

**DEFORESTATION IN D.G. DRIVER'S WHISPER OF THE WOODS****S. Gifty (Reg: No:22213134012001), Dr. K. Kalaiarasi\***

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**Abstract:**

This research paper explores the theme of deforestation. Deforestation is depicted as a destructive and multifaceted force that leads to desertification and it is harmful to the creatures that inhabit the forest. The anthropocentric view in human beings drives their mind to view nature as a commercial product which congregates the economic stability. Through the portrayal of deforestation and its consequences, the paper highlights the need to preserve the environment and to be mindful of the impact of their actions on the natural world.

**Keywords:** Deforestation, Anthropocentric, Nature, Environment.

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D.G. Driver is an American Writer, who has been a published author for twenty years. She has several critically acclaimed and award-winning nonfiction books under the name of Donna Getzinger. She is a member of SCBWI mid-south and lives in Nashville with her family. She is an actor and enjoys community theatre in Nashville. She is also a special education teacher in the same city. D.G. Driver is a presenter who explores environmental themes in novels, speaking at schools, libraries, and special events. She is a multi-award-winning author of books for teens and tweens. Some of her works are *Whisper of the Woods*,

*Second Chance for Love, Passing Notes, Echo of the Cliff, Tomato Slices, The Royal Deal, and The Silent Beauty.*

*Whisper of the Woods* by D. G. Driver is a young adult fantasy novel that features the themes of environmental conservation and deforestation. The story follows the protagonist 13-year-old June, who lives in a world where trees are magical and have the power to communicate with humans. Deforestation is portrayed as a destructive and multifaceted process that harms not only the environment but also the magical creatures that inhabit the forest. June is against deforestation and has a quest to save the forest from being destroyed by a lumber company. The lumber company's actions are shown to be motivated purely by profit, with no regard for the long-term consequences of destroying the forest. June and her companions work to raise awareness about the importance of forest conservation and to find a way to stop the lumber company from carrying out their plans.

The novel explores the interconnectedness of all living beings and the impact of deforestation that affects the natural world. The animals as well as the magical creatures of the forest are dependent on the trees for their survival, and the forest for resources. In one hand, the creatures that inhabit the forest cherish the goodness of the forest without harming the resources present there. Even though these animals consume the wealth in the forest they help in maintaining the balanced ecosystem. In the other hand, the human beings, who live in the outskirts of forest get the resources from the forest for the commercial as well as personal needs. Human beings not only consume the wealth and receives the benefit but also overconsumes it and this paves path to deforestation. Overall, *Whisper of the Woods* highlights the importance of environmental conservation and the need to protect natural habitats from destruction. Through its portrayal of deforestation and its consequences, the novel highlights the need to preserve the environment and to be mindful of the impact of their actions on the natural world. The article *Deforestation: Causes, Effects and Control Strategies* states the causes of degradation of forest by humans in the following lines:

In order to save forests, we need to know why they are being destroyed. Distinguishing between the agents of deforestation and its causes is very important in order to understand the major determinants of deforestation. The agents of deforestation are those slash and burn farmers, commercial farmers, ranchers, loggers,

firewood collectors, infra-structure developers and others who are cutting down the forests. (Chakravarty et al. 6)

June is a girl of native American descent; her parents are environmental activists they keep on imposing their ideals on her. Though she respects and appreciates their concerns regarding the environment, she finds herself as an unwilling activist. She just wants to lead a normal life unlike her parents, who concerns much about resource depletion and deforestation. She visits the forest site where her parents are protesting against the cutting down of old trees, she tries to communicate with one of the old trees to figure out the power which resides within the tree. This seems to be supernatural, even the trees do not want them to be chopped. At this juncture, June witnesses the desire of the tree to live in this world. The tree has opened up its innate feelings and desire to the actions of June, since it identifies her as a biocentric person. Campbell discusses the idea of Barry Lopez regarding the inhabited and uninhabited landscapes in the following lines:

Barry Lopez, for instance, replaces the distinction between humanized landscapes and uninhabited wilderness by paying attention to how the human imagination-as well as human action – has always interacted with the land. And he questions the usual opposition between the civilized and the primitive when he says, “What is truly primitive in us and them, say-age hungers, ethical dereliction, we try to pass over”. (Campbell 128)

June gets into a mindset to save the tree after witnessing it. The tree is a perfect reflection of growth and crossing the threshold into adulthood. June finds herself on the top of the tree. The magical spirit that resides in the tree is neither interested to unleash her nor it allows anyone to save her from it. The tree is also a perfect representation of the way every teen feels isolated from the world, and even from themselves.

June judges one of the trees, which is big and she makes an estimate that the tree is there for over thousand years. The girl thinks that trees are existing there since the Roman Empire period. The ancient people have saved the trees for future generations. They have saved the trees for so many years for the upcoming generations. In today's world, it is hard to see biocentric people. During the olden days, people lived along with nature and were dependent on nature. Earlier people used wood for cooking. People in the olden days, they do not have advanced technologies to cook. Even though they are dependent on nature they

valued nature. In the present day, people are anthropocentric and they are keen on destroying nature for their own needs.

June is not ready to accompany her parents to protect the environment in the initial days, only after seeing the bad situations of nature and the cutting of trees she decides to work for the life of flora and fauna. June thinks of the incidents which she had cherished with the tree in the past. June goes near the ancient tree and coils up the rope which is hanging over the branch of the tree all day. The trunk is too wide for her to try to get the string around it, she puts the rope in her lap with her legs out straight in front of her, that is the only way she could get her arms long enough to dangle the string from one side of the branch and swing it underneath of her other hand to catch. She ties a knot and when it is done she shouts at her father regarding her success in saving the branches of the tree from falling.

Nature is viewed as a source of income because it provides multiple products like wood, fuel, food, etc. People are attracted to nature not only for mental peace and well-being but for economic purposes. Deforestation is multifaced even though it has its merits of providing economic prosperity for a short span it has its long-term negative impact on the people as well as the land.

June along with her mother visits a shop, where red cedar trees are being sold. Her mother notices the name of the shop and the shop name is represented as Plantation Home and Lumber. June's mother gets into the shop and warns them to stop selling the redcedar trees. But the man, who sells the trees is not ready to stop it. She is making them realize, the wood they sell is thousand years old. The shopkeeper conveys his point of view that "I don't know what to tell you lady. Cedar smells good, and people like to build closets with it. Maybe the closets will last a thousand years" (60). These lines show people are anthropocentric. They keep on chopping the trees and sell them to make their lives better. No one worries about the trees which they chopped. Here June's mother is fighting against this incident. The trees which last forever, are chopped down by the people for their personal use. This is the situation in current society too. This may bring economic consequences, as forests provide valuable resources such as timber, food, and medicinal plants.

June gets into the forest to save the trees, she feels that the trees smell fresh and alive. When she is alone, she hears the voice saying 'Yes'. She is looking for people around the woods but there are no signs of animals or people. She then keenly listens to the sound that comes from the cedar tree, which is near to her. She makes up her mind that the sound has

come probably through the wind. She feels tired and sleeps under the tree for a while. After waking up she finds herself thirty feet above the tree. She has no idea how she has gone up. June's dad and her uncle are searching for her in the woods but she is missing they did not know that she is at the top of the tree. A thought creeps into the mind of her uncle that the tree would have done something bad to June. But June's dad did not get any doubt about it and he is not ready to listen to June's uncle. June is on the tree with so many questions in her mind but those questions are without answers. The tree with magical power thinks that if it holds June on its top, no one can harm the tree.

June's dad finds out that she is on the top of the tree. June came down after so many struggles, her friend helps her to get down. Even after getting down, she is not clear about the magical thing that happened. But one thing she is clear about is the tree, which has held her has magical power. Already she has come across the story, which her uncle has said to her. It's about her aunt, who has come into the forest once and never returned. This is also the major reason to cut down trees. June is strong enough to not let the people cut down the trees. All she needs is to protect them and to know about the magical spirit.

People begin to protest not only for a particular tree but for the whole forest. June joins the protest with her dad, near the forest. After sunrise, June enters the forest and enjoys nature to the fullest. When she sees the giant trees, chillness shuddered her. She put her hands into her pockets and moves deeper into the forest willing herself to move forward. She crosses the first barrier of trees and within a few steps, she loses her sight of the protest camp completely. She is listening to the buzzing, clicking, and chirping of the morning bugs and birds crazy loud. While moving forward she is witnessing more and more trees. She is mentioning red cedar trees as a monster in the following line "Not all of them were red cedar monsters, but they were all big and close together" (76). June is bothered about the red cedar tree which has magical powers and she is not scared of any other trees. Even when people walk into the forest, they can get to hear a lot of noises, but people have thought it would have come from trees or animals. When she moves further into the forest she could recall the unforgettable incident, in which the red cedar tree kept her on its top.

Ancient people who lived in the forest used certain landmarks for direction while traveling. June thinks of ancient people and wonders how they could find their way in a dense forest. June has no idea how to look at the broken twig or stare at the mud and figure out if someone has ever walked in that direction. In the poem "*The Road Not Taken*" by Robert

Frost the poet explains the road, which is not used by people, "Yet Knowing how way leads on to way, / I doubted if I should ever come back" (Frost, Lines 14-15). While walking June hears two noises, the former noise is crunching, and the latter is her heavy breathing noise. She closes her eyes and picturizes the day on which she is left on the tree for a night. She gets a picture of darkness and trunks of trees in her mind. June is walking into the forest and she gets so many noises, but now she is listening to the sound which she heard first, while she is in the tree. She hears a sound of whispering with a lot of air and hissing. She thinks whether the sound is real and she gets a reply to that question as 'yes'. By hearing the reply, she overthinks and a kind of fear evolves within her. A few minutes later she finds her cousin near her and realizes that the sound has come from her cousin. On the other side, June's uncle and her grandfather believe that the tree has the soul of June's dead aunt. They believe that the dead aunt's soul is the only reason for all these incidents.

June's dad warns her to go home, but she is not ready to leave. Her dad says about the plantation lumber crew, who has come to the forest to chop the trees. After listening to this she is very strong in her point that she will never allow them to cut the trees. She says her mind could hear words like 'Help', 'Need', and 'Please' from the trees around her. So, she thinks, the only way to protect the trees is to climb up again. So, she goes to the top of the tree and stays there. June's parents convince her to climb down the tree. She is not ready to come down. So, they seek the help of Kyle, who used to climb trees. He goes up and takes her down. He says to her that "I don't see how your uncle can chop it down. It's protected by law" (128). June says that to her understanding, it is reservation land so they can chop the trees down. Indarto and Mutaqin, a scholar gives his opinion that government should implement strict rules to abolish deforestation through the following lines "Most of the forest areas are owned by public are state forest, the role of the government should be strongly taken into consideration in any theoretical discourses or policy exercises of deforestation" (Indarto and Mutaqin 117).

The German Forester Hans Carl Von Carlowitz, is the first to discuss forests as resources for wood in the context of sustainability. Carlowitz conceived of a sustainable practice for harvesting forests so that future generations would not be adversely impacted, and so that they would have access to the same resources as the current generation. June too protested to save the trees for upcoming generations.

June considers the protest, as a tool, which has the ability to change people's mindset towards deforestation. The protest has created a positive impact in the people as well as their attitude towards nature. June's success is revealed in the following line "... we did save the remaining trees" (208). June has saved the tree from deforestation and also finds the magical power which is present in one of the trees. This paper has brought out anthropocentric and biocentric views of man towards nature.

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