



## TRACING THE FOOTPRINTS OF ANTHROPOCENE IN J K ROWING'S HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

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### ABSTRACT

The impact of human activities on Earth and its ecosystem from the beginning till this day is known as Anthropocene Epoch. In this paper, the trails of human damage to the biota are scrutinized for the study which highlights the impact on climate change and fellow beings on the Earth. The numerous references of animals, plants and other living creatures are reported in the novel Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets which includes Cornish Pixies, spiders, Basilisk, phoenix and Mandrakes. Harry Potter and his friends have an adventurous journey in the underground chamber in the school of Hogwarts is the one line story of the novel where the present study of research takes place.

**KEYWORDS :** Anthropocene, deep ecology, human interference, Hogwarts

### INTRODUCTION

The footprint of each organism is unique in nature but the footprints that human are leaving is harmful to the environment and even for human beings which very soon backfires on them. The study follows the deep thoughts of Arne Naess's deep ecology. The ideology of Arne Naess is not pinpointed definitely for deep ecology because it depends upon the ecology of each individual. He differentiates the deep ecology with the shallow ecology for understanding it in a better way. The concept of deep ecology means oneness with the nature. The study traces the delineated ways in the novel for helping the humans to mend it. For better understanding, the discussion is divided into four sub-topics namely human footprints, displaced animals, phenomenal plants and supernatural beings.

### HUMAN FOOTPRINTS

Children Literature is abundant in animals which show children's natural intuition of oneness with the nature. As they become adult, the natural oneness feeling is deviated to give the importance to self. The opening of the novel clearly differentiates the differences. Harry Potter wants to let his owl to be free of caged on the contrary note, his uncle Vernon wants it to be caged until he leaves for his school Hogwarts. His uncle has to consider the owl irrespective of its value to the human beings and respect it as an equal living organism in the Earth.

The setting of Hogwarts and the travel to reach is the fine example of Anthropocene. It is located in the outskirts of mountains or foot of the forests but far away from the hustle bustle of the city life here it is London. Hogwarts Express boards students and starts its journey through green fields and snow capped mountains. The very act of describing the train travel itself is an act of intruding the natural environment.

Whenever there is a celebration, it creates more harm to the environment. In the novel, celebration such as Christmas calls for dislocating the trees from its place, Valentine's Day celebration needs dwarfs to carry the Valentine message to the loved ones and even at the end of the novel, they feast for the triumphant rise of Harry Potter over Voldemort. Excluding these celebrations, they celebrate start-of-the term, Easter and End-of-the term which has numerous varieties of dishes. The wastage would be high in such celebrations which in turn increase the green house gases.

Harry gets luxury eagle-feather quill as a Christmas present. Nobody mentions how they acquired the luxury eagle-feather. Anyway presenting an eagle-feather itself is an act of showing anthropocentrism. Yet another character named Lucius

Malfoy is always skeptical about other fellow human beings who are leading an eco-friendly lifestyle. He and his son always taunts the family of Weasley for their second hand materials which imbibes a negative idea into Weasley's children primarily Ginny Weasley in the novel. She thinks low of her second hand robes and books which eventually leads her near death experience in the chamber. Lucius furthermore passes snide remark on Hagrid's hut, the gamekeeper in Hogwarts. The way Hagrid living is oneness with nature without harming animals but the idea of Lucius high standards of living with a house-elf as a servant makes him remark as, " ' My dear man, please believe me, I have no pleasure at all in being inside your – er – d'you call this a house?' said Lucius Malfoy, sneering as he looked around the small cabin." (Rowling, 2014, p.277). Rowling has created contrary characters such as Lucius and Hagrid in the above mentioned paragraph to showcase the consequences of their choice of living.

In the climax of the novel, nature is intruded by Harry, Ron and Professor Lockhart who go into the tunnel to reach the chamber of secrets. Many landslides are happening because humans change the natural structure of mountains by paving roads or building homes. Human intervention is responsible for such landslides. It is not the nature causing the calamities whereas humans are intruding the natural structure and paving way for the calamities to happen. They meet up with a tunnel fall in the adventure. The intrusion of wizards into the underground of the school castle has made the tunnel to collapse.

### Displaced Animals

Moreover Hagrid uses flesh-eating slug repellent for keeping the slugs at bay from the cabbage. Definitely it is a human intervention in the food chain of slug but at least happy that he never kills them, as well slugs seen in Ron Weasley's wand backfiring of spells. When Ron tries to fight with Draco Malfoy, his broken wand backfires the spell and made him to belch slugs dribble from his mouth. It takes long time for them to stop the belching slugs. The animals are dislocated suddenly or even created but they don't mention about what has happened to them later. Will they let them into the nature or done something to them is not also specified. This shows the lack of human interest on other living beings around them. Whereas Ron Weasley suffers from belch of slugs, Fred and George Weasley are curious to experiment with Salamander by feeding a Filibuster Firework. The simple idea of experiment with animal is cruelty. They never consider it as a living thing itself. The animals are vulnerable in magical world as well.

Spiders are intriguing insects mentioned in the novel. Normal

spiders lead its way to the heart of the forest where eight eyed eight legged gigantic hairy black spider known as Acramantula named Aragog resides. On the advice of Hagrid, Harry and Ron traces the small spiders for the answers of the culminating problems which leads them into the harmonious living home of Acramantula spiders. Aragog considers it as a human intrusion in their habitat. After answering the questions of Harry, Aragog asks his children to have them. It is the epitome result of human intervention rebounds on the human. If they don't intrude into the forest, they don't try to attack them. Not interfering in other living organisms life would help the flourishing and maintain the ecological balance.

In the dueling club Malfoy conjured a snake towards Harry. Instead of leaving the snake alone, Lockhart conjured the spells at the snake which flew it ten feet above the ground. It irks the snake which was hissing furiously and tries to attack the nearby person. The way humans are treating the animals makes it worse for the human itself. Whereas Harry simply asks the snake to leave Justin from attacking in Parseltongue and the snake obliges immediately. The simple act of treating other living things as equal would solve many problems.

Phoenix is a unique respected bird in the magical world. The uniqueness comes from its reborn abilities i.e. burst into flames and reborn from the ashes as a new one. Dumbledore keeps Fawkes, a Phoenix as a pet because, "They can carry immensely heavy loads, their tears have healing powers and they make highly faithful pets" (Rowling, 2014, p.219). He uses phoenix for its value to him but not otherwise. The ideology clashes with the principle of Arne Naess's equal treatment of living organisms without considering its value to the human beings. In the same vein Dumbledore has said, Phoenix saves the life of Harry in the chamber. Phoenix carries Harry, Ron, Ginny and Professor Lockhart out of the tunnel to the bathroom of Moaning Myrtle.

Countless times the harm people are doing to the nature would backlash on people. Hermione has made Polyjuice Potion to transform into Slytherin students in order to get the truth about Sytherin heir from Malfoy. When the Polyjuice potion is ready to enhance the adventurous fun Rowling has planned all the three Harry, Ron and Hermione to transform into Goyle, Crabbe and Millicent Bulstrode respectively but she hold Hermione from desired transformation. Harry, Ron and Hermione drop the hairs of their desired person to change into the Polyjuice potion and drank it. Harry and Ron changes exactly what they want but Hermione is changed into a cat. Even though it is the mistake of Hermione to drop cat's hair in the potion, Rowling wants to emphasize the deviation from natural form will always fall flat on human. Alter the nature is also out of bounds for the intellectual too.

Similar to Hermione changes the nature form, Voldemort additionally hides his part of soul in the dairy to have a rebirth when his original form is collapsed. The method of separating part of his soul from his body and hides in non-living things is against the natural law. The greed for eternal life only kills Voldemort. Deviation from the nature would always do more harm than good. Just one more example is Professor Lockhart's use of memory charm in other people. Lockhart mentions so many adventures in his books but in reality, he writes other people's adventures as his by changing the memory of the original adventurer. He has done a lot of memory charms in his career in order to sustain his fame but the last memory charm he has done in the tunnel backfire it on him and washes his memory completely without even able to recognize who he is.

Basilisk is a snake known as the King of Serpents which has gigantic size and lifespan of many hundreds of years. It is the mortal enemy of spiders and fears for the rooster crowing because it is fatal. Such fearsome murderous monster is

controlled by Tom Riddle, the younger self of Voldemort. It just acts for the command of Tom Riddle. He sets the snake Basilisk to petrify four students, one ghost and one cat. For his need only he uses the snake even when the snake is blinded by phoenix. He wants to kill Harry Potter by inhumanely using the snake, " 'No!' Harry heard Riddle screaming. 'Leave the bird! Leave the bird! The boy is behind you! You can still smell him! Kill him!' the blinded serpent swayed, confused, still deadly. Fawkes was circling its head, piping his eerie song, jabbing here and there at the Basilisk's scaly nose as the blood poured from its ruined eyes" (Rowling, 2014, p.337). However fearsome an animal maybe wizards want to control it for their use. This shows the dominant anthropocentric nature.

There are plenty of characters treat other living organisms for their use only, Hagrid stands apart from them which is evident from the words of Aragog, a Acramantula spider. When Hagrid is a small boy, he hides Aragog in a cupboard because it is just hatched from an egg. He feeds the scraps of food from the table to the spider. When the circumstances are not good for the spider to live in Hogwarts, Hagrid let it out in the Forbidden Forest. Even now Hagrid visits the spider in the deep forest and even finds a wife for Aragog. The kind act of nurturing and protecting the giant spider against all the odds shows the good humane nature of Hagrid. Furthermore he even gets permission from the headmaster to put charm around the hen-coop because two roosters are killed without any traces. Instead of using for his needs he treats other animals equally which is rarely seen in other characters.

In Hogwarts School they use animals for teaching - in Transfiguration, they use to change beetle into button and white rabbits into slippers. This changes in the nature of the animal and nobody cares about what happens to the animals after they change it into non-living things. Their value is not equally considered by the wizards. This raises a challenging question in the hearts of Hogwarts students. In Defense Against Dark Arts subject Professor Lockhart cages Cornish Pixies for teaching the students. After they are freed from the cage during the class, they make havoc in the classroom. When the pixies live in their habitat, it won't make havoc in the class.

### Phenomenal plants

Similarly, flora world is also exploited. In the name of degnome they are punishing the gnome. They name it weeds but it has its own value in the world. The way Weasley's is getting rid of gnome is almost like a punishment. They uproot it, swing it few times and throw it in a long distance. "This is what you have to do," he said. He raised the gnome above his head ('Gerroff me!') and started to swing it in great circles like a lasso. Seeing the shocked look on Harry's face, Ron added, 'It doesn't hurt them - you've just got to make them really dizzy so they can't find their way back to the gnomeholes'" (Rowling, 2014, p.38). Instead of weeding them out Weasley should opt to live harmoniously with them.

Whomping willow is a tree in Hogwarts. It sways its branches whenever anyone goes near it or touches it. When Harry and Ron reaches Hogwarts in the flying car, they end up crashing into the tree which in turn crashes the car with more strength in short how wizards treating the tree is reciprocated by the tree. Human intervention in the environment has more impact in the ecological imbalance. Though Harry and Ron damages the tree, Professor Sprout mends the damage to the tree which ends up bandage for her arms. Just like Hagrid for animals, Sprout cares for the plants. She teaches Herbology in Hogwarts and maintains the greenhouse where magical plants are grown. Most of the time, her clothes and fingernails have mud in it. They have separate greenhouses according to the year students are studying where dangerous and interesting plants are housed in it. They use to fertilize the plants with toadstools, purning the Abyssinian Shrivelfigs and

mandrake pot shifting.

Mandrakes are an interesting plant which is used to make potion when it reaches full size. It cures many ailments. In the novel, it revives petrified persons. When the mandrakes are in childhood, they wail and wriggle when repotting. The wail even kills the person who hears it. They use to have protective ear covers before repotting. If it matures, it becomes moody, secretive and the acne clears up. The process of growing up mandrake is tedious but the pain is worth for its usefulness in potion-making.

Hagrid is an avid animal lover however he interferes in the plant life. In the previous novel he put out of place Christmas trees and in this novel he put Engorgement Charm on the pumpkins in a vegetable patch behind Hagrid's home. For Hallowe'en Feast, he changes the nature of pumpkins. It enlarges the size of pumpkins by changing their original nature. Hermione and Ginny Weasley appreciates the pumpkin enlargement. The act of human intervention sends negative signals to the young minds.

After the banging entrance of Harry and Ron into the Hogwarts School the car unloads the truck and vanishes into the forest. They don't care about the car until they go into the forest by following the spiders. They find the car which is merged with the forest nature. The car doesn't belong to the forest but turns out to be in the centre of the forest. The simple act of human displacing the things from its original place has more damage to the environment. The car even rescues Harry, Ron and Fang from the spiders and leaves them safely in the outskirts of the forest. They use the car for their needs and don't even consider what happens later to the car.

### Magical Being

The treatment of house-elf is vividly pictured in the novel by Malfoy's house-elf Dobby. They have house-elf to serve for particular family. They bound to do all the dreadful/ dirty works for the master. They use to keep secrets of the family and treated as servants by the masters. The value of house-elf is inevitable in wizard's life. Some wizards threaten the elves and punish them to do work for them. Few wizards are exceptional like Dumbledore who treats house elves with respect and equal beings in the magical world. Whenever they use to reveal secrets of the serving family, they use to punish them for revealing the secrets like Dobby, "Dobby has to punish himself, sir," said the elf, who had gone slightly cross-eyed. 'Dobby almost spoke ill of his family, sir...' (Rowling, 2014, p.14).

Basic needs are denied for the house-elf Dobby. He wears a pillowcase as his cloth because if the master gives clothes to the elf symbolizes they are set free from the family. So Malfoy's family is very conscious of not giving even a sock to Dobby. But Harry Potter plans it trickily to give socks to the elf by Malfoy. Harry palces the diary inside the dirty socks and give it to Malfoy. While opening he throws the socks to the elf, Dobby who is at the heels of Malfoy and it sets Dobby free from the family of Malfoy.

### CONCLUSION

The study traces the footprints of Anthropocene in J K Rowling word which suggests rectification for the problems raised. Humans have to reduce their impact on the environment and give equal treatment to the other living organisms such as house-elf, trees and animals in the world and let the nature be in her course unaltered.

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