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**CLIMATE CHANGE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
JUSTICE IN *AN ATLAS OF IMPOSSIBLE LONGING* AND *THE FOLDED  
EARTH***

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**Abstract:** *Anuradha Roy's novels operate at the intersection of lyric realism and political critique. This paper argues that *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* (henceforth *Atlas*) and *The Folded Earth* (henceforth *Folded Earth*) depict ecological crisis not as spectacular catastrophe but as slow violence an accumulation of historical extractions, market-driven development, and social inequalities that render specific bodies and places vulnerable. Roy's fiction links environmental change to class, gender, and postcolonial histories, and advances a quiet vision of environmental justice grounded in epistemic humility, local knowledge, and ethical care. The analysis draws on close readings of representative passages, situates the novels within ecocritical debates, and engages selected critical responses.*

**Keywords:** *ecological crisis, environmental justice, epistemic humility, ecocritical debates*

**Introduction:**

In Indian English storytelling, Roy's literary approach and ecological attitude are particularly significant. Landscapes, in Anuradha Roy's writing, are recurring themes because of their dual roles as places of emotional memory storage and contentious physical transformation. Roy pays attention to place-specific processes that alter social life and deepen inequality, such as slope destabilization and quarrying in the foothills, and deforestation and mining in the plains, instead of highlighting climate as a universal abstraction. Her approach integrates ethical consideration of displaced people with detailed sensory description and layered temporality (memory/history). Reviewers have highlighted Roy's postcolonial and ecological sensibilities, demonstrating how her books do not separate gender and class from environmental issues.

Conceptual framework: nonviolent conflict resolution and ecological fairness  
Environmental damage can build up subtly over extended periods of time, causing political injury in addition to physical harm; here is where Rob Nixon's idea of "slow violence" comes in handy. As seen in Roy's novels, harm does not come from a single calamity but rather from a chain reaction of legislative decisions, economic pressures, and cultural transformations that put certain populations in jeopardy. Recognizing the unequal distribution of risk (who pays for upstream extraction? who lives on marginal lands?) and demanding distributive and historical retribution are essential components of environmental justice in this context. The politics of yearning, an atlas of impossible longing, archives, and extraction

**The landscape as a repository and tool for the study of the past.**

Atlas traces yearning through the ages Gardens, riverbanks, and woodlands are relegated to the role of societal history archives in the narrative, pushing familial memories aside. Roy paints a vivid picture of the forest and the people forced to flee it as a result of industrial

extraction. The narrator first mentions groups of people who "kept to the forest" until mines "gouged out chunks of their forest," forcing them to live in temporary colonies and work in dangerous conditions. See publisher preview and excerpts for more information about how this image depicts extraction as a social process that alters both ecology and habitus at the same time.

Colonial and postcolonial economic endeavors (plantations, mining, and market agriculture) are depicted in the book as contributing to the gradual degradation of the ecosystem. The landscape bears witness to the atrocities of the past, a virtual "atlas" of unattainable desires that records the loss of what development has eradicated. Readers approaching Atlas via an ecocritical lens will notice Roy's focus on how environmental damage is intertwined with social structures. (ssjournal.com 2)

Deliberate brutality and everyday vulnerability

Instead of dramatizing a single environmental disaster, Roy demonstrates how ecological deterioration causes everyday scarcity through phenomena like crop failure, dwindling commons, and urban migration. People in the book face persistent erosion of their means of subsistence as they witness the shift from seasonal to casual urban work and the marginalization of local indigenous people. The end result is that environmental damage is no longer seen as an afterthought, but rather as fundamental to the breakdown of social structures. Such depictions make climate-related vulnerability comprehensible as a result of socio-economic organization, according to scholars (and supported by Roy's novel).

Inequitable geographical distribution of harm, gender, and caste

Roy highlights the unequal distribution of environmental impact based on gender and caste. Fetching more water, managing fewer home goods, tending deteriorated fields—in various scenarios, women's labor intensifies as resources shrink, making them increasingly exposed to poverty and societal constraint. Floods, soil erosion, and relocation caused by mines disproportionately affect people of lower socioeconomic status, who tend to reside on marginal soils. Environmental justice is inextricably linked to redistribution and social acknowledgment; this connection between ecological devastation and social hierarchy is fundamental to the ethical argument put forward in the book.

### **The Folded Earth: mountains in crisis and contested development**

Folded Earth focuses on the precariousness of mountains, in contrast to Atlas's tracking of forests and plains. The delicate micro-ecologies of the Himalayan foothills, including springs, slopes, and unchecked growth, are brought to life in the book. These ecosystems are highly vulnerable to shifts in rainfall patterns, deforestation, and unchecked development. By repeatedly depicting the mountain's crumbling foundations, shaky slopes, and endangered water sources, Roy elevates the mountain's vulnerability to the level of a moral issue. "The world she has come to love, where people are connected with nature, is endangered by the town's new administration," according to publisher summaries and Google Books previews, which both highlight the town's endangered character. The narrative is presented in a way that is in line with current discussions around the development of hill towns and the dangers of extraction pushed by tourism.

The language of "development" as a means of exploitation

The language of contemporary growth is one of Folded Earth's primary ethical targets. Slope instability and the dispossession of the poor are exacerbated by extractive industries, which Roy reveals as being hidden behind the promises of roads, hotels, and urbanization. These economies include illicit quarrying, timber mafias, and speculative development. Asymmetric risk occurs when vulnerable households occupy the most hazardous areas, caused by the acts of local elites and outside developers who are shown as involved in turning communal landscapes into profit margins. This is Roy's accusation: "development" devoid of social protections and ecological understanding is not advancement but eviction.

### **Relocation, migration, and psychological and ecological suffering**

Roy pays attention to the ways in which environmental instability causes internal displacement as well as external migration. The protagonists and antagonists of Folded Earth face the difficult moral decision of either abandoning ancestral lands or watching them crumble away. Policy explanations seldom acknowledge the psychological harm—*anxiety, insomnia, and the narrowing of future horizons*—that these scenarios capture. Consequently, Roy's fiction broadens the definition of environmental justice to encompass not only physical but also psychological and cultural forms of pain, as well as the cultural significance of home and belonging.

Narrative tactics: highlighting subtle acts of violence

To provide the impression of urgency to sluggish, gradual operations, Roy's technique is vital. Key tactics she employs. She gives the ground an emotional life, making its degradation feel personal, and the landscape itself is a character. Environmental change is cumulative and can be traced to historical origins due to layered temporality, which is facilitated by flashbacks and intergenerational memory. Down to the micro level, realism reveals how ecological collapse rearranges everyday existence through domestic detail and quotidian labor. Roy's stories emphasize care practices and local knowledge as ways to fight back and fix things, which brings us to our fourth ethical point. Roy avoids abstract polemic through his formal decisions; rather, the personal and the sensual give rise to the political.

Insightful criticism and progress in interpretation

Eco-critical articles on Atlas and Folded Earth, as well as other works published after 2015, place Roy in the context of a growing eco-literary movement in India that links colonial pasts and neoliberal development to environmental destruction. Research emphasizes that Roy is adamant about demanding answers to environmental issues that are both historically aware and justice based, rather than reducing them to techno-managerial solutions or pastoral nostalgia. Literary critics have lauded Roy for her ability to write both elegy and critique; in her work, landscapes are both grieved and questioned for their role in systemic brutality.

### **Conclusion**

Climate change and ecological catastrophe in India are best understood as socially created conditions, rather than as isolated meteorological catastrophes, as seen in the two books by Anuradha Roy that were examined. A strong vision of environmental justice—one that demands reparative responsibility, epistemic pluralism (valuing local ecological knowledge), and a care

politics is advanced by Roy's fiction through the historicalizing of environmental decline, the mapping of its unequal geography, and the dramatization of its psychological costs. A cultural repertoire memory, moral attention, and narrative witness is what her works give, rather than technocratic solutions, and this is what any long-term, equitable solution to the environmental catastrophe needs.

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