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RESEARCH ARTICLE

When the Mountains Mourn: Ecological Grief and Feminine Precarity in The Folded Earth

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Abstract

Recent developments in environmental humanities have increasingly emphasised that the ecological crisis is not only environmental or political but deeply emotional, reshaping experiences of grief, belonging, memory, and vulnerability across the globe. Within South Asian literary studies, however, insufficient attention has been paid to the affective dimensions of ecological precarity, particularly in relation to Himalayan landscapes and women's emotional subjectivities. Existing scholarship on Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth* has largely focused on ecofeminism, trauma, displacement, and environmental degradation in generalised terms, often treating nature as a symbolic backdrop rather than an active emotional and political presence. Such readings overlook how Roy transforms grief into an ecological condition distributed across landscape, weather, silence, and environmental instability. This paper argues that *The Folded Earth* reconceptualizes grief as an affective ecology in which feminine mourning becomes inseparable from the wounded Himalayan environment. Rather than presenting nature merely as a healing refuge, Roy portrays the mountains as emotionally charged spaces shaped by slow environmental violence, capitalist intrusion, and postcolonial developmental anxieties. The novel destabilizes conventional distinctions between emotional interiority and ecological exteriority by allowing landscape itself to absorb, reflect, and intensify grief. Through this process, Roy critiques patriarchal and anthropocentric systems that simultaneously exploit women and nature while also complicating romantic ecofeminist assumptions about ecological harmony.

Keywords: Ecological Grief, Ecofeminism, Affective Ecology, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Himalayan Ecology, Slow Violence, Environmental Humanities.

1. Introduction

There are certain landscapes in literature that do not merely exist as settings but breathe alongside the emotional lives of characters. In *The Folded Earth*, Anuradha Roy transforms the

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Himalayan landscape into such a living emotional presence. The mountains in the novel are not silent backdrops to human suffering; they absorb grief, conceal memory, intensify loneliness, and silently witness ecological and emotional devastation. Roy's Himalayas are unstable terrains where mourning becomes inseparable from weather, forests, silence, and environmental fragility. The novel, therefore, refuses to separate emotional experience from ecological existence. The contemporary world is increasingly defined by overlapping crises of climate anxiety, displacement, ecological destruction, and emotional fragmentation. Environmental catastrophe today is no longer experienced only through floods, fires, or disappearing forests; it is also experienced through exhaustion, alienation, grief, and uncertainty. As ecological systems become unstable, emotional life itself becomes precarious. Literature has become one of the few spaces capable of representing this deeply human dimension of environmental crisis because fiction allows ecological collapse to be felt rather than simply observed. Within this context, *The Folded Earth* becomes an extraordinarily relevant novel.

Set in the ecologically fragile Himalayan region, the narrative follows Maya, a young widow attempting to cope with the death of her husband, Michael, by withdrawing to the mountains of Ranikhet. Yet the novel is not simply about personal mourning. Maya's grief slowly spreads across the landscape itself. Rainfall, forests, mist, altitude, silence, and environmental isolation become part of her emotional condition. Roy repeatedly dissolves the boundary between the human body and the natural world, suggesting that grief cannot remain contained within the self because emotion itself has ecological dimensions. One of the most striking moments in the novel occurs when Maya reflects upon the hills surrounding her: "In the hills, the sky is circumscribed. Its fluid blue is cupped in the palm of a hand whose fingers are the mountains around us" **(Roy, 2011, p. 16**). The image immediately establishes the mountains as emotionally structuring forces. The landscape appears protective yet restrictive, intimate yet isolating. Nature in the novel does not function merely as beauty or escape. Instead, the Himalayas become affective geography—spaces through which grief is organised, experienced, and intensified. At the same time, Roy avoids romanticising ecological intimacy. The mountains comfort Maya, but they are also associated with death, silence, and emotional enclosure. Maya herself admits that "her rival in love was not a woman, but a mountain range" **(Roy, 2011, p. 6)**. The statement is significant because it grants the landscape emotional agency. The mountains are not passive scenery but active forces capable of shaping human relationships and desires.

The novel also quietly exposes the environmental precarity of the Himalayan region. Forests are cut down, landscapes become commercialised, and ecological systems gradually deteriorate under developmental pressures. Roy portrays environmental destruction not as a sudden catastrophe but as slow, normalised violence embedded within everyday life. Through these subtle representations, *The Folded Earth* reveals how ecological degradation and emotional instability become deeply interconnected within contemporary postcolonial realities. This paper argues that Roy transforms grief from a private psychological condition into an ecological experience distributed

across landscape, atmosphere, and environmental vulnerability. Through the representation of wounded mountains, fragile ecologies, and feminine mourning, the novel critiques patriarchal and anthropocentric systems that simultaneously exploit women and nature. However, Roy also complicates conventional ecofeminist assumptions by refusing to portray nature as purely nurturing or spiritually restorative. The Himalayas in the novel heal and wound, shelter and isolate, comfort and threaten. By combining ecofeminism, affect theory, and postcolonial ecocriticism, this study examines how *The Folded Earth* imagines ecology as emotionally charged, politically wounded, and historically burdened. Rather than treating landscape as a metaphorical background, the paper positions the environment as an active participant in grief itself. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing discussions in environmental humanities concerning ecological grief, affective landscapes, and environmental precarity in contemporary Indian fiction.

2. Theoretical Framework

This paper employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines ecofeminism, affect theory, and postcolonial ecocriticism to examine the interconnections among grief, gender, and environmental precarity in *The Folded Earth*. Since Roy's novel moves beyond conventional representations of nature as a passive background and instead presents ecology as emotionally charged, politically wounded, and materially active, no single theoretical lens is sufficient to explain its complexity. Ecofeminism forms the primary conceptual foundation of this study. Ecofeminist theorists argue that patriarchal systems historically construct women and nature through interconnected structures of domination. **Val Plumwood (1993)** explains that Western philosophical traditions rely upon hierarchical dualisms such as man/woman, culture/nature, and reason/emotion. Within these binaries, women and nature are associated with passivity, irrationality, and emotionality, thereby legitimising their exploitation. **Karen Warren (2000)** similarly argues that the "logic of domination" sustains both ecological destruction and gender oppression.

Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist critique becomes particularly relevant for Roy's representation of the Himalayas. **Shiva (1988)** argues that capitalist development destroys ecological balance by transforming forests, rivers, and landscapes into economic resources. In *The Folded Earth*, the mountains gradually become vulnerable to tourism, bureaucratic expansion, militarization, and deforestation. Roy repeatedly critiques developmental ideologies that commodify ecology. However, ecofeminism alone cannot fully explain the emotional and atmospheric dimensions of Roy's narrative. Affect theory, therefore, becomes essential. **Sara Ahmed (2004)** argues that emotions do not remain confined within individuals but circulate between bodies, spaces, and objects. Emotions become relational rather than purely psychological. This framework illuminates how Maya's grief spreads across the Himalayan landscape itself.

Postcolonial ecocriticism further deepens this analysis by connecting ecological destruction to histories of colonialism, capitalism, and uneven development. **Rob Nixon's (2011) concept of "slow violence"** is particularly useful because environmental degradation in *The Folded Earth* unfolds gradually and invisibly through logging, road construction, militarisation, and ecological

erosion. Through close textual analysis, this paper demonstrates that Roy imagines the Himalayas not simply as scenery but as an emotionally and politically wounded ecology marked by loss, memory, and environmental vulnerability. The study contributes to ongoing conversations in environmental humanities by foregrounding ecological grief as a significant interpretive framework for contemporary Indian fiction in the age of climate anxiety and environmental collapse. Together, these theoretical perspectives allow the paper to move beyond simplistic readings of nature as a symbolic background. Instead, the framework demonstrates how Roy transforms ecology into an affective and political condition through which grief itself is experienced.

3. Literature Review: Ecofeminism, Emotional Ecology, and Himalayan Landscapes

Ecofeminist scholarship has consistently emphasized the interconnected oppression of women and nature under patriarchal systems. Françoise d'Eaubonne first introduced the term "**ecofeminism**" in 1974 to establish the relationship between ecological destruction and gender oppression. Later scholars such as **Val Plumwood (1993)**, **Karen Warren (2000)**, and **Vandana Shiva (1988)** expanded ecofeminism into a critical framework examining the ideological structures underlying both environmental exploitation and patriarchal domination.

Within Indian literary studies, ecofeminism has become an important framework for analysing representations of environmental degradation and feminine vulnerability. Existing criticism of The Folded Earth primarily emphasises the symbolic relationship between women and nature. "**Ecofeminism in Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth*: Intersecting Narratives of Gender and Nature**" argues that the novel exposes "the interconnected oppressions" experienced by women and ecology within patriarchal systems. The paper effectively identifies Roy's critique of environmental degradation but remains largely descriptive in its treatment of ecology. Similarly, "**Reading Landscapes: An Exploration of Ranikhet in *The Folded Earth***" examines the ecological significance of the Himalayan setting and critiques modernisation and industrialisation. However, the study tends to romanticise nature as purely restorative and harmonious. These developments become particularly relevant for reading Roy's novel because *The Folded Earth* repeatedly transforms landscape into emotional infrastructure. This paper, therefore, extends existing ecofeminist scholarship by foregrounding ecological grief as a central interpretive framework. Rather than treating nature merely as a symbolic background or emotional reflection, the study argues that the Himalayan environment actively participates in grief.

4. The Himalayas as Affective Landscape

One of the most striking aspects of The Folded Earth is the way Anuradha Roy transforms the Himalayan landscape into an affective space that does far more than merely frame human action. The mountains in the novel are not passive scenery against which grief unfolds; rather, they become emotionally charged presences that absorb, shape, intensify, and sometimes even resist human feeling. Roy repeatedly dissolves the distinction between emotional interiority and ecological exteriority, suggesting that grief cannot remain confined within the boundaries of the human self. Instead, mourning spreads into weather, silence, forests, altitude, and spatial isolation until the

RESEARCH ARTICLE

landscape itself appears saturated with emotional residue. What makes Roy's treatment of the Himalayas particularly compelling is that the novel consistently resists romantic environmental idealism. The mountains initially appear to promise refuge from the violence of urban existence and personal loss.

Maya arrives in Ranikhet carrying the emotional exhaustion of Michael's death, and, like many grieving protagonists in literature, she turns to the landscape in the hope of emotional survival; however, Roy refuses to allow nature to become a simplistic consolation. The mountains do not merely heal Maya; they complicate, deepen, and occasionally intensify her isolation. This tension becomes visible from Maya's earliest descriptions of the hills. She observes: "In the hills, the sky is circumscribed. Its fluid blue is cupped in the palm of a hand whose fingers are the mountains around us" **(Roy, 2011, p. 16)**. At first glance, the image appears intimate and almost comforting. The mountains seem protective, holding the sky gently "in the palm of a hand." Yet the emotional complexity of the sentence lies in Roy's use of the word "circumscribed." The sky is not simply embraced; it is restricted, enclosed, and contained. The landscape, therefore, becomes psychologically ambivalent. The mountains provide shelter from chaos, but that shelter simultaneously creates enclosure. The Himalayas shape the psychological conditions within which Maya exists. Her retreat into the hills is not simply physical relocation but emotional containment. The mountains isolate her from the outside world while also trapping her within memory and grief. This duality becomes central to the novel's affective ecology because the landscape repeatedly oscillates between refuge and imprisonment. The emotional agency of the mountains becomes even more explicit through Maya's startling confession that: "Her rival in love was not a woman, but a mountain range" **(Roy, 2011, p. 6)**. The sentence radically destabilises anthropocentric assumptions about emotional relationships.

Nature here exceeds symbolic background and becomes capable of desire, seduction, and emotional competition. Michael's attachment to mountaineering transforms the Himalayas into an active force within human intimacy itself. The mountains are not passive objects to be admired from a distance; they demand loyalty, obsession, and risk. This moment is especially important because it complicates traditional ecofeminist readings that idealise nature as nurturing and maternal. Roy's mountains are not innocent spaces of ecological purity. They are seductive but dangerous, beautiful yet emotionally destructive. Michael's death permanently associates the Himalayas with absence and loss. Consequently, Maya's relationship with the landscape remains emotionally unstable throughout the novel. At the same time, Roy also presents moments of profound ecological intimacy that suggest Maya's emotional survival gradually becomes dependent upon the mountains. Roy writes: "She became a hill person who was only at peace where earth rose and fell in waves like the sea" **(Roy, 2011, p. 20)**. The line suggests more than a simple appreciation of nature. Maya's identity itself begins to change through her relationship with the landscape. Peace becomes geographical rather than psychological. Emotional recovery emerges not through abstract reflection but through embodied ecological attachment. Yet even this intimacy remains deeply fragile.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The same mountains that provide Maya with peace are inseparable from Michael's disappearance. Roy, therefore, refuses a stable symbolic interpretation. The Himalayas simultaneously function as spaces of healing and trauma. Nature comforts Maya while continuously reminding her of death. This ambiguity prevents the novel from collapsing into romantic ecological sentimentality. Indeed, one of the most remarkable qualities of Roy's writing is her refusal to imagine the natural world as emotionally innocent. Silence itself acquires weight within the novel. The hills do not merely contain stillness; they amplify absence. Maya repeatedly encounters moments where quietness feels almost oppressive, as though the landscape absorbs memory without ever releasing it. The mountains become repositories of emotional residue. Roy intensifies this affective atmosphere through sensory descriptions of weather. Rain, dampness, cold air, and mist recur throughout the narrative, transforming grief into something tactile and environmental rather than merely psychological. Roy writes: "Everything smelled damp, cool, and fresh from the light rain that had fallen at dawn" **(Roy, 2011, p. 4)**. The significance of this line lies in its sensory immersion. Emotional experience in the novel is never abstract. Grief circulates materially through smell, moisture, texture, and atmosphere. The environment does not simply symbolise Maya's mourning from a distance; it physically participates in it. This atmospheric quality aligns closely with the idea of affective ecology, in which emotions extend beyond the individual body and become distributed across environments. Roy repeatedly blurs the distinction between body and landscape until emotional suffering itself begins to feel ecological.

Maya's grief becomes inseparable from rain, fog, silence, and altitude. At times, the geographical remoteness of Ranikhet itself intensifies Maya's emotional exile. She remarks: "Our town spans three hills. It is far away from everywhere and very small" **(Roy, 2011, p. 16**). The simplicity of the sentence conceals its emotional complexity. Distance initially appears comforting because it separates Maya from urban chaos and social expectations. Yet the remoteness gradually produces another form of isolation. The further Maya retreats into the mountains, the more emotionally enclosed she becomes. Roy, therefore, complicates the fantasy of ecological retreat so often present within nature writing. The Himalayas provide refuge from modernity, but refuge itself risks becoming alienation. Nature may temporarily soothe emotional pain, yet it cannot erase grief entirely. Instead, the mountains preserve memory even as they soften it. Importantly, the Himalayas in *The Folded Earth* are not timeless or untouched ecological spaces existing outside history. Roy repeatedly hints at environmental fragility and developmental intrusion. Roads, logging, tourism, and bureaucratic expansion slowly reshape the mountains. The landscape itself appears vulnerable. This ecological instability parallels Maya's emotional precarity, creating a powerful connection between environmental degradation and feminine grief. Consequently, the Himalayas in the novel function not as a decorative background but as affective structures through which emotional life is organised and experienced. Roy transforms landscape into emotional infrastructure. The mountains absorb grief, amplify silence, and preserve memory until ecology itself appears wounded. Ultimately, *The Folded Earth* suggests that landscapes remember suffering just as intensely as human beings do.

The Himalayas do not merely witness Maya's grief; they participate in it.

5. Slow Violence and Environmental Precarity

Although The Folded Earth is deeply invested in the intimate textures of grief, memory, and emotional survival, it also contains a subtle yet devastating critique of postcolonial developmental violence. What makes Roy's ecological vision particularly compelling is that environmental destruction never emerges through spectacular catastrophe or cinematic disaster. There are no dramatic floods, collapsing glaciers, or apocalyptic storms dominating the narrative. Instead, ecological devastation unfolds quietly through altered landscapes, disappearing forests, damaged ecosystems, expanding roads, and shifting human relationships with nature. Roy portrays environmental collapse as gradual, normalised, and disturbingly ordinary. This gradual erosion of ecological balance strongly recalls **Rob Nixon's (2011) concept of "slow violence**," which refers to forms of environmental destruction that occur incrementally across time and therefore often remain politically invisible. Unlike immediate physical violence, slow violence is difficult to represent because its effects accumulate slowly within everyday life. Roy's novel captures precisely this hidden violence. Ecological destruction in *The Folded Earth* is not sudden; it is administrative, bureaucratic, and normalised through the language of development and economic progress. Diwan Sahib's reflections on deforestation become especially significant in this context. He remarks: "There are trucks that come and go; the entrance to the spur is piled high with logs from trees that have been cut from the forest all around" **(Roy, 2011, p. 177)**. The image appears deceptively simple, yet its emotional and political implications are profound. The trucks move routinely, almost mechanically, carrying away the remains of forests with such regularity that violence itself begins to disappear into habit.

Roy deliberately avoids sensationalising ecological destruction. The cutting of forests has become normalised within everyday economic systems, making environmental collapse appear mundane rather than catastrophic. This normalisation of ecological violence reflects one of the most disturbing aspects of modern developmental ideology: destruction becomes acceptable when it is framed as progress. Roads, logging, tourism, and industrial expansion are all justified in the name of modernisation, yet Roy repeatedly exposes the emotional and ecological cost hidden beneath such narratives. Diwan Sahib's further observation sharpens this critique: "The forest now—it is a park, it is what is called a resource, a factory" **(Roy, 2011, p. 178)**. The forest no longer exists as a living ecological system but as something classified, regulated, and economically exploited. Roy critiques the anthropocentric logic by which nature is transformed into a "resource" and a "factory," terms that strip ecology of its emotional, ethical, and spiritual significance. Forests are no longer understood as complex ecosystems inhabited by human and nonhuman life; they are instead treated as measurable units of productivity. Importantly, Roy does not romanticise premodern ecological harmony either. The novel repeatedly emphasises that such developmental violence extends beyond forests toward nonhuman life itself. Diwan Sahib asks: "Why should they, when we have destroyed their world?" **(Roy, 2011, p. 74)**. The question emerges during a discussion about disappearing

wildlife, yet its ethical implications extend far beyond animal extinction. Roy radically shifts perspective away from human-centred suffering toward multispecies vulnerability, suggesting that ecological destruction is not merely environmental damage but the collapse of entire nonhuman worlds.

Roy further critiques modern industrial civilisation through Charu's experience of Delhi. Charu recalls: "What she was not prepared for was the stench. It smelt of putrid things, filthy drains, sewage, burning rubber, and smoke from factories" **(Roy, 2011, p. 214)**. The sensory excess of the description is significant. Roy does not describe the city visually but olfactorily. Pollution becomes something inhaled and absorbed by the body. Industrial modernity produces not merely environmental degradation but sensory and emotional alienation. The city appears ecologically diseased. This contrast between Delhi and Ranikhet complicates simplistic binaries between urban corruption and natural purity. Although the Himalayas initially appear cleaner and more emotionally sustaining, Roy gradually reveals that the mountains, too, are vulnerable to ecological collapse. Roads penetrate forests, tourism expands, trees disappear, and developmental intrusion slowly reshapes the landscape.

Maya's emotional condition repeatedly parallels the fragility of the Himalayan environment. Like the mountains, she exists in a state of slow erosion. Her grief accumulates gradually rather than explosively, mirroring the incremental destruction unfolding around her. This parallel between feminine precarity and ecological vulnerability is central to Roy's ecofeminist vision. Yet the novel avoids reducing women and nature to simplistic symbolic equivalence. Maya is not "one with nature" in any romantic sense. Rather, both Maya and the Himalayas are subjected to similar structures of instability, abandonment, and exploitation under patriarchal and developmental modernity. What ultimately makes Roy's critique so powerful is its refusal of dramatic resolution. The forests do not disappear overnight, just as grief does not vanish suddenly. Both ecological destruction and emotional suffering unfold slowly, persistently, and often invisibly. In this sense, Roy's novel suggests that the environmental crisis is not something separate from ordinary existence. It is woven into daily life, emotional experience, memory, and human relationships. Slow violence becomes not merely ecological but affective. The wounded landscape of the Himalayas, therefore, reflects not only environmental precarity but the emotional fragility of contemporary existence itself.

6. Ecological Ethics and Fragile Relationality

Despite its persistent atmosphere of grief, silence, and ecological instability, *The Folded Earth* does not entirely surrender to despair. Beneath the novel's awareness of environmental destruction and emotional fragmentation lies a quieter attempt to imagine alternative relationships between humans and the natural world—relationships grounded not in domination, ownership, or exploitation, but in vulnerability, attentiveness, and care. Yet what makes Roy's ecological vision especially compelling is that these moments of intimacy remain fragile and incomplete. The novel resists the temptation to romanticise ecological harmony or offer nature as a simple solution to human suffering. The character of Puran becomes particularly important within this ethical framework

RESEARCH ARTICLE

because he represents a mode of ecological existence radically different from the capitalist and developmental logic shaping the world around him. Unlike those characters who view forests merely as economic resources or landscapes as spaces for extraction and expansion, Puran's relationship with the natural world is deeply relational and affective. Roy recounts that: "One year Puran had run into the flames in the middle of the night and come back with a singed fox cub" **(Roy, 2011, p. 142)**. The image is profoundly significant because it foregrounds interspecies compassion without sentimental excess. Puran risks his own body to rescue an injured animal, suggesting an ecological ethics grounded in care rather than utility. Importantly, Roy does not portray this act as a heroic spectacle. The moment appears almost quietly ordinary, which makes it even more powerful. Ecological responsibility in the novel emerges not through grand ideological declarations but through small acts of attentiveness toward vulnerable life. Puran, therefore, embodies an alternative ecological consciousness that resists anthropocentric thinking. His relationship with animals is not based on mastery or possession but coexistence. In a world increasingly shaped by developmental violence and environmental commodification, such acts of care become forms of resistance. Roy further expands this ethical vision by repeatedly reminding us that the landscape does not belong exclusively to humans. Diwan Sahib reflects: "The land had belonged to these monkeys, and to barking deer, nilgai, tiger, barasingha, leopards…" **(Roy, 2011, p. 74)**. The statement radically destabilises anthropocentric assumptions about ownership and territory. The land is imagined not as private property or national resource but as shared ecological space inhabited by multiple forms of life.

Roy's emphasis on multispecies belonging challenges modern developmental ideologies that privilege human expansion at the expense of ecological coexistence. At the same time, the line carries an unmistakable sense of loss. The use of the past tense— "**had belonged**"—suggests that this ecological balance has already been damaged. The forests continue disappearing, wildlife becomes increasingly vulnerable, and developmental intrusion steadily reshapes the Himalayas. Roy carefully avoids sentimental closure. Nature does not magically restore emotional wholeness, nor does ecological awareness automatically produce harmony. Instead, the novel suggests that meaningful relationships with the natural world must emerge through an acceptance of vulnerability, incompleteness, and uncertainty. In many ways, this refusal of resolution becomes one of the novel's greatest strengths. Roy acknowledges that both emotional recovery and ecological restoration remain partial within structures of ongoing violence, capitalism, and environmental precarity. The forests remain threatened, species continue disappearing, and the mountains themselves appear politically and ecologically unstable. Yet the novel does not entirely abandon hope. What survives in *The Folded Earth* is not optimism in the conventional sense but the fragile possibility of coexistence. Roy suggests that even within wounded landscapes, acts of care, attentiveness, and ecological intimacy still matter. Such moments may not repair the world completely, but they resist the logic of domination that produced ecological destruction in the first place. Ultimately, Roy's ecological ethics are grounded not in fantasies of purity or return but in the difficult work of learning how to inhabit

damaged environments responsibly. The novel, therefore, imagines relationality itself as fragile, temporary, and vulnerable—yet perhaps still necessary for emotional and ecological survival.

7. Conclusion

The Folded Earth resists easy closure because Anuradha Roy refuses to separate human grief from the damaged landscapes through which that grief is experienced. The Himalayas in the novel are not passive settings but affective spaces that absorb memory, intensify silence, and register both emotional and ecological fragility. Grief, therefore, becomes environmental rather than merely psychological. This paper has argued that Roy transforms the Himalayan landscape into an affective ecology where feminine mourning and environmental precarity become deeply interconnected. Through disappearing forests, developmental intrusion, and ecological instability, the novel exposes how postcolonial modernity damages both ecosystems and emotional life. Importantly, Roy complicates conventional ecofeminist assumptions by refusing to romanticise nature as purely healing or harmonious. The mountains comfort Maya, yet they also isolate her. Silence offers refuge while deepening alienation. Nature in the novel remains emotionally unstable and politically wounded rather than spiritually idealised. At the same time, Roy avoids complete despair. Through fragile moments of ecological care and interspecies relationality, the novel suggests that coexistence grounded in vulnerability and attentiveness remains possible even within damaged environments. Yet healing remains partial. Forests continue disappearing, grief persists, and ecological violence remains unresolved. By integrating ecofeminism, affect theory, and postcolonial ecocriticism, this paper has foregrounded ecological grief as an important framework for understanding contemporary Indian fiction. Ultimately, *The Folded Earth* reveals that the ecological crisis is never merely environmental; it is emotional, historical, and profoundly human. In Roy's novel, the mountains do not simply witness grief—they mourn alongside it.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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