

BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR- "A JOURNEY TOWARDS HOPE AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS"

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Barbara Kingsolver, the 2010 Orange Prize-winning author, has always been deeply aware of nature and the environment. Climate change, as a global phenomenon, often lies at the heart of her fiction.

Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Flight Behaviour* is a moving examination of human agency, ecological crisis, and the intricate relationships between nature, community, and hope. The novel, which is set in rural Tennessee, tackles pressing environmental issues while providing a story of resiliency and change. Kingsolver skilfully interweaves themes of environmental consciousness and the possibility of hope amid ecological upheaval through an engaging narrative.

This research paper is an attempt to analyse *Flight Behaviour*, by Barbara Kingsolver, which falls under the genre of climate fiction. The novelist tries to present an amalgamation of the unreal and the real world climate change impasse, reality and imagination to impose a detailed account of eco catastrophes.

The term "alarmism" is frequently used to describe climate change. Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* captures the truth of this "alarmism" and the truth of monarch butterfly migration. It resonates with topics like climate change, man-made disasters, environmental preservation, and environmental consciousness, among others.

This paper specifically examines the protagonist Dellarobia's journey towards environmental consciousness from an ecological perspective. It depicts her journey as she changes from an anthropocentric, lifeless housewife to an environmentally conscious, responsible custodian of the world around her. The transitions represent her ignorance of the reality and worthiness of Monarch Butterflies, the gruesome face of climate change and the impending catastrophe, the challenges and obstacles she faces in convincing her town's residents to acknowledge the truth about climate change on individual, environmental, economic, and political grounds, and finally the lessons she learns from nature. The survival and flight of the butterflies itself stands a life lesson from nature that the protagonist takes forward.

Keywords - Climate change, Alarmism, Butterfly phenomenon, Eco consciousness

Wordsworth, the nature poet, often detailed about the association between man and nature. He called it as a 'spiritual intercourse'. To him nature always was –

“The anchor of my purest thought, the nurse
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.” (*Tintern Abbey*, lines 109-111)

Similar sentiments were expressed, “What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make” by Dr. Jane Goodall.

Nature has always inspired, comforted, and guided humanity, influencing thoughts, passions, and morality. Its beauty, tranquillity, and freshness have been extolled in literature for centuries, providing peace to the human spirit. People have lived in harmony with nature since ancient times, relying on it for important resources such as food, shelter, and everyday needs. Nature was revered and adored as a symbol of humanity's harmonious cohabitation with all other beings on Earth.

Urbanization, industrialization, and the expansion of infrastructure have caused extensive harm as a result of human avarice and unrelenting demands pushing the world to its limits. As a result, pollution has increased to dangerous levels due to deforestation, the depletion of fossil fuels, environmental negligence, and an anthropocentric attitude. Humanity has departed greatly from its respect for the natural world. The effects of the unrelenting exploitation of the Earth and its resources are not given much thought these days. The innate desire to protect the environment, take care of nature, and embrace an ecocentric mindset has mostly been forgotten.

The destruction of the ecosystem poses a significant hazard to humanity. The anthropocentric attitude has already resulted in huge disasters, yet humans exhibit little regret for their acts. Ecological consciousness is something missing invariably in human psyche. This horrific destruction of the environment and its elements has provoked many a conscious minds of the world to ponder seriously about the protection and care of environment. These intellectual minds paved the way for the literary advocacy of protecting the environment, giving rise to a brand-new field of critical inquiry known as ecocriticism.

Eco-Criticism and Environmental Awareness

Ecocriticism as an emerging field in contemporary literary and cultural theory delineates “the relationship between literature and the physical environment” [3] in broader perspectives. Ecocriticism, in this mode also offers insights if not an exact remedy and “seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis” [13].

The most famous definition of ecocriticism has also been given by Cheryl Glotfelty, who says in ‘Introduction’ to *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* that ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. (1996: xviii)

Ecocriticism, a boon for literary and cultural scholars, paves a new path to study and investigate the global ecological crisis through the combination of literature, culture and the physical environment. Ecocriticism, initially originated as an idea called Literary ecology. (Meeker 1972,) and was later coined as an “-ism” (Rueckert 1996, cited under General Overviews)

Lawrence Buell defines “ecocriticism” ...as [a] study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis.” (1995: 430). Karl Kroeber in *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* points to the importance of this intersection between the cultural and the biological:

An ecologically oriented criticism directs itself to understanding persistent romantic struggles to articulate meaningful human relations within the conditions of a natural world in which transcendence is not an issue...Ecologically oriented criticism thus recognizes a foreshadowing of its own understanding of humanity’s relation to nature in the romantic view that it is natural for human beings to be self-conscious, and natural, therefore, to construct their cultures out of complexly inter-assimilative engagements with their physical and biological environment. (38-9)

As Glotfelty asserts that the key focus of ecocriticism, is the fixing of focus on earth-centred and away from man-centred. That is focussing from the inner to the outer. Though ecocriticism focuses on nature, all literary works on nature cannot be called ecocritical. For a work to be considered as ecocritical, there needs to be a mighty cord between the humans and the non-humans. Ecocritical writings not only illustrate and speak for the natural world, but also seek to protect it from degradation.

Lawrence Buell, was the one who used this wave metaphor in his “The Future of Environmental Criticism”(2005) to describe the development of ecocriticism. He writes in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*:

No definitive map of environmental criticism in literary studies can [...] be drawn. Still, one can identify several trend-lines marking an evolution from a “first wave” of ecocriticism to a “second” or newer revisionist wave or waves increasingly evident today. This first-second wave distinction should not, however, be taken as implying atidy, distinct succession. Most currents set in motion by early ecocriticism continue to run strong, and most forms of second-wave revisionism involve building on as well as quarreling with precursors. In this sense, “palimpsest” would be a better metaphor than “wave.” (17)

The "first wave" of ecocriticism praised nature writing, poetry, and wilderness fiction, emphasising the philosophy of the organism and prioritising rural wilderness over metropolitan environments. It took a dehistoricized view of nature, ignoring bureaucratic and intellectual constraints.

The second wave broadened its focus to address place-attachment not only locally, but nationally and globally. It questioned the distinction between rural and urban spaces, proposing that urban landscapes should also be considered in ecocritical research. This wave emphasised environmental justice and the value of local community and place-allegiance, combining literature, environmental studies, postcolonial literary analysis, and studies of ethnic minority literature.

The “third wave” of ecocriticism addresses universal issues like global warming, ethnicity, environmental justice, transnationalism, and environmental degradation. It promotes a comparative, transcultural approach to ecocritical studies and explores ethnicity through environmental literature. This wave combines elements of the first and second waves, expanding the scope of ecocriticism to include uncharted literary genres and works.

Flight Behaviour can be interpreted through the lens of eco-criticism, a literary approach that investigates the relationship between literature and the environment. The novel emphasizes the devastating effects of climate change by depicting the symbolic and literal displacement of monarch butterflies, whose migratory patterns have been disrupted by global warming. The unusual concentration of these butterflies in Appalachia serves as an effective metaphor for ecological imbalance.

Kingsolver’s depiction of the butterflies forces both the characters and readers to confront their roles in environmental degradation. By placing the crisis in the tiny Appalachian town of Dellarobia Turnbow, Kingsolver highlights how environmental issues are not remote, abstract ideas but are actually deeply embedded in daily life. Dellarobia's initial awe of the butterflies' "miracle" gives way to a sobering realisation of the ecological disaster that rationalises their existence.

Climate change and Climate fiction

Nature has long been a central theme in literature. Ideas about nature can be found in sources like Genesis to Revelation, as well as in the works of transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Henry David Thoreau. It was till then that Nature was depicted in its most mystical and subtle form. But Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) emerged to be a work of real significance of nature, that seriously addressed contemplative issues like ecological degradation and eco catastrophes into thought. The novel depicts a similar replica of the “nature that once existed” [8] and the long forgotten balance and endurance among the living beings on earth.

Among the environmental disasters, climate change, a global phenomenon, for example, is considered as one of the “wicked problems (which) afflict open, complex and imperfectly understood systems, and are beyond the range of mere technical knowledge and traditional forms of governance” [12].

Science fictionists, with a major spotlight on climate as subject, have been postmarking serious climate change issues in their works. Many early literary works, most of which are either science fiction or dystopias have significantly kindled serious debates on climate change. Jules Verne’s *The Purchase of the North Pole* (1889), John Brunner’s *The Sheep Look Up* (1972), Adam Roberts *The Snow* (2004) etc have prompted discussions and perspectives related to climatic fluctuations. Dan Bloom coined the term “cli-fi” in 2007, as a pun to “sci- fi”. That was when climate fiction became a separate genre for climate change novels.

From then onwards , cli-fi has offered itself to be a conventional genre. Writers and their works like Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The New Atlantis* (1975), Margaret Atwood’s trilogy *Oryx and Crake* (2003); *The Year of Flood* (2009); Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl* (2009), Ian McEwan’s

Solar (2010) etc have contributed immensely to this specific genre, which also marked the onset of climate fiction in contemporary literature. Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) and Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1999) makes one seriously contemplate and reevaluate the effects of environmental crises in fiction.

Cli-fi tries to substantiate the tangibility of climate change in real life by drawing parallelism between real life and fiction. It attempts to establish the solidity of climate change ironies in real life through the fictional characters, who express the voice of many a scientist and climate activist. According to Judith Curry, introducing climate change into fiction "is an untapped way of... smuggling some serious topics into (the readers') consciousness" [9] and by doing so, an author ventures to get familiarised with both the cognitive and affective behaviours of a reader – in which the scientists are ineffectual doing in the real world.

In his opening speech at the 2007 Bali Conference on Climate Change, Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary-General, ratified the precondition climate change in the current scenario. He has affirmed that "climate change is the defining challenge of our age The science is clear. Climate change is happening. The impact is real. The time to act is now" [1].

The appalachian ecology, anthropocentric attitude and climate change in the novel

Flight Behavior does not focus on a post-apocalyptic scenario but instead highlights the need for humans to effectively respond to nature's warning signs. It explores the journey of an impending disaster, serving as a premonition of destruction. The novel also reflects on the effects of climate change and how these changes impact natural phenomena, particularly the migration of Monarch butterflies. The Appalachian region, just like many other mountain ecosystems, has been afflicted to severe damage by environmental practices that pursue profits through accelerated means. The profits acquired through such breakneck moves only sustain gullible and patriarchal power systems. Compared to many other regions of the United States, the standard of living in the Appalachians is significantly lower. Scarcity, coupled with poverty, has led to the over-exploitation of resources in this region.

For ages, nature has acted as a backdrop for human existence, resulting in its exploitation based on human desires. Natural and man-made disasters such as droughts, global warming, floods, and increased species extinction demonstrate the severe climate changes induced by human meddling. Perceiving this end of the Holocene, the term "Anthropocene" was coined by Nobel prize winning chemist Paul J. Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer in 2000 to describe this "human dominance of biological, chemical and geological processes on Earth" (Crutzen/ Schwägerl 2011), an impact similar to past epochal changes caused by volcanic eruptions, continent shifts, or a meteorite strike.

Anthropocentrism, in environmental ethics, is the belief that human interests are the primary concern, viewing all other beings as means to human ends. This attitude deems humans superior to other species and is considered unethical by writers and authors, who argue that it's the root cause of ecological crises. Anthropocentrism reflects the idea that nature is valued only for its

material or physical benefits. This self-centered behavior leads to environmental degradation and contributes to major climate catastrophes

Flight Behaviour spearheads the cause of climate change to review the callous and unrelenting attitude of humans in the destruction of non human resources in their environment. It is a deliberate attempt to discuss the exploitation of the ecological resources and how humans act as a catalyst in spawning up catastrophes. Pollution, deforestation, global warming and climate change etc are all nothing but the consequences of this savage behaviour of man. The novel focuses on establishing a healthy balance between the human and non-human worlds to restore their symbiotic relationship. By highlighting climate change as a central theme, Kingsolver draws attention to how humans dominate nature, leaving it depleted for their own gain.

In the words of Mike Hulme, *Flight Behaviour* is undoubtedly viewed as: A story about the meeting of Nature and Culture, about how humans are central actors in both of these realms, and about how we are continually creating and re-creating both Nature and Culture. Climate change is not simply a „fact“ waiting to be discovered, proved or disproved using the tenets and methods of science. Neither is climate change a problem waiting for a solution, any more than the clashes of political ideologies or the disputes between religious beliefs are problems waiting to be solved. [12]

Flight Behaviour is characterised by those who deny or resist the fact that climate change is something true and that it has an effect on their lives. *Flight Behaviour* is not just about climate change alone, it hails as a forewarning to the coming generations, whose mere existence seems to be in jeopardy. Climate change drives the monarch butterflies from their home place and nesting grounds to a new territory. The novel reflects a similar situation between the ambiguous yet foreboding future of the monarchs with the other births. The protagonist, Dellarobia experiences horrid moments coming in terms with her own child's death while dealing with Hester's birthing lambs. The present location of these animals, their ability to successfully reproduce seem to mirror the levels of denial or acceptance of climate change, especially in the main character Dellarobia.

The analogy regarding humans and non humans are very much speculative here as they comment upon the future of our common reproductive success with climate change as the backdrop. This novel while critiquing the concept of anthropocentrism, also aptly opens up the truth that if humans continue refuting to their ruthless and deceitful environmental practices, they will have to barter their own potential for successful future generations. Gradually, Dellarobia comes to the realisation that she cannot be ignorant towards climate change.

Community, Science, and Eco-Consciousness

Flight Behaviour is characterised by humans, who have gendered responses to non human life. Males and females have their unique attitudes when it comes to the non human world. Male characters like Bear Turnbow, treats the land as if he is entitled to its resources. He brims with an anthropocentric mindset, nonchalantly makes his decisions without any concern about the ecosystem and the long-term consequences. Dellarobia, the main character, envisages the fact that

how animals, humans and nature are all interrelated, and how the exploitative, patriarchal mindset of males demean everything—animals, women and nature as well. Human exceptionalism is what she analyses that seems to supercede the nonhumans, resulting in their severe exploitation.

What Kingsolver pictures in the first few hundred pages is the ruined environment and unstable climatic conditions of the town. Nature seems to come upon loose from its station in life. Rains batter the small town day in and day out due to heavy logging in the mountains. People are dismayed to see the sudden escalation in rains but remain ignorant about the probable aftermath of these erratic rain patterns. Though seemingly worried about the strange climate changes, none think it is important to discuss it.

Largely confessing about not seeing such erratic climate behaviour, still the people of Feather town do not fathom that it is something very critical. For instance the town recently had the “wettest fall on record” (pg 8) though it never felt like the people had any stable climate pattern for there was always “wetter summers and mild winters” (pg17). Its environment on the other hand had drowning pastures and evergreen trees that are soon to meet its writhing stage. *“The pasture pond seemed to reflect more light off its surface than the sky itself had to offer.”* (pg3) *“Little puddles winked all the way down Highway 7 toward Feather town and out other side of it.....”* (pg 3) *“The town has already seen mud slides six times in five months caused by unrestricted logging. “Near Great Lick a whole hillside of mature timber had plummeted together, making a landslide of splintered trunks, rock and rill.”* (pg 7).

The climate changes and other factors are seriously disregarded a danger and not given much importance. It is of least concern for the people of the town, who lead mundane lives and those who are never so bothered about small little changes that happen in the environment.

“Trees were getting new diseases now. Cub had mentioned that. The wetter summers and mild winters of recent years were bringing in new pests that apparently ate the forest out of house and home.” (pg17) The local residents of Feather town seemed to be totally ignorant to understand the “weird weather” (84) and ‘*unrelenting rain*’ (49). No one is concerned about the effects of climate change and what it would do to their lives. Life is an everyday rat race for these ignorant lot, who run the race to satiate their basic needs without any concern for nature or care for environment. It is as though these residents assume that there would be no tomorrow at all.

The media adopts an authoritative tone, which complicates the agreements within personal, familial, and ecological systems. These complications further exacerbate the socio-political conditions in Feather Town. By asserting absolute control and a domineering role, it seeks to suppress individual opinions and freedom of expression. Instead of genuinely gathering information, media personnel pander to their audience for sensationalism. The acclaimed and peerless journalist Tina Ultner comes to record and report the happenings and the status quo of the town, but the factual reality behind the entire butterfly migration gets concealed in the strong grip of capitalistic consumerism. The actual truth, global warming never sees the light of day.

This is apparent when Tina cautions Byron after his interview, suggesting that he could lose his audience if he only discusses global warming. The media openly disregards journalistic ethics by treating the appearance of the butterflies as a sensational story. It is presented as mere breaking

news, designed to capture public attention and create a buzz. The post doctoral researcher Pete comments that “*is that we are not sure about climate change. It’s too confusing. So every environmental impact story has to be made into something else. Sex it up if possible, that what your news people drove out here for. It’s what sells.*” (pg 230).

Cub, husband of Dellarobia listens to the radio show of Johnny Midgeon who makes fun on global warming. Whenever there is a change of bad weather, he uses the line “*All Gore can come toast his buns on this*” (pg 260). Dellarobia recognises that how media manipulates serious issues.

For the media marketing and selling sensational news is more important than serious review of environment and its exploitation. The people of the town are completely oblivious of the approaching disaster whereas the educated urban intellectuals show no involvement in discoursing about the weird weather. “*Their blindness toward the environmental change is described as “looking without seeing”*” (pg 52).

Kingsolver emphasizes the contrast between scientific knowledge and rural mistrust. The Appalachian community's early skepticism toward Ovid Byron's scientific explanations mirrors a larger cultural split on environmental issues. However, Kingsolver's story bridges this gap by depicting science as a tool for understanding and survival rather than a separate entity. The story emphasizes the importance of a collaborative effort based on communication and mutual understanding to raise environmental awareness.

The inclusion of Dellarobia’s personal struggles — poverty, familial obligations, and a stifling rural life — underscores the intersectionality of environmental justice. Kingsolver reminds readers that environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized communities, making eco-consciousness both an ecological and a social imperative.

The Butterfly Phenomenon

“Does the flap of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?” This is something meant to be not understood in the given same context. The fact that this may not actually happen is also to be noted. It is a mere indication that an insignificant event, like the flapping of a butterfly’s wings at a presumed correct time and place in theory, could provoke a wave of occurrences that might finally result in the creation of a hurricane in a different part of the world. This concept may sound insensible and hence need not be-resumed true.

"The Butterfly Effect" is given a metaphorical notation to present the fact that negligible minuscule events somewhere may lead to powerful valid results over time. Edward Lorenz, a meteorology professor at MIT, coined this term during the 139th meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Science almost 45 years ago. Though he developed the concept as such, he never intended it to be applied the way it has all too commonly been used.

The central idea behind his thought-provoking query was to highlight that certain complex systems exhibit unpredictable behaviors, where even small changes in fundamental conditions can lead to deep and vastly different outcomes. Due to the sensitivity of these systems, their outcomes are

inherently unpredictable. This concept laid the foundation for a branch of mathematics known as chaos theory, which has been applied in numerous scenarios since its inception. A significant portion of natural phenomena are the result of a complex, interconnected, and affiliated series of circumstances. This means they are inherently complex and challenging to resolve in practice.

The butterfly effect directs at finding obvious reasoning in the chaos around, which forms the crux of the novel. The arrival of the butterflies creates a chaotic yet awesome spectacle. Each character appears to find a relative obviousness in this chaotic circumstance. Kingsolver describes the arrival of butterflies as:

Unearthly beauty had appeared to her, a version of glory to stop her in the road. For her alone these orange boughs lifted, these long shadows become a brightness rising. It looked like the inside of joy, if a person could see that. A valley of light, an ethereal wind. It had to mean something...She only wondered how long she could watch the spectacle before turning away. It was a lake of fire, something far more fierce and wondrous than either of those elements alone. The impossible. (pg 21-22)

The characters in the novel respond to the butterfly effect in different ways. For Dellarobia Turn Bow, the butterflies appear to be an alarm to stop her in her pursuit for illicit pleasure, and an initiation for her quest to become a “something” [pg 2] in the society.

For the dwellers of Feather town and the Pastor Bobby Ogle, the advent of the butterflies signify the rebirth of the Lord, the religious symbol of resurrection. The local citizens find themselves captivated and enraptured at the sight of the butterflies with their fire-like glow. They identify a spiritual connotation to the entire episode. They believe that the butterflies hold religious implication, ie the birth of the lord. To Dellarobia’s father in law, the land is a means of economic profit, where the butterflies are the means to attract tourists, through which the family debt can be paid. Cub believes what his father believes, so he also sees only the financial angle. Hester, the mother-in-law is no different. She believes that the mountains with the monarchs can serve as a good tourist spot where she could source some extra income for the family.

The not so famous little town suddenly becomes a wondrous tourist spot with crowds thronging to see the spectacular sight of the butterflies. Media, Tourists, journalists and scientists make an immediate beeline to the place to witness the elegance. The little town buzzes with unforeseen activity. But “*nobody was asking why the butterflies were there, the big news was just that they were*”(pg 32).

To Ovid Byron, the entomologist, the butterflies appear to be the alarming sign of global threat i.e. - climate change. Ovid calls the butterflies as ‘*a giant mistake*, ’(FB 205) an ‘evidence of a disordered system.... A biological system falling apart along its seams, ’(FB 503-504) and a ‘phenomenon ’that is a sign of something else (FB 504).

To people like Tina Ultner, a hardcore media psyche, the butterflies were much insignificant except being the current talk of town. This would possibly help them promote their channel further. Despite the fact that the arrival of the monarchs altered the daily routine of many

inhabitants of the fictional Tennessee, the actual significance of the butterflies, a “disastrous manifestation of a changing climate,” remains unrevealed [pg 7]. This amount of ignorance of reality in its people only puts the discussion on climate change on hold. And finally it ends up in obstructing the revealing of the truth.

The flight towards Human Connection, Hope and Eco consciousness

The term ‘flight’ is generic in nature and applies metaphorically to the theme of the novel. It symbolises the flight of the Monarch butterflies literally. It also indicates at the flight of the protagonist from a plain homemaker to an eco-conscious person, acquiring various experiences as a part of her journey. The author laments about the non-existence of ecocentric awareness or ecological sensitivity among humans. Hence she sees them as individually opposing entities: scientists and non-scientists; rural and urban; individual and society, and those in favour of economy and ecology; religion and science, to illustrate the environmental crisis inflicted by them on common grounds.

Flight is a recurring theme in the book, signifying both transformation and escape. The monarch butterfly's innate ability to fly is disturbed by ecological shifts, illustrating how unstable nature is. Dellarobia views flying as a symbol of her desire to break free from the constraints of social expectations, poverty, and unhappiness. Her want for something more than her present life is comparable to humanity's drive to “fly” in the direction of sustainable solutions and a closer bond with the natural world.

Flight, in this sense, becomes a metaphor for hope and agency. Kingsolver draws a delicate balance between despair and the possibility of transformation, illustrating that while the journey is uncertain, hope lies in movement, adaptation, and collective responsibility.

The concept of hope in the face of despair is central to the novel. Kingsolver declines to present the environmental catastrophe as a story of despair. Rather, she provides avenues for change via science, education, and personal initiative. The logical and knowledgeable voice that connects local communities with the ecological realities of the world is embodied by the character of Ovid Byron, a scientist who studies butterflies. His attempts to involve the community and Dellarobia serve as a reminder of the value of awareness-raising and teamwork in tackling environmental issues.

Dellarobia's journey from disillusionment to self-awareness reflects a broader societal awakening to environmental concerns. Her transformation demonstrates how individuals can adapt and change even in the face of overwhelming circumstances. Through Dellarobia, Kingsolver suggests that the path to eco-consciousness is not straight forward, but full of personal struggles and revelations.

Eco-consciousness can be viewed as a fundamental way of relating to ‘nature’ and re-engaging the world that offers the possibility for shifting perspectives on ‘self’ and ‘nature’. As Kaplan (2000) states, individuals need to discover their own ways of relating to the world to improve and/or sustain environmentally responsible behaviour.

The arrival of the butterflies has a significant impact on Dellarobia. She initially panics but later begins to notice the climate changes caused by the misguided practices of people. The effects of poor land and environmental management, along with the butterflies' migration to her town, serve as a warning of an impending natural disaster. She is further more conscious of the earthly territory once she encounters the migrated Monarch butterflies. The butterflies appeared to bring in more anarchy to the already existing climatic conditions in the town, which the author describes as "*scattered here for the purpose of sheer confusion. To get people lost in the woods*" (pg71).

The Monarchs are paradoxically presumed to be representatives of an unsettled adrift environment, and also as a component element of probable hope. Hence ,the author has metaphorically painted the butterflies as 'ethereal beauty,' 'a vision of glory,' 'ethereal wind,' 'valley of lights,' 'a lake of fire,' 'orange blaze 'and as the souls children that have died.

Dellarobia, shows sincere consideration in knowing about the migration of the butterflies when she hears about the disaster that struck the Mexican family that she meets. Their house is destroyed by a mudslide; it is also the usual migration destiny of the butterfly. "*Everything is gone!*" the little girl wailed in blind affliction."*The water was coming and the mud was coming on everything.....Un diluvo.*" (pg 139)

From here, she starts to seriously ponder over the fact that the earth is one single planet, the integrated whole. It is the prime commitment of every individual to care for its well being as in turn it is one's own well being too. She turns out to be more considerate in knowing and doing something about the butterflies when she hears the disaster that stuck the Mexican family that she meets.

Dellarobia's transition to observe and perceive her surroundings, button down the needs of nature lead her to display more ecological consciousness. She induces her strong headed mother in law into believing that the butterflies flew to the town for a reason and that the family should abandon the logging thing. "That's what she said. We should come up here and have look, because it was the lords business."(pg 76) She explains the butterfly effect to her husband Cub.

"They all come here for winter, and they shouldn't have, because the winter is too cold here. But they came because of the things being too warm. Or I guess we don't know because of what. But he says it's something gone way wrong".

Cub is initially skeptic, but when he actually sees the billies, he too believes that his wife is nothing less than a blessed soul.

"My wife had like a vision or something. she said we all needed to open our eyes and have look before we started logging up there. She had this feeling something real majors going to happen on our property."(pg97)

Dellarobia, for the first time ever in her life observes the exquisiteness of the surroundings. Even though she agrees that she had spent a major chunk of her sluggish life in the foothills of those mountains, Dellarobia has never been welcomed and taken into the folds of nature. She stands

there, astounded at the magnificence and artistry of the terrain. “*The view across the valley was puzzling and unreal, like a sci-fi movie.*” (pg 18)

She wonders at the exceptional beauty of nature and its inhabitants, other than the normal humans. Dumbstruck at the marvels of nature, she takes a complete serving of its beauty down into her disturbed mind. “*These things were all over, dangling like giant bunches of grapes from every tree she could see*”(pg17). “*These were evergreen trees, they should be dark, and that wasn't foliage. There was movement in it. The branches seemed to writhe.*”(pg 18)

The sight of the butterflies save her from an act of adultery. “No words came to her that seemed sane. Trees turned to fire, a burning bush. Moses came to mind, and Ezeikel, words from Scripture that occupied a certain space in her brain...”(pg 19). She believes it was God's will that held her up from stooping low. “The burning trees were put here to save her.”(pg22). Remorse dawns upon her, making her realise the worth of her life. “A lake of fire had brought her back here to something.”(pg 23)

Kingsolver's choice of naming her character, the scientist, Ovid Byron appears intentional. ‘Ovid’ refers to the Roman poet and his narrative poem named *Metamorphoses*. Here, in the novel, *metamorphoses* can be correlated in two different contexts—Migration of these Monarch butterflies from Mexico, their natural habitat to the Feather town and the other—Dellarobia's progression from an unsophisticated simple homemaker to that of a new empowered self.

Joining Ovid as an intern in his lab, Dellarobia gains deeper knowledge about the butterflies—learning their physiology, migratory patterns, and habitat details. From concerns about a continental ecosystem collapse to methods of studying survival data, she immerses herself in the work. Excited by the challenge of her new role and the scientific knowledge she's acquiring, Dellarobia appreciates Ovid's confidence in her suitability for the lab tasks. Della, during her Christmas shopping, tries to buy presents for her children at the local dollar store. She finds most of the things that she saw there were way too expensive. But when she helps the scientists to construct a field laboratory, she happily tears the price tags. She seems to make a desperate attempt to save the butterflies by shipping them to a warmer place. Ovid describes her act as “*this is a concern of conscience, not of biology. Science does not tell us what we should do. It only tells us what is*” (pg 327).

Dellarobia observes how human actions have drastically altered the system, leading to a calamity that threatens both butterflies and humans alike. The novel underscores the stubborn sense of geographical boundaries in relation to environmental disaster. Kingsolver offers readers hope through her distinct interpretation of key factors: the migration of the Monarch butterflies, technology, and Dellarobia's personal growth. Although the butterflies initially serve as a warning, they ultimately symbolize hope and guide events toward a positive conclusion. This is reflected in Dellarobia's conversation with her son Preston, where she finds her identity and purpose by reconnecting with nature. She explains Preston that it was the butterflies that guided her “*to come back and do the right thing*” (pg 528).

Apart from the butterflies, technology nurtures hope to some extent. Technology is a minor destructive force when compared to the entire media in the novel. Though the media has consumed Dellarobia's personal life, it is only after her acquaintance with technology had she realised its power to use it as a weapon to change the world, and that it only got struck in the wrong hands. It is evidently seen through Dovey, Dellarobia's friend, when she uses YouTube to bring the corrupt media to limelight, and its cunning ways to mask the seriousness of global warming.

Conclusion: The beginning towards Hope

Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* is ultimately a story about exodus - a journey towards consciousness, change, and hope. By combining ecological realism and human resilience, Kingsolver creates a novel that forces readers to confront the gravity of climate change while remaining optimistic about the potential for progress. The story is a call to action, reminding us that hope is found in teamwork, personal development, and a steadfast dedication to preserve our shared environment.

In *Flight Behaviour*, monarch butterflies become an enduring symbol of ecological fragility and the possibility of restoration. Kingsolver encourages readers to consider their part in molding the planet's future, asking them to move forward with humility and hope. Through her vivid storytelling, she offers not just a critique of environmental apathy but a vision of eco-consciousness grounded in empathy, science, and resilience.

In the near end of the novel it becomes sure that Dellarobia is about to break her marriage, enrolling herself for a college degree along with a lab assistant job. Even when Dellarobia was surrounded by flood in the end of the novel, the author points out that she again moves to uphill "but this time] to avoid her demise" (pg593) and to catch hold of a "better-days-ahead story" (pg588). The butterflies which are considered as the souls of dead children had enlivened the odds just like Dellarobia and "flew out to a new earth" (pg597) in search for a new life.

As Dellarobia becomes accustomed to the force of the flooding water and the altered state of the previously abused land, she realises that the Monarch butterflies, which numbered around fifteen million at the time, have migrated to her Tennessee woods after their Mexican habitat was destroyed by flooding, windstorms, and other severe weather. The melting snow, which has no natural boundaries to contain its spread, is now driving them out of the sheltering woods.

The deft descriptions that Kingsolver creates show the reader that Dellarobia has learned the lessons of a nature in outrage—she watches the frantic birds, she ferrets out the remnants of the Monarch colony, she eventually finds a fragment of personal tranquility in the midst of the destroying waters. By the end of this effective description, Kingsolver has created a haven for Dellarobia as well as for what Monarchs remain.

As the author writes matter-of-factly,
"She'd come out here to see the butterflies. Since yesterday she had watched them leave their clusters in the dead peach orchard and scatter downhill into cedars and tangled brush along the

roadsides. Now they dotted every small muddy rise that was not yet swamped. Wherever she looked she saw their aggregations on the dwindling emergent places: forming bristling lines along tree branches and the topmost wire of the fence, clustered on driftwood, speckling even the distant, gleaming roof of her car. Orange clouds of the undecided hovered in the air space above them.” (pg432)

The final paragraph of the novel reckon Kingsolver’s choice to force the natural world to become one with the human one, an act that is accomplished without Dellarobia’s name ever being mentioned.

The sky was too bright and the ground so unreliable, she couldn’t look up for very long. Instead her eyes held steady on the fire bursts of wings reflected across water, a merging of flame and flood. Above the lake of the world, flanked by white mountains, they flew out to a new earth . (Pg 433)

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