



Nature's Defiant Voice in Tamsüla Ao's Short Stories 'Snow-Green' and 'The Talking Tree'

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Abstract

Folklore is a collection of cultural beliefs that reflects societal values and our interaction with nature. We can learn more about the perceived agency of nature and the complex interactions between humans and the natural world through a study of these nonnatives. Tamsüla Ao's "The Tombstone in My Garden" is a collection of five short stories that explores the complex relationship between humans and the natural world through the lens of folklore. The selected stories are seen from the perspective of folklore in "Snow-Green" and "The Talking Tree," respectively. This research delves into the themes of "Natural Resilience vs. Human Interference" and the "Symbolism of Trees and Landscapes" within the context of literature and the environment. Through an examination of Tamsüla Ao's short stories, particularly "Snow-Green" and "The Talking Tree," this study explores how literature serves as a mirror to the delicate balance between nature's innate resilience and the consequences of human intervention. The stories illuminate the enduring spirit of the natural world in the face of external pressures, emphasizing the importance of responsible stewardship.

Keywords: Natural Resilience, Human Interference, Symbolism, Trees, Landscapes, Literature, Environment, Tamsüla Ao.

Introduction

Tamsüla Ao, a distinguished Indian writer and recipient of the Sahitya Academy Award, is celebrated for her evocative short stories that delve into the intricate relationship between humanity and the natural world. "The Talking Tree" is a captivating narrative that delves into the world of a mystical forest, where nature's creatures, from tiny saplings to majestic

elephants, unite to defend their home against the encroachment of humans. This tale resonates with readers, reminding us of the vital need to protect and respect the delicate balance of nature. Folklore plays a central and intricate role in Tamsüla Ao's short stories, "Snow-Green" and "The Talking Tree," both of which are deeply rooted in the cultural heritage and oral traditions of the Naga people

(Indianexpress.Com). "The Talking Tree" is a heartwarming story that conveys several important themes and messages. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings in the natural world. Through Tiny, the little tree, it can be seen how even the smallest and seemingly insignificant members of an ecosystem play a vital role. The cooperation of animals, trees, and even insects showcase the delicate balance of nature and how each element relies on the other for survival. Tiny, though small in size, demonstrates courage and intelligence. The wise elephant, Dada, exemplifies the importance of leadership and guidance in times of crisis (Imphal Reviews. In). The tree's role as a sentinel and communicator emphasizes the significance of respecting and safeguarding the environment (IndianExpress.Com).

The story of "Snow-Green" beautifully illustrates the intimate relationship between a garden and a lily flower. In this narrative, the lily, Snow-Green, isn't just a resident of the garden; she is a cherished member of the family, intricately linked to the garden's vitality and the emotional well-being of those who tend to it. Snow-Green's arrival in the garden marked the beginning of a unique connection. The gardener, Odi, recognized her potential and nurtured her with unwavering dedication. In return, Snow-Green thrived and became the garden's crowning jewel, a symbol of its vibrancy and beauty. The lily, in its splendour, brought life and purpose to the garden. Her annual blooms were not just an aesthetic delight but a testament to the garden's health and vitality. The garden, in turn, provided Snow-Green with the nurturing environment she needed to flourish – rich soil, sunlight, and the camaraderie of other flowers. It was a symbiotic relationship where both parties benefited.

In "Snow Green," Tamsula Ao weaves a narrative of mysticism and environmental consciousness. "Lily" is an entity in the short story that explores themes of beauty, individuality, and societal expectations. It tells

the tale of a unique and exquisite lily, known as "Snow-Green," which becomes the focal point of the story. It is set within a garden, and the lily's exceptional qualities set it apart from its floral companions. Snow-Green's beauty lies not just in its pristine white petals but also in the delicate pale green tinge that adorns its serrated edges, making it truly one-of-a-kind. However, the story takes a poignant turn as Snow-Green, the lily, resists the owner's ambitions and refuses to bloom when placed in a pot for the show. This act of defiance is symbolic of the lily's determination to maintain its natural essence and not conform to human expectations (Imphal Reviews. In). Snow-Green's blossoming symbolized the enduring connection between the caretaker and the cared-for, transcending the boundaries of nature and logic. Snow-Green's extraordinary act of flowering out of season was a testament to the profound bond between humans and the natural world, a bond that transcends time and seasons.

Rationale

The rationale for conducting this research stems from the growing need to understand and address significant issues related to the environment and human interaction with it. In an era marked by environmental challenges such as climate change, habitat destruction, and resource depletion, it has become imperative to delve into the intricate dynamics of nature's resistance, as portrayed in Tamsula Ao's short stories "Snow-Green" and "The Talking Tree." Tamsula Ao's works are highly regarded in the realm of literature and have a profound cultural significance. These stories, rooted in indigenous perspectives, offer a unique lens through which to examine humanity's relationship with nature (Sharma). The rationale behind choosing "The Talking Tree" for discussion lies in its poignant portrayal of the intricate web of life in nature, the impact of human activities on the environment, and the unexpected heroes that emerge when ecosystems are threatened. This story offers valuable insights into ecological interconnectedness, emphasizing the

importance of respecting and preserving our natural world.

In the Snow-Green mistress gazed upon Snow-Green's radiant bloom, her initial wonder soon gave way to a different set of emotions and instead of seeing it as a touching homage, she regarded the lily with a greedy desire. Her thoughts shifted from the sentimental to the practical, and she yearned to capitalize on Snow-Green's extraordinary beauty. A new ambition ignited within her to enter Snow-Green into a prestigious flower show competition. The prospect of winning accolades and recognition for her prized possession became an all-consuming goal. In her eyes, Snow-Green was no longer a symbol of the past but a potential ticket to fame and glory. The mistress's once serene garden transformed into a battleground of meticulous care and attention. She spared no expense to ensure that Snow-Green remained in pristine condition, hiring expert gardeners, purchasing the finest fertilizers, and even installing a climate-controlled greenhouse.

The story of "Lily," centred on the unique and defiant that prompts a thought-provoking discussion on several themes and human-nature relationships. The story highlights the concept of beauty not conforming to conventional norms (the print.in), deep within the lush green canopy, a patch of serene solitude, there resides a cluster of enchanting lilies. These were no ordinary lilies; they were the forest's most treasured secret. As the seasons danced through time, these lilies waited patiently for their moment in the spotlight, with the arrival of spring, the forest floor would be blanketed in vibrant green, and these lilies would awaken from their long slumber. The pure white petals unfurled, revealing hearts of the deepest, richest crimson, like the memories of love and passion held in the gardener's heart. These lilies, the forest's gift, were the only flowers deemed worthy for the gardener's funeral. The lily's actions and characteristics can be seen as symbols, with Snow-Green representing the resilience and

determination of all living creatures to preserve their authenticity in the face of external pressures.

In the exhibition, people responded to the photographer's unconventional approach with a mix of curiosity, astonishment, and, eventually, a deep sense of reverence. At first, when visitors entered the hall and encountered empty frames on the walls, they were utterly perplexed and somewhat agitated. Many deemed the photographer's actions as arrogant and insulting, believing that they had been subjected to an art show without art. The frustration and disappointment were palpable in the air. However, as they ventured further into the exhibition and stumbled upon the remarkable canvas depicting the "Talking Tree," their emotions began to shift. The tree's peculiar appearance and the profound energy emanating from it left them in awe. The visitors marvelled at the intricate details, particularly the opening in the tree's trunk from which a sapling emerged, seemingly engaged in a silent conversation with the massive tree. The absence of a signature or any identification added an air of mystery, deepening their fascination. As they mulled over the significance of the "Talking Tree," a sense of reverence settled in. The crowd's initial uproar gave way to hushed contemplation.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the representation of nature's resistance, to examine cultural and indigenous perspectives, to explore environmental awareness and advocacy and to assess interdisciplinary connections of nature. In this research, a positivist research philosophy has been employed followed by a descriptive design. Descriptive research is focused on providing a comprehensive and accurate depiction of a phenomenon (Upshaw, et al. 0248336). Descriptive research allows for an in-depth exploration of the themes and content of the selected texts. The chosen methods and approaches aim to provide a rigorous and systematic analysis of the selected texts while

acknowledging the limitations inherent in literary and textual analysis.

Nature's Resistance

Nature's resistance is a central theme in Temsula Ao's short stories "Snow-Green" and "The Talking Tree." Through these narratives, Ao explores the idea that nature is not passive but possesses an inherent ability to resist human actions and interventions. In "Snow-Green," Ao paints a vivid picture of a tranquil village landscape covered in pristine snow. The story of "Lily" embodies the theme of Nature's Resistance within the context of folklore. Snow-Green, the lily, can be seen as a character representing nature's defiance against human ambitions. For generations, the woodland denizens sought solace beneath its ancient branches, where stories were whispered, and council was sought. The Grandfather Tree's roots run deep, anchoring it to the earth like an eternal sentinel, a living testament to the enduring spirit of the forest. Its presence offered comfort and inspiration, a reminder that in the cycle of life, nature's wisdom endured through time.

In both stories, Ao emphasizes the intricate relationship between humans and nature, highlighting the consequences of human actions on the natural world. Furthermore, Ao's stories invite readers to contemplate their own roles in the ongoing dialogue between humanity and the environment (Larsson et al. 261). They encourage reflection on the consequences of our actions and the importance of coexisting with nature rather than attempting to dominate it. Nature's resistance, as portrayed in these stories, highlights the idea that the natural world is not just a backdrop to human existence but a dynamic and sentient entity deserving of respect and protection. However, this story also underscores the vulnerability of such relationships. It emphasizes how nurturing and respect for nature are essential for the thriving of both the garden and its unique inhabitants. The story of Snow-Green reminds us that the

relationship between a garden and its flowers goes beyond aesthetics, it is a deep, emotional connection that shapes the well-being of all involved.

Cultural and Indigenous

Cultural and indigenous perspectives play a significant role in shaping our understanding of the world, our relationship with the environment, and our collective heritage. These perspectives are rich and diverse, reflecting the unique traditions, values, beliefs, and knowledge systems of distinct cultural and indigenous communities worldwide (Fernández-Llamazares et al. 334). In this way, culture informs the way people relate to and coexist with the natural world. Indigenous perspectives, on the other hand, are rooted in the unique experiences and worldviews of indigenous communities. These perspectives are often deeply intertwined with the land, as indigenous peoples have historically maintained strong connections to their ancestral territories. Temsula Ao's short stories "Snow-Green" and "The Talking Tree" offer a captivating glimpse into the rich tapestry of Indian folklore. In "Snow-Green," Ao weaves a narrative deeply rooted in Naga tribal traditions, exploring themes of nature, spirituality, and the human connection to the environment. Through vivid imagery and mystical elements, she evokes the essence of indigenous beliefs, where the forest becomes a realm of enchantment.

"The Talking Tree" delves into the folklore of Assam, interweaving the supernatural with the everyday. Ao skillfully brings to life the age-old belief in sentient trees, drawing readers into a world where nature communicates with humanity. These stories reflect the enduring influence of folklore in Indian culture, showcasing Ao's talent for blending tradition with contemporary storytelling and preserving the enchanting allure of myths and legends. In Native American traditions, for example, trees are often considered wise and ancient beings with stories

to share (Fernández-Llamazares, et al. 338). Similarly, in African folklore, trees are linked to ancestral spirits and are viewed as symbols of life and knowledge. The story's focus on the relationship between animals and nature resonates with indigenous beliefs in the importance of harmony and balance within ecosystems. Thus, "The Talking Tree" aligns with cross-cultural narratives that celebrate the wisdom of the natural world and the need to protect it. Moreover, these perspectives emphasize the importance of recognizing and honouring the rights and sovereignty of indigenous peoples in environmental decision-making [Ford et al. 538].

Environmental Awareness and Advocacy

Environmental awareness and advocacy are integral components of efforts to address the pressing environmental challenges facing our planet. They involve raising public consciousness about environmental issues, fostering a deeper understanding of the interdependence between human societies and the natural world, and advocating for sustainable practices and policies. Environmental awareness serves as the foundation for informed and responsible decision-making (Rogayan, et al. 112). "The Talking Tree" serves as a powerful medium for environmental awareness and advocacy. It illustrates the consequences of human encroachment on natural habitats and the devastating impact on the ecosystem. In an era marked by increasing environmental challenges, "The Talking Tree" contributes to the global dialogue on the importance of protecting and respecting our planet's ecosystems, making it a valuable tool for environmental advocacy (Yasin 131). The efforts have led to important environmental victories, such as the banning of harmful chemicals, the establishment of protected areas, and the advancement of renewable energy policies. A towering giant, affectionately known as "Big Father," stood as a sentinel of wisdom and strength. Its massive

trunk, adorned with time worn crevices, sheltered a young sapling named Tiny Tree.

Advocates work to influence decision-makers, raise public awareness, and drive change at local, national, and global levels (Rogayan, et al. 111). They often collaborate with organizations, engage in public demonstrations and lobby for environmentally friendly legislation. Awareness and advocacy play essential roles in confronting challenges such as climate change, deforestation, pollution, and species extinction. They empower individuals and communities to adopt sustainable behaviours, reduce their ecological footprint, and demand action from governments and corporations. The story of "Lily" initiates a thought-provoking discussion on several fronts. It delves into the tension between human desires and nature's autonomy, symbolized by Snow-Green's resistance to bloom in a pot.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Interdisciplinary connections refer to the integration of knowledge, methods, and perspectives from multiple academic disciplines to address complex issues or solve real-world problems. This approach recognizes that many of today's challenges are multifaceted and cannot be adequately understood or resolved within the confines of a single discipline. Interdisciplinary connections are crucial in our ever-evolving world because they enable us to approach problems and questions from a holistic perspective (Akkermans, et al. 103563). The story of "Lily" offers rich interdisciplinary connections, drawing on themes from botany, psychology, and environmental ethics. Botanically, it delves into the life cycle and behaviour of plants, emphasizing how they respond to environmental changes. This story serves as a bridge between the sciences, humanities, and ethics, offering valuable insights into our relationship with the natural world (Gao, et al. 8). Folklore fosters a sense of belonging and identity among the Naga readership and offers a window into Naga

culture for those outside the community. It bridges gaps in understanding and promotes cultural appreciation.

Investigation of Resilience and Adaptation of Effective Practices

The investigation into resilience and adaptation of effective practices is a critical endeavour in the context of addressing environmental and societal challenges. Resilience refers to the capacity of systems, whether natural or human, to absorb shocks, recover from disturbances, and adapt in the face of change. Involves the deliberate adjustments and strategies employed to minimize the negative impacts of change and maximize the benefits of new circumstances. In environmental science and conservation, understanding the resilience and adaptation of ecosystems is fundamental. In the context of human societies, investigating resilience and adaptation involves examining how communities and institutions respond to challenges such as natural disasters, economic shifts, and public health crises (Ungar 96). The effective practices in this context may encompass disaster preparedness, social safety nets, sustainable urban planning, and the development of resilient infrastructure.

Interconnectedness of Humanity and Nature

The interconnectedness of humanity and nature is a profound and fundamental concept that highlights the intricate and inseparable relationship between human beings and the natural world. It highlights that humans are not separate from the environment but are an integral part of it, with profound implications for both ecological and cultural contexts. From an ecological standpoint, the interconnectedness between humanity and nature is evident in the delicate balance of ecosystems (Díaz, et al. 3100). Folklore often involves interactions between humans and spiritual entities residing in the natural world. In "Snow-Green," the spirit of the forest is a guardian and protector, showcasing the belief that nature has a direct influence on human lives. Similarly, in "The Talking Tree,"

the tree's wisdom embodies the idea of nature offering guidance to humans. The interconnectedness of humanity and nature has been a central theme in many indigenous belief systems and philosophies. The indigenous communities often view themselves as custodians of the land and emphasize a harmonious coexistence with the natural world. This perspective recognizes that human well-being is intricately linked to the health of the environment. In the face of global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss, understanding and honouring the interconnectedness of humanity and nature is vital (Des Roches, et al. 256).

Natural Resilience vs. Human Interference

The dichotomy between natural resilience and human interference represents a central theme in the relationship between humanity and the environment. Natural resilience refers to the inherent capacity of ecosystems and the natural world to withstand, adapt to, and recover from various disturbances and environmental changes. It emphasizes the remarkable ability of nature to maintain its balance and functionality over time. In contrast, human interference signifies the impact of human activities on the environment, often resulting in disruptions, degradation, and alterations to natural systems (McWethy, et al. 801). This interference can take many forms, including deforestation, pollution, habitat destruction, and resource exploitation, among others. The tension between natural resilience and human interference is a critical concern in environmental conservation and sustainability. It highlights the need for responsible stewardship of the planet. When humans fail to recognize and respect the natural resilience of ecosystems and instead impose excessive interference, it can lead to ecological imbalances, loss of biodiversity, and adverse effects on the climate (He, et al. 1029). Understanding this dichotomy highlights the importance of adopting sustainable practices that align with nature's resilience. It encourages us to work in

harmony with the natural world, rather than against it, and to consider the long-term consequences of our actions.

Symbolism of Trees and Landscapes

In literature and art, the symbolism of trees and landscapes often carries profound meanings and serves as a powerful metaphorical language. These symbols are rich with cultural, emotional, and environmental connotations that convey deeper messages and themes (Wolpert, et al. 1273). Trees, for instance, frequently symbolize various aspects of life, growth, and endurance. Their roots represent stability and heritage, while their branches and leaves symbolize expansion, evolution, and renewal. Trees can also represent the interconnectedness of all living things, with their roots delving into the earth and their branches reaching toward the sky (Calaza-Martínez, et al. 10). Landscapes, on the other hand, often reflect the emotional and psychological landscapes of characters or societies.

In the context of environmental literature, the symbolism of trees and landscapes can extend to themes of nature's resilience and resistance. Trees may symbolize nature's determination to endure and adapt in the face of human interference, while landscapes can embody the broader struggle of the environment against external forces (Tempesta, et al. 154). The symbolism of trees and landscapes emphasizes the interplay between the physical and metaphysical worlds, offering authors and artists a versatile means of conveying complex ideas and emotions. It invites readers and viewers to engage on both a sensory and intellectual level, inviting contemplation and reflection on the profound connections between humanity and the natural world. The discussion of themes such as "Natural Resilience vs. Human Interference" and "Symbolism of Trees and Landscapes" in the context of literature and the environment prompts profound reflections on humanity's

relationship with nature. "The Talking Tree" is a poignant narrative that transcends cultural boundaries and resonates with a global audience. It weaves together themes of nature's wisdom, human greed, and the importance of environmental stewardship. The "Symbolism of Trees and Landscapes" speaks to the power of nature as a symbolic language. The story of "Lily" invites profound discussions on various themes. It highlights the clash between human ambitions and nature's intrinsic autonomy, symbolized by Snow-Green's refusal to bloom.

Conclusion

The exploration of themes such as "Natural Resilience vs. Human Interference" and the "Symbolism of Trees and Landscapes" in the context of literature and the environment provides valuable insights into humanity's intricate relationship with the natural world. Moreover, the exploration of the "Symbolism of Trees and Landscapes" has emphasized the powerful role of nature as a metaphorical language in literature and art. Through the lens of literary analysis and symbolism, it signifies the profound connections between human actions, nature's resilience, and the cultural significance of the environment. The theme of "Natural Resilience vs. Human Interference," examined how literature can serve as a mirror reflecting the delicate balance between nature's ability to adapt and the consequences of human interference. The stories of Temsula Ao, particularly "Snow-Green" and "The Talking Tree," highlight the enduring spirit of the natural world in the face of external pressures.

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