

**ECOSPIRE****PRESENTS**

PETRICHOR

The Newsletter

Designed and Edited by: Sreya Suresh

B.A English IV SEM)



UNVEILING THE URGENCY, INSPIRING ACTION

In today's world, when environmental issues and climate change are at the forefront of global concerns, a newsletter focused on these themes is more relevant and necessary than ever. This type of newsletter may be used to educate, inform, and encourage its readers to take action. It can emphasise the most recent advances in environmental research, legislation, and activism, as well as providing practical recommendations for living sustainably. Furthermore, words have the ability to effect change by increasing awareness, altering public opinion, and lobbying for policy improvements. A well-crafted newsletter may be a catalyst for good environmental change, making it a crucial weapon in the battle against climate change. This was at the forefront of the conception of Petrichor, the newsletter for our climate club Ecospire. May it help provoke some thoughts and actions we desperately need.

WHY ECOSPIRE NEEDED TO HAPPEN

DR. SWATHI, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT DLHS
FACULTY IN-CHARGE FOR ECOSPIRE

I am thrilled to see this newsletter take shape and be out there in the world, articulating how students are thinking about the environment and more importantly, their place in these discourses. The range of topics on which students have voiced their thoughts—from consumption practices to the influence of social media on our buying choices to the intersections between social and environmental justice to delving into how literature engages with climate change—shows the steps students are taking to make the environment and its discourses their own. As an educator, I could not be gladder that the newsletter represents a step ahead.

Environmental studies is often treated as ‘one more subject to study’, as something made ‘compulsory’ by rules and regulations but at the end of the day, not a ‘core’ subject for students who will go onto have glittering careers in their subject areas—whether it's media, psychology, literature or the social sciences. This is the conundrum for us: all of us know about and certainly experience the environmental crisis but it is not central to our hopes, desires and plans for our individual lives. The scale at which environmental crisis takes place also confounds us, making it something someone else—maybe some corporation, some summit, some government—will address. As Divya Kishore writes in her piece in this newsletter, “We don't think we need to save the environment because we think someone else will do it.”

This is where environmental humanities can step in to help change this narrative of helplessness and un-accountability towards just action. The articles featured in this newsletter on eco-fiction and eco-criticism for instance showcases how writers from across the world are alive to the looming crisis and are doing their bit to centre the environment in people's imaginations. In a similar vein, the articles on climate change and mental health can open up the possibilities for incorporating climate injustice into mental health practices. These approaches can ensure that the environment is not something out there to think about but are central to our lives. For me, this newsletter is only the beginning of something like a collective action, spearheaded by students of MAHE, inspiring change both within and outside the university. My best wishes to the Ecospire team, and the newsletter's editor Sreya Suresh, for beginning this journey for all of us.

SOLAR POWER, LIKE THE LORDE ALBUM?



DIVYA KISHORE

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It is easy to admit that the climate isn't the first thing we think of when we roll out of bed in the morning. When we are barreling through the day on five hours of sleep, we do not really care if the cup is made of plastic or paper as long as there is enough caffeine in it. I can't blame you for thinking you're being environmentally conscious enough because you do not use plastic bags or litter. While it definitely contributes to our planet's well being, they aren't exactly (environmentally) green flags (yes, pun intended) because taking the extra effort to chuck your coffee cup in the bin is the bare minimum. After hearing the same preach year after year, it gets tiring. We automatically trivialize the gravity of the situation if we don't know how we can directly relate to it. Considering the immense contribution of corporate firms to the damage of our environment, it's easy to think that as teenagers, there is not much we can do to help, apart from going on rallies with posters made out of recycled paper. However, this leads to diffusion of individual responsibility. We don't hold ourselves accountable. We don't think we need to save the environment because we think someone else will do it.

I think a good way to make the concept of climate change accessible is understand how the nuances of the matter can be connected to the spheres of life we interact with on a daily basis. It is difficult to realize how every aspect of our routine's landscape can be weaved into a domino sequence of events that impacts our environment.

For example, certain stores we shop from online rely on unsustainable methods to run the machine of fast fashion. Plastic toys and bottles which are thrown take longer time to biodegrade than our favourite fanfiction authors take to update a chapter.

While I of all people understand how a stack of pretty books is a pillar of emotional support, switching to e-books and online textbooks can reduce paper wastage (it's also easy on your wallet and storage space)

I know we cannot change every aspect of our lives to suit the needs of the environment. We aren't asking you to come to university wearing potato sacks and spend your nights scouring websites to download books for free. However, being conscious of your actions and decisions is important as even the smallest contributions can improve the fabric of our routine before it's too late.

CAPITALISM, CLIMATE AND INSTAGRAM. ALL THE FUN STUFF

VASUNDARA SRINIVASAN

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Capitalism. Isn't it outstanding? The global economic framework that values only capital. And it made us a lot of promises. Abundance of work, unlimited growth, wealth, power, and happiness for everyone.

Unfortunately, things did not pan out that way.

Firstly, let's understand capitalism. It is defined as "an economic and political system in which private owners control trade and industry in a country for profit." Simply put, the drive for profit is the fundamental aspect of capitalism. Irrespective of the price. Even when they were people's lives.



Now, let's talk about social media, particularly Instagram. If only there were a few words that sum up Instagram. The app, which has over 2.3 billion active users and produces over 95 million photos and videos daily, has done exactly what marginalized people fear most: it has exacerbated our culture of wasteful lifestyles. When we see an Instagram influencer using a new shiny toothbrush, what do we do? We also want it. Do we need it? That is unimportant. All we want is that shiny toothbrush. The fact that the shiny toothbrush is probably not any more useful than a regular one we already have doesn't matter. The mindless use of social media is the root cause of the overconsumption habits. We are aware that social media has both positive and negative effects on us. While it can help us network with the right people, it can also put our wallets in jeopardy by causing us to spend money on things we may not need or even detest. Yet, we almost always choose to do the worst for ourselves.

How does capitalism and social media play a role with climate? Just one phrase: Instagram made me buy it.

How many times have we either said or at least thought that when we purchase something we don't need? The minute that something we bought (to keep up with the ever-changing personality of social media) loses its social value, we discard it. Even though it may be hidden from our view, the rubbish we carelessly throw away could wind up in a child's stomach as food.



Food waste, E-waste, medical wastes are all hard to get rid of. It ends up in our oceans which propels into a cycle of destroyed marine life, destroyed fishing industry and eventually our food chain. Overconsumption leads to waste which leads to inability to get rid of the waste which leads to endangering the planet that feeds all of us. Let's care more and care right.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND MENTAL HEALTH: AN OVERVIEW

JAHNAVI V NAIR

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Environmental justice and natural health are two interconnected concepts that have important implications for the mental health and well-being of marginalized populations. Clinical psychology, with its focus on the diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders, has a unique perspective on these issues, particularly when it comes to indigenous and marginalized populations. Environmental justice refers to the fair distribution of environmental burdens and benefits across different groups of people. This includes access to clean air and water, green spaces, and protection from toxic pollutants.

However, marginalized populations often bear a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards, which can have negative impacts on their mental health. For example, exposure to air pollution has been linked to increased rates of anxiety and depression, while lack of access to green spaces can contribute to higher levels of stress and anxiety. Natural health, on the other hand, refers to the benefits that are derived from exposure to natural environments. This includes improved physical health outcomes such as reduced rates of obesity and chronic diseases, as well as mental health benefits such as decreased levels of stress and anxiety.

However, marginalized populations often have limited access to natural environments, which can contribute to health disparities. When it comes to clinical psychology, the impacts of environmental injustice and natural health disparities on mental health outcomes are of particular concern. For example, studies have found that exposure to environmental toxins such as lead and mercury can lead to cognitive and behavioral impairments, while lack of access to green spaces has been linked to increased rates of depression and anxiety.

For indigenous and marginalized populations, the impacts of environmental injustice and natural health disparities are often compounded by other social determinants of health such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to healthcare. This makes it crucial for clinical psychologists to take a culturally sensitive approach when working with these populations.

This includes recognizing and respecting the unique cultural beliefs and practices of indigenous populations, as well as understanding the historical and ongoing trauma and injustices that they have experienced. It is crucial for clinical psychologists to take a culturally sensitive approach when working with these populations, and to advocate for policy changes that promote environmental justice and natural health for all.

HOW ARE THE INDIGENOUS AND MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS AFFECTED?

SREESHTI ROY

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According to the UN, economic hardships and climate change are having a severe influence on the indigenous tribes' traditional methods of procuring food. Due to their efficacy, reduction of waste, and ability to adjust to the seasons, these food systems are regarded as some of the most sustainable in the world. However, among indigenous groups, climate change is contributing to issues like drought and the extinction of species.

In Africa, indigenous women are paying the price of climate change. The Sahel is a large semi-arid region south of the Sahara Desert, which is where Lake Chad is located. The region is extremely susceptible to drought, and in the last few decades, the size of the lake has changed considerably during prolonged periods of drought. Over the past 50 years, it has fallen to roughly a tenth of its

former size, which was over 10,000 km². More than 30 million people rely on freshwater from Lake Chad. It also supports fishing, irrigation, and economic activity both in Chad and Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger. But as the lake shrinks communities are struggling and there is competition for the dwindling resource. Because of this, in some communities, men must seek work in bigger cities during dry seasons when the lake can no longer sustain them. Internal migration is increasing, as well as people looking further afield to places such as Europe for work. This leaves the women and children left behind to fill the gaps and they are forced to improvise to maintain food security.

This is not a problem exclusive only to Africa, gender inequality coupled with the climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of our time. It poses threats to ways of life, livelihoods, health, safety and security for women and girls around the world. Girls leave school to aid their mothers in the agriculture sector.

Due to long-standing gender disadvantages that have led to differences in information accessibility, decision-making, access to resources, and training, women are less likely to escape disasters and more likely to suffer injuries. Women and girls are less likely to be able to get aid after a disaster, as the more physically capable men are given an upper hand, endangering the women's ability to survive and rehabilitate. This also leaves them susceptible to future adversities. This also relates to the fact that the degree of mental distress is also high among women and people in general in developing countries

Although natural disasters are due to the unstoppable forces of nature, controlling climate change will lessen the magnitude and the unpredictability that has been seen when it comes to natural disasters like tsunamis, cyclones, etc. which will lessen the number of people that experience these calamities and develop psychological disorders from them.



VIBHA VENUGOPALAN REKHA

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Eco-fiction, commonly referred to as environmental fiction, is a subgenre of literature that focuses on how people interact with the natural world. Environmental fiction analyses the effects of environmental deterioration and climate change and is concerned with how human activity affects the environment.

The early 20th century saw the beginning of environmental fiction as authors started to investigate the interaction between humans and nature in their writing. The environmental movement began to pick up steam in the 1960s and 1970s, although the genre did not become well known until then. The 1962 release of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which increased public awareness of the risks posed by pesticides, was a key moment in the evolution of environmental fiction.

The emphasis on the environment and the effects of human action on the natural world are characteristics of environmental fiction.

Authors of environmental fiction use their writing to investigate the effects of human activity on the environment and to spread awareness of the risks posed by environmental deterioration and climate change. They also look at how science, technology, and capitalism contribute to environmental damage, and they frequently look at how people interact with other animals.

The focus on human culture is another trait of environmental fiction. The social, economic, and political elements that lead to environmental deterioration, including the roles of businesses, governments, and individuals, are examined by authors of environmental fiction. The effects of environmental deterioration on human health and wellbeing as well as the moral and ethical ramifications of human behaviour on the environment are also discussed.

It has, however, also come under fire for highlighting the harmful effects of human activities and for its capacity to instill a sense of dread and despair. It has drawn criticism for being overly bleak and for failing to address the issue of environmental destruction.

Cli-fi, commonly referred to as climate fiction, is a relatively contemporary literary subgenre that has grown in popularity in recent years. Science fiction with a climate change theme focuses on how climate change may affect the environment and human society. It attempts to increase people's knowledge of the risks posed by climate change and motivate them to take action to lessen its consequences. Cli-fi is closely related to environmental fiction, both of these genres work together to usually form dystopian fiction.

The future of a planet that has undergone significant change as a result of climate change are frequent settings for climate fiction. The stories examine a range of situations, from severe natural disasters to the environment's gradual decline. Authors of climate fiction use their writing to spread the word about the dangers of climate change and to motivate readers to take action to lessen its consequences. A worldwide series of protests called the People's Climate March were held on September 21, 2014, in various locations all around the world. Before the United Nations Climate Summit in New York City, a coalition of environmental and social justice organisations organised the marches to demand action on climate change.

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Margaret Atwood's "MaddAddam" trilogy, which envisions a dystopian future in which global warming has wreaked havoc on the world, served as inspiration for the People's Climate March.

The "MaddAddam" trilogy, which consists of the books "Oryx and Crake," "The Year of the Flood," and "MaddAddam," envisions a dystopian future in which climate change has wreaked havoc on the globe and humanity is fighting for survival. The trilogy examines issues of genetic engineering, corporate greed, and environmental destruction. It has received accolades for its foresight into the perils of corporate dominance and climate change.

The concepts and sentiments of the "MaddAddam" trilogy served as an inspiration for the People's Climate March. The march aims to advocate environmental justice for groups that are disproportionately affected by climate change and bring attention to the urgent need for action on the issue, just as the novels portray a world where climate change has caused widespread destruction and inequality. The novels emphasise the need for grassroots movements to oppose powerful interests and demand change, as well as the perils of corporate control. This message struck a chord with the People's Climate March organisers, who viewed the march as a chance to confront corporate power and call for a more just and sustainable future. The "MaddAddam" trilogy also served as inspiration for the People's Climate March's innovative storytelling and artistic elements. Giant puppets, costumes and banners were among the imaginative and artistic displays used throughout the march to emphasise the urgency and significance of the message.

Essentially, interconnecting facts and science with the humanitarian aspect of story telling, which is personal, enthralling and has prolonged effect is one of the best ways to spread awareness as well as encouraging action. The art of climate fiction or environmental fiction are slowly seeping into other genres too, creating a natural yet inviting thought of climate change for the readers and for people to realise the day-to-day relevance of the topic in their lives.

Climate Fiction To Start Reading

- American War. by Omar El Akkad
- War Girls. by Tochi Onyebuchi
- Gold Fame Citrus. by Claire Vaye Watkins
- Vigil Harbor. by Julia Glass
- Weather. by Jenny Offill
- Oryx and Crake. by Margaret Atwood
- Perilous Times. by Thomas D. Lee
- Bangkok Wakes to Rain. by Pitchaya Sudbanthad

ECOCRITICISM: ARE HIS WORDS WORTH?

DEEPIKA G.

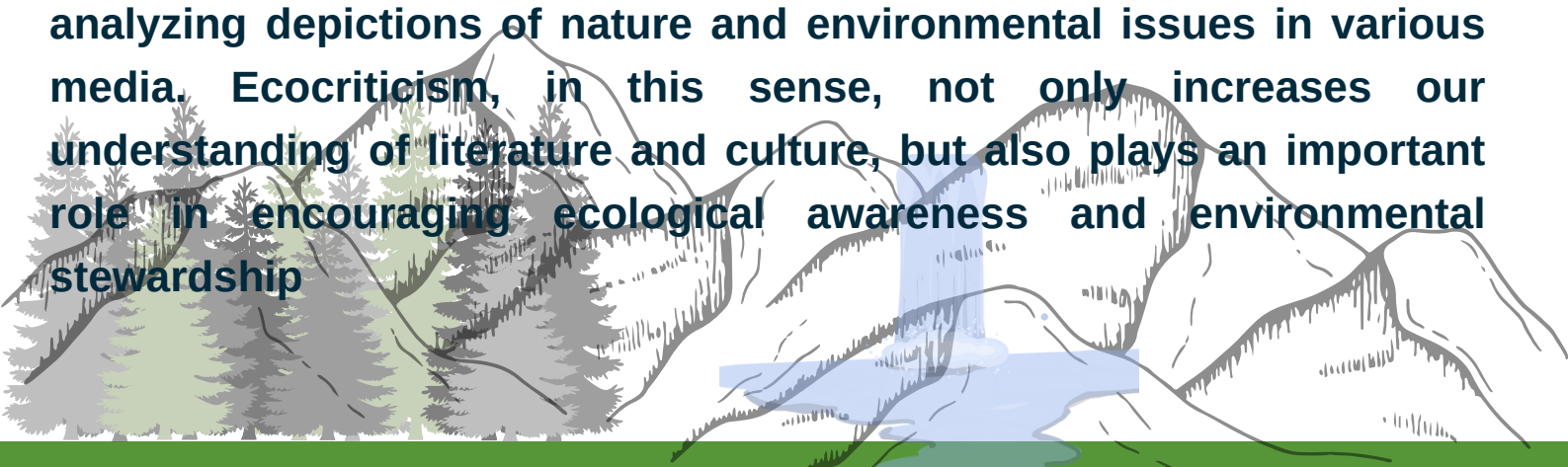
B.A ENGLISH (HONS) IV SEM



Ecocriticism is a literary and cultural studies interdisciplinary subject that originated in the late twentieth century, focused on the relationship between literature, culture, and the environment. This critical perspective investigates how texts, such as literature, film, and other forms of cultural expression, relate with and reflect nature, ecosystems, and environmental challenges. It aims to investigate how human society interacts with the natural world and how these relationships are portrayed in cultural artefacts.

Ecocriticism focuses on environmental ethics and the critical need for ecological awareness and action. It recognizes the interdependence of human and non-human natures and invites a rethinking of the human-nature relationship. Scholars in this discipline frequently examine literature to identify underlying environmental ideologies, criticizing anthropocentrism and advocating for a more eco-centric viewpoint.

The analysis of how literature and culture both reflect and impact attitudes towards the environment is one of the fundamental topics of ecocriticism. Eco-critics seek to create a better knowledge of the world's ecological difficulties and to inspire positive change by analyzing depictions of nature and environmental issues in various media. Ecocriticism, in this sense, not only increases our understanding of literature and culture, but also plays an important role in encouraging ecological awareness and environmental stewardship

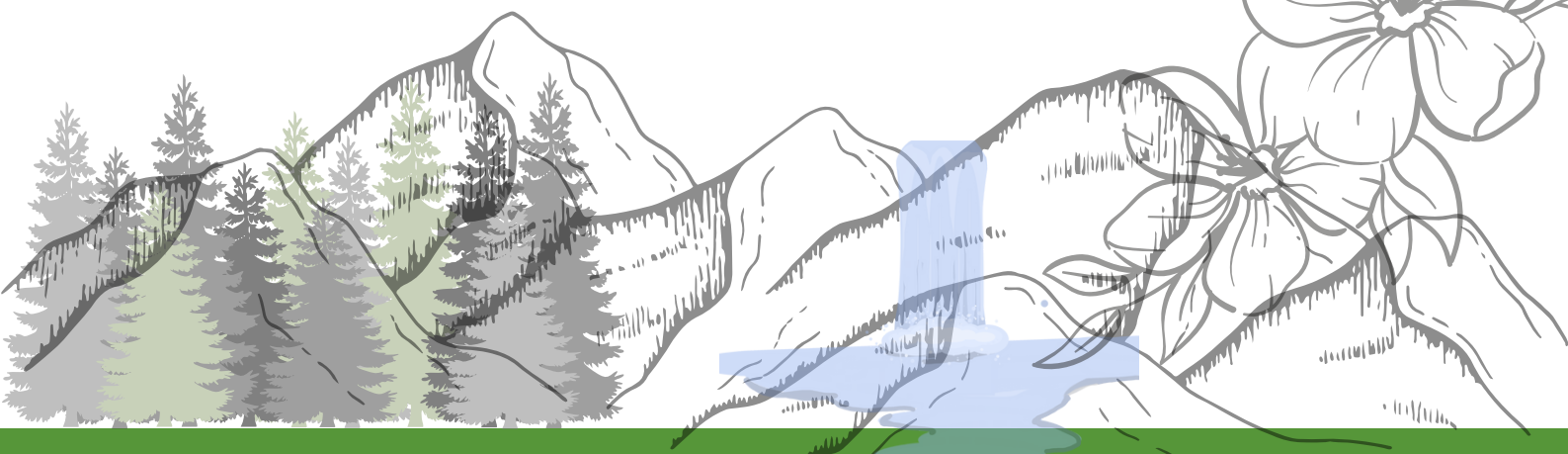


Wordsworth as an eco-critic poet

Wordsworth was an 18th century Romantic poet. He is considered an eco-critic poet and is often considered to be one of the first climate change activist. A large amount of his poems have nature as a predominant theme. He is also known as a nature poet.

The debates over William Wordsworth's reputation as a poet of Nature, as well as his ecological and environmental concerns, are numerous. McKusick highlights Wordsworth's crucial role in the establishment of English Romanticism as well as his substantial influence on the modern environmental movement. Wordsworth's retreat to the tranquil Lake District, away from the hectic technological civilization of the Enlightenment, established him as a "ecological critic of the Enlightenment." R. Pite emphasises that Wordsworth's strong connection to nature was inextricably linked to specific places that have significant personal significance for him.

Wordsworth's interest in the non-human world, particularly Nature, according to Bate in "Romantic Ecology," is a quest for a harmonious relationship with it. Wordsworth, he sees, is a conservative thinker who advocates for Nature yet is frequently regarded as mute.



Is his ecocriticism relevant in the 21st century?

Wordsworth is a popular writer and his legacy as a romantic and nature poet lives on even today. With the rise of ecocriticism and climate change, his ecocriticism is questioned. Romantic poets emphasised on returning to nature and leaving the big cities. However, can literature written in the 18th century have relevance in the 21st century and the climate crisis we face today?

Surely, his writings cannot express the struggles of the 21st century and our battle with the climate crisis. Nevertheless, his poems like “Tintern Abbey” can be used to remind people about the importance of nature. Literature has always been used as a tool to inspire and motivate society. In the face of the climate crisis, we can use the poems of Wordsworth and other eco-critic poets to re-establish the bond between humanity and nature.

I would like to conclude with a few lines of Wordsworth’s poem “Lines written in an early Spring”

heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

...

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature’s holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament

What man has made of man? (Wordsworth, 2006, p. 1333, lines 1-8, 21-24)

WILD-FIRES, GLITTER, GENDER NORMS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

SREYA SURESH

B.A ENGLISH (HONS) IV SEM

Wildfires, glitter, gender norms and climate change. Four words that you may not often find hanging out together in a sentence. Although after the events of the past few years, it is not surprising that they do. If you have been on social media at any time during the last few years you might know about this new “tradition” or celebration that has gone viral and attacked our feeds. Gender Reveal Parties. Gender Reveal Parties are parties organised for the “grand reveal” of the sex of the baby of an expectant couple. It is done in numerous creative ways, ranging from the more mellow cake-cutting to reveal blue or pink icing on the inside to the more elaborate balloon bursting or helicopter stunts involving colour powders. So what does this have to do with the environment and climate change?

A lot of these gender reveal parties go horribly wrong, (inspiring a new genre of social media news coverage, often titled ‘Gender Reveal Gone Wrong’) causing damage and destruction.

In certain instances, these damages aren’t limited to their backyard. The Sawmill Fire in Arizona began in 2017 after an off-duty border patrol agent shot at an explosive target during a gender reveal. The resultant wildfire, helped by dry and windy weather, burnt around 28% of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. The fire took almost 800 firemen and more than \$8 million to put out. Three years later, a smoke bomb during a gender reveal party started California's El Dorado Fire, which burnt more than 22,000 acres in San Bernardino County and killed one fireman.

Many reports suggest that the damage caused by these wildfires, especially the El Dorado wildfire, is hard to recover from during our lifetimes. Experts say that even if they were to recover, trees that were burned were burned and that nothing can undo that or the toxic fumes that went up in the air. Not to mention all the wildlife that is displaced or killed during these wildfires. Fish are also very vulnerable to wildfires, maybe much more so because they cannot fly, escape, or flee, said to Hunter.



A fire may heat up a body of water, killing aquatic creatures. Following a fire, ash flow and erosion can also make it hard for fish to breathe, resulting in large die-offs, as was the case after Australia's devastating 2020 wildfires.

Even if these events do not cause severe wildfires, pyrotechnics, smoke bombs, and sparklers are unquestionably bad for the environment due to their proclivity to emit heavy metals and toxins into the sky. Glitter, which is sometimes used at parties in pink or blue bursts, has been dubbed a "environmental abomination" due to its status as a microplastic — tiny fragments of trash that are hard to dispose and are everywhere from oceans, our food, rainwater and have been found in the placentas of unborn babies. Glitter is tiny and sticky and almost impossible to dispose of properly. Glitter is one of the most popular items used in gender reveal parties.

Moreover, gender reveal parties contribute to the promotion of harmful stereotypes about gender and gender roles. It emphasizes that the gender of a baby is its most important aspect that deserves the most celebration (or disappointment as seen by the countless number of videos that show dads being disappointed at having a baby girl). In our modern age where gender discourses have moved past the traditional binary, a gender reveal party is best left behind. In India, this trend is not prevalent as it is illegal to reveal the sex of the baby before birth.

It is important to note that the damages that we inflict upon our environment for a few minutes of social media clout and moments of enjoyment, can go a long way, and not in a good way. This can include not just gender reveal parties but celebrations such as wedding and birthday parties as well. This is not to say that celebrations shouldn't happen at all. The first step to take would be to stop the usage of glitter.

FROM ALL THE BEES, WHO DIED SILENTLY

ART AND POEM BY:
ARYA ATUL GOHAD
(SRISHTI STUDENT)



They said don't come close to me,
I wouldn't take it too kindly.

Yet you paid no heed,
Waving, pointing, and prodding.

Now, they say I must be killed,
Not knowing that I am already dying.

You think I stung you out of malice,
But I didn't know my being would cost my life.

As my stinger pierced into your flesh,
It ruptured my body too, this was nobody's first choice.

As I spiral to the ground, I pray for you,
If you're ever in the wrong place, at the wrong time,
I hope you're shown the mercy I plead for.

Now they've killed me,
Not knowing that I was long gone.



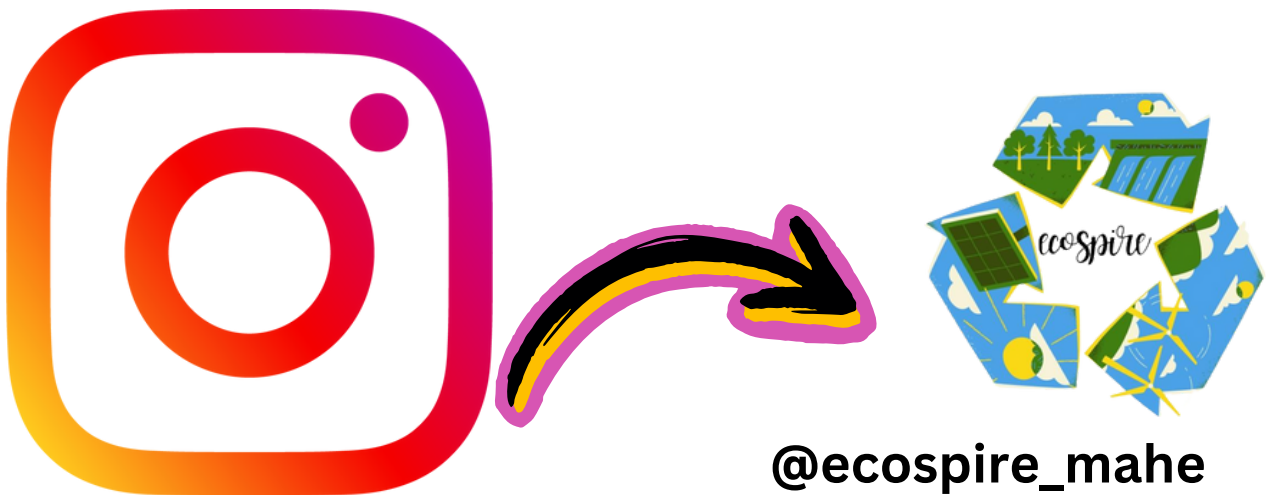


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