



The Representation of Strangling Nature through Deforestation and River Water Pollution in Guntur Alam's Short Story "Harimau Belang"

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Abstract: "If we save our wild places, we will ultimately save ourselves." — Steve Irwin

The natural world offers us many benefits. The elements of life—air, water, and food—are abundantly provided by nature, which also enhances human wellbeing. The things humans need to survive are provided by nature. Natural resource management is a responsibility of humans. People strive to preserve environmental equilibrium by using their knowledge and resources, realizing the profound connection that exists between humans and the natural world. Peaceful coexistence is crucial since both the environment and humans depend on one another for survival. Guntur Alam's famous short story "Harimau Belang" effectively captures the complex interrelationship that occurs between humans and the environment, particularly in South Sumatra. By successfully addressing serious issues like river pollution and deforestation, Alam paints a troubling picture for readers of what occurs when people exploit natural resources excessively. He does more than merely present a story. Additionally, the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform has estimated that, "as much as 77% of the land and 87% of the ocean have been modified by humans, driven in large part by global resource use which has contributed to the loss of half of the world's plant biomass and 83% of wild mammal" (web). By closely scrutinizing the story's depictions and character experiences, this research paper "The Representation of Strangling Nature through Deforestation and River Water Pollution in Guntur Alam's Short Story "Harimau Belang" highlights the pressing necessity for adopting sustainable practices and protecting the environment.

Key Words: coal mining, deforestation, ecosystem, environment, habitat destruction.

1. INTRODUCTION :

According to Norfil, "Nature is often not just a setting for a fictional story in a literary work, but can also be the main theme in a literary work. Literature and nature are two things that are always close and have a reciprocal relationship" (2017). Which has proved by Guntur Alam through this short story. Guntur Alam, a writer from Indonesia, was born in Tanah Abang, Muara Enim, South Sumatra on November 20, 1986. Currently he lives in Bekasi, and is a young writer who has produced many works. Driven by the declining Sumatran tiger population as a result of human avarice, Alam uses his narrative skills to highlight environmental abuse. His well-known short tale, "Harimau Belang", encourages readers to reevaluate their relationship with the environment while offering an intense description of nature's destruction.

If we talk about the title of the short story "Harimau Belang" Harimau means tiger and Belang means stripes. So basically "Harimau Belang" means tiger and its stripes. The term "deforestation" describes the widespread removal of trees or forests, usually for uses other than forestry, such as agriculture, plantations, cattle, and human habitations. The forest ecosystems are destroyed as a result of this extensive clearing. Nigeria has the greatest rate of primary forest



loss in the world. In the past five years, about half of its main forest has been gone. According to a news report by Press Trust of India, which cited statistics from Global Forest Watch (GFW) about the state of tree cover loss in India, “between 2000 and 2023, India lost an astounding 2.33 million hectares of tree cover. That’s somewhat larger than the entire state of Meghalaya. If, we consider the setting of the novel, South Sumatra, which lost 63% of its natural forest between 1990 and 2019. Deforestation is fueled by the spread of large-scale commercial plantations, as well as illicit logging and clearance” (Web). Deforestation affects human health and the environment in equal measure. Large-scale deforestation can result from industrial operations, agricultural expansion, and the building of infrastructure to support expanding populations. Small-scale deforestation can also be caused by people or groups using the wood for fuel, construction materials, or cultivation. As aptly stated by Vandana Shiva-

The death of nature is central to this threat to survival. The earth is rapidly dying: her forests are dying, her soils are dying, her waters are dying, her air is dying. Tropical forests, the creators of the world’s climate, the cradle of the world’s vegetational wealth, are being bull-dozed, burnt, ruined or submerged. In 1950, just over 100 million hectares of forests had been cleared -- by 1975, this figure had more than doubled. During 1950-75, at least 120 million hectares of tropical forests were destroyed in South and Southeast Asia alone; by the end of the century, another 270 million could be eliminated. In Central America and Amazonia, cattle ranching for beef production is claiming at least 2.5 million hectares of forests each year; in India 1.3 million hectares of forests are lost every year to commercial plantation crops, river valley projects, mining projects and so on. Each year, 12 million hectares of forests are being eliminated from the face of the earth. At current rates of destruction, by the year 2050 all tropical forests will have disappeared, and with tropical forests, will disappear the diversity of life they support (12).

The causes and effects of deforestation in forests are examined in this short tale. Paper production is the main reason for deforestation in this story. Due to the deforestation there was no longer source of food for the tigers, the forest was destroyed, forcing them to leave it. The tiger's entry inside the hamlet in search of prey initiates habitat degradation and the reduction of its food supply. In this short story, trees are cut down and their wood is processed into paper powder, demonstrating the literary connection between nature and life. Guntur Alam's tale draws light on the implications of ecological imbalance, prompting readers to consider humanity's responsibility in biodiversity conservation and ecological equilibrium.

Furthermore, animals in the area are disturbed as a result of deforestation because the area where the animals hunt for food has been affected by human activities. This is what brings the tiger out of the forest. Guntur Alam's novel arranges readers to see the relationship of all living creatures, as well as the immense impact that human actions have on nature. According to a report on Sumatran tiger, “The Sumatran tiger’s shrinking habitat has forced them towards human societies where they occasionally prey on livestock, and in some instances, attack people. Sixteen tigers were killed in a five year period due to encounters with human societies, a grave toll for a population of only a few hundred” (web).

In addition, if the animals cannot get food anymore, the impact is the extinction of the animals that live in the forest because the habitat / residence no longer exist. The tiger's predation on its own progeny demonstrates the intensity of its hunger and the desperate means it takes to live. Even a six-year-old child was ambushed by a tiger while playing war games with his fellow children on the borders of the community. Even the people of Tanah Abang sub-village do not have a concern to preserve the forest. Through the people of village the writer showing us how generally people behave.

Additionally, the issue of river water pollution has also been talked about in the story. The river is used as a place for people to meet their daily needs, namely the need for clean water for bathing. However, in this story the Lematang river, which is often used as a place to bathe by local residents has now been disturbed by the community by taking the fish. In addition, river water pollution also occurs because of waste originating from factories, which makes people who bathe in the river itchy due to the influence of the waste. “Water pollution has a two-fold effect on the ecology. It has a harmful impact on humans as well as the environment. People and water environments are both negatively affected by pollutants. Every day, over 14,000 persons die as a result of water contamination, mostly because untreated sewage contaminates drinking water in developing countries. An estimate 700 billion Hindus do not have



recourse to a bathroom, and 1,000 Indian children, as well as kids in many other countries, die of diarrhea every day. In China, about 500 billion individuals lack access to clean drinking freshwater”. (Jain 5583). In this story, Lemtang River is a symbol of all the rivers that are related to water pollution and harming our environment. This short story takes the theme of forest exploitation in South Sumatra and also contains the meaning of the existence of Lematang river pollution due to the disposal of waste paper powder factory, and has an impact on the emergence of various diseases experienced by local residents.

2. Conclusion :

So we can say that the message to be conveyed by the author is that we should always protect our environment. It can be analyzed that the tiger that preys on village is not without cause. This happens because the forest that is home to tigers began to be harassed by the community, so the tigers came out of the jungle and looked for other food sources and eventually preyed on livestock owned by residents. When the land provides animal to feed them, is opened into a business area, it is certain that animals will find another place to live and get out of the forest. Forests are cleared and turned into business land. The message to be conveyed by the author is that it should always protect the natural ecosystem and efforts to conserve tiger which must not be hunted and killed. Forest preservation and unpolluted water of the river should continue to be maintained, because forests and river are the source of life. As accordingly put by UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen “Our planet is facing a triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and waste. These crises are taking a heavy toll on oceans, rivers, seas and lakes”(Web). Therefore, from this short story the reader should be able to take a message that by preserving the forest and river in fact, we are also preserving our future generations.

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