Chapter 5

Aspects of Violence in *The Year of the Flood*
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*My main concern is that with each compromise with development, we end up with less for nature.... Should we use our capacity to tame nature and commandeer all the resources for ourselves and take it right up to the breaking point?... Will we even know where that breaking point is?* (Wallace 119)

*The Year of the Flood* (2009) is a novel by Atwood that focuses on the contemporary issues of ecology, feminism, and violence. In her earlier novels like *Surfacing* (1972), *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), and *Oryx and Crake* (2003) she had revealed her concern for the problems that are plaguing the world. These novels depict her yearning for a better and peaceful world and also highlight human activities that are inappropriate for the present generation as well as the future one. Through her satirical tone, she presents a picture of the deteriorating condition of the planet and of the deeper structures that oppress women. Her concern is a global concern and the themes of her novels indicate the current problems of the fast tech-world. In her dystopian fiction, she portrays a very dark picture of the future world, pointing towards the evil and polluted minds of human beings as they are corrupting the morals and values of life due to their selfish pursuits. Suka Joshua comments:

In an age of environmental crisis, Atwood takes her writing as a mission to do some good, to ameliorate the crisis. In her works Atwood has performed the function of the artist to speak the forbidden, to speak out especially in a time when progress and development are the jarring jingles of Multi-national Companies that are swallowing up the earth and its resources. (Joshua 102)
How can we bring back those morals and values that have been so maliciously eradicated from the essence of life? In *The Year of the Flood*, the present civilization comes to an end after an apocalypse. The apocalypse signifies the prevailing unethical and corrupt practices of the world that may lead to a major disaster in future. The authoritative rule of the ruling power, the exploitation of common people, the corruption in the name of altruism, and the abuse of technology are some of the issues highlighted in the novel. People who try to revert back to natural ways are killed by the security system called CorpSeCorps, considering those people as a threat to the profits of the capitalist system.

The degeneration of the moral values is posing worldwide danger to peace and harmony. Families are breaking and the divorce rates are high. The gap between the rich and the poor is becoming wider. The effect on the environment is exceeding the danger mark and the increasing pollution is putting unwanted pressure on the planet. The corrupt society that Atwood has depicted in the novel is a reflection of the practices of the present world. In the novel, there is a strict dividing wall between the dwellings of rich and the poor and they are completely separated from each other. The exploitation of the poor is an inevitable outcome of the corrupt practices of the elite group. The government that is supposed to be responsible for the happiness of people is making their life miserable. The novel is contemporaneous with Atwood’s previous novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003), with many similar characters.

The novel begins with a hymn on a beautiful garden that has been destroyed by ‘greedy Spoilers’. The garden was very green once and it was also the finest one. God’s dear creatures were very happy in this garden until the greedy spoilers came
and killed all of them. Even the fruitful trees that flourished once were destroyed. Water that was clean once had been turned into slime. Birds, that used to make the environment lively with their ‘joyful choir,’ have stopped singing now. They are not happy now and they mourn at the destruction of nature and its beauty. The hope is alive that the Gardeners will arise and restore the garden back to its original state.

But then came greedy Spoilers

And killed them all away.

........................................

Until the Gardeners arise,

And you to Life restore. (n. pag.)

The hymn on ‘The Garden’ reflects upon the devastated state of the earth. Garden is a metaphor for earth and the destruction of the garden connotes the destruction of the planet Earth. The violent activities of people have changed the course of nature and destroyed its beauty. Nature has been treated like a slave and oppressed with the help of technology. The greed of people knows no limits in the modern world and they have exploited the natural resources for their endless needs.

The hymn can be related to Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring (1962), in which she had raised a powerful voice against the injustice being done to people by the overuse of pesticides. The environmentalist movement started by her had given an impetus to the conscious of common people. She was of stern opinion that the chemicals in the pesticides were fatal for the living creatures. The beginning of the novel also hints towards this kind of environmental destruction. Truly, the planet has been destroyed by ‘greedy Spoilers.’
An apocalypse marks the beginning of the novel and the whole of humanity has been destroyed. Toby is one of the few survivors and she has locked herself in a luxurious spa. She is a nature-loving woman and she had acquired knowledge on the herbs and their various uses. She is also efficient in different natural treatment procedures. She recollects that people were calling for help while dying but she could not help because of the severity of the infection during the spread of the pandemic. She wonders if there is anyone else alive on the planet besides her.

The apocalypse that marks the end of civilization also marks the end of people who were greedy and selfish and had brought the world to its present chaotic state. After the disaster is over, the greed has been eliminated from the planet along with the human beings. Now there is nature, being left on its own, free and wild. The wilderness has begun to show its signs of growth everywhere. Life has started taking new form and the cycle of life has begun once again. The end of human species coincides with the fall of corrupt practices and the end of violence. Now there are no more riots, no more robberies, and no more bombshells.

Ren, locked up inside an air-sealed room, is counting on her luck as she was shut off from the outside world during the time when catastrophe struck. Working in a high end sex-club, she had got a rip in her protective Biofilm Bodyglove, when a client had got carried away and bit her. She was waiting for her test results in that locked room. The disease that had spread world-wide was highly infectious and fatal. Had she been not locked in that room, there were all the chances of her catching the infection.
Twenty-five years before this epidemic, few ‘Gardeners’ had come to settle on a rooftop. They had occupied the waste rooftop and had developed a garden there. This rooftop was barren but they had turned it into a beautiful garden within a few years. In the fifth year the whole garden was blossoming. They had grown food that was unpolluted by insecticides and pesticides. They believed that if others also followed their example, many positive changes could be brought on the planet. “Some would term our efforts futile, but if all were to follow our example, what a change would be wrought on our beloved Planet” (11)! On the fifth year of the creation of Edencliff Rooftop Garden, Adam One who was the head of the Gardeners, spoke to the fellow Gardeners about the decay and sterility prevalent in the world. He spoke about the fifth day of Creation, when man was not a carnivore. He had a loving relationship with animals and they were not afraid of being killed. All the living creatures had peacefully gathered and there was no place for bloodshed or pride. He said that when the world was created by God, He gave freedom to Adam to act according to his free will. He wonders that when did man lose his sanctity and started killing animals for food.

Meat-eating has always been an ecofeminist concern. Carol J. Adams opines, “Ecofeminism posits that the domination of nature is linked to the domination of women and that both dominations must be eradicated. If animals are a part of nature, then why are they not intrinsically a part of ecofeminist analysis and their freedom from being instruments of humans an integral part of ecofeminist theory” (Adams 114)? The researches on condition of animals used for consumption have shown shocking results. “Ninety percent of all pigs are now raised in indoor, near-dark,
windowless confinement sheds, a stressful existence that includes being underfed and living in a sauna like atmosphere of high humidity” (Adams 122). The ecofeminists argue that animals are treated badly while kept in slaughterhouses and at other places.

Adam One told everyone in his speech, “Adam’s first act towards the Animals was thus one of loving-kindness and kinship, for Man in his unfallen state was not yet a carnivore (12-13):

When Adam first had breath of life
All in that golden place,
He dwelt in peace with Bird and Beast,
And knew God face to face. (14)

Adam One told that after God had creating everything, He called all the creatures along with man. It was the unrepeatable day when every living entity was embraced by man. One of the major aims of ecofeminist peace politics has been illuminated in this speech. The main agenda of this politics is to create a non-oppressive relationship between human-beings and other living creatures. Karen Warren writes, “It is structurally pluralistic, rather than structurally reductionist or unitary .... It makes a central place for considerations of care, appropriate reciprocity, friendship, kinship, appropriate trust, and love” (Warren 188-89). Hence, it says that the relationship of domination maintained by the ‘Up’ group to keep the ‘Down’ group down is unjustified. The embracing of nature by man can bring the hope for a peaceful world:

How shrunk, how dwindled, in our times
Creation’s mighty seed –
For Man has broke the Fellowship
With murder, lust, and greed.
Oh Creatures dear, that suffer here,
How may we Love restore?
We’ll Name you in our inner Hearts,
And call you Friend once more. (14)

The pandemic that had spread was a massive one covering the whole planet. There was a scientific background to it. Biotechnology had let itself loose crossing all the limits. The Gardeners had always warned of such a disaster calling it ‘Waterless Flood’. “... it travelled through the air as if on wings, it burned through cities like fire, spreading germ-ridden mobs, terror, and butchery” (20). The scientific inventions had overpowered nature, and the disease caused by one of them had spread like fire. Had there been control on them, people could be saved from the disaster.

Man acts as the master of nature and thinks that nature can be exploited with the help of science and technology. He believes that the economic growth through industries would put mankind on the path of progress. On the contrary, this has led to the overexploitation of natural resources. “This is clearly unsustainable in the long run .... continuing on this path will only result in an environmental and social catastrophe” (Rajagopalan 42). The need of the present world is to balance economic development and environmental conservation. “A new awareness is growing that is questioning the sanctity of science and development and revealing that these are not universal categories of progress, but the special projects of modern western patriarchy” (Shiva
xiv). A new code of domination has been set up by technology and people have become totally dependent on it. The fatal disease that has spread in the novel is also an outcome of this domination.

Toby represents love for nature in *The Year of the Flood*. The misfortunes began very early in her life. When Toby was small, her father had to pay the price for not selling his land to a developer. Everything was manipulated against him to strangle him financially and emotionally. He lost his job and his wife caught a strange and fatal illness. She always took care of her health and daily took a dose of HelthWyzer Hi-Potency VitalVite supplements. She never knew that the vitamin supplements were carrying in them hostile bioforms, deliberately put by the company to make people sick. The company kept the treatment reserved with them so that they could extract all the money from the patient. Toby’s father had to finally sell his house that the company wanted. Her mother died and her father was left with nothing else except humiliation and failure. Having no other option, he killed himself and Toby had to leave the house.

The security guards of CorpSeCorps belonged to a corrupt organization. They manipulated the facts according to their convenience. Common people were suffering badly under their rule. The elite, the corporations, and the rulers were spreading the tentacles of their corrupt practices everywhere. This type of authoritarian rule has been criticized by ecofeminists. Ariel Salleh comments:

> North and South, ruling elites consist of big men and their families, including the occasional well-situated feminist. But in the debate over global governance, the masculinist imperative that structures state
formations is not questioned.... politics is conceptualized on a one-dimensional specular plane, a matter of size and extension. (Salleh 189)

Toby’s family had become the victim of capitalist forces. The capitalists had extracted their wealth and forced them to die. Toby was left alive but she had to die emotionally and mentally many times. According to an argument on capitalism by International Debate Education Association, “Profits in capitalism are always made through exploitation (be it the exploitation of workers for their surplus value, of third world countries for cheap natural resources and cheap markets for goods, etc.) and the institutions of capitalism were designed this way” (IDEA n.pag.). The same process of extracting the wealth of the common people was being practised by the governing bodies, capitalists, and the elite group in the novel.

Toby left the house and escaped from the questioning by CorpSeCorps but she was in constant fear of being caught by them for her father’s debts. She burnt her identity and had no money to buy a different identity. “She didn’t have any money they could seize, but there were stories about female debtors being farmed out for sex” (30). Having no identity meant that she couldn’t get a legitimate job. She rented a tiny room in a building and on its ground floor endangered species were killed secretly. “Technically, the endangered trade was illegal – there were high fines for it – but it was very lucrative” (31). The corruption was running deep inside the whole governing system. The endangered species were being killed and the trade was going on mercilessly.
Atwood highlights the fact that with growing consumerism, animals are being killed at a fast rate for various profitable trades. The killing of animals for selfish purposes by human beings has been condemned by ecofeminists. The endeavour to promote peace needs to develop the conscious of non-violent and loving relationship with animals. Analysing the origin of maltreatment of animals, Marti Kheel writes, “The conception of nature as an object for “Man’s” use was carried to an ultimate extreme by Cartesian philosophy. According to Descartes, since animals were lacking in “consciousness” or “reason,” they were mere machines that could feel no pain. Smashing the legs of a monkey, Descartes “reasoned,” would hurt no more than removing the hands of a clock. With Cartesian philosophy, the wild, demonic aspect of nature was, thus, finally laid to rest, and the image of nature as a machine was born” (Kheel 7).

Toby, in the novel, saw the brutal and merciless treatment towards animals. Her survival was also very difficult as she had no identity and no money. She managed to survive, first by selling her hair and then by donating her eggs. When she tried to sell the eggs for the third time, “they told her there were complications, so she could never donate any more eggs, or – incidentally – have any children herself” (32). The hopeless situation in Toby’s life reveals the exploitation of poor women. They are allured to donate their eggs in exchange for huge money. But the complications which generally arise after the process are not taken care of. Women either develop infections, diseases or become permanently sterile. They are not compensated for the damage caused to them. Huge profits are made by extracting their eggs and then they are left to their fate. Leila R. Brammer opines that “This vision depicts patriarchal
society as operating with malicious forethought. Their argument is that women and children who are poor are subject to these living conditions, which are life shortening and threatening in order to keep them in submission. They also argue that women become a scapegoat for those exploiting the environment” (Brammer n.pag.). Toby wanted to give birth to a child but she was told about her becoming sterile only after she had donated her eggs:

But it seems she’d wanted children after all, because when she was told she’d been accidentally sterilized she could feel all the light leaking out of her. (32-33)

Toby took a new job with a chain called SecretBurgers. The manager of that outlet, Blanco, used to consider girls as his perks. He called girls to his office for free time sex. He was bouncer-shaped and sported a full set of arm tattoos. Any girl who tried to run from him, was killed ruthlessly. One day he ordered Toby to his office with the intention of raping her. She felt she was on the way to her own execution. “Skiny bitch, I’m promoting you,” he said. “Say thank you” (37). Toby felt that she was being strangled. “The tattoo on his back was just as Rebecca had described it: a naked woman, wound in chains, her head invisible” (37).

Blanco treated women and animals in the similar manner. Ecofeminists argue that both have to bear the oppression by men. Joni Seager relates violence inflicted upon women and animals:

A number of women have drawn parallels between the treatment of animals in factory farming, and especially in experimentation, and the treatment of women. One of the frightening aspects of this overlap is the use of male violence as a tool of domination. (Seager 209)
Toby was in a situation from which she could not escape. The capitalist patriarchal culture of her work place had started suffocating her. The workers had to over-work and were paid rock-bottom wages. The girls felt unsafe due to the criminal attitude of the manager, who left them almost lifeless after assaulting them sexually.

Ecofeminists have probed the status of women at work places. Ariel Salleh comments, “In fact, the global majority of women live out their lives right at the bottom of a hierarchy of oppressions, inhabiting the contradictory space where Women and Nature meet” (Salleh 10). The protests against such an oppressive system have been raising their voice worldwide. In Australia, ‘Women against Rape in War’ and ‘Women against Violence against Women’ together represented global confrontation with the destructiveness of men in a capitalist patriarchal system. In a system like this, a female worker’s well-being and identity are impoverished as a tool of oppression.

Blanco represents the most evil character of man – a man who shamelessly and rightfully does every degrading and dominating act. “His view was that a woman with an ass as skinny as Toby’s should consider herself in luck if any man wanted to stick his hole-hammer into her. She’d be even luckier if he didn’t sell her to Scales as a temporary, which meant temporarily alive” (38). Atwood has related the consumerist culture of multinationals to the consumption of women at work places. Blanco views the women who work for him, as his prey. Under patriarchal systems, women are treated as mere objects. In the United States, estimates are that one out of every three or four women will be raped by someone she knows. Rape and sexual harassment are examples of behaviours practiced within patriarchy. Karen Warren and Duane Cady comment:
Much of the current “unmanageability” of contemporary life in patriarchal societies, is then viewed as a consequence of a patriarchal preoccupation with activities, events, and experiences that reflect historically male-gender-identified beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions. Included among these real-life consequences are precisely those concerns with nuclear proliferation, war, environmental destruction, and violence toward women, which many feminists see as the logical outgrowth of patriarchal thinking. (Warren and Cady 12)

In The Year of the Flood, a procession by God’s Gardeners was passing by one day, when Toby was doing her morning shift. They were holding their slates with slogans printed on them: “God’s Gardeners for God’s Garden! Don’t Eat Death! Animals R Us” (39)! Adam One, the leader of the Gardeners, started giving speech and said that he was once a materialistic and meat-eater man. He also believed that man was the measure of all things. He was a scientist and he thought that only numbers could give a true description of reality. One day while eating a SecretBurger he had the revelation of the sin involved in eating meat. He said, pointing towards the unit of SecretBurger, “Every day you stand here selling the mutilated flesh of God’s beloved Creatures, it’s injuring you more. Join us, my dear – we are your friends, we have a place for you” (41). Blanco attacked him in a fit of rage but he himself fell down and suffered injury on the head when attacked by a teenager. Toby kicked Blanco’s head and went away with the Gardeners. If he could manage to get up, his next step would have been to get her killed.
Toby felt huge relief after joining the Gardeners and leaving the place where animals and women were tortured. The garden where Gardeners lived was beautiful, with plants and flowers of many kinds she’d never seen before. She was crying with relief and gratitude. Toby had now entered a very different and peaceful world. It was a nature-loving world, where nature was preserved in the best possible way. Every phenomenon of nature was respected and understood. The rhythm of the life of Gardeners was in synchronization with the rhythm of nature. Atwood paints a picture of two completely opposite life-styles. On one side, nature is ignored and capitalist patriarchal culture prevails and on the other side, few people are living with reverence for nature and their lives are determined by the natural ways.

Atwood has associated beauty in its purest form with nature. The reference to ‘the wild Onion’, ‘the wild Asparagus’, ‘the wild Garlic’, ‘the wild Strawberries’, and the herbal medicines has an underlying significance. They are wild, untamed, unspoiled, unobstructed and in the purest natural form. These are the characteristics that lend them natural taste and beauty. Similarly a woman, free, happy, and independent, has a natural beauty that must not be destroyed by the oppression of patriarchal rule. Deborah Slicer, an ecofeminist, has also asserted that finding theories and political strategies that effectively identify and eradicate the tangled oppressions is perhaps our greatest promise and challenge.

The theory of Deep Ecology can be related to the thinking and living style of the Gardeners. The key feature of this theory is the rejection of atomistic and scientific individualism. The idea that a human being is an individual possessing a separate existence radically separates the human being from the rest of the world. To
make such a separation not only leads to selfishness towards other people, but also induces human selfishness towards nature. The theory proposes that organisms (human or otherwise) are best understood as “knots” in the biospherical net. “The identity of a living thing is essentially constituted by its relations to other things in the world, especially its ecological relations to other living things. If people conceptualise themselves and the world in relational terms, the deep ecologists argue, then people will take better care of nature and the world in general” (Brammer n.pag.).

The nature-loving approach of Gardeners in the novel has similarity to the approach of anarcho-primivitists. Anarcho-primitivism is an anarchist critique of the progress of civilization. According to it, the shift from hunter-gatherer to agricultural subsistence led to alienation of human beings. This ideology promotes non-domination and anti-authoritarian approach. Anarcho-primitivists attempt to incorporate sustainable techniques for safer ways of surviving in this world. They argue that ownership and control of land, plants, animals, children, women, or slaves is a part of the development of institutions that reinforce patriarchy. Patriarchy demands subjugation of women and control of nature, leading humanity towards destruction.

In the novel, Adam One told Toby that they were strict vegetarians and had a spiritual connection with animals and other creatures. The daily works of that place were evenly distributed among everyone. Toby started making herbal lotions and creams, the art that she had studied at Martha Graham Institute. She started teaching those skills to children also. Adam One predicted about future:
A massive die-off of the human race was impending, due to over-population and wickedness, but the Gardeners exempted themselves: they intended to float above the Waterless Flood, with the aid of the food they were stashing away in the hidden store places they called Ararats.... Thus they would survive to replenish the Earth.” (47)

Adam One could predict the disaster by analysing the life-style that people had adopted. They had become slaves of advanced technology. The progress based on capitalism, unethical ways of making profit, and cruel destruction of nature had been the cause of violence and chaos. Atwood gives an indication of the precarious situation in the present world. The environmentalists are presenting a critical view of the planet. Brammer opines, “The images of the earth are of devastation on a tragic level. The visions are almost hopeless. In their dramatic construction of the present, one gets the idea that there is little left to save, but they do look toward the future” (Brammer n.pag.). Besides the degradation of the environment, people are suffering due to the side effects of synthetic products and eatables. Ariel Salleh quotes an Australian mother:

There is nothing to eat anymore! Beef has e coli; lamb has scrapie; rabbits have callici virus; chicken is full of synthetic hormone; fish carry heavy metals; soy beans are genetically engineered; vegetables and fruits are covered with pesticides; seaweeds are radioactive. What can I give the children tonight? (Salleh 66)

In the 1960s and 1970s the growth in human population was the leading concern of environmentalists. Moving from about 6 billion in 2000 towards a
projected 7 billion in 2011, the world population seems to be exploding like a bomb. The social and economic pressures that lead to overpopulation are insecurities of poverty and the oppression of women. Overpopulation is an issue that stresses upon the need to combine the environmental and feminist movements. Due to the inability of women to have control over their reproductive phase, the resulting rise in population has a direct impact on the environment. Hence, the two issues are inseparable and must be dealt together. Timothy Clark comments, “... the unprecedented challenge of things like climate change or overpopulation – issues at the same time of morality, ethics, biology, ‘animal rights’, statistics, geography and politics – may be the need, literally, to think everything, even to think everything at once” (Clark 203).

The exponential population growth and urbanization put great pressure on the natural resources. Any kind of land, including fertile fields, is converted into new colonies for expanding cities. More land is needed for roads, highways, industries, and education complexes. The need to feed the vast population is another challenge. Exploitation of forest resources is another factor which demands control on population. “As cities and slums grow, water scarcity will intensify, more and more waste will pile up, the air quality will drop, public transport will be overloaded, traffic jams will increase, and so on” (Rajagopalan 153).

Ecofeminists argue that a moral theory must emerge out of the issues at hand. Ecofeminism must be adequately grounded and contextualized to be an action-guiding ethical theory. As an alternative to Western, atomistic, materialist worldview, it should develop an understanding of gender and other human differences. The value
dualistic, value hierarchical thinking in the ‘oppressive patriarchal conceptual framework’ maintain all social ‘isms of domination,’ e.g., racism, classism, heterosexism, sexism as well as naturism. Ecofeminism is a global movement that opposes all these ‘isms of domination.’

In *The Year of the Flood*, the Gardeners had adopted the similar guidelines of non-violence. They were of the firm belief that they would be able to survive the disaster due to their love for nature and would also replenish the planet after the time of crisis is over. They would have the power to save the planet and make it habitable again. The causes of destruction would also be destroyed during the apocalypse. Adam one said, “Ours is a fall into greed: why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything” (52-3)? He sang the hymn from the ‘The God’s Gardeners Oral Hymnbook’:

> Oh let me not be proud, dear Lord,
> Nor rank myself above
> The other Primates, through whose genes
> We grew into your Love.
> ......................................................
> So keep us far from worser traits,
> Aggression, anger, greed;
> Let us not scorn our lowly birth,
> Nor yet our Primate seed. (54)

The world of Gardeners was altogether different, guided by many rules. The children wrote on slates and they had to be wiped off at the end of each day. Writing
on paper was sinful because it was made from the flesh of trees. The children were taught holistic healing with plant remedies, wild and garden botanicals, meditation, emergency medical etc. The gardeners slept on the beds of husks and straw. They didn’t believe in wasting water and soap on too much washing. The only toys they approved of were the ones sewed out of leftover fabric or knitted with saved-up string. They said that nature is our playground. They didn’t believe in elevators except for old people and paraplegics. Adam One said, “The Earth and the music thereof, the Universe and the harmony therein – these are God’s works of Creativity, of which Man’s creativity is but a poor shadow” (90).

The complete trust of Gardeners in nature opposes the theory of anthropocentrism i.e., domination of nature by humans. Anthropocentrism is the position that human beings are the most significant species on the planet and others are inferior to them. Non-anthropocentrists regard this ideology as the cause of environmental crisis. The environmentalists hold the view that it is the moral duty of humans to extend an attitude of care and ethical behaviour towards nature. They argue that the practical purpose of environmental ethics is to provide moral grounds for social policies aimed at protecting the earth's environment and remedying environmental degradation. They oppose the anthropocentric view and affirm that everything that is part of nature has an intrinsic value. Hence, the superiority of humans over nature is entirely unethical. “While it has become commonplace to refer to the present era as “the age of terror”, there is increasing agreement across the entire globe that the world is facing chronic and unprecedented environmental problems,
many of them of human origin” (Brenman and Yeuk-Sze). Adam One in *The Year of the Flood* told other Gardeners:

Yes, my Friend – any further cursing of the ground would be done not by God but by Man himself. Consider the southern shores of the Mediterranean – once fruitful farmland, now a desert. Consider the ruinations wrought in the Amazon River basin; consider the wholesale slaughter of ecosystems.... (90)

During the ‘Festival of Arks,’ Adam One said that they mourned the deaths of all those creatures that had become extinct. He said that during the second event of Creation God was not happy with His creation of Man. He knew something had gone wrong with his last experiment of creating man. Farmlands had been turned into deserts, Amazon river had been ruined, and the ecosystems had been disturbed. God gave a warning to all the animals – ‘*Beware of Man, and of his evil heart’*. Man had revealed his cruelty and God was alarming every beast of the earth and every fowl of the air to be fearful of him.

Adam One indicated that ‘all flesh’ and ‘every living creature’ needed to be saved from the cruelty of human beings. “Therefore the Animals are not senseless matter, not mere chunks of meat. No; they have living Souls ...” (91). He suggested that care and love for animals and for nature could save humanity from destruction. Adam One’s knowledge about nature calls for the need to follow the ethics proposed by environmentalists. Environmentalists and the environmental ethics extend their considerations to animal liberation and animal rights. “Both animal liberation and environmental ethics spring from a common defensive reaction to the wilful
aggression perpetrated upon the natural world. Animal liberationists concentrate much of their energies on protecting those animals reduced to the status of inert matter or machines— that is, animals in laboratories and factory farms” (Kheel 10).

The Gardeners could feel the restlessness and chaos prevailing in the world. They could sense that a worldwide disaster was impending as people had lost the true motive of their lives. “We can feel the symptoms of coming disaster as a doctor feels a sick man’s pulse. We must be ready for the time when those who have broken trust with the Animals ... will be swept away by the Waterless Flood” (91). ‘Waterless Flood’ was the name given by them to the disaster that was going to destroy the world. It was going to spread like floods but instead of water the infection would be the source. Gardeners believed that they would be saved. They were living in harmony with nature and had taken the precautions to save themselves. Atwood has painted a very unique picture of these nature-loving people, with a hidden message. In their world, nature and its ways were respected. There was harmony and well-being in their simple living. It was in total disagreement with the life-style governed by the pressing needs of the contemporary world.

Toby had adopted the life-style of Gardeners while living with them. She was now more confident and satisfied. “Her skin smelled like honey and salt. And earth” (101). She spent her time in tending the beehives, extracting the honey, and storing it in jars. Adam One told everyone on the Saint Euell day that this saint had the knowledge of fungi, wild herbs, and roadside medicines. During the catastrophe, when all buying and selling would cease, Gardeners would rely on the knowledge of plants.
By juxtaposing two different views about nature, Atwood suggests that human beings can either think themselves as superior to nature and can exploit it, or can live in harmony with nature. In the novel, on one side there were people in the Compound who had become slaves of technology and had become corrupt in the process of making profit and on the other side Gardeners had built a world for themselves in which life in the simplest form was led. Study of various herbs, their properties, their medicinal uses, extracting honey with a special procedure, caring for bees, preserving maggots to cure wounds, learning self-defence activities, meditation, celebrating nature’s phenomena were part of their daily routine activities. They were living without any burden on the planet rather they were contributing their best to it. On looking at the violence and mismanagement prevalent in the world, the Gardeners felt that man had adopted the wrong way and instead of following the nature’s way and inner instinct, he was more involved in greed, lust, and selfishness, ultimately becoming totally dependent on artificial means:

According to Adam One, the Fall of Man was multidimensional. The ancestral primates fell out of the trees; then they fell from vegetarianism into meat-eating. Then they fell from instinct into reason, and thus into technology; from simple signals into complex grammar, and thus into humanity; from firelessness into fire, and thence into weaponry; and from seasonal mating into an incessant sexual twitching. Then they fell from a joyous life in the moment into the anxious contemplation of the vanished past and the distant future. (188)
The ideology followed by Gardeners suggests that modern human activities related to capitalist patriarchal culture are responsible for the major global problems of environmental degradation, violence, and corruption. The need is to balance the economic development and environmental conservation, and also to eradicate the hierarchical structure of power. This is only possible if man puts an end to patriarchal practices. Rajagopalan comments on the inter-connectivity of everything that exists on earth. He writes, “This we know – the Earth does not belong to us we belong to the Earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family” (Rajagopalan 47).

Due to various human activities like deforestation and burning large amounts of fossil fuels, there has been excessive warming of the atmosphere, putting the other species in danger. The Arctic ice is melting very fast. There is a consensus among the scientists that the Arctic will be free of ice by 2030. The sea level will increase and will cause serious damage to coastal areas. The world’s fisheries are also in deep crisis. A massive increase in global fishing began in the 1950s and 1960s with the use of new technology. Soon the rate of harvest exceeded the rate of fish population growth. Apart from overexploitation, fisheries are threatened by pollution of water bodies and climate change. In the novel, Adam One gave a speech on the sea creatures:

“Let Love and aid be brought to the Sea Creatures in their present peril and great suffering; which has come to them through the warming of the Sea, and through the dragging of nets and hooks along the bottom of it, and through the slaughtering of all within it ....” (196).
The imbalance caused in the environment by human activities goes parallel with the imbalance in human relationships. In the novel, Lucerne was a woman who loved colours, sunrise, and aesthetic values. She was entrenched in her sensual feelings but her ambitious husband was a hard core rational person, unaware of her amorousness. He was totally involved in his job and his scientific experiments had turned him deaf and dumb towards the needs of his wife. “She was really very restless, because her husband was cold as a crypt, and they never made love any more because he was too busy with his career” (116). Zeb came in her life and she felt as if her arid life would come to an end. She left the Compound and its luxuries for the sake of his love. She accepted a poor life with him in search of true love. Ironically, it was only a trap and as time passed, Zeb stayed away from home for many days leaving Lucerne only to feel anxious and keep waiting. A moment came when she decided to leave Zeb and live an independent life. She could no more tolerate the humiliation. Ecofeminists have taken into account the plight of women whose emotions are neglected:

Look at the way women have been treated. We’ve been completely controlled, raped, not given any credibility, not taken seriously. It’s the same thing with animals. We’ve completely mutilated them, domesticated them. Their cycles, their entire beings are conformed to humans’ needs. That’s what men have done to women and the earth.

(Adams 116)

In *The Year of the Flood*, the Gardeners are vegetarians and believe in the oneness of the universe. Instead of believing in mastering or controlling nature, they
have deep reverence for it. They believe that everything in nature has an inherent value. Such a strong faith in co-existence with nature and its creation had made them confident that the impending disaster would not be able to affect them. Their inner instinct guided them and they valued it more than pure reason. Adam One sings a hymn on the natural wisdom of animals:

God gave unto the Animals
A wisdom past our power to see:
Each knows innately how to live,
Which we must learn laboriously.
The Creatures need no lesson books,
For God instructs their Minds and Souls:
The sunlight hums to every Bee,
The moist clay whispers to the Mole. (236)

The disaster that the Gardeners had predicted seemed to be coming closer. Toby remembered that a kind of restless feeling used to upset her mind when she was in college. She also felt like many other people that things were seriously going wrong in the world. “She remembers the oppressive sensation, like waiting all the time for a heavy stone footfall, then the knock at the door” (239). She had, like other people, ignored the warning signs of the coming apocalypse. The topic of everybody’s discussion used to be that ‘We’re using up the Earth. It’s almost gone.’ The gravity of the situation was felt by people but they were scared of speaking about it.

Atwood’s major concern is to make human beings aware of the significance of the issues like environmental degradation, overpopulation, and the depletion of
natural resources. There is an immediate need to find pragmatic solutions to these problems. Being an environmentalist, Atwood is seriously concerned about growing climate change and environmental crisis. She finds that these are complex problems having no easy solutions. These problems arise from the way people live and they need to be aware of the importance of ecological balance:

If today is a typical day on planet Earth, we will lose 116 sq. miles of rainforest, or about an acre a second. We will lose another 72 sq. Miles to encroaching deserts as a result of human mismanagement and overpopulation. We will lose 40 to 100 species, and no one knows whether the number is 40 or 100. Today the human population will increase by 2,50,000. And today we will add 2,700 tons of chlorofluorocarbons to the atmosphere and 15 million tons of carbon. Tonight the Earth will be a little hotter, its waters more acidic, and the fabric of life more threadbare. (Rajagopalan ix)

The mechanization of everything around us is not only responsible for environmental degradation, but it has also given birth to feelings of uncertainty and insecurity in the minds of people. They are restless and violent in their pursuit of catching the fast pace of life. The confidence and belief in the rhythm and phenomena of nature are missing from their mentality. The horrors of World Wars, terrorism with latest weapons, violence due to greed, and the invention of new bombs and missiles have threatened people and a peaceful, harmonious world seems only a dream to them. “You find yourself saying to the sky, Just do it. Do your worst. Get it over with” (239).
In the novel, the fear of the disaster increased with every passing day. Toby could feel the tremor running down her spine. The fear persisted in her heart even when she was living among the Gardeners. It was an intuition that something was seriously going to go wrong. The Gardeners were doing their best efforts to protect their community from the evils of the modern world. While leading a natural life, they were far removed from the temptations that were heading man towards apocalypse. Their community was devoted to the creation of nature – the living or the non-living world. Instead of a self-centred approach as human beings, they preferred an approach of co-existence and respect for nature’s creation. Zeb was especially concerned about the rare species of birds and animals that were eaten at expensive restaurants.

The scientists living in the Compound didn’t have faith in nature’s phenomena and they were using unethical means for their personal profits. Glenn’s father was a scientist at HelthWyzer. He came to know that illnesses were being spread by the scientists among common people in the form of vitamin pills. They were collecting huge amount of money in the name of treating the disease they had themselves caused. When this practice troubled his father’s conscience, he gave some important data to the Gardeners to help them in their struggle against unethical practices. Immediately after that, he was murdered.

In the Compound, only the technology ruled and dominated. Anybody who tried to think on the humanitarian terms, against the wish of the Corporations, was immediately killed. Scientists and doctors were making huge profits at the cost of other people’s lives. The animals that caught diseases in the Compound were burnt in large numbers and the others were used as experimental objects. Once a part of the
Compound, it was unthinkable for anyone to break the boundaries of the higher status.
“If you’re Corp and you do something they don’t like, you’re dead. It’s like you shot yourself” (244).

The ratio of women to men fleeing the Corporations was three to one. Clearly evident was the fact that women felt more suffocated in a technocratic environment than men. Also they were more ethical as they could not tolerate the destruction of common people and the natural species in the name of new inventions. It is a special power that Atwood endows, of being able to free themselves, to her female protagonists. After continuously suffering in male-dominated situations, the saturation time comes when they can no longer remain passive and subdued. An unusual power arises inside them and they release themselves from the suffocating environment.

Suka Joshua comments on Atwood’s deep concern regarding the fatal consequences of uncontrolled bio-technology experiments. She writes, “In particular she voices her concern over the dangers posed by the ‘gene rush’ and the impacts of bio-technology as they ruthlessly upset the ecosystem” (Joshua 107).

The Gardeners had planned to restore all the lost species with their preserved DNA codes. Many species were becoming extinct due to the interference by biotechnologists. The Gardeners were taking the help of technology only to save the species and to save themselves from the disastrous effects of the ruined world. They had blended their ecological religion with appropriate use of science. The species that were becoming extinct were of special concern for them. They wanted to save those species with their diligent efforts. Atwood hints at the extinction of many species that is a matter of concern for ecologists in the contemporary world. Judith Plant writes in
her article “Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community” that “At the current rate of extinction of species, the next five hundred years of our inhabitation of the planet will wipe out all differences, different species of flora and fauna, and, if the New World Order takes hold, different cultures and societies of people” (Plant 126).

In the novel, every day was of some special significance for the Gardeners. Each day was a celebration of one or the other nature’s gift, named after a Saint. Toby had completely absorbed herself in Gardeners’ activities but the fear of her past was still palpating in her heart. She had kicked Blanco and wounded his ego badly before leaving him. She knew that he would immediately kill her, as soon as he found her. “Even after spending years with the Gardeners, the sexually traumatized Toby still has nightmares about Blanco’s skinless-looking blue-veined hands coming for her neck” (Bouson 13).

Blanco was among those people who were wiping out hundreds of species by making them part of meals for humans. He was like a giant monster who had chosen violence as his sport. Bouncers like Blanco were spreading violence with their evil minds and CorpSeCorps, who were the only ones having weapons legally, were not performing their duty of curbing violence. Communities like those of Gardeners were a threat to their authoritarian rule. Finally, the Gardeners had to escape and leave their Edencliff Rooftop. Adam One said, “But surely one day we will return to Edencliff and restore that blissful site to its former glory. The CorpSeCorps may have destroyed our Garden, but they have not destroyed our Spirit” (275).
The ruling Corporations had started feeling threatened by the success of Gardeners. From being simple plant-growers, the Gardeners had now spread their garden to a vast area and were generating positive influence on people. Their nature protecting religion had started converting many people and so, it had become necessary for the governing bodies to destroy them. Andrew Heywood describes such a dictatorial rule, “The central pillars of such regimes are a comprehensive process of surveillance and terroristic policing, and a pervasive system of ideological manipulation and control. In this sense, totalitarian states effectively extinguish civil society and abolish the ‘private’ sphere of life altogether” (Heywood 102).

Atwood has conceptualized tyranny, capitalism, hierarchy and power politics as linked to each other. The dominant, violent, and powerful CorpSeCorps wanted to destroy the existence of nature-loving Gardeners. It was clear that oppressors wanted slaves, not free thinkers. Many theorists have commented upon this kind of oppression by the ruling power. Mary Wollstonecraft is of the opinion that a social status in life which refuses one the decision-making capacity effectively keeps one from being virtuous. She directs that “every profession, in which great subordination of rank constitutes its power, is highly injurious to morality” (Wollstonecraft 17). Barbara Andrew comments, “For Wollstonecraft, any profession that operates with such vast power differentials corrupts society, and to hold such a system in esteem, as the government does with the military, is to sanction despotism” (Andrew 123).

Like Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf also probes the way particular professions shape the personalities of people. Some professionals want to maintain power only due to their greed for financial gains. As Adam One said in the novel,
“Alas, we were becoming too powerful for their liking. Many rooftops were blossoming as the rose; many hearts and minds were bent towards an Earth restored to balance. But in success lay the seeds of ruin, for those in power could no longer dismiss us as ineffectual faddists: they feared us, as prophets of the age to come. In short, we threatened their profit margins” (275). Woolf opines that getting rid of weapons will not be enough to change man who “is driven by voices in himself – ancient instincts, instincts fostered and cherished by education and tradition” (Woolf 246). The point is to bring the radical change in education of basic values and to teach the relationships of love and trust.

An ecofeminist peace politics makes visible how “isms of domination” are maintained and reinforced by patriarchy. It exposes and challenges relationships of power which function to maintain, perpetuate, and justify “isms of domination” and other oppressive relationships. The desire to remain powerful by suppressing the minorities and not allowing them freedom or their own choice of life, causes those having power to resort to violence. An ecofeminist peace politics explores conceptions of nonviolence in terms of appropriate uses of emotions and ethics. Karen J. Warren, in her article “Toward an Ecofeminist Peace Politics,” takes up the emotion of anger as an example and she writes that anger is appropriate if it challenges the oppressive and disrespectful behaviour, but it is inappropriate when it is used to dominate or control another being (Warren 194). Mc Allister writes, “The peculiar strength of nonviolence comes from the dual nature of its approach – the offering of respect and concern on the one hand and of defiance and stubborn noncooperation with injustice on the other” (McAllister iii-iv).
In the novel, the Gardeners had become a symbol of nonviolence and integrity. They were becoming popular with their anti-violence and nature connected activities. Their belief in vegetarianism was a step towards the feeling of oneness, shared among all the creations of the world. By being vegetarian, they were setting an example of ethic of care, against the dominance of patriarchal culture. Marti Kheel, advocating this concept of vegetarianism in her article “Vegetarianism and Ecofeminism Toppling Patriarchy with a Fork” writes, “I examine the sociocultural substructure that supports the practice of meat eating and, in particular, its foundation in patriarchal modes of thought.” (Kheel 327).

Marti Kheel has argued about the connection between the oppression of women and the oppression of animals, under the common patriarchal thinking. Both women and animals are considered as inferior and are exploited as a consumption material. The rational man practices meat-hunting and meat-eating as the methods of strengthening his manhood qualities. As Kheel argues:

Hunting, although not an exclusively male activity, has a long history of association with masculine self-identity. Many cultures require a young boy to hunt and kill an animal as a symbolic rite of passage into manhood. The initiation is designed to help the boy to detach from natural ties of affection, enabling him to transfer his allegiance to an external standard of manliness based on self-control and control over others. (Kheel 330)

In the novel, it was the same spirit of controlling others and detaching them from the natural ties of affection that led CorpSeCorps to uproot the communities
which were trying to save earth and were selflessly caring for the future generations. They had become a threat to the greedy and profit-oriented people whose selfish pursuits were destroying the planet in many ways. “Adam One used to say, If you can’t stop the waves, go sailing. Or else, What can’t be mended may still be tended” (279). Among the Gardeners, few women were the food experts who played their creative role in providing healthy and natural food. Their nature oriented activities were destroyed because of the profits involved in new scientific knowledge. Shiva comments on the bad effects of the destruction of natural way of life. She writes, “... a new death-based knowledge and development system, which puts violent modern man at war with the web of life in order to make profits and gain control over nature and the economy” (Shiva 164).

The power of money ruled and dominated the world of elite in the Compound. It was wealth that decided the family ties and bonds. Ren had become a victim of the artificial and modern wealthy society. Lucerne discarded her daughter as soon as her husband was kidnapped. She married another rich man and Ren was left on her own to earn. Suddenly, she had kicked her daughter out of her life for the sake of money. Toby, being a former fellow Gardener, saved her and took her to work at AnooYoo Spa.

The same lust for money is the cause behind environmental destruction. Modern man believes that progress made with the help of high finance and new inventions would make the development possible. As Hawken opines, “... [industrialized society has] quite naturally produced a dominant commercial culture that believes all resources and social inequities can be resolved through development,
invention, high finance and growth – always growth” (Hawken 5). But this kind of
development, based on exploitation and abuse of natural resources, is
‘maldevelopment’ according to ecofeminist perspective. Annie Muldoon comments
on the unfavourable consequences of new development practices that ignore the value
of preserving environmental balance. “This has led to pollution and the extraction of
irreplaceable resources. It has also helped to create communities of isolated
individuals and families who are led to believe that consumption is salvation”
(Muldoon n.pag.).

In *The Year of the Flood*, Gardeners who lived with nature-loving ideology
and practices opposed the corporate culture. They believed in simple living and
promoted natural way of life. The CorpSeCorps destroyed the Edencliff Rooftop and
tried to kill all the Gardeners. It was a strategy of the rulers to keep people separated
from nature-loving activities. Those activities could reduce their profits and could turn
common people against them. CorpSeCorps had resorted to brutal violence to destroy
the Gardeners. “Because of unjust Laws, we cannot learn the whereabouts of these,
our fellow Gardeners. We can only hope that they will die in unwavering Faith”
(311). Karen J. Warren describes this type of violence:

*Power-over power* serves to maintain, perpetuate, and justify relations
of domination and subordination by the coercive use or threat of force,
imposition of harms and sanctions, expression of disapproval or
displeasure, or restriction of liberties of the Downs by the Ups. This
power-over power may be overt or covert, individual or institutional,
intentional or unintentional, malicious or benevolent; its key feature is
that it is exercised by Ups over Downs. (Warren 182)
The domination of human beings over other human beings and the domination of human beings over nature are both interlinked practices and involve the hierarchical structure. Under the oppressive conceptual framework, nature is considered as subordinate and this type of thinking promotes human domination of nature. Animals are treated badly and are subjected to tyranny and brutal force. The Gardeners, in the novel, used to celebrate Saint Dian’s Day, who devoted her life for other species. She gave up her life while defending the Gorillas from ruthless exploitation. “She laboured for a Peaceable Kingdom, in which all Life would be respected; yet malignant forces combined to destroy both her and her gentle Primate companions” (311-2).

Similar concern of ecofeminists, for other living beings on the planet, forms their agenda of peace. Joni Seager writes, “Violence against animals often evokes a sexualized violence: the repeated forced pregnancies of dairy cows, the “rape racks” used by breeders, animals bound and splayed on dissection tables in laboratories” (Seager 209). Gardeners in The Year of the Flood were against violence of any kind but they could not escape from the torture of ruling authorities. They had to leave Rooftop Garden and had to change their living places frequently. Adam One, following the path of nonviolence, told other fellow Gardeners about Saint Dian who believed that other living beings deserve the same tenderness that we have for our beloved friends and families. Adam One told that the species for which Saint Dian gave her life were no more alive. “Like so many others, it has been wiped from the face of God’s planet” (312):
Too many violent hands and hearts!
Dian, too sadly few like you –
For when a Species dies from Earth,
We die a little too. (314)

The causes of violence have been analysed by many researchers while searching for other related factors also. A research on the “Anatomy of violence” quotes a 2011 study by the India Armed Violence Assessment, “A number of socio-economic factors contribute to crime, including poverty, inequality, unemployment, rapid urbanisation, and uncontrolled urban migration. The inefficiency of the security apparatus and the pervasive sense of impunity are further influencing factors” (Mullick 8). Another research on violence points at the upbringing problems and social factors. “Looking at the roots of aggression or violence, it is the result of insecure or/and disorganised early attachments such as parental or child-rearing attachments. It could also be influenced by external events and stimuli – triggers and frustrations as well as social and environmental factors” (Rai 1).

Adam One wondered that why human species was so much inclined towards violence. Why did human beings show cruelty towards animals? He knew that their cruelty would only end with a major catastrophe when human beings would be destroyed on a large scale. Adam One said:

What is it about our own Species that leaves us so vulnerable to the impulse to violence? Why are we so addicted to the shedding of blood? Whenever we are tempted to become puffed up, and to see ourselves as superior to all other Animals, we should reflect on our own brutal history. (312)
The Gardeners, who were the saviour of nature, had to hide at different places to protect themselves from the security guards. The people on the whole planet died at a very fast speed, after the catastrophe struck with a fatal virus. The virus was said to be spreading through air and water. The symptoms were haemorrhagic and the body got eaten up quickly. There were riots, bloodshed, and chaos on the streets. At last, the whole civilization came to an end. The remains of metal and glass buildings were scattered on the streets, indicating towards the end of man-made structures.

Amanda, Ren, Croze, Shackie, and Oates, all of them the previous Gardeners, are left alive after the catastrophe and they are planning to move to the forest as the cities are dangerous to live in because of the infection and broken buildings. The city that was preferred earlier as a dwelling place has turned inhabitable within a few days. The forest is a safer place to live and nature is the rescuer for humans. Ecofeminists have analysed the uses of forests and they argue that people living in forests are self-sufficient and autonomous. They have a stable relationship with their environment. Forests are the source of important herbs and materials used by rural people for their living. Ariel Salleh comments about people who live in forests, “... they use low-impact technologies; they work only a few hours a day, and give energies to social bonds, ceremony and art” (Salleh 130).

In the Indian civilization, forests have been worshipped as Aranyani (the Goddess of the forest). They are considered as the primary source of life and fertility. Contemporary human civilization is rooted in the city with huge buildings and noise of traffic. The mechanization has killed the wilderness that was earlier a part of human soul. People have been turned into machines by the oppressive structure of the modern civilization. Contrary to the violence prevalent in cities, forests provide peace
of mind and tranquillity. Vandana Shiva writes, “For the tribes of Central India, the forest is the context and condition of survival” (Shiva 57). The Chipko movement, popularly known as a women’s movement, is an example of the struggle for survival when few courageous women hugged trees to avoid them from felling. On 26 March 1974, a group of men arrived in the forest next to Reni village in the Garhwal district of Himalayas. They were sent by a contractor to cut 2,500 trees in the forest. About 25 women hugged the trees in response to the project of cutting trees and prevented them from felling. The movement became a symbol of women’s concern for environment and nature.

The philosophy of ecofeminism is to accept the non-human world as an integral part of our being. Ecofeminist Peace Politics proposes to maintain a peaceful and caring relationship with it. As Adam One said, “As Creator, God has put a little of Himself into each of His Creatures – how could it be otherwise? – and therefore the Tiger, the Lion, the Wolf, the Bear, the Boar, and the Shark – or, on the miniscale of things, the Water Shrew and the Praying Mantis – are in their way reflections of the Divine” (346). Men do not hesitate even in killing the extinct species that reflects their selfishness and unconcern for the environment. The fundamental questions are: “Which is more blessed, to eat or to be eaten? To flee or to chase? To give or to receive” (347)? Adam One sings a hymn against non-vegetarianism:

But we are not as Animals –

We cherish other Creatures’ lives;

And so we do not eat their flesh

Unless dread Famine drives. (348)
The Gardeners had predicted the apocalypse (Waterless Flood) and their prediction comes true. Although everything has destroyed, the destruction has given rise to a new morning. Gardeners are among the very few human beings that are left alive. Adam One says that they should rejoice in the rearranged world. They are privileged to witness the first precious moments of rebirth. There is no more man-created pollution and the air is cleaner. Adam One explains the dangerous effects of pesticides. He is remembering Saint Rachel Carson who dedicated her life for birds, and thus for the welfare of the entire planet. DDT was the biggest threat to birds in the times of Saint Rachel Carson. She was attacked by the powerful chemical corporations but she persisted with her campaign.

Adam One says that Gardeners have always believed in their aim as worthy, and in their methods without malice. They always had confidence in their natural way of life-style. Their nature-loving spirit is still alive and they have to move in firm faith for selfless ends. They have always heard the call of the seasons and have answered them. They have replenished the earth with life-affirming activities. Adam One asks, “Do we deserve this Love by which God maintains our Cosmos? Do we deserve it as a Species? We have taken the World given to us and carelessly destroyed its fabric and its Creatures” (424). Adam One says that due to unnatural practices by humans, they have been wiped out by plague and all other species are safe. Like a true warrior against the forces crippling the civilization, he prays at last for all the souls:

But let our going out be brave and joyous! Let us end with a prayer for All Souls. Among these are the Souls of those who have persecuted us; those who have murdered God’s Creatures, and extinguished His
Species; those who have tortured in the name of Law; who have
worshipped nothing but riches; and who, to gain wealth and worldly
power, have inflicted pain and death. (425)

The Gardeners who have survived after the plague have overpowered the
Painballers, responsible for creating terror. The patience and benevolence of
Gardeners have made them victorious at last. Toby is like an angel showering her
love, affection and care on everyone and stands strongly for the right purpose. The
Gardeners are supporting each other to promote their revolutionary ideas. They are
against the use of pesticides that are a severe environmental hazard. They are also
against the bad treatment of workers in the big companies. They believe in a sort of
utopian, nature-loving life. Another chapter of civilization begins after the destruction
of technology and technological minds. The new chapter has erased the actions of the
past. Carolyn Merchant writes about the effect of technology:

When the Scientific Revolution took hold, our cosmos ceased to be
viewed as an organism and became instead a machine, the earth was no
longer regarded as a nurturing mother to be cherished. (Merchant xv)

Karen J. Warren argues that the domination of women and domination of
nature are connected to each other in many ways. She establishes patriarchy as a
systematic and historical source of the twin dominations of women and nature.

Women are struggling to free themselves from the constraints that are making them
subordinate to men. Environmentalists are also developing an ecological ethic for
putting an end to environmental exploitation. An ecofeminist peace politics opposes
any form of domination, including practices such as toxic pollution by industries. It
values the relationships based on trust, love, and care – relationships with an ethic of sharing rather than sheer force. Various questions prick the conscience in the contemporary situation – What is happening to our world? What can we do to reverse the damage? How long have we got? What kind of people might undertake the challenge? The theorists of ecofeminist peace politics are making attempts to answer these questions by working for the agenda of creating a non-violent and a more tolerant world.

The treatment of animals in factory farming and in experimentation has been linked to male violence as a tool of domination. Women have also been the target of this violence in a dehumanizing manner. Rape resembles hunting in chasing the prey, the cruel attitude, and creation of terror in the victim. Recreational hunting has caused the extinction of the Arabian oryx, the Mexican jaguar, the Labrador duck, among dozens of other species. There is an alarming rise in the number of animal species becoming extinct. The biggest global importers of wild animal products are Americans, West Europeans, and Japanese. Wildlife preservation and the protection of animal species are on the priority agenda of environmental groups.

The environmentalists have to face opposition not only from the industrialists but government also. The militarized regimes and even the democratic governments have targeted them with mild expressions or force. Wangari Mathaai, a prominent leader of the Greenbelt movement in Kenya, was arrested several times in 1992 and was even beaten brutally by government police. Environmentalist groups in other countries working against pollution causing activities are also made the target.
In *The Year of the Flood*, the Gardeners become the target of violence under the authoritative rule. Their nature-loving practices become a threat to the ruling bodies. They persist with their rules and do not let their spirit die. The violence in various other forms has also been brought into picture in the novel. Women have to suffer from oppression at work places. They are exploited for reasons like poverty and unemployment. Nature is also targeted and its creatures are killed for various purposes. According to ecofeminist peace politics, peace can be attained only by removing social inequalities.

Men’s domination of women is deep and systematic. The oppression of women remains invisible many times. Analysis of the oppression of women reveals that it is linked to the neglect of environment. The novel *The Year of the Flood* sheds light on the connections between both oppressions. Women in the unit of SecretBurgers have to face exploitation and violence and at the same place, the rules of environmental ethics are broken. On the rooftop of Gardeners, women enjoy freedom, and work with nature and natural products. The clear distinction between the two places makes the agenda of ecofeminist peace politics discernible. Humanity must turn toward eco-community that holds respect and love for all living beings.

Atwood attempts to make people aware in *The Year of the Flood* so that they are able to look beyond their current ways of seeing. The novel tackles with environmental questions like global warming, over-population, pollution, depletion of natural resources, and bio-engineering. It also probes into problems linked with women’s oppression at various places. The novel comes as a warning against the choices our society is making in relation to ecology and the position of women. The theory of ecofeminism, as analysed in this novel, creates a vision around which grassroots movements can unite to form an egalitarian and sustainable world.
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