Concept Note

Anthropocene, Climate Change and Ecodisaster: Role of Literature and other Cultural Media

'Anthropocene' is a buzz word in the discourse of climate change and ecological disaster. We agree with Dipesh Chakraborty when he observes that the "geologic now of the Anthropocene has become entangled with the now of human history". Beyond its strictly geological reference the Anthropocene becomes the one name for a "slow but massive shift in the tectonic plates of human self-conceptions" (Timothy Clark). What is dominant now is a sense of the plurality, unpredictability and chaotic condition of the planet earth. Anthropocene, however, is not a monolithic idea because mankind in general is not responsible for the environmental degradation. The point is, a colonial/imperial agenda always worked at the centre of this contested idea and it continues to work in the name/s of a different agency/agencies today impacting different people in different ways across the world.

Alicia Cole, a poet of our times, in her poem "Corrupt the World With Drum" raises a question: 'Where will we go when we don't conceive/ ourselves properly? Where will we go/when everything is overrun with the wrong/kind of strength?' This 'wrong kind of strength' is deeply embedded in the discourse of Anthropocene. Our relation with the earth has turned toxic. We continually commit 'slow violence' on earth. A fine example in this context is Ambikasutan Mangad's *Swarga: A Posthuman Tale* (2017) that shows how a toxic disaster assumes an active agency and kills the flora and fauna of a district in Kerala. Another example is Imbolo Mbue's novel *How Beautiful We Were* (2021) that reveals the horror of a manmade ecodisaster in an imaginary indigenous space of Africa. Our craving for more and more prosperity and comfort and our obsession with 'development' disturb ecological balance and pave the way for the 'great derangement'. Amitav Ghosh allegorises this in *The Living Mountain: A Fable of our Times* (2022).

Anthropogenic factors like urbanization and unchecked expansion of mankind, burning of fossil fuel and stubbles, destruction of forests among other things contribute to climate change and global warming. Nick Admussen argues that in the "Age of Climate Change" literature "can no longer hang outside the world". And he duly emphasizes, "Practical ethics must come from the stories we tell". Orijit Sen in his graphic novel *The River of Stories* (1994) drives home this point of 'practical ethics' under the garb of fiction. Interestingly, ecopoetry of contemporary times also plays its own role in this regard. One may remember Jhilmil Breckenridge's poem titled "Photograph" that poignantly renders the catastrophe of climate change: 'Birds drop dead mid-flight/Reuters reports 1.24 million died in 2017/That children are getting brain damaged/Meanwhile, crops burn around Delhi'. We live in an ambience of 'ecoprecarity'; and ecopoetry draws our attention to a state of apocalypse: 'How it must feel, to prescribe/a burn, to watch the Oroville overflow with/predictions, the denial, *no more water/in the pail! No more moon in the water!*(Seth Garcia, "Displaced Water").

Films also represent the horror of ecodisaster and provoke us to meet the environmental challenges whether at the personal or the political level. The climate disaster film "The Day After Tomorrow" (2004) focussing on the catastrophic consequences of global warming or "Interstellar" (2014), a sci-fi film warning us against the dangers of environmental degradation may at once come to one's mind. The Indian films like *Jal* (2013) *Kadvi Hawa* (2017), *Irada* (2017) are also worth-mentioning in this context. They all staunchly critique the anthropocentric view of the world and lead to an "activist intention, as well as responsibility to heighten awareness about contemporary issues and practices affecting planetary health" (Willoquet-Maricondi). The recent animated short film *Wade* (2020) which imagines Kolkata as a deserted climate-imperilled city inhabited only by a band of climate refugees from the drowned Sundarbans certainly deserves a special mention here. The web series like *The Jengaburu Curse* (SonyLiv) and *Kaala Pani* (Netflix India) add a significant dimension to the genre of eco-disaster drama and cli-fi drama series respectively.

We invite critical and theoretically informed essays that not only discuss the representations of Anthropocene and climate change in literary/cultural texts but also focus on the role of literature and other cultural media in the present-day world of climate peril and ecological/environmental disaster. The list of subthemes (not exhaustive) is given below:

Subthemes:

Displacement, migration and climate refugees

Climate anxiety, tierratrauma and the mental health

Colonialism, imperialist politics and climate crisis

Extractive neoliberalism, resource curse and resource conflicts

Vulnerability, planetary precarity and resilience

Disaster, apocalypse and the dystopian imaginaries

Postcolonial ecology, climate injustice and decolonization

Climate change, contagion and Biopolitics

Eco-horror, Ecocide and Green Criminology

Climate peril, indigenous communities and human rights

Climate change, Global warming and Species extinction

Race, Gender and Class in the Anthropocene

N.B. The journal also welcomes reviews of books on the chosen area - published in recent times - along with the permission of the copyright holder / legal heir, in less than 1500 words.

Timeline & Instructions:

Last date of submission of Abstracts: **25.05.2024**

Date of communication of selected Abstracts: **10.06.2024**

Last Date of submission of papers with Declaration, Similarity Check Report & Bio note: **10.08.2024**

Submission Guidelines: 8th edition of MLA handbook. Papers will be summarily rejected if

not submitted as per the guidelines.

Font type & size: Times New Roman, 12 point, 1.5 line spacing

Email address for submission (electronic version only): **editor_english@mail.vidyasagar.ac.in**

[Abstracts submitted to any other email address will be summarily rejected.]

Word-limit: Abstract: 300 (maximum) [inclusive of the title and keywords]

Keywords: not more than 6

Final paper: should be strictly in the range of 4000-5000 words. Papers will be rejected if the

word limit is not maintained.