



# **Eco Poetic Imagination and Environmental Consciousness in Tishani Doshi's A God at the Door and Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods**

**Kawya Pandey**

**Sharda University**

## **Abstract:**

The paper explores the ecopoetic sensibility and environmental awareness inherent in Tishani Doshi's poetry collections *A God at the Door* (2021) and *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods* (2017). Set in the modern context of the Anthropocene, an era marked by increasing ecological deterioration, climatic emergency, and species endangerment—Doshi's art provides a poetic intervention that highlights both the resilience and vulnerability of the natural environment. By closely examining a few chosen poems, this research paper looks at how Doshi uses the lyrical style to express the connections between planetary pain, human complicity, and environmental injustice. Doshi's poetry portrays nature not only as a passive backdrop but as a dynamic entity, capable of both resistance and resilience. Her vocabulary, which alternates between being personal, eerie, and respectful, betrays a profound ecological consciousness that goes beyond sentimental nature writing. Her verses challenge the reader to confront the ramifications of human exploitation, the colonial legacies of ecological cruelty, and the muted anguish of disadvantaged ecosystems. This dissertation contends that Doshi's oeuvre presents a unique ecopoetic perspective that interweaves the personal with the global, examining the reflection of environmental degradation in gendered bodies, cultural obliterations, and existential concerns. The paper incorporates theoretical frameworks from ecocriticism, namely Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism and Rob Nixon's notion of slow violence, to examine Doshi's poetic depictions of ecological mourning, environmental resilience, and the ethical imperative for planetary kinship. Through the exploration of desert landscapes, oceanic vistas, decay, and fauna, Doshi formulates a poetic narrative of grief and resilience that challenges the commercialisation of nature while honouring its diversity and sacred unpredictability. Her lyrical landscapes serve as transitional spaces where human and non-human elements converge, questioning

anthropocentric perspectives and encouraging a redefinition of belonging in a threatened planet. This paper will enhance the field of South Asian ecopoetry by establishing Tishani Doshi as a pivotal voice in expressing decolonial environmental awareness. Through her lyrical re-enchantment of the planet, Doshi urges readers to heed the subtle violences of ecological degradation and to envision, despite the bleakness, avenues for ecological restoration and creative defiance.

**Keywords:** Ecopoetry, Ecological Consciousness, Anthropocene, Ecofeminism, Planetary Grief

## Introduction

Amidst intensifying climatic disasters, increasing sea levels, species extinction, and the aggression of unregulated industrialism, poetry serves as an essential medium to conceptualize human connections with the natural environment. Tishani Doshi's poetry, especially in her books *A God at the Door* (2021) and *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods* (2017), serves as a significant intervention in current ecopoetics. Situated within the essential context of the Anthropocene, Doshi's literary perspective contests anthropocentric thought and reestablishes environmental awareness via poetic dedication, emotional lamentation, and profound empathy.

Doshi's work does not idealise nature but addresses its degradation with pressing truth. In the poem *The Fox Spirit*, she expresses a shape-shifting entity that transcends species distinctions, amalgamating the wild with the feminine, the legendary with the ecological. This being part woman and part beast disrupts dichotomies and highlights non-human agency. In *Greenwich, 2000*, the poet depicts a dismal planetary future characterised by quiet and degradation, implying the price of modernity's relentless advance. Her landscapes are not mere scenery but politicised terrains, imbued with the legacies of colonisation, gendered violence, and ecological neglect. Doshi's ecopoetic sensibility is characterised by the integration of the personal and the planetary. Poems such as "Contract" from 'Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods' initiate as corporeal reflections but climax in disquieting metaphors of survival that encompass endangered animals and ecosystems. The female form in her poetry frequently symbolises a wounded Earth, both vulnerable and resilient. This symbolic alignment is fundamental to Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism theory, which highlights the intertwined oppression of women and nature within patriarchal and colonial frameworks. Doshi's poetry reflects this by reconceptualising gendered suffering as an aspect of a larger environmental problem.

Furthermore, Doshi's exploration of the slow violence concept introduced by Rob Nixon to characterise the gradual, imperceptible devastation of ecosystems and marginalized populations—is evident in her nuanced, poetic depictions of neglect, drought, and species extinction. Her poetry anthology is replete with endangered species: avians with fractured wings, canines hobbling at the periphery of sight, and sea turtles dislocated from their original coasts. In "Ode to the Walking Woman," Doshi depicts a woman's relentless odyssey across desolate terrains, serving as a symbol for both ecological resilience and feminist perseverance. Doshi builds a poetics of kinship through the profound interplay of ecological lamentation and lyrical defiance, reinterpreting human-nature relationships based on vulnerability, care, and accountability. Her work greatly enhances South Asian ecopoetry by recording environmental devastation and establishing a sacred place for marginalized voices, including women, animals, and devastated landscapes. This paper examines how Doshi's poetry addresses ecological bereavement, colonial remnants, and the sacred unpredictability of the Earth to develop a unique environmental ethics. It asserts that Doshi's poetry cultivates a decolonial ecological imagination that opposes commodification, celebrates multiplicity, and facilitates healing opportunities.

### **The Anthropocene and the Deconstruction of Anthropocentrism**

The Anthropocene, defined as the supremacy of human influence on Earth's ecosystems, has emerged as a crucial focus of study in modern ecocriticism. Tishani Doshi's poetry provides a profound critique of the anthropocentric age by challenging the concept of human exceptionalism. In works like *The Fox Spirit* (Doshi, *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods*), she redefines species boundaries through a shape-shifting being that is "part woman, part beast," a literary technique that resonates with Donna Haraway's "cyborg ontology" and restores agency to non-human entities. This breakdown of the human-animal dichotomy aligns with Stacy Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality, which contests the division between human bodies and ecological systems (Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, 2010). Through the embodiment of hybrid forms and perspectives, Doshi's poetry challenges the Enlightenment paradigm of mastery and control, proposing an interconnected existence between humans and non-human living forms. The poem "Greenwich" (2000) depicts a post-industrial dystopia characterised by "rusted machinery" and "vanishing birds," evoking a society devoid of ecological diversity and permeated by loss. This perspective challenges the technological arrogance of modernity and the notion of progress as a fallacy. The poem's quiet aftermath serves as a critique of what Bruno Latour refers to as the "parliament of things," wherein non-human entities are consistently marginalised in ethical and political discussions.

## Ecofeminism and the Gendered Environment

Doshi's poetry resonates with ecofeminist ideals that connect the subjugation of women and nature within patriarchal and capitalist-colonial frameworks. Vandana Shiva contends that the subjugation of women and ecosystems derives from a shared rationale of control, commodification, and violence (Staying Alive, 1988; Ecofeminism, 1993 with Maria Mies). Doshi's poetry illustrates this linkage through metaphors that link the female body to the injured planet.

In the poem "Contract" by Doshi, titled "Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods," the speaker articulates: "my body a contract / written in disappearing ink"

The transience and obliteration of the feminine person reflect the ecological deterioration of marginalised territories and communities. The metaphor encapsulates the concurrent exploitation of the environment and women, both obscured by powerful institutions. Rob Nixon's notion of slow violence—the "violence of delayed destruction" (Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 2011)—finds bright poetic portrayal in Doshi's imagery of physical and ecological erosion.

Likewise, *The River of Girls* mourns gender-based violence using an ecological metaphor.

"the river carries their bones / but does not speak."

This poetic stillness emulates the suppression of trauma; however, the depiction of the river—conventionally a sign of life—carrying the bones of the violated, recontextualises it as a testament to institutional oppression. The poem aligns itself with Shiva's critique of "development" as a euphemism for displacement and erasure.

In "Ode to the Walking Woman," Doshi depicts a solitary lady traversing drought-affected terrains, highlighting the challenges faced by women in ecologically precarious regions. The boundary "she walks / though the earth has forgotten her name" evokes both ecological memory loss and the displacement of women from narratives of power. The woman embodies resilience, reflecting the ecofeminist myth of the Earth Mother, not as a passive entity but as an active agent of survival and testimony.

## Gradual Violence and Environmental Grief

Tishani Doshi's exploration of creeping violence is seen in her poems that document the overlooked, protracted deterioration of surroundings. In *The Sea is a Wet Machine*, the ocean transforms from a life-sustaining entity into a lethal apparatus:

"the ocean coughs up / its dead."



This dreadful transformation of the sea, much idealised in poetry, presents the reader with the harsh realities of ecological decline, including overfishing, oil spills, and increasing temperatures.

In Drought, the line

“the earth cracks its knuckles / and the children stop singing” captures a communal silence that is both literal and metaphorical. The depiction of fissured soil and silent children implies the inherited trauma of ecological degradation. This aligns with Nixon's claim that slow violence disproportionately impacts the impoverished and marginalised those left mute in public discourse.

In Elegy for a Broken Wing, Doshi mourns the demise of bird life:

“the sky empties / one feather at a time.”

The loss of a species is turned into an emotional experience by this gentle, elegiac tone, which initiates what Joanna Macy refers to as the “work that reconnects”—the emotional toil of confronting ecological grief and reestablishing ties with the Earth.

### **Decolonial Ecopoetics: Kinship, Reciprocity, and Healing**

Doshi's conception of environmental justice is fundamentally decolonial, repudiating Eurocentric and capitalist perspectives that regard nature as just a resource. In “Prayer” (Doshi, *A God at the Door*), she invokes a sanctified ecology:

“the god is a tree / the tree is a woman.”

This statement integrates sacredness, nature, and gender, resonating with Indigenous cosmologies from India and others, where land is not possessed but cohabited in reciprocal kinship. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's notion of land as education is pertinent here. Doshi's poetry serves as an instructive example of non-extractive, interdependent existence.

“the river does not recognize / the lines you’ve drawn.”

This opposition to cartographic violence reflects Ghosh's work (*The Great Derangement*, 2016), which contends that contemporary nation-states are inadequately prepared to address planetary interconnection. Doshi's river, an elemental force, derides artificial boundaries and asserts its independence. Her poetry frequently revisits the concept of care, not as charity but as mutual obligation. By doing so, she engages in what Donna Haraway refers to as staying with the trouble and remaining present in complex, challenging ecological relationships instead of pursuing transcendence or evasion.

### **Conclusion**

Tishani Doshi's *A God at the Door* (2021) and *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods* (2017) represent a significant contribution to current ecopoetics, expressing a pressing environmental awareness that is simultaneously elegiac, assertive, and profoundly intimate. By employing a poetics that deconstructs

anthropocentrism, interacts with ecofeminist critiques, and reveals the gradual violence of ecological deterioration, Doshi redefines the lyric as a domain of both lamentation and defiance. Her work not only chronicles the crises of the Anthropocene but also examines its foundational structures like colonialism, capitalism, and gendered oppression, while presenting a decolonial vision of kinship that surpasses human exceptionalism. Doshi's ecopoetic vision fundamentally challenges the fixed ontological distinctions between human and non-human things. Poems like *The Fox Spirit* and *Greenwich, 2000* deconstruct Enlightenment notions of mastery, advocating for a trans-corporeal connection that resonates with Stacy Alaimo's materialist ecocriticism. Through amplifying the perspectives of hybrid entities and marginalised environments, Doshi contests the neoliberal commercialisation of nature, framing the non-human realm as an active agency rather than a mere resource. Her work contributes to posthumanist ecocritical discourse, demonstrating the insufficiency of anthropocentric paradigms in tackling planetary collapse.

Ecofeminist theory, especially Vandana Shiva's analysis of developmental violence, is an essential perspective through which Doshi's poetry connects ecological and gender oppression. In *Contract* and *The River of Girls*, the female body serves as a metaphor for plundered landscapes, exhibiting the wounds of both patriarchal and ecological violence. Rob Nixon's notion of slow violence elucidates Doshi's portrayals of gradual loss, droughts, extinctions, and marine degradation, made perceptible through her evocative lyricism. In contrast to traditional nature poetry that frequently idealises the environment, Doshi's work demands an examination of the material and moral consequences of ecological obliteration. Ultimately, Doshi's ecopoetics is decolonial in its emphasis on reciprocity, sanctity, and resistance. Poems such as *Prayer* and *Ode to the Walking Woman* evoke Indigenous epistemologies that repudiate extractive paradigms, instead promoting a relational ethics of caring. By positioning her work inside South Asian ecological discourse and using global theoretical frameworks, Doshi broadens the parameters of ecopoetry beyond Western environmentalism, presenting a conception of planetary belonging that is both locally anchored and transnationally impactful.

This paper identifies Doshi as a significant figure in modern ecopoetics, whose work not only analyses the afflictions of the Anthropocene but also suggests avenues for regeneration. Her poetry resists apocalyptic fatalism; instead, it fosters what Donna Haraway describes as "staying with the trouble" an active, imaginative engagement with ecological precariousness. Doshi urges readers to confront their role in environmental brutality while imagining alternate forms of cooperation. As global calamity intensifies, her lyricism acts as both testimony and compass, advocating for a re-enchantment with the planet that is politically essential and lyrically significant. Doshi's work integrates ecocritical theory, feminist critique,

and decolonial praxis, creating a novel paradigm for South Asian environmental literature that warrants academic scrutiny and secures her position within the canon of global ecopoetry. Subsequent studies may investigate the linkages of her work with Indigenous ecological knowledge, ecologies, or postcolonial environmental justice movements.

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