the sight. The inhabitants are

not threatened by nature. She has a good idea of who to aid. To her, there is nothing more rewarding than helping others. Natura is welcoming with its own strength - providing illumination even when the sun is not shining.

Aside from that, the Na'vis are able to communicate with trees. They frequently visit the Tree of Souls, where they link themselves to the tree and communicate their thoughts and emotions to the tree in a mystical way. The conversation between Neytiri and Jake makes it more clear,

JAKE

It's like -- a sound you feel.

NEYTIRI

We call this utraya mokri -- the Tree of Voices. The voices of our ancestors, who live within Eywa.

Neytiri initially resisted teaching Jake any of it. That does not happen until he is surrounded by seeds from the Tree of Life. Then, she thinks that he has been chosen by the Goddess and agrees to teach him how to live like the inhabitants of Pandora. The people of Omaticaya follow the laws of the natural world. They use herbal cures. In difficult times, the other creatures come to the aid. As a result, it is impossible to disconnect the Na'vis' lives from the natural world. They all rely on one another. Cameron evokes viewers to think about such a subject from a different perspective. This concept should act as a wake-up call to everybody to protect the earth's natural magnificence. Cameron uses a metaphor to suggest that not just Pandora, but also our planet is immersed in the abundance of natural beauty. However, sufficient care and attention must be given to it.

The Omaticayan people are heavily reliant on the natural world, and there are numerous examples of this throughout the film. They spend the night in the Hometree's web and cure their illnesses by drinking the floral nectar. While they were on the verge of defeat, the other creature helped them. The character of Jake is shown as an environmental conservationist. At the end of the film, he is willing to save Pandora and ready to fight with those with whom he has worked with. He says to The people of Omaticaya, “The Sky People have sent a message that they can take whatever they want, and no one can stop them. But we will send them a message. Ride out, as fast as the wind can carry you, tell the other clans to come. Tell them Toruk Macto calls to them. Fly now with me brothers and sisters! Fly! And we will show the Sky People that this is our land!”

There is no resemblance between life on Earth and on Pandora. The movie plays out like a prediction about humanity's future on Earth. One day, mankind will have to rely on other planets for environmental assets. The film

forces the spectators to make a comparison between these two planets. Rather than just fantasising about such a genuinely magnificent planet, mankind is asked to protect what we have on the earth not only attractive but also crucial environmental assets. Seeing a landscape made of concrete can never be attractive to us. Technological prowess cannot sustain life on our planet.

Avatar (2009) shows the strength of a community living in harmony with nature. With its emphasis on vision and the subsequent breakdown of civil society, this film portrays how even societies that pride themselves on their technological ability have failed to achieve true progress since they lack the profound environmental knowledge necessary for true progress to be made.

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