Space, Place, and the Environment in the Contemporary Anglophone Indian Novel explores postcolonial identity politics through the lenses of place, space and the environment in relation to three contemporary Anglophone Indian novels. By combining human geography with ecocriticism, the study locates marginalized sense of place at the intersection of the socio-cultural categories of gender, race, class and caste and the materiality of the environment of postcolonial spaces.
SPACE, PLACE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE INDIAN NOVEL
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ABSTRACT

Since space and spatiality function as major determinants of identity, postcolonial studies have concentrated on the role of formerly colonized places in determining marginalized experiences. The colonialist ideology of reshaping indigenous landscape has also occasioned a wide range of environmental issues that have affected the colonized territories and their life forms. This study locates postcolonial identity politics at the intersection of space, place, and the environment, and explores the way postcolonial space and environment can reshape identities in India, a former British colony, with reference to three contemporary Anglophone novels, namely Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* (2008), Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), and Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* (2008). In doing so, the study aims to amalgamate geographical dialectics of the concept of sense of place, intersected by the social privileges of gender, race, and class/caste, with ecocritical explorations of the agency of nature and nonhumans, often intervened by dualist models of nature/culture, emotions/reasons, human ‘others’/humans, and so on. This study thereby combines human geography with ecocriticism to explore the spatiality of places and the materiality of their environment to underscore the interdependence between culture and nature. However, while the marginalized sense of place is analysed from the perspective of women (gender) in Ghosh’s novel, in the novels by Desai and Adiga the analysis focuses on the western-educated, ‘modern’ Indians (class) and the marginalized poor (caste), respectively. Therefore, this research is rooted principally in the socio-cultural rhetorics of gender, class, caste, and an overarching colonial ideology of race. Finally, the study argues that the incorporation of environmental and spatial discourses helps resolve the model of dualism that formulates distinctions between humans, and their spaces, and disregards the agency of both human ‘others’ and nonhumans. In other words, this interdisciplinary approach will enable an analysis of the way in which the act of crossing spatial boundaries demarcated for different marginalized groups is coterminous with the process of developing an identity both closely associated with and separated from nature.

*Keywords*: Anglophone Indian Novel; postcolonial geography; ecocriticism; Amitav Ghosh; Kiran Desai; Aravind Adiga; Sea of Poppies; The Inheritance of Loss; The White Tiger
TIIVISTELMÄ


Avainsanat: englanninkielinen intialainen kirjallisuus; jälkikolonialinen maantiede; ekokriitikki; Amitav Ghosh; Kiran Desai; Aravind Adiga; Sea of Poppies; The Inheritance of Loss; The White Tiger
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... 5

TIIVISTELMÄ ..................................................................................................................... 7

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................... 9

1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................... 13
  1.1 Aims and Structure ......................................................................................... 13
  1.2 Research Materials and Earlier Studies ..................................................... 17

2 POSTCOLONIAL PLACE, SPACE, IDENTITY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT ...................................................... 21
  2.1 Postcolonial Place, Identity, and Space ..................................................... 22
      2.1.1 Feminist Geography and Sense of Place ........................................ 24
      2.1.2 Cultural Geography and Racial Space ......................................... 25
      2.1.3 Development Geography and Class Hierarchy ............................... 26
  2.2 The Nature–Culture Dualism in Ecocriticism .............................................. 27
      2.2.1 Women and Nature: Ecofeminist Literary Criticism ....................... 29
      2.2.2 Nonhumans and Animal Agency .................................................... 30
      2.2.3 Bioregional Enquiry of Place, Its Environment, and Culture ............. 31
  2.3 Postcolonial Environment, Place, and Space ............................................ 33
      2.3.1 Colonial Place, Gendered Space, and Nature ................................. 34
      2.3.2 Racial Landscape and Human–Animal Relationships in the Making of a Place ................................................................. 41
      2.3.3 Local and Global Place Grounded in Class and Bioregional Sense of Place ................................................................. 49

3 LAND OF POPPIES: WOMEN’S SENSE OF PLACE AND NATURE IN AMITAV GHOSH’S SEA OF POPPIES ........................................... 58
  3.1 Women’s Space and the Environment of Colonization .............................. 59
      3.1.1 Agricultural Land, Women’s Rights to Harvest, and Space .............. 60
      3.1.2 The Restricted Space of the Hut and the Poppies ............................ 63
      3.1.3 Crossing the Boundary of the Land: Sea and the Slave Ship .......... 69
  3.2 The Space of the Whites: The Dualism between Nature and Culture ........ 75
      3.2.1 Interracial Relationships in the Home and the Restricted Space of the Mansion ................................................................. 76
      3.2.2 Journey to the Sea and the Resolvability of Spatial Differences between the Colonizers and the Colonized ........................... 82

4 HUMAN–ANIMAL RELATIONS AND CLASS IDENTITY IN KIRAN DESAI’S THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS ...................................................... 87
  4.1 Cho Oyu: A House of Modernity from the Past ........................................... 88
  4.2 England: The Place of Modernity and Tokens of Englishness .................. 97
  4.3 The Slum: The Space of Human ‘Others’ ..................................................... 104
5 DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL–LOCAL INTERRELATIONS:
BIOREGIONAL DEVASTATION AND COSMOPOLITANISM IN
ARAVIND ADIGA’S THE WHITE TIGER .............................................. 108
5.1 “The India of Darkness”: Caste Hierarchy and Water Pollution .......... 109
5.2 “The India of Light”: Class Hierarchy and Environmental Hazards ....... 114
5.3 Cosmopolitan Bioregion: Global–Local Interrelations and Pluralistic
   Identity .......................................................................................... 122
6 CONCLUSION ................................................................................ 129
BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................... 134
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIMS AND STRUCTURE

Place and space have long been at the centre of postcolonial literature for their association with the politics of postcolonial identity. Scholars such as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin have defined place as a framework within which identity is constructed and, thus, have taken a profound interest in the correlation between place and identity (Post-Colonial Studies Reader 392; The Empire Writes Back 8–11). Place plays a significant role in the epistemology of postcolonialism since it determines “how one defines one’s own identity and, equally, how that identity is defined by others” in former colonies (Teverson and Upstone 2). Therefore, it appears that both personal and public places such as homes, gardens, roads, and cities, in general, serve as integral parts in constituting different dimensions of marginalized experiences, ranging from formulating the identities of the marginalized to the reshaping of the traditional social and cultural boundaries imposed upon them.

However, it is not only the place with its “geographic boundaries”, but its culture and social privileges, such as race and class, that can also bear importance in the creation of space (Said, Orientalism 54). Women’s spaces in India, for instance, are marked by “[g]endered restrictions” that “have been intricately tied up with those of other hierarchies, particularly those of caste, religion and social class” (Jackson 63). Nonetheless, in the wake of concerns over environmental degradation and the exploitation of natural resources, the inclusion of the environment into the geographical exploration of identity as a viable unit that impacts spatiality broadens the constituency for space that is customarily charted along socio-cultural dynamics. Moreover, for postcolonial recording of the history of colonized space, environmental models are deemed central to conceptualizing how colonized spaces and ecology were restructured by colonial hegemony concerning their “resource use, stewardship, and sovereignty” (DeLoughrey and Handley 24). Nonetheless, ecocriticism or “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment [that] takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies” identifies the interaction between humans and nature/nonhumans as the basic tenet of human–place relationships (Glotfelty xix). Accordingly, the very concept of “environment” is often understood by postcolonial ecocritics, who map the confluence of and the disjuncture between postcolonial studies and ecocriticism, such as Mukherjee, as the convoluted “relationships between human and non-human agents or actors” that mark the history of former colonized spaces (Postcolonial Environments 5). Again, as the ideological contours of domination and exploitation are retained in the era of globalization shrouded in the veil of “economic growth” (Shiva, “The Impoverishment of the Environment” 74; Huggan and Tiffin, “Green Postcolonialism” 1–2), it is claimed that the identity of the marginalized in neo-colonial spaces of developing economies can never be fully explored unless “the symbiotic link between environmental and social justice” (Huggan and Tiffin, Postcolonial Ecocriticism 115) is included in the otherwise anthropocentric discussion. Also, for the representation of the correspondence between the environment and place in texts, it is suggested that “all texts are at least potentially environmental (and therefore susceptible to ec-
ocriticism or ecologically informed reading) in the sense that all texts are literally or imaginatively situated in a place, and in the sense that their authors, consciously or not, inscribe within them a certain relation to their place” (Kern 259). In other words, since both space and nature are charted through the dynamics of dualism which have regarded human ‘others’ and the environment as mere “bodily resources” (Alaimo, “Skin Dreaming” 125), it appears pertinent to engage with both geographical and ecological overlapping concerns that inform the politics of marginalized identity. In this context, my aim in this thesis is to explore the identity of the human ‘others’ at the intersection of space, place, and the environment, with reference to three Anglophone novels, namely Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* (2008), Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), and Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* (2008). Therefore, the prospect of retrieving a disenfranchised sense of place in colonial, postcolonial, and neo-colonial spaces is investigated in this study in relation to the rhetorics of gender, race, class, and caste, which construct differences between humans, and humans and nonhumans and create spatial divisions.

In doing so, the study locates the interrelations between postcolonial space, place, and the environment in Chapter 2, which serves as a foundational premise on which the subsequent chapters on the three novels are modelled. This chapter provides a theorization of space and place and illustrates the concept of “sense of place”, incorporating feminist, cultural, and development geographical analytical discussions of space, marked by the socio-cultural rhetorics of gender, class, caste, and an overarching colonial ideology of race. In the next part of the chapter, an ecocritical understanding of the ‘materiality’ of nature in spaces characterized by dualist models of nature/culture, emotions/reasons, and human ‘others’/humans, and their impact on human identity are highlighted encompassing the disciplines of materialist ecofeminism, animal philosophical studies, and cosmopolitan bioregionalism along the axes of gender, race, and class/ caste, respectively. Finally, the chapter combines the geographical exploration of the sense of place with the ecocritical contention of the agency of nature and nonhumans, which allows the thesis to explicate how the sense of place and identity of the marginalized can be viewed as congruent with their understanding of the agency of nature in spaces unrestricted by gender, race, class, and caste hierarchy. Furthermore, the chapter emphasizes the relevance of such an interdisciplinary theoretical approach in addressing the politics of identity in everyday spaces, such as homes, gardens, agricultural fields, ships, mansions, roads, bungalows, and so on, of the three concerned texts.

The paradigm of dualism that formulates spatial divisions and cultural distinctions between humans and human ‘others’/women/nonhumans is mapped in the next chapter with reference to Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*. Set in the nineteenth-century-colonial space of India in the wake of the Anglo-Chinese Opium war, *Sea of Poppies* is a collage of vast spaces as diverse as river, land, and the sea. The study pays attention to the construction of gendered space, intersected by nature and the cultural category of race. However, it should be clarified at this point that when gendered space includes the space of both women and men, the focus of this study will be principally on the gendered spaces of women since the analysis of the interface between gender and race provides an excellent opportunity to examine how the dualistic patriarchal structures of space, such as masculine/feminine or public/private, are interceded by the colonialist ideology that engages the colonized (both men and women) and nature as the ‘others’. In addition, spaces that are otherwise believed to be ‘natural’ or ‘neutral’ have sexed identities (McDowell 15–17), which determine the social behaviour,
gendered role, and spatial boundary of those who dwell in those spaces. Chapter 3 explores a range of gendered spaces, such as home/house, gardens, mansions, and agricultural lands, to decipher gendered facets of everyday places for women, their restricted spaces grounded in emotion and care, and their impact on women’s identity. Therefore, the chapter relies on the feminist geographical typology of gendered space to study how the spatial boundary of the two central female characters in the novel is maintained by the dominant socio-cultural power relations, which often threaten the female characters’ exclusion from the social space on the pretext of their belonging to an inferior gender group.

This chapter also argues for the recalibration of women–nature relationship which is compatible, as the study claims, with the shifting spatial contours of women and their agentic sense of self. Therefore, women’s understanding of the agency of the environment of the places that often causes their migration as well as shapes their harmonious relationship with both nature and culture is illustrated through materialist ecofeminists dialectics of human (toxic) bodily interconnections with (toxic) nature. Employing a materialist ecofeminist analysis of the body, this chapter thus builds a connection of materiality between the human body and nature, a revelation that informs, as the study will show, the awareness of the agency of nature and the sense of place in a space, which rejects the paradigm of duality, involving men (culture, mind)/women (nature, body), public/private, reason/emotion, and rationality/ethics, among others.

The study continues to explore the tenets of human–nonhuman interdependence in a post-independence-racial-landscape, by examining Kiran Desai’s Booker-winning-novel *The Inheritance of Loss* in Chapter 4. The novel offers a snapshot of a political conflict in north-east India in the 1980s, following a political party’s demand for a statehood, the turmoil which has a thriving presence even today. In this context, the chapter aims to show the way the loss of sense of place and identity of the judge, one of the central characters of the novel, is coterminous with his loss of ‘modern’ westernized space in his bungalow imbued with an essence of colonial history. By offering a cultural geographical reading of race relations as evident in the bungalow of the judge, the space of the human ‘others’ as well as the ‘white’ space of England, where the judge experiences racism, the chapter highlights the race–class interrelations in the post-independence era, which mediate class identity and formulate, as the study argues, class tensions and spatial divisions, such as between ‘modern’ space for the educated upper-class humans and indigenous space for the human ‘others’.

It is also the contention of this chapter to explore the way in which the judge’s ‘modern’ sense of place in the separate racialized space is congruent with his relationship with his companion animal – a relationship, which, as the study will show, is “uneven” in nature (Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments* 80), where the animal is often expected to act as a substitute for humans. Moreover, it is suggested that in the process of attributing human mental status to animals or anthropomorphism, the power relations between human and human ‘others’ are replicated in the relationship between humans and companion pets, negating the agency of both the pet and the human ‘others’. Therefore, the chapter offers an analysis of the owner’s empathy toward the pet to identify the hierarchical relationship between the pet and its owner. Thus, although spaces where such uneven interspecies relationships occur might appear as places that destabilize the human–animal (pet) divide, they are spaces, as the study illustrates, where power relations play a domineering role and perpetuate the human (westernized)–human ‘others’ (local) binary. Nonetheless, the typology
of the interspecies relationship principally includes interdisciplinary human–animal studies and animal geography to foreground the interplay of power relations and animal embeddedness in the construction of a landscape based on class hierarchy, which disregards the agency of both animals and human ‘others’.

Nevertheless, the hierarchy of class modelled on racial ideology that demarcates spatial boundaries between humans, and humans and animals often creates neo-colonial local and global places in developing economies, as will be argued in Chapter 5 with respect to Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*. The Booker winning novel is believed to have drawn wide critical attention for its harsh representation of India, launching into a tirade of criticism about the system of caste and class hierarchy, corruption, and environmental degradation. The process of development, which can be perceived as entwined in these socio-cultural rhetorics and environmental calamities, often draws a boundary between rural and urban spaces, although the development of the latter impacts the livelihood of humans in the former space and its environment. Nonetheless, development is also viewed as connecting distant places and offering survival “strategies” to local people through migration to urban/transnational/global spaces (Bebbington, “Movements, Modernizations and Markets” 87–90). This chapter, thus, explores the conundrum of development as both allowing and disregarding the agency of the human ‘others’, especially the protagonist of the novel, across rural and urban spaces. Moreover, the chapter expatiates on the way the contentious nature of development formulates a sense of ambiguity in the migrants over their identity and discourages them from associating themselves either with the local or the global. Following a development geographical analysis of the inherent contradictions of development, the chapter explores the interrelations between imperial land policy, corruption, and class and caste tensions that reshape neo-colonial space. Moreover, development geographical analyses lay the groundwork for a critique of development in this study, which will enable the chapter to measure the necessity of developing a connection or dissociation between local and global places.

Quite apart from the hierarchy of class and caste, which separates the local from the global, the development of the global or the process of urbanization necessarily includes the destruction and exploitation of rural nature as expendable resources, which, nonetheless, affect the livelihood of the locals and necessitate their loss of sense of place and migration from the local to the urban. In dealing with the process of alleviating the loss of orientation in spaces, the chapter argues for a bioregional cosmopolitan understanding of the process of development and an agentic correspondence between human and the environment. By emphasizing the necessity of adopting a bioregional cosmopolitan awareness of human–nature interdependence and an alternative development model, the chapter shows how a sense of cosmopolitan community, involving a compatible relationship of development between local and global places, can resolve the migrants’ ambiguity toward their identity. This awareness also offers a sense of place in a space that recognizes the agentic participation of all human groups in the process of the development, which is both independent and interconnected with rural, urban, and other transnational spaces. Therefore, this research emphasizes the interface between the spatiality of place and the materiality of nature by locating postcolonial identity politics at the intersection of social privileges as well as nature in the context of colonial, postcolonial, and neo-colonial hierarchy of domination. Each of these three novels complies with this interdisciplinary approach, the efficiency and relevance of which is explored in detail in the following chapter, to critically consider the questions of gender, race, class, and caste as well as environ-
ment. Yet, the following section provides an overview of earlier studies conducted on these three novels. Though not detailed, this attempt identifies the main threads of relevance that hold these studies together in relation to the present thesis.

### 1.2 RESEARCH MATERIALS AND EARLIER STUDIES

Amitav Ghosh, the author of *Sea of Poppies*, the first text addressed in the research, is often regarded, by critics such as Sankaran, as “one of the foremost writers in not just the Indian, but the global fiction scene” preoccupied with both the “collective” and “individual” history of marginalization, border-crossing, and migration: “his works manage to hold together a global, ecumenical perspective while focusing on highly individual, often contested and marginalized histories, such as those of refugees, Indian sepoys under the British Raj, the ‘lowered’ class Othered, and voiceless women” (xiv–xv). It is no surprise then that many recent critics have perceived his Booker-nominated 2008 novel *Sea of Poppies* as repeatedly spinning around those celebrated “themes of indenture, migration, and the transformation of self and [...] the experience of coolies” (Rai and Pinkney 65). While the novel offers a collective experience of *girimitiyas* or indentured labourers or coolies who cross the Black water or kala pani to work on the plantations of Mauritius, Rai and Pinkney opine that the voyage of the *girimitis* should be perceived as imbued with “a feminine metaphor” that evokes “the trope of a bride’s exile”, referring to Ghosh’s inclusion of elegiac Bhojpuri songs (71). These songs are usually sung at the time of a bride’s taking leave from her father’s place and the women immigrants in the novel sing them while crossing the boundary between their familiar river, the Ganges, and the vast unfamiliar space of the Indian Ocean. In addition, distinct spaces and their “histories” have always been prominent in Ghosh’s novels since the author remains “fascinated by interstitial spaces such as oceans, estuaries, rivers and, of course, islands and frequently uses such locations as settings in order to scrutinize and critique nationalist accounts of British colonialism and its aftermath” (Fletcher 4–5). Furthermore, it is suggested that a bond of “new egalitarian solidarity” is established among the *girimitiyas*, as the barriers of class, caste, race, and language are fractured, and the sense of ‘self’ undergoes the process of “transformation” on the Ibis (Rai and Pinkney 74). Therefore, along with women, the male characters of the novel, especially the two central upper-caste characters, experience a “transformation of self” since the disintegration of the normative “structures of maintaining ritual purity and caste standards” assists Raja Neel Ratan Halder and Baboo Nob Kissan in their emancipation in the form of a transformed ‘self’ (Rai and Pinkney 75).

Nonetheless, a gamut of work deals with Ghosh’s representational strategies employed in the novel. Though Ghosh’s experimentation with language in *Sea of Poppies*, a cross between English and Hindi/Bhojpuri, has been the crux of attention, recent studies claim that the cross-fertilization of different languages of the novel has been indicative of racial and cultural disintegration, and therefore, the language of English has “performative and political” usage throughout the novel (Luo 385–388). Thus, it is often perceived that the intermingling of distinct class and caste boundaries of the land on the Ibis is congruent with the development of the hybrid language of the ship, as Chambers remarks: “In his writing [...] Ghosh is eager to demonstrate that the ‘dialogue’ between people from various racial and religious groups travelling in the Indian Ocean was not simply metaphorical, but also literally enshrined in the
polyglot tongues of the coasts’ inhabitants” (88). Describing the multicultural and multilingual relationships that the migrants share on board as a mode of “vernacular cosmopolitanism”, Luo finds that such “cosmopolitanism” creates a “space” for the dispossessed and makes room for various “unusual” imbrications of “caste”, “class”, religious, and racial categories in the novel (380–81). Whereas it is the space of the slave ship and its socio-cultural milieu that have received much attention, this research will explore the specificities of spaces such as the sea, land, and river along the axes of gender, race, and the environment to explore how the development of new identities of indentured labourers is coterminous with their changing spatial boundaries between the land, the river, and the sea.

Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, the second novel to be examined in the thesis, has been perceived as laying bare the ‘uneven’ power relations of the globalized present. Thus, it is argued that in the novel, Desai uses the concept of “diaspora” as a literary method in exposing “the global networks of inequality” (Sabo 386). By focusing on the “material histories” of immigrants affected by the capitalistic ideology of the First World, the novel is claimed to have highlighted the creation of an insurmountable economic, social, and cultural gulf between the First and the Third Worlds (Sabo 376). Moreover, the places and edifices of the novel such as the airport, restaurants as well as government offices have also been identified as imbued with meanings that lay bare the social imbalanced structures endorsed by globalization (Masterson 420–22). Therefore, the novel serves as a critique of “transnational capitalism” in the USA where illegal immigrants often fail to achieve any “socio-economic means” of survival (Sabo 385). In a similar vein, Scanlan opines that the novel underscores “the postcolonial desire to create an independent political structure” rooted in local culture and language as expressed in the novel’s representation of the political struggle of the Indian-Nepalese community (271). The study also brings to the fore a range of “anti-systemic impulses” of the nineteenth century as represented in the novel such as the judge’s unusual “Anglophilia” (273), and therefore it has been pointed out that in the text:

[T]he insurgents and terrorists stay at home, and the poor go to America to join the underclass, where they are exploited, if not exactly terrorized, by the US economy in general and expatriate Indians in particular. New York’s restaurants offer the “authentic colonial experience”; “on top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native. Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, Gambian” (23). (Scanlan 272)

The politics of postcolonial identity mediated by the perception of the West have also been central in studies such as Spielman’s who analyses the characters of the novel under the rubric of “contradiction” consisting of the traits of “suppression” and “ambivalence” (75). Spielman claims that in Desai’s novel, the judge, for instance, has been represented, on the one hand, as a character who makes vain attempts to “suppress” his “past” in the derision of others, and on the other hand, his violent behaviour toward his wife, a prototype of traditional Indian values, evokes an “ambivalent” attitude in him characterized by both his hatred of and sexual longing for her (76–77). To illuminate the ambivalent attitude of certain characters, Spielman, furthermore, refers to the characters of Gyan and Sai whose “solid knowledge” of life, as has been represented in the novel, is always in flux throughout the text (82–87). And it is through this focus on the contradiction of “ambivalence and flexibility”, the study
claims, that the novel has made a contribution to the dialectics of postcolonial agentic identity (Spielman 88–89). Nonetheless, another study on the conceptualization of place and space and on the role of nature in Desai’s novel holds particular interest to this thesis. By developing a theory of “placeness” that includes “the physical locale of home and home-region” as well as “a person’s emotional, legal, aesthetic and existential investment”, J. Ferguson shows how both natural calamities and human “violence” transform a distinct place into a vacant space or “liminality of space” in the novel (36–44). According to J. Ferguson, Desai’s novel engages the loss of “the sense of ‘place-ness’” and “different types of natural and human violence” (36). Whereas this study highlights the necessity of perceiving nature as an agentic being, it should also be noted that the way in which the peculiarities of the indigenous and modernized space of the novel are intervened by the human–nonhuman correlation is a subject of further analysis, which this research claims to offer.

Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*, the third novel examined in the thesis, has often been discussed in the light of diasporic identity and its representation in the novel. The novel has been viewed as exposing the insurmountable “cultural” and “ideological” discrepancies between native Indians and non-resident Indians, which is also reflected in the breach between India’s aspiration “to become a global socio-economy and the reality of its present socio-economic state” (Goh 341). Concentrating on the human body as a place of locating the difference between the “foreign” and “local”, Goh makes use of the concept of “global capital” proposed by Deleuze and Guattari and shows how the effects of capitalism become engraved on the human body, with reference to the central characters of the novel (343). Goh identifies the bodily features of the oppressive landlords as a replica of the Indian “feudal economies” (348), and the Western-dressed female character of the novel as representing the global Indian economy and, therefore, suggests, referring to the end of the novel, that the two can never meet, although a sense of desperation looms large (349). However, taking the cue from Goh’s argument that Adiga’s text has taken a “dark turn” in the history of Indian writings in English in its exposure of the inherent traits of the country, Anwer considers that “this ‘dark turn’ might be more than just a means to seduce a western audience through images of an ugly, but enthralling and mesmerizing India” (306). Rather, she believes that this “novel addresses a native, anglophone and highly literate Indian audience in an attempt to make them aware of their complicity in the ongoing structures of violence and marginalization” (Anwer 307). Moreover, referring to Balram’s distinguished act of murder to rise up to the level of the gentry, Anwer argues that through this novel, Adiga actually “paves the way for the unhindered celebration of individualism and exceptionalism” (310).

Another study by Korte explores the narrative as dealing with the problem of representation of poverty and the poor. Korte opines that Adiga represents Indian poverty and the poor in a “non-generalised way” (296; emphasis original) and, unlike the “familiar romantic rags-to-riches pattern that promises wealth to any individual willing to work hard enough and persist in his efforts”, Adiga presents his protagonist as endowed with “new opportunities to reject and rise from poverty” to come out as a resolute entity (297). Again, in an attempt to address the question of the possibility of an ‘authentic’ representation of ‘the real’ and of giving voice to the ‘others’ by cosmopolitan authors, Mendes has found that the asymmetrical elements, such as the use of English language by an uneducated protagonist and his sudden turn from cowardice to tenaciousness, that raise disbelief among the audience about the story’s “authenticity”, have been intentionally instilled into the narrative as a “representational
strategy”, and that these elements “mock” the English-educated readers’ expectation of “the ideal of authenticity” (287). Drawing on Graham Huggan’s conceptualization of the marketing of the culture of the East, Mendes considers that the use of English in narrating the text should not be deemed as Adiga’s “flaw”; rather it constitutes a significant characteristic of his “representational strategy” to jerk the “preconceived notions” of the English-educated Indians about the poor (qtd. in Korte 298–99).

In a similar vein, extending the argument of Gayatri Spivak of hearing the subaltern, Detmers argues that the protagonist of the novel, as a social underdog, both challenges and reconstructs the distinction between “[s]ubject (law) and object-of-knowledge (repression)” (536). Accordingly, it is claimed that Adiga’s narrative enquires into “the shifting intra-cultural semantics and signatures of subaltern identity” (Detmers 537). In this context, the critic concentrates more on the strategic approach employed in the narrative in order to trace the genre than on the theme. However, for Detmers, the locales of the novel, both Bangalore and New Delhi, termed ‘New Metropolis’ and ‘New India’, appear central in the reconstruction of subaltern identity, as Adiga’s protagonist “re-conceptualizes the confining contested spaces of both the New Metropolis and the New India” that could offer “both routes of escape and roads to success” (543–544). While almost all of the previous studies focus on the feasibility of the protagonist’s emancipation from poverty and his rise to upper-class elitism, very few studies have looked into the role of development in reshaping the spatial boundary of the protagonist through both connecting and dissociating places, which will be examined in detail in this study.

What distinguishes this research from earlier work is its aim to develop a connection between space, place, and the environment, as will be elaborated in the second chapter of the study, in all of the three novels to explore the power relations that create divisions between humans, and humans and nonhumans. While the reading of Sea of Poppies in this study will connect space, place, and the environment from gendered or women’s perspective, in The Inheritance of Loss, the loss of modern/western space falsely built by middle-class Indians is emphasized in the wake of both political and environmental crises. In Adiga’s The White Tiger, the local–global interrelations will be explicated as contributing to the cosmopolitan identity of the marginalized. Moreover, the wide-ranging time span encompassed by these three novels lays the framework for tracing the socio-cultural and environmental facets of different spaces rooted principally in the history of colonization. While Ghosh’s novel is situated in the colonial past, the novel by Desai is set in 1980s India amid clashes between educated Indians and neglected Nepalese. Adiga’s novel focuses on contemporary events, as it is located in the age of globalization in the twenty-first century. This extensive time span and its preoccupation with different power relations depicted in these novels serve to expand the focus of the research in its attempt to relate space, place, and the environment.
2 POSTCOLONIAL PLACE, SPACE, IDENTITY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Space and spatiality are believed to be an integral part of human identity that is “plural and contradictory” as well as “spatially variable” (J. Martin 99). In a postcolonial exploration of the identity of human ‘others’, geographical dimensions are regarded as the foundation for conceptualizing the “historical experience” of the colonized (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 6). Therefore, the representation of individuals’ experience of space and place has recurred in a substantial number of writings by postcolonial novelists and critics who aim to participate in an anticolonial struggle “by moving beyond colonialism” (Ryan 471; emphasis original). Anita Desai, for instance, has incorporated a vast “field of spatial vision” in most of her works and recorded, in the process, the individuals’ “subjective” perception of their space (Jackson 60). Many postcolonial critics, in Wenzel’s view, for whom the tracing of the route of the development of human “identity” has become one of the crucial points in discussing postcolonial space, are of the opinion that an individual’s sense of being or identity is intrinsically bound up with their “perceptions of [the] ‘space’ and ‘place’” they inhabit (143). Moreover, it is important to remember that the difference between the colonizers and the colonized was performed across spaces in colonies, which was a byproduct of the emphasis placed on racial and cultural distinctions between the East and the West (Mills, “Gender and Colonial Space” 136). Therefore, one of the principal dialectics of geographical practices dealing with “spatial operations of colonial power” centres on the analysis of the process through which the spaces of the colonies are remodelled by colonial powers intersected by the categories of race, class, and gender, among others (Ryan 475). Nonetheless, although it is a place that informs colonial and postcolonial identity, the concept of place is always in flux, and, consequently, geographers argue that any attempt to conceptualize place as having a fixed set of “meanings” should be regarded as “either an attempt to reinforce dominant power relations or acts of resistance on the part of the subordinated” (Pulido 19–20; emphasis original). Besides, in an era of internal and transnational migration, place and identity are becoming thought of as fluid categories. In thinking along the lines of observations that Said has made on a general state of “homelessness” characterizing the present age, Gupta and Ferguson remark that constant mobility and incessant “transnational cultural flow” have resulted in “deteriorized” identity not only for the refugees and migrants from the Third World, but also for common people, whose land has been “internationalized” (9–10). Therefore, the preconceived notion of a place as offering permanent identities with ingrained culture is subject to criticism, as people’s perception of place changes over time which defines their changing space and fluid identity.

Aside from the racial distinction that leads to spatial divisions, the Western colonial practice entailed a wide range of unfavourable environmental conditions that impacted colonial spaces and often reshaped territories considered wild and uninhabitable (Huggan and Tiffin, “Green Postcolonialism” 1–2). Incidentally, the colonial power politics defined the colonized as the ‘others’, justifying the colonial ideology of domination and the “animalization” of people of colour (K. Anderson 303; Warren 92). Nonetheless, the neo-colonial ideals of exploitation and domination upheld by globalization encourages the separation between humans and animals/nature that has become a point of reference for constructing distinctions between different human
groups, materialized along the axes of gender, race, class, and caste, among others. It is the binary perception that humans are separate from nature that has resulted not only in the dehumanization of certain human groups, but also in the destruction of ecosystems, as ecocritical studies claim, denying the agency of nature (Plumwood, *Environmental Culture* 74). Environmental historians such as Arnold and Guha also believe that in an age marked by the stark ramifications of environmental degradation in the form of deforestation and desertification, among others, such a nature/culture anthropocentric understanding of the world is both unrealistic and “dangerous” (2). Therefore, the inseparability of “discourses on nature” and its “materiality” has found a prominent place in the spatial analyses of colonialism and its impression on the identity of the colonized (Duncan, “The Struggle to be Temperate” 35). The necessity to understand the “political” relationship between humans and nonhumans, which is no lesser in value than human and human relationships (Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 17), has also acquired a new significance ever since the neo-colonial tendency of globalization in the form of expanding the economy, making advancements with technologies, and converting wild territories into organized spaces rakes up differences between the North and the South, their people, and economic capacities (Cowen and Shenton 27–30; S. White 413). Nevertheless, it is my contention that an acknowledgement of the agency of nonhumans, nature, and humans marked as the ‘others’ and an understanding of the human–nature correlation, intersected by the social privileges of gender, race, class, and caste, inform human identity and determine the cultural contours of a space. Following a disquisition on the distinction between a space and a place, Section 2.1, therefore, focuses on the interfaces between postcolonial space, place, and identity as well as their convergence at the intersection of the spatial dynamics of gender, race, and class.

2.1 POSTCOLONIAL PLACE, IDENTITY, AND SPACE

The concept of space has often been argued to be “difficult to define philosophically” since it is “both an aspect of physical reality and also the varying ways in which human beings experience and conceptualize this reality” (Lange xiii-xiv). This problem of conceptualizing space in literature has been noted by Rawdon Wilson who suggests:

Space, understood in its most primitive sense (a distance to be crossed, an openness between points, one of which is occupied by a perceiving subject, filled by something, sunlight, moonlight, hot dust, cold mud or emptiness) seems omnipresent in literature, but rather hard to place. There doesn’t seem to be a vocabulary sufficiently capacious to discuss space. […] [L]iterary space, in being conceptual, cannot be measured, but it can be experienced. It is this experience that leads us to claim that space is invariably present in fiction though never precisely so. (qtd. in Fincham 215)

Then, space, whether social or literary, revolves around the axis of place. Said proposes that even a social space, “space to be used for social purposes”, involves regions, geographical places, and “lands” (*Culture and Imperialism* 93). The difference between space and place is also understood through human social relationships with certain places that often define the contour of a space, as Lefebvre perceives: “[A]ll ‘subjects’
are situated in a space [...] which they may both enjoy and modify. [...] This has the effect of setting up reserved spaces, such as places of initiation, within social space. [...] The texture of space affords opportunities not only to social acts with no particular place in it [...], but also to a spatial practice that it does indeed determine [...]." (35–57).

However, the dialectics of space and place as defining identity have been explored in a range of disciplines, such as postcolonial studies, feminism, and geography, among others. Geographers often define place in relation to the social relations it nurtures, as McDowell exemplifies:

**[P]lace as constituted by sets of relations which cut across spatial scales. [...]**

Places, in other words, touch the ground as spatially located patterns and behaviours [...]. However, to understand [...] local relationships in places, where, for example, Chilean migrants reconstruct their sense of ‘home’ in Glasgow, or Tamil refugees in London, combining cultures and habits from ‘there’ and ‘here’ to create a new sense of place, requires not just an analysis ‘in place’ but the unpicking of relationships and spatial practices [...]. It is at the nodes in these networks, and through the cultural meanings associated with them, that places are constituted. (30)

In other words, although both the terms space and place are used quite interchangeably in everyday life, for cultural geographers the “sense of place” has always been central to “[t]he underlying physical characteristics of place” (Dale, Ling and Newman 268). Nevertheless, geographer Tuan emphasizes our “[k]inesthetic and perceptual experience” in making a place out of space, such as a “familiar” space becoming a place for human (Space and Place 73). Since the field of geography itself has also undergone a change in shifting its focus toward space from “a practico-inert container of action” to “a socially produced set of manifolds” (Crang and Thrift 2), the “sense of place” has been prioritized over space, both “naturally” and “socially” constructed, as it is claimed that “both natural space and socially constructed spaces contribute to the evolution of a sense of place within a community” (Dale, Ling and Newman 268). Thus, J. Anderson differentiates between a space and a place on the basis of an individual’s cultural and emotional attachments with the region as he claims:

**Spaces are scientific, open and detached; places are intimate, peopled and emotive. You may travel through spaces (perhaps isolated in a car or train), but you will live your everyday life in places. Place then is the counterpoint of space: places are politicised and cultured; they are humanised versions of space. [...] Places then are ‘carved’ out of space by cultures. In contrast to space, places are meaningful, they root people both geographically and socially, and are fashioned by culture from context. (Understanding Cultural Geography 38)**

Championing Tuan’s disquisition on the differences between place and space, Taylor observes that space has mostly been seen as “general”, and place has frequently been associated with “personal” spheres (10). Therefore, it appears that the principal distinction between a space and a place is grounded in human perception of, familiarity with, and emotional responses to the land – a range of experiences that are also intervened, as geographers argue, by the social hierarchies of gender (Blunt and Rose, Writing Women and Space), race (Kenny, “Claiming the High Ground”; Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority”), and class (Radcliffe, “Development and Ge-
ography”; M. Power, Rethinking Development Geographies). Consequently, in exploring the colonial, postcolonial, and neo-colonial spatial divisions along the axes of gender, race, and class, as the following subsections show, this research builds on feminist, cultural, and development geographical studies in order to foreground the sense of place of women, westernized natives, and human ‘others’ in spaces where implicit social practices and customs, cultural stereotyping, and “uneven” power relations occasion spatial boundaries for different human groups.

2.1.1 Feminist Geography and Sense of Place

Feminist geographers’ interest in spatial analysis appears to emanate from the identification of the dichotomy between places, such as between private and public, which is believed to have deleterious impacts on women (Jackson 58). Such dichotomous conceptualization of place has been challenged by feminist geographers, such as Blunt and Dowling, who argue that both private and public places, at the intersection of various social relations, should be considered as modified by “sexuality as well as class, gender and ‘race’” (50). Furthermore, it is claimed that such dichotomies between public and private and “global and local” allow us to conceive utopian concepts of “stability, completeness and authority” associated with a place (Laurie et al. 112). In a similar vein, postcolonial literature has perceived that, in the former colonies and in Third World nations, dwelling places are often controlled by various social coordinates such as race, class, gender, and many more (Jackson 58). “Purdah practices” of Indian women, for instance, has been a consequential case that manifests how cultural practices of separating the private from the public are imbibed with specific socio-economic connotations: “Purdah practices have varied over time and between regions, ranging from minor restrictions on women’s mobility to total incarceration within the home. All forms of purdah have been displays of class privilege, the implication being that families who keep ‘their’ women in purdah can afford to forgo the income from their labour outside the home” (Jackson 58). Therefore, the restrictions on women’s mobility and their confinement at home (private place) are correlated with the economic and social status of their (patriarchal) family, and the distinction between their private and public spheres can vary conforming to the requirement of their family in the course of time.

However, when there is substantial agreement on places as shaping identities, the variance of spatial experience in private places such as home/house should also be taken into consideration to examine the divergence between the politics of identity located in the same private place. The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, for instance, views homes, as Wenzel puts it, as having “significant and relevant spaces or spheres of influence in personal and public life” (145). The following view elaborated by Blunt and Dowling is an extension of the concept of home:

Home […] is a place, a site in which we live. […] Home is also an idea and an imaginary that is imbued with feelings. These may be feelings of belonging, desire and intimacy […] but can also be feelings of fear, violence and alienation […]. These feelings, ideas and imaginaries are intrinsically spatial. Home is thus a spatial imaginary: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places (2; emphases original).
Also, a house can become a home when it encourages the development of an atmosphere for our intimate relationship with other residents of the house (Bowlby, Gregory, and McKie 344). Home has also been perceived as a place of conflict where different individuals attempt to secure footholds as a space of their own (George 18). While the way in which a sense of being home is bound up with a sense of self and identity will be explicated in detail in Subsection 2.3.1 in relation to Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, suffice it to say that the postcolonial geographical analysis of home is largely congruent with the concept of identity, whether peripheral, colonial, or hybridized, and the sense of “belonging” (Blunt, “Cultural Geography” 509). However, even such a distinction between private places can be gender typical and create different spaces for men and women (Blunt and Rose 2). Nonetheless, as the following discussion on cultural geography suggests, the conceptualization of space as a variable construct depends on a wide range of social and cultural categories, including race and class.

2.1.2 Cultural Geography and Racial Space

Cultural geography, as an addition to human geography, enquires into the discourse of racism, its construction in societies, its representation, such as the attribution of “negative” cultural meanings to bodily and ethnic differences between human groups, and its role in spatial segregation (Pred 66). The most celebrated enterprise that human civilization entails of distinguishing between “ours” and “theirs”, as Said perceives, is one of the infamous methods of differentiating between a “familiar space” and an “unfamiliar” one (*Orientalism* 54). Therefore, cultural geographical studies on race are principally informed by the deconstructive analysis of race that is built upon the “naturalized hierarchy” of biological differences between people and the hierarchy’s “material” impact on social groups (Nash 639). However, it has also been argued that cultural geographical studies of race have remained mostly oriented toward the West (Kobayashi 553). As a result, cultural geographical discourses highlight the need for geographers to scrutinize cultural categorizations such as “white” and “western” to identify the “wider systems of racial privilege” in the geographical study of space (Bonnett and Nayak 309). Besides, in the mapping of postcolonial racial geography, it is claimed the concept of the “otherness” and the agency of the colonized are often deconstructed from the white /western perspective (Clayton, “Critical Imperial and Colonial Geographies” 364). In their examination of the decolonizing strategies of the East, cultural geographers working on postcolonial spaces are, therefore, required to gauge the importance of “[d]ecentring the West” and exploring other geographical global spaces, apart from the West, where cultural contacts between the colonizers and the colonized occur (Clayton, “Critical Imperial and Colonial Geographies” 362–64). In this regard, the evaluation of the way in which racial meanings are produced and “cultural geographies of race […] are […] materialised” in the urban landscape have also been crucial to the geographical reading of racial discourse (Nayak 553). Since cultural geographers have insisted on a link between racialization and spatialization (Kobayashi 554), the investigation of the racial meanings attached to the space of the colonized can provide an understanding of the way racist ideologies create separations and boundaries between spaces for different human groups.

The spatial demarcation of postcolonial geography and landscapes is bound up with colonial power hegemony and postcolonial identity. Since racial discrimination has “spatial dimensions and effects in specific geographical and historical settings”,

25
where it often interacts with other social categories such as gender, class, and sexuality (Ryan 475), the spaces of such interactions develop different meanings that might influence and determine the identity of those living in those spaces. Therefore, cultural geographers Duncan and Lambert show how the space of the colonizers can be recreated in the space of the colonized through the process of “the domestication of colonial spaces”, which reshapes the cultural geography of the colony and impacts the colonized identity (390–93). Nonetheless, while the study looks forward to providing a detailed account of the formation of a racial landscape in India in Subsection 2.3.2, where the shifting spatial boundaries of middle class Indians in the late twentieth century are discussed with reference to Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, in the following subsection the study discusses how the process of development and globalization, intersected by class and racial hierarchy, affects postcolonial spaces and the agency of its inhabitants.

### 2.1.3 Development Geography and Class Hierarchy

Development geographical studies examine different dimensions of the process of development and its consequences on society such as poverty, class and gender-based inequity, migration, and environmental disasters as well as emphasize the need for an ecofriendly “sustainable development” (Redclift, “Sustainable Development”; Adams, “Green Development Theory?”). Development, as geographer Crush defines, is the regulation of certain places, their society, people, culture, and environment by a few powerful, which results in a hierarchized society (6). Again, development also means progress and modernity, which the contemporary world aims to associate itself with. However, the development process, in practice and often with aid from the West, of expanding the economy, making advancements with technologies, converting wild territories into organized spaces, and valuing culture through the lens of economic importance, is commonly viewed as a project akin to the European paradigm of Enlightenment and progress. From this perspective, development accommodates a pervasive neoliberal tendency toward neo-colonization (Cowen and Shenton 27–30; M. Power 131). Therefore, in the name of progress, the attempt to rake up differences between people, places, and economic capacities of different countries comprises one of the central characteristics of development (S. White 413). Nonetheless, while class hierarchy patterned after the racial binary is believed to have a stranglehold on society and place, the racial implication in the class stereotypes and in the neo-colonial tendencies of development mostly remained unexplored until the twenty-first century (S. White 407). Moreover, the critical theorization of space and place has been mostly limited to western space and its framework (Robinson 648–49). Thus, the analysis of the nature of development along the lines of class in the former colonies should be foregrounded in the correlation between racial dimensions of development and the neo-colonial power structure.

In its emphasis on disproportionate power structures in society, development geography, as geographer Radcliffe perceives, can offer a “culturally specific” understanding of “uneven” power relations in the former colonies (296). Since the term postcolonialism itself is imbued with a sense of “internal colonialism” or the neo-colonial socio-political developments formulated by race and class categories (Sidaway 19–23), an evaluation of the relation between human and human ‘others’ enables development geographers an understanding of the various ways the consequences of development projects are experienced by different human groups. Also, such uneven relations be-
between human and human ‘others’ are believed to be based on a dualism between the North and the South (M. Power 132–136; Radcliffe 293), an implication strongly associated with the discourse of postcolonial development in the former colonies. Moreover, in the age of globalization, the formation of identities at the intersection of renewed colonial relationships and “cultural hybridities” (M. Power 120) appears to be one of the predominant issues of postcolonial criticism of development (McEwan 129). Also, these hybrid identities often blur the boundaries between different spaces, turning the local into global and vice versa (M. Power 137). Consequently, an analysis of the differences between and interdependences of local, national, and international spaces, in the context of development in the aftermath of colonization, can also offer a glimpse into the hybrid identity of those agents who reside in and migrate to those places. Nonetheless, the way the model of development that is intersected by class and racial hierarchy both links and dissociates rural and urban places and affects the livelihood of those who dwell in those places will be argued in detail in Subsection 2.3.3 in relation to Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger.

Again, other than restricting the space of different human groups, the rhetorics of gender, race, class and caste can also impact an individual’s relationships with the environment. While scrutinizing such asymmetrical social constructs from a specific gender position, Warren suggests that there are “customs”, “taboos”, and “legal” constraints that pose a hindrance to women’s various rights, such as land rights, that men do not face at all (5). Moreover, nearly all sorts of calamities and natural disasters have certain gender, class, and age dimensions such as, in the Third World, women and children are the first victims of natural hazards of drought, pollution, drinking water scarcity, soil erosion, and desertification, among others (Warren 8–9). Therefore, the theorization of space should be aligned with the analysis of culture as well as nature since both human culture and nature inform the politics of identity in a space. By emphasizing the correlation between nature and culture in reshaping identities, the following section will provide an overview of the discourse of ecocriticism and its dialectics of the binary between humans and human ‘others’/nonhumans.

2.2 THE NATURE–CULTURE DUALISM IN ECOCRITICISM

Ecocriticism, or “[e]nvironmentally oriented literary and cultural studies” have started to gain prominence, as Heise writes, from the mid-1990s with the emergence of “globalization” as a principal theme for cultural study (“Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn” 381–82). Although originated as a “white” literary approach to local environmental crises in America, ecocriticism has been inclusive of a number of literary disciplines of global importance, such as postcolonialism, environmental justice studies, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and feminism, among others (Cilano and DeLoughrey 73–75). Moreover, studies of ecocriticism, unlike other literary practices that mostly emerged as “political movements”, also make room for various conflicting subjects such as “history”, “language”, “art”, “literature”, and environment (Heise, “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism” 504–6). However, in the wake of concerns over the environmental degradation, the decision to incorporate ecological studies into mainstream critical disciplines was hailed by almost all discourses since it is perceived that “[a]n environmental consciousness cannot be grounded in environmentalist or ecological discourses alone” (Bartosch 11). As a result, otherwise anthropocentric literary theories began to emphasize that the fundamentals of both society and culture are intrinsic to
an understanding and an awareness of nature (Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* 17). In other words, the principal concern emerges as how to incorporate nature in conventional studies in the humanities, voice its degenerated state, and lambaste, partly to some extent, the (western) anthropocentric outlook that has so far viewed nature as the ‘other’, like the disenfranchised human ‘others’ in society.

Evidently, for many ecologists, the existing environmental catastrophes have a lot to do with the “human/nature” polarization maintained by our anthropocentric perception of the world (Plumwood, *Environmental Culture* 4). Critics, therefore, aim to destabilize such a binary understanding of the world in reconsidering both our “rationalist” positions as well as our involvement in the chain of oppressions that maintain such duality (L. White 137). While ecocritic Bartosch claims that ecocritical study, in particular, aims to resolve many dichotomies such as those between the “centre” and the “periphery” and “nature” and “culture” (12), Plumwood reiterates the necessity of a new “environmental culture” that dissolves “the nature/culture and reason/nature dualisms that split mind from body, reason from emotion, across their many domains of cultural influence” (*Environmental Culture* 4).

Bioregionalism, the branch of study that argues that “humanity must organize itself socially and geographically in relation to its ecological context” (Mellor 131), also perceives that the human and nonhuman others’ “communities” are “so entwined with the land that any slim boundaries between self and other, sky and earth, water and soil, animal and human” should wither away (Thayer 69). Therefore, it is expected that we establish a system embedded in both nature and culture that can enable us to see the interrelationship between human space and the sphere of nature (Plumwood, *Environmental Culture* 51). This interconnectedness of not only nature and culture but also “living and nonliving beings” termed as “mesh” should be considered as the foundation of the “ecological thought” which encompasses our “social, psychic, and scientific domains” (Morton 28–29). Again, postmodern feminist critics believe that, instead of understanding nature against the backdrop of the dualistic model of nature/culture where nature stands as an inactive object that receives oppression from “Man”, we should view nature as an agent that can influence the whole environment incorporating both humans and nonhumans (Alaimo and Hekman 4–5). However, critics believe that though measures are being taken to ward off natural calamities, the issue of “knowledge and decision-making” cannot go unquestioned, which always seemingly privileges humans over nonhumans (Plumwood, *Environmental Culture* 69–70). This is something that Garrard calls a “shallow” form of approach to the environmental crises (19). Nevertheless, although the question of an effective “policy-making” for a global sustainable human–nature relation has consolidated much of the tension of ecocritical studies, there has been considerable demand within ecocritical studies to adopt a consolidated approach toward transnational and global connections (Heise, “Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn” 382), a normative gendered perception of nature (Gaard, “Ecofeminism Revisited” 28), and the animalization of human ‘others’ (Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* 152) in exploring the ethics of rationality that foreground the matrix of power relations and politics of identity (Wallace and Armbruster 7). As this study intends to analyse the reshaping of spatial boundaries of the marginalized along the rhetorics of gender, race and class/caste, the research will incorporate ecofeminist, animal philosophical, and bioregional studies into ecocriticism to pinpoint the intersections between socio-cultural categories, such as gender, race, and class/caste, and nature, which, as the following subsections will argue, can affect identity politics by constructing a binary between humans and nonhumans.
2.2.1 Women and Nature: Ecofeminist Literary Criticism

The dissection of the anthropocentric social and cultural structure, as the above discussion indicates, makes explicit the inescapable link between nature, nonhuman others, women, the poor as well as the marginalized (Plumwood, *Environmental Culture* 236), who stand in stark opposition to the rich, the male, or the powerful, in general. Critics often contend that the “cross-fertilization” of feminism and ecocriticism named as ecofeminism serves “as one of the catalysts for ecocriticism’s increasing recognition of the complexity of environmental issues” (Vakoch 2). It should be noted here that although ecofeminism is a practice that expresses concerns over patriarchal domination, “multinational corporations, and global capitalism” that result in “environmental degradation” and the refutation of women, indigenous peoples, and non-human others’ rights and their identity, it never aims for a world devoid of economic progress or its sustainable advancement (Gaard and Murphy 2). Ecological feminists or ecofeminists point out such correlations and censure the unjustified domination of patriarchal anthropocentrism from different viewpoints. However, the dominant and oppositional ecofeminist positions widely discussed involve radical ecofeminisms, which advocate women’s association with nature on the basis of “female biology and social experience” (Otto 19), and the philosophical or sociological ecofeminisms, which refute such a relation on the basis of its being constructed within a patriarchal social order (Garrard 24). These ecofeminist standpoints are also named cultural ecofeminism and rationalist feminism (Otto 15–19). While for cultural ecofeminists, for instance, the women-nature alignment does not appear to cause as much damage to the status of women as does the cultural depreciation of both “feminine categories” and “the virtues necessary for a more viable human relationship with nature” (Otto 17), rationalist feminists question the role of historical processes and structures of society such as “capitalism, statism, and ethnic oppressions” in constructing the nature/culture dualism (Biehl qtd. in Otto 18). Embodied material feminists, on the other hand, connect women and nature on the basis of the human’s bodily embeddedness in nature, which can help dissolve the essentialist charges brought against ecofeminisms. Ariel Salleh, a materialist ecofeminist, thus, argues that the cultural “deformation” of both women and nature cannot diminish their “material potentiality” (Canavan, Klarr, and Vu 184).

It is also argued that ecofeminisms, irrespective of the distinctive paths that question the anthropocentric and patriarchal perceptions of society and nature, should locate themselves at the intersecting points of race, class, gender, and sexuality (Gaard, “New Directions for Ecofeminism” 645–46; See also Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 1; Campbell ix). However, although feminism has long voiced for the inclusion of their own dimensions to the ecocritical analyses of culture, there have been only a handful of studies, according to Gaard, Estok, and Oppermann, that can provide “intersectional and culturally specific tools for evaluating the cultural produc-

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1 Essentialist tirades are directed against (cultural) ecofeminism, which claims that women’s biological closeness to nature on the basis of reproductive features can provide them with a better understanding of nature than men (Sturgeon 264). For a nature–culture-specific study on Indian cultural ecofeminism see “Development, Ecology and Women” and *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* by Shiva. See also Gaard’s “Ecofeminism Revisited” and “New Directions for Ecofeminism” for how such charges often misrepresent the basic arguments that ecofeminisms pose surrounding gender, race, and nonhuman ‘others’ dualisms.
tion by and about women and communities of color” (10). And, again, it is believed that “white” ecofeminism prioritizes the issue of gender over race, and therefore, the “issue of colonialism” has received little attention in ecofeminism, which can partially alleviate the ongoing “ecological and social problem for indigenous women around the globe” (Crawford 88). As a consequence, it is of utmost importance to analyse the typology of ecofeminisms within the oeuvre of postcolonial theory to heighten a gendered awareness of the impact of colonization on humans and nonhumans.

Yet, despite the problem that ecofeminism might have in destabilizing the binary model of hierarchy, it shares a common ground with ecocriticism in voicing the need of acknowledging the agency of those deemed as ‘others’, such as women, nature or animals. The two corresponding problems that ecofeminisms encounter in relation to establishing a women-nature-compatible relationship have rightly been pointed out by Campbell. First, ecofeminisms aim to challenge the dualistic model of nature (women)/culture (men) constructed by western ideology, and second, with this aim in view, some ecofeminist arguments fall into the loopholes of essentialism in positioning women more naturally along with nature and, thereby, run counter to their arguments of rejecting the dual mode of thinking that separates women from culture and men (ix). Although I aim to provide a comprehensive illustration of the interrelation between the agency of nature and women from materialist ecofeminist standpoints in Subsection 2.3.1, suffice it to say that the denial of the agency of nature or nonhumans is correlated with our perception of self and others. Correspondingly, the following subsection expatiates on the agency of domestic animals, which will chiefly be discussed along the axes of the human perception of animals and animal agency, to show the way the anthropocentric attitude toward interspecies relationships reinstates the dualistic model of separation.

2.2.2 Nonhumans and Animal Agency

Since animals or nonhuman ‘others’, along with nature, are judged along the popular humans/nonhumans dualist model bolstered by an ideology that resembles one of “imperialism” (Huggan and Tiffin, “Green Postcolonialism” 6), questions associated with the representation of animal subjectivity, agency, domestication, exploitation, and conservation, among others, have received significant attention from many disciplines, such as, animal studies, animal geography, and ecocriticism, to name a few (Matthews 131). Ecocritical studies’ concern for animals and their conservation is rooted in an ethical ground similar to the one that calls for the need to recognize the independent presence of nature and our dependency on it. The representation of animals in literary and cultural works and the ethical facets of human–nonhuman relationship are perceived to be key areas of ecocritical studies (Buell, Heise, and Thornber 417). The basic theory emanates from the fact that human civilization has aggravated the crisis of habitats for most animals, and has pushed them to the periphery. Also, the spirit of animal rights activism, which protests against cruelty toward animals, is theorized in ecocriticism, which perceives such cruelty as a result of “speciesism” or human’s sense of superiority over nonhumans, and, in addition, considers it as comparable to “racism”, “misogyny”, and “homophobia” (Estok, “Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness” 208; Estok, “Reading Ecophobia: A Manifesto” 75). Therefore, the exploitation of animals and their conservation, like the degradation of the environment, are some of the ethical issues that ecocriticism remains concerned with in its exploration of the dualism inherent in the process of ‘othering’ humans and nonhumans.
According to Estok, ecocriticism, which shares common ground with the “environmentalism” movement regarding animal welfare, thus, should concentrate on human perceptions of animals (“Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness” 215). In all of the encounters between humans and animals, according to Malamud, animals are perceived as devoid of any agency and can be used by humans as resources or possessions, a popular cultural perception that results in both bodily and “a kind of cultural consumption” of animals (1–2). Even in the event of domesticating animals, a theory of “mutual benefit” is championed that highlights the benefit that both humans and animals derive from human–animal relationships, although such purported claims are often criticized for being anthropocentric and for advocating the “controlled breeding” of animals “for human purpose” (DeMello 92). That is to say, although in a human–companion animal relationship the agency of the animal appears to exist in the form of a companion, who provides and can also derive pleasure from the relationship, such interspecies relations appear to be maintained on human terms.

Nevertheless, in ecocriticism, our biological resemblances to animals are emphasized in understanding the agency of the nonhumans since it is perceived that our body is as agentic and “wild” as that of animals (Snyder 17), and therefore, it is considered essential for humans to recognize both their physical and emotional resemblance to animals, who can play a pivotal role in the understanding of our self and identity, to boot (Shepard 80). Yet, in our understanding of ourselves as part of the natural and animal worlds, it is also argued that we either tend to commodify animals or exoticize their wildness. The way animals are produced and perceived as a commodity in contemporary society and culture, which prioritizes the “companion-animal” relationship, is aptly pointed out by Haraway who contends that human–animal (pet) relations in “European and American bourgeois families” follow “patterns of consumerism” (47) evident in the development and popularity of pet-specific industries that produce commodities such as pet food (48) and customized breeds of dogs (53). Besides, our exoticization of wild animals devalues them in turning them into mere “camera grist, intellectual ciphers, words, models for woolly toys, and monuments to esthetic detachment, as if wild animals were shrines or works of fine art” (Shepard 6). Therefore, we need to consider animal agency in relation to the factors that construct human agency since humans often attribute their perceptions of animals to understand their agency (McFarland and Hediger 3–4). In the domestic sphere of a household, the way in which an interspecies relationship is affected by such perceptions of humans, disregarding the agency of the companion animal, will further be elucidated in the following Subsection 2.3.2, which deals with the creation of a racial landscape and separate spaces for human ‘others’. Moreover, in the age of globalization, such spatial divisions on the basis of class or race transpire across rural, urban, local, and global spaces and often reshape, as we shall shortly see, the ecological contours of those spaces.

2.2.3 Bioregional Enquiry of Place, Its Environment, and Culture

Bioregionalism as part of environmental studies emerged in the 1970s’ North America with the aim of redefining a place, especially the regional and the local, involving its ecological, geographical, social, and cultural elements (Lynch, Glotfelty and Armbruster 3). Instead of defining a region through its national and political boundaries, a bioregion is demarcated by its natural characteristics and “physiographic” boundaries
since “globalizing economic, technological and political relationships” have made “national boundaries less relevant” (Thayer 19). Moreover, the interrelationship between nature and culture, as Li perceives, has been identified as a dominant theme in bioregionalism, which also explicates the correlation between the global and the local (57). Therefore, according to American bioregionalist Thayer, a “bioregion” or “lifeplace” is marked by the cohabitation of both nature and culture (4; emphases original).

In the question of the interrelatedness of human identity and place, bioregionalists explicate that “human identity may be constituted by our residence in a larger community of natural beings – our local bioregion – rather than, or at least supplementary to, national, state, ethnic, or other more common bases of identity” (Lynch, Glotfelty and Armbruster 4). For Berg and Dasmann, inhabiting a place means something more than simply living in a place since a society’s sense of place depends on its correspondence with human and nonhuman lives and other seasonal and climatic processes of the planet (231). Thus, bioregionalism offers a solution to the problem of misusing local lands in the age of globalization by emphasizing the process of “reinhabitation”, which should involve:

Becoming-aware of the particular ecological relationships that operate within and around it. It means understanding activities and evolving social behavior that will enrich the life of that place, restore its life-supporting systems, and establish an ecologically and socially sustainable pattern of existence within it. Simply stated, it involves becoming fully alive in and with a place. (Berg and Dasmann 232; emphasis original)

In other words, although bioregionalism focuses on the regional, its concerns cannot be pigeonholed only into the ethics of local land since a place, its society, culture as well as its sense of place come under the purview of bioregionalism. Thus, a bioregion not only nurtures and nourishes all humans and nonhuman others but also is “alive” in itself (Thayer 32; emphasis original). Therefore, bioregionalism defines a place through its natural, social, and cultural determinants, which lead to the construction of the identity of the people who inhabit such “bioregions”. However, it has been perceived that such bioregional emphasis on the creation of an isolated environmental and cultural praxis from that of the global is opposed to postcolonialism, which engages with the political, cultural, social, and psychological tensions between the colonizer and the colonized. Among the four principal points of difference, precisely pointed out by Nixon, between postcolonialism and bioregionalism, a postcolonial focus on “displacement” and “cosmopolitanism” in opposition to bioregionalism’s “priority to the literature of place”, and “nationalism” draws particular attention to the study of the interrelation between the local and global (“Environmentalism and Postcolonialism” 235). Nonetheless, it has also been asserted that despite having many similarities between postcolonialism and bioregionalism, such as over the “critiques of dominant power” and valuing “indigenous knowledge and language”, “bioregional critics have generally overlooked postcolonial texts, limiting their purview to American literature” (James 263). Conversely, a cosmopolitan bioregional awareness of the interrelations between local and global places and their environment in the age of globalization, as advanced in Subsection 2.3.3 on hierarchized human spaces rooted in class and caste, can foreground postcolonial interests on racial tensions by accentuating the interdependence between human and the human ‘others’ and by highlighting their agentic sense of place. With this aim in view, the following section
brings geographical dialectics of identity and space as explicated in 2.1 into a dialogue with ecocritical studies to show how the creation of places in postcolonial spaces is determined by the closure of the dualisms between man and woman, nature and culture, reason and emotion, human and human ‘others’, and local and global, among others.

### 2.3 POSTCOLONIAL ENVIRONMENT, PLACE, AND SPACE

Any discussion on place and space or the lack of them is bound to encompass a geographical exploration of the human–place interrelationship, as Edward Said perceives in his memoir *Out of Place* (1999), where he refers to the deep “political nature of place” and its intricate correlation with identity (Blunt and McEwan 1). The concept of culture relies on that of colonization since “the culture of land”, which comprises the cultivation of its plants and animals or “agri-culture” is invariably connected with “a form of colonization” (Young 31). However, the geographical explication of colonialism or imperialism is also believed to express much “stronger concern with the materiality of discourse, the physicality of movement and interaction, and the geographical embodiment of power and identity” than postcolonial studies, which chiefly circulate around “textualism” (Clayton, “Imperial Geographies” 457). Geographer Blunt clarifies the role that geographies can play in the analysis of colonial process by asserting that postcolonial geographies “provide critical readings of colonial power, knowledge and the production of space, and their effects in shaping the present world” (“Colonialism/Postcolonialism” 179; emphasis original). Ecocritical studies, on the other hand, contribute to the production of “material, experiential, cultural, and embodied knowledges” by adopting “non-anthropocentric models” that question “many of the assumptions the humanist tradition supports and perpetuates”, such as the binary between nature and culture (Mason, Szabo-Jones and Steenkamp 4). Nonetheless, at this point it should be clear that human identity is a conglomerate of a sense of place in spaces, as feminist, cultural, development geographies argue above, and a sense of community with nature and nonhumans in those spaces, as ecofeminisms, animal studies, and bioregionalism suggest. Thus, it is the contention of this research that geographical studies on shifting spatial boundary need to incorporate the ecocritical understanding of the agency of nature, which, as the following subsections will argue, like cultural constructs of gender, race, class, and caste, affects the sense of place of humans and even instigates their migration. Again, ecocriticism, which argues for the resolvability of the dualist paradigm of nature/human, should consider geographical phenomena such as the displacement of the colonized and the colonialist act of reshaping indigenous landscape that often trigger such dualisms between humans, and humans and nonhumans. That is to say, while ecocritical awareness of the materiality and agency of nature can accentuate a sense of place, the geographical dialectics of spatial distinction, loss of land, and displacement can underscore the specificities of dualist paradigms that are not only experienced across spaces but are also reconstructed in distinct spaces along the lines of gender, race, class, and caste. In the subsections that follow, therefore, the study enquires into a range of possible intersections between geographical and ecocritical disciplines, highlighting the necessity of locating postcolonial identity at the interface between spatiality and environmental responsibility, in relation to the coordinates emphasized by both disciplines – gender and race, race and class, race and class/caste – in my analysis of Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, and Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*, respectively.
2.3.1 Colonial Place, Gendered Space, and Nature

This subsection aims to locate the intersections between geographical and ecocritical analyses of place and identity along the axes of gender and race, for which I claim that it is imperative to connect feminist geography and materialist ecofeminism in order to define women’s sense of place, resolving dualist paradigms modelled principally upon gender and race. In doing so, the analysis, following in the footsteps of materialist ecofeminists and feminist geographers, will emphasize the need to understand the agency of nonhuman others as well as the social and cultural constructs of gendered space, an understanding that can reshape women’s space – from a constrained space to a place untrammelled by gender category. Moreover, without falling into the pitfalls of essentialist charges hurled against ecofeminisms on the ground of women’s biological closeness to nature, this study will employ materialist ecofeminist dialogue in dealing with the way in which women’s experiences of marginalization can be shaped by their different understandings of nature. But such an understanding can be foregrounded only when the knowledge of gendered and restricted space and the possibility of challenging such restricted space, as feminist geographer McDowell argues, can be taken into consideration in the analysis of locating place and women’s identity. Although feminist geographies and materialist ecofeminist claims in regards to place have already been partially outlined in the beginning of this chapter, it is imperative, as the following paragraph will illustrate, to emphasize the specific aim of these branches of ecocritical and geographical studies in order to locate the intersections between nature and gender.

It would be useful then to begin with a comprehensive understanding of the interdependent circles of spatial segregation and gender segregation that are considered natural as the aims of feminist geography make evident:

The specific aim of a feminist geography […] is to investigate, make visible and challenge the relationships between gender divisions and spatial divisions, to uncover their mutual constitution and problematise their apparent naturalness. Thus the purpose is to examine the extent to which women and men experience spaces and places differently and to show how these differences themselves are part of the social constitution of gender as well as that of place. (McDowell and Sharp, “Feminist Geography” 91)

Consequently, many geographical studies that offer a spatial understanding of places such as homes are deemed androcentric from feminist geographical viewpoints, as expressed by Blunt and Dowling, since they are believed to have ignored the gender binary, such as masculine/feminine and emotions/rationality, implicit in spatial divisions between, for instance, private and public, home and work, local and global, among others (17). Moreover, the nature of a place and its environment are also thought to be determined by the gender assumptions of a society and its prevailing gender-specific behaviours toward men and women (Rose et al. 148). As a result, everyday spaces such as homes are seen as material places for emotions and care constructed by a range of “taken-for-granted” activities of women called “making home” (Dyck 240). Such “gendering of roles” creates gendered identities in homes marked by a patriarchal power hierarchy that naturalizes such hegemony (Bowlby, Gregory, and McKie 345). The tensions between gender and space have well been summarized by geographer Rose, who claims that while, on the one hand, individuals’ “sense of
place” is constituted through their everyday experiences at places, which often have strong nuanced “meanings” that can influence the identity of the individuals, such “meanings” of the places and individuals’ perceptions of them, on the other hand, are also modified by “social, cultural and economic circumstances” of the place (“Place and Identity” 88–89). Therefore, the essence of a place is bound up with the sense of belonging in that place shaped by various socio-cultural constructs, power hierarchy as well as the dwellers’ emotional reactions to them.

In a similar vein, McDowell and Sharp discuss individuals’ spatial relations through “gendered social relations”, as the following arguments show:

Spatial relations and layout, the differences between and within places, the nature and form of the built environment […] are all part and parcel of the social constitution of gendered social relations and the structure and meaning of place. The spaces in which social practices occur affect the nature of those practices, who is ‘in place’, who is ‘out of place’ and even who is allowed to be there at all. But the spaces themselves in turn are constructed and given meaning through the social practices that define men and women as different and unequal. (*Space, Gender, Knowledge* 3)

For feminist geographers women’s space is constructed through their gendered social relations and practices. Correspondingly, once a place becomes gendered, as the above claims illustrate, it continues to label humans according to their gender roles, and therefore, the same place can bear different relations to individuals (men and women) as well to society. Various social relations as well as a gendered place, thus, continue to influence a person’s sense of being. In other words, a place can be influenced by the socio-cultural dynamics of the place and, at the same time, it can have an impact on defining our social relations to it, and thereby, it might create distinct spaces or spatial boundaries for individuals.

Nonetheless, in order to challenge such spatial boundaries for women, it is claimed that identity should be perceived as “fluid, multiple and uncertain” that can also “struggle over the distinctions between man and woman, masculine and feminine, the mind and the body” which have constructed “woman as man’s ‘Other’ and as inferior” (McDowell and Sharp, *Space, Gender, Knowledge* 9–10). Additionally, along the lines of the postmodern conceptualization of identity as fragmented and multiple, it is argued that the identity of a place is multiple since both the identity of humans and the place they cohabit correlate with the changing nature of human culture, and thus, a single place can have multiple meanings due to its exposure to diverse ethnic and cultural interpretations imposed on it by its dwellers (J. Anderson, “The Ties That Bind?” 46). Thus, place is also perceived as a fluid construct since it can never be fixed to a particular culture that may identify itself with the place (McDowell 4). Aside from defining places in relation to cultures, feminist geographers have criticized the way nature is defined only in relation to humans. Thus, geographers have claimed that the man-made environment, which is often used as a byword for the natural world cannot be understood unless we include “the cultural, political and economic processes through which the environment becomes caught up in power relations” (Rose et al. 146). However, the way in which the dominant, patriarchal, dualistic paradigm engages in gendering both women and nature will be illustrated in detail in the following paragraph with reference to materialist ecofeminist analyses of gender and nature.
The discourse of ecofeminism revolves around the argument that in a patriarchal society and an anthropocentric culture, both women and nature are perceived as the ‘others’. In the late twentieth century, there was a radical change in ecofeminist critical study, as Gaard writes, in shifting its focus from making the connections among the receptors of suppression to concentrating on the reasons/logic behind such oppressions through postmodern and poststructural analyses of the materiality of oppression (“Ecofeminism Revisited” 31–32). The materialist ecofeminists, therefore, claim that binary social constructs such as men/women, public/private, nature/culture, and rationality/emotions, among others, have been essential for such oppression (Plumwood, Environmental Culture 74; Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 36). Following Carolyn Merchant’s argument that in European culture women and nature have always been seen as synonymous, where the former was attributed with pure, pristine qualities of the latter, and the latter was characterized with the former’s feminine characteristics, positioning both in sharp opposition to man and his culture of civilization, ecofeminist Alaimo perceives that defining women as a byword for nature deprives them of “subjectivity, rationality and agency” (Undomesticated Ground 2). Yet, Plumwood claims that it is our “rationality” that should be questioned since our “reason”-centred perception of the world has, on the one hand, constructed our “culture” and “identity” and distanced ourselves, on the other, from nature and nonhuman others almost to the extent of repudiating their claims of existence on earth (Environmental Culture 4–5). Moreover, this same “rationality”, especially in the West, that uses reason as a ploy to employ destructive means to make economic gains out of nature, differentiates between “male-coded rational prudence and female-coded ethics” (Plumwood, Environmental Culture 9). Moreover, such rationality is often termed as “hegemonic rationality” which, unlike “ecological rationality”, views not only women as situated outside its realm of “reason” but also finds “the slave, the animal, and the barbarian” as positioned in an irrational sphere that has never focused on the “physicality and materiality” of the world as its primary concern (Plumwood, Environmental Culture 19). Morton, who also points out the necessity to develop “politics” based on ecological thoughts, emphasizes the materiality of nature: “Politics in the wake of the ecological thought must begin with the Copernican ‘humiliations’— coming closer to the actual dirt beneath our feet, the actuality of Earth” (125). Nevertheless, in an earlier study, Plumwood has identified several methods employed in deprecating nature and nonhuman others. While the structures of “backgrounding” and “radical exclusion”, for instance, fail to acknowledge “dependency, continuity and relationship of self to other”, the system of “relational definition”, “instrumentalism” and “homogenization” refutes any idea that might suggest the other’s individuality or “independence of self” (Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 68). Therefore, it is claimed that such dualistic patterns emerge from the denial of human dependency on the subjugated human/nonhuman ‘others’, objectifying them as mere resources and defining them as a homogeneous group (Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 41, 48–55; Alaimo, Undomesticated Ground 2–3). It is this “master model” (Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 21–23) that not only maintains the nature–culture division but justifies such a binary through its patriarchal and anthropocentric outlook on society.

In order to challenge such binaries, “the solution does not lie in simply valuing the side of the dichotomy that has been devalued in Western patriarchal frameworks”; rather such structures should be reappraised and those dichotomies that are imaginary should be obliterated (Davion 26). While expounding on how women should find their position in the man–woman/nature configuration, Plumwood argues that
we are required to conceptualize the distinction between the terms dualism and difference. Dualism, according to Plumwood, is more than a simple distinction or dichotomy since in duality, the life, culture, and values of “the dualised other” are regarded as inferior, and ecofeminisms should voice against the dualism that deems the other part of the structure as inferior, but, at the same time, should not reject the differences among various marginalized groups (Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 47–55). In other words, she proposes that we should accentuate our “solidarity” with nature, which requires “not just the affirmation of difference, but also sensitivity to the difference between positioning oneself with the other and positioning oneself as the other” (Environmental Culture 202; emphases original). Therefore, it is argued that ecofeminists should consider the dual relationship that women can have with nature. While women, on the one hand, should express solidarity with nature, they should reject any essentialist gendered perceptions of nature, on the other, that might suggest a women–nature correlation on the basis of reproductive resemblances. Thus, Plumwood asserts that for “a healthy feminist identity, like a healthy personal identity” we are required to value both “self-criticism and self-affirmation” of “female-associated” qualities (Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 64–65) that can dismantle social binaries.

That is to say, ecofeminists insist, according to Alaimo and Hekman, on recognizing the materiality of the “more-than-human world”, which feminism, in its rigorous focusing on the materiality of the human world to rebuff the claims of women’s closeness to nature in relation to “essentialism, reductionism and stasis”, has ignored (4). It is also claimed that feminist studies, in order to deconstruct men (culture)/women (nature) dualism, have taken “a flight from nature”, and accordingly, they argue that women are created by culture and not nature (Alaimo, Undomesticated Ground 4). With the purpose of delineating feminisms’ rootedness in ecological studies, material ecofeminists have demanded a “transevaluation” of nature: “Nature, as understood by material feminism, is rarely a blank, silent resource for the exploits of culture. Nor is it the repository of sexism, racism, and homophobia. Instead, it is an active, signifying force; an agent in its own terms; a realm of multiple, inter- and intra-active cultures” (Alaimo and Hekman 12). Thus, the real solution, “neither a feminist retreat into nature […] nor a feminist flight from nature”, according to Alaimo, depends on our reappraisal of gendered concepts, such as subject, object, mind, body, nature, culture, resource, agent that have been in use to undermine a specific group of human and the nonhuman others (Undomesticated Ground 13). Yet, the critical rejection of women (nature)/ men (culture) dualist paradigm has also been championed by feminist geographical critical discourses situated at the intersection between women’s subjectivity and social marginalization with respect to gender. The women (nature)/ men (culture) association has been challenged by feminist geographers, who drawing on anthropological arguments, conclude that “in many societies and at many different times the apparently natural biological distinction between men and women has been mapped on to a distinction of worth or social quality”, and therefore, while women are seen as “polluters” or “irrational” because of their biological characteristics, men are perceived as “superior”, “rational” and often “unbodied or disembodied” subjects (McDowell 44–45).

However, like some of the other feminist theoretical interpretations, the feminist geographical analysis, which perceives the body as discursively constructed is at variance with materialist ecocritical enquiry into the human body and its relationship to nonhuman nature. Feminist geography’s persistence on viewing the body as fluid and transformable as a place and, consequently, defining it on spatial scales, as McDowell
and Sharp argue, appears to be based on Judith Butler’s feminist inquiry of the history and geography of the body (“Body” 19). A body is termed ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ only when it follows the norm of dominant socio-cultural constructs, such as heterosexuality (McDowell 36–39). Following in the footsteps of Butler who considers “gender identities” as a “performance”, “constituted by the ‘stylized repetition of acts’” (McDowell 54), feminist geographers, such as McDowell, became interested in the “bodily performance” (Longhurst, “Situating Bodies” 342), homosexual and gay acts, which are regarded as “‘perverse’ sexualities” and, therefore, “‘out of place’” (Bell and Valentine qtd. in McDowell 56). For women, as McDowell argues, the gendered body is the centre of interest in the quest for the knowledge of their place since “sexed embodiment is deeply intertwined with geographical location” (56). Again, while it cannot be denied that “the construction of gender regimes with particular patterns of the segregation of the sexes and gendered hierarchies of power” (McDowell 56) has been the basis of all sorts of inequalities and marginalization in society, McDowell considers that the “questions of the sexed body – its differential construction, regulation and representation – are absolutely central to an understanding of gender relations at every spatial scale” (68). That is to say, her focus has always been on the variable “understanding” of both male and female bodies that change over time and place (McDowell 68). The differing meanings of the body in various places have been emphasized in her geographical analysis which equates the body with place on the basis of its transformability.

Other feminist geographical inquiries into the changing nature of local places in the era of globalization and rapid migration have also concentrated on the social, cultural, and political categories in defining women’s identity and their bodies. Dyck, for instance, emphasizing the link between women’s activities in everyday spaces, such as the home, family, and even the body, and various global processes, such as immigration policies, has highlighted the socio-cultural and political categories that constitute women’s subjectivity, their “sense of ‘belonging’”, identity and, therefore, define their “place-making” (240–42). But such a conceptualization of the body as socially constructed like a place not only positions both place and the body in opposition to or inherently outside the domain of nature, but also perpetuates the culture/nature and mind/body duality in an effort to equate the body with culture. However, geographers, such as Longhurst, have criticized such insistence on a theoretically and discursively produced body that is fleshless, immaterial, and incorporeal (Bodies: Exploring Fluid Boundaries 23). Following Elizabeth Grosz’s argument that in most dualistic structures, one side of the dichotomy is considered inferior as it is solely defined in relation to the other side, which is considered superior, Longhurst criticizes McDowell’s, along with other geographers’, explication of both the body and place as marked by gender/sex categorization since she believes that such paradigms perpetuate the dualistic model in defining women and body chiefly in relation to men and mind, respectively (“(Dis)embodied Geographies” 490). In the process, the body has been regarded as the distinct “other” in the following way:

The fluid, volatile flesh of bodies, however, tends not to be discussed. There is little in the discipline that attests to the runny, gaseous, flowing, watery nature of bodies [...]. When geographers speak of the body they still often fail to talk about a body that breaks its boundaries – urinates, bleeds, vomits, farts, engulfs tampons, objects of sexual desire, ejaculates and gives birth. The reason this is significant is that the messiness of bodies is often conceptualised as feminised and as such is Othered. (Longhurst, Bodies: Exploring Fluid Boundaries 23)
Although similar to other feminist geographers, she insists on equating the geography of a body with that of a place, her emphasis lies on the recognition of the materiality of the biological body in order to claim that the biological body and the space it occupies are inseparable (Longhurst, *Bodies: Exploring Fluid Boundaries* 7–8). Nonetheless, while there has been a call for identifying the body’s functions, reactions, and “agency” in places, as Elizabeth Grosz defines (qtd. in McDowell 53), the role of socio-cultural categories as representing and defining the meaning of the body remains central to nearly all feminist understandings of the body.

Materialist ecofeminisms, on the other hand, although appreciative of the considerable attention that place and its diverse spatial relationships with the human body have received in various scientific accounts (Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* 63), they demur on the idea of understanding the body on a discursive regime and as principally formed by social and cultural constituents, the very locus of feminist arguments, and emphasize instead the agency of the body (Tuana, “Fleshing Gender” 54). Alaimo claims that “feminist theory’s most revolutionary concept, the concept of ‘gender’ – as distinct from biological sex – is predicated on a sharp opposition between nature and culture [...] [as] [n]ature, in short, must be all that culture is not for the sex/gender system to explain the process of social construction” (*Undomesticated Ground* 5). Moreover, this sort of binary understanding of the meaning of the body also perpetuates various other false dichotomies that refute the human–nature indivisibility. The following argument on the biological body and its relation to both nature and culture demystifies such bifurcation:

The sex/gender distinction is only one of a wider set of dichotomies that are metaphysically linked – nature/nurture, biology/culture, essential/accidental, innate/learned, genetic/environmental, fixed-variable. Traits due to nature or biology are perceived as fixed and unchangeable. Those arising from nurture via our particular cultures are seen as variable and, to some extent, within human control. (Tuana, “Fleshing Gender” 56)

Perceiving nature as separate from, if not opposite of, culture not only assigns negative values to nonhuman nature but also legitimizes the marginalization of certain human groups, on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, and class, among others, by highlighting their ‘natural’ proclivity to nature and, thus, signifying their distance from culture. Critiquing the conventional feminist line of thought that “exclusively” perceives the body as “discursively produced, which casts the body as passive, plastic matter”, Alaimo offers a material analysis of both the body and environment that emphasizes “the ways in which nature, the environment, and the material world itself signify, act upon, or otherwise affect human bodies, knowledges, and practices” (*Bodily Natures* 3–8). Moreover, while feminist geographers such as McDowell argue that the body is changeable through modern scientific procedures, which can affect our perception of a gendered/sexed body, a material analysis of the body argues that the very matter of bodies remains unaddressed in such processes as the transformation of the body through medical procedures can hardly bring any material change in the very matter of the bodies. Instead, it is often claimed that such “cosmetic or transsexual surgeries [...] involve literally making the body over to achieve desired goals. But in neither is the material body thought of as having internal agency; rather, it is a fixed entity which is at odds with what is desired” (Birke 47–48).
In offering a materialist analysis of human bodily correlation with nature, Alaimo advocates the conceptualization of a “trans-corporeal” material body that is “neither essentialist, nor genetically determined, nor firmly bounded, but rather a body in which social power and material/geographic agencies intra-act” (Bodily Natures 63). Such an understanding can modify our sense of self with a consciousness that “the environment” is not located somewhere out there, but is always the very substance of ourselves” (Alaimo, Bodily Natures 4). This perception is akin to Tuana’s insight into the “porosity” of bodies, which react similarly to natural calamities, such as rain and flood, as to socio-cultural phenomena, such as racism, politics, and poverty. She claims that such “porosity is a hinge through which we are of and in the world.” (Tuana, “Viscous Porosity” 199–200). Thus, if a body is perceived to be porous and susceptible to both socio-cultural and environmental circumstances, the assumption of how the hazard of a toxic environment can affect a body cannot go unexamined. In this case, Alaimo’s following insistence on the presence of toxic bodies in continuance with toxic environment provides powerful insights into our bodily dependence on nature, which can regulate a body’s inner actions:

The existence of toxic bodies, both human and non-human [...] still mixes things up. Since the same mechanical substance may poison the workers who produce it, the neighborhood in which it is produced, and the web of plants and animals who end up consuming it, the traffic in toxin reveals the interconnections among various movements [...]. The traffic in toxins may render it nearly impossible for humans to imagine that our well-being is disconnected from that of the rest of the planet [...]. In other words, the ethical space of trans-corporeality is never an elsewhere but is always already here, in whatever compromised, ever-catalyzing form. (Bodily Natures 18)

Alaimo conceives of a space that is trans-corporeal (“Trans-corporeal Feminisms” 252–53), involving the materiality of both human corporeality and nonhuman nature. Such a space is possible to imagine if we acknowledge the “material agency” of both nature and various factors “intra-acting” with our body such as “[t]he sun kindles a flaming headache” or diseases correlated with “stress, diet, or the weather” (Alaimo, “Trans-corporeal Feminisms” 250). This chapter, nonetheless, in its aim to analyse the nature–culture correlational impact on women’s subjectivity in Sea of Poppies, will emphasize the materiality and agency of both bodies and nature since such an understanding of one’s self and body as closely linked up with nature has an immense impact on our identity (Alaimo, Bodily Natures 20). Thus, in deconstructing men (culture)/women (nature) dualism, while almost all feminist discourses have taken a “bodiless flight” (Alaimo, Undomesticated Ground 10) from nature to join the other side of culture, leaving the domain of nature as opposed to men (culture) as to women, I will focus on the agency of both nature and the body and will show the way it can transform the contours of gendered and raced places, in relation to Amitav Ghosh’s Sea of Poppies in Chapter 3.

While gender appears to constitute one of the central aspects of the debate over dualist models of nature/culture that often defines the place and identity of humans, the emergence of a sense of place or belonging, as cultural geographers argue, is also dependent on the racial traits of a space that exert an influence on, as the following subsection illustrates, the relationship between human and human ‘others’. Moreover, in the following discussion, the geographical concept of landscape will be defined as
a space, intersected by the interactions both between humans and nonhumans, and between humans and those deemed as ‘others’, which can modify an individual’s sense of place and identity.

### 2.3.2 Racial Landscape and Human–Animal Relationships in the Making of a Place

The conceptualization of landscape has been at the centre of economic geography (Stenning, “Shaping the Economic Landscapes of Postsocialism?”), political movements and identities (Cohan, “Political Identities and Political Landscape”), personal space making such as home (Duncan and Lambert, “Landscapes of Home”), postcolonial and imperial geographies (Blunt and McEwan *Postcolonial Geographies*; Clayton, “Imperial Geographies”), and many other fields of inquiry. Landscape has found a special niche in geographical studies chiefly as a fusion of human space and its habitat or, in the words of Rose, of “Nature and Culture” (“Looking at Landscape” 172). In cultural geography, however, the nature of a place is principally analysed through its relations to human and non-human interactions (J. Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography* 38). Moreover, this turn to nature–culture correlations in the twentieth century has enabled cultural geography to explore the “cultural landscape” (Wolch and Emel xiii). The exigency of the analysis of racial hierarchy in imperial geographical landscape is intensified by this subsection since it aims to explore the racial nature of human space in a formerly colonized place in the context of human relations with nonhuman others. Therefore, our understanding of the racial landscape will primarily be based, on the one hand, on relationships grounded in race and the impact of such relationships on human identity, and, on the other, on how such race relationships between human (colonizer)–human ‘others’ (colonized) further reinforce the binary between humans and nonhumans (animals) in everyday spaces.

The discourse on the construction of postcolonial space as a result of various reciprocal actions between different groups has principally engaged most geographical analyses on racial landscape. The cityscape of former colonies, for instance, is considered to be “a relational identity, created by interactions across traditional, premodern and modern spatial boundaries and between the colonized and the colonizer” (M. Kumar 85). Similarly, the landscapes of former colonies and their “lived environments” are perceived as historically and politically constructed through the process of colonization (Hooper 16). A colonial space is also defined in relation to the coloniser’s “own frames of reference” and appears both as a “manufactured” and “fractured” space where differences are ignored (Byrnes 60–61). However, it is the demarcation of spatial boundaries that appears central in the fashioning of landscape on the basis of race in former British colonies. This differentiation between spaces, according to Puwar, is closely connected with the white masculine imperial project that regarded women as well as non-white native populations of the colonies as “space invaders” (10). She refers to a few specific “notions” based on race and gender such as the “look”, “terror” and the “monstrous” that have largely determined spatial boundaries (Puwar 33). The idea of “the look” or physical appearance acts as a determinant of “psychic and physical boundaries” as the space of the whites is generally perceived as separate from that of people of colour (Puwar 39). The concept of formulating separate spaces based on appearances, however, is only a constituent part of a vast racial segregation project, which other than posing boundaries between spaces entertains certain racial
stereotypical assumptions in relation to human looks. Fanon in his psychoanalytic study of racism found that a coloured human body or its look has a different impact on human psychology, and thus, when a coloured body enters a white space, it is immediately associated with a series of hypothetical suppositions: “I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: ‘Sho’ good eatin’.” (83–85).

In addition to the concepts of “the look”, “terror”, and the “monstrous”, as reflected in Puwar’s and Fanon’s arguments above, the racial segregation of spaces is also dependent upon three kinds of “fear”, according to M. Kumar, which has enabled the colonizer to create spaces on the basis of “race, purity and pollution” in the colonies: “This colonial perception was based on three kinds of fear, which can be delineated as moral, political, and sanitary uncertainties. Morally and politically, the ‘bazaar’ and the contiguous Black Town were seen as a den of debauchery, full of greed, lies, flies, mosquitoes and gossip in which the ignorant and superstitious interacted and rebellions were plotted” (87). Therefore, the open spaces of the natives, such as the bazaars in India were regarded as dirty, filthy, and disorderly places, in contrast to the organized spaces of the white colonists (Chakrabarty 541). Accordingly, the British colonialists championed “post-Darwinian racial theories” to highlight their white racial supremacy and demanded separate and clean environments that are “less accessible to the Indians” such as the hill stations (Kenny, “Claiming the High Ground” 664–69). Similarly, the landscape of British hill stations in India is imbued with symbolic underpinnings of racial and imperial ideologies (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 711) founded principally on the categories of better health, purity, and civilization.

Nonetheless, the ideology of race can also be intersected with “perceptions of religious, ethnic, linguistic, national, sexual and class differences” as the meaning of race varies “contextually, and in relation to other social groupings and hierarchies” (Loomba 121–22). Even after the independence of British colonies, separate landscapes are being produced along the lines of class or caste as a legacy of British colonialism. Race and class hierarchies are integral to any power relations, according to Loomba, since “[r]ace is the modality in which class is lived” and race is “the medium in which class relations are experienced” (133). For this reason, the model of separate space between the elites and the poor has an obvious presence even in modern times. Again, in India, since the natives were regarded as “culturally” incapable of forming a government, the British administration focused on a utilitarian project of educating Indians through the English education system “to prepare them for that future” and produce “cultural intermediaries” (Kenny, “Claiming the High Ground” 659). These “intermediaries” developed a concept of “modernity” modelled on the colonial paradigm. Though the idea of “current modernity” can be understood as a result of “capitalism”, in non-European countries, as Khair opines, modernity has always been associated with the West and its culture, which demands a repudiation of the “tradition of the East”:

[In the non-West, modernity is seen as disjunct from tradition. Modernity is something that is traced to another space and time—either Europe or the effects of European colonisation. The ‘fragments’ of the ‘non-European’ present come from the two separate/d spaces of ‘tradition’ (read: the recent ‘native past’) and ‘modernity’ (read: the recent Euro-American past) – and, hence, one or the other space has to be forcibly vacated in any conception of a holistic future. That is the tragedy of ‘modernity’ in the non-West. (13)
Consequently, with a predisposition for rejecting the culture of the East and its peoples who have not received English education, these western-educated new bourgeoisie created a separate space of “hypocrisy and spiritual sterility”, notes Davis, which maintained a class boundary between the rich and poor and dissociated all connections with the native land (199). It was the western-educated middle-class elite who imbibed the colonial method of bifurcating spaces as they were greatly impressed by “the Enlightenment narrative of improvement” that was imbued with their “sense of inferiority to the British” and the impeccable ability to imitate the colonists (Kaviraj 92–93). As a result, following in the footsteps of British colonisers, this middle-class preferred spaces, such as the hill stations, that were separate from that of their uneducated fellow countrymen. This landscape of hill stations then serves as a spatial determiner that epitomizes social and racial hierarchies (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 695). Therefore, the colonial strategy of remodelling hill stations in India was favoured by the new English-educated Indian gentry who, by doing so, aimed to rise in the Indian caste-based social echelon through their acquaintance with the praxis of Englishness branded as modernity. Consequently, it can be asserted that this differentiation between spaces such as hill stations and the plains became a “cultural project” that in the name of “modernity” controlled spaces (M. Kumar 89) and reshaped the landscape as well as inspired a class binary between westernized and uneducated Indians. It would not be wrong then to conclude that this race segregation not only motivated class hierarchy in Indian society between the western educated Indians and the uneducated natives but also redefined their relationships with each other so as to form separate spaces.

The formation of boundaries between different spaces – between westernized space and native space – can also be held responsible for changing the human relationship with animals or the English educated Indians’ relationship with their companion animals. As this study aims to show, this develops in continuity with their Anglophilia and represents their desire for a modern and westernized identity. Instead of an unconditional relationship between the owner and their pet, as the following discussion on human–pet relationship will explicate, the owner’s relationship with his dog, in the context of Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, acts as a substitute for the human (westernized Indians)–human ‘others’ (the natives) relationship. Therefore, the following paragraph will locate various facets of the human–domestic animal relationship and the process of humanizing animals or anthropomorphism. It will assist us in expounding the roles that canine companions are expected to play in the cloistered space of the owner’s secluded household with reference to the analysis of Desai’s novel. Furthermore, the following discussion will elucidate how the conceptualization of landscape as formed through class relations also includes interactions between humans and animals developed as an alternative to those of between humans and human ‘others’.

Over the years, human environment and place have received significant attention in interdisciplinary human–animal studies. Concepts often considered purely geographical, such as landscape and space, have been modified by human–animal interconnections (Urbanik 10–11). This turn in human–animal relationships has found a prominent place, according to Wolch, in the geographical analysis of race, gender, and cultural identities:

Building on critical race and postcolonial theory that highlighted connections between race, gender and representations of ‘animality’, animal geographers have sought to understand the role of animals in the development of hetero-
geneous identities that urban residents adopt or have ascribed to them. Such identities may have ties to temporal periods, geographic places or imagined communities such as nations, as well as to racial/ethnic, cultural or gendered identities. (727)

Moreover, the importance of bringing human–animal relations into the dialogue of geographical scrutiny of space appears to lie in “human’s emotional connections with animals” as well as in such emotion’s impact on our environment (Urbanik 7–8). Again, this “new” geographical turn to animal–human relations or to animal geography, as viewed by Philo and Wilbert, emphasizes “the complex entanglements of human—animal relations with space, place, location, environment and landscape” (4). There have been several imbricated concerns between animal geography and human–animal relations, as Urbanik points out, that are “foundational” to both human–animal and geographical studies: the very basic connection happens to be between place, power, cultural identity, and animals (38). The spatial dimension plays an important part in the understanding between human–nonhuman relations since these relations are always “co-produced by both human and non-human actors in specific contexts” that “are historical and cultural, as well as spatial” (Nyman and Schuurman 2). Thus, spaces, especially landscapes, which comprise, according to Urbanik, “all the visible features of a location – the geology, flora, fauna, and the built human environment” can also be described with regard to animals as a “cultural animal landscape” that investigates the way humans perceive animals in various places (11). Like a landscape that is historically and politically constructed, the history and the cultural dimensions of human–animal interrelations are required to be unfolded in the matrix of gender, race, and economy (Wolch 734). Therefore, by locating the various commonalities between a space and a human–animal correlation, intersected by racial ideology, the research provides an understanding of the animal embeddedness in the construction of a racial or a class-based landscape that further intensifies both humans–human ‘others’ and human–animal binaries.

However, in a manner similar to materialist ecolfeminist studies concentrating on the active agency of both nature and the body, as addressed in the previous subsection, the “new” turn in the geographical study of animals dismisses the idea of animals as solely passive objects of human representations, as the following quotation suggests:

If we concentrate solely on how animals are represented, the impression is that animals are merely passive surfaces on to which human groups inscribe imaginings and orderings of all kinds. [...] This question duly raises broader concerns about non-human agency, about the agency of animals, and the extent to which we can say that animals destabilise, transgress or even resist our human orderings, including spatial ones. (Philo and Wilbert 5)

Since animals are mostly understood through human representations, the question of nonhuman agency in a human–animal relationship gains currency in defining the spatial attributes of a place and the human identity associated with it. Here, again,
the power hierarchy that acts as the pivot of the human–human ‘others’ binary can be
termed as the fulcrum of the human–animal dichotomy that disregards the agency of
the nonhumans. Urbanik, who perceives the idea of power as a significant determin-
er of varying human–animal relationships in various places (42), finds geographer
Tuan’s explication of “the role of power” in human–animal relationships as similar
to animal geographies’ exploration of an inherent power structure between humans
and animals. The human–domestic animal or the human–pet relationship gives a
clear glimpse of such power relations acted out in everyday spaces. The human–pet
relationship in domestic spaces, as Urbanik understands Tuan’s argument, where
the owner controls the relationship and domesticates the animal, can be perceived as
outlining a “domesticated cultural landscape” that denies the subjectivity of the pet
and attempts to change the habit of the pet (50–51). In other words, in a human–non-
human (pets) relationship what appears fair and is held together by close bonds of
affection is inherently bound up with power and dominance.

Yet, critics who point to the favourable outcomes of human–pet relationships ad-
vocate the necessity of such relationships, considering the possibility of a shared space
of humans and animals:

However, while in the 1960s a close relationship with a pet was widely consid-
ered dissocial and the cause for some concern, in the 1990s the development of
very close, human styled relationships with animals is normative and, indeed,
therapeutic. Animals are now considered important for our health, happiness
and our recovery from physical and mental illness. Again, the boundary (or
the significance of the difference) between humans and animals is challenged
by the fluidity and interchangeability of humans and animals in friendships,
companionships and love. (Franklin, Animals and Modern Cultures 5)

Moreover, a human–animal shared space often attributes human values to pets who
are then regarded as part of the household or as members of the family. One report
by the American Pet Association evinces that dog-owners often share strong rela-
tionships with their pets similar to those with family members (Dotson and Hyatt 458). It
is especially on “emotional and social terms” pets often acquire the position of fami-
While “[t]hrough understanding our relations with animals we can come to a better
understanding of ourselves” (Franklin, Animal Nation 5), our perception of our sense
of self can be viewed as intersected by our understandings of our pets. Since animals
are never free from the ideologies, “representations”, and habits of human society,
and humans are never free from the ‘animality’ of animals (Simmons and Armstrong
2), it appears appropriate to understand the identity of humans in relation to their atti-
itude toward animals or pets. As it happens, the human desire to find both similarities
to and differences from animals is believed to be the cornerstone of human–nature
interrelationships (Shepard 86). This dependency on dogs, nonetheless, is charged
with ambiguous attitudes of humans, according to geographer Tuan, such as “domi-
nance and affection, love and abuse, cruelty and kindness. The dog calls forth, on the
one hand […] self-sacrificing devotion to a weaker and dependent being, and, on the
other hand, the temptation to exercise power in a willful and arbitrary, even perverse,
manner” (Dominance and Affection 102). This ambiguity permeates the human propen-
sity to consider both the similarities and differences between humans and animals, a
practice that also enables us to distinguish between different human groups:
What happens in all cultures, it seems, is that animals allow humans to perform the feat of differentiation: to organise ourselves into different groups and to mark that difference. To maintain a sense of identity and difference we adopt an animal to signify ‘us’ but also, of course, ‘them’. But we also use animals to differentiate behavior, character, morality and types of person. So animals actually perform two very useful tricks of representation for humans everywhere. They allow us to label or address others, as in ‘she is a bitch’, ‘he’s a pig’ or ‘Possum!’ in an endearing way, and to attempt to place people permanently as this or that. This can be and often is a form of social control. (Franklin, Animal Nation 7–8)

That is to say, while pet-keeping symbolizes class hierarchy, the demarcation of the differences and similarities between humans and animals often creates distinctions between human groups, and consequently, such “social control” often leads to the racial and cultural segregation of spaces since in “postcolonial, Western capitalist space, the idea of a human–animal divide as reflective of both differences in kind and in evolutionary progress has retained its power to produce and maintain racial and other forms of cultural difference” (Elder, Wolch and Emel 245). In human–companion animal relationships it is important then to investigate the extent to which we perceive the animals as ‘us’ and ‘them’ in order to unearth the underlying categorizations involving race, class, and gender, among others, that shape human identity and our understanding of nonhumans.

Likewise, it is argued that pets receive attention as prized companions since they are often perceived as humans. Franklin who adheres to a human–animal favourable relationship, as noted above, also believes that whether our love and compassion for our pets is a recompense for their “fulfilling surrogate human roles” remains a matter of uncertainty (Animals and Modern Cultures 86). Moreover, it is believed that a successful human–pet relationship is always congruent with the fulfilment of expectations from the pet that needs to behave according to the acceptable standards set by the owner. A study on satisfying human–dog relationships by Cavanaugh, Leonard, and Scammon claims that, unlike close human–human relationships, a successful human–dog relationship relies on the “openness” and “agreeableness” of the dog’s personality, which can provide a “greater sense of self” to the human owner (476). Although it is argued that this process of “humanization” that places animals on equal footing with humans can lead to the “hybridization” of the owners’ families (Franklin, “Human–Nonhuman Animal Relationships in Australia” 14), this relationship between humans and animals is often censured for being chiefly anthropocentric and for incorporating humanized animals into human society. Therefore, a plethora of academic disciplines on human–animal relations, including ecocriticism, have found this attribution of human characteristics to animals a misinterpretation of the debate over human–nonhuman interdependence.

Since the role of animals as part of the nature–culture relation has received considerable attention in ecocritical discussions of place (Buell, Heise, and Thornber 430), the disquisition on the construction of human place and identity, as correlated with animal-human interdependence, cannot avoid the ecocritical dimensions of understanding animals in relation to humans, and it is anthropomorphism, among all other intersecting points between animal geographies, human–animal studies, and ecocriticism, that has been perceived by ecocritics as the centre where the human–nonhuman binary is implicitly played out. And if ecocritical study aims to focus on dismantling the core of our anthropocentric and anthropomorphic attitude toward nature, and
explore possible dimensions of retrieving the true essence of “wild nature and wild-
ness” (Callaghan 90), it is crucial to locate our anthropomorphic approaches toward
companion animals within the matrix of ecocriticism that will allow us to identify
the ways in which our perception of animals is intersected by race, class, or gender.
Anthropomorphism, as defined by Fox, is the act of rejecting the agency of nonhu-
mans/animals and ascribing ‘human-like’ characteristic to animals (527). Thus, our
relationship to our companion pets can also be termed, as argued by Serpell, as an
assistive form of anthropomorphism where the pet owners expect to see a shadow of
themselves in their pets (443), and thereby, the agency of the pet is hardly taken into
consideration. This anthropomorphism, which is socially and psychologically benefi-
cial for the pet owner, argues Serpell, is based on a reciprocal relationship between the
pet and its owner since the owner’s attachment to their pets depends on the love they
receive from the pet in return (444–45). Again, a companion animal is expected to get
“domesticated”, but the household hardly makes any change in its structure in order
to cohabit with the pet since animals are mostly considered as “passive bodies” (E.
Power 537). Therefore, anthropomorphism receives criticisms principally with regard
to anthropocentrism in human–pet relationships where the animals are required to be
modified to become involved in a fruitful relationship with humans.

Consequently, reconsidering our understanding of our relationships to society
and culture can perhaps enable us to review our perception of nonhuman ‘others’. In
a study of an individual dog and the meaning of its behaviour, gesture, and posture,
Shapiro finds that the owner’s attitude of “empathizing with animals” is mediated by
their own empirical “experience”, as the following argument shows:

Most of us relate to nonhuman animals, particularly companion animals, as if we […] apprehend their concerns, projects, and experience — at least until we are trained not to do so.

Empathy refers to a directly given sense of another being’s experience.

However, this claim does not imply that that immediately given apprehen-
sion of another’s world is not influenced by the investigator’s own history,
bias, intended project, and the like. […] I reject the possibility of an unbiased
objectivistic stance, […] I do not conceive of empathy as a transparent access, a
pure mirroring of what we seek to understand. […] While the empathic act aims
to deliver just what the object of study is experiencing, that act is necessarily
informed by my “preunderstanding” of him or her. (281)

In other words, human understanding of their pets is always undercut by the own-
ers’ empathy interceded by their own past knowledge, making it difficult to present
an accurate objective understanding of a pet. This leads to the perception that an-
imal behaviour is “a realm that is difficult, if not impossible, to know with objective
certainty” (Hutchings 174). Moreover, one of the basic ideals of anthropomorphism
includes, according to Lehman, “an affirmation that an animal has a human mental
characteristic when it lacks that characteristic” (106). Therefore, it can be claimed that
attributing both human mental status and pre-existing experiences to pets to under-
stand their behaviour and to regard them as part of a human household is akin to a
form of anthropomorphism where, again, the human is prioritized in the relationship.

Considering the impact of anthropomorphism on animals, critics such as Serpell
and Tuan have pointed out several negative effects of this process of humanization
on the biology and psychology of animals. Moreover, the process of neutering is an
anthropomorphic method of domesticating the pet that enables the owner to remain oblivious of the “sexuality” of the animal (Tuan, *Dominance and Affection* 88–89). Haraway has pointed out certain aspects associated with the practice of breeding dogs, such as “[m]utts were good as long as they were sterilized; trained to a low standard – lest human control play too big a role–by positive methods” (96). Also, the change in the behaviour of domestic dogs as fully dependent on humans for their food and emotional support is viewed as a direct consequence of anthropomorphism (Serpell 448). The more recent trend of pet owners to understand their pets through animal psychology, which aims to challenge anthropomorphisms, has proven to reiterate the human–animal distinction by essentially judging animals through their “‘biological’ behaviour” (Fox 529). As a result, there is no denying the fact that the acknowledgment of the agency of pets and their status as equal to humans is believed to be central in deconstructing the human–animal dualism.

Yet, the idea that anthropomorphism has anthropocentrism at its core has given rise to conflicting views on the question of viewpoints. Since ecocritical studies have long been at the centre of debate on whether ecocriticism should be perceived as “ecocentric” or “anthropocentric” as it is claimed that the “discussion of ecocentric actions” is “performed from clearly and ineluctably anthropocentric positions” (Estok, “Theory from the Fringes” 68–69), anthropomorphism appears inevitable in delineating the human–animal relationship only through human perception. As a result, the fate of anthropomorphism remains “variable and uncertain” (Lulka 182) in contemporary intellectual discourses, as it is both criticized and advocated. Ecocritical advocates of anthropomorphism find such a view unavoidable since we use human language to describe animals, and it is often regarded as “useful” as it can place both humans and animals on equal footing (Estok, “Theory from the Fringes” 68). Its critics, however, denounce it for focusing only on attributing human mental status to animals and, thus, privileging mind over body (Lulka 183).

Accordingly, it appears that the ideals of anthropomorphism dovetail with two irreconcilable views: first, anthropomorphism appears appropriate since it aims to place animals on equal footing with humans by regarding them as humans, and second, it does so while attributing human values to animals and therefore, suppressing their agency and animal nature. While resolving the tension between the legitimacy and disapproval of anthropomorphism is beyond the aim of this study, which claims to locate the intersecting points of human–companion animal interactions in everyday spaces such as in the owner’s house as will be shown in Chapter 4 on Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, it would be apt to conclude that when a human–animal relationship is developed as a substitute for human–human ‘others’ relationship in a space/landscape imbued with a racial history and class hierarchy, the categories of race and class are more often than not reflected in the owner’s attitude or empathy toward their companion animals. Moreover, these race or class dimensions of their relationship play a crucial role in the formation of the identity and sense of place of the owner who, as it will be argued in Chapter 4, always desires to define every relation, be it with humans or with nonhumans, along the binary of class hierarchy. Thus, I contend that the anthropomorphisms that attribute human racial ideals to companion animals not only perpetuate the gap between human–human ‘others’ by disregarding the agency of animals but also have a detrimental effect on the owner’s identity and sense of place in a space marked by racial undertones.
2.3.3 Local and Global Place Grounded in Class and Bioregional Sense of Place

While the question of disregarding the agency of human ‘others’ is central in the formation of racial hierarchy, the economic and political units that consolidate such hierarchy are worth taking into account in order to identify the process of othering. Development, for instance, acts as an economic practice that, along with its promise of growth, progress, economic prosperity, and equality to name a few, has widened the chasm between people in relation to class, gender, and, in some specific contexts, caste stratifications. This difference is played out across rural and urban spaces, where the former is usually associated with poverty and the lower caste/class people, and the latter with the affluence of the upper-middle class and the rich. This subsection, in continuation with the arguments on class dualism and agency as explicated in the previous subsection will concentrate on the way in which the economic process of development not only connects distant places but also hierarchizes human space in accordance with social status grounded in class and caste in developing countries, such as in twenty-first-century India. Quite obviously, in such spatial arrangement, human ‘others’ and the environment are perceived as passive material resources, and are, thus, set against upper-class humans. However, this research, owing to its emphasis on spatial divisions and the connectedness of local, national and global places accentuated by economic development, will explore the way in which the process of development in twenty-first-century India both denies identity to human ‘others’ as well as provides them with an agentic and a cosmopolitan awareness of the entire arc of development encompassing economy, culture, and nature. In doing so, the research focuses on the dualism inherent in development, as suggested by development geography, and its impact on bioregions to locate the varying nature of development reiterated across rural, national, and transnational spaces as will be discussed in Chapter 5, which deals with Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*.

The interrelation between the global and the local has long found a niche for itself in the study of globalization. However, development geography, one of the fundamental tenets of which has been to explore the nature of contestation over places preceded by social inequity and class hierarchy (Raghuram and Madge 270), incorporates a place-based approach toward development and investigates the way economic, political, and environmental impacts of development on local, national, and global places are mediated by myriad socio-cultural hierarchies permeated with racial connotations. For instance, geographer S. White claims that race has remained an important concept for those nations with a colonial past since other categories of differentiation, such as class and gender, are heavily dependent on it, and the process of development often acts as an accomplice in intensifying such differences between humans (417).

Nonetheless, despite offering insights into the interdependent circles of the process of globalization, development geography as a branch of human geography is frequently perceived as lacking in concrete ideological framework. According to geographer Bebbington, development geography remains mostly “case-study oriented” and it offers little theoretical basis for tracking the trajectory of the “material” practice of development (“Global Networks and Local Developments” 297). Thus, although development geography calibrates the devastating consequences of globalization on people and places, its neo-colonizing tendency, and its encouragement of disproportionate power structures, its geographical arguments appear to be predominantly engrossed with a number of socio-cultural and economic facets of development, among others.
Consequently, the interrelations between various places, both local and global, receive little attention. Following Bebbington’s disquisition on the necessity of developing a theoretical approach for development geography, the subsequent discussion explores the workings of development in the Third World with an emphasis on agency and the global–local interdependence and, therefore, serves as the foundation for the reading of Adiga’s *The White Tiger*.

Although development geography aims to expose the “inequity” and “disadvantage” played out across spaces in the age of globalization, the genre is required to turn practical data into theory, as Bebbington suggests, by conceptualizing the “processes” of development, and the interrelations that development can create between local, global, and transnational places (“Global Networks and Local Developments” 298–301). To this end, four major concepts need to be considered as part of the theoretical framework for development geography – “place, livelihood, scale and network” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 298; Bebbington and Batterbury, “Transnational Livelihoods and Landscapes” 370). Development, as defined by Bebbington, is both “the expansion and extension of (generally capitalist) systems of production, exchange and regulation”, and “organized interventions with explicit and implicit goals” (“Global Networks and Local Developments” 299). Noticeably, while in the former definition development is equated with capitalist economy, by intervention in the latter he mainly refers to the intervention of the First World and different political and religious establishments into the economy and culture of the Third World for the purpose of progress. Intervention can also be perceived, which is one of the central arguments of this study, at the individual level – as “resistance” by local people “in which people aim to create opportunities and pursue their aspirations by manoeuvring through and finding spaces at the interstices of the same political economy that in other ways simultaneously constrains and structures their agency” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 300). Thus, an analysis of the dual structure of development along the axes of the four central concepts will identify “how and why” the working of economy and “organized intervention” vary across different spaces. It is the variation of development across spaces and the interrelation that this variation can create between local, global, and transnational spaces that should be at the locus of the theorization of development geography (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 298).

Moreover, developments in both senses, which affect each other and space, are deeply reliant on and embedded in the four concepts that can establish their interrelations (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 301). The development of capitalist society, for instance, with its production and distribution of commodity, creates various networks such as the “economic network”, through which “people, organizations and places become hooked into transnational relationships” (Bebbington and Batterbury, “Transnational Livelihoods and Landscapes” 375). Whereas “interventions” as development, whether individual or organized, create “social and institutional networks structuring flows of ideas, resources and activities” that might not depend on the global capitalist market (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 299–300). Therefore, capitalist development and interventions work along the lines of a “network” to maintain a pervasive presence and, as a result, connect local and global places, and people. Nonetheless, the analysis of the workings of development should also be grounded in the concept of “place” to explore not only the places that bear impacts of development but also places “where […] economic decisions are made and structured” (Bebbington, “Global Networks
and Local Developments” 300). Additionally, along with the concern of how capitalist development works in places, the question of who controls and decides in those places, or the agency and “actors” of such places, should be considered important for development geography:

Understanding those actors in place (or more accurately, places given that actors are often so mobile), and this is so whether these actors are peasants, petty traders, government bureaucrats, NGO programme officers, or managers of transnational mining corporations. How structures, ideas and meanings affect their practices, and how decisions are made and how they translate into practice depends greatly on the places in which these actors live, work and move. (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 302; emphases original)

Thus, the place-based concern incorporates the question of agency. In cases of intervention on an individual basis where local people, especially the rural poor, aim to improve their life and, therefore, might adopt various “strategies” such as “technology, ethnicity, and politics”, the necessity to consider the poor as agentic and not merely as “‘clients’, recipients, and the objects of somebody else’s development strategy” (Bebbington, “Movements, Modernizations and Markets” 87–90; “Reencountering Development” 499) lies in the fact that it can provide a sense of “optimism” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 300). Again, the agency of individuals or their resistance to the consequences of development affects their “livelihood”, and connects them across myriad spaces, their places of accommodation and economies (Bebbington, “Capitals and Capabilities” 2034; “Global Networks and Local Developments” 300). Their participation in development through survival “strategies” and resistance to the undesired ramifications of development exerts influence on their livelihoods. This idea of livelihood as governed by individual agency is crucial to considering the question of decision-making, or, more often than not, deciding on “how resources should be used […] and who should determine these decisions” (Bebbington, “Reencountering Development” 507).

Nevertheless, place and livelihoods work as interrelated categories as livelihood connects not only people and places but can also recreate places in different spaces (Bebbington, “Livelihood Transitions” 179). Again, the way human livelihoods vary, as a result of development, “in other places and across wider spaces”, constitutes the concept of “scale” in development geography (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 303). Moreover, the links that connect these scales can be termed as networks that unite “actors in different places through which flow ideas, people, products, money, etc.” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 303). These networks can also be social since “people mobilise and build up networks of relationships to help them deal with, live through and perhaps resist these forms of development” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 303). However, in the developing societies with a history of western colonization, the social networks between people and places are intervened, as argued above, by internal social stratifications such as class and, in the context of India, the system of caste, bolstered by racial undertones. Apparently, such structures create social inequality, affect economy and the livelihood of individuals, disregard their agency, and, at times, maintain separations between places according to the social status of humans who inhabit those places. The way these social stratifications interact with the four theoretical concepts of development and influence global–local interrelations, will be
elucidated in detail in Chapter 5 with special reference to the imperial past and its impact on India in the twenty-first century.

Although the four concepts that development geography should incorporate—place, scale, livelihood, and network—focus, in Bebbington’s view, principally on the economic impact of development on individuals, their agency, and their relationships to others, the consequences of development on nature, which also affect human livelihood, are worthy of attention to consider the interrelation between global and local places. Accordingly, the analysis of the current predicament facing basic amenities for the poor from the standpoint of development geography undeniably includes the concern over “a healthy urban environment”, as recent geographical studies on developing countries have sought to explore the environmental facets of industrialization and economic growth in order to consider the challenges of climate change that have global effects but have even harsher impacts on the poor (Desai and Potter 273). Geographer Watts, for instance, perceives that modern development projects cannot be dissociated from “poor soil, erratic climate, inaccessibility, low agricultural productivity and infectious disease [that] mutually reinforce one another in a vicious cycle of destitution and backwardness” (11). Besides, it is worth mentioning that development geographies’ appraisal of the risks of development often reiterate postcolonial eco/environmental criticism of race and development. Whereas critics of development, for instance, suggest that the developing world is imagined as a space for disposal by the West, their view resembles the environmental analyses of Third World spaces, such as Shiva’s perception that India is “used as a dumping ground by the Northern industrialized countries” for its cheaper waste disposal costs, which poses a threat to the sustainable development of the country (“Ecological Balance in an Era of Globalization” 58). Therefore, in the context of development as creating environmental hazards that have varying impacts on diverse places (Forsyth 295) and on individuals with different social status, the interactions between the environment and the project of development, in both senses of Bebbington’s definition, should also be mapped along the four aforementioned conceptualizations.

In addition, while the process of marginalizing the poor and nature on the basis of their assumed inferiority and lack of agency has an implicit tenet, as has been argued throughout the thesis, of dualisms such as between human and nature, and human and human ‘others’, the existence of the agency of the poor depends on the dissolvability of such binaries. Moreover, along with strategies and methods resisting the over-consumptive behaviour of development, the agency of the human ‘others’ is invariably connected with their understanding of the human–nature correlation. Thus, it is argued that in a reappraisal of human–nature relationships a “global community” (Roos and Hunt 2–3) should be formed that would enable the individual/local to connect with the wider community/global to uphold the values of “pluralism” and “solidarity” and to maintain environmental “security” by sustainably using limited environmental resources (Shiva, Earth Democracy 4–5). However, it should be noted that while in geographical analysis, the emphasis is on economic opportunities provided by development that might connect local and global places, in eco/environmental studies the global and local interconnection is believed to be built through the environmental awareness of a global community. Therefore, environmental approaches that highlight local and global interrelations through pluralist perceptions of society, culture, and nature, such as cosmopolitan bioregionalism, appear to contribute to the formation of a global community by questioning the current over-consumptive rationality of development. Geographer Adams’s preference for “bio-regionalism” as
part of a sustainable development strategy is grounded in its capability to question “established utilitarian ideas as well as reformist and managerialist ‘conservation’” (93). The way such a strategy of conservation can be formulated involving local and global interconnections is expounded in the following discussion on cosmopolitan bioregionalism and its alternative development paradigm or “another development” model, which will aid us in explicating the recuperation of identity of human ‘others’ in Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger.

The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines “bioregion” as “[a] region defined by characteristics of the natural environment rather than by man-made divisions” (“Bioregion”), whereas bioregionalism as a form of environmentalism incorporates human, nonhumans, and nature, as well as the “social behavior” of humans that characterizes the nature of a place (Berg and Dasmann 232). In order to resolve the feud between the local and the global or, in other words, turning the global into local and vice versa, it is asserted that bioregionalism should consider the plurality of society, culture, human perceptions, and “traditional” environmental practices, especially from the South where the project of development thrives (Heise, Sense of Place 59). However, according to the bioregional critic Thomashow, such plural perceptions should always start from the local since the local or the “place-based orientation” is related to sensory perceptions, and is, therefore, beneficial for connecting to the environment: “People are best equipped to observe what happens around them – what they can see, hear, smell, taste and touch. These observations are poignant in their home places, where they are likely to spend lots of time […] and be most in touch with the natural world” (Bringing the Biosphere Home 5). Shiva also argues that “[t]he ‘global’ must accede to the local […]. The local is everywhere. The real ecological space of global ecology is to be found in the integration of all locals” (“The Greening of the Global Reach” 155). Consequently, people’s empirical understanding of their environment plays an important part in the conceptualization of their identity. Along with a profound understanding of nature, the cultural and geographical contexts, among others, play a crucial role in defining a local place-specific sense of place (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 121). Therefore, Thomashow argues that, on the one hand, a local place-based sense of place is crucial in exploring global consequences of development and its geographical variance. On the other hand, however, he asserts that any understanding of the local, its environment, people, human–nature interrelations, and the consequences of the process of development in the age of globalization should involve a global perception:

Global economy requires that bioregionalists explore both the immediate landscape (place) and those larger systems that exist beyond the horizon (space). The local landscape can no longer be understood without reference to the larger patterns of ecosystems, economies and bureaucracies. […] A bioregionalist sensibility moves from the parts to the whole, but in a way that lends meaning to both, and is tangible to the psyche. (“Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 126)

Then, with an understanding of the local and the global interconnectedness, Thomashow imagines a global community – based on a global culture and multilinear perspectives of nature – where pluralism is celebrated. It can be argued then that although this perception is based on a particular place, it relies on “multicultural and multispecies tolerance” that permits “different people to understand all the different places that may be considered home”, an understanding named cosmopolitanism
that modifies the distinctions between global and local (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 121–22). In the context of the economic plunder of Third World countries, such an identity with a cosmopolitan perception can be effective in confronting the consequences of globalization and questioning the process of othering nature on the basis of its supposed inferiority.

Moreover, through this pluralism embedded in an understanding of the local and the global, it is claimed that “the hierarchy and/or centralized power” can be dismantled, and a “self-determination” can be obtained (Snyder 46). In addition, such a strong affiliative cosmopolitan relation between humans and their environment in the local helps make a home in the global sense and, therefore, can also create an environmentally conscious global community (Thomashow, Bringing the Biosphere Home 24). The conceptualization of an environmentally aware cosmopolitanism provides an alternative to the displacement caused by the processes of globalization. Thomashow argues that as a result of globalization, environmental degradation, and displacement, migrations occur globally where these displaced migrants often try to retain their “ecological and cultural integrity” through their memory or “confront the dire consequences of naked assimilation and the loss of cultural identity” (“Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 123). However, migration can also mean multiple identities in multiple places: “In global economy, people identify with many places at once, forming networks and allegiances based on pluralistic identities. This is the essence of a local/global dialectic in which regions unfold within and between each other” (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 129). Thus, a cosmopolitan awareness of the global community based on human–nature correlations is essentially bound up with such multiple identities in both local and global places that are termed bioregions.

Although Thomashow calls for a reassessment of the impact of globalization on humans and nature to form a cosmopolitan individual identity embedded in human–nature relations, the way in which such an appraisal can be performed or economic measures can be adapted remains to be explained. Bioregionalist Evanoff, who prioritizes the local economy in the East and its links to western capitalism, identifies unequal power relations working across spaces and even beyond the boundaries of nations that contribute to the economic prosperity of the West. However, the relations between the local and the global are encouraged as an act of intervention since it is principally understood, according to Bebbington’s definition, as a necessary form of development where the developed countries interfere with the economy and culture of the developing countries for progress. Nonetheless, local and global relations can also be held responsible for encouraging exploitations by the former and consequently maintaining an asymmetrical power relation between the developed and developing countries. Evanoff maintains that the wealth of the developed parts of the world comes from the resources and cheap labour of the Third World, or, to put it another way, “the poor are not extracting resources, growing food, or making products for themselves, but rather for people in developed countries. In export-driven economies imbalances are created in which the siphoning off of labor and goods from developing countries leaves the poor with insufficient resources to meet their own basic needs” (146–47). By propounding a modified version of Wolfgang Sachs’s concept of “delinking” local communities “from the global economy as a way to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency and political autonomy”, Evanoff believes that a bioregional perspective, in chiefly focusing on the local bioregion, can essentially save the local economy by dissociating the local from global exploitation (147). Furthermore, such
delinking is perceived to be assistive in “domestic development” (Sachs 337), as Sachs summarizes in his essay:

I can so far only conclude that delinking from the North (and reinforcing linkages within the South) is the only possible approach for many Third World countries seeking to defend themselves economically, to reassert themselves culturally and to transform themselves socially. Such a vision is implicit in the various grass-roots struggles in Third World countries. Delinking means, in essence, the ordering of less goods and the borrowing of less money from the North, and the withdrawing of resources from exporting goods and interest payments to the North. (339)

Thus, the concept of delinking can corrode the hierarchical basis on which the poor status of the local economy depends. Moreover, it is claimed that such dissociations and delinks will enable the local to develop “an alternative bioregional paradigm” that is engrossed in “high degrees of self-sufficiency within the ecological limits of local geographical regions” (Evanoff 148). Again, it should be noted that while this “alternative bioregional paradigm” rejects neocolonialism in the form of providing help by the West, it welcomes international activities that can help boost the local economy, as the following claims show:

While it may be agreed with cosmopolitans […] that, in addition to the negative duty of non-interference, we have a positive duty to help those in genuine need, positive duties do not justify imperialism masquerading as assistance nor attempts on the part of one culture to impose its ways upon another.

[I]t can be argued that the principle of non-interference is best construed as a proscription against domination, not against genuinely needed assistance. (Evanoff 150)

In order to deconstruct the ruler and the ruled relationship in a locality, the delinking theory then leads to “an emerging alternative development paradigm which emphasizes local production for local consumption and community decision-making process” (Evanoff 150–51). However, the bioregional local inflection does not imply that the local should stand in stark opposition to the global/transnational; rather a cosmopolitan understanding of both the local and the global is recommended, provided that the interrelation makes room for the consideration of the agency of the peripheral, and prioritizes the local community over an over-consumptive market (Evanoff 151–52). Such an alternative bioregional model of development can thus influence the livelihoods and agency of individuals – issues vigorously emphasized in development geographies – by involving them in the process of decision-making for local developments, and thereby, they can challenge power binary and social inequity. Moreover, in response to the call for valuing the local, the alternative paradigm might ensure the use of natural resources wisely in the locality and, in this manner, limit environmental degradation. It is also important to note that such a cosmopolitan understanding of the global and the local on the basis of society, culture, environment, and economy considers the question of reinhabitation, a central concept of bioregionalism, not from an idyllic perception of returning to a utopian old village. Rather, it provides a material solution to the question of development, technological progress, and environmental devastations, and shapes our under-
standing of the way we should perceive development’s impact on local bioregions and modify our actions accordingly.

The tension between local and global places as to their interdependence and disassociation as brought to the fore by bioregionalism is, then, precipitated by contradictions apparent in the nature of development which, as a result of local–global interdependence, on the one hand, encourages economic progress and, on the other, indulges in the exploitation of local places, both its humans and natural resources, to ensure the progress of the global (the West). Therefore, the inclusion of development geography into the bioregional conceptualization of linking and delinking places will assist in the calibration of the binary nature of development in compliance with which separation and connection between places can be formed. That is to say, development geography, along the coordinates of place, livelihood, network, and scale, will zero in on individual agency and decision-making processes in developing countries, and accordingly can detect the impact of development projects on those societies – their possibility of gaining economic self-sufficiency and developing a pluralist cosmopolitanism – which will then determine the necessity of connecting or dissociating places. Similarly, the alternative bioregional model of development can merge with the substantial survival “strategies” or opportunities of the poor, as development geographers argue, in an economy that recognizes their role as “actors” in the processes of decision-making and controlling the modes of production, and therefore it can address the predicament of social inequity between local and global/ transnational places. In other words, the question of “place formation” or creating local places in transitional spaces, resulting chiefly from globalization, human decisions, and economic policy (Bebbington, “Livelihood Transitions” 179), should incorporate a cosmopolitan understanding of place that can both rely upon other places for development and establish its own alternative desirable model of development.

Nonetheless, in Third World countries, not least in India, an understanding of one’s environment is intervened by various internal structures such as class and caste – both interceded by race – as shown in the discussion of development geographies above. These unequal power structures often work in close collusion with an exploitative project of development that results in migration, displacement, exploitation of both humans and the environment, the loss of the land rights and identity of the poor to name a few. In the face of such tensions between human groups, and between humans and nature, therefore, both the consequences of development projects on humans and the environment, and their progressive role in offering identity will be explored in the context of Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*. One of the devastating consequences of development, as interceded by the hierarchies of class and caste and a contaminated environment, can be experienced in the loss of agency of the central migrant character of the novel and his ambiguous identity in local and transnational places. It will be asserted further that in the context of the transformations of places as part of development projects, a cosmopolitan understanding of one’s environment, based on the dissolvability of power binaries as a method of sustainability, can resolve such ambiguities and offer a sense of place to the marginalized.

In what follows, I want to analyse the spatial, geographical, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions of place we encounter in three contemporary Anglophone novels from India, which have received acclamation both from the East and the West. In addition, space and place in the study will be located as a condition which enables the postcolonial downtrodden, in case of the respective texts, to become aware of their correlation with the nonhumans in a society which both constricts their space and ex-
tricates them from the system of hierarchy of gender, class, and caste and, as a result, redefines their position as independent selves. Therefore, in the following chapter on Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, the first novel to be discussed in the thesis, the study aims to expound on the way such an understanding drives the marginalised with an urge to ameliorate their knowledge about the self and help them create an identity which, as the study will show, is based on their experience of the land or place and the environment in which they dwell.
3 LAND OF POPPIES: WOMEN’S SENSE OF PLACE AND NATURE IN AMITAV GHOSH’S SEA OF POPPIES

*Sea of Poppies* (2008) is a narrative that connects land and water with the solidity of human history and the fluidity of human identity. Framed in the backdrop of the Anglo-Chinese opium war in the nineteenth century, the novel chiefly focuses on an array of characters who travel or are forced to travel to Mauritius as indentured labourers on a refurbished slave ship. In the chapter that follows, I aim to locate the identity of the colonized at the intersections of various spatial boundaries and nature, with special reference to the central migrant female characters of the novel. In doing so, the study follows materialist ecofeminists’ argument for the reassessment of the women–nature relationship in women’s recognizing the agency of nature, and their solidarity with and difference from nature, and feminist geographical analysis of social and cultural construction of place, and its emphasis on emotions and sense of belonging that can construct their identity. Building on the works of materialist ecofeminists such as Plumwood, Sturgeon, and Alaimo, among others, I will scrutinize the materiality of the environment of the places that the central female characters of the novel dwell in or travel to and argue that their sense of place is reliant on their understanding of nature as an individualistic agent that has both independence from and continuity with culture. In addition, I will employ the feminist geographical conceptualizations advocated by McDowell, Sharp, Blunt, Rose, and others to decipher the implications of spatial constructions for women as well as to underscore the importance of understanding the notion of sense of place as inclusive of both reason and emotion. Further, it will be argued that this sense of place retains a non-hierarchized culture that considers nature as an essential part of it. In the exposition of women’s rootedness in both culture and nature, I will also focus on women’s understanding of the biological or material human body affected by toxic nature. Therefore, the very matter of the toxic body and nature as an agentic being will be juxtaposed in relation to the explication of women’s identity in the following section, and thus the discursive conceptualization of women’s body and its variable meanings in spaces are not included in this research. The chapter has three specific aims: first, it will locate gendered spaces where women experience marginalization in a colonized society. Second, it will explore the way such socio-cultural categories exert an influence on those spaces that, as it will be argued, fragment women’s sense of self and displace them. Finally, the chapter will chart how women obtain or recuperate an identity, subverting the dualistic socio-cultural constructs, such as men (culture, mind)/women (nature, body), public/private, reason/emotion, and rationality/ethics, among others, and make their place through a reappraisal of their identity in relation to both nature and culture as represented in *Sea of Poppies* (hereafter referred to as SP). This includes the recognition of the agency of nature, humans’ dependence on and women’s difference from nature as well as a sense of place in spaces untrammelled by the aforementioned dualist patriarchal models.

The chapter is divided into two major sections that aim to reveal the differences between a native woman’s and a white woman’s relationship with nature and culture. In Section 3.1, I explore the gendered space of one of the central female characters of the novel, Deeti, in relation to the dispossession of her agricultural land, the patriarchal
control over her house, and her relationship with nature and the environment of her village. While in 3.1.1, the gendered space will be analysed in connection with Deeti’s land of poppies as the pivot of such interrelations, in Subsection 3.1.2, the role of her hut and its dependence on the land will be explored in the context of her constricted space. Subsection 3.1.3 will examine how such restricted gendered space changes its contours, quite contrary to the conventional patriarchal perception of women as residing in the private, and opens up a subjective place for Deeti in the public space of a migrant ship. Finally, it will be concluded that Deeti’s identity has been a result of her sense of self in a place that, though based on racial terms, offers her an opportunity to reassess her position in relation to both nature and culture.

The inclusion of the discursive analysis of the restricted space of Paulette, the French female character of the novel, who expands her spatial boundary through travelling with the dispossessed on the slave ship, adds a significant dimension to this study since it explores different convoluted facets of dualisms based principally on gender that Paulette, as will be shown, even as an educated European, cannot escape in keeping pace with the dominant (English) socio-cultural regime. Therefore, in 3.2 I will investigate the way Paulette finds her space as constricted by the socio-cultural category of gender and aims to ameliorate her control of her sense of self through travel on the ship, which acts as a melting pot for a variety of experiences of marginalization irrespective of class, caste, and gender. Subsection 3.2.1 aims to show how Paulette experiences her unrestricted space and sense of self in her riverside laboratory-cum-home with proximity to the native Bengali culture. However, such spaces are always fragile, especially for a European woman, who, instead of harbouring the domineering colonialist ideology of maintaining separation from the natives, aspires to construct interracial spaces incorporating indigenous plants, peoples, and their culture. Subsection 3.2.2, accordingly, explores how such attempts on the part of Paulette are regarded as indecent and improper by the colonialist culture that attempts to depersonalize and transform her into an appropriate member of the white community with an awareness of her spatial constraints. Moreover, her changing relationship with the native plants and its impact on her restricted space will also be analysed in relation to her understanding of the nature–culture interrelation. Additionally, the subsection examines the way Paulette finds her sense of place in the outer world by breaking away from the norms of a gendered English society through her journey with the native migrants on the revamped slave ship. Finally, the chapter offers a conclusion that shows how the novel’s focus on the two central female characters catapults the necessity to dissolve the argued dualistic perceptions maintained by the hierarchy of gender, race, and class/ caste.

3.1 WOMEN’S SPACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT OF COLONIZATION

The concept of the renegotiation of women’s changing spatial boundaries has carved a niche for itself in postcolonial feminist studies (Blunt and Rose 3). However, it is often claimed that such renegotiation depends heavily on the resolvability of the difference between “public (men)/and private (women) spaces” (Jackson 57–58). Moreover, it is suggested that certain places have specific gendered characteristics since the “meaning” of those places is governed by our behavioural pattern determined by patriarchal social norms that aim to make typical “spatial difference”
through “gender difference” (Fry qtd. in Blunt and Rose 1–2). Therefore, space is a form that is more socially than topographically created, and it serves as the mainstay of “gender difference [which] establishes some spaces as women’s and others as men’s; those meanings then serve to reconstitute the power relations of gendered identity” (Blunt and Rose 3). It follows then that such socially inscribed “meanings” of gendered spaces that instigate spatial differences construct men’s and women’s identities in opposition to each other. In the following subsections, the study will draw on the way such realignments of gendered spatial boundary take place in the context of the nineteenth-century-Indo-China opium trade. Moreover, it will be explicated how gendered spaces create restricted spaces for women that obfuscate women’s relationship with both culture and nature.

3.1.1 Agricultural Land, Women’s Rights to Harvest, and Space

The novel begins with “Land” in late winter in the village of Ghazipur, east of Benares in India, with a landscape of poppies extending over both banks of the river Ganges. Deeti, a village-woman and one of the central characters of the novel, is immediately introduced in the beginning. The villagers’ happiness appears to be closely associated with the blooming of the poppy flowers, and it becomes a major concern for all in the village if they bloom late (SP 3–5). The harvesting of poppies is an event itself that is completely in tune with the lives of the villagers, men, women, and children alike, since the flowers are valued not just for their pecuniary parts but also for their purposeful household contribution (SP 7). It is made evident in the beginning of the novel that life and land in the riverside village of Ghazipur are interconnected in the system of farming as the crops of poppies can provide the villagers with both money and pleasure in the form of drugs or opium. The world that Deeti lives in, therefore, is lost in the joy of the cultivation of poppies, a plant used in the opium factory of Ghazipur to make narcotics, as that have a charming and soothing effect on all who go near the plants or live with them regardless whether they are humans or insects (SP 28). Because of the high importance of opium in the village of Ghazipur, it is also treated as a medium of exchange. Similarly, for a poor village woman like Deeti, the patch of her field where she cultivates poppies promises a sense of security since, as the most enterprising member of her household, she can make provisions for her shaky hut out of the profit of selling poppies to the opium factory. Incidentally, the critics who view women’s legitimate land rights as the very basis of the propaganda that advocates “women empowerment” in the developing countries suggest that in rural Indian households, even today, land is regarded as the primary source of income for most women, a considerable amount of which women use for their households (Agarwal, Are We Not Peasants Too? 4). Deeti, nonetheless, epitomizes the collective agony of the underclass women in brooding over the problem of thatching a roof with dried stalks of grain since the colonial masters do not allow her or any other villagers to grow essential crops like wheat or lentils. As a result, the farmers of the village depend on the profit from the cultivation of poppies:

In this age of flowers, thatch was not easy to come by: in the old days, the fields would be heavy with wheat in the winter, and after the spring harvest, the straw would be used to repair the damage of the year before. But now, with the sahibs forcing everyone to grow poppy, no one had thatch to spare – it had
to be bought at the market, from people who lived in faraway villages, and
the expense was such that people put off their repairs as long as they possibly
could. (SP, 29)

However, lands that raise poppies, an important crop full of economic values, often
appear as spaces of contestation in a society entangled in the binary categorization of
superiority and inferiority on the basis of caste, class and gender. People of superior
caste (Brahman or Kshatriya according to the Hindu caste system), class (rich farmers),
and gender (masculine) tend to occupy the land of those who belong to inferior caste,
class, and gender groups since it is believed that the latter is not entitled to any right to
hold property (M. Singh 146). Deeti, although a member of a Kshatriya family, which
maintains a physical distance from lower-class people and refrains from making eye
contact with the untouchables of the village (SP 60), faces discrimination on the basis
of her gender status, which is classified as inferior. Again, the patriarchal construction
of the social hierarchy of “gender roles”, claim Blunt and Rose, distinguishes not only
between genders but also between spaces such as masculine and feminine or public
and private spaces (1–2). Therefore, women as an inferior gender group are supposed
to remain inside, in the private places, spend their energy on household chores, and
are not expected to work as men in the public. Consequently, Deeti’s work in her gar-
den of poppies remains mostly invisible and she is hardly recognized as the farmer of
her land in a gender stratified society, which, bolstered by the rationalist ideology of
patriarchy and colonialism, finds it illogical both to acknowledge women’s contribu-
tion to the cultivation of cash crops (Warren 10) and to raise environmental concerns
over the protection of lands of indigenous crops.

Thus, Deeti’s attempt to raise her crops on her own and, thereby, develop a bond
with her land is met with criticism and derision from her male relatives who advise her
on the need of having a male child in order to find a proper farm hand for her land (SP
6). However, for women, the experience of gender discrimination on the basis of tasks
varies “in everyday spaces” (McDowell 15). Also, for Deeti, the experience of her gen-
der-specific labour associated with the cultivation of poppies differs in spaces. While,
on the one hand, her labour on poppies in the field is not taken into account by the pa-
tricial society, which bifurcates the society on men (work)/women (home) paradigm,
she, on the other hand, is allowed and expected to process other less valuable residues
of the vegetation at her hut, such as poppy-petal wrappers for covering the containers of
opium (SP 6). In this context, capitalist patriarchy differentiates between “productive”
(public and pecuniary work) and “unproductive” work (unpaid work in private places)
and, thus, genders work relationships to society: public paid work is associated with
men and domestic unpaid household chores are associated with women (Mackenzie
and Rose qtd. in Laurie et al. 113). This creates a gendered and restricted space for Deeti
both in her hut and on her land. Since land in India is regarded as strongly associated
with identity and position in society (Agarwal, A Field of One’s Own 17), the refusal of
Deeti’s position as a farm labourer and the owner of patches of her husband’s land after
his death creates a profound sense of loss in the space of her hut.

3 Conlogue terms agricultural land as the “garden” of the farmer (Working the Garden 13). With specific
reference to the history of American land farming, he defines agriculture as a social structure that “bounds,
arranges, and systematically transforms nature into something we can eat, wear, or otherwise utilize”
(Working the Garden 5). Therefore, farmland is not a body of untamed nature; it is specifically designed to
meet human needs.
It can be extrapolated then that Deeti’s relationship with her land and the dependence of her livelihood on the environment are interlaced with the socio-cultural interpretations of land maintained by the patriarchal colonized society that faces marginalization on the notion of race and colour in early nineteenth-century India. However, it would be wrong to presume that the British uttermost colonial control on agricultural lands in India, if nothing else, helped to abolish such ownership dichotomies between native men and women. Sangari and Vaid write that the colonial legacy of agricultural control does not resolve the inequality inherent in such social systems (qtd. in Mohanty 18). Instead, it strengthens the same patriarchal system that maintains the hierarchy of gender divisions in society by manipulating actions such as, in Mohanty’s words, “reempowering of landholding groups, the granting of property rights to men, the exclusion of women from ownership, and the ‘freezing’ of patriarchal practices of marriage, succession, and adoption into laws” (19). Because colonial policy, as Shiva argues, enforces the extensive cultivation of cash crops, replacing food crop production in the colonies, and discriminates against native women on the grounds of land rights, women’s impoverishment came to a head during colonial rule (“The Impoverishment of the Environment” 74). Deeti, therefore, like the other farmers in the village, hardly receives adequate payment for her cultivation by the British opium factory and forfeits her whole cultivation of poppies as well as her land as a result of the large loans taken earlier by her husband (SP 155). Since the cultivation of poppies has always been “labour intensive” and “expensive” (Farooqui 77) with little profit, it has often been regarded as undesirable by native farmers. Thus, Deeti realizes that providing hard labour for the cultivation of poppies more than is needed for household purposes is a “punishment” and almost insane, as the following shows:

Such punishment was bearable when you had a patch or two of poppies – but what sane person would want to multiply these labours when there were better, more useful crops to grow, like wheat, dal, vegetables? [...] [N]ow the factory’s appetite for opium seemed never to be sated. Come the cold weather, the English sahibs would allow little else to be planted. (SP 29–30)

She, as a poor farmer, subsequently, cares for farming only those essential crops and vegetables that are consumed by the household. When produced with such intensity of physical labour and emotional attachments, the farmers in Ghazipur, as Deeti perceives, are poorly paid for their harvests at the opium factory and, thereby, become entangled in a net of debt to local moneylenders (SP 94). However, when grievances are expressed at such wrongs they are meted out either with corporal punishment or with proposals of selling their lands and joining the group of indentured labourers migrating to Mauritius (SP 155). Therefore, although the cultivation of poppies means overseas economic gain for the colonizers, the peasants in the colonies who harvest poppies find it hard to make ends meet.

Yet, at this point, it is pertinent to consider Deeti’s attitude to her land in the context of the colonial enforcement of the cultivation of marketable crops, which controls her livelihood, in relation to her experience of nature. While the indigenous society that Deeti lives in has constructed many binary categories on the basis of gender and caste, among others, it has also, along the same lines of colonial policy that perceives indigenous nature as a mere resource that can be exploited according to colonial need (Huggan and Tiffin, “Green Postcolonialism” 5), viewed nature as a provider of resources, i.e., food and security. Therefore, it should be noted that Deeti, being placed
in such a colonized space, conceives of nature, whether indigenous food crops or cash crops, as a unit that provides a “background” (Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 68–69) for humans who can draw sustenance from it according to their need for essential or “luxury” crops (*SP* 29). Although she, along with others in the village can sense human dependency, mostly economic, on nature/poppies, her knowledge of nature is limited to considering it as a property or land of poppies measured chiefly by its harvests, as her following perception clarifies:

As her steps lengthened, she saw that on some nearby fields, the crop was well in advance of her own: [...] the air was buzzing with bees, grasshoppers and wasps; many would get stuck in the ooze and tomorrow, when the sap turned colour, their bodies would merge into the black gum, becoming a welcome addition to the weight of harvest. The sap seemed to have a pacifying effect even on the butterflies [...] See how it’s lost in dreams? Deeti said. That means the harvest will be good this year. Maybe we’ll even be able to fix our roof. (*SP* 28)

In other words, in viewing nature as a “background” that is to be cultivated or utilized according to human needs or defining nature in relation to humans, the chasm between nature and culture widens which situates nature as the ‘other’ of humans (Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 68). Therefore, it would be apt to conclude this section by asserting that Deeti’s perception of nature is influenced by the dualism between human and nature – the “master model” maintained and justified by a patriarchal society (Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 21–23). The way such an understanding of nature as a resource for sustenance intersects with socio-cultural categories of a colonized society that restrict women’s space will be elucidated in the following analysis of Deeti’s experience of other sites of her dwelling such as her hut.

### 3.1.2 The Restricted Space of the Hut and the Poppies

In the landscape of poppies, which resembles a flowing river, Deeti imagines her hut as a boat maintained by the flow and the current of the crops – an allusion to the hut’s correlation with the land. The only partition that separates Deeti’s “mud-walled dwelling” from the poppy field is an earthen doorsill, which is evocative of the indistinctiveness of the boundary between her private and public world since her work consists of caring both for the house and the crops in her field (*SP* 5). Similarly, Deeti’s hut is inseparable from her land since the hut not only serves as an extension of the land but also depends heavily on its crops. Therefore, the hut where she spends most of her time has a unique relationship with her land in maintaining a stable livelihood for her family. Nonetheless, home as a place of intimate relationships can also be gendered since home is often seen as a place that, quite contrary to the competitive world outside, is full of rest and care, and the person responsible for such caregiving has to be a female (Bowlby, Gregory, and McKie 345–46). Thus, while the income derived from Deeti’s land allows her livelihood opportunities, the harvests of poppies can also bring to the fore a number of miserable memories that she once faced in her hut (*SP* 30). She recalls how, on her wedding night, she came to know about her husband’s opium addiction and became acquainted with various sorts of opium narcotics that her husband held in great possession: “You [Deeti] should know, he
“[the husband] said at last, that this [the opium] is my first wife. She’s kept me alive since I was wounded: if it weren’t for her I would not be here today. I would have died of pain, long ago” (SP 33). Since by the end of the seventeenth century in India, poppies were more valued as opium, used as a drug to provide pleasure (Trocki 6), the opium appears as an overpowering entity, often perceived as the planet Saturn, that controls Deeti’s destiny as well as the ambience of the hut: “Her prospects had always been bedevilled by her stars, her fate being ruled by Saturn – Shani – a planet that exercised great power on those born under its influence, often bringing discord, unhappiness and disharmony” (SP 30). Then, it is this destiny regulated by the power of opium that not only causes Deeti’s husband’s addiction but also disingenuously uses the drug as a tool for her violation (SP 35).

Since gender is the most essential component in defining the boundaries and “experiences” of home (Blunt and Dowling 15), the exploration of Deeti’s gendered space in her hut can provide a glimpse into her experience of home that defines her spatial boundary. Although for humanist geographers home is a place, as Women and Geography Study Group of the Royal Geographical Society contends, created with human “sensitivity and creativity” and thus is regarded as an essential component in constructing human identity (8–9; Blunt and Dowling 11), other critics argue that home can also be seen as a place of unequal power relations and violence (Bowlby, Gregory, and McKie 343; Blunt and Dowling 10). Yet, the opium is used as a means by which a wide range of violence is perpetrated in Deeti’s hut: Deeti’s incapacitation under the drug’s effect, the sexual violence she is submitted to by her brother-in-law to hide the impotency of her drug-addict husband, and a forced pregnancy. Therefore, in the hut, Deeti appears to be regarded as a mere female body which, like an agricultural field, should be valued only through its merits of productivity.

In this context, the same economic crop stands for an accomplice that aids in violating Deeti’s body, which is treasured for its purity and capability to give birth to children (SP 35). For feminist geographers, such as McDowell, however, the issue of the “body” is intricately tied to the idea of “subjectivity and identity” and, like place and gender, it is “socially constructed and variable” (36). Nonetheless, Deeti’s identity in her household is constituted through her biological capacity to produce male children; she therefore, like the land, is considered to be an instrument, to borrow Plumwood’s term on the logic of oppression, which should only be valued for its productive capabilities (Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 68). Ensnailed in the colonial process of exploiting and cultivating the land for profit, to use the words of Stein, the village perceives women as “no more than reproductive bodies, hollow vessels who bear sons to the [...] land, rather than self-fulfilled persons who exist in their own right” (Shifting the Ground 3). Women, in this case, are seen as “breeders” whose bodies, like lands, can be controlled in the name of environmental needs “to increase the prosperity of the land owners” (Stein, New Perspectives 6). However, while Deeti’s biological sex appears to be the major category for her discrimination with regard to her possession of agricultural lands, her physical capacity to produce children is regarded as intrinsic to her worth in the household, as the following claim by her husband and mother-in-law in justification of the violence on her wedding night shows:

Yes, everything was as it should be, he said. You gave proof of your purity to my family. With heaven’s blessing, your lap will soon be filled.

Yet every day offered fresh proof of the old woman’s [the mother-in-law’s] complicity – in nothing more so than the look of proprietary satisfaction with
which she watched over the progress of the pregnancy; it was as if the child were her own, growing in the receptacle of Deeti’s body. (SP 35–37)

Since our sense of our gendered bodies can influence our sense of being in a place and changes the space for us (Laws 49), Deeti’s sense of her gendered body in her house confines her sense of being and restricts the space where she can never have any distinct individual subjectivity. Although some women can feel power and self-confidence with the experience of pregnancy in a society “which tends to devalue and trivialize women and which defines feminine beauty as slight and shapely” (Young qtd. in McDowell 59), for Deeti such devaluation with a forced pregnancy offers no sense of self; rather it deprives her of her subjectivity and restricts her space.

Therefore, Deeti endeavours to broaden her space by making an attempt to discover “the identity of her child’s father”, using opium in a retaliatory act of retrieving the truth from her in-laws. The dried stalks of plants from her newly thatched hut not only reveal the potential of opium to addict humans but equip her with the idea of using it on others, who she assumes were involved in the sexual violence on her wedding night:

What was she to do? It rained hard that night and the whole house was filled with the smell of wet thatch. The grassy fragrance cleared Deeti’s mind: think, she had to think, it was no use to weep and bemoan the influence of the planets. She thought of her husband and his torpid, drowsy gaze: how was it that his eyes were so different from his mother’s? [...] The answer came to Deeti all of a sudden – of course, the difference lay in the wooden box. (SP 37)

Thus, the drug seems to possess an immense colonizing power of controlling human beings. However, it is believed that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in India, especially in the western part, the knowledge and the use of opium both as a drug and a medicinal component was widespread among a part of society (Farooqui 72). Deeti, a farmer who was initially unaware of the addictive potential of her crops, develops an interest in learning the differences between different types of plants such as “datura” or “hemp” and continues experimenting with those in creating addiction in her harsh mother-in-law, an accomplice in her violation on her wedding night:

As for Deeti, the more she ministered the drug, the more she came to respect its potency: how frail a creature was a human being, to be tamed by such tiny doses of this substance! She saw now why the factory in Ghazipur was so diligently patrolled by the sahibs and their sepoys – for if a little bit of this gum could give her such power over the life, the character, the very soul of this elderly woman, then with more of it at her disposal, why should she not be able to seize kingdoms and control multitudes? (SP 38)

It is at this point that Deeti understands the original value of the crop, more than its household usage as mere seeds for cooking, and the reason for its mass production in the factories and transportation in ships. She realizes how an addiction can make men appear as having a “drowsy demeanour” and a “slow manner of speech” (SP 32). Moreover, her shrewd mother-in-law, who always took an interest in her pregnancy becomes nonchalant about everything around the household as a result of consuming foods spiked with opium (SP 38). The experience of her journey to the opium factory to
take her unconscious husband back home also serves as clear evidence of the potency of the drug. Near the opium factory she discerns that even the ambience seems to drape itself in a cover of stupor since the world around it, including animals, behave in unprecedented ways:

[A] miasma of lethargy seemed always to hang over the factory’s surroundings. The monkeys that lived around it, for instance: […] Unlike others of their kind they never chattered or fought or stole from passers-by; when they came down from the trees it was to lap at the open sewers that drained the factory’s effluents […]

Deeti and Kabutri began to sneeze; soon, Kalua and the oxen were sniffing too, for they had now drawn abreast of the godowns where farmers came to dispose of their ‘poppy trash’- leaves, stalks and roots […]. Ground up for storage, these remains produced a fine dust that hung in the air like a fog of snuff. Rare was the passer-by who could brave this mist without exploding into a paroxysm of sneezes and sniffles […]

This stretch of riverbank was unlike any other, for the ghats around the Carcanna were shored up with thousands of broken earthenware gharas […]. […] F[j]ish were more easily caught after they had nibbled at the shards. (SP 91–92)

The environmental pollution from the manufacturing of narcotics in the English factory, as described above, has adverse effects on the biota of the river Ganges as well as on the town of Ghazipur, where the coolies work in a state of being both conscious and unconscious (SP 94–95). Therefore, it can be claimed that the factory has transformed them into “toxic bodies”, as Alaimo claims, and the toxicity of the drug affects the humans, nonhumans, and plants of the place in similar ways “[s]ince the same mechanical substance may poison the workers who produce it, the neighborhood in which it is produced, and the web of plants and animals who end up consuming it” (Bodily Natures 18). Such an argument is also supported by theorists who examine the intersections of the process of colonization with the exploitation of colonized lands as it is perceived that the indigenous lands have always been used as industrial waste dumps by settlers (Smith 23). Again, Deeti is surprised to discover that it is the addictive air of opium inside the factory that has turned human labourers into machine-like creatures:

[H]er eyes were met by a startling sight – a host of dark, legless torsos was circling around and around, like some enslaved tribe of demons. […] When her eyes had grown more accustomed to the gloom, she discovered the secret of those circling torsos: they were bare-bodied men, sunk waist-deep in tanks of opium, tramping round and round to soften the sludge. Their eyes were vacant, glaze, and yet somehow they managed to keep moving, as slow as ants in honey, tramping, treading. […] These […] men had more the looks of ghouls than any living thing she had ever seen: their eyes glowed red in the dark and […] their loincloths […] being so steeped in the drug as to be indistinguishable from their skin. (SP 94–95)

Such pollution of the environment, both inside and outside of the factory, evokes the image of a vulnerable society threatened by environmental risks and hazards since what appears as invisible might well be real and present (Alaimo, Bodily Natures 68) and “possess[s] a higher degree of hazardous reality” (Beck 44), which can destabilize
both the mind and body of people dwelling in that place. Moreover, this pollution can be termed a form of controlling the body of the natives, which can be seen as “[a]n abstract bodies […] that are made docile, useful, disciplined, rationalised, normalised, and controlled sexually” (Duncan, “Embodying Colonialism?” 318). Critics concentrating on the history of the opium trade and its effects on the colonies have remarked that the most devastating impact of the opium trade includes “poverty, many millions of addicts, substantial extension of war and genocide, serious corruption on all sides, brutal perpetrators and helpless and even disgraced victims” and hence it was a process of colonial “assault on the East” (Derks 4). Thus, Deeti is right in comprehending that it is because of the “affeemkhors”, opium addicts, that the business of opium has reached its economic full growth (SP 98).

Incidentally, critics envisaging the history of the world’s most popular drugs have opined that the commercial production of drugs, such as opium, and the monopoly on its distribution were usually associated with the process of colonization, which eyed “mass markets” and enormous “cash flows” that consolidated the economic foundation of the empire (Trocki xii). Nonetheless, after taking her husband back home, Deeti finds that even on his deathbed Hukam Singh’s desire for the opium is insatiable, and as a result, she concludes, contrary to her usual belief, that an addict’s complete abstinence from opium, instead of curing them, leads them to death (SP 154). Therefore, the drug addiction, on the one hand, has proved itself beneficial in broadening her spatial boundary in her hut restricted by the categories of gender. On the other hand, she is also aware that such an addiction has adverse effects on the most basic requirements for food, indigenous crops, native vegetation, local environment as well as on the marginalized poor who are compelled to work both on the land and at the factory and become heavily indebted in the entire process of colonization. Thus, Deeti’s understanding of the human body, previously conceptualized mainly on the basis of gender binaries, now intersects with her realization of the agency of the toxic environment which, as she perceives, has a devastating impact on men’s biological body to boot. In this context, she becomes aware of the presence of “the ethical space of trans-corporeality”, which makes it unfeasible to “imagine” that it is nature that needs human care and protection in “separate, distinct areas in which it is ‘preserved’” (Alaimo, Bodily Natures 18). A “trans-corporeal” material body, as Alaimo defines, is “neither essentialist, nor genetically determined, nor firmly bounded, but rather a body in which social power and material/geographic agencies intra-act” (Bodily Natures 63). The body can be affected by both socio-cultural and natural forces (Tuana, “Viscous Porosity” 199–200). Therefore, if opium played a crucial role in the violation of Deeti’s female body, it is the same opium-induced pollution that threatens the materiality and the corporeality of the entire society, an understanding that offers Deeti an awareness of the existence of the “trans-corporeal” material body which, irrespective of gender, class, caste, and race, is interrelated with nature (Alaimo, Bodily Natures 63). Deeti’s visit to the opium factory then enables her to redefine her identity in relation to nature since such an understanding of the body–nature correlation can modify our sense of self with a consciousness that “‘the environment’ is not located somewhere out there, but is always the very substance of ourselves” (Alaimo, Bodily Natures 4).

In addition, if addiction, in the former sense suggested above, has provided Deeti a place in her hut, it continues to become a space for her oppression. As she faces poverty in her hut, with small harvests, her in-laws take the opportunity to encroach on her possessions such as the land and the hut. She receives an unreserved and obnoxious
proposal from her brother-in-law, which highlights the way in which the objectification of both women and land is encouraged in a patriarchal society:

Why should you waste your looks and your youth on a man who cannot enjoy them? Besides, the time is short while your husband is still alive – if you conceive a son while he is still living, he will be his father’s rightful heir. Hukum Singh’s land will pass to him and no one will have the right to dispute it. But […] as things stand now, my brother’s land and his house will become mine on his death […]. When I become master of this house, how will you get by except at my pleasure? (SP 157)

Consequently, she, like her land, is regarded as an object or property always defined in relation to men, a view that materialist ecofeminism terms as a “relational definition” (Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 68). Accordingly, in order to overturn this objective existence and relational presence in the patriarchal society, Deeti decides to perform sati, one of the most popular religious practices for Hindu widows, after her husband’s death and burn herself alive. Even in her preparation of making herself ready for cremation, she uses opium to remain unaware of the pain of burning and death (SP 159).

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that her house, which is a place of violence, deprivation, and poverty, is a sham as it is not a home; it is not a “hearth, an anchoring point through which human beings are centred” (Blunt and Dowling 11). One of the principal features of home, as critics have pointed out, is that it is “a site and a set of meanings/ emotions. Home is a material dwelling and it is also an affective space, shaped by emotions and feelings of belonging” (Blunt and Dowling 23). Thus, Deeti’s hut, which remains merely as a site of contestation, is not a home as it fails to provide a sense of place to her. While the fragile physical presence of the hut cannot be denied, there is no sense of belonging in it. However, such a fragile link with her home is also occasioned by the ecological crisis of the place. While she is denied property rights and is unable to inherit her land and house, she, at the same time, cannot repair the house or rebuild it, due to the lack of sufficient cultivation of poppies, or renew her relationship with her house. Since houses like bodies share our experiences (McDowell 93), Deeti’s hut, like her body, remains a property that has been ravaged by both socio-cultural and environmental forces. On the one hand, while society falsely believes that our body is intricately tied to “a coherent identity” and therefore, all forms of “inequality and oppression” in society find their manifestation and “association with or confinement to the body and its physicality” (McDowell 47–54), the agency of nature in the form of the toxic environment exerts an influence on the human biological body. Accordingly, as a person’s ethnicity, race, colour, gender, and economic status determine their “chances of having an economically and ecologically sustainable lifestyle in a relatively unpolluted […] environment” (Platt 143), Deeti’s loss of land and, thereby, her source of income, the destruction of indigenous crops, and the pollution emanating from the opium factory in her village are interlinked with her status of being an indigenous woman of colour, poor, and colonized.

Nonetheless, as critics perceive that “a focus on the social relations within a domestic space crosses the boundary between the private and the public” (McDowell 73), Deeti’s transgression of boundaries depends heavily on her interpersonal relationship with the marginalized ‘others’ of the society. As her view was initially restricted to her gendered body and considered sexual difference as the sole reason for her exploita-
tion, the act of humiliation and dehumanization of lower-caste people like Kalua (SP 56–57), depicted as a man of gigantic physical strength, provides her with an awareness of the socio-cultural category of caste, which, like gender, can destabilize one’s sense of self in a stratified society based on dualisms along the lines of gender, race, class, and caste, among others. Thus, being saved from the funeral pyre by Kalua, Deeti and Kalua set sail for spaces where socio-cultural binaries are blurred, and an identity based on a unifying solidarity with the marginalized others is developed through their journey to the river, to the sea, and on the ship.

3.1.3 Crossing the Boundary of the Land: Sea and the Slave Ship

This subsection deals with the spaces that Deeti travels to after her escape from the funeral pyre. With an analysis of various places starting with her downriver journey, this subsection focuses on the role of nature, especially the cash crop, in resolving the patriarchal dualistic models that have been responsible for her constricted spatial boundary. Moreover, while the earlier subsection expounded on the agency of nature, which impacts the human biological body, this subsection extends the argument by explaining the way nature is responsible for both the displacement and the reshaping of Deeti’s sense of self. While for Deeti the escape from the oppressive gender restraints of society means performing a ritualistic custom of Hinduism, for Kalua the escape from a casteist society involves journey (SP 178). Again, while Kalua remains uncertain how Deeti will react to the fact of being rescued by a man from a lower-caste, the land and the river awaken Deeti to a new awareness of being alive with a marked change in her attitude toward people of inferior caste, as the following shows:

Even then she did not feel herself to be living in the same sense as before: a curious feeling, of joy mixed with resignation, crept into her heart, for it was as if she really had died and been delivered betimes in rebirth, to her next life: she had shed the body of the old Deeti, with the burden of its karma [...] she could hear the whispering of the earth and the river, and they were saying to her that she was alive, alive and suddenly it was as if her body was awake to the world as it had never been before, flowing like the river’s waves, and as open and fecund as the reed-covered bank. (SP 178–79)

Therefore, she realizes that her identity as an upper-caste woman has now become a thing of the past (SP 234). Thus, as a village woman who always lived “inland”, away from the sea, and who never dared cross the sacred river Ganges in fear of losing caste (SP 3, 8), she has no qualms about crossing the river anymore. Moreover, the sea has been an outside world for her, which she always conceived of in terms of popular myths and religious beliefs that associated the ocean with “darkness” (SP 3). Furthermore, Deeti, who previously shuddered to think of the girmitiyas, the migrants who are travelling to Mauritius as labourers, since it is believed that they are the first to lose their caste, herself becomes one of them in her journeys on a slave ship (SP 72). Although she leaves her land and hut behind and starts a new journey to the river, she expands her spatial boundary by making a new home for herself on the makeshift raft.

Deeti’s experience of her downriver journey, nevertheless, is fraught with the usual sight of misery in the land cultivated with poppies. She perceives that the landscape she has been accustomed to from her childhood has changed drastically with the
harvest of the cash crop. She reflects on the name of the small river near her paternal home, where she spent her childhood; she feels that although the name of the river is Karamnasa (which means the ravager of “karma” or human “merit”), as it is associated with the popular local belief that a single touch of the water can snatch away all human merits from them, in reality it was the landscape on the river bank that has actually been destroyed and devalued by human merits. The river banks are now full of weeds of poppy, the cash crop, as the following example illustrates:

The landscape on the rivers’ shore had changed a great deal since Deeti’s childhood and looking around now, it seemed to her that the Karamnasa’s influence had spilled over its banks, spreading its blight far beyond the lands that drew upon its waters: the opium harvest having been recently completed, the plants had been left to wither in the fields, so that the countryside was blanketed with the parched remnants. Except for the foliage of a few mango and jackfruit trees, nowhere was there anything green to relieve the eye. […] Where were the vegetables, the grains? […] Everyone’s land was in hock to the agents of the opium factory […]. And now, with the harvest over and little grain at home, they would have to plunge still deeper into debt to feed their families. It was as if the poppy had become the carrier of the Karamnasa’s malign taint. (SP 192–93)

Therefore, for Deeti the poppy, in this context, hardly appears to be an invaluable cash crop, a useful natural resource that can be utilized to make profit. It appears instead as a forceful power that not only demands the harvesters’ intensive labour but reduces them to destitution and leaves them to starve to death. Moreover, her questioning of the “rational prudence”, as Plumwood argues, that “employ[s] destructive means to make economic gain out of nature” (Environmental Culture 9), can be juxtaposed with her consideration of the environmental “ethics” to preserve the indigenous plants of the land and her recognition of the agentic nature of the cash crop, which can have “consequences for both the human and nonhuman world” (Alaimo and Hekman 5). Since “without land there is no life, and without a responsible social and cultural outlook by humans, no-life-sustaining land is possible” (Ortiz xii), all riverside lands appear as uninhabitable and non-existent to Deeti. Since she can identify herself with the indigenous people at the mercy of both the human and nonhuman world, her emphasis lies on human dependency on nature, since all forms of dualistic pattern emanate from negating human dependency on nature or nonhumans (Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 41, 48–55; Alaimo, Undomesticated Ground 2–3). Her vision of human dependence on nature is further consolidated on her downriver journey in the town of Chaapra where she comes to know that people, who met with a similar fate as the result of the cultivation of poppies, are driven out from their villages and are now forced to travel as labourers to work on foreign plantations (SP 202). These people are used as resources who can work for the profit of the Company on a faraway island. This is because it is always those “Third World people” with “the least institutional power and access to resources in society” that are targeted as “expendable” (Smith 26). Incidentally, critics often term this early nineteenth-century opium trade as a form of coolie trade, which was similar in effect as the African slave trade (Derks xiv). Therefore, not only can private places such as the body or land determine identity but the process of colonization that forcefully prevents people from cultivating indigenous crops can also affect the sense of place of the natives. Nonetheless, the
The cultivation of the cash crop has induced the scarcity of food that compels Deeti and Kalua, among others, to enlist themselves as indentured labourers (SP 204–05). On the slave ship, the physical strength of a body is a prerequisite for joining the native labourers’ community, and biological sex is not taken into consideration.

However, an appalling sense of bewilderment awaits the migrants in the city of Calcutta, which, far from appearing enchanting, presents itself as a strange place completely unconcerned about human–nature cohabitation. The lack of agricultural fields and greenery in the city even makes the migrants express doubt about whether the humans in the city are of a similar species since the migrants themselves, as people of villages, can hardly imagine a place devoid of any open space for nature: “How was it possible that people could live in the midst of such congestion and so much filth, with no fields or greenery anywhere in sight; such folk were surely another species of being?” (SP 277). Yet, when the migrants are taken to a nearby resting place in a camp in the city of Calcutta, Deeti, unlike other migrant women, remains unperturbed as, she believes, she has left her class and caste identity behind through her performance of the ritualistic practice of sati (SP 339). She gradually overcomes the imminent fear of a journey into the black water or kala pani, the very term that always invokes in the Indian context, according to historian C. Anderson, a sense of losing caste among the migrants or “caste pollution” through “common messing and the sharing of berths, water pumps, and latrines” on the ship (101). Moreover, the home that she made previously on the makeshift raft on the river now grows into the form of a vast ship, the Ibis, which will transport them from Calcutta to Mauritius. Thus, on their journey from Calcutta, the migrants are wished happiness and prosperity in their new “home”, a ship where they will spend months before reaching their destination (SP 341). While the common misconception about Mauritius as a terrible place full of demons looms large in the camp, on the day of their boarding Ibis, Deeti assembles her courage and helps others to ready for boarding: “To such good effect did she apply herself that by the time Kalua appeared in the doorway, every last belonging, the smallest pot and the thinnest shred of cloth, had been accounted for and packed away” (SP 354).

Besides, in her downriver journey, Deeti, unlike other migrant women who identify themselves only in relation to their husbands or children, uses her own name, Aditi, to introduce herself to the crowd of migrants journeying on the same boat. Although her real name, not known to anyone other than the narrator-author who always addresses her by the name of Deeti, gives her an opportunity to escape without being caught by her in-laws. One can hardly ignore the undertones of self-importance in prioritizing a new identity in the following lines:

It was on her lips to identify herself as Kabutri-ki-ma–the name by which she had been known ever since her daughter’s birth – when it occurred to her that if she was to prevent her husband’s kinsmen from learning of her whereabouts, both she and Kalua would have to use names other than those by which they were generally known. […] Her proper, given name was the first to come to mind, and since it had never been used by anyone, it was as good as any. Aditi, she said softly, I am Aditi. No sooner had she said it than it became real: this was who she was – Aditi, a woman who had been granted, by a whim of the gods, the boon of living her life again. (SP 233)

But in her new life, Deeti appears as a migrant figure, who, unlike other men and women labourers, acquires a different perception of her journey at sea. It is important
to note that since the process of colonization emasculates especially the males of the colonies, “both literally and figuratively”, asserts Wright, the male subjects are often construed as colonial females and, consequently, are positioned along with colonial females and children (95). Therefore, although the patriarchal native society maintains spatial segregations along the axis of gender, the slave ship Ibis serves as a melting pot for various cultures, languages, races, gender, and castes since they all propose to be “jahaz-bhais” (ship brothers) and “jahaz-bahens” (ship sisters) on a journey where no one can lose caste (SP 356). It is here on the ship, though conscious of the effect of being marginalized as a coolie locked up in the bottom of the ship, Deeti finds a familial relationship with human ‘others’ with no ownership of lands, and she attempts to make a new home with newly established bonds between humans. As Buell suggests, that in a situation of being in an unknown place, one possible solution appears to be finding “a safe space where you feel buffered against the weirding-out effect of the strange locale” (71). Quite surprisingly, the slave enclosure under the ship, which has a “ghostly” appearance to the natives, becomes a new home to Deeti when refurbished (SP 394). While the “box” like “dabusa” continues to add “a near-superstitious horror in the crew” (SP 319), Deeti attempts to create a new home with a beam of the ship that gives her support and “shelter” like her home:

[The beam] gave her something to hold on to, and she found that she could lessen the whirling sensation in her head by focusing her eyes on the wood. In this way, [...] she became intimately familiar with that length of timber [...]. [...] She had all the sky she could deal with in the wood above her head. For Deeti, the stars and constellations of the night sky had always recalled the faces and likenesses of the people she remembered, in love or in dread. Was it this, or was it the shelter afforded by the arched limb that reminded her of the shrine she had left behind? (SP 394).

Since places are constructed by our “socio-spatial relations”, defining the exclusive characteristics of a place (McDowell 4), Deeti’s cultural habits on land, such as drawing pictures of humans and objects in her shrine and, thereby, maintaining her social relationship within her place, are transported onto the slave ship through her habits of painting images on the beams of Ibis in the process of her connecting with her past. The place also serves as a place full of memories of lands that have their manifestations in the singing of local songs by migrant women:

Deeti fell silent as the other women spoke, for the recollections of the others served only to remind her of Kabutri and the memories from which she would be forever excluded [...]. How was it possible that she would not be present at her child’s wedding to sing the laments that mothers sang when the palanquins came to carry their daughters away?

Talwa jharáilé
Kāwal kumhláile
Hansé royé
Birahá biyog
The pond is dry
The lotus withered
The swan weeps
For its absent love (SP 397–98)
On occasions of happiness among the migrants, as described above, the practices of land, especially the rituals of singing during weddings, yield the essence of land on the ship (SP 460). However, it should also be noted that since the status of the coolies is always marked by “random mobility” (Balachandran 268) with no stability, the ship cannot be deemed as permeated with an essence of permanency of experiences or the feelings of migrants who leave their oppressive past behind in search of a new home. Nonetheless, on a slave ship, where slaves are often regarded as “commodities” as well as people who are marked out for moving “across a number of economic and social categories” (Ewald 89), gender and caste appear to be outdone by racial colonialist ideology which appears to value the productivity of the natives, men and women alike, as labourers on the island of Mauritius.

Nevertheless, such objectification of the natives under the colonial paradigm receives protest from the migrants with regard to the disrespect shown to the cadaver of dead migrants, which culminates in a rebellion against the white authority in charge of the ship (SP 414–15). Following Gayatri Spivak’s theory of the objective representation of women who go through the ancient Hindu ritualistic cult of self-immolation, as posed in the essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, I have argued elsewhere that Amitav Ghosh deconstructs the traditional concept of Sati, the Hindu woman who burns herself; rather than portraying her as a passive object through his representation of the character Deeti, he shows how the cult transforms her instead into a subjective being, a “messiah”, and a maternal figure on the ship who can inspire others to evaluate their similar marginalized existence (Sarkar 292–93). It is on the ship that Deeti shoulders the responsibility of restructuring the relationships among the migrants that are not class or caste based. Nonetheless, Deeti finds an affinity with other marginalized on the sea which, contrary to her house on land, becomes her new home – “a real cosmos” (Bachelard 4). Therefore, the migrants engage in various ceremonial activities in order to find a solution to their displacement and isolated sufferings on land. Deeti can feel bound to redefine the culture of the land by both rejecting the restrictive binary social constructs based primarily on gender and caste (Sarkar 292) and preserving the essence of the land based on the acknowledgement of a shared sense of belonging. For Deeti, reason works along with emotion in re-evaluating the laws of the land, as the following passage shows:

[W]hat would it matter whether you were from the plains or the hills? […] Surely all the old ties were immaterial now that the sea had washed away their past? […]

Now that they were all cut off from home, there was nothing to prevent men and women from pairing off in secret, as beasts, demons and pishaches were said to do: there was no pressing reason for them to seek the sanction of anything other than their own desires. […] And wasn’t it she herself who had said, at the start, that they were all kin now; that their rebirth in the ship’s womb had made them into a single family? (SP 431–32)

Since Deeti has never seen water without boundaries, the black water of the Black Sea ahead of them, thus, resembles the sky without borders, expanding its space, which symbolizes her own spatial expansion and merging of social and cultural boundaries on the ship. However, as our identity is mediated through categories of race, class, and sexuality (Mohanty 33), the subversion of the dominant power structure that maintains such categories becomes possible only when such classifications are restruc-
tured in the formation of both collective and subjective identity. That is to say, the relationships among the migrants are not based on class and caste dualisms but on a sense of the common experience of marginalization. Nonetheless, since crossing the border or boundaries signifies “powerful, prefeminist privileging of difference that can be understood as critiquing oppressive ideologies and patriarchal social structures” (Sullivan 79), Deeti’s crossing the boundary of land with the taboos associated with its binary social constructions can, therefore, be regarded both as a means of rejecting such categories that restrict her space as well as a way of making a place out of an unknown space that can marshal the shattered collective subjectivities of the disenfranchised. Critics suggest that our identity does not depend on our location only; rather, it depends “on the development of networks between members of an imagined community of Third World women” (Mohanty qtd. in McDowell 214). This network of belonging among other marginalized women enables Deeti to construct a sense of place and a subjective existence that can challenge the preconceived structures of society.

Furthermore, it is on the ship that Deeti comes to realize the agency of nature that can both destabilize as well as redefine human spaces. When Deeti inherits a pouch full of poppy seeds from an aged female migrant on the verge of death from seasickness, she ponders how the poppy seeds, a crop that has displaced nearly all of the migrants on the ship, can still be valued like “treasure” and “life” (SP 450–51). Accordingly, the powerful element that she has misconstrued throughout her life as Saturn, the planet that apparently controls her fate and governs her life, turns out to be the very poppy seed that has been responsible for the miseries as well as the expansion of her spatial boundaries:

She looked at the seed as if she had never seen one before, and suddenly she knew that it was not the planet above that governed her life: it was this minuscule orb – at once bountiful and all-devouring, merciful and destructive, sustaining and vengeful. This was her Shani, her Saturn.

When Kalua asked what she was looking at […]

Here, she said, taste it. It is the star that took us from our homes and put us on this ship. It is the planet that rules our destiny. (SP 451–52)

In this context, the crop stands as a “dynamic agent”, a powerful force that can obscure “the boundaries between self and nature” (Fitzpatrick 2). Deeti now recognizes that poppies have been more than a mere “background” that has existence in relations to humans (Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 68); rather the plant has its own agency that can influence the socio-cultural categories of a space and determine the sense of belonging to a place. She perceives the interconnection between nature and the patriarchal constructions of gender, which results in her eviction and loss of land as an inferior ‘other’ with no rights of property, especially that of cash crops like poppies. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is the harvest of poppies that has controlled the lives of the migrants and facilitated their displacement as well as aided them in making the slave ship a dwelling place that allows interpersonal relationships, leading to the expansion of their collective space. Deeti finds solidarity with nature, an understanding that not only recognizes the agency of poppies, as materialist ecofeminists have argued, but the plant’s difference from and continuity with human life. Consequently, Deeti’s perception of poppies as a destructive force, which she misconstrued in the past as the evil influence of the planet Saturn, gives
her comfort, unlike in the past, as she takes into account the plant’s continuousness with and recreating impact on human life that helps her reassess her sense of self and constitute her subjectivity. She has perceived how indigenous nature in the colony, on the one hand, receives human onslaught and, humans, on the other, face both the destructive and regenerative power of nature in the form of a cash crop that, intersecting with socio-cultural categories of gender and race, can both displace them and restructure their spatial boundary.

However, such an understanding of nature is not “ethnocentric” or “gender-specific” and cannot be deemed as only attainable to women from a marginalized community. Rather, such “knowledge” is attainable to all, to the entire human race, to men and women, and colonizer and colonized (Grewe-Volpp and Tarter qtd. in Fitzpatrick 8). Since our understanding of nature depends on knowledge concerning “historical and social positions rather than on any claims of a biological or essential affinity” (Hawley 35), Deeti’s awareness of human–nature interdependence cannot be viewed as correlating with her ethnic closeness to nature. Although it can be claimed that her knowledge of nature is correlated with her individual experience of gender-specific violence in relation to nature, it would be wrong to conclude that all ethnic women possess an authentic experience of indigenous nature. Thus, Deeti’s understanding of nature cannot be termed as a relationship that associates her more naturally with her land than the men of her village. Moreover, Deeti’s individual experience has been mediated by her understanding of her sense of place and identity on the ship. Yet, at the same time, it is knowledge that she acquires in close proximity to both nature and culture, private and public, and reason and emotion, that expands her spatial boundary and constructs her identity.

The above section has shown how a marginalized woman’s identity is reshaped by her changing spatial boundary from a hut to a raft and, finally, to a ship, a place where her knowledge of the socio-cultural categories such as gender, caste, and race is simultaneously intersected by her recognition of the agency of nature. The following section will focus on the restricted space of a white woman whose identity, as it will be shown in the Section 3.2, is contingent on the dissolution of the western rational binary constructs that diminish the worth of both nature and women in conceiving them as men’s/culture’s ‘others’ and, thus, inferior.

3.2 THE SPACE OF THE WHITES: THE DUALISM BETWEEN NATURE AND CULTURE

Postcolonial feminists, such as Gayatri Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who focus on “subaltern” experiences of female subjects in erstwhile colonies, often perceive that the dualistic structure between man and woman, nature and culture, humans and animals, and many others becomes more “nuanced” when the experiences are viewed only through the lens of Western feminism, where race and class hardly receive any attention (Wright 94). However, in the age of “[e]conomic development”, First World women’s responses to “the continuing effects of colonial history and […] the persistence of neocolonial economic and political relationships” (Narayan and Harding, qtd. in Mack-Canty 165) appear crucial in the discourse on the exploitation of lands and the environment of former colonies, which often have harsher impacts on poor Third World women. Therefore, in the novel, the French character Paulette Lambert’s perception of the colonialist ideology of marginalizing both the human and nonhuman world should
be juxtaposed with her own sense of marginalization along the lines of ethnicity and gender in a white colonialist society. Moreover, it is often claimed that our sense of self, both masculine and feminine, differs “by class position and by ‘race’, as well as over time and between regions and nations” (Connell qtd. in McDowell 20). Accordingly, the distinction between the spatial boundary of Deeti, a native woman, and Paulette, a white female, should be taken into consideration when defining the feats of their “reimagined sense of place” (Mohanty qtd. in McDowell 214). Since the nature of their space differs in relation to their social status, such as while Deeti mostly remains indoors with household chores, Paulette’s sense of being and her work involves “public” presence and scientific activity, this section will explore the dualistic categories of race and gender and the intersection of such categories with nature.

Paulette, the daughter of a French botanist and the assistant curator of the Royal Botanical Gardens near Calcutta in India, is introduced in the text as a white girl who, being motherless since the time of her birth, is raised by an indigenous Muslim family in the city. The story of her mother’s death and her birth are narrated concurrently with the story of Jodu, the son of the aunt-mother who reared Paulette and with whom Paulette developed a sibling relationship in her propinquity to the family of a boatman working on the river Ganges (SP 66–69). The intensity of this interracial relationship, based on dependence and assistance between Paulette and Jodu’s families, has its manifestations in everyday places, such as in the Botanical Garden’s Bungalow, playground, and gardens, as well as in colonial places such as in the mansion of a proud British merchant. The mansion is a hub of dominant western values that vilify such interracial bonds in the colonies. In the following Subsection 3.2.1, I aim to show how such interdependence between the East and the West is played out in Paulette’s bungalow which, I argue, serves as a haven in valuing the intercultural space of humans unblemished by socio-cultural categories such as race, religion, and gender. This section will further argue that, in contrast to places that allow freedom and a sense of self, the British household, which adopts Paulette after her father’s death, restricts her spatial boundary by denying the agency of both women and nature. Subsection 3.2.2 will continue to map Paulette’s journey to an interracial space, such as on a slave ship, which, as it will be shown, offers her a sense of self, subverting the model of dualism maintained by the colonialist society.

3.2.1 Interracial Relationships in the Home and the Restricted Space of the Mansion

Following her mother’s death, Paulette Lambert is reared as Putli, a word meaning a doll in both Hindi and Bengali, by a native woman whom she calls her aunt-mother. Being a botanist engrossed in the native culture of the city, Paulette develops an affinity with indigenous vegetation and shares her space with plants: “[S]he had always craved the mouth-puckering taste of its [chalta] fruit. At home, in the Botanical Gardens, a chalta tree had stood beside the window of her bedroom and every year, during its brief season, she had gathered handfuls of the fruit, to make into chutneys and pickles. She loved them so much that she even ate them raw, to the disbelief of others” (SP 102). Moreover, instead of taking a bath in “a bathtub [which] was the pucka amenity for a memsahib”, she, like the natives, develops the habit of daily bathing in the river Hooghly: “Through years of habit, Paulette had grown accustomed to daily baths and frequent dips in the Hooghly: it was hard for her to get through a
day without being refreshed at least once by the touch of cool, fresh water” (SP 124).
However, such coexistence between the traditional socio-cultural values of the East and the scientific progressive ideology of the West, often termed as irrational, marks the essence of her bungalow, which shapes her unprejudiced space with a sense of belonging and rootedness in both worlds.

As a result, what makes the Lambert household distinct from the neighbouring white community is its ability to maintain an ambience of scientific rationality that relies on the interconnection between humans, irrespective of race, class, religion and gender, and the nature of the place they inhabit. Theirs is a life that circulates around exploring new facets of knowledge, be it socio-cultural or environmental, that can question the concurrent structure of white patriarchal society modelled on man/woman, culture/nature, human/animal, and colonizer/colonized binaries, among others. In other words, Paulette, the resident of the home, can feel the interconnectivity to such an extent that her identity appears inseparable from both nature and culture. Therefore, she is as her botanist father perceives:

[A] child of Nature, that is what she is, my daughter Paulette. [...] I [Lambert sahib] have educated her myself, in the innocent tranquility of the Botanical Gardens. She [...] has never worshipped at any altar except that of Nature: the trees have been her Scripture and the Earth her Revelation. She has not known anything but Love, Equality and Freedom: I have raised her to revel in that state of liberty that is Nature itself. (SP 136–37)

Though a place where such cohabitation prevails is a haven for all, it remains isolated from the rest of the white society based on racial dualisms, which differs in its perception of men, women, and nature. Thus, the bungalow stands as “an island of innocence in a sea of corruption” of the white society (SP 137), which submerges in racism following Mr. Lambert’s death and Paulette’s adoption by a renowned English merchant family of the city. However, it has been argued that women’s consciousness can be most perspicuously understood at the time of any breeches that can threaten to change their “normalcy” of life (Mies, “Feminist Research” 40–41). Consequently, Paulette’s sense of being home in her house in association with native culture and nature can better be understood by analysing her tense relationship with Bethel, the English household, established as a paragon of British cultural, if not racial, sophistication.

The mansion of Benjamin Burnham, the owner of Burnham Bros., the most successful opium exporting company in Calcutta in the early nineteenth-century, and a trader of Asian coolies, appears to recreate the British landscape along the river Hooghly. The landscape is recreated not only through the mansion’s majestic grandeur as a vast estate that enables the owner to keep a watch on the trading activities of ships on the river but also with its imposing stature of superiority in restructuring the riverside landscape to fit it for both European habitation and opium trade:

[F]or a patch of garden, no matter how pretty, could not be held to materially affect the owner’s prospects, while to be able to keep an eye on the comings-and-goings on the river had an obvious and direct bearing on the fortunes of all who were dependent on that traffic. By this criterion it was generally acknowledged that the estate of Benjamin Brightwell Burnham was second to none, no matter that it was an acquisition of relatively recent date. [...] [H]aving himself been responsible for the founding of his estate, Mr Burnham had felt no
constraint in shaping the grounds to his needs and desires, ordering, without hesitation, the clearing of every unseemly weed and growth that obscured his view of the river – among them several ancient mango trees and a heathenish thicket of fifty-foot bamboo. Around Bethel, nothing interrupted the lines of sight between house and water, other than the chabutra that stood perched on the lip of the river, looking down on the estate’s landing ghat and jetty. (SP 100)

Then, the “heathenish” vegetation is regarded as an obstacle to European civilization and its trading needs. Incidentally, wilderness, in ecocritical studies, is often perceived as an agentic force that has its individual existence. Ecocritic Alaimo associates the wilderness with the “material agency” in claiming that “acknowledging the agency of all that is not human affirms the need for places — urban, suburban, and especially “wilderness”— in which the “doing/being” of creatures, ecological systems, and other nondiscrete life forms can flourish” (“Trans-corporeal Feminisms” 249). The removing and reshaping of the wilderness in the riverside area by the white household can, thus, be termed as an act of objectification of nature and the denial of its agency. Moreover, the entire Garden Reach area, south of the dock-side places of Khidderpore, where Bethel is located, has been designed according to the “taste” of the white traders who reshape the native wilderness with plants and decorative water feature designs imported from Europe:

Here [in Garden Reach], as if to keep watch over the ships that bore their names and their goods, stood the adjacent properties of the Ballards, Fergusons, Mckenzies, MacKays, Smoults and Swinhoe. The mansions that graced these estates were as varied as the owner’s tastes would allow, some being modelled on the great manors of England and France, while others evoked the temples of classical Greece and Rome. […] [T]he malis who tended the gardens […] vied to outdo each other in the fancifulness of their plantings, creating here a little patch of topiary and there an avenue of trees, trimmed in the French fashion; and between the stretches of greenery, there were artfully placed bodies of water, some long and straight, like Persian qanats, and some irregular, like English ponds. (SP 99–100)

Such modification of native wilderness, as described above, in the creation of European gardens, often evokes a sense of bafflement for the indigenous peoples, who, as poor natives heavily dependent on natural resources, can hardly identify themselves with the landscape altered with new varieties of foreign species of plants grown in the garden. Bethel’s garden, for instance, has the appearance of a fortress to the boatman Jodu who expresses astonishment at the garden’s “impregnable” largeness where any native tree, such as chalta, is regarded as a “misbegotten growth” (SP 102). Consequently, the gardeners strongly reject any suggestions by Paulette, “a child of nature” (SP 136), to nurture indigenous plants along with European species at Bethel’s garden:

The Head Malley had quickly made it clear that he would not willingly take instructions from a girl of her age. It was over his objections that she had planted a chalta tree by the chabutra, and only with the greatest difficulty had she prevailed on him to put a pair of latanias in a bed on the main driveway: these palms, a great favorite of her father’s, were another slender link with her past. (SP 131)
As our gardening habits are closely related to our relationship to our home, identity, and culture (Bhatti and Church 38), Paulette’s gardening practice and preference for indigenous plants in Bethel not only reflect her association with the native flora of the colonial land but also maintain her link with her past. Apart from the garden of the mansion, which appears as the epitome of British sophistication, the mansion Bethel encourages English values in the house, snubbing all kinds of native practices. The native servants along with the British residents, thus, attempt to maintain a thorough European essence in the household. Incidentally, the colonial rule provided a vast opportunity for the colonial masters to elevate their “material” as well as “social status” in India where every white person, however “obscure” at home in England, received much importance on the basis of their racial supremacy (O. Douglas qtd. in Parry 51). In order to maintain such unimpaired visibility in the white European community in India, it appears essential for the Burnham mansion to glorify its status as a safe haven for English social and cultural values and, thereby, to highlight the racial chasm between the East and the West. As a consequence, when Paulette is taken in the mansion, her habits of wearing sarees, speaking Bengali, taking baths in the Ganges, and planting native vegetation in the garden are regarded as un-English, for which she receives strong repudiation:

It was only in the seclusion of her [Paulette’s] bedroom, sheltered from the prying gaze of the staff, that she dared wear a sari at all: Paulette had discovered that at Bethel, the servants, no less than the masters, held strong views on what was appropriate for Europeans, especially memsahibs. The bearers and khidmutgars sneered when her clothing was not quite pucka, and they would often ignore her if she spoke to them in Bengali. (SP 123)

Consequently, it can be asserted that such rejection of native attitudes has been the mainstay of Bethel’s existence, which aims to exist in sharp opposition to the East. However, such opposition of the East in the mansion is not without its gender regime: unlike her home in her bungalow, Paulette is encouraged to become accustomed to the social conventions for white women placed in sophisticated gender-segregated colonialist space. In other words, both English decorum and the rules of etiquette for an upper class white woman or a memsahib appear as the major axes along which she is expected to learn colonialist attitudes. As the imperial control of the economic sectors of the colony, as historian Sinha explains, is considered an important factor responsible for a pervading sense of British manliness throughout the colony, set in clear opposition to the “effeminacy” and passivity of Indians, especially male Bengalis (S) in Calcutta, the gendering of the Bethel household on the basis of separate cultures can be regarded as an extension and preservation of such patriarchal and monopolized views of the world. Therefore, the patterns of dualism modelled upon gender and race in the mansion can be viewed as influenced by the imperialist perception of the colonialist society since a society’s binary and hierarchical structure determines the behaviour of individuals living in that society (McDowell 11).
Furthermore, the imperial project that was invariably concerned with the formation of “racial boundaries” with its untrammelled control of colonial land, as historian D. Ghosh asserts, perceived “local women” as the cardinal point on which such boundaries could be manifested (302–03). Chiefly aiming to maintain a pure white community among the dark natives, the Burnham house sets its sights on reviving white class consciousness in Paulette as well as on reminding her of the norms of colonial society for a memsahib, which she has refuted from her childhood for being rooted in the local tradition of Calcutta through her connection with the natives. Since imperial households are likely to be governed by “imperial politics” of domination, according to Blunt and Dowling, such households often become places of contestations where gender and race play significant roles (159). As many habits and behaviours of colonized societies were often perceived as different and strange by colonial culture (Mills, “Gender and Colonial Space” 130), Paulette, reared to follow the indigenous cultural values, finds her space constricted as she is forced to conform to the imperial norms that segregate space, such as private and public, on the basis of gender. Accordingly, she is not allowed to take daily baths like men, for example, or bathe in the fashion of men in the mansion: “Mrs. Burnham […] had made puzzling reference to the many reasons why frequent cold baths were necessary for a man but unseemly, even perverse, in the gentler, less excitable sex; she had made it clear that, so far as she was concerned, a bathtub was the pucka amenity for a memsahib, to be used at decent intervals of every two or three days” (SP 124). Moreover, her scientific knowledge is regarded as opposed to the English culture maintained in the household, and therefore, she is not allowed to share her knowledge in the form of tutoring Annabel, Mr. Burnham’s daughter, in the house:

Through effort and observation, Paulette had become, while still quite young, an accomplished botanist and a devout reader of Voltaire, Rousseau, and most particularly Mr Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who had once been her father’s teacher and mentor. But Paulette had not thought to mention any of this at Bethel, knowing that the Burnhams would not wish to have Annabel instructed in botany or philosophy or Latin, their dislike of Romish popery being almost equal to their detestation of Hindus and Muslims – or ‘Gentoos and Musselmen’ as they liked to put it. (SP 131)

As a result, Paulette’s experience of the “memsahib-in-the-making” (SP 148), a process that she undergoes in the house in order “to improve [her] standards of white femininity”, to borrow Blunt’s view of the white European household in India (“Imperial Geographies of Home” 431), might be viewed as restricting her spatial boundary and aiming to bereft her of her scientific and progressive understanding of the society in which she lives. Scholars studying the nature of Anglo-Indian or British households in India in the nineteenth century, such as Blunt and Dowling, have described how

4 Looking closely at the historiography of British India, D. Ghosh claims that the native women who cohabited with or married British officers never gained recognition as partners or wives of those officials in the Company records. But the interracial children, unlike their mothers, were often regarded with some value and thus separated from their native mothers in order to prevent mixing of race and to preserve ethnic purity (303). However, Blunt opines that maintaining a “social and domestic distance” between Indians and Anglo-Indians, especially for British elites, was considered necessary to uphold imperial control of the land (“Imperial Geographies of Home” 426).
race and gender were regarded as the basic criteria for maintaining a European and superior atmosphere in the households (155). Thus, Paulette, who still considers the native family as “the only family […] [she] has in the world”, and Jodu as her brother (SP 149), is made to believe that she belongs to a different space – the space of the white colonizer, which is different from that of the colonized in its very existence, and this white space is established, as Mills argues, on racial and cultural differences between the East and West (“Gender and Colonial Space” 136). Moreover, Paulette’s conceptualization of the agency of the biological body stands in stark opposition to the racial and gendered perceptions of a body in Bethel, where the physical body of a woman is conceived of chiefly in relation to its socio–cultural meaning. Therefore, in the process of fitting her “maladroit” tall female body into womanly clothes from the West, as the following passage shows, she is chastised for her fashion sense:

In the past, Paulette’s awareness of her unusual stature had led to a shy indifference to her appearance: but in a way this awkwardness had also amounted to a charter of freedom, in that it had rid her of the burden of having to care about her looks. But since her arrival at Bethel, her diffidence about her appearance had been transformed into an acute self-consciousness […]

[M]emsahib costume of this kind being, in any case, unfamiliar to her, the lack of fit greatly compounded her discomfort. (SP 126–28)

Such modification of a material body resembles that of the indigenous wild nature in the Bethel garden, as shown above, since in the British household the representation of the body is given preference over the biological body which has been disconnected from “its evolutionary, historical, and ongoing interconnections with the material world” (Alaimo, “Trans-corporeal Feminisms” 238). Again, while in Paulette’s view, nature is as agentic as humans, both men and women, the ideology that equates women and nature in Bethel perceives both women and nature as the inferior ‘others’ to men/culture that should be modified according to cultural decorum. Thus, disengaged from both the scientific rationality of (environmental) culture and nature, Paulette finds her space restricted in Bethel, which refuses to accept her sense of self.

It can be argued, then, that the white space of the house, based on the colonial and patriarchal binaries in relation to gender, culture, race, and nature, marginalizes both women and nature by objectifying them, to borrow Plumwood’s ideas, defining them in relation to patriarchal and colonial regimes as well as by using them as mere instruments to highlight the difference between the East and the West (Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 68). As a result, while in the fashion of her adventurous grand aunt, who travelled on a ship in the guise of a male sailor (SP 254–55), Paulette expresses her desire to join the crew of the ship and dares to venture into the domain that patriarchy has so far denied women to enter into, she is perceived as an interloper who aims to cross the boundary between the colonizer and the colonized. Her lack of knowledge of the formal social decorum appropriate for a white woman, considered unsuitable for Bethel as it involves her propinquity to the natives, their manners, and habits, such as wearing sarees, planting native plants, avoiding religious activities, and taking baths in the river, is a direct result of her treading the boundary between the domains of men and women as well as between the colonizer and the colonized. Moreover, unlike the other memsahibs of the city, she gives importance to her sentiments and feelings over the affected manners of white women. Thus, while proposed for a marriage to
a wealthy old British judge and a strict follower of religion, Paulette’s refusal of the proposal, on the basis of her sentiment, is snubbed by Mrs. Burnham as a foolish way of disregarding the propriety of a memsahib, as she claims the following:

‘Sentiments [...] are for dhobis and dashies. We mems can’t let that kind of thing get in the way! [...] [Y]ou’re lucky to have a judge in your sights and you mustn’t let your bunduk waver. This is about as fine a shikar as a girl in your situation could possibly hope for.’

‘I doubt he is long for this world. And just imagine – after the dear, sainted man is gone you’ll be able to swan off to Paris with his cuzzanah and before you know it, some impoverished duke or marquis will come begging for your hand.’ (SP 274–75)

Furthermore, what makes the Burnham mansion different from the Lambert bungalow is its emphasis on the importance of religion in formulating colonialist identity. In Bethel, Paulette is advised on the matter of religion as though her transformation from being non-religious to a devout follower of Christianity has a lot to do with her becoming a memsahib in the house. However, Paulette fails to connect herself to the religiosity maintained at Bethel, which deems war as just and necessary in case the opium trade is banned in China, as in the name of benevolence, at least for the Indian opium farmers, the addictive trade is interpreted as an expression of God’s will mistakenly termed illegal by the Chinese (SP 260). In addition, under the guise of tutoring Paulette and advancing her knowledge on religious strictures, she is used as a mere object of sexual gratification by the merchant, Mr. Burnham, who himself tutors her on matters of “chastisement” and “penitence” (SP 298–99). Nonetheless, upon recognizing the serpent that “lives in man”, other than “a serpent [that] is as much our brother in Nature as is a flower or a cat” that humans should not be afraid of, as Mr. Burnham teaches, Paulette decides to flee the Burnham house (SP 303). She continues then from Indian subcontinent to the Mauritius island, a place of wilderness, which used to be her family’s “home” (SP 303). Thus, following in the footsteps of her scientist and explorer grand-aunt, who was interested in the nomenclature of new kinds of plants and animals (SP 255–56), Paulette aspires to cross the boundary between masculine and feminine spaces, as the following subsection explicates, by travelling to Mauritius disguised as a male crew member of the slave ship (SP 254).

3.2.2 Journey to the Sea and the Resolvability of Spatial Differences between the Colonizers and the Colonized

This subsection expounds on the nature of the interracial and multicultural space that Paulette enters on her journey on the slave ship Ibis. In this context, the spatial differences between the white household, Bethel, as argued in Subsection 3.2.1, and the coolie ship are explicated along the axes of race, caste, and gender. Moreover, this subsection shows how Paulette’s decision to travel by sea, disguising herself as a male lascar and working as a member of the crew of the ship receives sharp rejection on the basis of her race and gender. Paulette reasons with Mr. Reid, one of the shipmates, and Jodu who joins the ship as a lascar, as regards her competence, as the following argument shows:
Anything Jodu can do, I can do also – that has been true since we were children [...]. I can climb as well as he, I can swim and run better, and I can row almost as well. As for languages, I can speak Bengali and Hindusthani as well as he. It is true that he is darker, but I am not so pale that I could not be taken for an Indian. [...] [T]here has never been a time in our lives when we could not persuade an outsider that we were brothers [...]. In this way we have been everywhere together, on the rivers and in the streets of the city [...]. If he can be a lascar then, you may be sure, so can I. (SP 308)

Yet, both Mr. Reid and Jodu, as if in a “confederacy of maleness” (SP 307), oppose her idea of passing as a native male. Nonetheless, in the guise of a Brahmin woman, when Paulette manages to obtain a place on the Ibis with the assistance of a native overseer in charge of the deportation of the migrants, she expresses a belief that her journey to the island in search of her lost sense of self would be no less than a pilgrimage:

But aren’t you afraid, she [Deeti] said, of losing caste? Of crossing the Black Water, and being on a ship with so many sorts of people?

Not at all, the girl [Paulette] replied, in a tone of unalloyed certainty. On a boat of pilgrims, no one can lose caste and everyone is the same: it’s like taking a boat to the temple of Jagannath, in Puri. From now on, and forever afterwards, we will all be ship-siblings – jahaz-bhaïs and jahaz-bahens – to each other. There’ll be no differences between us. (SP 356; emphases original)

Thus, Paulette attempts to attain a sense of place on the ship through establishing a familial bond with the migrants. As Massey and Jess suggest in their introduction to the geographical analysis of space and place, the conceptualization of place is intervened by the ideology of culture in two particular ways: First, there is an intermingling of cultures in interconnected places created through phenomena such as migration, among others. Second, the process of maintaining or “holding together of cultures” of “home” in a place far away from home impacts the “settledness, coherence and continuity” of the migrated place (1–2). Accordingly, on the ship where such intermingling of cultures takes place, thus refuting any class or caste based identity of the past, Paulette finds her “self-possession” within the space of the ship in proximity to the natives (SP 370). As the “sense of place” is intricately tied to the “sense of self” through a sense of “belonging or alienation” (Blunt, “Home and Identity” 73), Paulette finds a sense of home on the ship in her belonging with the inmates and develops a “common identity shared by different groups of people” (Blunt, “Home and Identity” 72).

However, it should be noted that although caste and gender binaries are dismantled among the natives, the slave ship remains a space of racial segregation as the schooner hardly offers any physical space to the coolies: “It was very dark inside [the dabusa] [...]. With no flame lit and the hatch secured, such light as there was came from cracks in the timber and the openings of the piss-dales. The leaden gloom, combined with the midday heat and the fetid stench of hundreds of enclosed bodies, gave the unstirred air a weight like that of sewage: it took an effort even to draw breath”, and the migrants crammed into the ship enclosure struggle and fight for space (SP 370). Since “[a]t an ideal or stereotypical level, British colonial space in India and Africa is primarily designated into clear-cut territories where distance between the colonised and the colonisers is emphasized” (Mills, Gender and Colonial Space 29), the significance of spatial separation receives importance in the colonial context. The ship maintains a sharp segregation of
spaces between the whites and the labourers to maintain the binary structure of the colonizer/colonized unimpaired on board. Notwithstanding sharing the same slave ship, the coolies are pigeonholed in the murky underground chambers at the bottom of the Ibis, like animals in cages, while the white officers have their own separate cabins on deck with a significant number of lascars-cum-attendants to wait upon them:

Not till darkness had swallowed the surrounding banks were the girmitiyas allowed on deck; until then the gratings of the hatchway were kept firmly closed. [...] [T]hey were allowed up only in small groups, and were herded back into the dabusa as soon as they had finished their rice, dal and lime-pickle [...]

While the bhandaris and maistries were seeing to the feeding of the migrants, Steward Pinto and his mess-boys were serving roast lamb, mint sauce and boiled potatoes in the officers’ cuddy. The portions were generous [...]. But in spite of the plenitude of food and drink, there was less conviviality in the cuddy than there was around the chuldan, where from time to time, the migrants could even be heard singing a few snatches of song. (SP 373–74)

When women migrants are also made to work on board, Paulette joins the migrants in various activities sharing their menial tasks: “Eager for exercise of any sort, Paulette elected to share the washing with Heeru and Ratna” and other migrant women on board (SP 379). However, while for other women their memories of land find expression through their song, Paulette’s memories of her childhood and her affinity with nature find expression through her practice of staying in the open air and gazing at the passing greenery while still close to land. For instance, while passing the mangroves of the Sundarbans, she ponders upon how her botanist father named various shrubs and plants in the jungle often giving them the names of people they knew, including herself:

The Ibis was now deep in the watery labyrinth of the Sundarbans, and she was glad to seize every opportunity to gaze at the river’s mangrove-cloaked shores. [...] Some of Paulette’s happiest memories were of helping her father catalogue the flora of this forest [...]: now [...] her eyes sifted through the greenery as if by habit: there, beneath the upthrust elbow-roots of a mangrove, was a little shrub of wild basil, Ocimum adscendens; it was Mr Voight, the Danish curator at the Gardens at Serampore [...] who had confirmed that this plant was indeed to be found in these forests [...] and there, on the grassy verge [...] was a spiky leafed shrub she knew all too well: Acanthus lambertii. It was at her own insistence that her father had given it this name – because she had literally stumbled upon it, having been poked in the leg by one of its spiny leaves. (SP 380; emphases original)

Paulette’s attitude is indicative of her scientific material knowledge of the natural world, as is evident in her identifying and naming various plants, her knowledge of their actions and their locations in the unseen island “in order to make sense of personal experience” or subjectivity (Alaimo, Bodily Natures 87). Accordingly, when leaving India for good, she realizes how her sense of self has been closely related to her proximity to and bond with nature, as the following example shows:
Now, watching the familiar foliage slip by, Paulette’s eyes filled with tears: these were more than plants to her, they were the companions of her earliest childhood and their shoots seemed almost to be her own, plunged deep into this soil; no matter where she went or for how long, she knew that nothing would ever tie her to a place as did these childhood roots. (SP 381)

While for other migrant women the jungle is a place of utmost dread full of vicious animals and creepers (SP 381), Paulette finds solace in her affinity with the forests. Whereas the illiterate migrants gradually become afraid of the islands of Mauritius, it is Paulette who comforts others with her knowledge of the natural habitat of the islands and, in this manner, appears as a self-possessed migrant who can alleviate fears of an unknown environment of further oppression. Thus, when some migrants in the enclosure of the ship spread rumours about the island such as “the younger and weaker migrants […] [are] destined to be used as bait for the wild animals that lived in those forests” to terrorize others, Paulette protests: “Don’t believe these stories – they aren’t true. There are no wild animals in Mareech, except for birds and frogs and a few goats, pigs and deer – most of them brought there by human beings. As for snakes, there’s not one on the whole island” (SP 389). In addition, she aids the migrants in pushing the limits of their boundary of their restrictive space defined by gender and caste dualisms, among others, with her assurance of the possibility of acquiring a new sense of place on the island.

The ship also allows Paulette a glimpse into the different manifestations of the imperial control of the colony. Other than the cultural aspects of race and class supremacy that she herself experienced at Bethel, Paulette now becomes aware of the way such colonial rule can engrave its mark even on the colonized body. Consequently, she recoils at the sight of the captain eager to whip the migrants at the slightest disorder on board the ship (SP 405). In order to help the male migrants escape such physical torture, she hatches a plot and uses her personal acquaintances to arrange boats so that they can escape the ship and, in this manner, she plays, as she claims, “an essential” part in the entire scheme of assisting the migrants fleeing the Ibis (SP 495). Her joining the underclass in the disguise of a native woman, her assimilation with them as well as her assistance to the migrants, therefore, can be perceived as a means of exploring the different facets of her identity in the East. Upon receiving gratitude from Raja Neel Ratan Halder, one of the prisoners on board, for assisting others, she summarizes her thoughts through her following conversation with him:

‘I will do what I can, Mr Halder.’

‘I do not doubt it for a moment, Miss Lambert. If anyone could succeed in this delicate mission it is none other than you. […] Your performance so far has been so fine, so true, as not to be an impersonation at all. I would never have thought my eye, or my ear, could have been thus deceived–and that too by a firangin, a Frenchwoman.’

‘But I am none of those things, Mr Halder,’ protested Paulette. ‘There is nothing untrue about the person who stands here. Is it forbidden for a human being to manifest themselves in many different aspects?’ (SP 497)

Since women’s sense of place differs in relation to various categories such as class and race, among others (Mills, “Gender and Colonial Space” 131), Paulette’s sense of place differs from Deeti’s in her conceptualization of her jeopardizing social and cultural
relationships with the land where she has a domicile of origin. As it is asserted that
the feelings of colonization as an oppressive system may be experienced differently
by white women (Smith 22), Paulette’s understanding of nature differs from that of
the indigenous women not only on the basis of human–nature interdependence, but
also because of the women’s identification with nature. Paulette perceives that under
the broader colonial regime of racial superiority, both gender and nature undergo
socio-cultural modifications that suit colonial policy. While wild nature is replaced
with European sophisticated gardens, white women are vigorously encouraged to
posit themselves sharply in opposition to native women by following gender-specific
European manners and maintaining a racial distance from the natives. In such a con-
strictive place, as Paulette perceives, no sense of place or belonging is feasible where
racial category intersects with those of gender and nature and constructs dualisms
such as white women (superior)/native women (inferior) and European plants (super-
ior)/indigenous plants (inferior). However, Paulette’s understanding of such racial
paradigms cannot be related to any “epistemic privilege”, to borrow Slicer’s words,
since an individual’s understanding of the causes of her oppression or the power
dynamics behind it is not embedded in any particular race, gender or community:
such knowledge is also available to the “outsiders” who “with sincere and sustained
effort”, can have the experiences of the marginalized (50) and therefore such experi-
ences can be reshaped.

This chapter has shown how nature intersects with socio-cultural categories of gen-
der and race in reshaping women’s spatial boundaries. Moreover, the understanding
of the materiality of nature as well as its intersections with gender helps women rede-
fine their position in both nature and culture – a culture that is independent of binary
socio-cultural constructs. Thus, scrutinizing both gendered aspects of the spaces that
the central female characters of the novel dwell in or travel to and the materiality of
nature in those spaces, this chapter has shown the ways in which women’s identity is
embedded in the dominant socio-cultural power relations as well as in their under-
standing of nature as an agentic force that has both independence from and continuity
with human culture. It has also argued for the way various (patriarchal) dualistic
models, especially mind (men)/ body (women) and culture (men)/nature (women)
binaries, which are deemed to be solely responsible for the devaluation of the status
of both nature and women in society by posing them as the inferior ‘others’ to men/
culture/ mind, can be resolved with an awareness of the agency of nature and the
human–nature interdependence that results in women’s changing spatial boundaries.
The various dualistic models that perpetuate the separation between different human groups as well as between humans and animals have race, class, and gender categories at their core. While the previous chapter argued how such a dualism has an inherent power relation in terms of gender, this chapter, dealing with Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, will explore the landscape of race in relation to human–animal interaction. The novel begins in the mountainous region of Kalimpong, in the Indian state of West Bengal, where the grandeur of the mountain Kanchenjunga dissolves the boundary between day and night through its mist and clouds. The novel is set in the late twentieth century amid the tension between the state government of West Bengal and the Gorkha National Liberation Front who demand a separate state of their own with the proposed name of Gorkhaland, a nation to be founded on the basis of race and alleged equality.

Here, as in the previous chapter, I aim to show how the sense of place and identity is coterminous with the human–nature/nonhuman relationships that accentuate the environment of those places. This will be explored in relation to the identity of the judge J.P. Patel, one of the central characters of the novel, and his relation with his dog. In the making of a separate space for the owner away from humans in the Himalayan landscape, the role of the dog in substituting human relationships will be examined along the axis of human–animal interdependence. Building principally on the work of Philo and Wilbert, and Wolch, and Dotson and Hyatt’s geographical explication of human–animal attunement, this chapter will argue that the judge’s relationship with his dog facilitates his sense of place and identity. It will be further explored how the judge’s understanding or knowledge of the world is reflected in his behaviour toward his dog. Therefore, in the context of investigating the role that a pet is required to play in its owner’s household, the section will argue that the judge’s expectations from his pet and his own understanding of Indian society find their manifestations in his attitude toward his dog that plays a crucial role in the formation of his identity. In dealing with the attribution of the human mental status to a pet to understand its behaviour will then be highlighted with the aid of an analysis of the owner’s empathy toward pet, as has been discussed in Chapter 2 through Serpell’s, Urbanik’s, and Tuan’s disquisition of the attribution of human characteristics to a pet.

Again, it should be noted that the space where such human–animal interactions are enacted is a modified landscape devoid of human ‘others’ on the basis of class and social hierarchy imbued with racial history. Although such a place may seem to destabilize the human–animal (pet) divide, this is actually a space where power relations play a dominant role and perpetuate the human (westernized Indians)–human ‘others’ (native Indians) binary. Building on Kenny’s, Fanon’s, and Loomba’s studies of racism, therefore, the racial history of the landscape, including spaces such as the house of the judge and the slum of the ‘others’, as well as the judge’s experience of racism in England, which he interprets as a form of modernity, will be explored in relation to the judge’s identity and his making a place in the landscape. As the study will show, such class hierarchy and distinct spaces associated with modernity appear
to lead to a human–animal relationship that is formed at the expense of the human–human ‘others’ relationship, where a companion animal is given more importance than the human ‘others’. This is a way of negating the agency of both the pet and human ‘others’, widening the gap between nature and culture. However, it will be argued that when such an aristocratic human–animal relationship and a separate space of modernity based on the principles of social hierarchy are denied by the natives through burglary and dog-stealing, the modern identity associated with such a hierarchy is fragmented and allows for a consideration of the marginalized ‘others’ and a recognition of their being an agentic force.

The chapter is divided into three parts. Section 4.1 deals with the space of the judge and his bungalow. In this context, the way in which the bungalow with a colonial history has been made into a distinct space or an epitome of English values in the Himalayan landscape ridden with political unrest and poverty will be analysed with regard to the judge’s perception of the natives, considered as the ‘others’, and his relation to his pet dog Mutt. While this section offers a historical explication of the racial history of the landscape, which, as it is argued, has caused such class-based binary and has modified the judge’s relationship with his pet, Section 4.2 focuses on the spaces to which the judge travels as well as on the way race relationships in such spaces define his identity and drive him to construct a separate space based on class hierarchy. This section further clarifies the notion of hatred that the judge harbours toward the idea of being an Indian. It also highlights several impacts of the abhorrence on his relationship with the native ‘others’ as well as with his dog, where the pet is attributed anthropomorphic characteristics to maintain a class hierarchy that denies the agency of both the pet and human ‘others’. The chapter will remark upon the widening gap between nature and culture, as one of the principal aims of this study, that arises from such a human–pet/nonhuman ‘other’ binary. Finally, Section 4.3 focuses on a slum, a space of Indian ‘others’, to which the judge is forced to travel in search of his stolen dog Mutt. The pet-stealing episode of the novel, which, as it will be argued, leads to the judge’s loss of sense of place and fragmentation of identity. Here, the power hierarchy is reversed to expose the judge’s dependence on the nonhuman in everyday places. This section concludes that the loss of modern identity can also be engendered by the understanding of the agency of the disenfranchised deemed as passive ‘others’.

4.1  CHO OYU: A HOUSE OF MODERNITY FROM THE PAST

*The Inheritance of Loss* (referred to hereafter as *IL*), a novel set against the background of a political crisis in 1980s’ India, opens with the description of the house of J.P. Patel, a retired judge in the city of Kalimpong. A sense of unrest in the form of the political struggle of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) organized by the Gorkha (Nepalese) people of the Darjeeling district of the state of West Bengal for an independent statehood pervades the entire novel. This unrest is manifested in the robbery of the households of the upper middle-class non-Nepalese residents of the district. Cho Oyu, the bungalow of the judge, as made evident from the beginning, is no exception and provides no sense of security to its residents – the judge, his granddaughter Sai, the cook, and the judge’s dog Mutt – despite the proprietor’s association with the judiciary system of the country. However, the bungalow of the judge draws attention for its apparent alienation, both in structure and in ambience,
from the rest of the landscape of Kalimpong and its society fraught with a sense of tension. Its interior decoration, for instance, serves as a reminder of its affluent past. Since home decoration appears to be “the principal means by which members of households attempt to invert, reinvert or perpetuate their material worlds” (Clarke 26), the house itself stands as a memento to the lost glory of the judge’s past when he was well-connected to the West. Thus, the house’s presence, as if standing still in the past (IL 20), appears odd to the GNLF members who are fighting for their own ethnic identity, as the following description illustrates:

The boys carried out a survey of the house with some interest. The atmosphere, they noted, was of intense solitude. A few bits of rickety furniture overlaid with a terminate cuneiform stood isolated in the shadows along with some cheap metal-tube folding chairs. Their noses wrinkled from the gamy mouse stench of a small place, although the ceiling had the reach of a public monument and the rooms were spacious in the old manner of wealth, windows placed for snow views. They peered at a certificate issued by Cambridge University that had almost vanished into an overlay of brown stains blooming upon walls that had swelled with moisture and billowed forth like sails. (IL 7)

Consequently, the house exhibiting “the old manner of wealth” creates a space that maintains a firm separation from the world outside – from the poor and the disenfranchised Nepalese inhabitants of Kalimpong. However, this separation gives the judge a psychological assurance of belonging to the past since it is experience, as philosopher Bachelard perceives, that creates an essence of a place out of a space (6). The chief difference between the inner space (house) and the outer space (landscape) rests on the beholder or the inhabitant’s psychological association with space. Accordingly, Bachelard argues that more than a landscape, the house is emblematic of the dweller’s “psychic state”, and, therefore, it is a place of “intimacy” (72). Geographer Tuan concedes that a house as a “home” is an “intimate place” where “enchanted images of the past are evoked not so much by the entire building […] as by its components and furnishings, which can be touched and smelled as well” (Space and Place 144).

Yet this spacious house, full of English romance, once bought from a Scotsman and built as part of an adventurous desire to live in the wild landscape, was established on the colonialist ideology of racial segregation. In settler colonies, the colonizers who intended to buy land aimed to gain social prestige in the new land, which was a way of replicating an “older image of the English gentry” (Mahar 74). Moreover, the climate of hill stations, the cold weather, less pollution, and, most importantly, their isolation, as argued by the colonists, were conducive to the mental and physical well-being of the whites who imagined those spaces as a “piece of England” (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 694–95). Nonetheless, such distinct white spaces were constructed by the labour of the natives: “As always, the price for such romance had been high and paid for by others. Porters had carried boulders from the riverbed – legs growing bandy, ribs curving into caves, back into U’s, faces being bent slowly to look always at the ground – up to this site chosen for a view that could raise the human heart to spiritual heights” (IL 13). For the judge, an excessive admirer of British values, more than the potential of the land, the assuring words of the Scottish proprietor appear enough to convince him to build a “shell” of his own:
“It is very isolated but the land has potential,” the Scotsman had said, “quinine, sericulture, cardamom, orchids.” The judge was not interested in agricultural possibilities of the land but went to see it, trusting the man’s word—the famous word of a gentleman—despite all that had passed. [...] He had felt he was entering a sensibility rather than a house. [...] The judge could live here, in this shell, this skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country, for this time he would not learn the language. (IL 32)

Since human identity is developed in places such as homes, gardens, neighbourhoods, and towns (Duncan and Lambert 388), the old Scottish house in Kalimpong defines the sophisticated identity of the judge as an ideal home that marks his difference from the uncultivated natives. However, this sense of difference from the natives and a feeling of superiority on the basis of his English education, which resemble the English ideology of colonialism in hill stations offer “a sense of belonging” (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 699–703) to him in a place modelled on English style. Thus, the separate space that the house demarcates is imbued with power relations on the axis of race as well as that of class. Moreover, as the “cultural geographies of home are shaped by political and economic processes” (Blunt, “Cultural Geography” 510), the judge’s authoritative position in the past when he was able to decide on the future of the natives, like a colonist, offers the bungalow a higher status through the act of employing local servants who work to maintain such households. Yet the servants, whose labour adds to the grandeur of the house, live in sheer destitution (IL 15), which compels them to deal with black markets such as selling illegal liquor to make both ends meet (IL 61–62). The fact that certain groups of humans, such as servants, are not properly taken care of, are paid scantily, and are always suspected by the upper-class of theft is further manifested in the episode of the burglary when the poor servant’s hut is rummaged in suspicion of the crime: “The police had exposed the cook’s poverty, the fact that he was not looked after, that his dignity had no basis; they ruined the façade and threw it in his face” (IL 20). The idea that the poor are the ‘others’ who should reside outside the spatial boundary of the rich is very similar to the colonialist ideology of settlement that voiced for the necessity of separating the white space from the “unhealthy” space of Indians (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 708). Despite the maltreatment and negligence, the domestic help, nonetheless, wishes to portray a false picture of the judge’s sense of nationalism, wealth, and benevolence in rivalry with other servants to highlight his upgraded status and sense of isolation:

So serious was this rivalry that the cook found himself telling lies. [...] He fanned a rumor of the judge’s lost glory [...]. A great statesman, he told them, a wealthy landowner who gave his family property away, a freedom fighter who left a position of immense power in court as he did not wish to pass judgment on his fellow men—he could not, not with his brand of patriotic zest, jail congresswallahs, or stamp out demonstrations. (IL 63)

Such lies, however, when overheard by the judge himself in the house, stir his memories, which are exactly opposite in nature to the stories that the cook attempts to invent. For instance, the judge’s humble background, supported by his father’s dishonest business of “procuring false witness to appear in court” (IL 65), and his desire of western modernity contrast with the image of the nationalist and landowning upper-class that the cook boasts about. Rather, it has been his dream to obsequiously follow the
colonialist ideology of power in search of western modernity. Since in the East, modernity is always equated with “either Europe or the effects of European colonization”, a desire to travel to a different “space and time” is central to the penchant for acquiring modernity (Khair 13). Moreover, such a modernity, as it appears to Jemubhai, associated with the colonial West, can provide him with a sense of superiority and control over the native Indians, as the following example clarifies:

In the entrance to the school building was a portrait of Queen Victoria in a dress like a flouncy curtain, a fringed cape, and a peculiar hat [...]. Each morning as Jemubhai passed under, he found her froggy expression compelling and felt deeply impressed that a woman so plain could also have been so powerful. The more he pondered this oddity, the more his respect for her and the English grew.

It was there, under her warty presence, that he had finally risen to the promise of his gender. From their creaky Patel lineage appeared an intelligence that seemed modern in its alacrity [...]. Sometimes, when his father saw him, he forgot to recognize his son, so clearly in the X-ray flashes of his imagination did he see the fertile cauliflowering within his son’s skull. (IL 66)

Incidentally, as geographers argue, it was such admiration for Victorian “social, political and aesthetic values” that led to the reshaping of the Indian landscape by English imperialists who aimed to make a “homelike” atmosphere in India (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 695–96). With excessive devotion to imperial ideologies that “reshaped and reimagined” (Mahar 77) many Indian Hill stations in order to separate white space from that of the natives, the judge wishes to sense a modified landscape in his distinguished space of Cho Oyu. Apart from its perceived aesthetic beauty, the reshaped landscape offers colonists a sense of control of a space that once belonged to the ‘others’. It is argued that “[s]ometimes arrogantly, at other times nervously, the landscape is remodelled by colonists, not just because it needs to be contained, yield a profit or support the community who live there, but it is also regarded as a very visible marker of ownership and authority” (Hooper 2). However, this idea of separating the judge’s space from that of the natives is also motivated by his desire to assimilate himself into the culture and the space of the English. Consequently, his love for modernity drives him to England where all sorts of connections with the plebeian characteristics of the East would be severed. As a result, while on board the ship to England, he considers it a humiliation to eat native food as it only adds to his embarrassment:

Jemu picked up the package, fled to the deck, and threw it overboard. Didn’t his mother think of the inappropriateness of her gesture? Undignified love, Indian love, stinking, unaesthetic love—the monsters of the ocean could have what she had so bravely packed getting up in that predawn mush.

The smell of dying bananas retreated, oh, but now that just left the stink of fear and loneliness perfectly exposed. (IL 43).

Yet, since “imperial inscriptions” are carved upon many territories of colonies, which become breeding grounds for “the struggle between imperial powers, their colonial aspirations and indigenous traditions” (M. Kumar 86), the Himalayan landscape, its environment, and the judge’s house engage in a struggle of keeping alive the different feats of the same history of colonization. While the judge adheres to imperial ideolo-
gies, the human ‘others’ in the landscape follow native culture and its values, which culminates in the resultant class hierarchy. Nonetheless, the judge’s memories of his dismissive attitude toward his own culture and his fear of the unknown culture of England, which he imagines to be superior to that of his own and, thus, worth pursuing, often cause embarrassment for him in the present since they also underscore his anti-India spirit. As a result, the judge is reluctant to allow anybody into his demarcated space lest they spark his sense of guilt from the past. For instance, he was unwilling to welcome Sai, his granddaughter, to Cho Oyu, after her parents’ death as it reminds him of his past journey to England in search of modernity:

He was silly to be upset by Sai’s arrival, to allow it to trigger this revisitation of his past. No doubt the trunks had jogged his memory.

Miss S. Mistry, St. Augustine’s Convent.
Mr. J. P. Patel, SS Strathnaver.
But he continued to remember (IL 43).

In order to suppress unpleasant thoughts of the past, such as the above, the judge chooses to confine himself to the solitude of the western modernity that Cho Oyu possesses, where no human being carrying the values of the East can find their place. In such a space of modernity from the past and immobility, the judge appears barely human to Sai (IL 37). Therefore, in his distaste for humans who remind him of his past life, he maintains a more-than-human relationship with his dog, Mutt (IL 40). As pets can provide a “nostalgic set of old-fashioned comforts” (Franklin, Animals and Modern Cultures 85) to their owners, the judge’s relationship with his pet offers him a sense of companionship after the English fashion of keeping pets in the manner of the Victorian bourgeoisie (Howell 46–47). Since he has a deep repugnance for the idea of allowing the culture of the East in his house, it is the dog, as an emblem of western modernity, that continues to maintain his link with his glorious past since the “[d]og [is] more human than dog” to him (IL 36). As Franklin argues, as human identity is formed in relations to animals or their pets (Animals and Modern Cultures 98), the judge’s affectionate relationship with his pet can be perceived as a substitute for human–human relationship. Accordingly, the structure of the human family and the space in Cho Oyu is modified by the inclusion of the companion animal, and this results in a “hybrid space” (Nyman and Schuurman 3) and a “hybridized” family (Franklin, “Human–Nonhuman Animal Relationships in Australia” 12). Besides, a shared bond of affection between the judge and Mutt provides him with a sense of belonging to Cho Oyu as his “sense of self” is correlated with his relationship with the companion animal (K. Ferguson 82). In this manner, although the judge refuses to show compassion for and a humane understanding of Indian society, he nurtures a feeling of deep admiration for his dog that is embodied in his concern for the fact that Mutt is a non-human (IL 115). In other words, the space in the household unapproachable by native human ‘others’ includes the companion animal Mutt, who can share the “most intimate spaces” (Franklin, “Human–Nonhuman Animal Relationships in Australia” 12) of the house marked by class category. Even during the monsoon, when every part of Cho Oyu appears to be crumbling with the fierceness of rain and the entire human civilization of Kalimpong is gnashed by the “[u]ncivilized voluptuous green” of the Himalayan landscape, resulting in landslides and the destruction of the area (IL 355), the judge is principally concerned with the vulnerability of his dog and the monsoon’s impact on its psyche:
An unending rain broke on them and Mutt turned into a primitive life form, an amoebic creature, slithering about the floor. With renewed thunder and a blast upon the tin roof, she sought refuge behind the curtains [...] and she was frightened by the wind making ghost sounds in the empty soda bottles [...] “Don’t be scared, puppy dog, little dog, little duck, duckie dog. It’s just rain.”

She tried to smile, but her tail kept folding under and her eyes were those of a soldier in war, finished with caring for silly myths of courage. [...] [T]he sound of civilization crumbling – she had never known it was so big – cities and monuments fell – and she fled again. (IL 116)

As the dog Mutt occupies the space of humans, its psyche and behaviour are often interpreted from a human perspective. Moreover, the pet’s fear of the outside world and the impact of the landscape on Cho Oyu transforms it into a powerless creature, which draws compassion from the judge who has always aimed to control the lives of ‘others’ and has shown mercy to the powerless. Since “power over another being is demonstrably firm and perversely delicious when it is exercised for no particular purpose” (Tuan, Dominance and Affection 107), Mutt’s nervousness and fear of everything beyond the space of Cho Oyu allow the judge to reiterate the power relations that he would enact on human ‘others’. Although it is argued that it is the home where “cohabitation” with pets enables humans to sense a “welcoming space”, which marks the “freedom” and happiness of both the pet and the pet-owner (E. Power 552), it can be claimed that the interior of Cho Oyu appears to contain every possible nicety of human–dog relationships, provided that it is marked by Mutt’s lack of “vigor and initiative” (Tuan, Dominance and Affection 107). The features of such uneven relationships between humans and animals are highlighted by Shepard as follows:

They [Pets] are [...] engineered to conform to our wishes, biological slaves who cringe and fawn or perform or whatever we wish. As embodiments of trust, dependence, companionship [...] or action by command, they are wholly unlike the wild world. In effect, they are organic machines conforming to our needs. No one now doubts that pets can be therapeutic. But they are not a glorious bonus on life; rather they are compensations for something desperately missing, minimal replacements for friendship in all of its meanings [...] (151)

This encounter between the judge and his dog is, thus, shaped by “the former’s economic, political, social and cultural requirements” (Philo and Wilbert 23), where the dog is required to play the role of the human ‘other’, devoid of agency and strength. Nonetheless, critics also refer to several intersecting situations where the human–animal coordinated relationship might work, such as in a social crisis, with a lonely householder in need of “companionship” or “an enduring, stable and robust relationship” (Franklin, “Human–Nonhuman Animal Relationships in Australia” 13; Animals and Modern Cultures 86), or with elites who, deeply impressed with the tenets of the Enlightenment, show more “open attitude” toward keeping animals at home as pets in order to mark their high social status (Franklin, Animals and Modern Cultures 88). Therefore, the practice of using Mutt, in order to highlight the hierarchy between the ‘modern’ judge and the native Indians, or to emphasize the former’s high social status symbolized by his possession of a fancy pet, is infused with his cultural and social
encounters with colonial history and racial ideology that determine the peculiarities of his relationship with his dog. It can be asserted then that his love for his dog correlates with his hatred for the natives, which is further manifested in the judge’s initial disapproval of allowing Sai to stay in Cho Oyu. Nevertheless, it is the western attitude of a native Indian that finally allows Sai a permanent place in the judge’s house, as the following example shows:

Sai could look after Mutt, he reasoned. The cook was growing decrepit. It would be good to have an unpaid somebody in the house to help with things as the years went by. Sai arrived, and he was worried that she would incite a dormant hatred in his nature, that he would wish to rid himself of her or treat her as he had her mother, her grandmother. But Sai, it had turned out, was more his kin than he had thought imaginable. There was something familiar about her; she had the same accent and manners. She was a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India. The journey he had started so long ago had continued in his descendants. Perhaps he had made a mistake in cutting off his daughter [...] This granddaughter whom he didn’t hate was perhaps the only miracle fate had thrown his way. (I.I. 230)

Thus, it can be claimed that the accumulation of western manners, language, and accent constitutes an ethos of an upper-class identity deemed as essentially different from and superior to the characteristic spirit of the East. This attitude imbued with Englishness marks “a sense of hierarchized space” (M. Kumar 87) at Cho Oyu, where the criterion of inclusion involves the two interdependent ideals of Anglophilia and class hierarchy. In order to perpetuate such western modernity, the staple of the upper-class identity, in the house, therefore, it is of utmost importance to humiliate and degrade those outsiders who enter the space of modernity on the basis of their internalization of the moral values, culture, behaviour, and languages of the East. Accordingly, the judge derives amusement from humiliating Gyan, Sai’s mathematics tutor, who eventually joins the GNLF activists to fight for the rights of the ethnic Nepalese community:

The judge studied him [Gyan].
He detected an obvious lack of familiarity, a hesitance with the cutlery and the food [...] [...] [A]n old emotion came back to the judge, a recognition of weakness that was not merely a feeling, but also a taste, like fever. He could tell Gyan had never eaten such food in such a manner. Bitterness flooded the judge’s mouth.
“So,” he said, silencing the meat expertly off the bone, “so, what poets are you reading these days, young man? He felt a sinister urge to catch the boy off guard [...]”
Gyan racked his brains. He never read any poets. “Tagore?” he answered uncertainly, sure that was safe and respectable [...] “OVERRATED,” [...] he gestured an order with his knife: “Recite us something, won’t you?”
“WHERE THE HEAD IS HELD HIGH, WHERE KNOWLEDGE IS FREE, WHERE THE WORLD HAS NOT BEEN BROKEN UP INTO FRAGMENTS BY NARROW DOMESTIC WALLS [...]” Every schoolchild in India knew at least this.
The judge began to laugh in a cheerless and horrible manner. (I.I. 119-20)
This episode of causing embarrassment to the natives with a sense of western modernity in the form of the English language recalls his own unease at the recitation of Sir Walter Scott’s poem with “the rhythm and the form of Gujerati” before the ICS exam interview board in England – an episode, which, as he recalls, provided as much amusement for the interviewers as Gyan’s recitation for him (IL 124). However, the unease of belonging to the East that he himself once experienced now becomes a tool for the judge to deride others, and although he wishes to suppress thoughts of his Eastern past following the Western modernity of the present, a sense of guilt and hypocrisy recurs to him, which constitutes the very basics of his past experience: “His memory seemed triggered by the tiniest thing – Gyan’s unease, his reciting that absurd poem…. Soon all the judge had worked so hard to separate would soften and envelop him in its nightmare, and the barrier between this life and eternity would in the end, no doubt, be just another such failing construct” (IL 124).

This shows how the house with its pretensions to the modernity of the west has always been a separate space in the Himalayan landscape where Nepalese activists demand a separate state based on their moral righteousness. Like the English colonists who preferred Indian hill stations to demarcate their spatial difference from the uncivilized natives on the basis of their white racial superiority (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 699), the judge’s bungalow Cho Oyu stands as an archetype of modernity at the time of protest and unrest by the Nepalese. Therefore, the strict rules and manners maintained by the judge in the house (IL 3–4, 37), regulating the inhabitants’ behaviour and habits, especially in matters of serving comestibles in the Western fashion, are mocked by the Nepalese rebel activists who force him to participate in the household chores, putting his dog at gun point. With his strong desire to match up to colonial expectations by following English education and values in every field of his life, the Western-educated judge becomes, to borrow Kenny’s words, “the ultimate figure of mockery” to both the natives and the English (“Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 697). Nonetheless, the disintegration of such English ideals inherited from the past is further highlighted by the burglary in the house, which can be described as an onslaught not only on the solitude, modernity, order, and class consciousness maintained by the house, but also on the conceit of the anglicized judge, and thus it is an instance of “the downing of a proud man” (IL 9). Accordingly, the incident of burglary, which not only makes the victim suspicious of the outside world but also impacts their sense of place and safety (Chapman 140–41), seems to underscore the tension between the eastern and western (colonialist) standards of behaviour in the landscape and their distrust of each other.

Moreover, although Cho Oyu appears to be a token of the past that maintains a sombre and sophisticated solitude in the midst of the tumultuous political environment of Kalimpong and, thereby, creates a space in isolation from the world outside, the house is no less vulnerable to the environment of the Himalayan landscape that usually attempts to destabilize its proud structure in the form of the mist and rain from the forest, as the following shows: “Up through the chimney and out, the smoke mingled with the mist that was gathering speed, sweeping in thicker and thicker, obscuring things in parts – half a hill, then the other half. [...] Gradually the vapor replaced everything with itself, solid objects with shadow, and nothing remained that did not seem molded from or inspired by it” (IL 2). The space of the house as invaded by the tensed environment from outside is further manifested in the monsoon when the season, in cahoots with political upheavals, attempts to change the contours of
the house (IL 126). For the judge, it is the rainy season, unlike the English winter, that brings disgrace to him by exposing his physical and emotional vulnerability:

How he hated this dingy season. It angered him for reasons beyond Mutt’s unhappiness; it made a mockery of him, his ideals. When he looked about he saw he was not in charge: mold in his toothbrush, snakes slithering unafraid right over the patio, furniture gaining weight, and Cho Oyu also soaking up water, crumbling like a mealy loaf. With each storm’s bashing, less of it was habitable.

The judge felt old, very old, and as the house crumbled about him, his mind, too, seemed to be giving away, doors he had kept firmly closed between one thought and the next, dissolving. (IL 120)

During the monsoon, the judge’s sense of power and authority over ordinary activities in the household of Cho Oyu is subverted by the rain. Instead of providing a “relatively cool, green, and unpopulated” environment, for which the imperial project of the British approved the separation of white space from that of the Indians (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 699), the landscape turns into a space of savagery and becomes a location where uncontrolled organisms threaten to change the interior of Cho Oyu. Moreover, it is this helplessness against the environment of the Himalayan landscape that positions him and his pet, although within the demarcated space of Cho Oyu, together with the native ‘others’ who suffer during the monsoon from landslides and other natural calamities. Therefore, such a tumultuous environment not only jeopardizes the tranquil sense of isolation in the house but also rakes up the memories of his own haplessness at encountering the western culture in England: “The air was spiked with pinpricks of moisture that made it feel as it were raining indoors as well, yet this didn’t freshen it […] but oh the weakness of an aged man, even the pill could not chase the unpleasant thoughts unleashed at dinner back into their holes” (IL 128–29). Consequently, the natural and political environment of the city makes it impossible for the judge to eliminate the traces of his past experiences of weakness and being appalled by the enigmatic charm of the modernity in search of which he travels as far as Britain to join the Indian Civil Service and work as an ICS official under the British regime.

This section has shown that the Anglophile judge’s penchant for modernity and Englishness drives him into a space, or a modified landscape, devoid of all human ‘others’ and, in this manner, enables him to develop a human–animal relationship that, instead of companionship, acts as a replacement for relationships with humans. The following section will argue how such detestation of native human ‘others’ is modelled on and functions as an imitation of the colonial race relationship that the judge himself experienced in England. Furthermore, the following section will provide an analysis of the concept of western modernity as perceived through a colonized eye as it is shown that, in reality, the ideals of western modernity hardly match the conceptualization that the East has set for it. Accordingly, the following section focuses on the judge’s experience of English modernity that, in contrast to his expectations, brings along embarrassment and a sense of deprivation and loss.
4.2 ENGLAND: THE PLACE OF MODERNITY AND TOKENS OF ENGLISHNESS

The judge’s excessive Anglophilia, which he terms as modernity, and his search for it that compels him to leave the space of natives to join the space of whites as an ICS applicant generates disappointment and shock owing to his discovery of the varying nature of Englishness and the English attitude toward the East. Contrary to his hope of achieving prosperity and grandeur in England, he is astounded by the mundanity of English life. Moreover, the new space in England appears unwelcoming to him as he cannot find a place to rent: “It took him by surprise because he’d expected only grandness, hadn’t realized that here, too people could be poor and live unaesthetic lives. While he was unimpressed, though, so too were the people who answered his knock […]. He visited twenty-two homes before he arrived at the doorstep of Mrs. Rice on Thornton Road. She didn’t want him either, but she needed the money” (IL 44). He is perceived, in the words of Puwar, as a “space invader” (10), an unwelcome specimen of the colonized in the space of the colonizers. This unfamiliar landscape and his failure to correspond to the English attitude, as a consequence, cause him agony and solitude, and he gradually becomes frightened of his existence: “[H]e failed to make a courageous gesture outward at a crucial moment and found, instead, that his pusillanimity and his loneliness had found fertile soil. He retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow” (IL 45). However, his withdrawal from the space of the whites and taking refuge in his own shadow is no less motivated by his embarrassment with his non-white physical appearance, which he mysteriously links to the necessity of his departure from spaces of the whites: “[E]lderly ladies, even the hapless […] moved over when he sat next to them in the bus, so he knew that whatever they had, they were secure in their conviction that it wasn’t even remotely as bad as what he had. The young and beautiful were no kinder; girls held their noses and giggled, ‘Phew, he stinks of curry!’” (IL 45; emphasis original). In other words, it is his bodily difference that confines him to a separate space in England, a space that is neither close to the space of the whites nor resembles the space of the East.

This demarcation of space on the basis of physical appearance is akin to Puwar’s and Fanon’s discussions of racial space where it is believed that “the look” of the ‘other’ in the space of the whites creates “psychic and physical boundaries” (Puwar 39) since spaces are assigned with stereotypical characteristics according to the appearances of the humans who inhabit those spaces. When a body of colour, for instance, enters a white space, according to Fanon, the appearance of the body gives rise to a set of conjectural assumptions in the minds of the people who inhabit the white space (85). As a result, the judge in his love for everything English and hatred for everything Indian remains confined to a space of his own based on Englishness and modernity, although this is a space that has neither existence in nor any resemblance to the prevailing society of England. Consequently, rather than enjoying the beautiful landscape of Britain, the judge remains locked in his preconceived notions of imperial modernity that he witnessed in the tense relationship between England and the colonized India, as the following example makes evident:

Thus Jemubhai’s mind had begun to wrap; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar. […] In fact, he could barely let any of himself peep out of his clothes
for fear of giving offence. [...] To the end of his life, he [...] would prefer shade
to light [...] for he was suspicious that sunlight reveal him, in his hideous,
all too clearly.

He saw nothing of the English countryside, missed the beauty of carved
colleges and churches painted with gold leaf and angels, didn’t hear the choir
boys with the voices of girls, and didn’t see the green river trembling with
replications of the gardens [...] or the swans that sailed butterflied to their
reflections. (IL 45–46)

The judge here appears, to borrow Bhabha’s term, to be a “mimic man”, who, posed
between his preference for Englishness and the reality of his not being able to be
a complete Englishman, suffers from an incongruity that ironically turns him into
both an “appropriate” and an “inappropriate” object of colonial regime (128–29).
Since “colonial discourse” itself was ambiguous, as Bhabha claims following Charles
Grant’s argument in “Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects
of Great Britain” (1792) and Macaulay’s “Infamous Minute” (1835), which, as part of
the humanitarian project of bringing civilization to the colonies, followed colonialist
ideology only “in part” for fear of rebellion, the colonized who took part in such
projects became “figures of a doubling” (127–29). As a result of Jemubah’s failure, in
this case, to assimilate himself into the white society, which he had always dreamed
of but been practically prevented from because of his ‘look’, he experiences a sense
of bafflement that inexplicably validates racial segregation on the basis of different
physical appearances. Therefore, the inherent Anglophilia that he has nurtured since
his childhood motivates him to be in a space that blithely retains the racial ideals
maintained in white society, while at the same time it makes him feel that he is justi-
fably marginalized for his different (inferior/brown) physical appearance: “He had
learned [...] to keep everyone at bay, to keep even himself away from himself like the
Queen” (IL 122). The development of such a separate racial space influenced by the
wider white space is further demonstrated in his appreciation of Indian landscapes
or his native place from the perspective of the English as ‘exotic’ places in the East, as
the following example highlights:

He read a book entitled Expedition to Goozerat: “The Malabar coast undulates
in the shape of a wave up the western flank of India, and then, in a graceful
motion, gestures toward the Arabian sea. This is Goozerat. At the river deltas
and along the malarial coasts lie towns configured for trade [...]”

What on earth was all of this? It had nothing to do with what he remembered
of his home, of the Patels and their life in the Patel warren [...]

This was all news to him and he felt greedy for a country that was already
his. (IL 121)

However, this space of racial segregation is contingent upon the judge’s fear of the
unknown landscape in England as well as his feelings of pity for and the shame of his
closeness to the East. Thus, the judge’s presence in a racialized space and his endorse-
ment of its features gradually turn him into a racial snob who belongs neither to the
West nor to the East, and he refuses to take into consideration the cultural praxis and
ethos of India. In addition, his identification with a racialized space drives him to sever
all ties with anything associated with the East and disregard the emotions and feelings
of all Indians, including his parents, as they are also regarded as native ‘others’:
Jemubhai looked at his father, a barely educated man venturing where he should not be, and the love in Jemubhai’s heart mingled with pity, the pity with shame. His father felt his own hand rise and cover his mouth: he had failed his son [...]

Never again would he know love for a human being that wasn’t adulterated by another, contradictory emotion (IL 42).

This emotional contradiction isolates the judge from both the East and the West, and a sense of hatred and disgust becomes the core of his identity as a government official in India upon his return from England:

He found he began to be mistaken for something he wasn’t – a man of dignity. This accidental poise became more important than any other thing. He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both [...] 

On board the Strathnaver on his way back, [...] [h]e sat alone because he still felt ill at ease in the company of the English. (IL 131)

As a result, such feelings of contradictory emotions toward everything Indian make the judge a misanthrope and alienate him from society. He hates his wife’s face, for instance, since he feels “[a]n Indian girl could never be as beautiful as an English one” (IL 185), and his “inexpertness” under the veil of hatred and fury compels him to commit repeated acts of domestic violence against his wife: “This distaste and his persistence made him angrier than ever and any cruelty to her became irresistible. He would teach her the same lessons of loneliness and shame he had learned himself” (IL 186). Therefore, the judge’s separate space both in India, where he returns as an ICS official, and in Britain, can be viewed as being comprised of the contradictory feelings of pity and shame for all humans, especially Indians, and a form of class relations modelled upon colonialist ideology, which he attempts to display in everyday places. As racial hierarchies are intersected by various socio-cultural categories such as class and gender, among others, this distinct racial space becomes for him “the medium in which class relations are experienced” (Loomba 133) in his familiar spaces in India. In his hatred for the natives and preference for English as the medium of communication with the illiterate natives, the act of providing any justice, which he has sworn to as a judge, proves to be a chimera where the limpidity of justice for rural Indians becomes almost non-existent:

[T]here was a worse aspect of contamination and corruption: he heard cases in Hindi, but they were recorded in Urdu by the stenographer and translated by the judge into a second record in English [...] [t]he witnesses who couldn’t read at all put their thumbprints at the bottom of “Read over and Acknowledged Correct,” as instructed. Nobody could be sure how much of the truth had fallen between [...] languages and illiteracy; the clarity that justice demanded was nonexistent. Still, despite the [...] language confusion, he acquired a fearsome reputation for his speech that seemed to belong to no language at all, and for his face like a mask that conveyed something beyond human fallibility. The expression and manner honed here would carry him, eventually, all the way to the high court in Lucknow where [...] he would preside, white powdered wig over white powdered face, hammer in hand. (IL 69–70)
While dismay and confusion become the staple of justice for the illiterate, the display of his assumed superiority to rural Indians, combined with a pretence of exercising authority like an English judge, becomes a matter of pride to the judge and constitutes a significant part of his fond remembrances that he often recalls after his retirement from the civil service (IL 70). Like the British colonials, for whom the nostalgia of England was imbued with an authorial “relations with subordinates” that enabled them to reinterpret and reconstruct the landscape of Indian hill stations (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 697), it is the nostalgia for an authoritative past of exercising control over the lives of the ‘others’ that empowers the judge to construct a separate space at the bungalow. However, his fond memories are also interlinked with the unfavourable or “burning memory of his beginnings”, which the judge desires to suppress lest this expose the falsity of his image of excellence that he wishes to project before others (IL 68). For instance, he reflects with pain on his inability and failure to hunt animals in the rural villages, which appears to him as a loss of opportunity to exhibit his manliness and pride as a western-educated civil servant:

The countryside was full of game; lariats of migratory birds lassoed the sky in October [...] The thunder of gunshot rolled away, the leaves shivered [...] One thing was always missing, though, [...] the prize of the action, the manliness in manhood, [...] because he returned with –

Nothing!
He was a terrible shot.
[T]he cook [...] cooked a chicken, brought it forth, proclaimed it “roast bastard,”
just as in the Englishman’s favorite joke book of natives using incorrect English. But sometimes, [...] the judge felt the joke might also be on him, and he [...] kept eating feeling as if he were eating himself, since he, too, was (was he?) part of the fun [...] (IL 70; emphasis original).

Since killing animals occupies a significant part in the colonial project of eliminating the beastly others or which can provide a sense of masculinity to the colonists (Arseneault 6; Urbanik 143), the killing of birds after the colonial fashion offers the judge an occasion to display his manhood and to prove his equal status with the colonists. But the failure to shoot any birds diminishes his status, as he believes, and places him amongst the colonized ‘others’ who are ranked lower and deemed effeminate. However, in addition to his recollections of helplessness, his agonizing memories are sparked at the encounter with his old acquaintances from England, such as Bose, and these memories often haunt him with a sense of guilt and loss. Therefore, these memories show why the judge, who usually confines himself to a space of past remembrances like Cho Oyu, is reluctant to meet old friends like Bose, who has always protested against the inequities displayed by the colonial system such as the difference in pensions between Indian and white ICS officials, since the encounter will generate memories of hesitance and awkwardness even in his demarcated space (IL 223). Although the judge chooses the Gymkhana dining place as their meeting place where “above the fireplace, [...] a portrait of the king and queen of England in coronation attire had once hung” (IL 222), the meeting with Bose triggers the judge’s palpable sense of loss as it makes him aware of the “cynicism” and ridiculousness with which he refused to help Bose in court cases against such discrimination:
Despite letter after letter typed on Bose’s portable Olivetti, the judge had refused to become involved. He’d already learned his cynicism by then and how Bose had kept his naiveté alive — well, it was miraculous [...] 

They were forcing Bose [...] into an inferior position – thus far and no further – and he couldn’t take it [...] 

Again they went to court and again they would go to court with their unshakable belief in the system of justice. Again they lost. Again they would lose [...] 

In England they had a great good laugh, no doubt, but in India too, everyone laughed with the joy of seeing people like Bose cheated. There they had thought they were superior, putting on airs, and they were just the same — weren’t they? – as the rest. (IL 223–24)

Although the judge’s cynicism prevents him from helping his friend Bose to file a lawsuit against the authorities, he can perceive that the ontology of the colonized–colonizer relationship receives a jolt as Bose challenges the system of inequality based on race validated by the English law. Considering the possibility that even a western-educated Indian like Bose might continue to identify himself with the native ‘others’, the judge suffers from pangs of conscience. As a result, he finds no sense of place in Bose’s company since it continually reminds him of his betrayal and lack of courage from a nationalist perspective. Moreover, the truth that the judge became aware of during his stay in Britain but disavows for fear of loss of identity, namely that the Indians, prepared in Britain to serve the British government in India and to take part in the colonial project, are nothing more than “the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized, is emphatically not to be English” (Bhabha 128; emphasis original), now appears impossible to repudiate. In order to alleviate the feeling of guilt or to avoid the exposure of disloyalty, the judge therefore desires to escape Bose and return to Cho Oyu to redeem his sense of control and power over ‘others’. This is the time he feels the urgent need to leave human company and to be in proximity to his companion animal in his familiar place, which is devoid of love and respect for humans. It is significant to note, however, that it is at this moment that the judge imagines how he can share an affectionate relationship with his pet:

The judge looked for the waiter. They should order dinner, get this over with, make it an early night. He thought of Mutt waiting for him.  
She would be at the window, her eyes hooked on the gate, tail uncurled between her legs, her body tense with waiting, her brows furrowed.  
When he returned, he would pick up a stick.  
“I could throw it? You could catch it? Should I?” he would ask her. (IL 223)

The judge’s interpretation of his pet’s imagined behaviour can also be analysed from Shapiro’s standpoint of empathy. Because empathy involves the attribution of human experiences to pets to see their own image in the animal (Shapiro 281), the judge’s awkwardness at the meeting and his intention to escape the space is projected onto the behaviour of the pet described as “tense” and unwilling to stay at home without the company of the judge. Unlike his meeting with Bose, which recalls only memories of his embarrassment, his reunion with his dog, he believes, will regain the sense of modernity that he has maintained throughout his life. Accordingly, the dog Mutt, in this context, helps maintain a sense of Englishness as it represents modernity based on English values. Thus, it can be argued that the judge’s anthropomorphic attitude
toward his dog is conditioned by his own experience of alienation from Indian society. Moreover, this alienation results from maintaining a separation from the outside world of ‘others’ on the basis of class – an ontology that the judge forces onto the pet by keeping it isolated in a separate space.

As I argued in Chapter 2, one of the basic features of anthropomorphism comprises the assertion that an animal possesses certain psychological characteristics when in reality it lacks these (Lehman 106). In this context, the judge’s understanding of his dog’s behaviour in favour of class stereotypes can, therefore, be termed as a form of anthropomorphism that is reliant on the hatred of human ‘others’. On the other hand, this anthropomorphic human–pet relationship is human-centred in prioritizing the human (the judge) over the animal. Here, the dog Mutt acts as a “stress reducer” and the epitome of English values since it is culturally constructed to be such (Shapiro 282–83) by the Anglophile judge. In other words, the ideology of anthropomorphism engages two incompatible views: first, anthropomorphism appears appropriate since it aims to place animals on equal footing with humans by regarding them as humans, and second, it does so while ascribing human attributes to animals and, thereby, suppressing their agency and instinctive nature.

Again, in contrast to his imagined happiness with his dog in his bungalow, the judge maintains a calm silence at his last meeting with Bose and dares not admit to his past misconceptions about western modernity lest his present, built upon the pretences of a false past, fall into pieces and damage his image as a domineering person held in high esteem by the natives: “He had kept up an immaculate silence and he wasn’t about to have Bose destroy it. He wouldn’t tumble his pride to melodrama at the end of his life and he knew the danger of confession – it would cancel any hope of dignity forever” (IL 228). Instead, he focuses on the moments that he can share with his pet as the annoyance and displeasure that the judge encounters at the meeting dissolve into happiness as soon as he returns to Cho Oyu and catches sight of Mutt:

Mutt was waiting for him at the gate, and the judge’s expression softened – he blew his horn to signal his arrival. In a second she went from being the unhappiest dog in the world to the happiest and Jemubhai’s heart grew young with pleasure.

The cook opened the gate, Mutt jumped into the seat next to him, and they rode together from the gate to the garage – this was her treat and even when he stopped driving anywhere, he gave her rides about the property to entertain her. (IL 229)

As the above passage suggests, the judge shares with his dog a relationship marked by two compatible characteristics: First, the judge’s happiness and sense of place is closely bound up with his affectionate relationship with Mutt at Cho Oyu. Second, this human–animal relationship is preferred over relationships between humans. The preference for animals over humans relies on the fact that the dog unquestioningly accepts, unlike humans, the judge’s superior position and helps the judge harbour his two favourite feelings that he usually reserves for ‘others’: pity and compassion. Thus, while the judge’s emotional dependence on Mutt is undeniable, the attribution of his racial temperament to his pet as a powerless being constitutes the core of his identity.

Furthermore, such perceptions of animals illustrate how the judge nurtures two conflicting attitudes toward his dog: First, he considers the pet worthier than the native Indians since it unquestioningly accepts his authority, and second, the dog is placed
on an equal footing with human ‘others’ in evoking pity in the judge with a show of its powerlessness. In both cases, the human–companion animal relationship appears anthropocentric as it helps maintain the ontology of modernity/power relations correlated with the identity and sense of place of the judge at his bungalow. This attribution of a human temperament to an animal, which perceives the animal both as the ‘other’ and above the ‘other’, is a way of denying the agency of the dog, which, in reality, widens the chasm between nature and culture. Such a human–animal relationship in a domestic space, according to geographer Tuan, where the human controls the relationship and domesticates the animal, can be perceived as constituting a “domesticated cultural landscape” that disavows the subjectivity of the nonhuman companion and changes its habits (qtd. in Urbanik 50–51). While the judge’s relationship with his dog in a “domesticated cultural landscape” such as Cho Oyu provides him with a strong powerful sense of being morally right and makes his acts justifiable, his relationship with humans, in contrast, awakens in him a sense of guilt and pangs of conscience. While detaching himself from the human world, the judge wishes to maintain a strong bond with Mutt as well as with his past, the arrival of his granddaughter, who has been educated at an English convent, consolidates his belief in the ideologies of social hierarchy and spatial binary by reinforcing the old essence of modernity that can suppress the pangs of admitting the truth of his pretended infallibility:

The judge had considered the convent’s request in the brief interlude of weakness he experienced after Bose’s visit, when he was forced to confront the fact that he had tolerated certain artificial constructs to uphold his existence. When you build on lies, you build strong and solid. It was the truth that undid you. He couldn’t knock down the lies or else the past would crumble, and therefore the present…. But he now acquiesced to something in the past that had survived, returned, that might, without his paying too much attention, redeem him. (IL 229)

Nonetheless, the judge and his granddaughter are considered misfits by the locals since they belong to a separate space, which has a “majestic” past though not a future as Sai asserts (IL 281), where no other language than English is spoken, Indian foods are eaten with fork and knife, and where English vegetables, such as snap peas and French beans, are preferred over “loki, tinda, kathal, kaddu, patrel, and the local saag” (IL 193–94; emphases original). Moreover, the space is also perceived as “uninspiring” in Kalimpong, the landscape of conflict where the Nepalese fight for the recognition of self-identity (IL 287). As a result, the idea of maintaining a detached space amid the political tumult falls apart when the underclass people encroach upon the westernized space in order to receive justice for the marginalization that they have been subjected to in consequence of being perceived as ‘others’.

This section has shown how a space based on class hierarchy excludes human ‘others’ but welcomes animals considered as companions on the basis of an uneven relationship between humans termed as western modernity, which not only creates a class-based binary between different groups of people in the Himalayan landscape but also restructures human perceptions of animals as nonhuman companions to be preferred over humans. The following section on the places of ‘others’ to which the judge is forced to travel will explore how such a preference for animals over humans results in the judge’s fragmented space at Cho Oyu. It will further explicate the distinctions between the space of modernity and that of the local Nepalese and point out the way the loss of such hierarchized space can lead to the loss of identity of the westernized judge.
4.3 THE SLUM: THE SPACE OF HUMAN ‘OTHERS’

The distinction between the space of the westernized Indians and that of the poor becomes conspicuous in relation to the gun robbery at Cho Oyu that stirs a huge ruckus in the city. A poor person suspected of the crime is wrongly arrested and suffers torture at the hands of the police, who work only in favour of the rich. Thus, in dearth of any assistance, the poor mistake the nature of the conceited space at Cho Oyu for truth, lawfulness, and justice and, thereby, expect compassion from the judge, as the following passage demonstrates:

It was the wife, begging for mercy, of the drunk the police had caught and questioned about the gun robbery and on whom they had practiced their new torture strategy. They, at Cho Oyu, had forgotten about this man, but the man’s wife had traced the connection and she’d come with her father-in-law to see the judge, walking half a day from a village across the Relli River […]

“Why come to me? Go to the police. They are the ones who caught your husband, not I,” said the judge, alarmed into eloquence. “You had better leave from here.” […]

The woman looked raped and beaten already. […] [S]he was quite bent from carrying stone – common sight, this sort of woman in the hills. Some foreigners had actually photographed her as proof of horror (IL 288–89)

Although the encounter with the underclass evokes in the judge a sense of responsibility to assist those in need of justice, like the memory that often makes him conscious of his sense of self-pity that is intrinsically bound up with his identity, the fear of the resurgence of guilt as well as the contradictory emotions for humans appear impossible for him to overcome. As the judge is aware, caring for the poor means disproving his past ideals of modernity along the axis of which he has defined the importance of his own life and that of others. He fears for his loss of modern identity if he sides with ‘others’. Therefore, it appears that assisting the poor can both jeopardize his past and present, and it can shatter his sense of place based on class hierarchy. In addition, despite feeling pity for human ‘others’ he imagines them as opportunists who can take advantage of the compassion that the rich feel for them:

The judge seemed suddenly to remember his personality, stiffened, and said nothing, set his mouth in a mask, […] went back to his game of chess.

In this life, he remembered again, you must stop your thoughts if you wished to remain intact, or guilt and pity would take everything from you, even yourself from yourself […]

This was why he had retired. India was too messy for justice; it ended only in humiliation for the person in authority. […] If you let such people get an inch, they’d take everything you had – the families yoked together because of guilt on one side, and an unending greed and capacity for dependence on the other – and if they knew you were susceptible, everyone handed their guilt along so as to augment yours: old guilt, new guilt, any passed-on guilt whatever. (IL 289–90)

Consequently, it appears crucial to him to exclude any thought that could corrode the base of his stern calmness, deemed as western sophistication. Again, the judge prefers
to be oblivious of the world outside and focuses instead on his relationship with his bungalow and, especially, with his dog Mutt as the latter relationship enables him to ignore human ‘others’. As a result, at the time of a political strike when human life in the Himalayan landscape comes to a standstill with no resources or provisions, the judge ensures that Mutt receives the best of the remaining rations of the household:

The judge was shouting: “Mutt, Mutt.” It was her stew time and the cook had boiled soy Nutrinuggets with pumpkin and a Maggi soup cube. It worried the judge that she should have to eat like this, but she’d already had the last of the meat; the judge had barred himself and Sai from it, and the cook, of course, never had the luxury of eating meat in the first place. There was still some peanut butter, though, for Mutt’s chapatis, and powdered milk.

But Mutt wouldn’t answer. (IL 316)

The compassion for an animal described above is contrasted with the judge’s emotionless attitude toward and abhorrence for the poor who receive inhumane treatment at the hands of the few powerful. Despite being a retired justice, the judge’s refusal to take notice of the infringement of the civil rights of the poor generates a sense of frustration and desperation among the disenfranchised. They now attempt to make their presence felt in the modern space of the rich, which, especially at Cho Oyu, is occupied by both humans and animals. As a result, when Mutt is stolen from Cho Oyu (IL 311) by the family of the accused poor man who intend to earn money by selling it, it becomes obvious that the dog is valued by its appearance as a piece of sophistication that can impress. They have noticed the judge’s empathetic attitude toward his pet, and have come to believe that the rich have more sympathy for pets than for the disenfranchised. It is often argued that in spaces fraught with power and race relations that validate the dominance of the powerful over the majority underclass, the former’s “environmentalism” or any compassionate attitude toward animals “that values animals above (certain) people” appears questionable to those belonging to the periphery (Mason, Szabo-Jones, and Steenkamp 8). However, this event indicates the contested relationships between the rich and the poor as well as questions the traditional notion of the human’s separation from animals as to the human’s emotional attachment to their dogs, as argued by Howell in relation to dog-stealing events in Victorian England:

London’s others, the thieves and the banditti who shared public space with the bourgeoisie and their pets, were never in fact very far away. The phenomenon of dog-stealing gives us a glimpse therefore not just of human and animal relations, but also of the complex geographies in which and by which relations between different sets of people in the Victorian city were played out […]

Dog-stealing ultimately suggested the inversion of social hierarchies, putting human dependence on animals at the centre of the problem; people were dominated and exploited through their dependence on animals and their own affections and sentiments, which could not be excluded wholly from their lives. Dog-stealing was thus a phenomenon that called into question conventional assumptions about human relations with animals […] (40–43)

The dog-stealing experience of the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, reversed the social hierarchy in making the middle-class emotionally deprived of their desired compan-
ions and, on the other, set an example of human dependency on pets – an incident working along the spatial scale marked by class. This event of stealing Mutt, thus, can be examined as a process of inverting the power relations between ‘modern’ humans and natives where the latter take advantage of the former’s emotions in exposing their passionate dependence on animals. Therefore, the dog-stealing experience reverses the hierarchy of class maintained in the Himalayan landscape in making the judge emotionally deprived of his desired companion and also awakens him toward an understanding of the agency of the human ‘others’ who can encroach upon his space, now fragmented because of his loss of Mutt. It is this similar sense of powerlessness that the poor have felt for themselves that makes the judge feel the darkness around him, both inside and outside Cho Oyu, as he focuses on the importance of animal life over human life:

He [the judge] felt more keenly than ever that at nightfall in Kalimpong, there was a real ceding of power. You couldn’t rise against such a powerful dark, so enormous, without a chink […]

He couldn’t conceive of punishment great enough for humanity. A man wasn’t equal to an animal, not one particle of him. Human life was stinking, corrupt, and meanwhile there were beautiful creatures who lived with delicacy on the earth without doing anyone any harm.

“We should be dying,” the judge almost wept. (IL 317–320)

This loss pushes the judge to venture into the space of the poor in search of Mutt, and his journey takes him to the slum of Bong Busti, a place that rich and modern Indians such as the judge and his granddaughter loathe visiting. While he demarcates his spatial boundary in the hills away from the natives, the loss of his companion dog compels him to face “the perceived unpleasantries of life in India” (Kenny, “Climate, Race and Imperial Authority” 698). Though they maintain a clear separation between their magnificent colonial bungalow and the Indian slum, the rich cannot help but acknowledge the existence of the poor and the insubstantiality of such separation as realized by Sai, as the following passage shows:

Sai knew that once the day failed, though, you wouldn’t be able to ignore the poverty [at Bong Busti], and it would become obvious that in these homes it was cramped and wet, the smoke thick enough to choke you, the inhabitants eating meagerly in the candlelight too dim to see by, rats and snakes in the rafters fighting over insects and birds’ eggs […]

There were houses like this everywhere, of course, common to those who had struggled to the far edge of the middle class […] holding on desperately – but were at every moment being undone, the house slipping back, not into the picturesque poverty that tourists liked to photograph but into something truly dismal – modernity proffered in its meanest form, brand-new one day, in ruin the next. (IL 279–280)

This realization of the space of ‘others’ and the existence of the East beside the modern West obliges the judge to re-examine the ideals of modernity that he has upheld and followed throughout his life. Eventually, as a result of his loss of sense of place and identity as an upper-class modernist, the judge becomes aware of the sceptic attitude that he has acquired as part of his western education and its hostile impact,
when combined with power, upon others: “He remembered all of a sudden why he had gone to England and joined the ICS; it was clearer than ever why – but now that position of power was gone, frittered away in years of misanthropy and cynicism” (IL 320). Moreover, the guilt of the pretentious refusal to admit the physical violence that he inflicted on his wife appears to be more prominent now than ever, and he cannot deny it in the face of the loss of his dog: “Now Jemubhai wondered if he had killed his wife for the sake of false ideals” (IL 338). Thus, the judge’s loss of the pet seems to open the floodgate of his past memories of guilt that he always suppressed. His concern for human ‘others’ now occupies the place of his sympathetic relationship with his dog, which mostly remains a “concept” since the companion animal usually appears as “a fancy dog” to families deemed as modern (IL 353–54). Therefore, it can be concluded that the judge’s identity and separate space demarcated by the class hierarchy correlate with his relationship with and dependence on Mutt, whose loss leads to the fragmentation of the judge’s westernized sense of place and awakens him to an awareness of the subjective force of the disenfranchised usually perceived as the non-agentic passive ‘others’. Moreover, his attribution of human racial ideals onto the dog further perpetuates the gap between humans on the basis of class, which has a detrimental effect on his identity that culminates in his failure to cohabit with the poor and the local people in the landscape.

This chapter has focused on a human–dog relationship and the role of the companion animal in the formation of its owner’s identity. It has argued how the judge’s understanding or knowledge of the world is reflected in his behaviour toward the pet that has facilitated his sense of place and identity. Furthermore, this chapter has explained the racial nature of the landscape where such relationships are played out and has shown that although such a place might appear to destabilize the human–animal divide, the power relations in the landscape play a dominant role in perpetuating the human (westernized Indians)–human ‘others’ (local Indians) binary along the lines of race and class. In such a place, the pet-owner’s attitude or empathy toward their pet is always modified by racial and class categories, which are often ascribed to the pet in order to maintain a hierarchy of power. The desire to maintain the social binary by using a pet as an instrument can, thus, be seen as a form of anthropomorphism where race or class ideals play a crucial role in the human–pet relationship. Although the owner’s emotional dependence on the pet can have a considerable impact on them since it determines their sense of self and identity, the judge’s relationship with Mutt is anthropocentric since the relationship evaluates the dog in relation to the judge, and therefore, it denies the agency of the pet in keeping it in a ‘modern’ space separated from the outside world. Moreover, the chapter has also asserted that this human–animal relationship is modelled upon the human–human ‘others’ binary where the animal is given more importance than human ‘others’. Finally, this chapter has suggested that when such an anthropomorphic human–pet relationship and a separate space of modernity based on the principles of social hierarchy receive an onslaught from ‘others’ in the form of burglary and dog-stealing, the modern identity associated with such dualisms becomes fragmented which, as a consequence, calls for the recognition of marginalized ‘others’ as an agentic force.
5 DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL–LOCAL INTERRELATIONS: BIOREGIONAL DEVASTATION AND COSMOPOLITANISM IN ARAVIND ADIGA’S THE WHITE TIGER

The entire arc of economic development principally associated with global industrial behemoths is often perceived as entailing considerable risks to the environment and major upheavals in human society, such as clashes between human groups for the control of power and resources. While the previous two chapters have focused on human–nature relationships in the colonial spaces of India from the perspective of gender and race, this chapter, dealing with Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*, will explore the tenets of the human–environment relationship from the perspective of class and caste. This epistolary novel addressed to the Chinese premier is narrated in flashback, where Balram, a successful entrepreneur from the Indian city of Bangalore, describes the story of his journey from poverty in his village to success and material wealth in the city. The protagonist begins with the description of his indigence and exploitation at Laxmangarh, a fictitious village in the Indian state of Bihar, where underdevelopment and poverty correlate highly with social stratifications of class and caste. The narrative of his migration from the village to the city as a child labourer is juxtaposed with that of an apparently beneficial development project and its consequences on both nature and culture.

While the questions of agency and sense of place were central in the previous chapters, they continue to receive similar significance in this section to reveal the nature–culture binary implicit in the human understanding of nature. Correspondingly, the binary between human groups that constitutes the core of the practice of domination is also a well-known phenomenon based on human–human ‘others’ perception, as the previous chapter emphasized. Nonetheless, such dualism, at the intersection between social echelons of caste and class, and the unequal power structure of development, in which local places, their environment, and human ‘others’ are exploited for the profit of global/transnational spaces, is rooted in the denial of the agency of the marginalized and the environment of their local bioregions. Conversely, development is also believed to assist in the economic growth and advancement of rural places and it enables human ‘others’ with certain survival ‘strategies’, linking the local with the global, that might bring them to the focus as agentic figures.

Therefore, building principally both on the bioregional call for delinking the local from the global, as Evanoff proposes, to save the local from the consequences of globalization, and on the insistence on connecting local and global/transnational spaces for the progress of local places, as suggested by development geographers such as Bebbington, this chapter explores the convoluted nature of development and its role in both accepting and denying the agency of human ‘others’ and nature. Since both development geographical studies and the bioregional platform have considered the question of agency as central to development, according to which connections and/or dissociations between places should be established, the chapter will evaluate the nature of development across the places (local and global/transnational) of the narrative, and their interdependence through four categories of development – place, livelihood, network, and scale – as proposed by geographer Bebbington. The aim is
to analyse the predicament of agency of the marginalized protagonist of the novel and the impact development has on the environment of those places. The chapter thus suggests that as the process of development both offers economic opportunity and exploits human ‘others’ by denying their agency, their identity is marked by an ambiguity that discourages them from associating themselves either with the local or the global, as evident in Balram’s binary perception of India – “India of Darkness” and “India of Light” – that he cannot connect himself with. In exploring the resolvability of such ambiguity, this chapter will follow Thomashow’s bioregional disquisition on the necessity of developing a cosmopolitan, pluralist understanding of human culture and the environment that, along with promoting an “alternative development paradigm” to dismantle the dominant power structure of globalization, as proposed by Evanoff, will recognize the agency of both humans and nature and provide a sense of place both at local and global places untrammelled by social hierarchies such as class and caste. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section 5.1 deals with the rural space of Laxmangarh, the “India of Darkness”, where the protagonist Balram hails from, and analyses the contradiction inherent in development that, when intersected by the social hierarchy of caste, exploits local humans and natural resources as well as offers economic opportunity to the poor through migration. However, contrary to the popular perception of migration as providing improved livelihood in cities or in the “India of Light”, the rural stratification of caste is replaced, as the following Section 5.2 argues, by that of class in the city of Dhanbad and the metropolis of New Delhi where Balram moves as a migrant. As the chapter illustrates, such hegemony is marked by the contradictory attributes of development, which allows livelihood opportunities to migrants as well as restricts their spatial boundaries, affecting their livelihood, place, and social networks across spatial scales, and giving rise to ambiguity over their sense of place. Section 5.3 focuses on Balram’s success as an entrepreneur in India’s technological hub of Bangalore and explicates the way in which a sense of cosmopolitanism can resolve his ambiguity toward identity in a pluralist space that recognizes the agency of all human groups. It further explains the attributes of the alternative economy, both independent and interconnected with rural, urban, and other transnational spaces, on which Balram’s dream of a “New” space is founded. Therefore, through an analysis of the rural and urban spaces of the novel intersected by power hegemony, the study aims to explore the binary nature of development that both connects and dissociates spaces.

5.1 “THE INDIA OF DARKNESS”: CASTE HIERARCHY AND WATER POLLUTION

Balram Halwai, the protagonist of The White Tiger (hereafter referred to as WT), a successful businessman, aims to reveal idiosyncrasies of Indian society, principally its social hierarchy based on the caste system and the related indigence with a letter of ‘truth’ written over the course of seven nights to a Chinese diplomat. Interestingly, the narrative of truth is built upon a binary perception of India as a composite of two distinct spaces – the “India of Light” and the “India of Darkness” – the former appears to offer affluence and freedom while the latter comprises poverty and the absence of rights. Despite its scenic landscape, smaller community, and closeness to nature, the apparently idyllic Indian village of Laxmangarh, where Balram was born, is regarded as a space of darkness principally for its substantial impoverishment resulting from
uneven’ relations between upper and lower caste social groups (WT 20). This darkness is also contingent upon the environment of the rural geographic terrain that is affected by the process of urbanization. Apart from changing the bioregional features of the village, the contaminated environment consisting of the river Ganga poses a threat to the livelihood of the villagers. In other words, the river appears antagonistic as an agentic being to humans, as is evident in Balram’s following polemic against the pollution in the river:

India is two countries in one: an India of Light and an India of Darkness.

The ocean brings light to my country. [...]But the river brings Darkness to India—the black river.

Which black river am I talking of—which river of Death, whose banks are full of rich, dark, sticky mud whose grip traps everything that is planted in it, suffocating and choking and stunting it?

Why, I am talking of Mother Ganga, daughter of the Vedas, river of illumination, protector of us all, breaker of the chain of birth and rebirth. Everywhere this river flows, that area is the Darkness [...] I urge you not to dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of feces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids [...] And then I understood: this was the real god of Benaras – this black mud of Ganga into which everything died, and decomposed [...]. Nothing would get liberated here. (WT 14–18)

Therefore, the river Ganga, with diverse poisonous substances, has turned into a “river of Death”, which stands in stark contrast to its mythical status as the embodiment of purity, sacredness, and emancipation. The transnational/urban project of development exploits the rural bioregion and its environment for depositing industrial waste. As a result, the rural village bears the brunt of development in the cities, although it remains deprived of the economic prosperity that the cities experience. The “processes” of utilizing the rural for the urban and, thereby, creating an interrelation between them exposes the “inequity” in the “material” practice of development (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 297–301). It is because of the asymmetrical relationship between places that such development runs a profit-driven network of capitalist economy between rural and urban places. Likewise, as a “sense of place” is grounded in the local environment (Heise, Sense of Place 33), the water pollution in the rural village of Laxmangarh affects the villagers’ health, their wellbeing, and their sense of belonging to the locality.

Additionally, the network of exploitation between people and places in the village of Laxmangarh is reinforced by internal social stratifications, such as class and caste, which control the livelihoods of locals perceived as human ‘others’. It is noteworthy that the impression of a racial echelon on the independent present often exacts too high a price from economy, culture, politics, and the society of underdeveloped countries with histories of colonialism. Development geographers explain that the poor economic condition of some Indian states, such as Bihar, correlates to imperial land policy. This state, according to Corbridge, Harriss, and Jeffrey, was to serve imperial “trading needs”, and it was here that “zamindari” or “landlordism” was inspired, instead of individual farming (7). Again, the patronizing of the class division by the imperial authority gradually influenced other inherent social categories, such as caste,
and, thereby, people belonging to inferior castes remained poorer than those from high castes (Corbridge, Harriss, and Jeffrey 48). Evidently, the imperial power structure was replaced after India’s independence by an internal social hierarchy based principally on caste – a hierarchy that continues to be strongly upheld, even today, which controls the development of the state of Bihar or its “system[s] of production, exchange and regulation” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 299), as the following assertion shows:

The British placed power in the hands of a small coterie of rich leaders at the centre, while buying off local bigwigs. In this system, elected ‘native’ boards, comprised mainly of powerful sections of society, were responsible for multiple aspects of governance. Local elites, for example, rich peasants in the countryside, became key intermediaries in patronage networks extending down to the local level. (Corbridge, Harriss, and Jeffrey 142)

It can be extrapolated that a power structure with an imperial legacy that continues to have a stranglehold on economy and political systems brings about poverty and underdevelopment to some parts of India. Accordingly, in Laxmangarh, such social stratification based primarily on caste leads to the exploitation of the natural resources of the village on which the livelihood of the poor depends. Behind the paradisiacal image of the village as an emblem of serenity, the roads, rivers, and even the waste lands of the village are controlled by the casteist power hierarchy of domination. Although involved in projects of urbanization, the four landlords from the upper caste, whom Balram has named after animals in accordance with their corrupted and domineering nature, deprive the locals of their rights to use the common lands, as the following account illustrates:

The Stork […] owned the river that flowed outside the village, and he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river, and a toll from every boatman who crossed the river to come to our village.

His brother was called the Wild Boar. This fellow owned all good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. If you wanted to work on those lands, you had to […] agree to swallow his day wages […]

The Raven owned the worst land, which was the dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and took a cut from the goatherds who went up there to graze with their flocks […]

The Buffalo was the greediest of the lot. He had eaten up the rickshaws and the roads. So if you ran a rickshaw, or used the road, you had to pay him his feed – one-third of whatever you earned, no less. (WT 24–25)

Whereas an earlier study on the concept of the local–global relationship of the narrative with a primary focus on the landlords’ endorsing a “feudal economy” that has markings on their bodies differing sharply from the “smooth, unmarked and attractive bodies of Overseas Indians” that represent global capitalist economy (Goh 343) has suggested a conflict between local and global economies that cannot be resolved, the necessity of the interdependence of local and global economies as well as of their dissociation should be elucidated by analysing the nature of development across spaces, at the intersection of social privileges that often limit the space of the unprivileged. Therefore, the process of demarcating the boundary of the villagers and categorizing
them as human ‘others’ can also be termed, borrowing from Shiva’s eco-environmentalist perception, as “the enclosure of the commons” or “[t]he exclusion of people from access to resources that had been their common property or held in common” (*Earth Democracy* 20). The question of considering the consent and agency of the lower-caste people receives little importance in matters that destroy their bioregion and control the common natural resources on which their livelihoods heavily depend. This act of dispossessing rural people is a way to thwart the economic empowerment of the local. As a consequence, the income of the rural household in the village is solely dependent on herding and milking cattle (*WT* 20).

As in India the access to natural resources is often prompted by caste hierarchy, which leads to further discrimination in society principally based on caste, class, and gender (Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor* 131), such a restriction is aimed at producing a separate and an elevated space for rural elites: “All four of the Animals lived in high-walled mansions just outside Laxmangarh – the landlords’ quarters. They had their own temples inside the mansions, and their own wells and ponds, and did not need to come out into the village except to feed. […] [T]he four Animals had sent their sons and daughters away, to Dhanbad or to Delhi” (*WT* 25). Furthermore, the motive behind such exclusion is to draw economic profit from seemingly unprofitable spaces. This is akin to Shiva’s argument on the “[p]roductivity” of the commons, which claims that the rich control the common lands or spaces as they value nature only as a marketable commodity and, thus, express insouciance to the needs of common people (*Earth Democracy* 20). Again, in tune with Shiva’s views on the neoliberal tendency of globalization and its semblance to the imperial propensity to control “peasant communities’ rights to their forests, sacred groves, and ‘wastelands’ [that] has been the prime cause of their impoverishment” (*Earth Democracy* 26), the indigence of the majority underclass in rural India that Balram belongs to can be perceived as having a direct bearing on class hierarchy. Such environmental concerns among rural people as expressed in Balram’s attitude toward the river pollution and the lack of human rights can be termed as the “environmentalism of the poor”, where the poor feel anxiety over the loss of the natural means of their subsistence (Martinez-Alier, “The Environmentalism of the Poor” 240). Therefore, the subject of acquiring individual freedom and India’s independence from imperial legacy (*WT* 22–23) has acquired currency regarding the development of rural spaces that currently remain underdeveloped. Since decisions over the process of development in rural places are made in urban places, the rural poor of Laxmangarh cannot be regarded as “agents”, or the “actors in place” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 302; emphasis original), and the rural development acts to the advantage of a handful upper-caste people in the village.

However, among the violation of human rights, the right to access education at government schools is mostly affected by the class binary, as the rich and the upper-caste prevent the marginalized from acquiring education and force poor children to leave school and work for them: “The family [of Balram] had taken a big loan from the Stork so they could have a lavish wedding and a lavish dowry for my [Balram’s] cousin-sister. Now the Stork had called in his loan. He wanted all the members of the family working for him and he had seen me in school, or his collector had. So they had to hand me over too” (*WT* 37). As a livelihood also incorporates “access to and benefits derived from social and public services provided by the state such as education, health services and other infrastructure” (Masanjala 1033), the government’s incapability to provide basic amenities to rural people, such as “power, water, sanitation, health care and education” (World Bank qtd. in Corbridge, Harriss, and Jeffrey 72), results in not
only low-quality livelihoods of the poor but also the collapse of the rural development project. Thus, when Balram is taken to a nearby tea shop to work as a child labourer he finds he is entangled in a web of slavery like his elders (WT 66) and, therefore, feels a sense of displacement in the rural space of the village because his cohabitation with nature is destroyed owing to “land grabbing and forced labour” (Martinez-Alier, “The Environmentalism of the Poor” 241). Consequently, the sense of displacement compels the locals to leave the rural space in search for employment opportunities in an urban space to maintain their livelihoods in the village:

[T]he Animals stayed and fed on the village, and everything that grew in it, until there was nothing left for anyone else to feed on. So the rest of the village left Laxmangarh for food. Each year, all the men in the village waited in a big group outside the tea shop. When the buses came, they got on [...] and went to Gaya; there they went to the station and rushed into the trains [...] and went to Delhi, Calcutta, and Dhanbad to find work. (WT 26)

With urbanization, the process of development brings a hope with industrialization and dissuades rural people from pursuing agriculture, a condition that further inflates the economic crisis and poverty, as Corbridge, Harriss, and Jeffrey suggest: “‘Development’ therefore involves the dispossession of many peasant producers – they lose control of their own land and other assets – and those affected by dispossession move into dependence upon wage labour for others, both on the larger, capitalist farms and increasingly outside agriculture altogether” (81). Assets, as Bebbington perceives, serve not only as the means for a better livelihood but also contribute to the competence of the dispossessed and provide their sense of being (“Capitals and Capabilities” 2022). The loss of land, thus, can be perceived as leading to their dispossession and deprivation of identity. Despite possessing a considerable amount of agricultural lands, the rich and the high caste landlords, in contrast, focus on “off-farm incomes” such as “[p]ublic sector employment” whereas the poor and the low caste usually work as “wage-laborers” in faraway places (Jeffrey 28). The rural poor, as a result, without “agricultural livelihoods”, migrate to cities in search of work in urban development projects (Bebbington, “Reencountering Development” 509). As the development paradigm offers allurement to economic progress and endless opportunity (S. White 410), rural migration prefers such scintillating economic alternative opportunities over rootedness in a specific place. Although internal migration from the rural to the urban occurs within the capitalist economy responsible for the marginalization of the poor, the relocation might appear as a process of intervention, or as a form of “resistance” by poor people that can improve their livelihoods (Bebbington, “Livelihood Transitions” 175). It has also been conceived of as a strategy of rural people to explore economic opportunities that can aid in rural development (Bebbington, “Reencountering Development” 510; De Haan and Zoomers 358). Additionally, living a “multi-local” livelihood can create networks between the rural and the urban and enable the poor to develop “a personal relationship” with people in different places (De Haan and Zoomers 360). As migration can also mean pluralistic identities, identification with both the rural and the urban can connect people and their places (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 129). Therefore, Balram’s migration first to the nearby city of Dhanbad and then to New Delhi to secure a job can be interpreted as a survival strategy through which he aims to ensure a stable livelihood, establish social networks between people (human ‘others’) of both places,
and, thereby, identify himself with distinct places to overcome the sense of loss and displacement from the rural.

This section has highlighted the contradiction inherent in development that, when intersected by the social hierarchy of caste, indulges in the exploitation of local humans and natural resources as well as offers economic opportunities through migration to maintain livelihoods in the rural village. It has also pointed out how urbanization affects the rural village of Laxmangarh, the “India of Darkness”, where the environment and the poor are considered passive objects devoid of agency. Nonetheless, the fact that the “India of Light”, where the project of development burgeons and decisions are conducted, can also render a sense of dispossession and a loss of agency will be explored in more detail in the following section in relation to the city of Dhanbad and the metropolis of New Delhi.

5.2 “THE INDIA OF LIGHT”: CLASS HIERARCHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

It is claimed that migration not only causes physical displacement but also displacement from the imagination of the government which prioritizes development and often takes part in indirect violence for their “administered invisibility” (Nixon, Slow Violence 150–51). It is further argued that since migration affects people’s relations with their familiar environment, they also suffer from a loss of identity through migration (Shiva, “Homeless in the ‘Global Village’” 99; Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 124). This section, in its exploration of the binary structure of development, intersected by internal class and caste hierarchy, will emphasize both the benefits and the consequences of migration – its capacity to improve the livelihoods of migrants, including their environment, and to enable them to regain an agentic sense of self in rural and urban places. It will be further argued that one of the substantial consequences of capitalist development can be readily experienced in the ambiguous identity of Balram based on his twofold perception of India.

Although the question of agency has always gained wide circulation in earlier studies on Indian poverty, the concentration has chiefly been on the representation of India in Adiga’s narrative (Mendes 283) that instead of exposing a profound sense of lack of hope in the “darkness” of poverty it has offered “new opportunities to reject and rise from poverty — if only to a few determined individuals” (Korte 296). What remains unaddressed is the analysis of the apparent material contradictions in the identity of the individuals, resulting from capitalist development that often differentiates between spaces, and of the way such contradictions can be resolved with an agentic identity. Nonetheless, the distinction between local and global places along the lines of economic development is evinced by the migration of a considerable number of people from rural areas to urban or transnational spaces. Although one of the principal motives of rural-to-urban migration is to bring “Light” or improve the livelihood in the rural space, Balram’s relocation to the city of Dhanbad, known for its coal mines, can hardly pierce the “Darkness” of the village since here it is principally as labourers and servants that the migrant children from lower caste can maintain their livelihoods (WT 28). Therefore, although the migration of lower caste people from the rural to the urban can be construed as a “strategy” of “resistance” by the poor (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 299–300), the working of the capitalist economic system in the city appears to be rooted in a hierarchy of power and class that
encourages the practice of illegal and exploitative recruitment of children as workers. Moreover, the city often appears, to a great extent, as a place where a development project replicates the imperial model of domination and, as a result, turns equally into a place of squalor, power, and class binaries. In the words of Triulzi, a city fosters divergent views and becomes a “meeting place and battleground for two opposed worlds, with their contrasting features: power and impotence, poverty and ease, new immigrants and old inhabitants, center and fringe”, which also affect the way “urban identities” are constructed (81). As both “making a living” and “making it meaningful” are significant in developing a livelihood and identity (Bebbington, “Reencountering Development” 498), the contentious nature of urban development, offering both economic opportunity as well as ignoring the rights and agency of the rural workers, should be accentuated in the context of development’s impact on the livelihood of the rural poor in the city. Therefore, Balram’s employment as a chauffeur for the Stork, one of the landlords from the village, who also runs an illegal coal mining business in Dhanbad, is marked by a sense of servitude that is grounded predominantly in the caste hierarchy giving way to class hegemony: “These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up” (WT 64). Since the “strategies and practices” of “development discourse” change as the nature of power relations between the ruler and the ruled alters in the course of time (Crush 7), the caste hierarchy in collusion with economic power, generated by the landlord’s undeclared wealth from the illegal and unlimited extraction of natural resources such as coal, appears to make room for the class-based hierarchy. Consequently, the feeling of being entrapped in the class hierarchy can hardly provide the rural poor with a sense of place in the migrated space of the city, although the urban space provides better economic opportunity to maintain livelihoods. In other words, the apparent futility of Balram’s flight from the rural, the “India of Darkness”, to the urban, assuming it to be a step toward the “India of Light” with ample income possibilities and freedom from caste oppression, gives rise to diverse ambiguities and contradictions over his sense of place across spaces of the rural and the urban. Since internal migration, compared to international migration, often complicates the livelihoods of migrants adding to their financial struggles (De Haas qtd. in De Haan and Zoomers 358), Balram’s migration to the urban space exacerbates his ambivalence toward the feasibility of improving his livelihood in the city, which denies him agentic identity and a sense of home. Therefore, although Balram concerns himself, on the one hand, with the network of caste and class hierarchy that works across rural villages and urban cities and even ensnares rural children from families of low social status, he distances himself, on the other, from the rural space for its lack of livelihood prospects, as the following tirade of criticism demonstrates:

The children ran along with me outside, little dirty brats born to one aunt or the other whose names I did not want to know, whose hair I did not want to touch […]

I drove through the greenery, through the bushes and the trees and the water buffaloes lazing in muddy ponds; past the creepers and the bushes; past the paddy fields […]; past the wild grass with the faces of the water buffaloes peeping through. A small, half-naked boy was riding a buffalo by the side of the road; when he saw us, he pumped his fists and shouted in joy – and I wanted to shout back at him: Yes, I feel that way too! I’m never going back there! (WT 86–89; emphases original)
As he intends to extricate himself from the rural space and its human ‘others’, Balram’s decision to travel further to the metropolis of New Delhi, which has a burgeoning demand for workers for the development of the city and is steeped in, as he assumes, prosperity and happiness, is primarily motivated by the desire to escape the network of class and caste hegemony circulating across spatial scales. However, contrary to Balram’s assumption, the metropolis of New Delhi is a place of destitution that absorbs a huge influx of migrants from rural villages and other urban centres in India, who remain homeless in the capital: “Thousands of people live on the sides of the road in Delhi. They have come from the Darkness too – you can tell by their thin bodies, filthy faces, by the animal-like way they live under the huge bridges and overpasses, making fires and washing […] while the cars roar past them” (WT 120).

As the development paradigm demarcates the separation line between the rich and the poor, it also counterpoints the difference, as in the case of class hierarchy argued above, along the spatial boundary. In other words, in the process of internationally integrating the globe within the metropolis of India, the poor face outright exclusion, and they have no other space to live in but the streets of the city, while the rich, in contrast, live in “gigantic apartment building[s] […] with nice big English names” (WT 128–29). Whereas with increasing earnings from urban labour markets, migrants might build a “new architectural landscape” in the rural with better living facilities (Bebbington, “Reencountering Development” 510), they are barred from the space of the rich because of their supposed inferiority as human ‘others’. Thus, the metropolis, which initially appeared as “the India of Light”, seems to retain the juxtaposition of two separate spaces – the “India of Light”, comprising the rich who live in luxurious apartments, and the “India of Darkness”, consisting of street-dwelling migrants. However, through the bifurcation of the spaces of the megalopolis for different human groups, the power hegemony of the rural appears to be shifted to the urban space of the city, as the following perception of Balram explicates:

Dim streetlights were glowing down onto the pavement on either side of the traffic; and in that orange-hued half-light, I could see multitudes of small, thin, grimy people squatting, waiting for a bus to take them somewhere, or with nowhere to go and about to unfurl a mattress and sleep right there. These poor bastards had come from the Darkness to Delhi to find some light – but they were still in the darkness. [...] We were like two separate cities – inside and outside the dark egg. I knew I was in the right city. But my father, if he were alive, would be sitting on that pavement, cooking some rice gruel for dinner, and getting ready to lie down and sleep under a streetlamp, and I couldn’t stop thinking of that and recognizing his features in some beggar out there. So I was in some way out of the car too, even while I was driving it. (WT 138)

While it should be noted that the creation of local places in transnational spaces ensures the presence of social networks between places, their people, and culture (Bebbington, “Transnational Livelihoods and Landscapes” 375), the relocation of the disproportionate power binary from rural villages to the cosmopolitan metropolis conjures up a familiar sense of loss of agency, which impels the migrants’ displacement from rural and urban centres. Thus, Balram’s view of his self as belonging to both spaces, both inside and outside the luxury car of his employer, echoes his ambiguity as he, like other migrants, teeters between the progressive and the demeaning models of capitalist development. That is to say, Balram’s as well as the migrants’
ambivalence toward their identity corresponds to the convoluted nature of development, which transforms the internal refugees into “developmental refugee[s]”, as Nixon claims: “Development implies positive growth, ascent toward a desirable end; refugee implies flight from […] the threat of development inflicted destitution […] the notion of the developmental refugee holds in tension an official, centripetal logic of national development on the one hand and on the other, a terrifying, centrifugal narrative of displacement, dispossession, and exodus” (Slow Violence 152). In such cases, therefore, the contentious nature of development and urbanization excludes the migrants, or at least the refugees of development, from both local and transitional spaces, and no apparent network of mutual correspondence between the local and the transnational is developed.

The migrants’ lack of sense of rootedness in the city and its environment is further expanded by the environmental crises of the cityscape. In an overcrowded city like New Delhi, the principal environmental hazard is air pollution from vehicles, which makes it difficult for the city dwellers to breathe. Apart from air pollution, the relentless noise from automobiles, owing to ineffective city planning, poses a serious health threat to the urban people. However, it is the poor, as Balram perceives, who suffer the most from the pollution since the rich, the major pollution makers in the city, can enjoy clean air inside their air-conditioned cars:

There was a fierce jam on the road to Gurgaon. [...] Everyone honked. Every now and then, the various horns, each with its own pitch, blended into one continuous wail that sounded like a calf taken from its mother. Fumes filled the air. Wisps of blue exhaust glowed in front of every headlight; the exhaust grew so fat and thick it could not rise or escape, but spread horizontally, sluggish and glossy, making a kind of fog around us. Matches were continually being struck – the drivers of autorickshaws lit cigarettes, adding tobacco pollution to petrol pollution [...] The autorickshaw driver next to me began to cough violently – he turned to the side and spat, three times in a row [...] ‘It’s like we’re in a concert of spitting!’ Mr Ashok said, looking at the autorickshaw driver.

Well, if you were out there breathing that acid air, you’d be spitting like him too, I thought. (WT 137–38; emphases original)

While pollution is a serious concern in any developing country, in India incessant noise and honking from automobiles are hardly considered as pollutants by common people (Singh and Davar 182), and their effects on health are mostly ignored. In other words, the wellbeing of both the poor and the rich in the urban space of New Delhi remains a lopsided part of the economic and technological progress entailed by urbanization with its increasing need for transport (Véron 2096; Ray and Lahiri 166). Along with the capitalist power hegemony of urbanization, the polluted environment of the city that impacts the urban space dwellers to varying degrees is, therefore, embroiled, in Nixon’s words, in a “slow violence […] that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (Slow Violence 2). Besides, one’s empirical understanding of their local place, its environment, and culture impacts their identity as well as consolidates their understanding of the workings of development across global scale (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism”
Accordingly, the pollution in the city stands as a synecdoche for the vast network of environmental threats precipitated by the process of development, working across different spatial scales. Thus, the water pollution of the river Ganga in the rural village of Laxmangarh can be interpreted as correlated to “the larger patterns of ecosystems, economies and bureaucracies” (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 126) of the equally polluted urban space of New Delhi, where decisions on rural and urban development are made, and a general lack of environmental awareness marks the essence of the space, as the following lines show:

Rush hour in Delhi. Cars, scooters, motorbikes, autorickshaws, black taxis, jostling for space on the road. The pollution is so bad that the men on the motorbikes and scooters have a handkerchief wrapped around their faces […]

There was a good reason for the masks; they say the air is so bad in Delhi that it takes ten years off a man’s life. Of course, those in the cars don’t have to breathe the outside air – it is just nice, cool, clean, air-conditioned air for us. With their tinted windows up, the cars of the rich go like dark eggs down the roads of Delhi. Every now and then an egg will crack open – a woman’s hand, dazzling with gold bangles, stretches out of an open window, flings an empty mineral water bottle onto the road – and then the window goes up, and the egg is resealed. (WT 133–34)

Therefore, the dearth of understanding of the systematic disposal of environmentally unfriendly materials, such as plastics, and the necessity to recycle them, compel the rich to make use of the public space as a dumping ground for waste, which adds to environmental pollution. In addition, nature is erroneously considered to be a passive object, and the possibility of a catastrophic impact of environmental contamination on human livelihoods is disregarded. These people with a high social status, then, can be seen living in a ‘double-think’ state where people, despite being aware of the consequences of pollution, environmental degradation, “industrial wastes”, their diverse negative impacts on human health, and their role as agents in the process of development, “fail to act on this knowledge by modifying their lifestyles” (Mies, “The Myth of Catching-up Development” 57). However, such wastes littered around the streets of the city are often hazardously utilized by the poor, as the following passage explains:

The rich of Delhi, to survive the winter, keep electrical heaters, or gas heaters, or even burn logs of wood in their fireplaces. When the homeless, or servants like night watchman and drivers who are forced to spend time outside in winter, […] they burn whatever they find on the ground. One of the best things to put in the fire is Cellophane, the kind used to wrap fruits, vegetables, and business books in: inside the flame, it changes its nature and melts into a clear fuel. The only problem is that while burning, it gives off a white smoke that makes your stomach churn. (WT 156–57)

Although it is in the metropolitan space where decisions on the pattern of development are made, the lack of a proper rehabilitation strategy for the homeless and the strict implementation of a waste management plan for all appear to be major causes of the environmental degradation of the urban space that affects the livelihood of the majority of homeless. Yet, such urban spaces are inclusive of modern aspects of
urbanization, and aim to create an “American part of the city” with western establish-
ments for entertainment, such as gigantic shopping malls and movie theatres to
courage a consumerist culture (WT 121–122; 203). Sociologist Baviskar states that
the city of Delhi has received “modernist” refurbishments since 1962, according to
the Master Plan formed under the guidance of the American Ford Foundation, which
recommended agricultural land procurement from nearby rural areas, and their re-
modelling into industrial spaces, residential complexes, and entertainment arenas,
among others (90). In other words, the modern development pattern, “as a project of
Western capitalism” (S. White 411), has been successful in luring people into believing
that a universal western space can be formed through the exclusion of rural spaces
grounded in indigenous culture and society. As it is principally the cities of former
colonies that bear the marks of modern western culture, it is also in the cities the
pennon for a consolidated identity is most clearly felt (Yeoh 457–58). However, this
Americanization of the city also necessarily excludes all forms of greenery that appear
unnecessary: “the rich of Delhi had built this part of Gurgaon with no parks, lawns,
or playgrounds – it was just buildings, shopping malls, hotels, and more buildings”
(WT 225). Such designing of the urban landscape is made, as McGinnis notes, in tune
with “[t]he illusions of global economy [which] undermines the importance of the city,
culture, and the ecological community – in short, the bioregion – in human affairs”
(“Boundary Creatures and Bounded Spaces” 68). Along with the devastation of the
rural environment, therefore, the local bioregion of the urban space is at stake in the
creation of a ‘global’ space in the metropolis.

Nonetheless, as the nature of development has always been “economic” and “po-
itical”, evolving from a hierarchy based on power (Crush 6–7), the conception of a
“global economy” in New Delhi is bolstered by a deepened network of corruption
working across multiple spaces. Moreover, this network connects rural elites to urban
politicians since the local upper class, as Harriss-White observes, can influence politics
and decision-making processes through pecuniary baits: “The power of the local elite
is also consolidated by their manipulation of party politics. Political parties have rarely
had consistent positions on private trade so it is […] rational for merchants to fund all
parties that are likely to achieve power” (52). In the developing economic system of the
South, in Jeffrey’s view, the issue of corruption, on the one hand, colludes with hier-
archies framed in class and caste, and it is the network of corruption that perpetuates,
on the other, social stratifications and manipulates the local government, including the
police and the judiciary system, through pecuniary baits (21–23). Corruption, in this
context, can be perceived as an inseparable part of “economic networks” that affect
people’s livelihoods, both in rural and urban spaces of India (Corbridge, Harriss, and
Jeffrey 142). In addition, the exchange of money benefits politicians to remain in power
and the elites to control the “public resources” (Corbridge, Harriss, and Jeffrey 142)
both in rural and urban spaces. In the urban space, the rich, therefore, often backed
by the government, unabatedly indulge in uneven development projects, exploiting
environmental resources and human labour:

There is construction work in any direction you look in Delhi. Glass skeletons
being raised for malls or office blocks […]; huge craters being dug for new
mansions for the rich. And here too, in the heart of Connaught Place, even in the
middle of the night, under the glare of immense spotlights, construction went
on. A giant pit had been excavated. Machines were rumbling from inside it […]
‘Look at that yellow crane. It’s a monster.’
It was a monster, sitting at the top of the pit with huge metal jaws alternately gorging and disgorging immense quantities of mud. Like creatures that had to obey it, men with troughs of mud on their heads walked in circles around the machine; they did not look much bigger than mice. Even in the winter night the sweat had made their shirts stick to their glistening black bodies. (WT 157–58)

In an era of globalization, the global giants, as shown above, have no clear boundaries. Their sphere of influence as an overwhelming control is brought to bear on the personalities and agentic identity of the migrants, who are required to keep pace with machines and fulfil technological demands. The neo-colonial practice of urbanization that transports cheap labour from rural parts of India, the “India of Darkness”, to the urban spaces of the “India of Light” for better profitability (Adams and Mulligan 5) only values human productivity and nature according to their monetary worth (McGinnis, “Boundary Creatures and Bounded Spaces” 65). Yet, disregarding “the ‘agency’ of people themselves as agents of development” (M. Power 151; emphases original), the exploitation of human ‘others’ as “human capital” eventually leads to “the dehumanization of society” (McGinnis, “Boundary Creatures and Bounded Spaces” 66). Moreover, the hegemonic nature of development stands exposed in the appropriation of the urban landscape with the aid of modern technological equipment and in accordance with global culture (S. White 413). Consequently, technology, as a means of assisting the global project of refurbishing the local, turns its bioregion into a passive object for use and “a bundle of natural resources to be managed by the best modern technologies available” (McGinnis, “Boundary Creatures and Bounded Spaces” 64). Undeniably, the remodelling of the city to create a West in the East not only results in tension between the rural (local) and urban (global), but it also exposes the homogenizing tendency of development that ignores the distinctive characteristics of places, and the differences between their culture, society, and the environment.

Nevertheless, the migrants exploited in the project of development are often grouped together in spaces that have no resemblance either to the rural, where they came from, or the urban, which they work for. As a result, displaced and denied assistance, the migrants build social networks among themselves “to help them deal with, live through and perhaps resist these forms of development” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 303). Therefore, although Balram previously aimed to dissociate himself from the rural space, its people and poverty by traveling to the metropolis of Delhi, the demarcation of the migrants’ spatial boundary appears to establish a bond between the migrants and Balram who is pigeonholed as a mere servant and is designated a “horrible” place designed for human ‘others’ at the bottom of a luxurious building: “[I]n India every apartment block, every house, every hotel is built with a servants’ quarters – sometimes at the back, and sometimes […] underground – a warren of interconnected rooms where all the drivers, cooks, sweepers, maids, and chefs of the apartment block can rest, sleep, and wait” (WT 130). Nonetheless, in the slum, as “surplus people” migrants fail to fit into the socio-cultural and economic model of the city and, instead, turn into “ghosted communities” (Nixon, Slow Violence 151). Consequently, other than living on roads, the migrants cluster together in communities in the dark underbelly of the urban space of prosperity, as Balram discerns the following:
I was at the slum [...] 

[All] these construction workers who were building the malls and giant apartment buildings lived here [...] 

These people were building homes for the rich, but they lived in tents covered with blue tarpaulin sheets, and partitioned into lanes by lines of sewage. It was even worse than Laxmangarh. I picked my way around the broken glass, wire, and shattered tube lights. The stench of feces was replaced by the stronger stench of Industrial sewage. The slum ended in an open sewer – a small river of black water went sluggishly past me. (WT 260)

Therefore, it is important to note that the process of globalization causes “economic and political resources into and out of places and spaces”, and, thereby, creates “new geographies [that] reproduce many of the uneven geographies that characterized older, colonial relationships between North and South” (M. Power 151). Moreover, such “uneven geographies” of temporary settlements in the metropolis are used as a dumping ground for industrial wastes, affecting migrant livelihoods and health. Since in third world countries, as Forsyth opines, “[w]aste dumps are often [...] based in land inhabited by poor and politically powerless people” (295), the slum in Delhi is used for the disposal of industrial waste material. Accordingly, the slum dwellers of New Delhi are the major recipients of the “slow violence” (Nixon, Slow Violence 4) since the unnoticeable impact of the waste on their health remains as unrecognized as their indigence. As development should ensure the participation of all human groups involved in the project of development to decide on “how resources should be used [...] and who should determine these decisions” (Bebbington, “Reencountering Development” 507), the migrants’ inability to make decisions concerning the management of the environment of the slum used as a landfill and to resist its impact on their livelihoods keeps them outside the decision-making part of urbanization. This turns them into mere resources to be utilized in development, in which they aim to participate thoroughly by adopting survival strategies such as migration from the rural to the urban.

The existence of the overarching power hegemony that can affect the livelihoods of human ‘others’ by controlling their environment even in urban spaces, therefore, makes evident the interrelation between the exploitation of urban and rural environments. Thus, the contamination of the river Ganga used as a reservoir for waste in the village of Laxmangarh, and its impact on the rural poor, resembles, as Balram recognizes, the environmental degradation of the “bitter” metropolis, and its harsher impacts on migrants living on the streets and in the slums of the city (WT 220–45). In this context, the interconnectedness of the concepts of place and scale, as defined by Bebbington, appears worth considering: “[I]t is worth reiterating the importance of linking place and scale given that the places we are concerned with have long been part of globalised relationships, and any attempt to understand those places without considering how these relationships affect conditions and possibilities is inevitably partial” (“Global Networks and Local Developments” 302). It appears evident that the environmental issues as well as the socio-cultural hierarchies of the village are connected with those of the distinct scales or the metropolis of Delhi, as both of these places share a network of “globalised relationships” where the development of the latter affects the space of the former. As the project of development can both offer strategies of intervention and restrict their implementation in the same space by excluding human ‘others’ from the process of decision-making as non-agentic beings, the migrants’ ambiguity over their identity and role in development, in particular, is
consolidated by a lack of sense of place, both in the urban city and the rural village. Therefore, Balram’s escape to the city of Bangalore, a transnational business hub, although as a fugitive charged with the murder of his employer, appears to be an individual act of resistance, which is deemed as a significant part of capitalist development (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 299–300), to the power hegemony that has impacted the livelihoods of the peripheral, created a network of domination across different spatial scales, and, as a result, has contributed to their loss of sense of belonging to all those spaces.

This section has shown how the process of urbanization replicates the rural power binary in a metropolis marked by the contradictory attributes of development, which allows livelihood opportunities to migrants as well as restricts their spatial boundaries, affecting their livelihood, place, and social networks across spatial scales. It has also argued for the way the rural spaces of “darkness” – consisting of lower-class migrants, the first victims of environmental degradation – are recreated in the upper-class urban space of “light”, where decisions on the process of development are made without any environmental awareness and where environmental hazards have less impact on those belonging to the space of affluence. Consequently, migrants retain a sense of ambiguity over their identity and sense of place also in the metropolis, as this section has maintained, since they deal with the contradictory facets of development. Moreover, their exclusion from the process of decision-making as passive objects further triggers their displacement both from the rural village and the urban metropolis. The way human ‘others’ can regain a sense of place in the cosmopolitan space will be explored in the following section, which examines a form of migrant identity that is developed at the intersection of an awareness of the agency of all human groups and the environment.

5.3 COSMOPOLITAN BIOREGION: GLOBAL–LOCAL INTERRELATIONS AND PLURALISTIC IDENTITY

The city of Bangalore, the metropolis of the southern Indian state of Karnataka and a technological hub, where Balram attains wealth, social status, and a new identity as a successful entrepreneur of transport service, appears to be another “India of Light”. However, the space is apparently grounded in a culture of mutual correspondence between distinct human groups of the city. This section, therefore, will explicate the way the interdependence between different human groups enables a stable livelihood and financial success and creates a network of social relations that connects rural and urban spaces in the age of globalization. It will be further contended that such correlations precipitate a cosmopolitan identity based on a pluralist perception of society that allows for the understanding of all human groups and nature as agentic beings.

As an abode of engineering and outsourcing companies that provide a large number of jobs every year, the city of Bangalore, appears to prompt, as represented in the novel, mass migration from the rural and other urban centres, and offer migrants opportunities, unlike the metropolis of Delhi, to participate in the process of the economic growth of the country (WT 210). Without indulging in a hierarchy of class or caste that has contributed to the exploitation of human ‘others’ and natural resources across spaces, the city differs from other spaces, as Balram perceives the following:
Allow me to illustrate the differences between Bangalore and Laxmangarh. […] It is not as if you come to Bangalore and find that everyone is moral and upright here. This city has its share of thugs and politicians. It’s just that here, if a man wants to be good, he can be good. In Laxmangarh, he doesn’t even have this choice. That is the difference between this India and that India: the choice. (WT 306; emphasis original)

Thus, the urban space of Bangalore favours freedom for individuals to choose between different possibilities to maintain their livelihoods and values their independence. Unlike the rural and urban spaces, which ensnare the migrants merely as labourers and servants in the web of class hierarchy, the local economy of the city of Bangalore mainly relies on the practice of outsourcing where several local establishments function for international companies, maintaining a chain of interdependent circles of economic opportunity that support individuals as well as aid in the development of the place. In addition, the nature of development differs between Bangalore and the metropolis of New Delhi in many aspects. Whereas in New Delhi, human physical labour and natural resources, considered cheap and exploitable, are key constituents of development, in Bangalore, it is international business relations that form the basic tenet of economic development where the local bioregion receives little onslaught and human resources are treasured in the process of development. As a result, Bangalore can ensure, as Balram’s success attests, the agentic participation of all – a condition intrinsically bound up with making a “meaningful” livelihood – in the process of development (Bebbington, “Reencountering Development” 498). Moreover, as livelihood also incorporates “social” and “institutional” exchanges of “ideas, resources and activities” (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 299–300) that as a form of intervention can resist the consequences of globalization and offer a sense of place (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 121), Balram’s relationship with both the locals (WT 312) and the migrants (WT 311) from other parts of the country highlights the necessity of developing a social network across spaces to resist the power hegemony precipitated by globalization:

Now, despite my amazing success story, I don’t want to lose contact with the places where I got my real education in life.

The road and the pavement […]

Keep your ears open in Bangalore – in any city or town in India – and you will hear stirrings, rumours, threats of insurrection. Men sit under lampposts at night and read. […] One night, will they all join together – will they destroy the Rooster Coop? […]

The book of your revolution sits in the pit of your belly, young Indian. Crap it out, and read. (WT 303–4)

Therefore, along with offering a sense of embeddedness, Balram’s act of identifying himself with local people and migrants has created a global or cosmopolitan community that permits a multicultural ethos of a space (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 121) as it incorporates people from several rural and urban spaces. In a process of “[a]lleviate[ing] global suffering” founded on an understanding of the global “exploitation” of a vast number of people and the environment, Balram, consequently, expresses an empathy with human, from rural
and urban places, and nature, and he, thereby, establishes a connection between the
global and the local (“Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 131; emphases origi-
nal). A cosmopolitan pluralist attitude toward places and societies also facilitates
the cohabitation of unsettling personalities emanating from “economic globaliza-
tion, and ecological and cultural diasporas” (Thomashow, “Toward a Cosmopoli-
tan Bioregionalism” 125–129). Accordingly, although Balram maintains a wealthy
livelihood in Bangalore (WT 7), his yearning for the rural village of Laxmangarh,
the memories of which have indelibly marked his disposition (WT 22), defines his
sense of place as being both rooted in the rural space that he has left behind and the
urban space that he lives in.

As migration from the local to the global can reconstitute the local in the migrated
transnational space through networks of resources and people (Bebbington, “Trans-
national Livelihoods and Landscapes” 375), the rural village of Laxmangarh appears
to be reconstituted, for Balram, in the transnational space of Bangalore through a
network that incorporates human resources from remote areas. As a consequence,
whereas at the outset of his migration to urban space Balram has intended to extri-
cate himself from his rural village of Laxmangarh and its human ‘others’ by escaping
the network of class and caste hegemony, as argued above, his sense of place in the
cosmopolitan space of Bangalore, conversely, is mediated by his desire, though un-
feasible after murdering one of the village landlords, to connect with the rural village
of Laxmangarh and its environment, consisting of humans, animals, and the village
landscape, as expressed in the beginning of his letter: “Sometimes, would you believe,
I almost miss that place” (WT 22). Although Balram’s perception of self as part of the
global community in Bangalore revolves around a specific place, the cosmopolitan
stance empowers him to look beyond the hierarchized space of caste in his rural vil-
lage and to consider several places as his “home” – a cosmopolitan perception that
dissolves the boundary between the global and local (Thomashow, “Toward a Cos-
mopolitan Bioregionalism” 121–22). Consequently, his ambiguity over identity and
lack of sense of place, both in the rural village and the urban space of Dhanbad and
New Delhi, appears to be resolved when his multiple fragmented selves, as a poor
migrant and a rich entrepreneur, converge in the cosmopolitan space of Bangalore,
whose development is markedly different from that of his rural village and the urban
space of New Delhi.

Nonetheless, such a sense of community and pluralist identity should be grounded
in ethics, as Balram claims, that would destabilize the exploitative hierarchy of power:
“But I had to do something different; don’t you see? I can’t live the way the Wild Boar
and the Buffalo and the Raven lived, and probably still live, back in Laxmangarh. I am
in the Light now” (WT 313; emphasis original). Rather, he aims to provide effective
assistance to those in need of help in the city: “I have to stay in the office. In case there
is a crisis. […] I am the man people call when they have a crisis!” (WT 38). However, it
should be noted that Balram’s opposition to the hierarchical form of development does
not denote his apathy toward all sorts of development that Bangalore might undergo
for economic expansion. On the contrary, since Bangalore, as a space of international
business relations, encourages local professionals to start their own small-scale com-
panies “for expanding the local base of entrepreneurship” (Kumar and Joseph 95),
urbanization and the expansion of the city appear as an inevitable outcome, as Balram
contemplates the following:
When I drive down Hosur Main Road [...] and see the companies go past, I can’t tell you how exciting it is to me. General Electric, Dell, Siemens – they’re all here in Bangalore. And so many more are on their way. There is construction everywhere. Piles of mud everywhere. Piles of stones. Piles of bricks. The entire city is masked in smoke, smog, powder, cement dust. It is under a veil. When the veil is lifted, what will Bangalore be like?

Maybe it will be a disaster: slums, sewage, shopping malls, traffic jams, policemen. But you never know. It may turn out to be a decent city, where humans can live like humans and animals can live like animals. A new Bangalore for a new India. And then I can say that, in my own way, I helped to make New Bangalore. (WT 317)

Nevertheless, the creation of a “New” space, which differs from other urban spaces, relies on the constructive role of development and economic growth not modelled on class distinction. Therefore, although Bangalore might face urbanization in the same manner as Delhi, such urbanization, Balram assumes, might not be overwhelmingly controlled by the rich or the behemoths of globalization. Besides, despite the presence of global companies, Bangalore seems to remain a place where the force of globalization works in favour of the local economy, and the local culture is allowed to flourish. Accordingly, it is argued that Third World economies that can “delink” themselves from the deleterious effects of globalization of complete dependency on the West can develop local economic paradigms “largely self-sufficient in material terms” (Evanoff 148). Again, it is important to consider that in the age of “global capitalism” a neo-colonial strategy of connecting the local and the global works with an aim to homogenize the world, as Dirlik claims:

What is ironic is that the managers of this world situation themselves concede that they (or their organizations) now have the power to appropriate the local for the global, to admit different cultures into the realm of capital (only to break them down and remake them in accordance with the requirements of production and consumption), and even to reconstitute subjectivities across national boundaries [...]. Those who do not respond [...] need not be colonized; they are simply marginalized. What the new flexible production has made possible is that it is no longer necessary to utilize explicit coercion against labor at home or in colonies abroad. Those peoples or places that are not responsive to the needs (or demands) of capital [...] or are too far gone to respond ‘efficiently,’ simply find themselves out of its pathways. And it is easier even than in the heyday of colonialism or modernization theory to say convincingly: It is their own fault. (311)

The above view reifies the convoluted nature of development that promotes transnational relationships, connecting local and global places, as well as constrains spaces with the neo-colonial hierarchy of capitalist class. This hierarchy makes “colonialism [...] even more active now in the form of transnational corporatism” and “multiculturalism” (Miyoshi 79–98). In addition, it is suggested that although “multiculturalism” is used as a byword for “cultural diversity”, there is a necessity to inquire into its “politics” to underscore the “underlying social tensions, contradictions and conflicts” (Kuortti 19). The bioregional model of dissociating the local from the global, however, might accentuate such “conflicts” and corrode the transnational class hierarchy that
results predominantly in uneven relationships between spaces, the homogenization of distinct cultures, displacement, and the disintegration of migrant identity. This independent economic model termed “an alternative bioregional paradigm” repudiates neo-colonial control of the East, yet it takes into account the international assistance that can strengthen the local economy (Evanoff 150), which as a form of intervention by international establishments assist in the local and national development (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 300). In other words, both the global “non-interference” and support for the development of the local economy should be appreciated in the internalization of the global into the local, thereby upholding a cosmopolitan inclusiveness (Evanoff 150). Accordingly, by following the cosmopolitan bioregional directive of “[m]ove[ing] within and without”, the alternative development model is required to take into account both the benefits and consequences of globalization, as Thomashow claims: “Trace the ecological/economic pathway of everyday commodities to fully understand the impact of globalization – its benefits and threats” (“Toward a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism” 131; emphases original).

The paradigm of reassessing both the benefits and consequences of development can be viewed as a method of intervention or a survival strategy that, although initiated through migration from the rural to the urban by the rural poor, extends across the scales of cities. Bebbington clarifies the point: “[E]ven if analysis is place based it must still work across different scales, in two senses: by tracing the ways place-based strategies reach out across space; and by tracing the factors that originate in other places, and affect these place-based processes” (“Global Networks and Local Developments” 302). And similarly, the capitalist hierarchy of class and other environmental “factors” evident in the city of Delhi inform such development strategies in Bangalore. In consequence, a recalibration of the constructive role of the ongoing project of development as well as its serious undesirable effects on the environment as delineated in Balram’s sense of place in Bangalore should form the core of a cosmopolitan identity. That is to say, the separation between the “India of Light” and the “India of Darkness”, as perceived by Balram, based on the contradictory attributes of development that offer economic opportunity as well as disregard the agency of human ‘others’ and nature, is resolved by adopting an economic model characterized by both interdependence and independence. Therefore, the expansion of the cosmopolitan space of Bangalore for such inclusion resolves his ambiguity over his sense of place since the interconnectedness of the global and local appears to be a desirable and a necessary configuration to establish an economically and environmentally sustainable local society that is inclusive of humans and nature.

The intervention of transnational establishments in the development of the local, thus, can be seen to depend on a network of interrelations between places that incorporate humans and nature across spatial scales. Along with its emphasis on an independent model of economy, the alternative development paradigm acknowledges the agency of nature, which can have a devastating impact on human health and livelihoods and cause a calamitous halt to economic progress. Nonetheless, it should be clarified that an understanding of the agency of nature does not imply a separation from the project of development and, thereby, a return to the idyllic pre-development bioregion. Rather the model of development should consider the possibility of a human’s identification with nature in the region and to “relocalize the affections and actions of inhabitants in a manner that is socially inclusive, ecologically regenerative, economically sustainable, and spiritually fulfilling” (Thayer 67–68). Consequently, as Balram can perceive the correlation between the process of development in the city
and its consequences which appear to restrict the space of the poor, as argued above, his dreams of making a “New Bangalore” are rooted in the new model of development which reappraises the risk of the environmental abuse entailed by urbanization and its impact on both local and global bioregions. Accordingly, as “a man of action and change” (WT 5, 12), Balram explicates the way in which he aspires to participate in the development of a pluralistic society, economy, and culture:

Am I not a part of all that is changing this country? Haven’t I succeeded in the struggle that every poor man here should be making – the struggle […] not to end up in a mound of indistinguishable bodies that will rot in the black mud of Mother Ganga? […]

I think I might sell everything, take the money, and start a school – an English-language school – for poor children in Bangalore. A school where you won’t be allowed to corrupt anyone’s head with prayers and stories about God or Gandhi – nothing but the facts of life for these kids. A school full of White Tigers, unleashed on Bangalore! We’d have this city at our knees […] (WT 317–319)

Therefore, while Balram was excluded from the process of decision-making related to the development of the urban space of New Delhi, in Bangalore he aims to participate in the project of development through offering basic amenities such as free education to the poor, the lack of which has affected their livelihoods, as argued above, by trapping them on the bottom rung of the hierarchy of class. Similarly, as it is believed that apart from the lack of “material consumption”, “environmental quality” and “political freedom”, the deprivation of “education” can also result in “poverty” (H. White 33), Balram’s aim to restore children’s rights to education can be viewed as part of his rural development plan in the urban space to destroy poverty in people from the rural. Education, then, as a survival strategy, will aid the human ‘others’ in becoming the “actors” who will decide on the nature of development in the cosmopolitan space (Bebbington, “Global Networks and Local Developments” 302). Thus, under this development model, the system of education should serve the communities’ own good in the way proposed by Evanoff: “Rather than provide education aimed at increasing technical skills so that people in developing countries can eventually get jobs producing goods for export to developed countries, education should be aimed at providing individuals with the skills necessary to produce goods for themselves and improve their own societies” (150). Although skilful participation is encouraged for local well-being and the progress of local economy, the involvement of people from different spaces of India can also ensure the economic growth of the country. In addition, the agentic participation of all human groups in the development of a “New” space and in its decision-making process establishes a network of mutual correspondence between people across spaces (rural/urban, local/global, and national/international), and might contribute to the deconstruction of the social hierarchy grounded mostly on caste and class in rural and urban spaces.

This chapter has explored the relationship between local and global places marked by contradictions of development and has analysed the way development precipitates both a lack of agentic sense of self and a cosmopolitan identity. Through an analysis of the protagonist’s sense of self, I have evaluated the nature of development across spaces (local and global/transnational) of the narrative and revealed the specific contexts of development in which connections and/or dissociations between places should be established. Moreover, it has been shown how the power binary of development inter-
sects with social stratifications of class and caste that disregard the agency of the poor and nature and creates an ambiguity that discourages them from associating either with the local or the global. Following both an independent and an interdependent model of development based on a cosmopolitan understanding of humans and nature as agentic beings, this chapter has explicated ways in which ambiguities over identity can be resolved in a pluralist space that emphasizes the local as well as considers the exigency of global and local interconnection.
6 CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have attempted to situate the interrelations between postcolonial place, space, and the environment within the purview of the politics of postcolonial identity in relation to three contemporary Anglophone Indian novels. In so doing, I have focused on a geographical and ecocritical understanding of the colonial and postcolonial spaces of India embroiled principally in the socio-cultural rhetorics of gender, class, caste, and an overarching colonial ideology of race. I started out by charting an interdisciplinary theoretical model, yoking together geographical analyses of spatial divisions and ecocritical explorations of the agency and “materiality” of nature, non-humans, and human ‘others’, which has enabled the thesis to explicate ways in which the sense of place and identity of the marginalized can be viewed as congruent with their understanding of the agency of nature in spaces untrammelled by gender, race, class, and caste hierarchy.

While any theoretical discipline dealing with colonial/neo-colonial ideology cannot but include “environment” as part of human culture (Mukherjee, “Surfing the Second Waves” 144), geographical studies on shifting spatial boundaries should incorporate, as the thesis has suggested, the agency of nature as a predominant category that, like the cultural constructs of gender, race, class, and caste, impacts the sense of place of humans and even occasions their displacement and migration. Again, since space or land lays the framework within which humans–nonhumans interactions occur (Thayer 69), ecocriticism, which has argued for the need to dissolve the culture/nature, humans/nonhumans, and logic/emotion dualisms, among others, is required to consider, as the thesis has shown, geographical phenomena, such as the process of reshaping local/rural landscape and spatial segregation, which often recreate binaries modelled on the coordinates of gender, race, class, and caste. In other words, whereas ecocriticism’s dialectic of nonhuman agency can underscore the sense of place in a colonial/neo-colonial space, geographical enquiry into the loss of land, displacement, and migration can offer a glimpse into the specificities of dualisms, which are not only felt across spatial scales, but are also reproduced in spaces demarcated by the social privileges of gender, race, class, caste, among others. This approach has enabled the study to analyse the way the act of crossing spatial boundaries defined for different groups can offer a sense of place to the marginalized, overcoming dualist models of power hierarchy and establishing an identity both in association with and in separation from nature.

Chapter 2 has provided a discussion of the various theoretical positions applied in the textual analyses. Whereas the concept of “sense of place”, or “making a place” out of space has been understood in the light of feminist, cultural, and development geographical analyses along the axes of gender, race, and caste/class, respectively, the materiality of nature and its impact on identity, marked by gender, race, and class, has been explored by incorporating the disciplines of materialist ecofeminism, animal philosophical studies, and cosmopolitan bioregionalism. Finally, this theoretical chapter, which has served as the framework for the critical analytical discussions of space and environment, has combined the discussions of feminist geography with ecofeminism, cultural geography of race with animal studies, and development geography with cosmopolitan bioregionalism to accentuate the relations of power between centre and periphery. The chapter has, thus, shown how the relations of power work along
the coordinates of race and gender, race and class, and race and caste/class, which refuse to acknowledge the agency of both human ‘others’ and nonhumans.

Chapter 3 has examined Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*. The chapter has mapped the dualist paradigm inherent in the nineteenth-century space of colonial India as represented in the novel and analysed women’s spatial boundaries along the lines of race and gender. By focusing on two central female characters of the novel, this chapter has argued for the recalibration of the women–nature relationship, which is compatible with women’s shifting spatial contours and their acquisition of an agentic sense of self. By exploring a range of gendered spaces upholding the colonial and patriarchal power hierarchy, such as their homes, mansions, agricultural lands, and gardens, the interface between race and gender has been highlighted. While the first part of this chapter has examined the gendered indigenous space of a native woman, the second part has been preoccupied with the gendered, restricted ‘white’ space encountered by a white female character of the novel. Therefore, it has been suggested that a sense of self can be recuperated in spaces such as a refurbished slave ship that, unmarked by the social hierarchies, rejects the paradigm of duality, involving men (culture, mind)/women (nature, the body), public/private, reason/emotion, and rationality/ethics, among others. Such a sense of place, it has also been shown, allows for an understanding of the interdependence between culture and nature as well as the recognition of nature as an agentic force.

While the spatiality of gendered space in this chapter has been explored employing the feminist geographical conceptualization of women’s restricted spaces grounded in emotion and care and its impact on their identity, their understanding of the agency of nature that often causes their migration as well as shapes their harmonious relationship with both nature and culture has been illustrated through materialist ecofeminist assertions of human bodily interconnections with nature. Thus, the materiality of the toxic body in a gendered space has been understood in relation to the toxic environment, a revelation that informs women’s awareness of the agency of nature. Accordingly, by rejecting the charges of essentialism that women are closer to nature because of their bodily resemblances to nature or their reproductive capacity, as cultural ecofeminists opine, this chapter has presented a materialist analysis of the biological body (of both men and women) and built a connection of materiality between the human body and nature, which has been highlighted in women’s understanding of the human–nature embedded relationship. However, it is important to consider that although feminist geography has called attention to the concept of the body as intricately linked with identity, the feminist geographical understanding of the body principally centres on its social construction and discursive production, trenchantly criticized by materialist ecofeminists as discussed above. Therefore, it is often argued that the body is perceived as a passive object in feminist studies – a surface onto which different cultural meanings can be ascribed (Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* 3). This research, instead, following in the footsteps of materialist ecofeminist dialectic of human body, has illustrated how a nature–culture correlation can be established by taking into account the human–nature biological correspondence and, as a result, has not taken into consideration the culturally produced discursive female body and its varying meanings across spatial scales. That is to say, the present research has not reflected on the idea of a gendered body as part of a gendered space as feminist geographers argue; rather, the matter of the body has been underlined in this chapter with regard to women’s consideration of the human–nature bodily interconnection.
In Chapter 4, human–nonhuman relations have been mapped along a post-independence-racial-landscape of India through a reading of Kiran Desai’s Booker-winning-novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. By focusing on the loss of sense of place of the westernized judge, one of the central characters of the novel, it has been explicated that a separate racialized space termed as ‘modern’ can be created through an uneven human–companion animal relationship, where the animal is often expected to act as the substitute for humans. And, it is this expectation from companion animals that informs the sense of place of the owner in the demarcated racialized space. Moreover, with the analysis of the peculiarities of the practice of attributing human mental status to animals or anthropomorphism, the study has made a contribution to understanding the interrelation between the dualist patterns of human/human ‘others’ and humans/nonhumans. In this context, the loss of the sense of place and identity of the judge has been shown as coterminous with the invasion of his ‘modern’ space and the loss of his companion animal that compel him to cross the boundary of racialized space and enter the space of human ‘others’.

This chapter has emphasized the racialized idiosyncrasies of a colonial bungalow in the Himalayan landscape through the cultural geographical dialectic of British hill stations marked out from the rest of India by the colonialist ideology of racial superiority, replicating the Western landscape in the East. The cultural geographical perception of race relations has also been beneficial in foregrounding a race–class interrelationship, which exacerbates class tensions and spatial divisions between ‘modern’, western-educated Indians and the indigenous peoples of the territory. Furthermore, it has suggested that the anthropocentric and anthropomorphic relationship between the judge and his dog has been symptomatic of such class tensions and social alienation of the judge from the space of human ‘others’. In exploring the process of anthropomorphism, an inquiry into the concept of an owner’s empathy toward a pet has been made in the chapter to locate the hierarchical relationship between the pet and its owner. While the study has taken into consideration human emotional dependency on animals, the act of pet-keeping, symbolizing high social status, and the owner’s ambiguous behaviour toward the companion animal in considering both the similarities and differences between humans and animals have been perceived as part of the process of humanizing animals in a hybrid space (Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures* 5). Nonetheless, the deconstructive typology of the interspecies relationship has been mostly grounded in interdisciplinary human–animal studies, whereas the exploration of the “animality” of the companion animal in the racialized landscape has made occasional references to animal geography, which has been crucial to illustrating the complex matrix of power relations and animal embeddedness in the construction of a racial or a class-based landscape for humans. Therefore, by investigating the power hierarchy between humans that can act as the fulcrum of the anthropomorphic attitude toward animals in everyday shared spaces, disregarding the agency of animals, the study has underscored the imbricated concerns of the disciplines of animal geography and ecocritical rhetoric on nonhuman agency.

The question of the human–nonhuman divide that places human ‘others’ and nature against man and culture in the neo-colonial spaces of developing economies has been discussed in relation to class and caste hierarchy in Chapter 5 on Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*. The way in which the dualism is maintained by both the social echelons of caste and class, and the unequal power structure of development in the novel has been explicated in view of the separation between local and global places, or the exploitation of local places, their environment, and human ‘others’ for the profit
of global/transnational spaces. By emphasizing the conundrum of development as both offering “strategies” of survival (Bebbington, “Movements, Modernizations and Markets” 87–90) to the protagonist of the novel and leading to his dehumanization, the role of development in both accepting and denying the agency of human ‘others’ and nature has been explored across the local and global places of the novel. Accordingly, it has been contended that since the process of development both offers economic opportunity and denies the agency of human ‘others’, their identity is marked by an ambiguity that discourages them from associating either with the local or the global. In evaluating the resolvability of such ambiguity, this chapter has argued for the necessity of developing a cosmopolitan, pluralist understanding of the process of development and an agentic correspondence between human and the environment that, recalibrating the dual nature of development and its impact on both humans and nature, can provide a sense of place both in local and global places untrammelled by social hierarchies such as class and caste.

The inherent contradiction of development that can be perceived along local and global places has been explored in this chapter through a development geographical analysis of the binary model of development and its imbrication in imperial land policy, corruption, class, and caste tensions linked with the colonial past of India. By examining the tendency of development to both offer “making a living” (Bebbington, “Reencountering Development” 498) and maintain the power hierarchy that has brought about poverty and underdevelopment to some parts of India, this branch of geographical analysis has offered a broadly congenial discourse for evaluating the necessity of establishing a connection or dissociation between local and global places, which is correlated to, as this chapter has described, the ambiguous migrant identity of the novel. Nonetheless, aside from the development geographical concerns over the environment being a recipient of the consequences of development, a bioregional cosmopolitan perception of society inclusive of nonhumans and nature has been emphasized in this chapter as a method of connecting the local with the global and developing a local and a global interdependent community. Furthermore, it has been claimed that such a sense of cosmopolitan community can resolve the migrants’ ambiguity toward their identity in a pluralist space that recognizes the agency of all human groups and adopts an alternative development method, which is both independent and interconnected with rural, urban, and other transnational spaces.

In sum, the study contributes to the politics of postcolonial identity with an emphasis on the intersection between the spatiality of place and the materiality of environment, a correlation that enabled the research to critically consider the coordinates of gender, race, class, caste, and environment in the context of colonial, postcolonial, and the neo-colonial hierarchy of domination. Since the history of colonialism and the process of neo-colonialism are aligned with that of ecological devastation (DeLoughrey and Handley 20), it appears impossible to analyse identity politics in developing economies in separation from the ecological and colonial history of domination. Moreover, while it is a common concern within ecocritical studies that the discipline remains mostly oriented toward the West (DeLoughrey and Handley 8) and thus has expressed only localized concerns over local people, their identity, and the environment (Heise, “Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn” 384), this study has provided a matrix of a range of spatial scales, involving the local and the global, and the rural and the urban, into which both postcolonial inflections of marginalized identity, intersected by gender, race, class, and caste, as well as the colonial environment fit. Nonetheless, although the study cannot negate the importance of analysing the way
in which colonial knowledge of dualism is represented in relation to the discursive fields of race, gender, class, and caste, the representational strategies of the three texts, such as the role of language or its metaphorical expressions have remained outside the focus of this study. In addition, postcolonial ecocritical concerns over the question of narrative authenticity or who speaks for the marginalized or for the agentic presence of nature (Head 38; DeLoughrey and Handley 25) have not been examined in this study and require further attention. Similarly, further studies are required to explore the textual production of place in these novels since the research has closely dealt with the “material social relations” of place (McDowell and Sharp, “Feminist Geography” 91) that formulate the rhetorics of gender, race, class, and caste. Nevertheless, the study’s focus on the “material social relations” between human groups and between humans and nonhumans has paved the way to define the sense of place of the marginalized, congruent with the closure of dualisms between man and woman, nature and culture, reason and emotion, human and human ‘others’, and the local and the global, among others. And the politics of identity as well as postcolonial epistemology can be grounded in this hybrid framework of human–nonhuman interdependence.
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Space, Place, and the Environment in the Contemporary Anglophone Indian Novel explores postcolonial identity politics through the lenses of place, space and the environment in relation to three contemporary Anglophone Indian novels. By combining human geography with ecocriticism, the study locates marginalized sense of place at the intersection of the socio-cultural categories of gender, race, class and caste and the materiality of the environment of postcolonial spaces.

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