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## **Migration, Displacement and Dispossession as a Theme of the Novel Dweepa (Island)**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Blue Humanities is an interdisciplinary research area which explores interactions between man and water through social, cultural, political, historical, ethical and theoretical perspectives. The term 'blue' in blue humanities signifies a fluid material which challenges land-based dominance of green epistemologies that are confined to terrestrial spaces. Blue Humanities uses hydrological approaches to understand the connection between man and nature as against terrestrial spaces like cartographic or national borders. The proposed research paper uses the blue humanities lens to analyze the novel 'Dweepa' (Island) written by Na D'Souza. The story revolves around the theme of migration, displacement and dispossession of the marginalized due to the construction of the Linganamakki dam across the river Sharavathi in the Western Ghats. That promises greater good, though for the people living in the surroundings, it will eventually lead to the tragic end of the poor and hapless protagonist Ganapayya, a traditional farmer, his wife Nagini and his father Duggajja, since the village in which they lived submerges due to heavy rains and floods. The proposed research study uses content and thematic analysis techniques to discuss the novel 'Dweepa' by incorporating theoretical frameworks such as subalternity, otherness and alterity to portray through a deeply personal, yet universally shared experience. This study shows how processes of social change like modernization and urbanization cause both physical and psychological problems to the people who become victims of such unpredicted transformation.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Blue Humanities, hydrology, migration, displacement, dispossession.

## Introduction

Displacement of people due to development projects like dam construction, building roads and reservoirs has been a great matter of concern in a developing country like India. In such situations, it's mainly rural people who suffer. A Kannada novella, *Dweepa* (Island), written by Na D'Souza, depicts the tragic lives of such people who suffer these consequences. The story is written in the context of the displacement that occurred due to the construction of the Linganamakki Dam on the Sharavathi River in Karnataka. The story is based on the hapless life of the Hosamanehalli village people who face submersion of their homes and fields due to rising waters, presenting a human, ecological, and ethical exploration of displacement and dispossession.

The blue humanity framework prioritizes narratives that re-center human experiences in ecological contexts, emphasizing empathy, justice, and the moral ramifications of environmental change (Vinayakaselvi & Abinaya, 2021). The novel *Dweepa* is not just a story of migration. It stands as a critique of the processes that displace lives and erase cultures in the name of development.

*Dweepa* (Island) is set in Hosa Mane Halli, which turns into an island as the Sharavathi River swells around it. The developmental plan of the government to construct the Linganamakki Dam becomes an impending threat of flooding and forced relocation. Most families, having no choice, accept compensation and move to urbanized areas, but a few, including Ganapayya and his wife Nagi, refuse to leave their home, land and their cultural traditions. The nominal compensation in the form of money and land may help the displaced people to find shelter and live their lives. Ganapayya goes on insisting that such monetary support by the government cannot replace the "love and respect" that they have built for their ancestral land, a sentiment echoed by everyone who resists relocation. As water increases and inundates the village, it creates a cultural loss in the lives of people who own land and are living there for generations. The narratives of such displacements trace

the psychological and emotional unravelling of characters whose identities are rooted in place and community.

### **Research Problems:**

The novel Dweepa focuses on the traumatic condition of the people due to migration, displacement and dispossession of land and home in the name of development projects.

1. Displacement in the name of development.
2. Destruction of the ecosystem and social injustice to the marginalized.
3. Suffering from trauma due to loss of individuality and loss of culture.

### **Research Objectives:**

1. To examine the degradation of the ecological system and destruction.
2. To analyse the intensity of hardships, inadequate social justice and inadequate rehabilitation faced by the marginalized and downtrodden.
3. To use the eco-feminist approach to show how the character Nagi is treated in the novella under the patriarchy of Ganapayya.

### **Research Methods:**

1. Qualitative Research Method: The textual analysis of the novella Dweepa to understand themes of displacement and environmental loss.
2. Blue humanity perspective: To examine the novella thematically to create awareness regarding the usage of water and how to tackle water related problems.
3. Eco-feminist Approach: To apply eco-feminist approach to show the importance of women in protecting nature.

### **Key Themes of the Novella:**

1. Submersion of Land and Identity.
2. Bonded Labor and Social Hierarchy.

3. Bureaucratic Apathy and Inadequate Compensation.
4. Resilience and Resistance to Displacement.

Displacement in Dweepa is not simply physical loss of people. But it is a loss of identity, memory, and belonging. Forced migration disturbs tightly knit rural social fabrics, scattering communities and impeding cultural transmission. Compensation offered by the government will only consider material like land and home over culture, tradition, and social capital.

Ganapayya's refusal to leave his home and village shows his resistance to being reduced to a statistic or commodity that gives importance to land, water and other daily needs. His family represented a broader peasant experience of a generation living in rural Indian communities that have lived symbiotically with landscape and riverine cycles for centuries. (jlls.org)

Displacement entails dramatic economic loss. In Dweepa, villagers depend on farming and fishing for their livelihood. As the land on which they lived submerges, they lose not only their homes, but their means of survival as well. For landless workers who serve wealthier landlords, displacement causes vulnerability. Since they do not own land, they are excluded from compensation altogether because they neither possess land nor formal ownership. (Studocu)

Economic dispossession also operates through state bureaucracy, where access to compensation or resettlement is mediated by power and privilege. Those who fail to negotiate or bribe officials will suffer through no fault of their own. This reflects broader disparity in Indian society, where caste, class, and access to state mechanisms form a base in getting the right compensation.

Loss in Dweepa is beyond the economics. It is the profound emotional trauma of the characters as they face the disappearance of landscapes tied to them and their generations. For them their land is not merely a physical territory but a storehouse of ancestral memory and ritual significance. Ganapayya and others agonize

that material compensation cannot replace their cultural worth and societal stature tied to place.

Psychological displacement is more painful than physical relocation. The uprooted villagers enter urban spaces where they lack social networks, face precarious employment, and grapple with identity loss. Such hidden problems are rarely considered in development and planning.

Dispossession in Dweepa brings disruption to ritual and community continuity. Traditional roles, such as Ganapayya's position as a priest and custodian of cultural practices, become insignificant in new places or cities. Rituals that once gave individuals their communal identities deteriorate, causing the loss of generational links.

This split indicates a broader pattern in which projects of modernization and development, whilst promising economic growth, inadvertently dismantle cultural ecosystems and indigenous knowledge systems. The term slow violence perfectly frames the devastation depicted in Dweepa. The steady rise of dam water is a metaphor for the processes of development that slowly remove ecological integrity and human livelihoods.

The natural landscape of Dweepa with river, rain, and soil acts as a backdrop and also as an agent in the narrative, shaping human experiences and decisions. As the water rises, the island gets gradually separated, increasing the psychological stress in the villagers by creating a sense of abandonment by distant policymakers. (ajrasa.in)

By projecting the force of nature and struggle of humans with ecological change, Dweepa represents the theme of displacement within a broader context of environment which challenges the narratives that frame development as purely economic and technological progress.

The characters of Dweepa exhibit resilience and resistance in

different forms. In spite of immense pressure, Nagi's will power to sustain her family and home reflects how people in the rural places fight against the broader structural forces of displacement. Her practical resilience contrasts with Ganapayya's fatalism, which illustrates how each individual's loss is different from each other.

The resistance of Ganapayya and Nagi to relocate is not just physical, but it encompasses emotional resilience and unwillingness to changing environments, and dominant development paradigms that fail to value individual lives. Nagi's strength marks the human ability for endurance even as dispossession looms.

### **Blue Humanity Perspective: Ethical Implications**

Using a blue humanity lens to Dweepa highlights several ethical dilemmas:

**Recognition of Everyday Voices:** The novella Dweepa amplifies experiences of the people often marginalized in policy debates, making their visibility invisible with the cost of displacement.

**Empathy for Socio-Ecological Interdependence:** The story shows how human emotions for ecology are inseparable from individual feelings.

**Justice in Development:** The development projects are often meant for the larger communities. Hence, displacement often presents structural injustice, where marginalized communities disproportionately bear burdens.

Dweepa serves as an ethical critique. It is an apt example to show that the government policies made for the benefit of larger communities should not only be human-centered, but ecologically informed. There should be an equal importance given to lived experience and development goals simultaneously.

### **Conclusion**

**Dweepa stands as a perfect example for exploring the themes of migration, displacement, and dispossession in the context**

of development. The novella captures universal themes of loss, resistance, and human dignity rooted in specific cultural and ecological geography. The narrative foregrounds the profound human costs of displacement that are often overlooked.

Using a blue humanity perspective deepens our understanding of Dweepa by prompting reflection on the moral dimensions of development and the need to center human experiences in ecological and policy discourses. The novella urges readers to reconsider justice, empathy, and ecological stewardship over material gain and development.

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The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

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