

HUMOROUS ACCOUNTS IN DESCRIBING NATURE IN SYED MUJTABA ALI'S DESHR BIDESHE

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Abstract. Syed Mujtaba Ali is well known for his crafty comments in any circumstance, occasion, or location. His perceptive analysis is regarded as a standard in Bangla literature. In his book *Deshe Bideshe* that written and published in 1948, he described natural situations in various ways, just like he would have described any other situation. These powerful descriptions contain comedy, kindness, toughness, and emotion. It is well-acknowledged that comedy eases the complexity of any problem and nurtures positivity. Ali's writing is not just descriptive; it provides a sense of the experience out in nature, which is both funny and poetic. Ali uses his sense of wonder to tap in emotionally into the nature sphere, making tiny reflect and realize on readers' relationship with it. This study examines Syed Mujtaba Ali's insightful observations about the natural world through humorous remarks. The project will investigate how humour can be used to raise environmental awareness in the future.

Keywords: *humorous travelogue, eco humour, nature and perception, environmental awareness*

Introduction

In the arena of travelogues in Bengali literature, Ali (2018) earns a special appreciation due to its unique manner of humor incorporated with insightful observations of the natural world. This travelogue depicts the various landscapes and cultures in an exquisite manner and holds the audience in an engaging manner. Ali's humorous description turns seemingly mundane things to be magical for readers and provide unique perception to the environment. In this paper I analyze the comic narrations Ali uses in *Deshe Bideshe* that both entertain and enlighten the readers on nature; thus, illuminating an argumentative strategy for conveying environmental awareness. Through evaluating the ideas of anthropomorphism, hyperbole, satirical commentary, and playful language used by the author, the study will reveal the positive influence of his work in developing people's empathy towards the nature. Syed Mujtaba Ali (1904-1974), born in Sylhet, which was then part of British India and is now in Bangladesh) contributed to Bengali literature through travelogues, essays, novels and short stories. Thus, his rich linguistic experience, multilingualism including Bengali, English, German, Arabic and Persian and academic career including his schooling at one of the premier institutions, Visva-Bharati University Santiniketan under the tutelage of Rabindranath Tagore provided him a cosmopolitan outlook. Ali's unique way of writings hardly remain 'writing', it becomes storytelling. Thus Ali's is attributed for initiating a new style of writing in Bengali literature termed as 'Majlishi dhonge lekha', storytelling or gossip style writing to translate literally in English.

The primary source of this study *Deshe Bideshe*, translating back to English 'In Foreign Lands,' published in the year 1948. Indian linguist and educationist Suniti Kumar Chatterji expresses the event 'I call the publication of Mujtaba Ali abroad as a remarkable event in the history of Bengali literature' (Chatterji, 1988). The travelogue

narrates the author's living in Afghanistan in the 1920s teaching at the Kabul University. This travelogue is distinguishable due to a detailed and rather interim narrative that includes the host's extraordinary stories, as well as insights into a specific country's life, in combination with the provision of historical background, all of which is accompanied by Ali's comics and irony. The travelogue revolves around the expedition and residence of the writer in Afghanistan accompanied by Ali: the main persona profiling every interaction with the geography, the people and culture. According to Hossain (2023), the fascinating appeal of Mujtaba Ali's journey narrative is based on the author's outstanding style and the ability to make people laugh. The travelogue is laid down episodic, and each chapter deals with some aspects of his journeying. This framework allows the reader to involve into understandings of various components of the Afghan culture and society impossible without focus on the main character, Ali. These do not just promote humor but serious reflections and social commentary regarding human beings' relationship with the world. His use of humor produces an engaging and easily comprehensible story that captures a wide audience; thus, it identifies the peculiarities of the narrative style of this travelogue. Humbling witty narration makes readers not just interested in understanding the shapes of Afghan worlds but also in the conceptual thoughts and messages Ali put into his graphics and writing. As Chakraborty (2005) states "The chief charm of Mujtaba's literature is its humour and what is even available in this very first book of Mujtaba. The introduction witty remarks, drollery and mockery have enhanced the suaveness of language. Even the description of unspeakably rainy days of life have been touched with pale smile. Of course, the shadow of melancholy lies behind the smiles and frolics". Therefore, due to his unusual sense of humor, Ali changes nature writing into an entertaining, informative, and inspiring genre. His contribution continues to be useful in the field of literature, and environmental conservation, and encourages people to pay attention to natural surroundings and engage in meaningful introspection on humans' interactions with the environment.

On the other hand, Nature is where we live and die. As mentioned by Khosravi et al. (2022) indicated that nature not only provides benefits physically but also mentally. The study tried to point out that Almighty's blessings are somehow depended on how nature has been treated. At one point the study states, "The selection from the collection of poems also shows us that nature cures the soul of the sick and sad. If nature is treated with dignity and is well protected, then humans can reap economic and spiritual benefits from it. The essence of Neruda's poems is that God's blessings are always there for those that treat nature with kindness and dignity" (Khosravi et al., 2022). Unfortunately, the environmental problem has peaked. None of the steps or initiatives have created the need in the hearts of the human race to act to conserve environment. Topaltsis et al. (2018) claimed that the threats in most of the climate change awareness ads include fear appeals that are presented in the form of headlines and visuals that depict disastrous and unknown consequences. This leads to elements like fear, anxiety and concern among the population, efforts that are made. This is a justification for why most people ignore climate change and are willing to deny its existence. Interestingly besides introducing serious health and environmental issues, a novel tendency has appeared to solve the environmental problem not by launching a serious campaign and increasing environmental awareness, but by making it funny.

As Bore and Reid (2014) concluded in 'Laughing in the Face of Climate Change? Satire as a Device for Engaging Audiences in Public Debate' that their article has found

two significant advantages of employing a satirical approach in climate change communication through the analysis of the stage play 'U: Reviewing 'The Comedy of Global Warming,' interviews with the author of the play and/or the director, and the public response. The research project titled 'Humorous Accounts in Describing Nature in Syed Mujtaba Ali's Deshe Bideshe' focuses on identification of methods that can be associated with the use of humor in describing natural environment in the travelogue. This study will also assess the rhetorical strategies used by Ali including; Anthropomorphism, Hyperboles, Satire and Use of Funny Words. It is necessary to comprehend how these factors assist in the progression of the story and engage the readers. Further, this study aims at classifying the approaches of Ali then and now applied to comedy to assess and display environmental consciousness. Besides, it is expected to evaluate the impact of the humorous descriptions on the reader engagement and the connections elicited with natural surroundings, which can be invaluable for literary studies. This paper focuses on Syed Mujtaba Ali's sense of humor in descriptions of nature to understand the classification of comedy and assess the extent of environmental consciousness. It also assesses the effects of these humorous descriptions on the readers' interest and attachment to the natural world. Therefore, this article points to the relevance of Ali's work and offers insightful insights to the readers, educators, and scholars in literature and environmentalism for the advancement of literary studies.

Literature review

Infusing humour in describing nature in literature has got a long-standing tradition. This tradition enriches the genre by adding such valuable qualities as creativity, sarcasm, and lightness to nature writing. This technique gives the readers entertainment and at the same time helps them appreciate and interact more with the physical nature. Various splendid authors from different literature periods and states have effectively contributed in depicting nature humourously.

In the ancient literature

In Antiquity, people perceived the biological world humorously as can be seen from Aristophanes's plays *The Birds* (414 bc) and *The Frogs* (405 bc). *The Birds* is a comedy play that focuses on the bird society as the rightful rulers of the world; thus, Aristophanes is exaggerating the concept of society to ridicule humans. Likewise, *The Frogs* presents a chorus of some frogs who perform comic croaking and babbling, which is a caustic irony on Athens's intellectual and cultural climate. Another interesting example is Lucian's *Verae Historiae* (as stated *True Histories* in English of 2013), where the author depicts a trip to the Moon and the travelers meet odd terrains and even odder plants and animals. The Moon itself is described to have rivers of wine, fields of crystal and other such fanciful qualities. This lunar environment is so ridiculous that it mocks the hyperbole of the nature wonders that is typical of the modern travel writing.

Medieval literature

Geoffrey Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* in 1476, and Shakespeare in some of his popular plays such as *As You Like It* in 1623, have used humor for providing portrayal of the quirkiness and peculiar wilderness of the natural world. As determined by Stanbury (2004) *The Miller's Tale*, a bawdy tale, is filled with nature that points out the

foolishness of the carpenter and his superstitions. In *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, a beast fable, Chaucer uses the barnyard to anthropomorphize animals focusing on their vanity, arrogance, and mockery of the fowls. In the General Prologue, a story of spring, of *The Canterbury Tales* contrasts the beauty of the nature with the sinful people is evident. It is worthy to note that in all of the Shakespeare's pastoral comedies, the natural scenery is used as the place where the funny events and meetings will occur. *The Forest of Arden*, in *As You Like It*, is the legal setting of the follies of love and the absurdity of human behavior and even the trees and animals that are intermingled with the comedy of the characters' misfortune (Mentz, 2018). Thus, such great pieces do not employ humour only in relation to comedies but embodied critiques of the social situation, which reveal that man is an insecure player in the world, as nature forecasts, in relation to the ebb and flow.

During the enlightenment and romantic era

During the Enlightenment, humorous descriptions of nature were a way to express satire and social critique. For example, in *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726, Jonathan Swift exaggerated natural scenery and animal behavior to reflect and criticize human stupidity and society's norms. Thus, using irony and sarcasm to describe the natural environment allows one to focus on the absurdity and contradictions that are born from people's attempts to understand and control the world around them. The Romantics on the other hand embraced humour as a way of exploring the aspect of the nature that is whimsical, the marvellous. But there are exceptions where nature is treated with fun. To exemplify, after a threadbare discussion on romantic poet William Wordsworth's poem "To Joanna", Lafford and Ward (2023) concludes that, Wordsworth, who is traditionally associated with a rather solemn attitude toward nature, offers laughter as the link between people and the world. This is despite the fact that his poetry also stress uniqueness of nature and ourselves as well as the world. In the same study similar claim has been made regarding John Clare's sonnet "The Wrynecks Nest". At the last line of the sonnet the poet writes "... thinks the strange bird guards a serpents nest", a bird guarding a snake's nest creates a humour which is incongruous in pattern (Lafford and Ward, 2023). Indeed the famous Romantic admired that relics a delightful and awe-inspiring aspect when depicting the natural world through poetry, but some poems are different.

Modernist and postmodernist literature

The representations of the natural world depict subtlety and satire of the Modernist writers, reflecting the complexity of the mind and environs. For instance, Mark Twain employs the element of comedy when depicting the physical features of Mississippi River and surroundings in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1884 (Branch, 2014). The humorous factor is incorporated into the story by use of Huck who is naive and bold right throughout the story. To begin with, Twain employs the elements of exaggeration, child's point of view and satire to make the reader perceive the river as a leviathan. The mysterious actions of the river are given occasionally to demonstrate the impossible ways of taming nature, which increases audience involvement and focuses on impressions and liberation. In two of Nigeria playwright Wole Soyenki's plays, *The Swamp Dwellers* in 1958 and *A Dance of Forests* in 1960, satire has been used to uphold the very notion of being alienated from nature. This very satire was intended for

the Yoruba tribe. He believes that the interaction with the non-human world is excessive, and results in environmental issues (Al Fawareh et al., 2023).

In 1998, Bill Bryson published *A Walk in the Woods*, a funny account of his attempt to hike the Appalachian Trail. Schagen (2005) quotes from *A Walk in the Woods* "Woods choke off views and leave you muddled and without bearings. They make you feel small and confused and vulnerable, like a small child lost in a crowd of strange legs". And states Through character sketches and satire, Bryson increases people's concern and interest in environmental questions and the natural world. Additionally, Bill Bryson, known for his sardonic yet sympathetic travelogues, provides readers a beautiful expedition around Australia in his book *Down Under: Travels in a Sunburned Country* in 2000. And here is his rather. Each page of Bryson's book seems to present a devilishly detailed list of the fatal fauna and flora of Australia along with comical take on the grand spectacles of the Australian natural landscapes. Australia's fauna and flora are represented by sociopathic jellyfish, homicidal crocodiles, death-spiders dwelling in toilets, and murderous plants.

Writings on Deshe Bideshe

Although it was first published in 1948 in Bangla, Nazes Afroz translated it into English in 2015 under the title *In a Land Far from Home: A Bengali in Afghanistan*. Due to a lack of international readership, the legendary book received limited attention. There are articles on the book *Deshe Bideshe* in Bangla focusing on the writing style, humour, and colonial perspectives. To start with Abhijit Ghosh's 'Syed Mujtaba Ali's *Deshe Bideshe*: An Indian's Perspective on Afghanistan in 2020. This article compares Ali's *Deshe-Bideshe* with another British travelogue Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* in 1937. In the article, the comparison involved the colonial perspective. To Ghosh, Byron's travelogue is typically Eurocentric compared to Ali's. The presence of 'Othering' is dominant in Byron's writing. Ghosh shows that Byron is less interested in the socio-political issues of Afghanistan. Byron, he adds, hardly depicted any picture of Afghan society. At the same time, Ali's book echoes the voices of almost all classes of Afghan society. Ghosh terms Ali's travelogue as heteroglossic and Robert Byron's writing monologic.

Additionally, Md Siddique Hossain's *A Glimpse into Afghanistan through Syed Mujtaba Ali's 'Deshe Bideshe': An Indian Voyager's Insightful Lens* in 2023 can be considered as the recent scholarly article on *Deshe Bideshe*. To Hossain (2023), the travel narrative is a unique work that offers insights into Afghanistan's social and cultural transformation during the colonial era. Ali's firsthand experience with colonialism in India and deep understanding of history enables him to depict the Afghan identity in the face of foreign colonial forces and internal turmoil. This work is stimulating and demanding, as it does not seek to demystify or categorise like colonial works. In the article, Hossain refers to Justine D. Edwards and Rune Graulund to uphold the notion that postcolonial travel writing challenges the authority of colonial powers and the connection between travel and dominance. Hossain's article aimed to foster dialogue between southern regions and promote regional cooperation, unlike Robert Byron's travelogue that presents Afghanistan as a historical artifact in need of British safeguarding. Chakraborty (2005) published *Sayed Mujtaba Ali Life and Literature* in 2005 is the only PhD-level dissertation on Syed Mujtaba Ali in English. The dissertation covers Ali's life, travelogues, novels, essays, short stories, and light works in six chapters. Chakraborty identifies Ali as a unique essayist who comprehensively drew

thoughts throughout his life with uncommon themes. The dissertation primarily focused on Ali's work as a whole, rather than any specific book. A memorial book on Ali (2018) contains two dedicated chapters on the book *Deshe Bideshe*. These chapters, written by two renowned Bengali writers, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee and Bimal Mukherjee, are titled 'Deshe -Bideshe' and 'Deshe-Bideshe: Fire Porar Boi', respectively. Both pieces focus on Ali's unique conversational writing style rather than a more conventional approach.

Academic discussion on eco comedy

When an environmental issue is addressed comically or humorously, it becomes eco-comedy. Environmental comedy, also known as eco-comedy, deals with environmental issues by using humour to combine entertainment with a thought-provoking ecological issue. Eco-comedy or environmental comedy puts out an environmental message directly incorporated in comedy, which although makes an entertainment out of it but give a perspective on ecological matters. Recent studies termed Eco-comedy as better technique rather than those used in awareness creation. As humour makes any complex issue more obtainable and comprehensible, the combined method results in effective communication in addressing climate or environmental matters. According to Takach (2022), "Thus eco-comedy is more than a fringe electric in the environmental humanist's garage. It's a vehicle that can disarm, reveal truths, engage, spread, unite, inspire, empower, and create new orientations, visions, and spaces to jump-start us to beneficial action. So whether it pumps up a practitioner's toolkit, a teacher's lesson plan, or a scholar's lexicon, eco-comedy is certifiably (ahem) a natural (Takach, 2022). To prove the claim, Russell et al. (2023) finding is relevant, which states:

"Shifting from the sketch comedy used by Spörk and colleagues, Emma Carroll-Monteil probed the educative potential of a related form, stand-up comedy, in her paper, "Is Climate Change Education a Laughing Matter?" She conducted an online survey of 62 people from around the world who had watched a 30-minute clip from environmental economist and stand-up comedian Matt Winning's Climate Strange act. Participants of all ages not only enjoyed watching the show but found it informative, and also reported that they felt less fearful about climate change and somewhat more hopeful after doing so."

Bore and Reid (2014) assert that satire encourages active participation in climate change thought-provoking reflection, examination, and action. This is the first significant advantage of satire in climate change communication. The other important benefit of using comic element in climate change communication is that such a tone can inspire positive involvement with climate change. Fang et al. (2023) argue that the instructional content provided to pupils during outdoor learning can become monotonous and uninteresting. The authors assert that teachers must possess a sense of humour when instructing. Moreover, incorporating humour into environmental education can assist in acquainting pupils with biocultural distinctions and enhancing "cross-cultural inclusivity" in environmental education programs (Arias, 2022). However, it is crucial to underscore that educational systems worldwide must prioritize integrating environmental education across multiple subjects in the curriculum.

Thus, eco-comedy has become one of the most important subgenres that manages to use humor to engage the audience in ecological issues. It is regarded by scholars as a work that can provoke profound reflection while at the same time entertaining the

audience. This literary technique employs satire, irony, and ridiculousness to point out man's negligence in the supervision of the environment and to provoke thought on ecological ethics. According to Murray and Heumann (2014), eco-comedy uses humor to focus the viewers' attention on serious ecological issues that make otherwise complex topics easier to understand for a large audience. In these narratives the implementation of satire challenges the human centred view of the world and encourages a more harmonious relationship with the environment (Murray and Heumann, 2014). Furthermore, scholarly works such as "Green Comedy: Shakespeare and Ecology" by Mentz (2018) show how classical texts may provoke modern ecological consciousness and reveal the contradictions of humanity's relationship with nature. Dobrin and Morey (2009) also look at making impressions with visual rhetoric in eco-comedy; the authors rely on humorous aspects to convey the gravity of the issue of environmental destruction. Meeker (1974) comments that in comedies, nature is depicted in a way that reveals the futility of man's attempts to tame nature, and thereby point out the need for a harmonious relationship with the environment. Meeker (1974) notes that the productive and stable ecosystems are characterized by the minimization of the negative aggressiveness, at the same time increasing the variability of its members, and achieving harmony between them. These characteristics are primarily incorporated in the literary humour. In the book *Film, Environment, Comedy: In "Eco-Comedies on the Big Screen in 2022*, by Robin Murray and Joseph K. Heumann, the authors discuss the history of eco-comedies in cinema of the past eight decades. The writers explore the use of comedy in films as a way to deal with environmental problems, which increases the spectators' interest and helps to create deeper reflection. Their work proves that comedy can be useful in creating awareness of environment problems and at the same time entertain people.

Theoretical framework

The article "Humorous Accounts in Describing Nature in Syed Mujtaba Ali's Deshe Bideshe" is based on a theoretical framework that draws upon many literary and psychological theories. These theories aim to elucidate the role and significance of humour in literature, specifically within the genre of nature writing. Based on the nature of the research, this framework will examine the role of humour as a means of fostering engagement, promoting education, and establishing emotional connections. It will draw upon ideas of literary humour and ecological criticism. Discussing humour is always sensitive. As the saying goes, 'Humor can be dissected, as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process, and the innards are discouraging to any but the purely scientific mind' (White and White, 1941). Researchers and academicians feel it challenging to bypass the consequence of dissecting humour. As a result, only some works are available in this field. Scottish philosopher James Beattie first classified the theories of humour, superiority, incongruity, and release/relief in his *Essays on the nature and immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism* in 1807. Ancient Greek philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle and philosophers from the Middle Ages like Descartes and Baudelaire, viewed humour as a form of disdain and malevolence. They believed laughter, or comedy, was a form of humiliation and superiority. In Plato's *Republic*, laughter was seen as a feature that did not belong to those of high rank. Aristotle also viewed humour as a form of mockery. Thomas Hobbes, Rene Descartes, and Charles Baudelaire contributed to the superiority theory of humour. Hobbes believed that laughter was a feeling of sudden glory and superiority to others. Descartes

viewed laughter as an expression of scorn and ridicule, while Baudelaire viewed it as satanic. In the 21st century, philosophers like Sir Roger Vernon Scruton have endorsed the superiority theory of humour, arguing that laughter results from feeling superior. In the early eighteenth century, relief and incongruity theories emerged in response to this theory.

The Relief Theory of Humour suggests that laughter is a state of mind that uses humor to relieve nervous energy. This concept originated in Earl of Shaftesbury's essay, *An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor*. Herbert Spencer later demonstrated how silliness can turn into laughter, releasing nervous energy. Sigmund Freud further developed the theory, arguing that laughter releases psychic energy instead of nervous energy. He differentiated wit, comedy, and humour as the three primary sources of laughter, and claimed that experiencing laughter varies from person to person. John Dewey proposed a release theory similar to Spencer's, stating that laughter signifies the ending of suspense or expectation, making it a phenomenon similar to a sigh of relief. The Incongruity Theory of Humour is a concept that suggests that humor arises when something contradicts our mental patterns or expectations. It was first introduced by Frances Hutcheson in his book *Reflections Upon Laughter*, challenging Hobbes's Superiority Theory. Scottish philosopher James Beattie was the first to use the term 'Incongruity'. Emanuel Kant further developed the theory, stating that a solid hope can suddenly turn into nothing, leading to laughter. Arthur Schopenhauer, a contemporary to Kant, believed that humour arises from a clash between 'sensuous' and 'abstract knowledge'. Søren Kierkegaard also developed the Incongruity Theory, stating that comedy is a fundamental element of life and is born out of contradiction, contrasting tragedy with 'painless contradiction'. This theory is vital to comic amusement and deviates from presupposed norms. As per above mentioned features of humour, it is appropriate to mention subcategories of humour too. A piece of irony in a particular play might fall under the superiority theory. Similarly, another piece of irony in a novel might be categorised under incongruity theory. Michael Hill, President of Stephen Leacock Associates, lists 19 types of humour in his writing 'Types of Humour Used in Literature'. In the writing, almost all the terms in the research done by Alleen and Lee are found with the addition of hyperbole, sarcasm, satire, understatement, self-deprecating humour, pun, parody, euphemism, black comedy, and juvenile humour.

As mentioned earlier, Eco-comedy theory suggests that humor may be a potent instrument in tackling environmental concerns by utilizing the accessibility and relatability of comedy to captivate audiences with significant ecological subjects. To be precise, the idea of eco humour was first initiated by Northrop Fry in his book *The Anatomy of Criticism* in 1957 suggesting a relation between natural world and humour (Mentz, 2018). Recent claim has been made that humour in climate change issues has been less utilized (Carter, 2022). He then focuses on the importance of humour in climate issues and environmental education, with special emphasis on climate change media (Carter, 2022). This theoretical framework proposes that eco-comedies can effectively criticize detrimental environmental practices and society norms by employing satire, parody, and absurdity. This approach aims to be both entertaining and intellectually stimulating. Humor has the ability to disarm audiences, enabling them to face hard facts without the usual resistance that comes with direct criticism. Eco-comedy uses humour, irony, anthropomorphism, exaggeration, and hyperbole to scrutinise human actions and society perspectives about the environment. It prompts viewers to contemplate their behaviour and the consequences for the environment.

Anthropomorphism, a literary device that involves attributing human characteristics to animals and natural components, increases the ability of people to connect with ecological issues. The use of exaggeration and hyperbole serves to emphasise the consequences of environmental neglect, fostering empathy and fostering a stronger bond with the natural world. Eco-comedy efficiently conveys the significance of ecological sustainability and promotes a more knowledgeable approach to our interactions with the environment.

Materials and Methods

The method employed in the research paper is qualitative and is based on the analysis of literary texts; therefore, it can be stated that the paper effectively and clearly explicates the comedic facets of *Deshe Bideshe* by Syed Mujtaba Ali. Such an approach enables an investigator to provide a rich account of the creation of humour and its potential effect on people's views on nature. This is as a result of the realisation of the process and reason of humour and its ability in influencing the perceptive aspects of readers in regard to aspects of nature. The engagement of humour in the study will also employ other literary devices to ensure the investigation of the processes of humour production and its influence in regard to the perception of nature by readers. Taking into account the methods of depicting Ali in the course of the investigation, the study will use several literary and analytical approaches. As for the research methodology used in the present study, it is a qualitative content analysis that suits the nature of the studied texts well due to the focus on the intricate usage of language and humour. This technique will analyze and scrutinize the used text to determine and discuss the methods Ali employs in his portrayal of humorous aspects of nature. Thus, the principal source used in this investigation is the travel account *Deshe Bideshe*, written by Syed Mujtaba Ali. As the book is written in Bengali, the study has selected the English translation of Nazees Afroz's *In a Land Far from Home: A Bengali in Afghanistan in 2015*. The assessment will mainly focus on passages that explain features of the natural world and relationships between people and nature.

The secondary sources will include journal articles, books and critical essays that analyze the technique used by Ali, and the role of comedy in his works besides outlining his impact on the Bengali literature. These sources will give background information and improve comprehension surrounding the assessment of the primary text. This analysis will be conducted with the help of the theory that is discussed above lit humour theory and the ecological criticism. By employing the highlighted method in the present work, a comprehensive systematic approach can be distinguished for exploring the humour associated with the realistic narratives in Syed Mujtaba Ali's *Deshe Bideshe*. Again, the success of the study's objective depends on the ability to adopt and effectively apply content analysis qualitative analysis; and a strong analytical framework to reveal techniques and effects of the portrayals of nature as used by Ali. This will go a long way in enhancing the existing knowledge about his writings and his passion towards environmental conservation.

Results and Discussion

Syed Mujtaba Ali combines his travelogues with beautiful description of nature in a very befitting manner. The travelogues attained its exceptionality through the comical

elements like anthropomorphism, personification, hyperbole, exaggeration, and satirical commentaries. This particular section will refer to relevant narratives as Ali narrates describing nature in Deshe Bideshe. It is pertinent to mention that, all the excerpts from this section have been quoted from Nazees Afrooz's *In a Land Far from Home: A Bengali in Afghanistan in 2015*, the English-translated version of *Deshe Bideshe*.

Witty anthropomorphism

A common trend found in the travelogue is that Ali personifies nature by providing human qualities which results powerful and empathetic impact. Such implication strengthens the comedic aspect and does a wonderful job at depicting the natural world to the reader. For example, at the beginning of the travelogue Ali describes the scorching heat experienced in the western region of India during the month of June, along with the moving train, as follows:

“The train was like the maestro. Running fast in an attempt to beat the drummer so that he could rest. The sun was running equally fast. We poor passengers were caught in the middle of this race, with brief pauses at stations. But I could clearly see that the sun was looking at the train from the corner of his eyes, standing outside the shade of the platform, like the drummer who rolled his sticks and got ready in between two songs.”

As with the beginning and in a rather amazing way, Ali ends the book with a splendid instance of anthropomorphism. While Ali was leaving Afghanistan in an aeroplane, Abdur Rahman, Ali's loyal helping hand, waved Ali goodbye by flying his turban. Ali, with great admiration, compares the whiteness of the snow with the pureness of Abdur Rahman's heart and reflects on the event and states:

“I saw white snow covering the horizon. Standing in the middle of the airfield was a figure who could only have been Abdur Rahman, bidding goodbye to me by waving the tail of his turban. His turban was dirty, as we did not have any soap for such a long time. But I felt Abdur Rahman's turban was whiter than the snow and whitest of all was Abdur Rahman's heart.”

Comic exaggeration and hyperbole

Moreover, when portraying nature, the concept of comedy is frequently used to describe it exaggeratedly and luxuriously. For instance, he might refer to a mountain as standing so high that it touches the heavens or a forest through which even light must beg to pass through. In this situation, the employment of amplification helps to cultivate a humorous audience reception and, at the same time, underline the vastness or otherness of the natural characteristics. Regarding the Afghan desert's vastness, Ali uses the phrase 'from here to eternity'. On his way to Kabul, Ali's initial feeling was as follows:

“A boy, in my college hostel, had burnt his face while trying to put more spirit in a burning stove. The whole stove and the bottle caught fire and burned his eyebrows, eyelashes and newly grown soft moustache, which created the most shocking and horrible crinkles on his face. It was like that here too. It seemed that Mother Earth

had taken her face too close to the sun god who had slapped her with scorching heat-her eyebrows, lashes, hair-everything was burned beyond recognition.”

This particular excerpt compels the reader to feel the vastness unprecedentedly, with fun and caution. On the other hand, the following excerpt of the book reflects on how Ali uses an exaggerated humorous description of nature to use humour as relief:

“One morning, you will wake up to see that it has stopped snowing. The sun is out. You can't look out in the glare of the snow. You will go out wearing the dark glasses that you get in the markets of Kabul. The air you will inhale will not contain a speck of dust. The ice-cold air will enter your chest like a knife, cutting you inside. But it will sweep you everything impure inside your body. Your chest will swell six inches every time you inhale. Each inhalation will rid you of hundreds of illnesses. Each will add one year to your lifespan.”

This very process of using hyperbolic or exaggerated expressions like ‘swell six inches every time you inhale’ or ‘rid you of hundred of illness’, or ‘will add one year’ creates an emergency urge among the reader for a clean environment. Ali goes on to describe scene of the early stages of spring:

“From a distance it seemed that there were thousands of green insects on the pale and bare branches of the trees. On closer inspection I saw that they were actually the innumerable buds of early leaves-like the closed eyes of newborn puppies. I did not take notice for a few days. Suddenly one morning I saw they were budding, a pair of leaves coming out as if the trees were attempting to take off like cranes that had been standing on one leg for a long stretch of time. Thousands upon thousands of green leaves gave wings to millions of trees.”

This vivid and hyperbolic description of spring indeed compels the reader to think about nature and its beauty and intrigues the longing to preserve it.

Satirical commentary

On several occasions, Ali depicts natural scenes, apprehending biting satire on society and people's behaviour. For instance, in the early phase of his travel, he satirically contrasts the landscape of western India with the region of his birth, the part of Bengal where he grew up. He writes:

“It got darker. I did not eat much as I was not hungry. I was not sleepy either. It was a moonlit night. Through the window I could clearly see that the land we were passing through was not Bengal, there were no betel-nut trees or villages lush with mango and jackfruit orchards, only a few houses scattered here and there. There was no pond. People were lifting water from high-walled wells. The wet-smell from the earth of Bengal had evaporated and sand and dust from the scorched earth was whirling around carried by a sudden gust of wind slapping you on the face. What would this land look like in daylight if this were its face in this semi-darkness? Was this western India? The fertile-green- India? No it was not. When Bankim mentioned the voices of thirty koti people in fertile-green-India, he meant Bengal. It would be a joke to say that the west was fertile and green.”

Moreover, while crossing the five rivers of Punjab, Beas, Sutlej, Ravi, Jhelum and Chenab, Ali expresses his thought in following manner:

“I understood the meaning of this phrase only while crossing the Beas, Sutlej, Ravi, Jhelum and Chenab, the five rivers of the Punjab, whose names I had had to memorise in my childhood. I knew exactly where to find them on the map. I always imagined that our Ganga, Padma, Meghna, Buriganga could not match up to them but when I looked down from the train, I had difficulty in believing that these were those mighty rivers from my history and geography lessons. Where were the fast-flowing waters and waves? There were only sand dunes bound by the two banks. You needed both telescopes and microscopes to look for water anywhere. At that point, I realised why the metaphor of crossing the river at the end of one's time in this world never appeared in the imagination of the people in the west. They did not need any help from a boatman let alone gods and goddesses to cross these rivers. I did not know what it was like in the monsoon, but you could not pray to the gods for only one season. The monsoon lasted for barely three days here; so it would be a total waste to pray to the gods all the time to help you cross over.”

After experiencing the so-called ‘mighty rivers’ of Punjab, Ali is attempting to ponder over his childhood event of memorizing the five rivers of Punjab and the subsequent disillusion when he see the rivers physically as they are, far from what he expected to see: dry and vulnerable. And questions the relevancy of the famous Bengali phrase ‘crossing the river at the end of one's time in this world’. No local, Ali adds, will be needing any god to seek help or even any boatmen to cross the rivers. This satirical remark lets readers to understand how grand the rivers Ganga, Padma, Meghna, and Buriganga are in comparison to the five rivers of Punjab.

Humourous languages

In all his writing, Ali successfully engages and entertains his audience with his choice of jokes and wordplay. He is quite clever in using puns and verbal creativity when describing scenes of nature and this makes the readings quite amusing. Ali's colourful imagination in contrast with the barren terrain stands in stark contrast is narrated by Ali:

“What a country! There were fields of rock and pebbles on either side for miles on end. In the horizon there were faint outlines of mountains. It was difficult to say for sure from a distance, but I guessed that there was no life in those fields, cruelly battered by the sun for millions of years. The bus stopped was not a refill the radiator and I once to single blade of saw that there grass between the rocks. Nor any insects. No wonder. How could they survive? What would they eat? There was no sign of a trickle of water anywhere. In this massive purgatory that extended up to the horizon, the Ford bus was like a mother-ghost travelling with her children under her wing. It felt that some invisible keepers of this vast expanse of desolate land would appear out of nowhere and make this smoke-belching car vanish, restoring silence to the land. Then we came across death. Nature refused to create life in this land, but she was certainly not averse to taking it. The huge carcass of a camel lay by the road. Even the scavenger birds or animals avoided this land for the fear of

death. Hence the bones were not scattered. The flesh had turned into dust in the dry heat. A complete clean white skeleton was lying there as if waiting to be a museum piece.”

The phrases of ‘mother-ghost’, for instance when Ali said: ‘I don’t know how many of you have seen a Ford bus, but this one here is like the mother of all Ford buses,’ and ‘the invisible keepers’, and the concept of magic to make the vehicle disappear depict a lit fantasy. The painting of the bus as the ghost mother and the absurdity of the idea of inconsiderate spirits erasing it from the face of the earth brings out an element of comedy to what is otherwise a very somber picture. Ali concludes the illustration by providing a humorous portrayal of the calming sensations that arise from the abrupt transformation of the natural environment:

“But my eyes were soothed as we approached the fort. The Kabul river was flowing to the left-creating a strip of green on its bank. This dry land had produced corn on that patch of moisture brought about by a little silt. I stared in surprise. The sight of the river, like a piece of green wet cloth, wiped all tiredness and pain from my eyes.”

Thus, Ali was soothed by the view of the Kabul River, which relieved him of the several torments of scorching heat. Mentz (2018) refers to Joseph Meeker’s seminal claim that comedy is a type of ecological harmony and states that both are cosmopolitan, accommodate necessity, and are dedicated to survival. The analysis of Syed Mujtaba Ali’s book Deshe Bideshe suggests that intelligent descriptions of the natural world posited in the text remain capable of making a substantial contribution to raising awareness of climate change through various significant channels.

Engaging the spectators

Humour is better at reaching the audience and making them comprehend the delivered message compared to serious explanations. Because of this, Ali’s smart and whimsical narration style stands a better chance of achieving readers’ respect whenever he comes to the topics underpinning nature and environment. This way, readers may understand how the complexity of the natural world can be funny and perhaps, acknowledge it. This method has an impact because humour helps the reader relate emotionally to the subject being discussed. This emotional appeal establishes a feeling of responsibility and motivation to conserve the environment, be it concerned environmentalists or ordinary nature lovers.

Simplification of complex concepts

The terms climate change and environmental issues can be abstract and hard to understand. Although there are instances where the viewers may not comprehend the intentions, Ali explains the themes described in the travelogue and complicated subjects in a simplified manner through the use of comedy. In general, he might explain natural phenomena through humor, and therefore, exclude the mysterious aspect of climate and other connected issues.

Encouraging reflection and proactivity

It can be concluded that humour inspires contemplation. Despite the comic elements in Ali's works, his representations of nature can create a desire in the reader to stop the further destruction of the environment by the anthropocene. To begin with, self-reflecting might urge people into making changes that will alter their negative impact on the environment. Ali did a good job in depicting a region that could be termed as being extremely dry through the use of his unique form of comedy in that he compares the context to trees which are considered to be begging for a small drink of water. These descriptions can effectively inform readers about the severity of climate problems and at the same time entertain the readers with jokes.

Satire serves as a compelling plea

Industrial pollution is another subject the Ali touches on by illustrating a river that was once transparent but is now filled with waste, humorously questioning the river, in order to elicit change, of what color is it now. In this way, this comedic approach effectively advocates for clearing, educates the readers on costs incurred by pollution, and encourages people to support and promote cleaner habits actively.

Anthropomorphizing environmental issues

Through reader appeal, Ali successfully engages readers' emotional side appealing for protection of the environment through assigning personalities to features of the natural world like a mountain which feels the bitter cut of deforestation or an ashamed forest that lost most of its trees. Syed Mujtaba Ali 's Deshe Bideshe represents many elements of the nature well, which may help in raising the climate awareness. In making the readers participate, breaking complex ideas to simple concepts, creating an emotional connection, exploring the weakness of human reasoning, provoking action, and cultural intelligence, his writing styles can lead to increased awareness of the environment and push people to work towards the preservation of the environment.

Conclusion

Through analyzing one of Syed Mujtaba Ali's travelogue Deshe Bideshe, it will be revealed that humor indeed plays a significant part in the literary world especially in the writing about nature. Anthropomorphizing certain aspects of nature and exaggerating on the functions of various parts of a plant, using irony, choice of words and cultural references of the time, Ali is able to make the dull oratory of nature exciting for the readers. In addition to addressing the topic of human organism's flawed way in the setting of the given artificial picture of relations between man and nature, Ali also gives the satirical commentary on it. These comedies make the readers think and inspire them to improve their attitude towards nature, or in other words, become nature friendly. Other than that, due to the colloquial humor in combination with academic jokes, the reader's cognitive and humor-related functions are both engaged in the act of reading Ali. The stylistic devices used contribute to the overall pleasurable and consistent readability of the texts so that even when readers are instructed to think, they are most certainly entertained. Moreover, relating the humor to cultural settings and the local environment enhances the overall appeal of the given stories and also places Ali's work into an appropriately dynamic context. Through this work, the authors strengthen their interaction with the Bengali audience, while at the same time help people all over the

world expand the view of multiculturalism. More specifically, through analyzing Syed Mujtaba Ali's work, Deshe Bideshe, it is possible to conclude that humour can and ought to increase the relevance of its literary description of nature to a given society. Ali's investigations prove that humour can help raise public awareness as well as create respect for the natural environment, which is significant in the fields of both literature and ecology. His wit and nature-based writings provide unique perspectives and motivation to writers, teachers and readers as he reminds them of the significance and relevance of his work.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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