

## **Environmental Racism: Fight for Green in David Klass' *Whirlwind***

**R. Sureshraj**

Don Bosco College, Yelagiri Hills

Email: [jesuawaits@gmail.com](mailto:jesuawaits@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Environmental racism is a rapidly growing movement, which started in the US as a series of community-based resistance against toxication of local environment and sitting of waste dumps and polluting industries that discriminate against poor and otherwise depowered communities, particularly minority communities seen as victimized by what has come to be called environmental racism. In contrast to mainstream environmentalism, whose traditional support base has been predominantly the white educate middle class, with leadership of major organizations until quite recent times predominantly male, the anti-environmentalism agendas of environmentalism activism have strong leadership and support from minority groups and from women across the line. Then US environmental justice advocates do not see this movement as narrowly national, but as part of worldwide attempt to broaden the definition and scope of environmentalism to include the basic needs of poor and politically less power group. *Whirlwind* is the sequel of *Firestrom* in which one of the main streams is environmentalism racism; hence the researcher makes an attempt to cull out points which have been reflected on theme of environmental racism in the novel.

*Whirlwind* begins after six months from saving the ocean reefs with help of Eko and Gisco. This novel fully packed with metaphorical statements and strong concerns over depowered communities as well as forest conservation. It begins with when he starts to go in search of P.J. for the reason is that he still loves her despite all his doubts and responsibilities. He heads with enumerable questions:

No doubt my Firestrom adventure and the long journey home transformed me.

Why was I chosen/ if there's a God, why did or she let things get so messed up? Is our earth really so fragile? If this is the Turning Point, can we save it? Do our lives have meaning, or is it all for nothing? Many questions with no answers. (4)

Jack starts to retrospect himself how he was sent back to find something called Firestrom and save the ocean, thereby improving living condition of centuries hence. A telepathic dog and a beautiful shaped- changing woman blinked out, leaving me alone. As he goes in the search of P.J. suddenly Gisco appears and tells the truth about P.J. where she is abducted by whom. Then they travel in a boat on Hudson River, suddenly people of dark Army attack them in which Gisco goes unconscious in addition to that boat has been damaged twenty miles away from shore, somehow they reached shore. Then once again they decided to go Outer Bank.

Jack asks it what damage is he doing down there? Gisco says that everything he can. He's deforesting the Amazon. Wiping out huge tracts of irreplaceable virgin rain forest, the destruction of which is having a terrible effect on the future earth and strengthening the hand of the Dark Army and he has another reason for coming back. An extremely personal only, you killed his only son, maybe he wants revenge and this time we are going to save the impenetrable

forest Amazon. The entire future is threatened by what the Dark Lord is doing in the Amazon. The world stripped of its lungs today. Then as he wanders in the forest, group of uniformed people arrest Gisco, the boy and Ernesto. The first victim of the group namely, Ernesto introduces him his mates:

...One tale of woe is sadder than the next. There four types of people one encounters in the Amazon. First there are the native Indians who hunted and fished in the rain forest for centuries. There are several of them in our cell. From different tribes. He identifies one sad-looking fellow as a full-blooded Korubo chief. Their lands are supposed to be (128).

Ernesto who is controlled by a white man namely Colonel and ceaselessly asks his indigenous people to do what they do not want to do. These native Indian' occupation are hunting and fishing but they were captured by colonel's crew willingly, then he makes them to cut trees, taking resources from forest and finding leaves for medicine. Klass brilliantly projects the environmental racism, how money oriented people take a native land forcefully from sons of the soils around the world and decrease of traditional occupations.

Ernesto moves on to the second group, the Caboclos. They are mixed Indian and European heritage, Ernesto says, and have retained some of their native survival skills. Many of them love the land and try to protect it. And he is also one among the Cabaclos who worked as photographer for paper all over South America. When founded a group that tried to use technology to document environmental abuses. I have videos of roads being bulldozed for miles

just to get to protect mahogany trees and every year our dominators dump tons of mercury into the Amazon basin. Ernesto admits himself that:

I also had many friends. I would never have believed that I could just disappear. But one day as I was driving on a remote stretch of highway my car was stopped by gunmen in army uniforms, and I was blindfolded and brought here. I don't think my family and friends even know that I am still alive. (129)

Then Ernesto points out to a few men who are taller than the Indians, but now look just weak and miserable. But those promises turned out to be hollow- the rain exists in a delicate balance with nature, and when the trees are burned and the wring crops are planted, the soil quickly becomes useless. The settlers fell into debt, they couldn't feed their families, so they rebelled and ended up in t prison with the very Indian whose land they stole. Klass vividly tells us the consequence of fight for green when the sons of the soils fight for their right and mercilessly have been put into jail, then he captures the peak of the environmental racism. This how the major parts of the world still the people who are fighting against for their justice either they will be put into serfdom or expatriated. He couldn't do what he is doing. It sounds like many different people are involved in destroying the rain forest. Europeans, Asians, Brazilians, Caboclos, Indians and Americans. Then Klass indirectly criticizes those who are in power, especially the people plunder the lands which give good yields. Michael Foucault aptly says power determines and corrupts everything. Ernesto agrees that:

There have always been corrupts government officials who bent the rules in exchange for bribes, but never on the scale of what this colonel is doing. He's

using his powerful connections to help loggers, miners, and foreign companies gain access and break laws. In the last few years, with his influences rising the destruction of the Amazon has proceeded at an ever- increasing pace. (131)

He glances an area the size of France has already vanished, chopped down or burned. Suddenly Ernesto tells “in thirty years it will all be gone. Every animal. Every tree and the people.”

Five centuries ago, when the European first came knocking, more than ten million Indians lived in the rain forest. “Ernesto tells him today here fewer than two hundred thousand. Each time a group of tribes disappears, we lose all the knowledge they have accumulated about the plants and animals. The problem is that the wrong men are coming now, for the wrong reasons. Soon it will be gone”. (133)

Klass through Ernesto gives entire history of unheard voices. Ernesto, who with depressing voice relates the rare species in the world of Amazon and tribesmen. This planet is four and half billion years old and there are more different species right here in the Amazon than have ever existed anywhere else, at any time, in that whole time span. Klass criticizes people’s ignorance of destroying the rarest culture of the world. He is basically a social activist rises his voice for preservation of environment and who also published several articles and research papers in the New York magazine. And one of the co-founders of the Earth Day is John Hayes says that: if humans continue this then the future generation will never know certain species and few will be extinct within twenty five to seventy years. The first world countries dominate and

make use of all the resources by alienating the indigenous people and especially places like Amazon, Atlantic shores, south east islands, and Everest. It results in either killing or eradicating the traditional ambience of native people. When powerful country occupies, the less powerful country where both economical and environmental crisis happen in the dominated country which results in culture degradation. Despite all their attempts they are caught once again. Each one is tied to cycle of chain; their hands are fastened at their back.

Colonel Aranha being an outsider dominates the native people of forest and forces them to work for satisfaction. He asks people to cultivate the plants which can yield drugs. The people who protest against are killed and he also imports and exports few variety of woods for foreign countries with help of tribes. When Jack asks Ernesto why they burned the forest?

“In four months, it will be seeded with rice or soy, he explains. The grains will go to feed cattle who will end up as hamburger meat in western fast-food restaurant chains. So acre by acre, our beautiful rain forest becomes millions of double cheeseburgers”. (140)

Sometimes non-natives can't accustom with nature and the climate conditions when a few of the men are forced to go another cell it's intolerable. But the boy from the Andes adapts to this wretchedness with surprising ease. Jack guesses these are not a total surprise. At night he sleeps near me, perhaps seeking comfort or protection, but during the day he seems happy and fearless. Klass brilliantly conveys that non-native can't adapt the native culture except son of soils. Being protagonist Jack time and again fails to adapt and recognizes connection between him and nature. Whereas, the boy and Eko easily imbibe and discern the sense of connection

with nature. Then he interweaves the inextricable connection between men and environmental when he talks about Eko and the boy.

Colonel, who wants to exploit the Amazon simply for getting name and power despite he knows that he is creating kind of disturbed atmosphere. Klass refers him through all the misguided representatives. All these kind of things happen because of few misguided heroes in government, who can be bribed or threatened. Then Klass brings few historical facts so as to show the consequences of environmental disaster:

I think back to what know of American environmental history over the last two centuries and can't find a good answer. From the near extinction of the buffalo to acid rain, from the bad farming techniques that led to the Dust Bowl to the *Exxon Valdez spill*, I know our own record of preserving natural beauty is not a distinguished one. (151)

When Jack is taken to P.J.'s room, sees cascade of tears truckling from her cheeks. She narrates Colonel's appearance to Jack: He doesn't have a name. He doesn't have an age, or a place of birth that you anyone knows. He's mysterious for the worst reason; everyone who comes up against him dies horribly. They say he likes to do the killing with his own hands, or even with his teeth and maybe half snake and spider. When Colonel enters, he fights against Colonel Jack fights back somehow he escapes from that place and helps other to escape from the hell and Colonel's clench. All men and boys are out there. Mudinho, young companion from the Andes, now looks to be inseparable from Gisco. He waves at him and similes. Then he hops into a canoe and snaps his fingers, and Gisco bounds in after him and settles down by his feet. He

watches him pat the dog's snout and give Gisco's ears a good scratch. Jack, P.J. and some of the prisoners escape in another canoe.

Jack happily begins his second journey; he goes with the satisfaction that he has saved few. As they travel Jack relates the entire outer bank and saving the firestorm. Klass clearly tells us that humans are very much interested and makes several ways to make use of indigenous sources. He is an excellent painter in describing native culture and often delineates connection between nature and humans. He always gives first preference to nature as social activist, who strongly reflects the notion of Mikhail Gorbachev, 1990: "I believe in the cosmos. All of us are linked to the cosmos. Look at the sun: If there is no sun, then we cannot exist.

This novel *Whirlwind* briefly tells us that how natural resources are exploited by the bourgeois, how they make use of the local people for their administrative purpose which creates profound consequence on depletion of traditional occupations of people. Ceaselessly he disseminates "we are all live in a web and "each generation takes the earth as trustees. We ought to bequeath to posterity as many forests and orchards as we have exhausted and consumed." Klass propagates environmental racism or justice movement throughout this novel. Colonel who represents politically powered people and the opposite less powered people (people of the forest) who are tortured, exploited, imprisoned and speculated from their own land and recurrently warned not continued their menial jobs in the Amazon.

Environmentalism racists imbue Hegelian concept that: Contradictory idea or fight arises only when there is conflict. Fundamentally these environmental studies have got its root in this idea, which promulgate that when minority groups dominate another group with power. In environmental racism encourageous the victimized to rebel against the dominators so as to



retrieve their cultural habits including culture, traditional occupations, rite, and approaches. Indeed Jack tries to save the people of the forest but he couldn't hence he rises the war against them and kills everybody and he frees the people of the forest in this second novel, with this *The Caretaker* ends up. David Orr aptly says "when we heal the earth, we heal ourselves". This main idea that has revolved around all through this novel and invariably this has been instilled in Jack mind by Eko and people of Dann. Klass is very much conscious about preserving the indigenous culture of the people. His concerns about the tradition colorfully expressed in *Whirlwind*. Each chapter talks about the tribes and the how their primitive cultures are inextricably connected with natural world.

This novel ensures that "no community suffers disproportionate environmental burden or goes enjoying fair environmental benefits." Klass, who has been profoundly influenced by great leaders of nations, therefore he might have been imbibed few of our great sayings of Gandhi's that: what we are doing to the forest of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another. This may be one of the ideas that Klass wanted to convey through this novel as social activist and environmentalist. Klass as an environmentalist fights against the exploiters and he anticipates our environmental condition:

I see images of a brutal future world: children trying to breathe impossibly thin air, old people roasting alive in unfiltered solar glare, and a lethal sandstorm.

(264)

Klass, as an environmentalist takes extra interest in nature. He wants to save it. He takes interest not only indigenous people, but also the plants and animals. Every writer has love for

their country. They express it in different ways in their works. Some talk about their rich heritage, some culture but his unconditional love for nature is unfathomable above and beyond he systematically gives historical facts and refers classic works which were written on nature throughout the novel.

### **Works Cited**

Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. New Delhi:

Blackwell Publishing, 2008.Print.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning THEORY*. New Delhi: Viva Books Private Ltd, 2014.Print.

Chandra, Joseph. and K.S. Antony Samy *Classical to Contemporary Literary Theory*.

New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2011.Print.

Klass, David. *Firestorm*. United States: France Foster Books, 2006.Print.

Howarth, William. *Some Principles of Ecocriticism*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

1995. Web.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism (New Critical Idiom)*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Bookchin, Murray. *Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the*

*Ecology Movement*. Burlington: 1897. Web.

Phillips, Dana. *Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Truth of Ecology*. Baltimore: The

Johns Hopkins University Press.2010. Web.