CHAPTER FIVE

"Climate Trauma": Narratives of Planetary Experience and Psychological Impacts of Climate Change

An in-depth analysis of environmental theories in previous chapters raises another aspect of contemporary issue which shows that in diverse geographical areas, climate change affects a large portion of the population with various types of risks including mental and physical health. At present, the studies on the impacts of changing climate conditions on mental health are significant aspects which are garnering a lot of attention from the scholars and scientists. The complexity and precariousness of the issue with regard to the outcomes of climate variations are discernible not only on the outer world but equally on the human psyche has attracted a variety of human responses. Climate change directly or indirectly affects different population groups due to their exposure and vulnerability to the transforming geographical conditions. As shown in the previous chapters, people experience a wide variety of challenges because of the lack of access to resources, immediate and long term protection, prior information, etc. Recent studies on the connection between climatic events and mental reactions have introduced new terms like ecopsychology, ecoanxiety, biospheric concern, ecological grief, climate trauma, solastalgia, etc. The novelty of the issue also brings to the focus its cultural implications.

Contemporary literature reflects upon such vital issues like exploring human response towards ecological transformation. Owing to its socio-cultural and ecological relevance, South Asian literature also could not remain unaffected by the issues that pose unprecedented threats to human life. As such, this chapter shows how South Asian authors are profusely dealing with themes, narrative styles and approaches to effectively communicate the overwhelming sensibilities prompted by climate change in contemporary times. Hitherto unacknowledged psychological effects of climate change are told and retold by the authors from myriad perspectives. South Asian society and culture have always been dynamic so is the literature it produces. Literary works, especially novels based on ecological or climate themes, have attempted to capture socio-cultural, political and ecological ethos of the time. The novels selected for present study show how acute climatic events can lead to traumatic stress through mechanisms similar to psychopathological conditions. Voicing the psychological aspects of climate change is a crucial move towards humanising the issue and enabling humans to

effectively tackle it within the larger global community. The aim of this chapter is to present a cohesive analysis of the connections between individual or collective trauma and its literary representation, with a particular emphasis on the Anthropocene, climate change, and the increasing significance of non-human entities.

In traditional trauma theory, the focus is on an unforeseen occurrence that disrupts an individual's real-life experiences. Drawing inspiration from the analytical reflections of Sigmund Freud, advocates of trauma theory persist in prioritising the directness of traumatic occurrences. Cathy Caruth (1996) postulates that the haunting that plagues the individual who has experienced trauma is not merely any ordinary incident, but rather, it is the profoundly impactful and unforeseen manifestation of "the shocking and unexpected occurrence of an accident" (6). Ruth Leys (2000), on the other hand, observes in her genealogy of the field that conventional theorists, such as Caruth and Freud, depict trauma as "an experience that, because it appeared to shatter the victim's cognitive-perceptual capacities, made the traumatic scene unavailable for a certain kind of recollection" (8-9). While underscoring the importance of both, Dominick LaCapra (2004) highlights a significant differentiation between event and experience that "trauma is itself a shattering experience that disrupts or even threatens to destroy experience in the sense of an integrated or at least viably articulated life" (*History in Transit* 117). Over time, novel approaches reflecting traumatic experiences have emerged as a distinctive means of articulating the intricacies of this psychological phenomenon. Particularly, climate theorists have developed concepts that focus on the mental effects of changing climate on individuals. These theories address the traumatic experiences stemming from one's direct or indirect exposure to disastrous climatic events. Timothy Morton (2013) is of the view that global warming is in itself "the ecological trauma of our age" (9). Such trauma can be regarded as a person's reaction towards incidents of such magnitude that profoundly affects their emotional and reasoning faculties, leading to chronic emotional perturbation. Individuals who have experienced traumatic events may exhibit symptoms such as dwindled sense of self, fragmented memory, or feelings of estrangement (Vickroy 131; Powell et al. 5). Traumatic experiences of the characters in fictions reflect various emotional and psychological reactions, such as feelings of doubt, guilt or embarrassment. Additionally, trauma can potentially undermine an individual's fundamental beliefs regarding their own safety and self perception as a capable, resilient, and independent person. The experience of trauma is situated within a fluid process which encompasses emotions,

recollections, integration, and recuperation. The phenomenon of trauma consists of an extensive variety of causative factors and resultant effects. Such a phenomenon departs from the conventional model of trauma, which emphasises the internalised and solitary psychological components of trauma, instead it embraces an alternative trauma framework that takes into account the interplay between behavioural and social constructs that are linked to trauma (Vickroy 131). Each writer of the selected novels often portray an inner voice of the victim characters, working through traumatic experiences, and hovering on the brink of exposing their innermost thoughts and experiences to the public eye.

The novels under study show that the experience of traumatic stress is characterised by feelings of futility, helplessness and a perceived threat to one's life. The author's account of traumatic experience indicates a profound impact on an individual's perception of 'self' and his or her ability to anticipate and navigate the world around them (McFarlane and Girolamo 136). People diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) often exhibit emotional constriction as a coping mechanism for their environment. Despite this, their lasting psychological responses generated by specific emotive or physical impulse persist as if there is an ongoing risk of disintegration. Psychological researches look into the symptoms such as hyper-vigilance, startled response, and restlessness that are commonly observed in individuals with PTSD. The existing body of research has unambiguously demonstrated that individuals afflicted with PTSD exhibit conditioned autonomic reactions towards stimuli that are related to their traumatic experiences (Van der Kolk and McFarlane 13). Nevertheless, contemporary evidence also indicates that a significant number of traumatised individuals experience heightened psychological stimulation in response to a diverse range of stimuli. They exhibit a tendency to rapid transition from a stimulus to a response, often without conscious awareness of the triggering factors that elicit a heightened emotional state. Their behaviour and mental state are affected by the intensity with which they feel unpleasant emotions like anxiety, terror, panic, depression, shock, agitation, pre and post traumatic stress or anger. As such, the majority of characters from the fictions under analysis are depicted as victims to a natural disaster and encounter heightened levels of fear and emotional distress when faced with imminent peril. Their psychological conditions warrant that the mere possibility of a catastrophic event can elicit stress responses, even if there is the absence of any real manifestation of environmental disaster. The relationship between the severity of natural disasters and the impact on individuals can be

observed through the ranges of experiences of affected persons at different stages of severity, ranging from disaster stress, behavioural change to mental disorder (Shultz et al., *Encyclopedia of Natural Hazards* 780). This suggests that the level of exposure to harmful forces during a natural disaster is a significant factor in determining the extent of its impact on individuals. It is important to note that in the event of a disaster that results in profound and wide-ranging damage to property, continued and grave community issues, significant incidents of trauma through wounds, life-threatening situations, and loss of life, it is highly probable that individuals will also experience acute and long-lasting psychological effects (Shultz et al., *Textbook of Disaster Psychiatry* 76). People confronted with the imminent actuality of climate change experience a sense of powerlessness in their ability to ameliorate the situation, resulting in an unresolved emotional state of trauma characterised by feelings of loss, despair and frustration (Gifford and Gifford 292). The discernible ramification of climate change, which is confined to a specific region or occurs promptly, such as physical harm or psychological stress arising from severe climate events or deteriorating topographies, can be construed as direct and personal effects of this phenomenon. To fully comprehend the psychological consequences of climate change, one must acknowledge the diverse interpretations and societal accounts linked to this intricate issue. The climate crisis is a "wicked problem", which is intricately intertwined with other global occurrences, such as surging population rates, economic inequality and urbanisation, issues that have been highlighted in the novels chosen for study (Doherty and Clayton 265). The impact of extreme weather events on individual's perceptions of climate change is influenced by an experiential process. This process involves the association of negative emotions or ecological grief triggered by the adverse effects of such events due to climate change (Ojala et al. 41; Cunsolo and Ellis 277). Additionally, memories of these dangerous consequences serve to increase the psychological significance of climate risks.

On the basis of the prevalent discourses, it can be posited that climate change socially damages mental health of ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees, the homeless and poor populations in countries like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, etc. Especially women from low socio-economic status, having scarce resources for sustenance, face decline of social and economic support, suffer from mental health issues along with traumatic experiences like death or injury of the loved ones, migration of family members from the native land to other countries, and sexual assault, etc. Native people, in a transforming ecology, are subjected to deal with

unfamiliar environmental conditions. For the victims of climate disasters, this transformation of the familiar context is experienced with acquiescence and a sense of powerlessness. When vulnerable people feel a sense of loss, powerlessness and frustration or anxiety prompted by their lack of capability to effectively manage and adapt to the consequences of ecological change, they experience acute sense of "eco-anxiety".[1] This situation also arises from their feelings of uncertainty and contemplation of the unfamiliar challenges posed by climate change. As such, it results in the blurriness of distance and evokes a sense of apprehension in individuals in relation to the climate hazard which leads to the traversing of their spatial, geographical and temporal positions – for instance, even if the disaster happens at a distance, individuals get psychologically affected as fear is not bound by their spatial context and impacts them nevertheless. When it starts raining incessantly, for example, traumatised people feel anxious because of their past experience of flood or storm that eventually remind them about their loss. Such a situation leads to "ecological grief" which finds expression in their way of associating the climatic event to their personal sense of loss.[2] Being exposed to climate hazards, people from certain groups and communities keep imagining the outcomes of the catastrophes resulting in their experience of pangs of anxiety, disruption, loss, uncertainty and fear. Literary narratives, particularly fictions about climate change, have endeavoured to bear witness to and encapsulate these impulses through innovative narrative techniques that compel readers to acknowledge the burgeoning psychological concerns pertaining to climate change and natural disasters. Whether explicitly depicted or addressed inversely, the theme of traumatic experiences resulting from climate disasters has imbued these fictions with an interesting perspective.

Although anticipation of natural hazards may have some positive impacts as the victims are motivated to formulate effective strategies for acclimating to the unfamiliar conditions, the novels show that the sensitivity towards atmospheric transformations make living organisms biologically prone to suffer the detrimental effects on body and mind. Changing climatic conditions in these novels also influence everyday activity of the characters along with non-human life forms and bring variations in their behavioural patterns. Endeavours made to examine fundamental processes of adaptation, the delineation of deviations from common experiences during climate disasters, and attempts to apprehend the cause-effect associations are arduous tasks faced by the victims. Cultural practices, social-behaviours, prior information and readiness to face extreme climate events all together determine the peri-traumatic experience of people,

their psychological disruption and collective effort to ensure resilience.[3] Studies based on information and observations have ascertained the relationship between the impacts of climatic events and human trauma now depicted in literature also. Western psychological theories upon trauma like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Pre-Trauma have been extensively researched upon and employed by contemporary literary writers. Consequences of climate events on psychological mechanism can become discernible either directly after heat waves, or indirectly during short term extreme conditions like floods, storms, or wildfires or in the long term occurrences like transformation of the ecology due to prolonged droughts, water shortage, sea-level rise, deforestation and desertification. Climate change increases the probability of psychological disorders mainly affecting women, children, low income groups and indigenous communities. It alters not only the lifestyle of native people but also generates climate-induced migration resulting in the growing number of climate refugees as shown in the third chapter of this thesis. The psychological conditions of the characters from the novels selected for this chapter show that climate events stimulate certain behavioural patterns for mental adaptation following the chronology of events: before the event, during the catastrophe and after the event. Moreover, the observation of the gradual disappearance of plants and animal species elicits a deep emotional response characterised by melancholy and a pervasive sense of despair born out of the perceived endangerment of all life forms on earth. Eco-critical and conventional trauma theories have affirmed that the wound inflicted to the psychological domain can affect a person's feelings about his or her surrounding environment causing more complex traumatic experiences, identity crisis and dissociative tendencies. Trauma related experiences also arise from loss of familiar landscape. As a whole, fictions dealing with climate events provide the authors the scope to find a way to portray the effects on a more personalised level. Depiction of the psychological impacts of climatic shifts in South Asian novels affords authors the opportunity to introduce an additional layer of complexity between imagination and reality that many acclaimed dystopian or science-fiction novels are unable to capture. In each of the novels, the uncertainty and mental agitation of contemporary warming age force their way in, dwelling quietly at the periphery or breaking forth as a dynamic theme. Present day reality is frequently dominated by anxiety and fear associated with potential catastrophic environmental events. Modern human experience of challenging situations also brings an obscure sense of present and future risks. Human preoccupation with continuous fear, risk and unprecedented threats is considered by the

scientists and scholars as characteristic of suffering which finds expression in a rising fascination for fictional depiction of catastrophic scenarios.

Drawing on ecological, psychological and climate-related studies of fear, anxiety and risk, this chapter analyses the novels' depiction of people's traumatic experiences and other psychological impacts that have penetrated into the society as a result of the growing ubiquity of catastrophe and uncertainties derived from anthropogenic activities of the risk society.[4] The analysis focuses on the protagonists' efforts to find a direction across the challenges presented by climate catastrophes and explores their traumatic responses to such catastrophic events as they try to rationalise their position amidst a culture of fear and anxiety. In this chapter, the attempt is to rationalise the process by which traumatic experiences manifest themselves, utilising the backdrop of certain calamitous events that prove to be rather obscure in its definition when examined through the lens of the theories of psychology or contemporary discourse surrounding mental well-being. With the advent of modern technologies, people believed that socio-cultural progress would be the harbinger of safety and deliverance from fear. However, paradoxically, changes in environmental conditions have established a reality which is increasingly frightening. Despite being in a world of technological and medical advancement and augmented defence and protection measures, people are exposed to emotional and psychological insecurity. It appears as though fear has permeated every facet of modern life, to the point where there is nowhere to turn in which to escape its clutches. Several sociologists have recently concluded that the best way to characterise modern society is as a "culture of fear".[5] People fear the destruction of valuable things in life including property, resources, health, social status and life itself. Climate change instigates fear not only for the protagonists but also for their loved ones. From general observation it can be inferred that someone who is afraid will typically want to flee or avoid anything he perceives to be endangering his interests, health, wellbeing or life. Thus, the common behavioural response to fear involves flight, or an attempt to create a substantial physical separation from the feared object, with the aim of moving beyond the reach of prospective harm. Lars Svendsen (2008) observes that the act of flight does not necessarily have to be interpreted in spatial terms, i.e., it does not always imply "a question of running away" (31). One possible approach is to establish a physical barrier between the individual and the object of fear, such as using one's arms as a shield or seeking refuge behind a door. Svendsen posits that the pivotal factor lies in the endeavour to put oneself in a position of invulnerability.

This approach of self-protection against perceived threat proves inadequate in light of the omnipresent character of calamities induced by climate change. The characters in the novels are perplexed by the continually mounting perils of calamity instigated by the global shift in climate that renders no region impervious to devastation. They are traumatised because there is no escape from the ongoing apocalyptic events brought on by global warming. The authors have realistically portrayed the serious effects of fear, anxiety, and helplessness experienced by those who have fallen prey to the ravages of climate calamity, evincing a palpable sense of inescapability.

Nilima, a major character in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019), heard about the legend of Gun Merchant and his suffering because of his refusal to become the devotee of Goddess Manasa Devi. She recalled the story seeing the label affixed to an account book as 'Cyclone Relief Accounts, 1970' retrieved from the old records of the Badabon Trust. The account book had an entry in Bangla script "Bonduki Sadagarer dhaam" or "the Gun Merchant's shrine" accompanied by a date "November 20, 1970". Eight days earlier from the date mentioned, a devastating cyclone hit the Bengal delta, including both West Bengal and the erstwhile state of East Pakistan (later named Bangladesh). That 1970 cyclone, later known as the Bhola Cyclone, is widely regarded as one of the most significant natural calamities of the previous century, and stands as a testament to the immense destructive power of nature in terms of casualties. The estimated mortality count stands roughly at three hundred thousand, albeit it is plausible that the actual count may have ascended to a million. West Bengal's the Sunderbans area bore the brunt of the cyclone's destructive force. Lusibari, an island where Nilima and her husband Nirmal were residing, was severely damaged by the storm surge, which carried away a huge portion of the island, along with several houses. Nilima learnt about the damage from Horen Naskar, a fisherman, who had gone on a fishing trip at the sea and had personally borne witness to the terrible devastation. Nilima was moved to orchestrate a group of dedicated volunteers, with the primary objective of amassing and distributing essential provisions after hearing Horen's account of the situation. Nilima and her team had taken a hired boat, with Horen steering it, to deliver supplies to several of the coastal settlements. Every time they went out, they witnessed something horrifying: coastal hamlets wiped out by the storm surge; all the trees had been bared of their foliage; floating dead bodies in the waters; half-eaten by animals; communities where the majority of the population had perished. Adding to the already dire food shortage, a steady influx

of refugees embarked on a perilous journey from East Pakistan to the neighbouring nation of India being driven by a desperate need to escape the escalating political unrest that plagued their homeland. Nilima eventually noticed the sandbank where the settlement once stood, now devoid of any remnants of human habitation, as the relentless tidal wave that trailed the cyclone had mercilessly eradicated every last house. Upon enquiring riverbank residents, she learnt an astonishing fact that no one from that hamlet, which she assumed was destroyed by the cyclone, had encountered any form of damage; in fact, they even succeeded in safeguarding their personal possessions and food. This miracle, as per the accounts provided by her informants, was brought about by the goddess of snakes, Manasa Devi, who guards a neighbouring shrine. Nilima's curiosity about the shrine was sparked by the eerie tale of how it saved the lives of the villagers and their possessions during the storm. Nilima eventually learnt more about the legend of Gun Merchant from the custodian or caretaker of the shrine. The custodian or the boatman told her the horrifying story of the Gun Merchant who was tormented by a series of unfortunate events like the presence of snakes and the relentless onslaught of droughts, storms, etc. that led him to flee overseas to escape the goddess' fury. Nilima's mind was left with an indelible memory of the story of the Gun Merchant and awful experience of the cyclone's devastation that kept bringing itself back to haunt her even later. She agreed by saying:

> I don't know what it was but there was something about the story that got into my head: it haunted me and I wanted to know more about it. But there was always so much else to do that it dropped out of my mind – until just the other day, when I was reading something about the great cyclone of 1970. Then suddenly it all came back to me. (Ghosh 17-18)

Even years after its occurrence, the Gun Merchant's legend kept her traumatic memory alive about the havoc wrought by the cyclone. The repeated recollection of this traumatic memory of Nilima reminds Cathy Caruth's assertion in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) where she states,

> Trauma is not experienced as a mere repression or defence, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment. The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it also a continual leaving of its site. The traumatic reexperiencing of the event thus *carries with it* what Dori Laub calls "collapse of

> witnessing," the impossibility of knowing that first constituted it. And by carrying that impossibility of knowing out of the empirical event itself, trauma opens up and challenges us to a new kind of listening, the witnessing, precisely, *of impossibility*. (Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 10)

The repeated occurrence of the traumatic incident, which remains concealed from awareness but persistently imposes itself on vision, implies a broader connection to the event that surpasses mere observation or witnessing. This connection is closely intertwined with the delayed and inexplicable nature that lies at the core of the repetitive perception. Nilima's statement resonates with Cathy Caruth's conceptualisation of trauma which can be understood as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 91). Nilima's ignorance regarding the inexplicable nature of the legend caused it to linger in her thoughts. This led to the story being deeply ingrained in her subconscious and repeatedly perceived, eventually resulting in her associating it with the devastation of the cyclone. Her concern about the dilapidated condition of the shrine brought about by the sea level rise made her to approach Dinanath Datta, a dealer in rare books, to visit the shrine and record the legend for preservation. On the other hand, Horen's perception of time is anchored in his recollections of devastating storms like Cyclone Bhola or Aila. He referred to the Bhola Cyclone of 1970 and of the Aila in 2009 as hazards that "bookended extended spans of time" (Ghosh 54). The effects of Cyclone Aila on his life were such that he had to find a new line of work. He formerly worked as a fisherman and owned many vessels. However, two of his trawlers and a few more vessels had been capsized by the storm in 2009. He could never forget the pain of his loss, and also had a sneaking suspicion that things would only get worse after the cyclone. Therefore, he made the decision to enter the tourism sector with the money from insurance. He also remembered the tremendous effects of the cyclone of 1970 for another reason: he nearly died in it. In addition to his near-death experience, he had to witness things he would have never expected to see. Both his personal loss and the collective loss of life during the storm gave rise to a sense of shock that caused him to perceive the storms as a temporal marker, a "measure of time", freezing the moment in his memory (Ghosh 54). Upon reflecting on the

encounter with the storm, his tone of shock and horror becomes evidence of the traumatic impact that the storms had on his psychological state.

The novel portrays a range of traumatic experiences, many of which have a profound and enduring impact on the psyche. These experiences are depicted as being deeply ingrained in the character's consciousness, persisting long after the initial event has occurred. The particular instance of Piya's (the cetologist in the novel) experience of a deadly cyclone and the unexpected death of a poor fisherman working with her emphasises the possibility of trauma manifesting as guilt. This observation underscores the complex nature of trauma and its potential to manifest in various forms. Tipu, a major character in the novel, lost his father Fokir in a cyclone during his childhood. Fokir is none other than the fisherman who had been killed by the cyclone while saving Piya's life. Piya was compelled to bear the burden of this grief over this loss forever. She was carrying the weight of the accident so severely that she served for his wife Moyna and son Tipu more than they could have possibly imagined. Her sense of guilt and trauma of losing a companion made her provide them with every resource for a standard living. Moyna informs Dinanath:

> She had bought a small house in Lusibari for Moyna and her son, and had opened bank accounts for them, one for their everyday needs, and one for the boy's education. She had spent countless hours tutoring the boy in English; when she was away in America she would give him lessons over the phone and the Net. She had gifted him laptops, tablets, the latest phones, games consoles, music systems – and when the boy complained that he was often unable to use his gadgets because of power cuts, Piya had paid to have their house solarised. (Ghosh 50)

Piya's generosity for this little known family is an expression of her guilt which compelled her to become overprotective for Fokir's family. When someone bears witness to the demise of another human being, it can be regarded as the transformative journey towards survivorship, wherein the presence of said witness assumes a pivotal role in the holistic encounter of survival. In a compelling interview with Robert Jay Lifton conducted by Cathy Caruth (1995), he opines:

> The witness is crucial to start with because it's at the center of what one very quickly perceives to be one's responsibility as a survivor. And it's involved in the transformation

> from guilt to responsibility. There's a lot of discussion, and some of it very pained, about survivor guilt. I sometimes talk about the paradoxical guilt of survivors. I want to make clear, of course, that there can be self-condemnation in survivors or what we call guilt, but it's paradoxical in terms of ethical judgment, because the wrong person can castigate himself or herself in terms of what is ethically just …. But carrying through the witness is a way of transmuting pain and guilt into responsibility, and carrying through that responsibility has enormous therapeutic value. It's both profoundly valuable to society and therapeutic for the individual survivor. And it's therapeutic in the sense of expressing the responsibility but also because that responsibility becomes a very central agent for reintegration of the self. One has had this experience, it has been overwhelming, the self has been shattered in some degree; the only way one can feel right or justified in reconstituting oneself and going on living with some vitality is to carry through one's responsibility to the dead. (Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 138)

Survivor's guilt is a common psychological phenomenon experienced by individuals who have lived through a traumatic event in which others did not survive. The experience of survivor's traumatic guilt is often obscure and shrouded in ambiguity as it is influenced by a myriad of elements. These elements include the individual's personality, the nature of the traumatic event, and the cultural and social settings in which the incident occurred. Piya was extremely conscious that following Fokir's untimely death, which she held herself accountable for, Tipu and his mother were left without any means of sustenance. Her conscience compelled her to alleviate her feelings of guilt to some extent by ensuring that the family received every necessary form of assistance from her. In another instance, Piya and his companions encountered a terrifying tornado during the rescue mission for Tipu, who was on board the blue fishing boat carrying refugees and moving towards Italian coast. In a distance from their minibus, they noticed a patch of dark cloud which was heaving and shuddering. An entire day of a catastrophic storm, incessant rainfall, and hailstorm culminated in this phenomenon. Suddenly, the cloud broke apart, and a grey, thin protrusion emerged and descended towards the ground, twisting like a whiplash as it developed. When compared to the other startled passengers in the minibus, Piya's reaction was very profound. Dinanath was taken aback by her frightened voice. He had never

thought Piya to be the kind of person who would easily become frightened. Piya's unusual behaviour was triggered by the tornado's unexpected appearance which reactivated a dormant but deeply rooted terror from her past experience. Her repressed memory of Fokir dying while trying to save her life from a cyclone came back to life. Her sense of guilt and trauma from witnessing Fokir's death overtook her in that instant, and she knew that she would never be able to get rid of this feeling. Her sense of guilt made her relationship with Tipu complicated as his father gave his life while saving her. She confessed, "It's not that I scare easily, [….] It's just that I had a terrible experience once, in a storm. It was a cyclone, not a tornado . . . I'd thought I'd gotten over it but I guess I haven't. Maybe I never will" (Ghosh 256). This statement shows that she is unable to recover from the trauma of her past. As a professional cetologist, Piya has been deeply moved by the declining population of river dolphin *Orcaella brevirostris* in the waters of the Sundarbans as a result of changing climate and increasing dead zones, in addition to the destructive cyclones that hit the region. She was already in a state of shock after witnessing a large group of dolphins, including her favourite Rani, beach themselves. The cumulative effects of these traumatic events left her emotionally and mentally scarred. In her current state of mind, she appears to be utterly fragmented and unable or incompetent to react appropriately to the threat her species is currently facing.

This threat Piya envisions persists as the climate crisis and global warming also bring destruction to the planet manifesting through wildfire. To attend a conference in a museum, Dinanath flew to Los Angeles, where he was confronted by a horrific wildfire. He found out that for days, enormous wildfires had been raging throughout Los Angeles. A very large portion of land had been engulfed in flames while thousands of people had been relocated to safety. As he looked out the window of the plane at the incinerated landscape, billowing clouds of smoke, and hunting birds of prey; his involuntary scream startled the other passengers. Dinanath was detained for interrogation by the police due to his weird behaviour on the plane after seeing the wildfire, which had traumatised and disturbed him in such a way that he lost control over his actions. At that time, he still had no idea what he had done, so he did not think the alarming shouts and yelling had anything to do with him. Trauma was triggered in him by a combination of successive events, including his harrowing experiences in the Sunderbans, his recent learning about the changing environment of the islands due to climatic shifts and consequent rise in sea level, his encounter with a snake, and his current confrontation with the wildfire. After reaching

his Los Angeles hotel, he again saw an unusual orange glow coming from a landscape that appeared to be ablaze with fire and smoke. The sight repeatedly returned to him in his sleep as he said, “When at last I fell asleep I saw the fires again in my dreams, with a glowing snake hurtling towards me, through the flames” (Ghosh 119). The novel presents many instances of Dinanath’s experience of trauma manifesting itself through his dreams, which often take the form of intrusive nightmares or cause him to suffer from insomnia. The stories of the illegal migrants crossing borders to reach various parts of Europe told by Gisa, who is Cinta, the Italian historian’s cousin’s daughter, haunted Dinanath to the extent that he started spending sleepless nights. Gisa informed him about the perilous circumstances in which refugees in the Sinai Peninsula found themselves. Since the local tribes in Sinai have connections to Saharan tribes, they receive refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan, all of which are hotspots of human migration. This provides the local tribes with a steady income, making human smuggling more profitable and less difficult than drug and arms smuggling. As soon as the refugees reach Sinai, they are taken to big depots called “connection houses” (Ghosh 174). After interviewing a few of the refugees, Gisa learned that the Sinai connection houses had special operating rooms with solar-powered refrigeration units and other modern technologies with latest equipment. The refugees who are unable to pay the ransom are given drugs to render them senseless. After that, they are taken to the operating rooms where an organ, typically a kidney is removed. These organs are frequently traded with Europeans. Gisa commented, “It sounds too terrible to believe, like the worst horrors of the slave trade” (Ghosh 174). Dinanath was traumatised by the facts as he tried to envision what the poor refugees in Sinai were going through as he states, “I found it hard to sleep that night: my mind was over-filled with disturbing images – of masonry crashing down at my feet; of people trying to escape floods by climbing into snake-infested trees; of refugees in the Sinai being preyed upon by demons” (Ghosh 175). In these cited lines, he describes how he was shocked after hearing from Lubna, a Bangladeshi lady, about her experience of a *tufaan* or awful cyclone and flood that struck Bangladesh. Lubna and her family sought refuge from the storm in a tree since the water level was rising. Snakes had also made their way up to the tree to escape the rising water below. Lubna described the terrible scene saying, “Can you imagine what it was like? Being in that tree, with the wind howling and the flood raging below, not knowing whether you would be killed by the storm or a snake?” (Ghosh 160). The more Dinanath heard about the cyclone, the more real it seemed to

him. He could envision the horror-struck faces of Lubna's family members; he imagined the water below; felt the presence of the snakes on the branches. Floods and cyclones have become more frequent with the changing climate. People's psyche is being traumatically affected by the anticipation of such a terrible occurrence, manifesting through nightmares and erratic behaviour. Dinanath's nightmares concerning the disaster reveal a mental state in which his experiences are being exploited to frighten him and disturb his sleep. His encounter with unexpected poisonous creatures brought on his episodes of anxiety and panic-attacks. He understood that due to rising temperatures and shifting climate patterns, venomous animals like the yellow-bellied sea-snake and the spider have migrated to new regions. Gisa's dog, Leola, the retriever, was killed in front of his eyes by the bite of a Yellow-bellied sea-snake which was not native to Los Angeles: "These snakes generally lived in warmer waters, to the south, but sightings in southern California had become increasingly common: their distribution was changing with the warming of the oceans and they were migrating northwards" (Ghosh 134). On two separate occasions he spotted poisonous spiders in Venice. After consulting Piya's friend Larry, a spider expert, he learned that the spider in question was a brown recluse, *Loxosceles reclusa*. Its venom is more lethal than that of rattlesnakes, and its bite can be excruciatingly painful as it breaks down skin and eats through flesh. Larry had never before heard of such a spider appearing that far north. According to him, temperatures have been rising rapidly across Europe, and the brown recluse has been expanding its territory. Dinanath was terrified by his recurrent encounters with poisonous spiders and began to experience panic-attacks. He was numb and in a condition of mental stupor as a result of the traumatic events: "Strangely I no longer felt panicky now; instead, a kind of numbness had begun to set in, a feeling of not knowing what I was doing or where I was" (Ghosh 205). Dinanath's gradual succumbing to numbness validates that trauma is a complex experience that involves both intense emotional reactions and an absence of affect. This is because trauma can be difficult to process cognitively and may lead to a feeling of emotional detachment or numbness (Bennett 5). Ghosh has made an attempt to illustrate how the migration of poisonous non-human creatures due to changing climate conditions has the potential to prompt traumatic experiences that seep into the human psyche and leave a lasting imprint of fear and helplessness. The enduring condition of traumatic stimulation and heightened awareness that arises as a reaction to exposure to trauma holds significant relevance in our comprehension of climate change. The lingering effects of traumatic experiences are seen when

individuals are faced with potentially dangerous circumstances. Therefore, trauma becomes apparent while someone is confronted with catastrophes and exhibits distorted responses to the consequences of climate change. Benjamin White (2015) contends that traumatic responses can become "conditioned, obfuscating our ability to adequately assess mixed signals of safety and danger and effectively leaving us in a perpetual 'state of emergency'" (195). To clarify, the experience of trauma may result in a persistent state of heightened vigilance, whereby individuals perceive their surroundings as potentially hazardous and respond accordingly. It appears to Benjamin White that traumatic reactions are widespread and almost 'universal' among humans as "both the climate change mentality and our ongoing process of responding to a changing climate embody much of what we now recognize as a response to threat, powerlessness and the feeling of being overwhelmed" (196). In *Gun Island,* sleep eluded Dinanath for the most part since he was fatigued and shocked from his terrible encounters with poisonous creatures in unexpected locations. The heightened awareness of changing environmental conditions has made him extremely vigilant. His mind was jarred by the certainty of calamitous climate-induced disasters in the near future: "At some point I drifted off, but only to wake up, some hours later. My heart was pounding and I was beset by a sense of urgency, as though something were imminent. Even the air seemed heavier, as in the hours before the breaking of a thunderstorm" (Ghosh 212). A lot of strange events had occurred that Dinanath could not grasp or explain. He could only realise, "It's a strange feeling, as though I'm not in control of what I am doing. It's as if I were fading away, losing my will, my freedom" (Ghosh 213-214). He made an effort to provide a scientific explanation or draw some sort of association between himself and the deadly spider in front of him. Cinta draws his attention to the fact that global warming is causing temperatures to rise around the world. This implies that a variety of species' habitats are also altering. The brown recluse spider is expanding its territory to include countries like Italy, where it was previously unknown. Cinta further explains that because of rising concentration of CO_2 and other harmful gases, climatic shifts are taking place. She asserts that these gases are produced by cars, aeroplanes, and factories that produce electric toasters, kettles and espresso machines. We require conveniences that were superfluous a century ago. The consumerist culture has paved a way for degradation of the environment. Making observations on the role of anthropogenic activities in causing global warming, Cinta states, "So you cannot say that this spider's presence here is "natural" or "scientific". It is here because of our history; because of

things human beings have done. It is linked to you already – you have a prior connection with that spider, whether you like it or not" (Ghosh 214). Dinanath's helplessness while confronting the strange events that ensnared him led to a state of *pretrauma* as mentioned by E. Ann Kaplan in *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the Future in Dystopian Film and Fiction* (2016). Kaplan defines *pretrauma* as "the trauma of the future" (28). Kaplan posits in the introductory section of this monograph that future climatic occurrences have the potential to elicit traumatic responses. In this context, she conceptualised the term Pretraumatic Stress Syndrome (PreTSS) to describe a state of extreme anxiety about the future. Kaplan characterises this condition as fearful apprehension over the complete breakdown of social and natural environments. She advocates for the notion that it is imperative to take into account the influence of future imaginaries on the formation of the present and past constructs. As such, the conception of a future world is more than just prospective, as Kaplan has indicated. Rather, it can be argued that such conceptualisations are consequences of the dire circumstances of the present, which are contributing to the collapse of the planet during the Anthropocene. Pretrauma may manifest as a result of persistent present-day indicators, leading to an apprehension of future realities. While depicting the subgenre of pretrauma film, Kaplan makes the observation that it functions as memory for the future for those who watch them. In a similar vein, Dinanath's speculations about the changing world offer readers "a way to remember what we have now – and may already be losing" (Kaplan 79). His uncontrollable behaviour and feeling of "fading away" can be linked to a pre traumatic state stemming from his fear and anxiety regarding the potential destruction of the natural world along with his life by future anthropogenic climate events.

While discussing traumatic neuroses, Breuer and Freud (1893) observe that the underlying source of the condition is not the minor injury to the body, but the emotional impact of fear, which is referred to as physical trauma. A trauma is distinguished by an excessive flow of excitations that surpasses the individual's ability to tolerate and his/her capacity to effectively manage and psychologically process these excitations. Any encounter that elicits distressing emotions such as fear, anxiety, embarrassment, or physical pain has the potential to be classified as a traumatic experience (Breuer and Freud 6). The extent to which an event is deemed traumatic is contingent upon the individual's level of susceptibility. In instances of general hysteria, it is not uncommon for there to be a collection of inciting factors comprising various partial traumas, rather than a single and crucial trauma. These events have solely induced a

distressing impact through accumulation and are interconnected in the sense that they constitute certain elements of a unified narrative of suffering. There exist instances in these novels wherein a seemingly insignificant occurrence conjoins with the truly influential event or arises during a period of heightened susceptibility to stimulation, thereby acquiring the status of a trauma that it would not have otherwise displayed, but which remains thereafter. Girija Prasad, in Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing* (2019), encounters trauma after the terrible death of his colleague who was killed by a crocodile. All of the officers and their families along with Girija Prasad and his wife Chanda Devi had gathered at Sir Mowgli Beach in the Andamans for a Sunday picnic. Owing to her childhood experience of growing up near a temperamental river, Chanda Devi became a good swimmer. While Girija Prasad went to swim, she also dreamt of swimming by his side. Instead, on the shore, she remained lost in the thoughts of swimming. But, an unexpected premonition jolted her out of her reverie: "A stab of fear pierces through her trance, pulling her by the hair. A premonition has surfaced, like a prehistoric creature swimming out of the abyss" (Swarup 35). Chanda Devi quickly sensed that her husband was not alone in the water; something horrible was accompanying him unnoticed. She immediately followed her husband in the water to take him back to the shore. Out of panic, she urged to leave the place immediately. Before leaving, Girija Prasad handed over his snorkelling gear to the Head of Felling Operations to experiment with. Throughout their journey back home, Chanda Devi was restless, shivering and suffering. After reaching home they were flabbergasted to get the news from a forest ranger about the horrible death of the Head of Felling Operations who was brutally killed by a crocodile. The crocodile from a neighbouring mangrove swam away in the water with the man, holding him in its jaws. Girija Prasad is shocked by the unforgettable memory of the "fearful eyes of the crocodile he encounters while searching for his colleague" (Swarup 37). This incident bears witness to the non-human invasion into the human world with the growing scarcity of food for wild creatures. The amputated body parts of the fellow officer terrorise the search-party. The sight of the corpse made Girija Prasad nauseated as "the stench of a man's entrails, the sight of an intestine trailing in the water like anchorless rope, were enough to bring forth every undigested morsel and unpalatable fact" (Swarup 37-38). But Chanda Devi urges her husband not to kill the crocodile for behaving instinctively. It is a sign of the encroachment of humans in the natural world of animals as we cannot punish an animal for "acting out their nature when we are the intruders" (Swarup 38). Girija Prasad is found unable to recall his final

thoughts about the dead officer due to the severe shock he has experienced. After the tragic event, he was left wondering how he would die. Their shared sense of trauma following the event forced Girija Prasad and Chanda Devi to physically reconcile after a period of separation in their marriage. The author reinforces the emotional implications of fear through the unusual behaviour of these two characters in response to a range of partial traumas, including uncanny premonition of imminent danger, the agonising event of witnessing a colleague's death, and the gruesome sight of a crocodile devouring the colleague's bodily organs.

The novel portrays that human behaviour is profoundly affected by the catastrophic impact of climate hazards, which includes the frequent threat of seismic activities and cyclones. After the devastating earthquake of 1942 in the Andaman Islands, the British rulers were deposed and replaces by the Japanese, who subjected the locals to extensive physical torture. The Japanese compelled them to work in the fields after a cyclone wiped off the harvest. When some Burmese were discovered stealing from a warehouse, they faced persecution. In the novel, people like the Karen woman Rose Mary's husband were caught and subjected to a merciless beating, executed in perfect conjunction with the loud rhythms of imperialistic slogans. These victims were forced to reiterate the slogans. Those who failed to do so were beaten again. The Burmese people were traumatised by the inhuman treatment they received, and as a result, they often recited the same slogans while carrying out acts of violence against others. Eventually, Rose Mary's husband completely stopped working and began to drink at home. Being inebriated, he slapped and kicked his wife while yelling Japanese slogans. Only when he was physically abusing her, he resorted to using that language. In this context, the usage of Japanese slogans is associated with acts of violence that leave victims with a lasting impression of mental anguish. This is clearly evident in Rose Mary's constant reciting of the phrase "*Hakko Ichiu*", the sounds of which definitely never left her mind. When she was terrified, she chanted the same phrase. In a manner reminiscent of children's rhymes, Rose Mary kept on chanting the words while waiting in line to deliver provisions to the Japanese army. This act's repetition serves as an evidence of the mental trauma she experienced due to physical abuse by her husband. This repetitive action is the result of what Cathy Caruth calls the unexpected violent event.

The second part of the novel, titled "Faultline", gives the readers an unfiltered look into the life of a political prisoner or student activist named Plato, son of Rose Mary, complete with graphic descriptions of physical and mental torture he encounters in prison that serve to advance

the novel's fundamental preoccupation: the inextricably linked connection between humans and non-humans in the Anthropocene. The land that Plato inhabits is a dreamer much like him. He himself is able to interpret the dream of the landscape and recognises that he is also a part of it (Swarup 173). The dream provides a psychosomatic portal back to the primordial world when plant and animal life, as well as insects and reptiles, looked very different from their current counterparts. Being immersed in the daydream, Plato can listen to their "barking, shrieking and clucking" (Swarup 173). Plato is able to transcend the limitations of human language due to his extreme physical and mental anguish and his unusual living situations. While in captivity, he went without food for five days and eventually drank his own urine to stay alive. Plato was wrapped up in a blanket and taken away from his overcrowded cell by the officials. Even when they removed his longyi and shirt, the soldiers kept a blood-soaked towel over his face, leaving him trembling and sweating excessively on the concrete floor. The Myanmar military Junta had Plato's arms, ankles, forehead and testicles pierced and wired together before electrocuting him and knocking him out. Every surge in the current is like a spasm of life and death for him. He was awakened from his unconscious state by a horrifying "cavernous shriek", and in the delusion brought on by the torture, he attributed the loud shriek to the "cries to a pig being slaughtered nearby" (Swarup 154-155). Two weeks into his imprisonment, Plato's fingers felt "permanent hieroglyphs" or scorched scabs, caused by the live wire on his scalp, knees, chest, ankles, shoulder and testicles. Plato "goes down on all fours and grunts like a pig", unable to adequately convey the extent of his suffering in human speech (Swarup 156). Extreme trauma can lead to a sudden confrontation with the inadequacy of language to fully capture and convey one's lived experiences. In situations of distress and disruption, whether caused by physical or psychological injury, the absence of conceptual frameworks for self-expression can lead to the emergence of trauma. The basic isolation that is intrinsic to the human condition is revealed by the fact that we are unable to articulate our experiences in a manner that allows for complete comprehension by both ourselves and others. Erica Still (2018) states that such occurrence of trauma is linked to the encounter with a 'void' or 'abyss', in which the loss of meaning and intense isolation can be overpowering (311). As a result, Plato clings tenuously to the shifting outside world with sounds, gestures and motions that mimic animals, birds and insects: "Crouching on all fours, Plato is filled with a crazy urge. He bleats like a goat and yawns like a buffalo. He roars like a tiger and hisses like a snake. He crackles like the pouring rain and flip-flops on the floor like a fish out of

water. He raises himself off the floor like a flower in bloom and crashes into the walls like a caged rooster" (Swarup 156). He attains unusual qualities as prolonged torture and suffering also enables him to comprehend that bats are 'dreaming in echoes and whispers'. He had suppressed all memories, longings or aversions that might have dragged him down the maze of time and kept him stuck in the past or the future, but he did not lose the sense of the passing of the seasons as he claimed, "One can forget one's name, but one can't forget the seasons" (Swarup 158). Seasons make us feel its presence even in the extreme state of isolation from the daily encounters with nature. His dream is important in which he is a fly caught in tree sap that eventually becomes encased in resin being fossilised. Plato's father had kicked his mother when he was in the womb creating the possibility that his body would have become fossilised – "petrified into a fossil himself, all before he could open his eyes" (170), just like a gecko embalmed within the resin. Plato is unusually attuned to the dreams and obscure features of the landscape due to the trauma he endured after knowing the violence committed to him while he was in his mother's womb and the pig-like existence he has been forced to lead by the Junta. As he suffers from emotional and physical agony, he draws parallels between the scars on his body, his broken teeth, and internal haemorrhages and the extreme violence that gives gemstones their beauty and sturdiness. The gemstones are also proof of transformations at the core; forced to the surface from faultlines deep within; they are described as "scars and clots from the land's deepest wounds" (Swarup 172). This shows that the experience of trauma "catalyses a transformation of meaning in the signs individuals use to represent their experiences" (Tal 16). Survivors who have experienced trauma often develop a revised understanding of concepts such as agony, terror, blood and insanity. Trauma is a transformational process, and people who have been impacted are unable to fully revert to their original, innocent selves like the gemstones mentioned above. Drawing on Lawrence Langer's theory, Kalí Tal (1996) quotes his statement that the individual who has experienced trauma does not go through a linear progression from a condition of "normalcy" to one of the "bizarre", only to return to a condition of normalcy. Instead, their journey entails moving from a condition of "normalcy" to one of the "bizarre", and ultimately returning to a condition of normalcy that is permanently marked by the lingering recollection of a confrontation with extreme cruelty. The coexistence of these two worlds creates a perpetual state of interdependence and mutual influence. Plato's extraordinary listening and sensing ability renders him paralysed by the emotions of the nonhuman world. A foreshadowing of the future is

buried in the voices, which is beyond the "normal". Traumatic experience occurs in a state of liminality, which lies beyond the parameters of 'normal' human experience, resulting in a profound sense of disorientation for the individual.

It is presumed that certain aspects of Plato's birth and other sufferings led to the circumstances of his life that prompted Plato to realise all evolution is governed by the primordial instinct which lets humans at liberty to venture into uncharted geography of longing to discover the ecstasy of mortality: "All evolution is guided by the primordial instinct. The one that set us free to explore the uncertain geographies of longing, only to stumble upon the bliss of mortality. The instinct leads us all to the primordial lake. Floating as uncomplicated single cells, waiting for life itself to cease" (Swarup 174). He was electrocuted twice daily in the prison with a bloodstained towel covering his face and stuffing his mouth until he lost track of the days. He realised the blood in the towel belonged to the tormented and the extinct because of the way it smelled and tasted. Solitary confinement makes him feel like he is a gecko entrapped in amber and he senses the same seismic waves that cause tremors in rice fields. The earthquake gives him a scope to recuperate from his injuries. For Plato, extraordinary and painful experiences in life, occurrences that eliminate the human/non-human divergences, make obvious the connectivity of all objects and beings – a realisation of the existence of companion beings that came about at times of extreme anxiety and trauma. Plato's response to unbearable suffering is to squeal like a pig. The inability of humans and, therefore, failure of fabricated language to communicate responses to both mental and physical assaults is similar to the failure of acknowledgement to the abuse inflicted upon nature and its non-human organisms by human greed. This inability triggers animalistic impulses, pushing the incomprehensible behaviour of an educated person to the brink of complete absurdity.

In the section "Valley", Sharan Thapa feels pain when he travels to Thamel, in Kathmandu, following his realisation that the place he knew and loved was being under ecological assault. Swarup has highlighted the factors leading to the rising concern in the Anthropocene, such as urbanisation, haphazard development, pollution, destruction of nature, and overpopulation, that have transformed the environment as manifested through unprecedented disasters, extinction of species, climate change, jeopardising and destabilising the equilibrium and vitality of human, animal and natural system. This has driven the planet into an unusual ecological crisis by exposing the environment to an ongoing and perilous succession of

vulnerabilities, exhaustion and stress. This conceptual structure not only further estranged people from the natural world, but it also made ecocide the norm, forever altering earth's landscape. Swarup paints a picture of Thamel as a chaotic, over populated area with humans crawling over the mounds of debris like termites and a place full of "tilting temples and sinking courtyards, the crumbling homes and crowded shops" and "terrace nightclubs and basement bars in choked alleyways" that are "waiting to suck you in" emotionally, mentally and spiritually (Swarup 197). Furthermore, the entrances to the buildings in Thamel looked like "snake holes", and the buildings staggered "like seasoned drunks, with protruding bellies and an unreliable gait" that was "pushed aside by the ever-busy streets, stooped with ceilings threatening to cave in" (Swarup 197). Thapa's anguish stems from his fear that when disaster strikes all will be destroyed without a trace as they are mere consolations:

> When the calamity comes, the structures will all sink without a ripple. For the bamboo scaffolds and timber planks that support it all – the tilting temples and sinking courtyards, the crumbling homes and crowded shops, the crutches that keep the beggars upright – they are, in truth, near consolations. When the calamity comes, the entire valley, not just this neighbourhood, will collapse into the contours and depressions of a seabed, setting the vivid colours and currents free to take new forms of lives. (Swarup 197)

The above realisation makes Thapa experience feelings of alienation and dejection or become an "outsider" while being trapped in this condition "in the land of his birth" (Swarup 198). With the exception of the overwhelming tug in his heart, nothing about that place reminds him of home. He predicts the upcoming natural calamity which is a "certain uncertainty, the greatest one there ever will be" (Swarup 198). After witnessing the deteriorating state of human life in this unfamiliar environment, Thapa is troubled by the local people's contradictory tendencies to commit suicide and desperate need for survival. The act of providing testimony through his observations regarding the ongoing ecological and human behavioural alterations serves to establish his role as a witness. Dori Laub (1995) contends:

> What ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing, spasmodic and continuous, conscious and unconscious, is not simply the information, the establishment of the facts, but the experience itself of *living through* testimony, of giving testimony.

> The testimony is, therefore, the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness: reconstitutes the internal "thou," and thus the possibility of a witness or a listener inside himself. (Laub 70)

The act of providing testimony as a means of reclaiming one's experiences can be viewed as a transformative process that is necessary for survival in the face of imminent danger and uncertainty. This process requires individual's active involvement with what has occurred so as to move forward and overcome the challenges posed by these circumstances. Thapa is concerned about the impending disaster that would follow from anthropocentric destruction of the area's natural splendour: "It is not an earthquake, not a tornado, nor is it a flood – it is all of them. The calamity will swallow all life there is and spit out new specimens. Un-toothed and un-jawed ones, searching for spare dentures among the ruins" (Swarup 199). These distorted specimens will be the product of humanity's reckless conduct and gradual estrangement from ecological well-being. The acute sense of alienation which Thapa experiences triggers solastalgia, a term defined by environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht (2005) as a pain "manifest in an attack on one's sense of place and a feeling of distress (psychological desolation) about its transformation" (48). It is a strong yearning for the continued existence of conditions that provide 'solace' or 'comfort' in one's current place of residence. Thapa is being overpowered by forces that eliminate the possibility of finding solace in the present as expressed in a sense of estrangement. In this regard, the assertion of Albrecht is noteworthy since he further elaborates solastalgia as a type of homesickness that occurs while remaining within the confines of 'home' itself (Albrecht 48). Solastalgia may develop in any situation when persistent disruption to the established order threatens to undermine the sense of place. Even though he can appear to be a local, Thapa's disappointment at being unable to thwart the development that was leading to the place's desolation and the loss of his sense of identity compounded his overall distress. His perceptions include an "odd feeling" brought on by the observation of "rubble", "half-dug ditches", "filth", "overbearingly sticky air" and "trash smells" (Swarup 203, 207). He is the same man whose family and community were wiped out in a thunderstorm followed by a landslide. Human minds that do not anticipate phenomena such as tsunamis, cloudbursts, or earthquakes as likely to occur at any instant are not suffering from a loss of memory but rather from an acute lack of

imagination. Swarup associates humans with calamities and her portrayal of human/nature relationship depends on the characteristics of memory for the permanent existence of the impression that these calamities have on people's minds: "Survivors of calamities bring the calamity with them, for it dwells permanently within" (Swarup 212). Doris Brothers (2008) is of the view that the state of trauma is marked by a significant level of disorder (chaos), which poses a severe threat of complete annihilation. She posits that it is commonly acknowledged that we live in a world where certainty is elusive, including the uncertainty of our psychological stability as "trauma appears to expose us to this truth in a way that we experience as unbearable" (Brothers 45). The mental state of 'exile' accurately captures the psychological condition of individuals who have undergone traumatic experiences, particularly those who have been violently uprooted from their familiar environment and thrust into an unfamiliar setting. This experience is a poignant one which resonates with the experiences of the victims. Thapa's depiction of his feeling of detachment and alienation from society subsequent to the traumatic encounter of continuous disturbance to the established system effectively portrays this condition. Consequently, the person who has experienced trauma is rendered an exile, compelled to exist within a realm that is devoid of familiarity. This analysis suggests that in such circumstances, even hope can transform into a frightening rival. The emotional states of anticipation and longing that comprise the construct of hope, and that impels our existence towards a promising future, can solely be endured in proportion to the degree of tolerability of uncertain encounters. In situations where trauma reveals the fallacy of certainty and the future appears bleak and desolate, it may be necessary to suppress hope in order to avoid exacerbating the already precarious state of the future. Like Thapa, Rose Mary also feels herself an 'outsider' in the land of her parents, husband and son (Swarup 187). The novel shows that emotional response to the loss or devastation of a specific place is a form of trauma that is experienced on a personal level. This sentiment is perceived as an assault to those who held the place or its ecosystem in high regard.

The novel portrays a varied spectrum of traumatic events that follow climate disasters, encompassing both the immediate and long-term impacts of such occurrences. These events span from the aftermath of a singular, all-inclusive instance to the intricate and multifaceted repercussions of prolonged and recurrent shocks. The presence of traumatised characters in climate fictions prompts readers to engage in a process of reconstructing history and making sense of current symptoms in accordance with past events. Through this process, readers are able

to reconnect fragmented elements and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. About the consequences of climate change, Risha Baruah and Merry Baruah Bora (2022) are of the opinion that "it then becomes rather explicit that the frequent storms, cyclones and tsunamis in the Andaman accompanied by harsh and devastating snowstorms in the Changthang plateau not only emphasised the unpredictability and ferocity of nature but also marked the Age of the Anthropocene wherein humans felt powerless in the face of nature that appeared as an unbounded and destructive force that instilled troubling fears inside us which subsequently made the whole business [of ecophobia] …. really unsettling" (123-124). The fact that Rose Mary experienced an earthquake in the Sagaing faultline in Burma demonstrates that there is no region of the planet that is untouched by the ferocity of nature – "an event that will change the course of rivers, send shivers down the earth's axis, and claim thousands of lives, altering emotional geographies forever" (Swarup 178). Such ecological disasters have resulted in the loss of countless individuals and their livelihoods, as well as the physical, emotional and spiritual displacement of the victims. The tremors of the earthquake awaken a deep, buried longing in Rose Mary's heart for her long dead Burmese husband, whom she killed to save their unborn child. Her fantasy about making reconciliation with the spirit of her husband in a dream was the emotional apex of the trauma she had endured from his death. She dreams that both of them together, in spirit, are lying side by side as fossils, watching while his body goes through its periodic cycles of "tropical warmth" and "polar winter"(Swarup 180). Her mental anguish and struggle to survive show the universal fight for survival on earth in the Anthropocene: "Unable to sustain itself in the battle between hot and cold, life moves on to other places, while the sentimental few attached to the earth choose extinction" (Swarup 180). The transformation of a once familiar ecosystem results in unrelenting suffering for its inhabitants, driving many species to the brink of extinction. The novel portrays a profound interconnection between the human and non-human entities, which is apparent throughout the narrative. The characters in the story seem to be mindful of the inescapable existence of various creatures in their surroundings. Sensing the existence of unusual creatures crawling all around has been implied as a consequence of experiencing traumatic events. Suffering and pain have enabled both Thapa and Plato to see numerous crawling creatures existing everywhere as if all land is a sea-floor. Traumatised by seeing his village and family destroyed by floods and landslides, Thapa imagines those creatures scurrying across the wreckage. Plato's comment emphasises the co-existence of those creatures

with humans in an ever changing world as he claims that they are "Premonition of our past … Ghosts of our future … They are us" (Swarup 251) who inhabit the cracks that humans live but are desperate to escape. The novel shows that the human mind is wounded after witnessing a series of natural disasters. In the Kshirsagar Glacial Complex, two scientists were caught in an avalanche while out on an excursion. The trauma of the life-threatening experience had left them in shock.

The shock from a life-threatening experience in Arif Anwar's novel *The Storm* (2018) takes another unfortunate turn. The character of Shahryar aka Shar, a Ph.D graduate in the United States, is the victim of trauma caused by his past experiences of floods and storms frequent in Bangladesh due to changing climate. The author's focus in this novel is not providing a direct commentary on the anthropogenic causes of climate change. Rather, he delves into the effects of climate disasters on the human psyche, which is an increasingly engaging concern. The author's use of characters such as Shahryar and Honufa further emphasises the effects of changing climate on individuals from impoverished and marginalised communities. Shahryar's understanding of the "schemes of the sky" and the "dark plot" they disclose to him through the arrangement of gathering clouds, gives him a "strange thrill" when he encounters a storm in the United States (Anwar 18). With a sudden and unsettling realisation, he analogised the oncoming storm to a "rushing train freighted with water" (19), the intensity of which made him remind his home (in Bangladesh) where there is a season known for storms – *Kal Baisakhi* – the Dark Spring. In addition, the storm also brings the terrible memories of his childhood back. The rain beats down on the windshield of his car like "a billion-strong army at bay" despite the wipe's best efforts; it seeps through the crevices of his memory. The world, in his opinion, is melting before him. He remembers the two major floods that hit Dhaka, when boats packed the streets and water level climbed halfway up the wall of their home. The ferocious weather in the United States brings back memories of the summer tempests he experienced as a boy in Bangladesh. When he tries to articulate his feelings or memories of natural disasters he has experienced to Anna, his nine-years-old American daughter, he is struck by how the vivid intensity of the event is lost in the process of retelling: "the beauty expunged through translation" (Anwar 19). Trauma from painful sights forced him to share his stories in fragments because he had to consider the significance of what he had been through. In the midst of the sudden storm surge, he starts to

imagine the gusts of wind as a "bully" who is, as if, threatening to catch up with him in the playground later.

Shar remembers the climate disasters in Bangladesh with an overwhelming sense of terror and contemplation at the precise moment of serious conversations with Val, his American girlfriend and mother of his daughter. He thinks back on how Bangladesh has a love-hate connection with water. The same rivers that descend towards Bangladesh from the base of the Himalayas and bring the productive alluvial soil that enables the country to support a hundred million people also flood during the monsoon season every year and uproot millions of people. In terms of fatalities, the storms are significantly worse that have inflicted unimaginable damages to the southern coast specifically. The obscure recollection from his early childhood years reminds him of the cyclone in November 1970 that wiped out a half million people overnight since no one had been warned in advance. The victims were traumatised by the horrifying sight of hundreds of thousands of corpses and livestock rotting in the sun as well as the failure of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and India to seek aid after the cyclone. Even though he describes the storm's devastation in detail, Shar fails to communicate to Val his own interest in and trauma associated with his childhood experience of the storm: "his childhood memory of the seashore, a day of black skies and keening winds – and running hand in hand with an unknown figure toward a great house to escape a storm" (Anwar 162-163). Whenever he has recounted this obscure memory, his foster parents have always told him it was all in his head. Therefore, he has come to believe this to be true over time. Even though he later moved to a different country, the shocking recollection and intense trauma of experiencing the calamity have never fully faded from his mind, leaving him with a lifelong fear of disasters affecting both his personal and public life. He has recurring dreams about a "hut" with a "thatched roof", where he is "playing with chickens" in a "dirt courtyard", "hot sand of an unnamed beach" and holding the hand of a dark-skinned woman (Anwar 165). As a young man, he seemed unaware of the storm related tragedy that caused his real parents to die, and he was then placed in the care of zamindar Rahim Choudhury and his wife Zahira. These faint memories resurfaced in the form of unsettling flashbacks and numbing feelings of trauma. Lacking the language to describe his nightmares, such as the one in which he runs away to survive the storm, does not feel made up or the work of his fantasy. The dreams are the manifestation of the deeply imprinted trauma he has endured as he remarks that they are "relics washed up on the shores of his being" (Anwar 165). He became

more perplexed and intrigued about the nature of his dreams as a result of his foster parents and Rina's (the woman who raised him) constant disregard for his dreams. Shahryar's life was irrevocably altered by two significant events: the storm that killed his parents and the Bangladesh War of Liberation, which started five months after the storm. During that period, Rahim and Zahira were present in Chittagong and were extensively engaged in assisting the community in its efforts to reconstruct the damage caused by the storm. Additionally, they were also involved in safeguarding the local population from the hostile actions of the invading soldiers from West Pakistan. The devastating impact of the storm and the war left an indelible mark on the shores of Bangladesh, evoking tragic recollections of the lives lost during these events. The storm-induced collective trauma had reverberations in the psyche of individuals residing in the impacted region. The confluence of these two events ultimately determined the fate of individuals such as Rahim and Zahira, resulting in their forced displacement. After the storm, Rahim witnessed the corpses of the victims as they were found everywhere "entwined around trees, floating in shallow water, buried under detritus so that only the odd limb shows. Broken, bloated, twisted and crushed. Every age, shape and gender. Often lying side by side with the animals. Evidence of the storm's cruel equity" (Anwar 344). These shocking depictions convey the notion that amidst the calamitous effects of climate change, the distinction between humanity and other life forms becomes insignificant, as they are both subjected to the wrath of nature on equal terms. Rahim also saw the displaced people, who took refuge in his house, sobbed when they discovered their dead livestock and mourned the loss of loved ones. On the other hand, the sight of irreversible destruction resulted in a collective trauma that caused many individuals to adopt a stoic demeanour. Their inadequate response demonstrated the severity of the trauma they experienced, as the extent of the destruction propelled them to a state beyond emotion. The loss experienced by people collectively can be so profound and traumatic that it results in a complete rupture of the sense of self, which cannot be accurately conveyed through either verbal or emotional expressions.

Honufa, one of the female protagonists in the novel and Shar's real mother, is the firsthand victim of the terrible cyclone of 1970, and the storm's traumatic experience caused her to recall all the tragic memories of her life. The Bhola cyclone that struck Bangladesh in 1970 was not the first time that Honufa had to brace herself for a storm of this magnitude; in Bangladesh, the prevalence of terrible storms poses a persistent threat to the lives of those who

live along the bay. However, this particular storm of 1970 was an occurrence of such magnitude that completely changed the course of her life. Honufa has been through a lot of storms over the years, and based on what she has learned from those experiences, she believes that the current storm is merely a test of its wrath. After the eye of the storm has passed, there will be a calm that can serve as an ensnare for those who are not prepared for it. She acknowledges it as the storm's cunning trick. The traumatic memory of Honufa's aunt's death in a storm while she was out checking on her livestock during one of those terrifying moments when the eye of the storm was passing by is brought back to her by this event. Her aunt was just about to return when the storm captured her in its grip. The daughter of her aunt witnessed her mother being swept into the sky in an instant by ferocious gales as she hurried back to her hut. The trauma of the incident is still so resonant in her mind that she becomes desperate in taking every precaution to preserve the life of her infant son by sending him to zamindar Rahim's home to seek shelter from the storm, even if it means compromising with all her resentments toward Rahim for abandoning her. Her subsequent decision, which she would make after placing her son in the care of her friend Rina so that he can be safe, would determine whether she will ever be able to be reunited with her son. Her reunion with her husband Jamir, who has gone to work to the sea, is also uncertain. With few choices remaining and each one being perilous, an injured Honufa finds it impossible to escape the storm. She only has a few moments to make a decision because the storm has already come with the ocean acting as its "dancing partner" (Anwar 312). Being relieved of the worry about her son and husband's safety, she focuses on herself as she finds some tangled boat rope and uses the most ferocious knots she can muster to tie herself to the trunk of a sturdy palm tree. The painful act to survive the storm reminds her of the inner storms she has withstood throughout her life and the hardships she has overcome leading up to this ultimate disaster. Her mind reacts to the storm by bringing up all the traumatic memories from her past life. Memory, in Paul Antze's (2003) view, is more akin to the ability to re-create an event in one's mind; one that primarily relies on indicators of context in order to patch together a jumbled set of scenes (97). Research on traumatic memories suggests that they are significantly more predicted to resurface in a disruptive manner than fade away silently; hence the evidence for repressed memories is at best unstable and ambiguous. According to the neuro-psychoanalytic theory of memory, declarative memory is the recollection or representation in language or sensory images of discrete circumstances, events, experiences or facts (Antze 98). Honufa's physical actions

demonstrate the resurfacing of declarative knowledge that she has retained in her mind for long, encoded with the symbolic and referential meanings of her past memories. When she makes the first knot to tie her legs to the tree, Honufa recalls how her sturdy legs once took her to the far western end of the beach, where she met Shiraj, a typist. They had an affair that did not last long but left her pregnant. Shiraj and Honufa planned an elopement with the hope that his family would eventually approve of her. However, Shiraj left without taking her and she did not see him again after that. In contrast, Jamir was a friend of hers from childhood and he secretly and passionately loved her. She recalls that when her community and family turned against her because of her liaison with Shiraj, Jamir intervened to save her by putting forth the marriage proposal even before her child was born out of wedlock. Anwar's narrative of Honufa's resurfacing of traumatic memory, triggered by her struggle against the storm, creates a vivid and immersive experience for the reader. Dominick LaCapra (2004) contends, "Traumatic memory (at least in Freud's account) may involve belated temporality and a period of latency between a real or fantasized early event and a later one that somehow recalls it and triggers renewed repression, dissociation, or foreclosure and intrusive behaviour. But when the past is uncontrollably relived, it is as if there were no difference between it and the present" (119). The phenomenon of re-enacting or repeating the past with exactitude is not necessarily a determinant factor as LaCapra doubts it. However, the subjective experience of reliving an event creates a sense of temporal collapse, blurring the distinction between the present and the past. Anwar has entwined Honufa's actions with the sequence of events in a way that blurs the differentiation between the past and the present, thus providing readers with the ability to perceive the unfolding of events as if they are transpiring in the present.

The storm symbolically rekindles the underlying patterns of traumatic memory that have regulated Honufa's existence. Suzanne Nalbantian (2003) has noted that persistent episodic memory is identified by a "richness of phenomenological detail, a sense of reliving the experience, a sense of travel through time, and a feeling of exact reproduction of the past" (137). A retrieval of this kind would take into account the environment or location in addition to the person's emotional state. Nalbantian agrees with cognitive psychologist William F. Brewer that such "personal memory" is defined as a "recollection of a particular episode from an individual's past" that often appears to be a "reliving" of the individual's perceptual experience during that earlier moment (137). Honufa's subconscious is stimulated by the storm, and every physical

action symbolic of the traumatic memory being dredged up to remind her of the dismal times in her past life. As the sand carried by the storm stings her body, she is reminded of her father's comment comparing her skin to her religion, which she was unable to live without. The momentous reminiscence provides readers with information about her birth, revealing that she was born a Hindu named Rakhi Jaladas, which means Rakhi the slave to water. A Jaladas could never be anything but a fisher folk. She had to adopt the name Honufa after getting married because her husband Jamir was a muslim. She always thought: "One could be what one wanted, not what one was fated" (Anwar 316). She always acted as a rebel against her family, society, norms and tradition. She took a daring step by embracing the religion of her husband, which ultimately led to her being shunned by her community and social isolation.

As she clung tenaciously to the tree amidst the storm, an inadvertent gasp for air caused her mouth to be instantaneously filled with particles of dust and dirt. The occurrence prompted her recollection that the very same mouth had previously articulated the sacred words of Shahada during her marriage many years ago. The act of marrying someone from a different religion elicited disapproval from members of her community. Zamindar Rahim, the only individual who offered assistance and encouragement during her difficult times, received an ultimatum from the villagers. They warned that any further support from him would lead to a loss of their confidence in his leadership. As a result, Honufa went through mental agony when Rahim visited her hut one night to seek her understanding regarding his decision to distance himself from her. He was apprehensive about the possible ramifications of maintaining a conspicuous association with Honufa, including inviting her to his residence to provide her with education, which he had done over the years. This act of abandonment caused a profound emotional impact on her, leading her to contemplate a permanent disconnection.

Upon retying the rope around her belly, the recollection of her and Shiraj's stillborn baby resurfaced, evoking a sense of sorrowful remembrance. Following Honufa's initial pregnancy, her belly housed a quiescent womb for several years until the birth of her son Shahryar. This magical event occurred so late in Honufa and Jamir's lives that they had come to terms with the possibility of a curse being placed upon them by Honufa's enraged family.

She engaged in the act of swinging the rope once again, this time directing it towards the upper portion of her stomach. This action triggered a recollection of the inexplicable withering of the bay in the year following the birth of her son: "The shoals of fish, so thick and abundant in

the years past, thinned to vanishing. Jamir's forays into the bay grew longer, the catches smaller. Where before the floor of his leased boat could not be seen because of the hauls of writhing, wriggling silver, now all one saw was wood, flecked here and there with the odd fish. They ate less and less" (Anwar 319). The family starved and her breast milk began to dry. The author has skillfully established a correlation between the act of tying her stomach with the rope and the state of starvation she endured.

Subsequently, she deftly secured the rope around her chest utilising her proficient hands, which were adept in the art of knot-tying. These same hands remind her that they had previously been utilised for menial tasks such as dishwashing and floor scrubbing when she had been compelled to work as a domestic servant due to her impoverished circumstances in the household of Abbas, a wealthy proprietor of multiple fishing vessels. As she squeezed her eyes against the onslaught of nature's fury, it brought to mind the hidden letter that she had chanced through her eyes, concealed within the bookshelf of Abbas' residence. The letter was addressed to Abbas from a man named Motaleb and concerned the zamindar Rahim Choudhury. Later, she confronted Abbas with the information she had acquired from reading the letter, which exposed the plot against the zamindar and his subsequent abduction. She developed a persistent sense of remorse, due to her decision to decline the offer of financial help from Abbas in exchange for her silence regarding the secret letter. Instead, she opted to facilitate her husband's employment on Abbas' trawler. The recollections of traumatic experiences linked to physical movements and specific parts of the body suggests that the human mind serves as a repository for personal encounters, and underscores the frequent association between bodily memory and perception of reality. Women exhibit a strong correlation between their mind and body, as they tend to be more attuned to their physical selves. Anna Lisa Tota (2016) observes: "The emotions that s/he could not live are probably conserved in the body waiting for an opportunity to emerge again and be transformed. As soon as something similar happens outside, the individual seems to reactivate the same 'old' pain, the individual seems to be imprisoned by the past" (468). Individuals respond to present events by projecting past experiences, which may have been repressed and stored in the mind for an extended period of time, resulting in various physical manifestations. In this regard, it can be aptly stated that during the process of tying the rope to the tree to withstand the storm, specific parts of Honufa's body served as a catalyst for recalling the traumatic past experiences of her life. Indeed, "At this, the end of times, she is ready to lay out her sins for the

storm to wash away to far-forgotten gyres" (Anwar 329). This line referring to an apocalyptic ending of Honufa's life subtly convinces readers to rethink the realities of climate hazards and their future selves bearing contours of trauma.

Large-scale environmental degradation in the Anthropocene results in the apprehension of a transition from safe and sound existence to a traumatically affected one. The references to the trauma caused by phenomena like coral erosion and sea level rise reverberate throughout the novel *Reef* (1998) by Romesh Gunesekera.[6] The novel opens in 1962, which is also the year in which the protagonist Triton begins working as a houseboy for Mister Ranjan Salgado, who is portrayed as a whimsical but curious scientist captivated by "legion under the sea, the transformation of water into rock – the cycle of light, plankton, coral and limestone – the yield of beach to ocean" (Gunesekera 24). Salgado agrees to accept financial support from the government to investigate into the "disappearing" coral reefs of Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon. He has identified coral mining, bombing, netting and tourism as potential factors contributing to the issue. However, due to a lack of sufficient data and motivation, Salgado is unable to definitely establish a conclusive explanation. The cessation of his financial support coincides with the commencement of a colossal irrigation and agricultural initiative by the Sri Lankan government. At the point of "its zenith" (119), the coastal project of Salgado is relinquished and he subsequently relocates to England with Triton, his servant. In the course of an initial discussion with Dias Liyanage, Salgado informs this close friend about his hypothesis which he aspires to validate, yet ultimately falls short in substantiating his hypothesis. The discussion pertains to polyps, which are delicate organisms responsible for the production and habitation of coral: "You see, this polyp is really very delicate. It has survived aeons, but even a small change in the immediate environment – even *su* if you pee on the reef – could kill it. Then the whole thing will go. And if the structure is destroyed, the sea will rush in. The sand will go. The beach will disappear" (Gunesekera 48). This statement implies that Salgado's account identifies the threat presently recognised as mass coral bleaching. According to Todd Kuchta (2020), coral bleaching is a phenomenon that arises due to alterations in temperature of water or salt content that adversely affect the vibrant photosynthetic algae which serves as a source of food and energy for polyps. This results in the discolouration of their limestone shells, rendering them a pale white hue, and ultimately leading to the demise of entire coral reefs (Kuchta 3). Salgado's anticipatory reflections validate Kuchta's view which implies that Salgado has

envisioned a potential catalyst for the extensive deterioration of coral reefs many years prior to its actual manifestation. The hypothesis posits an underlying fear that the potential consequences of the threat may not be given due consideration, thereby resulting in widespread havoc. The novel's suggestion of a correlation between coral erosion and global warming may hold even greater significance in light of current events. Salgado's increasing concern regarding the vanishing of coral reefs is evident in his statement to Dias about the prospect of escorting him to past Galle prior to the location's imminent disappearance (Gunesekera 47). A sense of urgency permeates the narrative. However, Salgado's commentary on the ocean's "thermodynamics" (82) is limited to mere speculations. While his fellows are producing papers on topics such as "the equilibrium of water and the effects of human muck on polyp life", he waits intently to accumulate additional information crucial for the completion of his research (Gunesekera 131, 139). He experiences fluctuations in emotional extremes, alternating between heightened anxiety and inaction, ultimately becoming unable to substantiate his presumption regarding the deteriorating reef. Furthermore, he remains unaware of the underlying cause of the dying reef, which is attributable to climate change.

Unlike Salgado's, Triton's psychological state is primarily influenced by the trauma stemming from his recent acquisition of knowledge regarding his master's hypothesis concerning the encroaching sea and coral erosion. This has led to the manifestation of severe apprehension and unease as he ponders upon the unpredictable prospects that lie ahead. Throughout the novel, he engages in introspection over the calamitous effects of human-induced destruction of ecology, which would lead to an increase in sea levels. Triton gradually comprehends what Mister Salgado is unable to discover: the detrimental impact of carbon emissions on the reef's survival. Evidence of rampant usage of petrol propels his narrative which seems to be constituted by its fundamental substance. The novel additionally signifies Triton's introspective attempt to recollect. His recollection of Ceylon is rekindled as he met an attendant in a petrol station in London through "thick fumes", which evokes a vivid sense of place (Gunesekera 1). His mind is transported back to Ceylon as he inhales the air that is saturated in petrol. He says that his every breath seems "imbued with petrol" (Gunesekera 3). A significant portion of the narrative revolves around carbon emissions, fossil fuel usage, as well as the operation of automobiles. Triton has direct experience with carbon emissions while living in Sri Lanka. His frequent references to petrol usage either by his uncle or Mister Salgado suggest a concern for the

significant impact of automobile emission on the environment. During his initial visit to his master's reef observatory, Triton watches through the rear window of their car "occasional bus belching smoke" (Gunesekera 59). This observation serves as a conspicuous manifestation of carbon discharge. Salgado reduces the speed of his vehicle upon observing the ostensible outcome of human conduct: "the skull-heaps of petrified coral – five-foot pyramids beside smoky kilns – marking the allotments of a line of impoverished lime-makers, tomorrow's cement fodder, crumbling on the loveliest stretch of the coast" (Gunesekera 59-60). The pyramids seen by Triton are not merely eerie figures of a previously prosperous coral reef. The presence of dead corals that is intended for utilisation in lime kilns serves as an additional indication of the effects of human action. He also notices "small pieces of bleached white coral marked the municipal parking lot" (118) in the vicinity of a fish market. Repeated encounter with bleached corals has reinforced his anxiety regarding the impending catastrophe that will result from global warming.

Anxiety leads Triton to experiencing discontentment with his position as a servant in Salgado's household; he strolled unaccompanied on the main road when a pervasive sense of doom overtook him due to his recent awareness of the ecological consequences of rising sea level. This led him to assert, "I could feel the ocean pressing around us" (Gunesekera 154). According to Jerome S. Bernstein's (2005) observation, individuals who possess the ability to exhibit a sense of "borderland consciousness", a phase of cognition that frequently involves a profound association with natural world as well as its struggles against human action, have undergone a personal encounter with trauma (214-215). The fusion of nonpathological 'borderland' encounters alongside individual traumatic experiences and neurotic layers of personality structure can lead to significant personal suffering. Recurrent fear of impending catastrophe has left a lasting impact on Triton's psyche, prompting him to contemplate the transience of such events. The author subtly alludes to Triton's "borderland consciousness" through his musings on the horror of ecological destruction rampant in the Anthropocene. If the route to Mister Salgado's reef observatory revealed to Triton the detrimental effects of carbon emission on coral, he now perceives an additional outcome: the continuous traffic emissions produced by the affluent population of Sri Lanka lead to the encroachment of the ocean on the shore that fails to sustain reefs. During a vacation in Wales with Mister Salgado, Triton vividly describes the sunset, evoking a sense of atmospheric crisis. He observes the presence of petrochemicals in the atmosphere, which "stained the air in mauve and pink" and strangely

enough, for him, these hues bear a resemblance to the "coral-spangled south coast back home" (Gunesekara 172). Despite its apparent disparity, this cognitive leap aids Triton in amalgamating the information he initially collected on coral erosion during his journey to Salgado's observatory. Triton's consciousness is currently preoccupied with petroleum and its residuals that affect how he describes the estuary: "The sea shimmering between the black humps of barnacled rocks, mullioned with gold bladder-wrack like beached whales, thickened into a great beast reaching landward, snuffling and gurgling" (Gunesekera 172). His psychological distress and anxiety manifest in the form of a striking mental image wherein a menacing sea like a 'beast' is poised to submerge his 'uprooted' and 'overshadowed' existence. Triton perceives Mister Salgado's comment about the disappearance of coral and the fluid future of humans in coastal regions, especially Sri Lanka, as obvious: "Now as the coral disappears, there will be nothing but sea and we will all return to it" (172). He characterises the presence of these threats as akin to a 'wound' for the planet. It seems that the sea has undergone a process of thickening, resulting in the formation of a 'gurgling' substance of viscous and poisonous fluid. Todd Kuchta (2020) is of the opinion that Triton has precisely completed the cognitive mapping process that he initiated while travelling towards Salgado's observatory. This process led him to a conclusion or a kind of epiphany during his trip to Wales, where he traced out the root cause of coral bleaching in Ceylon to the remote production of fossil fuels. His acknowledgement of the broader implications, specifically global warming, is made clear through one of his conclusive depictions of the petrochemical dusk along the coast: "The sky would redden, the earth redden, the sea redden" (Gunesekera 172).

Triton's gradual acquisition of terrifying knowledge concerning coral bleaching and adverse effects of carbon emission has led him to visualise traumatic outcomes, causing him to associate his current state of servitude with the exploitation of the reef. His ability to perceive and comprehend the ecological intricacies of a reef can be attributed to his position as a servant in Salgado's residence. His prevailing circumstances facilitate an in-depth awareness of the complexities of coral bleaching from a personal perspective, which is beyond the reach of a marine researcher like Mister Salgado. Triton's growing disillusionment with his current state of servitude is reflected in his verbal expression, which conveys feelings of dissatisfaction, futility and resentment through imagery reminiscent of corroding reefs and bleached corals. After being promoted to the position of only available servant for Salgado's household, he was assured the

dual responsibilities of serving and cooking for his master's ever-expanding social network. The author draws a comparison between his ability to cater to the regular visitors of Mister Salgado and that of a coral polyp which is a modest yet highly productive builder of coral reefs, forming the foundation for a flourishing ecosystem. Similar to coral, he maintains a harmonious connection with individuals in his environment. In brief, filtering through the perception of a polyp, Triton's societal position of servitude is viewed. His interpersonal relationships exhibit a symbolic nature, however, as the narrative progresses, he becomes increasingly aware of a shift in his environment towards a more invasive dynamic. He realises that rather than evolving into an expanded familial unit, they are developing a network of 'oglers' and 'hangers-on' who contribute nothing. His disappointment to see people coming after their food is evident in his comment when he says that they "craved my cooking. If I were cooking for two, I would soon be cooking for half-a-dozen" (Gunesekera 133). He subsequently expresses dissatisfaction frequently "invade in shoals" akin to ravenous fish, persistently seeking food and entertainment without reciprocating any favours (133). He articulates his disillusionment with servitude through language and graphic imageries that connote escalating temperatures and the process of coral erosion. An early indication of this can be observed when Miss Nili, Salgado's lover, gives him a cookbook as a Christmas gift. He experiences a complex emotional response upon discovering a hundred rupee note inside the book he received. While appreciative of the gesture, he also feels a sense of disappointment at the lack of deeper meaning behind the exchange: "I wanted there to be more than money between us" (Gunesekera 99). This realisation prompts him to acknowledge his subordinate position as a servant. His immediate and intense reaction – as expressed through the statement "my flesh was melting, leaving me numb and empty" – can be interpreted as a physical response to being in a state of servitude. This personal response can also be compared to the process by which coral is affected by rising water temperatures, leading to the expulsion of the algae that provides sustenance to the polyps. We get the hint about the traumatic realisation that, in the future, he will suffer the same fate as the corals destroyed by human intervention. This emotional agony has left his feelings numb and empty. Salgado's poker party with his companions elicits a comparable feeling, as Triton finds himself reprimanding his own servitude in response to the unrelenting demands of the guests. This inner turmoil is described as a consuming flame, as Triton laments, "Inside me, everything was burning up" (Gunesekera 154). The recurrent allusions to melting, burning and heat suggest the alarming

implications of an era constantly besieged by the horror of global warming, climate change, coral bleaching and glaciers melting. The recollection of Triton's reef swimming experience is imbued with hints to a disrupted ecosystem: shallow water "seethed with creatures", akin to an aquatic jungle of distorted forms, "whirling tails" and "tentacles sprouting and grasping everywhere" (Gunesekera 176). He experienced fear and trauma upon visiting Salgado's actual reef, which differed from his initial perception. He begins to perceive the reef as a place where natural elements are in a constant state of consumption of their immediate environment "everything was perpetually devouring its surroundings" (Gunesekera 177). The term "devouring" evokes an idea of a voracious fire, thereby implying that the waters encircling Sri Lanka are experiencing the adverse effects of rising temperature. Furthermore, his recollection combines the observation of an endangered polyp with experiencing the pain of a subordinated domestic help. When Triton swam in the reef, his fingertips turned white. This physical reaction is similar to what bleaching does to coral. The imagery of vulnerable reefs and increasing sea levels in the novel holds significance beyond serving as mere reminders of political upheaval and insurgency in a fragile society. Triton's traumatic journey from environmental ignorance to knowledge of the terrible impacts of global warming provides a unique foreshadowing of carbon-induced climate change. He identifies himself with the destroyed reef as a result of the trauma he undergoes witnessing the horror of the ecological degradation. Triton's status as a servant caused him mental agony which is conveyed through his statement, "I had a feeling inside me of everything sliding away, out of reach, into some other world" (Gunesekera 123). The author employs the term 'other world' to conjure a sensation of unfamiliar occurrences in his surroundings, suggestive of adverse socio-political and ecological transformations. Amidst his intense frenzy, he was able to anticipate a global shift "the whole world was changing" (Gunesekera 165). The aesthetic appeal of the landscape is being eclipsed by the escalating conflict and proclivity towards aggression, as well as the damaging impacts of the government's reformed regulation policies on land use. He experiences a sense of terror in response to the alterations occurring within his purview, which are attributable to the degradation of the natural world. This has prompted him to contemplate the actions of a neighbour who erected an apartment block on a plot of land that was formerly occupied by a garden. He is traumatised by his experience of the unprecedented degradation of the land and assumes that everything in their past, including their geography, would be reconstructed, resulting in a loss of familiarity and continuity.

As above discussion on Gunesekera's *Reef* convey, Sri Lanka, an island nation, is particularly vulnerable to the exacerbating impacts of the phenomenon of rising global temperatures and climatic changes, that also materialise through surging tides, torrential downpours, hurricanes, sea-level rise and devastating tsunami. The novel *A Little Dust on the Eyes* (2015) by Minoli Salgado attests the expeditious and calamitous alteration of earth's climate, as evidenced by the uncertainties surrounding the environmental state of Sri Lanka. The narrative chronicles the experiences of Savi and Renu Rodrigo, a pair of Sri Lankan-born cousins who were separated during their childhood as a result of the violent upheaval wrought by the Sri Lankan Civil War. Their paths fortuitously cross once again when they both get united during a marriage ceremony weeks before the devastating Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004. The haunting account of the calamity that led to the death of a significant number of individuals shows the vulnerability of human beings in coping with unpredictability enforced by non-human forces like tsunamis. Salgado's novel portrays the significance of employing the catastrophe trope in literature as a means of effectively communicating the lived experiences of people who lack the capacity to anticipate the immediate and enduring consequences of ecological calamities resulting from their disregard for the power of nature. Salgado's work also highlights the profound psychological impact of the tsunami on the protagonists, and people collectively, underscoring the limitations of human understanding in comprehending the workings of non-human forces, despite human's ability to exert influence on the natural world. The novel aptly portrays how the disaster not only wrought changes in the outer world, but also exerted a far-reaching sway on the interior space. Upon the occurrence of the tsunami, the expressive narrative voices of the affected individuals become temporarily suspended. The perspective suddenly shifts to an aerial view showcasing what followed, gliding over the characters to reveal intricate particulars of the devastation. In *Trauma: A Social Theory* (2012), Jeffrey C. Alexander postulates that such an event: "traumatizes a collectivity because it is extraordinary event, an event that has such an explosive quality that it creates disruption and radical change within a short period of time" (8). The traumatic event has led to a disruption in verbal communication, resulting in an eruption of shrieks and cries that have continued to echo for years. These shrieks and cries have come to represent the shared language of disaster within the collective history. Upon a sudden realisation, the victims find themselves bound by a shared experience of the feeling of loss and profound grief for the death of their loved ones, thereby forging a

psychological bond due to their collective traumatic experience. The shrieks and cries of those who have suffered loss have evolved into a language of trauma, owing to their incapability to articulate their sorrow and shock through verbal language. The complexity of this loss and grief renders any anticipation feeble, and no language possesses the potency to express and "bear the weight of suffering" (Salgado 208).

Three successive tsunami waves wiped out nearly three-quarters of the island's coastal region and resulted in an estimated death toll of thirty-five thousand people. People's survival was largely dependent on their current location, with their fate being determined by accidents, chance and an arbitrary confluence of unpredictable forces. According to the author's account, a multitude of people were swept away by the waves, while a significant number resurfaced with new identities. There were ample possibilities for multiple rebirths – conjecture regarding the identities of those who had lived and died. In a brief span of ten minutes, the waves obliterated the locality. However, a comprehensive show of the magnitude of the destruction would necessitate numerous hours of aerial television footage, given the traumatised state of people who are rendered speechless or "too shocked to speak" (207) by the calamity. The estimation of casualties and displaced people increased instantly, in tandem with the velocity of the tsunami, with figures rising by thousands. People frantically searched for their loved ones, displaying little regard for the devastation around. Following the disaster, various entities including local communities, military personnel, guerrilla forces and aid agencies converged on the island to provide assistance. In the subsequent weeks, a concomitant imperative arose to understand the historical and causal basis of the event, in order to establish its origin, order and coherence. The event elicited a varied range of responses, including "untold compassion" and acts of opportunistic exploitation like "untold greed" (Salgado 207). While some heroically risked and even lost their lives to save the affected people, others looted valuables from the decomposing corpses left exposed to the sun. People who have experienced trauma frequently exhibit a desire to comprehend and rationalise the cause of the event in an effort to cope with and reconcile with the experience. The vigilant and anxious victims exhibited similar responses as they were scrutinising the circumstances in an attempt to rationalise the event. The global pursuit of tangible evidence-based information became nearly as pressing as the scramble for medical assistance and food supplies. The author's graphic description of Savi's death amidst tsunami conveys the image of a psychologically wounded person succumbing to mortality. During the

surge, Savi made a valiant effort to save the life of an unknown girl child who clung to her arms in an attempt to avoid being swept away by the deluge. She was ultimately unsuccessful in rescuing the girl, and both perished to reinforce unavoidable mortality in the face of disaster. The landscape itself bore the traces of collective trauma, as is apparent from the depiction of the aftermath of the tsunami, where "there was no sea any more, only these pale waves of grief tumbling down towards the shore" (Salgado 223). The author has employed this imagery to emphasise the unceasing sufferings endured by the victims, resulting in their psychological instability due to overwhelming feelings of grief, depression and helplessness. The portrayal of collective trauma in this novel bears a striking resemblance to the representation of psychological distress experienced by survivors in the aftermath of an earthquake, as outlined in Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing*. The 1954 earthquake in the Andamans is mentioned by Swarup to illustrate the psychological anguish endured by the survivors. It was an extremely rare event in a planet's history for a conflict on its crust to cause so widespread disruption. The solid earth that supported the islands, reefs, ocean, forests, and rivers was torn apart in a matter of minutes, which no one could have foreseen. The traumatised survivors were stuck in that minute of utter blackness forever. They were deceived by a failure of imagination. The emergence of language-related and imaginative shortcomings in these two novels alludes to an acute sense of trauma that impedes people's cognitive faculties.

Hence, the literary works selected for this chapter showcase the human experience of trauma, which is either directly or obliquely linked to our shared sense of apprehension concerning an apocalyptic doom. Following the widespread devastation caused by climate change on a global scale, the literary community in South Asia has also played an influential role in addressing the psychological impact of witnessing the far-reaching consequences of natural disasters that stem from human activities such as carbon emissions, deforestation, unregulated coastal development, inland and marine pollution, overexploitation of natural resources, overfishing, sea mining and tourism. There appears to be an overall consensus among individuals in diverse settings that our connection with the planet is flawed, and discomfort can possibly originate from an underlying sense of grief and trauma pertaining to the lack of a sustainable future. The protagonists experiencing climate-induced calamities not only bear traumatic memories and psychological wounds, but also acquire fearful outlooks on existence in a world under constant change. The authors of the novels in question have incorporated language that

empowers the readers to gain insight into the inner world of the characters. This is achieved through the provision of spaces for memories, contemplation, introspection, foreshadowing and flashbacks of experiences tinged with pain, fear, anxiety and trauma. The traumatic experiences of the protagonists serve as illustrations of transformative episodes, wherein moments of agony and suffering ultimately results in a point of heightened understanding and knowledge. The manner in which individuals perceive climate change is influenced by their encounters with extreme weather events. This is due to a cognitive process wherein negative emotions elicited by the adverse consequences of such events become instantly linked with climate change. Moreover, recollections of these harmful outcomes concurrently amplify the psychological significance of climate-related hazards. By employing trauma theory as a framework to examine the ways in which protagonists respond to the climate crisis and exploring the function of current literature in addressing this pressing issue, this study efforts to reimagine the discipline through a planet-centred and trauma-informed lens. It has been noted that such works of fiction allow authors the opportunity to communicate the possible consequences of changed climate conditions from a more personal scale. The authors have introduced an approach of incorporating intermediary sections between the reality of climate catastrophe and its representation through human perception. This approach provides readers with the ability to understand the extensive implications and trauma of climate change without having to directly confront the actual disaster. The apparent ineffable expressions of psychological distress bear resemblance to the characteristics of sporadic cases of deranged psyche. However, the underlying cause of such occurrences can be attributed to human-induced emissions, the exploitation of resources, and the gradual transgression of ecological boundaries. The current state of the planet, the occurrences of disasters and resulting trauma may be attributed to our unethical relationship with the environment. The novels have portrayed that the tendency to draw comparison between the visible mental meltdown in everyday situations and the catastrophic impacts of changing climate provides a heightened level of personal insight. The protagonists in these literary works representing climate trauma find themselves confined within an emotionally charged atmosphere where the perpetual reality of planetary challenges overshadows the intricacies of personal existence. The aforementioned perspective is situated within the realm of personal fear and distress, redefining the concept of climate trauma as a dual issue involving both the unpredictability of ecological disaster and the private emotional turmoil experienced by

individuals. In the words of Laurie Vickroy (2014), there exist a multitude of psychological responses that extend beyond the conventional understanding of the indescribable which eventually "cultivate the subtleties of experience, which are expressed through behaviours, bodies, provisional identities, and survival strategies" (130). The texts examined here contain indications of ongoing disasters, manifested in various emotional forms that intensify the connection between the human and the crisis of experiencing and expressing the trauma caused by climate change. The experience of climate trauma is characterised by various affective forms that evoke an urge for survival against the consequences of human actions, the belief in life beyond human assumptions of a nurturing earth, and the immersion in the contemplation of climate catastrophe. Climate trauma is not merely a premonition or a figment of the imagination, nor is it an illusory awareness of complexities of hyperobjects.[7] Rather, it is a tangible manifestation of the psychological struggle felt in the present moment. It can be argued that the realm of fiction offers an expansive array of perspectives, thereby affording readers the opportunity to contemplate a myriad of human responses to the emotions of fear and shock. Thus, as suggested by the novels discussed, the atmospherics of affect acknowledge the inseparability of emotions from the impact of our surroundings, encompassing the natural environment and its degradation due to human activities or alterations caused by shifts in climate patterns.

Endnotes

[1] The term is used by S. Clayton et al. in the work, *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance* (2017), pp. 7. Available at https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf.

[2] Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville R. Ellis in their work *Ecological Grief as a Mental Health Response to Climate Change-Related Loss* (2018) define 'ecological grief' as "the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems, and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change" (275).

[3] See Kaitlyn R. Gorman et al.'s "Peritraumatic Experience and Traumatic Stress" in the book *Comprehensive Guide to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (2015) edited by Colin R. Martin, Victor R. Preedy, and Vinood B. Patel.

[4] Ulrich Beck in his book *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (1992) calls 'risk society' as a 'catastrophic society' in which "the exceptional condition threatens to become the norm" (24). This risk society is characteristic of destruction of nature, industrial pollution, nuclear threats, etc. with their multifarious effects on the health and social life of people.

[5] See the Preface of Frank Furedi's *Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation* (2002). The defining characteristic of 'culture of fear', Furedi says, "is the belief that humanity is confronted by powerful destructive forces that threaten our everyday existence" (vii).

[6] The novel was first published in 1994.

[7] The term 'hyperobjects' is used by Timothy Morton in his book *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (2013) to denote phenomenon like global warming as one of the 'hyperobjects' that are "massively distributed in time and space" (48).

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