

**TOWARDS A CREDO OF CONTENTMENT: READING DAYA DISSANAYAKE'S
THE CLONE AS A POST- APOCALYPTIC NOVEL**

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Abstract

*Man has remained ever curious about the future of the individual, the species and the world. Significantly, this curiosity crystallises in fears and desires. Noted Sri Lankan novelist Daya Dissanayake has dealt with a remote future in his 2012 novel *The Clone*. Dissanayake describes the post- apocalyptic reality of an imaginary planet from the perspective of Inee, the novel's clone narrator. The text gives an account of a world-wide destruction that has led to the extinction of the human species. It explains this disaster as an inevitable result of unsustainable development and unbridled aggression. Inee, as a survivor, proposes an alternative direction for intelligence that may create and maintain an era of peace and prosperity as a new beginning. Significantly Inee's worldview is steeped in the teachings of Lord Buddha, and this fact makes the clone a veritable mouthpiece of the novelist.*

*In the proposed study I shall read *The Clone* with a view to highlighting the play of minatory and expectant emotions of the author about the march of time and the vicissitudes of life. Attempts will be made to situate Dissanayake's conjecture within and against the ecocentric tradition. In the process I shall seek to analyse the reasons for the novelist's preoccupation with an all -to-probable apocalypse and its possible aftermath that the novel displays and its readers delight in. I shall also pay attention to Dissanayake's bold, yet popular, construction of an alternative imaginary of contentment and well-being in and through the figure of the clone narrator in reaction to the human history of disastrous greed and dissatisfaction.*

Keywords: Daya Dissanayake, *the Clone*, Credo, Contentment, Post-Apocalyptic Fiction, Alternative Imaginary

Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fictions are subgenres of science fiction that are set in a time period where the earth is coming to an end. The post-apocalyptic novels almost always take place in the future, although some describe the end of past civilizations that no longer exist. Apocalyptic studies were first addressed in the field of religious discourse. The end of

the world and human society was seen in the Epic of Gilgamesh, written c. 2000–1500 BCE. But even within the field of apocalyptic religious studies, it was so dynamic that the terminology has led to confusion and perplexity.

The recent scholarship “distinguishes between apocalypse as a literary genre, apocalypticism as a social ideology, and apocalyptic eschatology as a set of ideas and motifs that may also be found in other literary genres and social settings” (Collins, *Imagination 2*). Recognizable modern apocalyptic novels had existed since at least the first third of the 19th century, when Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) was published; however, this form of literature gained widespread popularity after World War II, when the possibility of global annihilation by nuclear weapons entered the public consciousness. Henceforth the writers more clearly began to think about the post apocalyptic world. *The Road*, *The Stand*, *I Am Legend* are the classical examples of post- apocalyptic genre.

The term post-apocalypse is related to the situation after the destruction of the world. It also relates to an extremely bad condition in which it seems as if the world has been destroyed because of a viral pandemic, an asteroid impact or global nuclear war, or because of some environmental hazards. Post-apocalyptic literature explores possible human reactions to annihilation of the world. Most post-apocalyptic stories fall under the genre of science fiction. Post- apocalyptic stories are basically based on apocalyptic catastrophe focusing on how survivors function in a new environment. Though, post- apocalyptic stories are very diverse in spirit and in plot, it is recognisable for the inclusion of several common themes and narrative tropes. In post-apocalyptic fictions environmental contaminants are the common difficulties that the characters face. Post -apocalyptic fictions focus on some hypothetical issues like what could have presented the apocalypse, what will it take to rebuild society, what values are important to humanity. Almost all the post apocalyptic fictions nurture several specific facts as the main factors behind apocalypse. The annihilation may occur because of alien invasion or astronomical catastrophes like solar flares, asteroids, gamma rays and others. Destruction may also happen because of electromagnetic pulse or other environmental catastrophe or because of machine, robot or AI uprising. Medical disaster like pandemics, natural disaster like super volcanoes, massive firestorms may also be responsible for this catastrophe. Nuclear war/holocaust, reproductive failure or mass infertility, resource depletion like water or food shortage, supernatural phenomena may be the causes of apocalypse.

Often we interpret these post-apocalyptic writings as warning against the global tensions or warning against destruction. Chris Beley, a professor of anthropology at the University of Transylvania says in his *The Next Apocalypse*, " Our apocalyptic fantasies capture something we long for : the chance to do it all over, to simplify, or to get out from under something like debt or loneliness or dissatisfaction." Hence the post-apocalyptic fictions may be categorised

in two types- one is Utopian and the other is Dystopian. Utopian fiction always made people dream of an ideal and perfect place or state, where everyone lives in harmony and everything is for the best, apocalypse may bring a new land where the community will survive without harder struggle, where people will entertain equality. In post-apocalyptic dystopian fiction there is also a recurring narrative of survivorship. Survivorship here is interconnected with a story of struggle; it may be the story of the survival of an individual or may be story of the survival of a small group. In many cases this survival is much more dangerous and the victims find their lives meaningless and can't find a way out of it. This concept of nothingness came to public conscious after they saw the devastation of second world war and also miserable situations of the war survivors. This post-apocalyptic life is depicted in many fictions. For example, the protagonists in *The Road* and *The Walking Dead* must continually scavenge for resources and fight others who threaten their survival. However, the theme of survivorship is not simply about surviving conflicts with nature and other survivors. Those who survive must also confront the hopelessness and meaninglessness of post-apocalyptic life. Fight for survival is depicted in the novel *I Am Legend* and the film *Zombieland* (2009). Like the popular genres of post-apocalyptic fiction Daya Dissanayake's *The Clone* shows that the bipeds have been disappeared from the earth and the clones are ruling the mother earth. They are performing the task of monitoring all water resources in the world for any contamination and for any unusual changes in the flow. Again, following the post-apocalyptic genre Dissanayake explores the ideas of survivorship in his novel *The Clone*. Here ancient human community scurvies and they are different from the humanoids who are evolving in the post apocalyptic world. The clone finds out that this community somehow made itself detached from the technologically developed human society and followed the rules of an organic life. So it became able to escape destruction and it remained same age after age. Often, in post- apocalyptic fictions these communities take a different structure than those that existed before the apocalypse. But here we find the human group does not face much difficulty related to their survival, problems are there, but life is beautiful in the lap of nature. In *The Clone* we find the evolving humanoids communities. Here the survivorship is represented from different perspectives. Here the humanoids are ignorant what they should do but the clone knows all, specially Inee tries to detect the cause of annihilation only with the intention that she could do something for the survival of the humanoids. In the post-apocalyptic world, individuals have been dislocated from communities which had met social needs beyond merely basic survival by offering shared rituals, practices, and symbols. As these individuals from disparate backgrounds come together simply for survival, these ad hoc groups are often unstable and unable to provide shared social and emotional connections. The clones can't make an emotional connection either between themselves or with the post-human

humanoids or with the ancient human being. Inee can only observe, but she is neither interested nor permitted by the Entity to be involved in their lives.

Actually, *The Clone* is a historical novel from the future which deals with the post-human subjectivity in the 1348th century. The time span described here is from 13 4700- 134799 CE. The post-apocalyptic reality of an imaginary planet that the book describes is represented here from the perspective of non -human entity, the clone. In the 90's there came a trend to raise environmental issues as a literary theme. *The Clone* is an example of that trend, as Dissanayake is very much concerned with environmental issues. As we all know that cloning is a type of genetic engineering, a clone is a plant or an animal that is produced naturally or artificially from the cells of another plant or animal. In the novel the readers find that man had been annihilated from the earth, perhaps they had made it intolerable for their further living and also they had been incapable of protecting nature. So the Entity decides to create the clone and the five clones are given shape at the same time. The clone is in the future and it sees the prehistoric stage of people who had lived on distant Mother Earth. The clone Inee is narrating the story. The clone is travelling from one place to another place and it happens to see a few people who are on different jobs for their livelihood and children for their amusement. Those men, women and children are called humanoids by the clone as they have not yet reached the physical or mental stage in evolution to identify them as humans.

In a casual conversation with me regarding the novel the novelist said that evolution stopped with human beings becoming bipeds. He had started using his hands to destroy. He managed to turn every tool he discovered or invented into a weapon, against man himself, the other animal beings and all plant life and natural resources. Daya Dissanayake in the same conversation said that through his fiction *The Clone*, he is trying to piece together the step by step destruction, beginning with the use of fire and iron and other minerals leading to the radioactive. In the novel *The Clone*, Dissanayake introduces the readers to a lurking disaster that devastates the entire living environment that should have been respected. Every living phenomenon has certain basic moral and legal rights to live and flourish that is also the core belief of Deep Ecology that had been used by Dissanayake consciously or unconsciously. Often this concept of deep ecology is framed in terms of the idea of a cosmopolitan reality so that it recognizes diverse communities of life on Earth. Deep ecology values ethical relations among living beings more than its resource value. Buddhism always talks about the meditative values of nature. Buddhism carries an inseparable connection with nature. Buddha Dharma was born and evolved in nature. The ascetic Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, attained enlightenment under a Bo tree in a forest on the bank of the Nerañjara River. His first lecture sermon was delivered by Buddha in Deer Park. He spent quite a significant part of his life in natural surroundings. Nature was always present in the four main events of the Buddha's life: birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon and death. The Dhammapada records

Buddha's attitude towards nature. He appreciated the serenity of forests: "pleasant are the forests, where the ordinary person does not delight." (Dhammapada: Verse 99). There are ample examples that the Buddha and his monastic disciples often spend their time doing meditation in the forest away from the hustle and bustle of the busy city. The sounds of birds and animals in the forest were quite helpful to be found to be consonant with the great philosophy of Buddhist insight. Buddhist reflection and awareness of Nature appears most clearly in the use of natural phenomena. These phenomena are often used as a source of simile and parable in the Buddhist teachings. Since Buddhist doctrine is abstract, it becomes necessary to find suitable ideas in the world of everyday experience in order to convey to laymen and leaders in communities the importance of the teachings of Buddha. The natural images derived from human culture ensure the close relation of Buddhist teachers and the people in ancient times within agricultural and village settings.

Dissanayake being a practicing Buddhist finds that the fall in the ethical relationship between the natural phenomenon, specially man's cruel and insensitive attitude towards nature is the cause of the breakup of this interconnectedness between man and environment. Man calls the destruction because he tries to find only the resource value or utilitarian value of nature. The clone searches the causes of annihilation and in her own way she finds out the causes. Perhaps Gia destroys human being to protect the mother Earth with its other living phenomenon. The narrator clone mentions that five clones are created by the Entity for different purposes. But in the novel the author's concentration is on the clone named Inee among them. The clones are engaged in the assignments of controlling temperature, humidity, radiation, and other such parameters. In this fiction Dissanayake, makes the readers aware of the disaster that destroys the entire environment. The ecological perspective which is constructed under eco-criticism delineates the nature-human relationship in both detrimental and constructive ways. If we analyse the novel from an ecocritical perspective we must recognise the fact that the trend of ecocriticism progresses from seeing nature as a mystic substance. It focuses on nature's interconnectedness to action and highlights the necessity of giving emphasis on the importance of maintaining nature. The clone expects that the new species of humanoids will evolve with eco-consciousness and eco-literacy about environmental issues. To bring awareness about the necessity of maintaining the eco-centric tradition of Mother Earth, the author narrates the whole novel with the help of a clone which is a product similar to a human being. But unlike human beings they are asexual and free from other needs such as eating, drinking, excreting, bathing, mating etc. The clone Inee possesses a researcher's mind and also has the habit of reading books, its focus is basically on the 20th and 21st century. Through her research she finds out that in the 21st century human civilization reached the peak of its development. Like the author, Inee, the clone also sees development as the root cause of destruction. In several interviews Dissanayake had

mentioned the point with explanation why development is actually another name of destruction. However, the clone doesn't find any record after the 21st century; perhaps the entity doesn't think it worthy enough to keep the record. So, she can't guess the real cause of annihilation of homo sapiens and the necessity of creating clones to protect Mother Earth.

Throughout the novel Inee is searching the actual causes of the ultimate annihilation of the human being. The clone speculates various probable reasons for human being's disappearance from this earth. One of them is man's turning into a carnivore because it kills the habit and intention of living in harmony with nature. Inee guesses it could have been a case of collective mass suicide because of some religious madness. She also guesses it could have been the danger from nuclear weapons, biological weapons, toxic pollution or worse still genetic pollution. Gia might have been instrumental in any way for this annihilation. Perhaps she was trying to eliminate the major threat (human being) for her survival. Mother Earth could not let the arrogant humans destroy everything else in their attempt at self destruction. Gaia, Mother Earth, or the Universe, if she is alive, could have taken steps to protect herself. This could have been an act of self defence. Or it could have been the maternal instinct of protecting the lives of all living beings on earth, which required the elimination of one life form, which was the threat to all others.

Reverence for nature is identified in the novel *The Clone*. Three important things are observed in the novel, *The Clone* regarding this reverence for nature. Firstly, knowing and connecting one's true self, secondly, concerning and connecting both ecologically and spiritually the Mother Earth, thirdly, maintaining balance with all living community. Vehement love and concern towards nature are significant for maintaining eco-centric tradition in this world. Imbalance in Ecosystem could have been the pivotal factor to prompt the apocalypse. Disappearance of soothing musics of nature and development of technology have an effective influence on the decline of plant life. The harmony had been disrupted because of monoculture.

Dissanayake tries to construct an alternative imaginary of contentment and well-being in and through the figure of the clone narrator in reaction to the human history of disastrous greed and dissatisfaction. As the Buddha made a journey in search of truth, so does the clone. Through her journey and inquisitive mind of learning, Inee got enlightened with the thought that it was Buddha Dharma which could have saved human being. Through her concentration on the Mother Earth the clone acquires Buddhahood in the form of ecological wisdom. Like Buddha Inee also had explained the three levels of understanding. "Dii, panna and bodhi. Views could be wholesome or harmful. Knowledge or Science by itself is not sufficient. It is only wisdom or insight that will lead a person out of his dukkha..."(135, Dissanayake). As the Homo Sapiens had used their intelligence and imagination more for self destruction than for the benefit of their future generation, so the clone Inee wants the humanoids to be

evolved with no 'Avijja' or ignorance. Inee further explains that the 'Avijja' is not only the absence of knowledge. Rather it is not seeing the things as they really are. Perhaps in the future, the successors of the humanoids will understand the causes and conditions of life and death cycle: "... from birth arises aging and death, and then these creatures would have to go back to find that birth arises due to clinging, which arises due to craving. Craving arises due to six senses, which arise from nama-rupa, which arises from consciousness which arises from avijja" (137). She considers that this would be her legacy to future humanity, if the humanoids ever evolved into a higher form. She wants to leave for them the message of Buddha, but in a more restricted way so that they can reduce the dogmatic clashes and protect their planet showing reverence to Nature. The Clone assures that her new found faith in the Buddha will show guidance for the bipeds evolving on their planet.

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