

The Theme of the Apocalypse in Mahesh Elkunchwar's *The Wada Trilogy*: An Ecocritical Study

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Abstract:

Ecological awareness as an academic pursuit has gained unprecedented attention especially during the first decade of the twenty-first century. The conservation of Nature, irrespective of cultures and conventions across the globe, has become a matter of urgent consideration. The ethical systems of human societies have put ecosystems of the earth in serious jeopardy. Today, the world- human, animal, and natural- is facing a global crisis. The intelligentsia, the world leaders, the business tycoons, the world organizations are much concerned over the issues of nature conservation. Literature being the mirror of society cannot stay aloof from such global issues. Nature writing has been as old as literary creations. But the study of literature from the viewpoint of a literary theory that specifically addresses the representation of nature in a literary text is a recent phenomenon. The celebrated term Ecocriticism got currency during the 1990s. It started as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. The literary critics, like historians, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming. Nonetheless, they can help with understanding. Not all literary authors might be involved in specific nature writing. But a literary work would incorporate nature as a setting and conditioning for delineation of the human action. The present article attempts to study the depiction of nature in Mahesh Elkunchwar's magnum opus play *The Wada Trilogy*.

Keywords: Culture, Ecological Awareness, Ecocriticism, Environment, Literature, Illumination.

*What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.*

- Gerard Manley Hopkins. "Inversnaid"

Human life, and its nurture, is possible only through Nature. The human nurture and culture cannot be imagined without the context of Nature. The primitive human societies utilized Nature owing a great reverence to it. The post-industrialization human societies claimed too much share from Nature. The human ego got floated owing to the immense growth of science and technology. From the most loved of the Creation, human being leaped to the status of the most intelligent and creative of the Creation. Human beings thought they can conquer Nature. They not only can understand the workings of Nature but, can change its course and schedule it according to their convenience. Poets, thinkers, philosophers, and creative pantheists, on the other hand, have been trying hard to make a sense that Nature is very kind and it gives back to Mankind what it offers. But, Nature returns in abundance. The extreme greed and the consequent reckless abuse of Nature have severely damaged the ecosystems of Nature. The world today is witnessing multiple environmental issues so much so that the world leaders and world organizations have had to take its cognizance as a top priority. The environmental issues have become a must and a core subject across the disciplines across the globe. Literature mirrors society. The creative writers, the poets, to quote Coleridge, 'are the acknowledged legislators of the world.' They may not exert direct control and power in any governing system, but they are capable of being the whistle-blowers. If a literary work of art is the representation of a slice of human life, then, this life cannot get depicted without its setting. And the setting is always provided by Nature. So a literary work of art contains a depiction of Nature. Some writers like the pastoral writers of the Greek or Roman period, of the epics and dramas of the ancient Sanskrit period or the writers from the Romantic periods all over the world, have chosen the Nature as one of the prominent subjects of literary expression. Not all literary works would be nature writings. But there are references to Nature and environment in a literary work of art, directly or indirectly.

The study of literature as a discipline has been as old as the known literary creation. But the twentieth century has witnessed unprecedented growth and development in terms of the

theories and approaches to the study of literature. The Psychoanalytic, the Marxist, the Postcolonial, and the Feminist approaches, among many others, have changed the course of the perception and the reception of literary work of art. The induction of the modern linguistic theories propounded by Saussure and later on developed by the linguists and thinkers like Jacobson and Derrida, just to name a few, have drastically changed the course of literary theories and approaches. One of the comparatively recent approaches to the study of literary works is the discipline that studies the relationships between literature and the physical environment. This theoretical proposition is popularly known as Ecocriticism. The term, or rather an approach, is the combination of the two words- Ecology and Criticism. The term refers to the study of the ecological concerns as reflected in a literary work of art. The Ecocritical approach is one of the comparatively recent approaches. The origin of the term Ecocriticism is credited to William Rueckert. In his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" published in 1978, Rueckert first mentioned the term. But it didn't come in the academic discourse almost for a decade. Cheryll Glotfelty, then an undergraduate student at Cornell University, New York, revived the term Ecocriticism in 1989 meeting of Western Literature Association held in Coeur d'Alene, a city in northwest Idaho, brimming with trees, mountains, and lakes. Since then, the term Ecocriticism received greater and serious attention in academic parlance. Later on, Cheryll Glotfelty, among many others, elaborated on the approach in Position Papers on defining Ecocritical Theory and Practice presented in the 1994 meeting of the Western Literary Association held in Salt Lake City, Utah. The elaboration of Ecocriticism by Glotfelty set rolling the discourse on Ecocritical approaches to literary works. Cheryll Glotfelty defined Ecocriticism in the following words:

Simply defined, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (7)

Glotfelty emphasized the 'earth-centered approach to literary studies'. Poets and philosophers, across space and time, have expressed the need for the earth-centered approach to human existence. One of the great transcendental writers of America, Walt Whitman, emphatically

endorsed the urgent need of the earth-centered approach to every domain of existence- human and animal- in equal measures. In his celebrated poem 'Song of the Rolling Earth', Whitman professes the future of the theoretical approaches to human sciences:

There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborates the theory of the earth,
No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of account,
unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,
Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the
earth.

The Ecocritical approaches to literature studies follow the outline sketched by Whitman. The ecocritical approach premises on the interconnectedness between human culture and the nature that sustains it. Cheryll Glotfelty brilliantly summarizes this interconnectedness as the basis of ecological criticism that, "as a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman," and argues that, "Ecocriticism expands the notion of "the world" to include the entire ecosphere." (7) In the wake of the crucial times the human and the nonhuman world is passing through, the ecological awareness and the corrective measures in every walk of life are the need of the hour. Nature has signaled from time to time a need to take a halt and weigh the human course of life. The customary lockdown of the wheels of human progress owing to the Corona-virus pandemic has once again put mankind in reverse gear and forced it to recast its foundations of existence. One of the effects of the lockdown is seen in the course of Nature. Nature is reinstating itself from the unwarranted and unethical abuses thrust upon it by mankind through its adulterous ideas of success and progress. The pollution level has drastically reduced. The rivers, the blood vessels of the ecosystems, and the giver of life to the inmates of the Mother Nature are restoring their purity. And the animal world is happy to have its habitat as a no man's zone! It is high time to give serious thought to the foundations of human existence. It is time to listen to the calls of nature and nature lovers. In this regard, Cheryl Glotfelty emphatically points out the concerns expressed by the historian Donald Worster:

We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even

more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding. (*The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* [New York: Oxford UP, 1993] 27. (7)

Worster has made a very poignant observation. The historians or the philosophers or the literary writers and scholars may not be the agents of change, but for sure they can play the vital role as the agents of a sincere and urgent understanding of the environmental crisis. Many literary writers have addressed the issues about Nature. The Greeks, the ancient Indians, the Elizabethans, the Romantics on both sides of the Atlantic have been avid nature writers. The renowned Marathi playwright Mahesh Elkunchwar has not written specific nature literature. But many of his literary works have a strong urge for the elements of Nature. Some of the memories from his book *Maunrag* are the brilliant invocations to the spirit of Nature. The pond, the river, and the stars recurrently appear in his plays. Nature specifically gets depicted in his play *The Wada Trilogy*, especially in the last play of the trilogy *Yugant (Apocalypse)*.

Mahesh Elkunchwar is one of the prominent playwrights of the Marathi theatre. He has played an important role in the shaping of modern, Post-Independence Indian theatre along with other noted playwrights such as Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, and Satish Alekar. Shanta Gokhale, the eminent theatre critic, remarks, “Mahesh Elkunchwar is arguably the best-known Marathi playwright in the country after Vijay Tendulkar.” (270) His plays originally written in Marathi have been translated in many Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, and Kannada, along with English and other European languages such as French and German. Vijaya Mehta, the noted actor, and director who has directed many of Elkunchwar's plays, aptly marks Elkunchwar's place as a playwright: □

Of his generation, Mahesh Elkunchwar is the only playwright with a truly pan-India reach. His plays are widely translated and produced in many Indian languages, particularly Bengali. Leading international theatre festivals in Europe frequently feature staged readings of Elkunchwar's plays in English and other European languages. This once again proves his present day relevance and acceptance even internationally. (xii) □

Elkunchwar is credited with giving a trilogy, and probably the only trilogy, to the Marathi theatre. *The Wada Trilogy* has become a milestone in the history of Marathi as well as Indian theatre. The three plays of the Trilogy, however, were not written in succession. The celebrated play was written in 1985. The second play *Magna Talyakathi (The Pond)* was written in 1992, and the third *Yugant (Apocalypse)* was written in 1994. *Wada Chirebandi (Old Stone Mansion)* is a complete, well-structured play in itself and has had a very successful run on the Marathi stage. The two plays *Magna Talyakathi (The Pond)* and *Yugant (Apocalypse)* continue the story of the Dharangaonkar Deshpande family. The Awishkar, the production house, performed a seven-hour long *The Wada Trilogy, Yugant* in original Marathi, at Ravindra Bhavan, Mumbai, on 11 April 1994. And after the success of this performance, the three plays came to be known as Elkunchwar's magnum opus play *The Wada Trilogy*.

The Wada Trilogy parades in a story of the Dhrangaonkar Deshpande family running through five generations from Dadi, the mother of Tatyaji, in *Wada Chirebandi (Old Stone Mansion)* to Bal, the son of Parag in *Yugant (Apocalypse)*. The *Wada* (a stone mansion) remains a central place of action throughout the Trilogy. It is the ancestral mansion of the Deshpande family, the landed gentry of the village Dharangaon in Vidharbha, Maharashtra. Tatyaji and Aai have four children namely- Bhaskar, Sudhir, Prabha, and Chandu. Dadi, a very old woman, deaf and blind, is Tatyaji's mother. Bhaskar, the eldest son, his wife, Vahini and their two children, Parag and Ranju live in the wada. He looks after the family farms. Prabha is the unmarried daughter of Tatyaji. She stays in the Wada. Chandu, the youngest son also is unmarried and lives in the Wada. Another son Sudhir has sought a job in Mumbai. He has been married to a *Kokanastha Mumbaikar* Anjali. She is also a working woman. They have a son Abhay. They live in Mumbai in a two-room flat. They come to the wada occasionally. Tatyaji (Venkatesh) never appears on the stage, but exerts a powerful presence throughout *Old Stone Mansion* and is mentioned in the next two plays of the *Trilogy*. The plays in the trilogy deal with many themes like the impact of the changing times on the people in the villages, the migrations, the disintegrations of the family ties, the divide between the village and city life, the crumbling of the agrarian life, rapidly changing human values and their impact on the human relationships. One of the dominant themes in the *Trilogy* is the process of degeneration in every walk of life. In the introduction to *The Wada Trilogy*, Samik Bandyopadhyay aptly points out that the

degeneration takes place "within the family, in relationships, in the community, in nature" (1). The degeneration that starts in the first play *Wada Chirebandi* culminates as an apocalypse in the last play *Yugant*. This play carries the weight of the concerns for nature and its ecosystems, of course, as a powerful setting for the action of the inmates of the play.

The process of the degeneration in every walk of life gets set in the very first play *Wada Chirebandi*. The play progresses through the disputes of the family members after the death of Tatyaji, the head of the family. Of the four children of Tatyaji, Bhaskar, and Sudhir dispute over the family land and the gold. Prabha wants her share in the family gold. Only Chandu makes no claims to the family property. Sudhir and Anjali have kept Abhay, their son aloof from the Wada affairs and the relations. He stays in Mumbai for his studies. Parag, the son of Bhaskar and Vahini, stays in the village. He shows no liking for the studies. Herein are sowed the seeds of clash in the relationship between Parag and Abhay. Bhaskar and Vahini earnestly long for Parag being taken to Mumbai so that he would change his behaviour in the company of Abhay. Sudhir and Anjali, obviously do not take Parag with them to Mumbai. Parag gets extremely angry with his uncle. These fractured relations with the Mumbaikars' get depicted in the second play *Magna Talyakathi*. The play depicts the estranged relationships of the Wada people. The focus of the play, however, shifts from the second generation of the Deshpandes' to the third generation. The relationships between Parag and Abhay and between Parag and his wife Nandini emerge as the prominent relationships in the play. The last play of the *Trilogy*, *Apocalypse (Yugant)* continues the relationships between Parag and Abhay on one hand and between Parag and Nandini on the other. The third important relationship is between Abhay and his American wife, Cynthia. On the one hand, the play depicts the human drama of suffering and loss of hope and on the other, the resilience of the characters to survive in the holocaust created by the extreme drought. The play carries in itself the philosophical propositions of the earlier two plays of the *Trilogy*. It also carries the preoccupations and positions of the playwright. In this regard, Anand Lal aptly comments, "It is perhaps his [Elkunchwar's] bleakest vision, as searing as the white heat blasts through its parched landscape, exposing human life like the stench of death, bleached bones littering the arid soil" (xxi). The characters in *Apocalypse* transcend their identity from just the family members of the Deshpandes to the universal beings. Sanjay Arvikar rightly comments, "The characters in the *Trilogy* in the first two plays behave as the carriers of the traditional

values of the wada. But in the *Apocalypse*, they take a sudden turn and attempt to become the representatives of the entire humankind." (46)

The total holocaust depicted in the last play of the Trilogy, *Yugant*, gets set in the second play, *Magna Talyakathi (The Pond)*. *The Pond* opens ten years after the closing action of *Old Stone Mansion*. Many changes have taken place in the village and the wada people in these ten years. Parag has taken over to be the master of the mansion. He has played a key role in reinstating the family honour of the Deshpandes that his ancestors attained and Tatyaji, his grandfather maintained. His word has become the final verdict even in every-day family matters. He has amassed enough wealth and given stability to the house. But there is a bleak side to this bright prosperity. He has involved himself in a profession of trading in teakwood. He has not obtained a license for such trading and carries out his illegal business with his partners Subhedarsingh and Lala. He has managed the top politicians and bigwigs and offers party to the top officials very often. Bhaskar does not mind the business of his son, rather he tells Sudhir, "the world has changed (WT 159)." The family is enjoying all material comforts and so Bhaskar has no complaints about the actions and behaviour of Parag. Parag has an open alliance with a village widow Maina. She has hung their photograph in the verandah of her hut. Vahini is much concerned about the villagers' wrath. Besides, it is a blot on their family honour for Ranju and Parag are still unmarried. But nobody dares stop Parag from continuing his illegal business or illicit relationship. Parag has involved himself in the illegal business and at times behaves rudely with his relations. He is not much educated but has the sensibilities of a poet. He deeply cares for all his relations and associations. For him, the pond is a strong point of attraction. He grieves over people having polluted the pond and turning it into a dumping ground. Parag keeps stars and the pond as his eternal company. In a monologue, Parag pours out his feelings for the stars and the pond: □

Once your gaze fixes on this star-filled sky, you forget all else. It's as if a pool of radiant light has been upturned over you. Drink your fill from it, you will never empty it. It's there for everybody. What is this inexhaustible spring? What could be the purpose of it all? Every day, new stars, new constellations, new galaxies are born, then die. What does it signify? Who creates all this? This infinite space, its gigantic events, and our minuscule lives. What's the connection (WT 186)?

Parag's monologue in *The Pond* is a prelude to his view of life that is elaborated in the last play *Apocalypse*. The thoughts of the purpose, aim, and the meaning of human life in the scheme of the vast universe trouble both Parag and Abhay. In the same monologue, Parag raises many of the existential dilemmas that have plagued humankind since the dawn of human consciousness. He asks whether our life and death are mere accidents, mere events, unimportant, trivial, and purposeless. Pitched against the cosmic universe what is the significance of human lives? Why do people burden themselves with joys and sorrows? Parag identifies himself with the stars and wants to communicate with them, but he could not understand their language. He feels that he has deep relations with the stars. This cosmic consciousness of Parag forms an important part of *Yugant (Apocalypse)*.

The relationships between Parag and Abhay form the core of the last play of the *Trilogy, Yugant (Apocalypse)*. Their relationships are presented through the juxtapositions of their views and responses to life, through their associations and sense of belongingness, and most importantly through their intimate relationships with their wives and children. *Yugant* opens eight years later the closing action of *The Pond*. So many happenings have taken place in these eight years. In the closing scene of *The Pond*, Chandu leaves the village in search of the pond; Abhay leaves for America intending to settle down there for his research in genetics, and also for his love for Cynthia; Parag goes to the jail for his illegal woodcutting, and Nandini is pregnant. *Apocalypse* opens in the same wada but this time it has lost its grandeur. It is high noon. Nandini is sitting on the verandah, amidst the burning heat of the summer, and a cloud of dust blows in with every sigh of the wind. Abhay enters, covered in dust, exhausted by the heat, panting, licking his parched lips. The elaborate stage directions sketch a picture of the village amidst the desert.

The Wada and the village have become a deserted place. The region has been facing drought for many consecutive years. Nandini tells Abhay that Bal, her son, has not seen the rain since his birth. Many of the villagers have left their homes in search of water and food. Of the wada people, Bhaskar and Aai are dead, Sudhir and Anjali live in Mumbai and it seems they have not come to the village in these years. Vahini has gone to live with her married daughter Ranju. In wada, only three people live- Parag, Nandini, and their son Bal. When the play opens, only Nandini and Bal are in the wada. Parag has gone to Kashi to perform the last rites of his grandmother, Aai. Abhay comes to the village after eight years after he left it the last time. He

has been living with Cynthia first in America and recently in Sweden. He comes to the village after he gets the news of the death of Aai. But on his way from Sweden to Dharangaon, he hasn't dropped into Mumbai to meet his parents there. He has lost, it seems, touch with them during these eight years.

In Dharangaon, the people have been facing severe drought. The fields have gone unyielding; the wells and the pond dried. There is no water except the government tankers. Many villagers have died of disease, hunger, and thirst. Many have deserted their homes. There are no trees left, nor the birds and animals except the vultures. On his way to the Village Abhay gets these horrifying pictures of the dance of death and decay. He wonders how Parag and Nandini could live in such severe conditions with their little kid. The philosophical discussions in *Apocalypse* are set against this inferno. The details of the village and its surroundings serve as pointers to various issues of human existence especially amidst the swarms of adversities and the dance of death. It is in the adversities that humankind's virtues are put to test. It is in the storm that the mariners' skills and courage are put to the test. Abhay, Nandini, and Parag are placed against this inferno. It is through their interactions, the play brings forth the eternal issues of human life: What role does destiny play in human life? What is the meaning humankind's existence? How does the existence matter in the grand scheme of the universe? Where does lie the ultimate value of human life? What are the means and what is the end to achieve in life? The characters in *Apocalypse* take on a journey in the pursuit of these questions and try to come to the solutions to them as they face life.

Abhay has traveled a long distance to come to wada. His journey to this place is an ordeal. The last time his visit was a family trip. He was with his parents and traveled in a car. He came there for the wedding and so the wada was in a jubilant mood. This time he is a lonely traveler. Even on the bus he took for the village, there was no fellow traveler except the driver. The bus failed halfway and could not reach the village. He had to take his journey on foot, under the hot blazing sun. On his way, he walked through the desert, the skeletons, the dried pond, and dried leafless trees. There was no sign of vegetation, of living things:

I just managed to drag myself here through the blistering heat. Not a tree, not a bush. Foot-burning yellow dust underneath. And above a blazing sky like a furnace burst open. Around me, the earth cracked and fissured as far as the eye could see (WT 209).

The external symbols of loneliness, of draught, of death, of the wasteland, correspond to the deserted, dry, alienated, isolated, and uprooted life of Abhay. Among many other things, the memories of the pond, the stars, the smell of the middle room of wada, the fragrance of *kewara* pulled him to that place. He came in search of his lost roots, belongings, ties, attachments, peace of mind, and solace to the troubled soul. But the same wasteland welcomed him.

Yugant works through the brilliant juxtapositions not only of the lives of Abhay, Parag and Nandini, but also the cosmic elements. The waste, barren, unyielding land is the central symbol in the play. The draught in Dharangaon and the snow-covered land in Sweden produce the same result. Abhay finds it difficult to accommodate himself in either surrounding. He runs from places to places, like Chandukaka, in the hope of a suitable environment for both body and mind, but feels unable to cope with the given surroundings. The thought of extinction terrifies him. The furies of death and decay horrify him. His troubled relations with his parents and with his American wife, added with childlessness have created much unease for him. His research in genetics and his achievements as a scientist give him no relief, for he feels guilty of meddling with nature's scheme. He feels envious of the ties between Parag and Nandini. Abhay's angst is juxtaposed with the calm acceptance and courage shown by Parag and Nandini even in the face of the holocaust. The play *Yugant* has very little physical activity. There are discursive dialogues and long monologues through which the philosophical questions of life get expounded. The play has been criticized for being less dramatic and being more a piece of philosophical discourse. Though the criticism is valid, yet, as the concluding part of the *Trilogy*, *Yugant* stands as a complete play both on the stage and on the page. The play succeeds through its cosmic, timeless settings in creating the elements of pity and fear in the minds of the audience. *Yugant* is a moving tale of the common ordinary people pitched against the raw, harsh nature and the environment. However, it does not end on the pessimistic note. Rather it assures the existence of values, of human relations as the means of survival against hostile surroundings. The prototype of Parag-Nandini-Bal would stand as one of the many possibilities of a meaningful human existence through cordial relationships. The play brings out this aspect of human existence through the interactions between Abhay, Parag and Nandini.

Abhay enters wada through the gates wide open. There is no truck standing in front of it, as it was there eight years ago. The wada is in all ruins. The outer stone-walls have large holes through which people would easily pass by. The stones and bricks have been taken away. He

follows through the wada after Nandini. He finds all rooms almost empty, with bare four walls and a roof. With no rain, no water, no comfort, with Bal running a fever and no medical facility available, Abhay asks Nandini, "How do you manage to live here?", to which Nandini answers, "Like everybody else" (WT 210). She tells him that many villagers have left the village, but they have decided to stay there as Parag has decided not to leave the village. She also tells him that he is the first outsider who has come that way in the last five years. They live in complete isolation, excommunicated from the rest of the world as if they have forgotten that there is a world outside, full of people. Abhay feels that they should have left the place long ago. But Nandini replies through a question, "And what if the same inferno awaits us elsewhere" (WT 210)?

Parag's struggle to come out of the grim situations was not easy. He was not educated enough to find a job for him. He had no money to start with any business or to invest in the farms. He adjusted himself with a current of the times and started amassing wealth from all unfair, illegal means. He knew he was wrong. He was aware his actions would lead him behind the bars. But he found no other way to cope with the situation. He was doing this in the interest of the family. However, he was always conscious of its consequences and he was prepared to accept the punishment as well. At the close of the play *The Pond*, he calmly goes with the police to the court and accepts his sentence as retribution to his sins. He has learnt many lessons in his life through choice, action, and suffering. His sainthood in the *Yugant* is the result of his conscious actions and sufferings in the past. Parag knows the importance of being consciously connected with the surrounding. He does everything that is in his capacity in a given situation. He helps the villagers even though he is as affected by the severe drought as everybody else is. He bears no hatred for those who betrayed him. Rather he remembers the love they showered on him in his childhood and youth. They passed one by one. Now only a few remain. Parag will remain there as long as they remain.

Along with the deep empathy for the people and the environment, Parag's character shines through his calm acceptance of the results, and the effects of the actions, the Karmayoga of the ancient Vedic philosophy. He does not shrink from the responsibility of his actions. Abhay reproaches him for not selling off teakwood long ago. He feels that Parag and his family could have escaped the tyranny of the draught, had they left the village. Parag tells him that people used to cut the teakwood in the night and carry away in the trucks. He had no courage to stop them, for he knew he too had done the same to the fields of others:

I couldn't lift a finger against them. I couldn't get rid of the thought that the teak wood wasn't mine. It belonged to those who came and took it away (WT 221).

Aai, Parag's grandmother, expresses the same attitude when Ranju elopes with the gold. Parag confesses that when he made the first cut in a teakwood tree, he knew that he was organizing his punishment. As he robbed people off their teakwood, others too robbed him. He takes their action as his punishment for his wrong doings. He shoulders the responsibility for the consequences of his action:

It is we, finally, who create our own desert (WT 221).

By the notion of 'desert', that runs as a central theme in the play *Apocalypse*, Parag refers also to the excessive greed of humankind for monetary gains at the expense of ecological imbalance. He feels guilty for cutting woods without ever growing them. He considers draught as nature's retributive act of punishment for man's reckless abuse of natural resources. He feels responsible for turning the fertile land into the barren, unyielding desert and thus, abominating the sanctity of mother earth. Bhaskar, his father, in *The Pond*, reprimands him for abusing the fertile land:

The millions will come. But how long will they last? Twelve acres isn't much. But it's good soil. It's has fed us for generations. And you've turned it into a desert for the lust of money! This kind of money doesn't last do you hear me (175)?

But Parag at that time couldn't realize the consequences of his actions. He knew that he was wrong. But he thought he was struggling against the currents of the time, and at any cost, he should clinch his family out of poverty. He felt he was just keeping pace with the ways of the world. He was aware that the monsters of urbanization and globalization would eat up the villages with the slogans of success and prosperity:

The city and its monsters have entered the village for keeps now. Do you think they will rest until they have stripped the villages bare? If you want to survive, just shake hands with them. That is the only way left (WT 176).

Parag did shake hands with them, amassed wealth, and went to jail as well. It was there, within the four walls of the prison, he sought his freedom from fear, shame, and anger. He thought that

by going to the prison he had paid the price for his actions. Now his slate is clean and he can start his life fresh. He realizes that life reveals itself once one is set free from the fear of losing one's possessions- Life should strip everybody down to nothing at least once (WT 221).

Mahesh Elkunchwar's *The Wada Trilogy*, as one of the many significant themes, depicts the wrath of nature as the result of the reckless human greed. Man's relation to the world, the meaning of his existence in this world, his importance in the cosmic structure is revealed through the speeches of Parag. He comments on man's existence in the cosmos through the analogy of stars that he calls his eternal companions. He tells Abhay, "Everybody has to make a choice between facing life and escaping it." (WT 224) The draught terrified him at first. But his knowledge of the immensity of Nature's regular eternal cycle took the burden off from him. With Nandini's help, he read the books Abhay sent to him about the stars. The books gave him enough strength. The draught lasting for a period of five or six years proves devastating for the people on the earth. But one year of Neptune amounts to be one hundred and sixty-five years of the earth. Seen from the Neptune this draught would count just one moment in time. Moreover, he felt, if the cycle of Nature was so well regulated, the draught must have its significance in it. Another point was that even if they had perished in the draught, the earth would continue her cycle. It would rain again and cover the earth with thick green jungles. The thought that he was a part of what was happening around him, soothed his mind. He decided not to run away from the surrounding of which he was a part. Thus, the play ends with a positive and affirmative note hoping for the benevolence of the mother earth as reflected in the Kshetrapati Suktam of the Rig Veda:

May the plants be sweet (i.e. filled with Nature's Purity), may the sky be sweet (i.e. filled with Nature's Purity), may the waters be sweet (i.e. filled with Nature's Purity), and may the space be sweet (i.e. filled with Nature's Purity) to us. (4.57)

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"Kshetrapati Suktam" - from Rig Veda (4.57)

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