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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-56173

Title: River, Forest, and Village as Cultural Memory in Indian English Novels

Recommendation:

- Accept as it is
- Accept after minor revision.....
- Accept after major revision
- Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality			
Techn. Quality			
Clarity			
Significance			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Ishrat Fatima

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The paper titled “River, Forest, and Village as Cultural Memory in Indian English Novels” offers a theoretically grounded and thematically cohesive exploration of landscape as a mnemonic structure in Indian English fiction. The central argument—that rivers, forests, and villages function not merely as settings but as living archives of collective memory is clearly articulated in the abstract and consistently sustained throughout the essay. The author effectively situates the study within memory studies, ecocriticism, and postcolonial theory, drawing particularly on Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, and Jan Assmann. This interdisciplinary framework strengthens the conceptual depth of the paper and allows for a nuanced reading of literary landscapes as socially embedded and historically layered spaces.

The introduction successfully establishes the significance of landscape in Indian cultural consciousness, especially within traditions shaped by sacred geography, oral storytelling, and ritual continuity. By foregrounding colonial rupture and postcolonial transformation, the paper contextualizes spatial memory within historical disruption. The theoretical framework section is particularly strong in its explanation of Assmann’s distinction between communicative and cultural memory and in connecting these ideas to ecocritical discourse. The discussion of how colonial regimes commodified rivers, forests, and villages demonstrates an awareness of political ecology and enhances the analytical lens through which the novels are later examined.

The section on the river as flowing cultural memory is one of the most compelling parts of the paper. The reading of Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* insightfully interprets the Himavathy as both sacred geography and nationalist metaphor, effectively linking mythic continuity to Gandhian political awakening. The analysis of R.K. Narayan’s *The Guide* shows sensitivity to symbolic subtlety, particularly in connecting the Sarayu River to existential and ecological crisis. The discussion of Arundhati Roy’s *Meenachal River* is especially sophisticated, identifying it as a “traumatic archive” rather than a redemptive symbol. The connection between narrative fragmentation and the river’s mnemonic function demonstrates strong interpretive skill. Collectively, these readings show how the river shifts across texts from sacred continuity to moral transformation to traumatic memory.

The section on forests effectively contrasts colonial extraction in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace* with subaltern resistance in Mahasweta Devi’s works. The argument that colonial forestry transforms living ecosystems into administrative commodities is convincingly articulated. The reading of Devi’s forest narratives is particularly powerful, emphasizing indigenous cosmology and land as ancestral memory rather than property. This section successfully integrates postcolonial ecocriticism and highlights the ethical dimension of environmental representation. The idea of the forest as a moral landscape that resists commodification adds intellectual weight to the overall thesis. The analysis of the village as a social memory structure is equally substantial. The discussion of *Kanthapura* as a national microcosm demonstrates how geography encodes caste hierarchy and political mobilization simultaneously. The reading of Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* is especially effective in exposing how caste is

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spatially inscribed into everyday geography. The concept of "oppressive memory" is a strong analytical contribution, showing that memory can preserve injustice as much as community. The section on modernity and fragmentation broadens the scope of the paper by situating the village within post-independence transformation and globalization, reinforcing the argument that memory evolves rather than remains static.

The intersections section strengthens the coherence of the study by bringing rivers, forests, and villages together into a unified cultural geography. The critique of colonial cartography and developmental reductionism adds political urgency and theoretical consolidation to the argument. The contemporary relevance section is timely and persuasive, connecting literary representation to present-day environmental crises such as dam construction, deforestation, and displacement. This demonstrates that the paper is not merely literary analysis but also a reflection on ecological ethics and cultural survival.

The conclusion effectively synthesizes the key insights of the paper, reiterating that landscape in Indian English fiction functions as an active mnemonic agent. The comparative mention of narrative techniques mythic realism, irony, social protest, postmodern fragmentation, historical reconstruction, and subaltern testimony adds breadth and reinforces the diversity of literary strategies examined. The works cited list is relevant and theoretically appropriate, covering primary texts and foundational theorists in memory studies and ecocriticism. In terms of strengths, the paper is conceptually coherent, theoretically grounded, and textually rich. It demonstrates strong command over both literary texts and theoretical frameworks. The argument is consistent, and the structure is logically organized from theory to thematic sections to synthesis. The language is scholarly and persuasive.

However, there are minor areas for improvement. Some sentences are stylistically dense and could be tightened for clarity. Occasional typographical inconsistencies (such as spacing and formatting issues in names like "AmitavGhosh" or "AranyerAdhikar") should be corrected for publication-level polish. Additionally, while the analysis is strong, more direct textual quotations from the novels would further strengthen the evidentiary base and add specificity to the arguments. A brief methodological clarification in the introduction could also enhance academic rigor.

Overall, the paper is a well-structured, theoretically sophisticated, and critically insightful contribution to studies of Indian English fiction. It convincingly demonstrates that rivers, forests, and villages operate as cultural memory systems and that landscape in Indian literature is inseparable from history, identity, ecology, and power. With minor stylistic refinements and added textual evidence, the paper would be suitable for publication in a reputable literary or cultural studies journal.