



E-ISSN: 2706-8927

P-ISSN: 2706-8919

www.allstudyjournal.com

IJAAS 2024; 6(6): 145-148

Received: 06-05-2024

Accepted: 11-06-2024

Adiba Tahsin Tasfia

Student, B.A. Hons. In
English Language and
Literature, Northern
University Bangladesh,
Bangladesh

Mohammad Rahmatullah

Senior Lecturer, Dept. of
English Language and
Literature, Northern
University Bangladesh,
Bangladesh

Mohammad Jashim Uddin

Associate Professor & Head,
Dept. of English Language and
Literature, Northern
University Bangladesh,
Bangladesh

Corresponding Author:

Adiba Tahsin Tasfia

Student, B.A. Hons. In
English Language and
Literature, Northern
University Bangladesh,
Bangladesh

Interwoven ecological metaphors in the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March 1971 speech discourse: An eco-critical exegesis

**Adiba Tahsin Tasfia, Mohammad Rahmatullah and Mohammad Jashim
Uddin**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/27068919.2024.v6.i7a.1232>

Abstract

This scholarly investigation delves into the utilization of environmental and ecological metaphors within the Bangabandhu's 7th March Speech, analyzed through an eco-critical lens as theorized by Cheryll Glotfelty. The study elucidates how natural imagery and metaphors bolster the speech's thematic elements of conflict and emancipation. By meticulously examining these rhetorical devices, the research reveals their pivotal role in articulating the interplay between human struggle and natural endurance. The findings demonstrate that the ecological metaphors not only amplify the speech's emotive and symbolic resonance but also underscore the intrinsic link between human and ecological freedom. These metaphors transcend mere rhetorical embellishments, embodying a profound disconnectedness between human aspirations and environmental processes. This study contributes to eco-critical discourse by highlighting how such metaphors encapsulate the intertwined challenges of human and ecological liberation, offering significant insights into the broader implications for understanding the symbiosis of natural and societal struggles.

Keywords: Ecological metaphors, natural imagery, emancipation, human-ecological interconnection, eco-critical discourse, rhetorical analysis

Introductions

The 7th March Speech by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is a cornerstone in the history of Bangladesh's fight for independence. Delivered in 1971, this speech mobilized the Bengali population towards the liberation movement. Its significance lies in the strategic use of ecological metaphors, which amplify the themes of conflict and emancipation. This paper employs Cheryll Glotfelty's eco-critical framework to examine how his speech intertwines natural imagery with the human struggle for freedom, contributing to the broader eco-critical discourse by elucidating the interconnectedness between human and ecological liberation.

Natural Imagery as a Reflection of Conflict and Freedom

Bangabandhu's speech employs a rich tapestry of natural imagery to reflect the struggle for independence and the quest for freedom. The invocation of elements such as rivers, forests, and blood on the streets symbolizes the resilience and continuity of the Bengali liberation movement. According to Glotfelty, eco-criticism emphasizes the relationship between literature and the natural world, asserting that literary works reflect and influence human interactions with the environment (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) ^[3]. In the speech, Bangabandhu states, "The streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rangpur and Rajshahi are today being spattered with the blood of my brothers" (Rahman). This imagery highlights the immediate human cost while evoking the persistence of natural cycles, suggesting that the struggle for freedom is as enduring and unyielding as nature itself.

Lawrence Buell asserts that environmental literature often uses natural settings and metaphors to comment on human struggles and aspirations (Buell 1995) ^[1]. Bangabandhu's use of natural metaphors in his speech aligns with this perspective, drawing on the resilience of nature to symbolize the enduring spirit of the Bengali people. By depicting their struggle through the lens of natural resilience, he effectively connects the liberation movement to a universal theme of survival and renewal.

His reference to the natural environment also legitimizes the liberation movement by grounding it in the immutable processes of nature. Describing the bloodshed as “spattered with the blood of my brothers” not only illustrates the brutality of the oppression but also invokes the idea of sacrifice as a natural and necessary part of achieving freedom. This notion is reinforced by Glotfelty’s assertion that literature often mirrors the cyclical patterns found in nature, where periods of destruction are followed by renewal and growth (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) [3].

Water-related metaphors in the speech are particularly poignant. Rivers, which are lifelines in Bangladesh, represent the flow of time and the persistent struggle of the people. They are metaphors for cleansing and renewal, suggesting that the bloodshed and sacrifices of the people will lead to a purer, liberated state. William Rueckert notes that water is a common symbol in eco-criticism representing life force and continuity (Rueckert 1996) [8]. Bangabandhu’s speech uses the metaphor of rivers to connect past struggles to future aspirations, framing their fight for independence as part of a natural, historical process.

Furthermore, Bangabandhu’s depiction of the natural landscape as a witness to the struggles of the Bengali people heightens the emotional impact of his speech. He states, “The cry we hear from the Bengali people is a cry for freedom, a cry for survival” (Rahman). This personification of the land as a sentient entity that shares in the suffering and aspirations of the people underscores the deep bond between the land and its inhabitants. Greg Garrard suggests that ecological metaphors create a sense of place and identity, fostering collective consciousness (Garrard 2004) [2].

Bangabandhu’s use of natural symbolism emphasizes the legitimacy of the liberation movement. By depicting the land as an entity wronged and crying out for justice, he reinforces the struggle for independence as not only a political necessity but also a moral imperative. This aligns with Buell’s assertion that environmental literature often uses imagery of the land to highlight issues of justice and rights (Buell 1995) [1].

The natural imagery in Bangabandhu’s speech is a powerful rhetorical tool reflecting the struggle for independence and freedom. Invoking elements such as rivers, forests, and the blood of martyrs, he connects the liberation movement to enduring and cyclical processes of nature. This not only legitimizes the movement but also resonates deeply with the audience, fostering a sense of unity and purpose.

Interconnectedness of Human and Ecological Liberation

Bangabandhu’s speech highlights the interconnectedness of human and ecological liberation, a core tenet of eco-criticism. Glotfelty posits that human and environmental systems are inextricably linked, and literature can reveal these connections (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) [3]. His use of ecological metaphors underscores this interconnectedness, drawing parallels between the human struggle for freedom and the natural world’s perseverance.

In his speech, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman asserts, “The cry we hear from the Bengali people is a cry for freedom, a cry for survival” (Rahman). This statement encapsulates the human desire for emancipation and parallels ecological survival against environmental degradation. According to Kerridge, eco-criticism explores how literary texts represent the relationship between human

and non-human worlds, highlighting mutual dependence (Kerridge 2003) [4]. His metaphors emphasize that the fight for human rights and ecological sustainability are intertwined, reinforcing that liberation movements can draw strength from the natural world’s capacity for endurance and regeneration.

The metaphor of “blood” illustrates the shared sacrifices and struggles between humans and the natural world. When Bangabandhu mentions, “the blood of my brothers,” (Rahman) he invokes a powerful image resonating with the audience, symbolizing both human suffering and broader ecological violence. This metaphor highlights the inseparability of human and ecological fates, emphasizing that the liberation of one is intrinsically linked to the well being of the other. Glotfelty emphasizes that eco-criticism seeks to uncover these deep interconnections, revealing how human liberation is often mirrored in ecological terms (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) [3].

Bangabandhu’s speech emphasizes unity and collective action, stating, “we will bring everything to a total standstill” (Rahman). This call for collective effort to achieve liberation resonates with eco-critical theory, which emphasizes community and interconnectedness in addressing human and environmental crises. Glen A. Love argues that eco-criticism highlights communal aspects of environmental and social struggles, suggesting that liberation can only be achieved through collective action and solidarity (Love 2003) [5].

References to natural elements, such as rivers and forests, underscore the interconnectedness of human and ecological systems. Bangabandhu’s mention of the “streets being spattered with blood” and the call for non-cooperation reflect Buell’s assertion that environmental literature often uses natural settings and metaphors to comment on human struggles and aspirations, highlighting mutual dependence between human and ecological liberation (Buell 1995) [1].

Bangabandhu’s speech also illustrates ecological resilience, central to eco-critical thought. Drawing on the enduring qualities of nature, He reinforces the idea that the struggle for independence is part of a broader, ongoing process of renewal and regeneration. His ecological metaphors evoke natural cycles and resilience, suggesting that just as nature endures and recovers from adversity, so too will the Bengali people. This aligns with the eco-critical perspective emphasizing natural systems’ resilience and the interconnectedness of human and ecological struggles (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) [3].

The emphasis on interconnectedness of human and ecological liberation has practical implications for contemporary environmental and social movements. By highlighting mutual dependence between human rights and environmental sustainability, Bangabandhu’s speech suggests true liberation requires a holistic approach addressing both human and ecological concerns. This perspective aligns with the eco-critical notion that literature can inform and inspire real-world activism by illuminating human and ecological systems’ interconnectedness (Kerridge 2003) [4].

Bangabandhu’s speech vividly illustrates the interconnectedness of human and ecological liberation through ecological metaphors and imagery. By drawing parallels between human struggle for independence and the resilience of the natural world, He emphasizes that true liberation encompasses both human and environmental

dimensions. This eco-critical analysis enhances our understanding of its rhetorical power and provides valuable insights into broader implications of human and ecological freedom.

Rhetorical Power of Environmental Metaphors

The rhetorical power of Bangabandhu's speech is significantly bolstered by his use of environmental metaphors. These metaphors serve as potent rhetorical devices that enhance the emotional and symbolic resonance of his message. Glotfelty posits that environmental rhetoric can profoundly shape perceptions and inspire action, a principle evident in Bangabandhu's speech (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) [3].

Bangabandhu's declaration, "The cry we hear from the Bengali people is a cry for freedom, a cry for survival," uses environmental metaphors to convey the urgency and gravity of the situation (Rahman). This metaphor evokes a visceral response, situating the struggle for independence within a broader, almost primal context of survival. Patrick D. Murphy asserts that environmental rhetoric can mobilize public sentiment by connecting political issues to fundamental ecological concepts, enhancing the impact of the message. His speech effectively employs this strategy, deepening the audience's emotional engagement and solidarity with the liberation cause through ecological metaphors.

References to natural disasters in the speech amplify its rhetorical power. Bangabandhu's mention of bloodshed as a recurrent phenomenon akin to natural calamities resonates with the audience's collective memory of enduring natural hardships. This technique aligns with Buell's observation that environmental literature often uses natural disasters as metaphors for human crises to evoke a shared sense of urgency and communal resilience (Buell 1995) [1]. His skillful use of such metaphors transforms the political struggle into a narrative of survival against overwhelming natural and political forces, galvanizing his audience.

Bangabandhu employs the metaphor of the land as a nurturing but wounded mother to evoke a deep emotional response. When he speaks of the land being soaked with the blood of its people, he not only describes the physical reality but also invokes a powerful image of a mother's suffering. This metaphor aligns with Garrard's assertion that environmental rhetoric often uses the image of the Earth as a nurturing mother to emphasize the sacredness of the land and the urgency of protecting it (Garrard 2004) [2]. His use of this metaphor strengthens the emotional bond between the people and their homeland, reinforcing their commitment to the liberation struggle.

The metaphor of natural cycles underscores the inevitability of change and renewal. Bangabandhu's references to the cyclical nature of bloodshed and resistance evoke the idea that just as nature endures cycles of destruction and regeneration, so too will the Bengali people overcome their current trials to achieve freedom. This aligns with Glotfelty's view that ecological metaphors in literature can convey a sense of hope and resilience, reflecting the enduring capacity of both nature and human spirit to recover and thrive (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) [3].

The rhetorical power of Bangabandhu's speech is significantly enhanced by his use of environmental metaphors. These metaphors evoke a deep emotional response and situate the struggle for independence within a

broader ecological context, amplifying the speech's impact. This eco-critical analysis reveals how environmental rhetoric can effectively mobilize public sentiment and strengthen the call for collective action.

Symbolism of Nature in Liberation Narratives

Nature in Bangabandhu's speech symbolizes purity, resilience, and the cyclical nature of life, crucial elements of the liberation narrative. These symbols resonate with the audience, fostering unity and purpose. Glotfelty's eco-critical framework highlights how literature often uses nature to symbolize broader themes and values, vividly illustrated in Bangabandhu's speech (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) [3].

His reference to "the shedding of the blood of the Bengali people" (Rahman) symbolizes a natural cycle of sacrifice and renewal, echoing nature's rhythms. This symbolism reinforces the idea that the struggle for independence is part of a larger, natural process of growth and regeneration. Buell asserts that environmental literature often employs natural symbols to represent human experiences and aspirations, creating a deeper connection between the reader and the narrative (Buell 1995) [1]. Bangabandhu's use of natural symbols in his speech underscores the intrinsic link between human and ecological freedom, fostering a sense of collective identity and purpose among the audience.

The symbolism of natural elements emphasizes the purity and legitimacy of the liberation movement. The imagery of rivers and forests in the speech evokes the natural beauty of Bangladesh and symbolizes the purity of the Bengali people's aspirations. According to Garrard, nature is often symbolized in literature as representing purity and truth, countering human corruption and oppression (Garrard 2004) [2]. His use of such symbolism reinforces the moral righteousness of the liberation movement, framing it as a struggle for justice and purity against oppression.

References to natural elements as witnesses to the struggle add symbolic resonance. Bangabandhu states, "The cry we hear from the Bengali people is a cry for freedom, a cry for survival" (Rahman). This personification of nature as a sentient entity sharing in the suffering and aspirations of the people underscores the deep bond between the land and its inhabitants. Buell suggests that ecological metaphors create a sense of place and identity, fostering collective consciousness (Buell 1995) [1]. Bangabandhu's use of natural symbolism strengthens the emotional and symbolic resonance of the liberation narrative, creating a powerful sense of unity and purpose among the Bengali people.

Bangabandhu employs the symbolism of natural cycles to underscore the inevitability of change and renewal. His references to the cyclical nature of bloodshed and resistance evoke the idea that just as nature endures cycles of destruction and regeneration, so too will the Bengali people overcome their current trials to achieve freedom. This aligns with Glotfelty's view that ecological metaphors in literature convey a sense of hope and resilience, reflecting the enduring capacity of both nature and human spirit to recover and thrive (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) [3].

The symbolism of nature in Bangabandhu's speech is a powerful rhetorical tool enhancing the emotional and symbolic resonance of the liberation narrative. Invoking elements such as rivers, forests, and the blood of martyrs, Bangabandhu connects the struggle for independence to enduring and cyclical processes of nature. This legitimizes

the movement and fosters unity and purpose among the audience, reinforcing their commitment to the liberation cause.

Ecological Challenges Paralleling Human Struggles

Bangabandhu's speech metaphorically aligns the struggle for independence with the enduring challenges faced by the natural environment. This alignment suggests that the quest for human freedom is part of a broader struggle against oppression and degradation, whether human or ecological. Glotfelty's framework emphasizes parallels between ecological and human challenges, a theme vividly portrayed in Bangabandhu's speech (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) ^[3].

His call to action, "We will bring everything to a total standstill," (Rahman) highlights the necessity of collective action to overcome both political and ecological challenges. This statement underscores the holistic nature of liberation, encompassing both human and environmental dimensions. Richard Kerridge argues that eco-criticism seeks to explore how literary texts illuminate the interconnectedness of human and ecological struggles, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of liberation (Kerridge 2003) ^[4]. His speech situates the Bengali liberation movement within a broader ecological context, aligning the struggle for independence with ecological challenges to emphasize the importance of addressing both human and environmental concerns.

Bangabandhu's speech draws on the metaphor of natural cycles to highlight parallels between human and ecological resilience. His references to the cyclical nature of bloodshed and resistance evoke the idea that just as nature endures cycles of destruction and regeneration, so too will the Bengali people overcome their trials to achieve freedom. This aligns with Glotfelty's view that ecological metaphors in literature convey hope and resilience, reflecting the enduring capacity of both nature and human spirit to recover and thrive (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) ^[3].

Bangabandhu uses the metaphor of ecological degradation to underscore the destructive impact of political oppression. He states, "The streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rangpur and Rajshahi are today being spattered with the blood of my brothers" (Rahman). This vivid imagery highlights the immediate human cost and evokes broader environmental degradation caused by political oppression. Buell notes that environmental literature often uses metaphors of ecological degradation to highlight the destructive impact of human actions on the environment and to call for a more sustainable and just relationship between humans and nature (Buell 1995) ^[1]. His use of such metaphors underscores the urgency of the liberation struggle, highlighting the need for a holistic and sustainable approach addressing both human and ecological concerns.

Bangabandhu's speech emphasizes collective action in overcoming human and ecological challenges. His call for unity and resistance against oppression resonates with the eco-critical notion that addressing environmental and social issues requires a community-based approach. Love argues that eco-criticism highlights the importance of community and interconnectedness in addressing human and environmental crises, suggesting that liberation can only be achieved through collective action and solidarity (Love 2003) ^[5]. Bangabandhu's speech reflects this perspective, emphasizing the importance of collective action in achieving human and ecological liberation.

Bangabandhu's speech vividly illustrates the interconnectedness of human and ecological struggles through ecological metaphors and imagery. Drawing parallels between the human struggle for independence and the resilience of the natural world, he emphasizes that true liberation encompasses human and environmental dimensions. This eco-critical analysis enhances our understanding of its rhetorical power and provides valuable insights into broader implications of human and ecological freedom.

Conclusion

The 7th March Speech by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, analyzed through the lens of eco-criticism, reveals a profound interconnectedness between human and ecological liberation. By employing ecological metaphors, he enhances the rhetorical power of his speech, drawing parallels between the resilience of nature and the enduring spirit of the Bengali people. This eco-critical exegesis contributes to our understanding of how environmental rhetoric can shape political discourse, offering significant insights into broader implications of human and ecological freedom.

References

1. Buell L. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard UP; c1995.
2. Garrard G. *Ecocriticism*. Routledge; c2004.
3. Glotfelty C, Fromm H, editors. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press; c1996.
4. Kerridge R. Introduction. In: Kerridge R, Sammells N, editors. *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*. Zed Books; c2003. p. 1-9.
5. Love GA. *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*. University of Virginia Press; c2003.
6. Murphy PD. *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies: Fences, Boundaries, and Fields*. Lexington Books; c2009.
7. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March Speech: Epic of Politics. ICT Division; c2021. Available from: ICTD Portal.
8. Rueckert W. *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*. In: Glotfelty C, Fromm H, editors. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press; c1996. p. 105-23.