

Chapter III

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Eco-socialism in *Green Grass, Running Water*

Contemporary capitalist society has reached the verge of catastrophe. The limitless supplies of natural resources and incessant exploitation of environment have put an end to a sustainable future. The dominant capitalist system may lead to natural disasters. Beside flora and fauna, the indigenous people are greatly affected because of exploitation of natural resources. Teale rightly says, “Marxism and indigenous rights were incompatible because Marxism, like capitalism, requires the exploitation of natural resources and industrial development that conflicts with indigenous ideas about the sacred nature of the earth” (158).

The origin of Eco-Marxism started with Walter Benjamin who was one of the Marxist theorists in the twentieth century. In 1928, his book *One Way Street* portrayed the domination of nature and the relationship between nature and humanity. A number of classical Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg, Vladimir Lenin, Karl Kautsky and Nikolai Bukharin created awareness of environmental problems through their writings. Many critics wrote only about the aspects of ecological problems, but critics like Barry Commoner, Rudolf Bahro and Elmar Altvater explained that capitalism is the main threat for ecology.

Ecological concerns and conflicts between indigenous people and the dominant culture are examined by many environmental sociologists to find out how economic development affects the environment and people. The future is at stake as the impact of environmental exploitation is felt throughout the world. With respect to these issues, many critical ideologies in literary studies are formulated to create possible solutions. Eco-Marxism, Social Ecology, Green Socialism and Eco-socialism share the same

ideology that involves capitalism or hierarchal society in which both nature and oppressed people are exploited. Robyn Eckersley believes that the Marxist critique of capitalism, "...simply does not go far enough: it is fundamentally limited by its anthropocentrism, its focus on the relations of production at the expense of the forces of production, and its uncritical acceptance of industrial technology and instrumental reason" (86).

Later, Marx's writings were redefined by many Eco-socialists. During 1970s, Barry Commoner authored many books in which he suggested left-wing, Eco-socialist ideology. He published a thesis named "Limits to Growth" which dealt with environmental ethics. The hypothesis of the thesis was that the advancement of technologies and capitalist economy was the root cause for environmental devastation. O'Connor, in 1988, edited a journal named "Capitalism, Nature and Socialism: A Theoretical Introduction" in which he analyzed that capitalism negated nature. Karl Polanyi in his book *The Great Transformation* says that economic growth should be limited in order to equalize the ecological factors. John Bellamy Foster is a professor of Sociology at the University of Oregon and he writes about political economy of capitalism and economic crisis and Marxist theory. He is the author of *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, *The Great Financial Crisis: Causes and Consequences* and *The Theory of Monopoly Capitalism: An Elaboration of Marxism Political Economy*. He originated Metabolic Rift theory which is an extension of Marx's view on ecological crisis that occur due to capitalism. The concept of the Metabolic Rift is the dynamic interchange between human beings and nature, resulting from human labour. In 1979, Alan Roberts, a Marxist from Australia in his article, "The Self-Managing Environment" proposed that people's unfulfilled needs were fuelled by consumerism. The Australian Democratic Social Party launched the Green Left weekly newspaper in

1991 collaborating with other groups like Green Alliance and Green Party. Later it came to an end when Australian greens followed policies of different political group. Democratic Social Party later published an inclusive book, *Socialism and Human Survival* and the second book, *Environment, Capitalism & Socialism* which was an expansion of the previous one. Eco-socialism according to Michael Lowy is, “A political current based on an essential insight: that preserving the ecological equilibrium of the planet and therefore an environment favorable to living species, including ours, is incompatible with the expansive and destructive logic of the capitalist system” (Lowy, “Preface” 1).

In the 1990s two important social feminists, Mary Mellor and Ariel Salleh discussed eco-socialist archetype and their prominent concerns were ecological awareness and social justice. David Pepper published his work *Ecosocialism: From Deep Ecology to Social Justice* which evaluates contemporary ecocritical literary approaches and he formulated a new theory, Deep Ecology. An ecosocialist manifesto was launched by two important eco-socialists; Joel Kovel who was social scientist, psychiatrist and former candidate for Green Party of United States and the second person was Michael Lowy, an anthropologist. *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* by Joel Kovel exemplifies eco-socialist concepts.

Capitalism has gone beyond its limit by maximizing profit regardless of social and ecological concerns. Eco-socialism takes a stand against both market ecology and socialism as it balances the connection between the manipulation of labour and manipulation of the environment. Eco-socialists believe that imperialism paved way for the expansion of capitalist economy which eventually resulted in social exclusion, poverty, war and environmental ruin. Eco-socialism is the combination of both past and existing groups of green politics

and socialism. Peter Beckmann and Warren T. Brookes gave priority to social justice rather than the ecological issues, signifying that they appear to be green but they are red inside, so they are addressed as watermelon.

Derek Norman Wall, British politician and former member of the Green Party of both England and Wales, focused on free-market capitalism. Capitalists extract water from subsistence farms which belong to primitive people which eventually results in famine. Forests are cleared to cultivate cash crops that distance local people from their means of production and it heightens poverty. Other eco-socialists like Guha and Martinez-Alier criticize globalization for producing high amount of waste materials and polluting the environment by dumping the waste materials inappropriately. Alan Roberts is an eco-socialist who supported working-class community's action and resistance. He stood by green ban movement where workers denied taking part in the project which is environmentally hazardous. Kovel also targets on working-class group through the eco-social parties and their continuous involvement in the current green parties who try to bring social change.

This chapter focuses on the Eco-socialism in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* as the novel depicts the adverse impact of imperialism which forcibly transforms the lives of Native Americans. The landscape is transformed through the construction of a dam which has an adverse effect on the Native people. Eco-socialism is the ideology that merges both social and ecological concerns. Eco-socialists believe that capitalism eventually resulted in social exclusion, poverty, war and environmental ruin. The dam built on Native land becomes the ultimate point of conflict as the manmade structure is holding back the force of nature.

Thomas King makes use of the title to satirically remind the promise made by the American government. Jace Weaver rightly says, “The title refers to the old treaties between the U.S. government and the native nations which often promised land to the Indians “as long as the grass is green and the water runs”” (56). In the novel, the narrator and the coyote lead two unrestrained interwoven plots in which the story narrated by the coyote is rooted in the myth of the creation of the world and the other one is a realistic plot that unfolds the day to day life of Blackfoot people. The myth of Blackfoot people regarding creation is repeated by four Indians. The woman protagonist in the myth is named as First Woman, Changing Woman, Thought Woman and Old Woman. All the four versions of stories have the same beginning; the woman falls from the sky to the earth which is filled with water. The four Indians who narrate the myth are Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe and Hawkeye. They escape from the mental asylum and travel to Blackfoot reserve in order to fix the world and to restore the ecological balance as there is an impending threat to the natural ecosystem because a dam is being built across the river in their native land; the Blackfoot reserve.

The dam which is built on the reserve serves as the central conflict in the novel. Clifford Sifton, a White engineer waits to open the dam after construction. Just before opening the dam, Eli Stands Alone stops it by getting an injunction from the court against opening the dam. Eli Stands Alone is a University Professor who returns to his native land after many years. He learns that his ancestral home is situated on the river bank and if the dam is opened, the course of the river will change and his home will be flooded.

Thomas King portrays that government relocated the native people to reservations situated in isolated places which were far away from fertile lands, lack of water and other

resources resulted in poverty. In Blackfoot reserve, isolated geography challenges the economy of the reserve. “Poverty diminishes opportunities, limits choices, undermines hope, and threatens health” (Morley 171). In the novel *Green Grass, Running Water*, Lionel Red Dog is a warm-hearted Blackfoot Indian who witnessed mishaps throughout his life. As Carlton Smith asserts,

King’s presentation of Lionel’s life as a life seemingly without options, prefigured by fictions which proceed him but which nonetheless conspire to fix his identity and limit possibility, allegorizes the familiar historic process of domination of Native Americans by written colonial narratives and “official histories” which have historically served to “invent” what it means to be an Indian. (516)

Lionel’s misfortune starts from his childhood. When he was eight years old, he feigns tonsillitis thinking that he would get to stay home from school. But his plan goes awry and he narrowly averts a heart operation after a nurse confuses his identity. Long after the mishap, people assume that Lionel still has a heart problem. Similarly, years later Lionel is asked to go to Salt Lake to present a paper in a conference instead of his supervisor. During the conference, students start to protest against the Wounded Knee incident. Wounded Knee incident occurred on February 27, 1973, when the followers of American Indian Movement seized and occupied Wounded Knee, a town near South Dakota. This protest eventually embraced failure. After the conference, Lionel is asked to participate in a rally which is to take place at the state capital near the statue of Massasoit. Lionel sees more than sixty people near the statue when he reaches the spot. Many gathered for the rally and a woman shouts out for donation. The crowd threw dollars onto the blankets when

the woman passes by. When she nears Lionel, he puts his hands into pockets and sighs and he feels embarrassed for not donating. He is penny less and his complete journey expense is funded by the Department of Indian Affairs. Most of the Native Indians are poor and the children cannot expect their parents to provide them money because they hardly earn money for their livelihood. Children study hard hoping that their present status would improve after graduation.

As Palmater states, “Today, Canada may be full of apologies and regrets, but the fact remains that federal laws and policies not only put First Nations in their current state of extreme poverty, but the same laws and policies keep them in this state” (113). Lionel struggles a lot to find a good job. Even their family members are worried about his status especially his aunt Norma who constantly reminds him about his social status.

“What you need is a job”

“I’ve got a job.”

“Selling them television is not a job for a grown man. Too bad about the government job.”

“wasn’t my fault auntie.”

“Government pays good. You got free trips all over the place, too.”

“Just bad luck.”

“Look at your sister. She makes her own luck.” (King, “Green” 59)

Lionel’s parents and relatives strongly believe that a person with a university degree can get a teaching job. Lionel replies, ““Course, Everett James and Maggie Plume and Jason Whiteman got university degrees, too. But they don’t have jobs”” (King, “Green” 87).

His parents often compare him with his sister Latisha who makes her own living by running a restaurant named Dead Dog Cafe. She sells hamburger and tells everyone that it is dog meat. Tourists think that First Nations people eat dog and they consider it to be their traditional food. In order to get rid of poverty she makes money by fooling the tourist. Most of the indigenous people who pursue higher studies depend on the government scholarships. Lionel tries to get funds from the government for his higher education but fails. “Lionel called the band office the next morning, and Morris told him that all the money for the current year had been given out” (King, “Green” 87).

Socioeconomic factors ... appear on the surface as neutral criteria. They are considered as such by legal system. Yet they can conceal an extremely strong bias in the sentencing process.... When the social, political and economic aspects of our society place Aboriginal people disproportionately within the ranks of the [unemployed, transient and poorly educated population], our society literally sentences more of them to jail. This is systemic discrimination. (Quigley 275-276)

Thomas King illustrates that false accusation has led to unemployment and poverty among the native people. Indigenous people are branded as criminals recurrently for petty crimes that are linked to poverty, inadequacy of employment and opportunities. In the novel *Green Grass, Running Water*, Lionel experiences false accusation many times. The first time is during his return from the conference. After the conference, a man arranges his transport. He asks him to board a van which belongs to a person named Cecil. The van heads towards Wounded Knee and Lionel has no idea that van had rifles and boxes of ammunition. “Lionel Red Dog, Canadian citizen, government employee, and status Blackfoot

Indian, was sitting cross-legged among the groceries and the guns” (King, “Green” 62). The police stop the van asking them to get out with their hands held up. While everybody was getting down, Lionel accidentally hooks a wing tip through the sling of the rifle and hurls towards the policewoman. The very next moment, he gets a hard hit on his head that it took nine stitches to cover the injury. The police put him in jail in order to check his identity and then he is again made to stay for five more days for disturbing peace.

After that incident, Lionel explains everything to his supervisor Duncan through phone and the supervisor is sympathetic. Only after hanging up the phone Lionel realizes that he is in Green River and he does not have money to get back to Salt Lake City so he calls the office in Blossom. It is a collect call and Lionel asks the operator whether his supervisor can bear the travelling charge but the secretary tells him that Duncan is out of town and will not come until the middle of next week. Even before hanging up the phone, Lionel realizes, “No one at the office was going to talk to him. Not today. Not tomorrow” (King, “Green” 64). “As is typical in all colonial societies, First Nations today are characterized as entrenched dependencies, in physical, psychological and financial terms, on the very people and institutions that have caused the near erasure of our existence and who have come to dominate us” (Alfred, “Colonialism” 42).

Lionel has no option other than walking all the way from town to the high way. Then he stands in scorching sun with his thumb out for three hours before he gets his first ride. The man is generous enough to drop him till Little America. The next ride takes him till Lyman. Then the next person drops him off in downtown Evanston. Eventually he reaches Salt Lake City at two the next day. His problem does not end there as people in the hotel did not believe that he stayed there nine days ago and his things are still there in

the room. The management of the hotel takes the matter to the court and Lionel has to tell the whole story once again. The judge orders the hotel to return his clothes. Lionel pays his outstanding bill with the traveler's checks in the jacket. The judge gives thirty days time to leave the town without paying the bill but he reduces it after knowing that he is Canadian. "“Seeing as you're Canadian, I'll reduce it to ten days,” the judge told him. “If it was your first offence, I could let you off with probation”” (King, “Green” 68). Though he is acquitted from the criminal case, still the evidence of his imprisonment makes him unemployed.

Lionel's second false enquiry takes place after he gets new part-time job at Woodward's store in the mall as a sales clerk. He joins there without mentioning the criminal case in which he was involved at Wyoming. Three weeks later, the police came to enquire him about a rally that American Indian Movement has planned for the following weekend.

“I don't know anything.”

“Is that what you told them in Green River?”

“That was a mistake.”

“Always a mistake to get caught.”

“I don't know a thing about AIM.”

“Report we saw says you were one of the leaders.” (King, “Green” 69)

After the enquiry, Lionel is again unemployed. These kinds of problems are common for indigenous people. Most of the indigenous people end up having false criminal records and become jobless. “Indigenous people are less likely to be employed, more likely to be

unemployed, and more likely to be outside the labour force” (Ciceri 22). Social exclusion is a recurring theme in the novel *Green Grass, Running Water*.

Social exclusion derives from an idea of society as a status hierarchy comprising people bound together by rights and obligations that reflect, and are defined with respect to, a shared moral order. Those excluded from moral order often experienced marginalization in times of employment and their relationship with the state. (Barnes 19)

Thomas King brings out social exclusion through Alberta’s family. Alberta’s family went on a trip to Browning when she was thirteen years old. Just south of Cardston, Alberta’s father, Amos stops at the border crossing. The American border guard came near the pickup and enquired them about their trip. Amos explained him that they are heading towards Browning. The guard conducts detailed enquiry. The guard deliberately irritates the family members by asking unnecessary questions. ““You got any presents for your friends in Browning? You know, cigarettes. Maybe a little something to drink?”” (King, “Green” 283). The guard wants to find some reason to humiliate them so he asks them if they have any feathers. ““You aware we got laws that cover certain things . . . for instance, parts of animals” . . . “Certain kinds of feathers. They’re covered too”” (King, “Green” 283). Eventually he attains his motive by damaging the dance outfits and throws them out from the truck. Enraged Amos, expresses his resistance but the guard replies, ““Guess we’re the ones to say what’s right and what’s not right”” (King, “Green” 284). Indigenous people’s beliefs and rituals are degraded by the higher officials. The saddest part is that the indigenous people are dumb folded despite their resistance. As Burchardt states,

Social exclusion allows the phenomena of interest to extend beyond non-participation due to lack of material resources...measures of social exclusion attempt to identify not only those who lack resources, but also those whose non-participation occurs in different ways: through discrimination, chronic ill health, geographical location or cultural identification, for example. (229)

First Nations people's dance outfits are considered sacred as it is used for Sun Dance. Cultural beliefs and rituals are the identity of indigenous people but the white people consider such beliefs as trivial.

““That's sacred stuff”, said Amos.

“No, said the guard. “What we have here are eagle feathers”” (King, “Green” 284).

The officials act inhumanly by confiscating the outfits. Amos explains them clearly that the outfits are sacred and they cannot perform their traditional Sun Dance without the outfit but the guard replies, ““I can always put you in jail, if that's what you'd like. Is that what you'd like?”” (King, “Green” 284). Amos is very stubborn to get back the outfits but he ends up in jail.

Though the Native Americans resist oppression, they are helpless. “A group of Natives who, in one way or another, suffer from the marginal roles assigned to them” (Goldman, “Mapping” 19). After Alberta's father gets out of the jail, he is heart-broken when the officials spread his ritual outfits on the ground. Later a reporter comes to know about this incident and writes a series of stories on the suppression of Indian religion. Within a few weeks, many politicians speak in House of Commons about the abuses that First Nations people suffer at the hands of Americans. They make use of this opportunity to blame the Minister.

“Will the Honorable Minister please tell the people of Canada why our citizens are no longer safe to cross the border while we continue to offer visiting Americans every courtesy?” (King, “Green” 310). It took six months for Amos to collect the outfit. When Amos goes to the courthouse to collect the outfits, it is tightly packed in the garbage bags. On seeing this Amos is enraged and bursts out, “You can’t stick outfits in a bag like this” (King, “Green” 313). The man who is in charge does not react. ““Let us know,” said the man, “If we can be of any further assistance”” (King, “Green” 313). Amos takes the outfit home without opening it. That evening Alberta’s mother opens the bag using a razor blade. Two outfits are badly tattered and most of the feathers are broken. The rest of the clothes seem repairable. The most heart wrecking moment is when, “Alberta could see pattern of dirt on the sleek feathers where someone with boots had walked on them” (King, “Green” 314).

Thomas King gives the readers an example of victimization of Native American in the novel *Green Grass, Running Water*. The first incident is when a used car dealer refuses to return the truck which he stole from an Indian. Amos, Alberta’s father works for tribal police for a period of time. Cars getting lost are a very common incident in the reserve. Generally the cars are borrowed by relatives or friends. Amos tries to hasten the return of borrowed cars and to soothe hard feelings without any trouble. Six months later, Amos’s brother-in-law loses his vehicle, a ford pickup. Milford had parked his car in front of a Super market in order to buy some groceries. On his return, the truck was gone. Amos pacifies him and assures him that he will find out. After a few days Milford spots his truck but unfortunately his truck is taken by the used car dealer and it is put up for sale. He seeks help from Amos and by the time Amos reaches, Milford is given the bill of sale. ““They got my truck at Peterson’s. I tried to tell them it was mine, but they had bill of sale with

my name on it. I told them someone stole the truck but they just kept waving that bill of sale at me”” (King, “Green” 340).

Amos goes into the office and puts his tribal police badge on the edge of Peterson’s desk. The very moment Peterson comments, “Didn’t know we had Indian police” (King, “Green” 341).

To use the notion of social exclusion carries the implication that we are speaking of people who are suffering such degree of multidimensional disadvantage, of such duration, and reinforced by such material and cultural degradation of the neighbourhoods in which they live in, that their relational links with the wider society are ruptured to a degree which is to some considerable degree irreversible. We may sometimes choose to use the notion of social exclusion in a more general sense than this: but here is its core. (Room 171)

Amos tells to Peterson that his work is to look for stolen cars and he pulls out a copy of bill and slides it towards Amos. Then Peterson replies ““All up front and legal”” (King, “Green” 342). The truck is for sale without the owner, Milford’s consent. Not only that the sign is misspelled in the bill, the person who signed instead of Milford has written his name as Melfred. When Amos asks Peterson about the wrong signature, he replies, ““Looks like Milford to me”” (King, “Green” 342). Amos’s effort goes vain as the car dealer is not in the state to listen to him. Amos tries his utmost by repeatedly telling him that Milford’s car was stolen and it was not sold to them. Peterson gives a sarcastic reply, ““Well, let’s say that maybe Milford or Melfred comes in here and he

needs a little money. And maybe he's had a little to drink. He sells us the truck, and then, maybe he forgets about it'" (King, "Green" 342).

Amos is in a state where he is neither able to bring back the truck nor convince Milford. Then Milford rejects Amos's suggestion of finding a lawyer and he also reminds Amos about another similar case which failed miserably. "'How many years did they drag out that case? Four or five? Until Everett was broke and had to give it up'" (King, "Green" 344). About a week later, someone sets the truck on fire. By the time the Fire department arrives, Milford's truck is completely burnt along with four other cars parked next to the truck. At last Milford is behind the bars for three days. "'I didn't do it", Milford told Amos, "I wish I had, but I didn't'" (King, "Green" 344).

"Social exclusion is a broader concept which usually implies that some people or households are not just poor, but that they have additionally lost the ability to both literally and metaphorically connect with many of the jobs, services and facilities that they need to participate fully in society" (Church 197). The next character who is victimized is Charlie's unemployed father, Portland Looking Bear. Only through his mother Charlie learns that his father had been a movie star. The first thing his father does to become an actor is that he changes his name as Iron Eyes Screeching Eagle. The director of the movie asks him to change his name more dramatically so he changes it and he gains success.

The director wants Portland who is a Native Indian to wear a rubber nose in order to look like an Indian. As Marlene Goldman rightly asserts, "A Native actor trying to make it in Hollywood, doesn't look Indian enough and is forced to wear a rubber nose" (Goldman, "Review" 3). He initially brings the nose home and hangs it on the wall. The edge of the nose dries out and then he wears it. "Everyone loved the nose. C.B. and Isabella swore it

made him look even more Indian” (King, “Green” 170). Problems arise consequently that Portland is unable to tackle it. The first one is that the artificial nose blocks the holes of the real nose. Portland experiences shortness of breath. Secondly his voice is projected in a comical way because of the blockage. “Instead of the rich, deep, breathy baritone, his voice sounded pinched and full of tin” (King, “Green” 170). Then his nose appears to be bizarre in the movie. “Under the lights, in front of the cameras, it seemed to grow and expand, to dominate Portland’s face” (King, “Green” 170). Worst of all, it starts to stink like rotting potatoes. People start to measure their distance. Portland undergoes identity crisis at Hollywood which results in psychological trauma, so he returns to his native reserve.

After the death of Charlie’s mother, Portland again attempts to enter Hollywood. Portland takes Charlie to C. B. Charlie is given a tour inside the studio and C.B. says, ““Nobody played an Indian like Portland. I mean, he is Indian, but that’s different. Just because you are an Indian doesn’t mean that you can act like an Indian for the movies”” (King, “Green” 208). When Portland asks for a job, C.B. tells him that Remington’s is hiring and he also suggests him to send Charlie there. Remington’s is a steak house. It is set up like Old West boardinghouse. The waiters wear cowboy hats, shirts and boots. Charlie feels foolish to stand around in the parking lot. His father gives him some survival tips. ““Remember to grunt,” his father told him. “The idiots love it, and you get better tips”” (King, “Green” 235). Portland works for the Four Corners. It is a burlesque theater. It is only eight blocks away from Remington’s. Charlie finishes his first day’s work at Remington’s and goes to the Four Corners to meet his father. The theater is smoky and so dark that one could hardly see the dancers. Initially a guy in a tuxedo comes and tells a couple of jokes and introduces the next dancer. Then a woman comes and dances and all

of a sudden Portland jumps onto the stage with a yell. Charlie did not recognize his father. “He was wearing a black mask and he had done something to his nose and had painted it red” (King, “Green” 238). Richard Eder points out, “There are occasional chilling glimpses of American Indian victimization, as when Charlie’s unemployed actor father performs as a painted savage in a strip joint” (2).

Bill Bursom is a person who is obsessed with White culture that he constantly disrespects Native Americans. He owns an electronic store where Lionel works. One day Lionel visits Bill Bursom’s Home Entertainment Barn, the largest television and stereo store in Blossom to return a video. Then Bill offers him a job knowing that Lionel has lost his job. Lionel knows that his cousin Charlie Looking Bear works for Bill. Lionel asks Bill about Charlie and he comes to know that Charlie has quit the job as he got an opportunity to work for a big corporate company. The way Bill offers the job shows his attitude towards Native Americans. ““You know, in a good year Charlie would make thirty-five, forty thousand dollars. You ask him next time you see him. Damn good opportunity for the right Indian”” (King, “Green” 86). According to Bill, Native Americans are good for nothing and have a very poor regard for them. When Lionel tells him that he has plans to get money from band for his education, he says, ““That’s right, You guys get all that free money”” (King, “Green” 85).

Bill consistently rants about his perspective on Native American culture. Bill arranges all the televisions on the wall in the shape of the outline map of Canada and the United States. He uses it as a business promotional tactics. He explains his idea to Minnie, a Native American customer who visits his showroom. Bill says that Lionel and Minnie are unable to appreciate the complexities of his map advertising design as they are Native

Americans. Bill even forces Lionel and Charlie to read a book named *The Prince* by Machiavelli.

Lionel at Bursum's insistence, had read *The Prince*, and so has Charlie Looking Bear for that matter, but Bursum was sure that neither of them has understood the central axiom. Power and control-the essences of effective advertising-were, Bursum had decided years before, outside the range of the Indian Imagination, though Charlie has made great strides in trying to master this fundamental cultural tenet. (King, "Green" 140-141)

Bill Bursum not only humiliates First Nations people but also curses Eli Stands Alone for legally stopping the progress of dam which is being constructed in the reserve. Bill has bought a piece of land near the lake believing that the prize would skyrocket when tourists visit the dam.

How many years had that old fart held up the dam? Some legal technicality. And the lake. A perfect good piece of lakefront property going to waste. And you couldn't call them Indians. You had to remember their tribe, as if that made any difference, and when some smart college professor did come up with a really good name like Amerindian, the Indians didn't like it. Even Lionel and Charlie could get testy every so often, and they weren't really Indians anymore. (King, "Green" 209-210)

Bill constantly points out that the Native Americans have not become materialistic in outlook. "The world kept changing and you had to change with it. Otherwise you could go crazy like that nut in Montreal...Make money. The only effective way to keep from going insane in a changing world was to try to make money" (King, "Green" 210).

One of the most insidious traits of the imperialism is encroachment of indigenous lands and relocating the natives to the reserve. Even in the reserve, Indigenous people cannot completely own the land because the government keeps confiscating their land for certain developmental projects.

Indians could not own reserve land as individuals, nor could they take advantage of the homestead opportunities offered to other Canadians.... The government had the power to move the bands if reserve land was needed by growing towns and cities. The government also gave itself increasing authority to lease or dispose of reserve land without band authorization. (Brittain 11)

Thomas King clearly reveals that imperialism has paved way for the establishment of corporate companies which especially targets the indigenous land. In the novel, the corporate company is Duplessis International Associates which targets the land of First Nations people and attempts to build a dam in the reserve where Eli lives. The dam is the central conflict between the White culture and the Native American culture. Eli Stands Alone comes to know about the construction of the dam and the threat it poses to the destruction of his ancestral house through his sister Norma. “There was the matter of their mother’s house, Norma told him. No one could live in it because it was right in the middle of the proposed spillway for the Grand Baleen Dam” (King, “Green” 122). Norma informs him in the first place because she thinks that Eli might still have some sentiment towards his native land and house. Norma thinks that, Eli might even wants to visit the place or take some photos before the place is flooded or torn during the process of building the dam. Norma bursts out, ““You were born there before you went off and became white,” Norma

told him, “So I thought it might be sentimental value. I hear if you’re famous enough white guy, the government will buy the house where you were born and turn it into one of those tourist things” (King, “Green” 122). Eli hangs up before Norma explains everything. The very next day, Eli catches a plane and reaches the reserve. Eli is in a fix after seeing the equipments, bulldozers, semi trucks and a few portable offices. He clearly witnesses the changes in the landscape. Soon after reaching his mother’s house, he is reminded of his mother and the difficulty with which she constructed the house.

His mother had built the house. Log by log. Had dragged each one out of the small stand of timber behind the house, barked them, hewn them, and set them. He and Norma had been too young to help, and Camelot was only a baby then. So they looked after their sister while their mother coaxed the trees into place. (King, “Green” 122)

Thomas King also exhibits the height of capitalism through Clifford Sifton, an engineer who is assigned by the Duplessis Company to build the dam. Eli meets Clifford near his mother’s cabin. To his surprise, Clifford knows everything about Eli including his education and occupation. Then Eli discusses about the dam and the reply which Clifford gives enrages Eli.

“Looks like you’re thinking about building a dam.”

“That’s right,” said Sifton. “She’s going to be a beauty.”

“This is my mother’s house”

“Your sister said you might want some things out of it before we tore it down.”

“She built it herself, log by log.”

“If there are any big pieces, sing out, and I’ll send some of the boys to give you a hand.”

”Don’t know that I want anyone tearing this house down”

“Construction starts in a month.”

“Maybe it will,” said Eli. “And maybe it’ll have to wait”. (King, “Green” 123-124)

Eli realizes that if the dam is built, then his mother’s cabin will be destroyed. That is when he takes up the problem and fights for their land and their rights. He stops the environmental disruption by filing a lawsuit against the Duplessis Company and gets a stay order for ten years. Right from day one, Eli stays in his mother’s house located near the dam. His daily routine is to watch the water slide past the porch from the window of the cabin. The water level often gets higher as they open the gates a little and let the stream flow over the sides of the channel and wash alongside the logs. He brings the coffee pot outside the porch and sits on the easy chair facing the west. “Four hundred yards behind the cabin, he could see the dam, an immense porcelain wall, white and glistening in the late morning light” (King, “Green” 118). Similarly, Tagore in *Mukta-dhara*, comments the machine tower as, “It looks like a demon’s head, a grinning skeleton head, lying in wait to devour your city in its sleep. To have it before your eyes night and day will dry up your souls like dead wood” (2.237-238).

Clifford Sifton, visits Eli in his mother’s house very often to convince him to withdraw the case. Their conversations make sense only for those who know the history of the Indian Removal Act and the relocation of Native Americans in North America. The Indian

Removal Act became a law on May 28, 1830. The law was initiated by the President, Andrew Jackson. According to the law, the President negotiated with the Native Indian tribes to relocate them to the west of Mississippi and take over their ancestral territory for White settlement. Many of the native tribes showed their resistance especially the Cherokee tribes joined their hands together to fight for their rights but they failed. They were forcibly removed from their ancestral territory and many of them were killed during the process of relocation which is called as Trail of Tears. The Indian Relocation Act was proposed in the year 1956. Native Americans were encouraged to leave their reserve and assimilate with urban people. The government even offered money for their moving expenses and promised to give them a decent job. Only a few tribes agreed to this and left their land to enjoy the beneficiaries provided by the government, but their expectations were not fulfilled as people suffered in many ways such as poverty, cultural shock and unemployment.

Whenever Clifford visits Eli's cabin, they argue about the dam. Eli questions about the provincial report which recommends possible sites for building dams.

“So how come so many of them are built on Indian land?”

“Only so many places you can build a dam.”

“Provincial report recommended three possible sites.”

“Geography. That's what decides where dams get build.”

“This site wasn't one of them.”

Sifton rolled his lips around the cup. “other factors have to be considered too.”

“None of the recommended sites was on Indian land.”

“I just build them, Eli. I just build them.” (King, “Green” 120)

Capitalists shrewdly use their power to take control over geographical places and landscapes. Dauvergne opines, “Social exclusion is manifested when social conflicts occur between those who see these projects as job opportunities, and those whose livelihoods are dependent upon the river, and thus oppose private control. These conflicts and the potential ensuing exclusion depend on the existing relations of wealth, land and power” (634). Duplessis Company employs Charlie, Lionel’s cousin right after his graduation from law school. They employ him only because he belongs to Blackfoot community. Their idea is to manipulate the mindset of native people by publishing news about Blackfoot lawyer who supports the corporate company. “They hired him because he was Blackfoot and Eli was Blackfoot and the combination played well in the newspapers” (King, “Green” 126). Charlie is used as a toy because he does not make any of the decisions. All the decisions are made by big-shot corporate lawyers. Alberta, a Blackfoot who works as a University Professor is loved by both Lionel and Charlie. She neither wants to marry Lionel nor Charlie but she wants a child by any one of them. She even tries artificial insemination. Alberta questions Charlie about his ethics as he is working against his own community. She also reminds him that their tribal people are not getting benefitted through this project. Charlie immediately says that government has made some changes in the actual plan. “That’s the new way to describe greed” (King, “Green” 126). Charlie says that it is prudent to make money when the opportunity knocks the door. “Look, where’s the harm? The case will probably be in the courts long after we’re dead. I mean, the dam is there. The lake is there. You can’t make them go away” (King, “Green” 126).

Alberta gives him a fitting reply by telling him that the dam is sitting there but they cannot use the lake or build on the lots until the case ends. Then Charlie says that he

is amused by the irony that when Duplessis began their work, nothing stopped them, environmental issues were cast aside. Even the possible questions about the fault lines of the dam were dismissed and the Native land claims which were there in the court for fifty years were shelved but Eli gets stay order and stops them.

So Duplessis built the dam. But the day after it was completed, after all the champagne, the speeches, the pictures, just as the chief engineer, the premier of the province, and the federal minister for natural resources were set to throw the switches that would open the gates for the first time and send the rushing water down the channels to where the farmers, the businessmen, and the Indians waited, Eli Stands Alone finally got an injunction that stuck. (King, "Green" 128)

Construction of the dam in the native reserve is an example of capitalist hegemony that has doomed the life of Native people. "Surge in alliances between multinational companies and local firms and governments bring more difficult for states and local communities to derive public benefits from production" (Borras 216). Duplessis Company plays dirty mind games to succeed. They find even a small loop hole to brainwash native people. Soon after the fourth year of injunctions, Duplessis hires Crosby Johns and Sons Inc., a slick public relations firm from Toronto to mount a publicity campaign to convince the Indians that dam is completely built to favour them. Their plan includes a story of Alberta which becomes richest place because of irrigation and hydropower after a year of opening the dam. Then the story ends by making all Indians rich. Two days after the article is published, Homer Little Bear calls for an emergency council meeting to discuss the benefits of the dam.

At the meeting, Homer tried to read the article out loud, but had to give up, he was laughing so hard. Someone suggested that they rename the dam the grand Goose or the Golden Goose because of the promised fortunes and because, as Sam Belly put it, that's about all Indians ever got from government, a goose. (King, "Green" 127).

Eli hears news that the dam is developing a crack. Just when he thinks about the cracks near the base of the dam, Sifton comes and praises the beauty of the dam. Eli bursts out thus: "It's nice in the morning. Sort of white. Like a shell". "Reminds me of a toilet", said Eli" (King, "Green" 148). Sifton never gives up till the end. He comes daily to persuade Eli. "I come by every day and read that thing those lawyers thought up about voluntarily extinguishing your right to this house and the land it sits on, and all you ever say is no" (King, "Green" 149). He uses all kind of tactics to convince Eli. He talks to him as if he really respects Eli. When Eli speaks about the treaties and the promises that government made, Sifton expresses his capitalistic perception over Indians.

"Hell, Eli, those treaties aren't worth a damn. Government only made them for convenience. Who'd of guessed that there would still be Indians kicking around in the twentieth century"

"One of life's little embarrassments".

"Besides, you guys aren't real Indians anyway. I mean, you drive cars, watch television, go to hockey games. Look at you. You're a university professor".

"That's my profession. Being Indian isn't a profession".

"And you speak as good English as me".

“Better”, said Eli. “And I speak Blackfoot too. My sisters speak Blackfoot. So do my niece and nephew”.

“That’s what I mean. Latisha runs a restaurant and Lionel sells televisions. Not exactly traditionalists, are they?” (King, “Green” 155)

Sifton tries to threaten Eli by referring to a short story, “Bartleby by Scrivener” (King, “Green” 155), and tells him that the protagonist of the story dies. He indirectly says that Eli also might die if he is adamant. Eli says, ““We all die Cliff”” (King, “Green” 156). He then tries to lure Eli by offering him bribe. Sifton asks Eli to get a lump sum amount and settle in Toronto like a king. Sifton is confident enough that one day the dam will be opened. He does not consider Eli’s stay order as a threat because he knows that the government always favours corporate companies. ““One of these days we’re going to open the floodgates, the water is going to pour down the channels, the generators are going to start producing electricity, and this house is going to turn into an ark”” (King, “Green” 156). Thomas King projects Sifton as a typical capitalist who does not value sentiments and emotions of other people. According to him, Eli’s house is, “A pile of logs in the middle of a spillway” (King, “Green” 157). Eli’s resistance overlaps Sifton’s attitude. Eli wishes the dam to break. Eli asks him, ““What happens when it breaks? You can’t hold water back forever”” (King, “Green” 157). This shows that Eli believes that the dam will definitely break. Similarly in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, the eco-warriors find every possible way to destroy the dam, “We ought to blow that dam to shitaree” (Abbey 66).

The dam disrupts the natural flow and blocks the growth of Native people’s sacred tree. Cottonwood tree grows near rivers, streams near southwest of America. Floods carry cottonwoods seeds to every place but this dam blocks the flood and the seed dispersal is

stopped. For First Nations people, Cottonwood tree is called as Sun Dance tree and it is considered as a sacred one as most of their rituals depend upon the tree. ““And if the cottonwoods die, where are we going to get the Sun Dance tree? ”” (King, “Green” 415). This dam not only kills the river but also affects the livelihood and the ritual practices of First Nations people. Many species depends on cottonwood trees. Beavers use cottonwood to build their lodge. The tree’s stem is eaten by deer, moose and elk and the predators feed on them live there. When the tree grows old and decays, the waste helps more than forty animal species for their nest and roosting. The trees play vital role in stabilizing streams which creates debris and it allows fish habitation.

Landscape kept changing in Canada since colonialism. Many rivers in Canada no longer run free and are not clean. Among the group of people in Canada, Native people are the one who experienced the disadvantages of the cultural transformation. Their traditional dependence upon the natural water is increasingly jeopardized by the corporate companies which exploit natural resources. This particular transformation scattered all the native communities throughout Canada. During the process of constructing dam, a few native people were relocated. The area in which the allocation made for those Native people are mostly beside the major drainage system, the only place Whites do not want to occupy. The inclination of government is to confiscate the rights that the native people had upon their land.

The province claims ownership of the water while the federal government claims jurisdiction over the fisheries. It has been our experience that in practice, while both governments will jealously guard these rights against Indian...residents, they are quite prepared to give them away to large

corporations to the great risk to other users and for uncertain and ill-defined economic benefits. (Quinn 139)

Watercourse provides natural cycles and caters for all necessities of life which has been perceived by Native people in the past. Native people categorize their work according to the season. For instance, after winter, the solitary groups in the bush go for hunting and trapping. Then during summer, the social groups go for fishing and harvest wild rice. Their strategies to find the right location to settle down during summer, help them to stay in a modified climate near water bodies and to get plenty of clean and cool water. Their close connection with nature makes them more vulnerable when exposed to modernization. They get affected psychologically when they are isolated from nature. Ken Kessey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a fine example as the protagonist, the Big Chief of their tribal community is mentally affected due to the construction of dam in their native land and eventually is sent to the mental asylum. "Big Chief views all the oppressive forces in society as 'The Combine' which functions mechanically as the dam that obstructs the natural flow of water" (Lavanya 121). The Big Chief escapes from the asylum as a sane person and goes to destroy the dam. Similarly, Thomas King in his novel *Green Grass, Running Water* depicts four old Indians who escape from the mental asylum at Florida hospital to fix the ecological imbalance created by the dam.

The four extremely old Indians: Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe and Hawkeye escape from the psychiatric hospital. "Having traipsed from a Florida hospital to the Blackfoot reserve in Canada, the four-hundred-year-old Indians have set out in an effort to change the world" (Smith 515). It is revealed that these old Indians are the representatives of the Indian Wars that took place in 1874. "The old Indians' names are Crusoe, Hawkeye,

Lone Ranger and Ishmael. Though mysterious at first, it is revealed soon that they are tribal representatives delivered to Florida at the end of the Indian Wars-Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, and Arapaho” (Smith 516). During Alberta’s history classes, Thomas King makes it clear that these four old Indians are associated with the wayward Indians who told their painful stories through paintings after sending them forcibly to Florida detention centre at Fort Marion.

In 1874, the U.S. army began a campaign of destruction aimed at forcing the southern Plains tribes into reservations. The army systematically went from village to village burning houses, killing horses, and destroying food supplies. They pursued the Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, and the Arapaho relentlessly into one of the worst winters of the decade. Starvation and freezing conditions finally forced the tribes to surrender. (King, “Green” 15)

In 1874, towards the end of Indian Wars, seventy-two prisoners were forcibly taken from Fort Sill, which is now called Oklahoma, to Fort Marion, Florida. All the prisoners experienced a rough journey that lasted nearly a month. After reaching Fort Marion, Captain Richard Henry Pratt freed the prisoner’s leg irons, cut their hair short, made them wear uniforms and then they were given ledgers to paint.

The old Indians escape from the hospital not only to stabilize the ecological imbalance created by the dam but also to fix Lionel’s life.

Their mission, in their various mysterious disappearances from the hospital, is to “fix” the world, a little at a time. The motivation behind their latest disappearance from the hospital is to fix up the life of Lionel Red Dog, one of the central characters in the novel. Lionel is a man who is facing his

fortieth birthday feeling as if his life has stalled-he is stuck in a dead-end job, and cannot persuade Alberta Frank, the Calgary historian, to marry him. His future seems to lack direction and purpose and to hold little hope of meaningful change. (Lamont-Stewart 120)

The old Indians try to amend the climax of the western movies which always portray Indians as victims. The first thing that old Indians fix is the classic John Wayne western movie. In most of his movies, Indians lose their battles. These old Indians magically get into the pictures and alter the ending by making the Indians win. This happens on Lionel's birthday. The old Indians meet Lionel in Bill Bursum's showroom to wish him on his birthday. They meet Eli and Charlie who have also come to wish Lionel. Then Bill Bursum asks them to watch a movie of John Wayne. Bill Bursum is completely into the movie and he enjoys John Wayne's dialogues especially when John Wayne makes fun of Indian characters. "“Surrender, white men,” shouted the chief across the river. ““Nuts to you,” John Wayne shouted back. That's the same thing he says in that war movie he made,” whispered Bursum. “It's a great line”” (King, “Green” 353). Charlie realizes that the Indian chief with a dramatic nose is his father Portland. He feels, “The same stupid wig. The same stupid headband. The same stupid nose” (King, “Green” 354). Soon everybody recognize Portland and Eli complements him saying that he looks good. Just when Bursum is waiting for the defeat of Indians, he witnesses the opposite. Indians defeat John Wayne and his troop.

Reckoning that the “classic” movie is as good place as any to start, the old ones stealthily alter the “well known” final scene of the movies as it unfolds amid the immense video wall of Wild Bill Bursum's Home Entertainment

Center. While the assembled watch, John Wayne and his costar, Richard Widmark, suffer a cinematic death usually reserved for Indians. (Smith 515)

Bursum is awestruck that he is not able to believe his own eyes. ““What the hell,” said Bursum, and he stabbed at the remote”” (King, “Green” 357). Charlie becomes emotional and clenches his fists by looking at his father who flows through the soldiers like a flood. ““Get’em, Dad”, he hissed” (King, “Green” 358). After that Lionel gets a different kind of feeling. “Right on the edge of his consciousness, something told him that whatever mistakes he had made in the past, his real problems might just be beginning” (King, “Green” 359).

Thomas King sets the final part of the novel in the reserve by gathering all the characters for Sun Dance where the earth quake occurs and the dam breaks. Lionel happens to come to the reserve as Eli compels him. Charlie comes there to meet Alberta and the four Indians come to the reserve to fix the world. Alberta accompanies Latisha to the reserve in order to meet Lionel to wish him for his birthday. Soon after she reaches there, she feels nausea and keeps throwing up. While everybody in Lionel’s house suspects her to be pregnant, she denies it. Later Lionel’s father and his aunt suggest him to get his face painted. ““Get your face painted on your birthday”” (King, “Green” 404). Native Americans consider face painting not only as cultural heritage but an important aspect in traditional ritual practice deeply connected with spirituality.

The next day Sifton witnesses something weird floating on the lake. Initially they see only dots and after using binoculars, they spot cars floating. As the novel progresses, Charlie, Alberta and Dr.Havoc, who investigates the missing old Indians, lose their cars one after the other. And now these cars appear on the lake. Nobody knew how these cars got into the lake. It was done by the four Indians. “As soon as the four old Indians disappear

from the hospital, automobiles begin to disappear mysteriously in inexplicable puddles of water; as the earthquake is about to occur, the three missing cars—a Nissan, a Pinto, and a Karmann-Ghia—reappear, sailing on the artificial lake above the dam” (Lamont-Stewart 121). Then all of a sudden, they feel the earth shaking. Everybody shouts “Earthquake” (King, “Green” 450). Everything in the reserve starts shaking. “The lodges in the circle were shaking and swaying, and there were cries everywhere as the people felt the earth move beneath them” (King, “Green” 453). Eventually the dam breaks. “And the dam gave way, and the water and the cars tumbled over the edge of the world” (King, “Green” 454). Eli Stands Alone dies drowning as the water washes over the cabin. The advocacy of violence against the Native people by building a dam is not new. Thoreau says, “I for one am with thee, and who knows what may avail a crowbar against Billerica dam” (qtd. in Brinkley xxii).

“The construction of a dam makes an unreasonable demand on nature. It is a challenge to the earth and is different from an act like a peasant working on the field” (Sumathy 116). When a dam is built, the scars on the landscape are highly visible. The impact goes beyond the location of the dam. Migration of fish is completely blocked and the populations of fishes are also at stake as the temperature differs from the natural flow. As the days pass by, the water loses its purity and the very water becomes poisonous. As Sumathy describes,

Dams change the hydrology of the river and disturb the seasonal fluctuations. Water quality is degraded as reductions in water qualities can increase salinity and make the water unusable because there is no longer enough water travelling downstream to flush the ecosystem. This may lead to the introduction of toxins. (116)

These ecological disruptions apart, dams displace people especially the tribes. Their lands and livelihood becomes corporate company's collateral. Arundhati Roy, the writer activist, in her article, "The Greater Common Good", says:

The million of displaced people don't exist anymore. When history is written they won't be in it. Not even as statistics. Some of them have subsequently been displaced three or four times- a dam, an artillery proof range, another dam, a uranium mine, a power project. Once they start rolling, there is no resting place. (4)

Joel Kovel defines Eco-socialism thus:

The crises of ecology and those of societal breakdown are profoundly interrelated and should be seen as different manifestations of the same structural forces. The former broadly stems from rampant industrialization that overwhelms the earth's capacity to buffer and contain ecological destabilization. The latter stems from the form of imperialism known as globalization, with its disintegrative effects on societies that stand in its path. Moreover these underlying forces are essentially different aspects of the same drive, which must be identified as the central dynamic that moves the whole: the expansion of the world capital system. (5)

Similarly, in the novel *Green Grass, Running Water*, imperialism paves way for the encroachment of Native lands and the colonialists take away the sense of belongingness from the Native Americans. The Capitalists, who are opportunists, follow the path laid by the colonialists. Corporate company occupies the Native land and builds a dam in order to globalize their business. The tribal people undergo a lot of struggles like displacement,

marginalization, poverty and unemployment. The expansion of capitalism and continuous displacement affects Native people's livelihood as their life is bound to nature. Corporate companies suppress the resistance showed by Native people like Eli Stands Alone, who struggles alone till the end and also sacrifices his own life to protect his native land as well as nature. Thomas King ends the novel with a possibility that the story as well as the world might one day be fixed and like the four old Indians, Native people will continue their effort to stop the social and ecological upheavals waiting ahead.