

Exploring Climate Awareness and Childhood Innocence in Bijal Vacchrajanai's *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* (2021)

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Abstract

Cli-fi bestirs as an emanating genre on the grounds of disparate and coercive environmental repercussions. An idiosyncratic perspective on the sweeping ecological and climate crisis was emulated by the writers with an amalgamation of our country's rich cultural heritage and coeval eco-friendly problems. Traditional narratives are intertwined with futuristic scenarios in order to emphasize the lurking danger behind deforestation. Water scarcity, the rising of sea levels, the melting of polar ice caps and glaciers were the ancillary eventualities of the hasty obliteration of trees and forests. By cultivating ecological concern and understanding, the narrative promotes an early emotional attachment between the child and the fragile natural world.

*The article aims to explore how Bijal Vacchrajanai in her novel *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* makes use of imaginative storytelling to pinnacle the increasingly erratic weather patterns of the warming planet. It also highlights the unprecedented climate upheaval the mother Earth is going to face in the distant future, and the ways in which complacency hastens that future. By examining the novel through the intersecting perspectives of climate*

Submitted: 16.03.2026 Revised: 11.05.2026 Accepted: 20.05.2026 Published: 15.06.2026

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Funding: No funding was received for this research.

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Citation: Risana S, and S. Mohamed Haneef. "Exploring Climate Awareness and Childhood Innocence in Bijal Vacchrajanai's *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* (2021)". *21CILS: 21st Century Indian Literary Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, June. 2026, pp. 01-18.

consciousness and childhood innocence, this paper highlights the affective, pedagogical, and ethical dimensions of environmental knowledge. It argues that climate awareness among younger generations is not a peripheral concern but a central theme in contemporary children's ecological literature. The study further explores the novel's narrative technique, particularly its use of magical realism, which transforms a vast and complex global environmental crisis into an intimate and accessible story from a child's perspective. Situating the text within the broader tradition of climate fiction in both Indian and international contexts, the paper demonstrates how children's climate narratives simultaneously preserve the wonder of childhood while gradually cultivating a sense of environmental responsibility and stewardship toward the planet.

Keywords : Climate Awareness, Ecological Concerns, Children Literature, Crisis, Progress, Magic Realism

Introduction: The Emergence of Climate Fiction

Climate Fiction prevalently called as Cli-Fi, is a fictitious literature that artifies the impact of fluctuating climate due to both man-made and non-natural contaminants. Though it is profoundly entrenched in Science Fiction, it lures devotion to literary realism, refusing the comfortable distance that speculative writing usually grants its readers. The term Cli-Fi became ubiquitous during the 2010's, but many novelists have been writing fortuitously continuing this trajectory for over twenty years. Even in 1815, George Gordon Byron penned a poem named "Darkness". In the poem, he exposed a dark, wet and spiteful summer of Europe in 1816. He passes that summer with Mary Shelley near Lake Geneva, Switzerland. As the poem spotlights calamitous and abysmal circumstances, the poem is considered post-apocalyptic. In the poem, he illustrated Earth as 'icy'. Byron declares, "Men forget their passions in the dread of this their desolation" ("Darkness" 7-8). As people mislaid their impetus due to the detrimental meteorological conditions, they became wretched and set fire to woods for light and balminess. Dearth flares up and the residents dwindle ensuing the ruin of European Civilization.

Since the colonial era, the abundance of natural resources in the Americas has facilitated the development of a global system of organized and intensive resource extraction. During the nineteenth century, as independent nations emerged across Latin America, the environment became central to discussions of national identity, economic growth, agriculture, energy use, modernization, and civilization. While colonial legacies of exploitation and unsustainable environmental practices continued to influence dominant cultural and economic models, alternative ecological perspectives and forms of local resistance also began to take shape. This dynamic interaction produced a complex environmental and cultural landscape. Within this context, art and visual culture assumed a significant role in disseminating ideas, constructing perceptions of nature, and influencing human relationships with diverse environments (Siqueira and Heynemann 90).

Early Roots of Climate Writing

The origins of climate writing predate the terminology used to describe it today. One of the earliest literary responses to climatic disruption can be found in the works of Lord Byron, whose poem “Darkness” (1816) was inspired by a real environmental catastrophe. In 1815, the eruption of Mount Tambora in present-day Indonesia released massive quantities of volcanic ash into the atmosphere, blocking sunlight and triggering what became known as the “Year Without a Summer.” The resulting crop failures, darkened skies, and widespread social distress across Europe profoundly influenced contemporary writers, who responded by depicting visions of environmental decline and societal collapse. These literary reactions demonstrate that long before climate science could explain such phenomena, literature served as a medium through which societies expressed fears and anxieties about environmental instability.

What distinguishes contemporary climate writing from its earlier manifestations is the scale, persistence, and scientific certainty of the climate crisis. Climate change is no longer perceived as an isolated natural event but as an ongoing and measurable global process. Consequently, literary responses to environmental concerns have evolved into a distinct genre with its own themes, narrative strategies, and readership. The term ‘Cli-Fi’ (Climate Fiction) is widely attributed to journalist Dan Bloom, who popularized it in the late 2000s to describe novels and films that place climate change at the centre of their narratives.

Unlike traditional science fiction, which frequently explores distant futures, extraterrestrial worlds, or advanced technologies, climate fiction remains closely connected to contemporary reality. Its narratives are often situated in familiar landscapes, cities, coastlines, farmlands, communities, and portray environmental crises such as floods, droughts, heatwaves, and storms that resonate with present-day experiences. This proximity to reality constitutes the genre’s distinctive strength. Readers are unable to dismiss these stories as mere fantasy because the worlds they depict closely resemble their own. In this sense, climate fiction functions simultaneously as a warning about potential futures and as a cultural record of the environmental challenges defining the present era.

Climate change is not a one-man concern; it is a far-fetched systematic problem. “Climate change represents the most significant environmental and social issue of our time. Climate change anxiety has been identified as a relevant consequence of climate change globally” (Pinho 12). It cannot be debunked by a solitary protagonist and so the plot hubs on the poignant arcs of the characters. “In the current constitutionalism paradigm, new rights are being created, either recognized by legal systems or by case law. In this context, the rights of nature and the rights of future generations are embedded in the right to the environment, which connects with the fundamental right to life and the right to health” (Cabello Fernández 510).

The augmented striding of the plot is interspersed by catastrophe. Cli-fi plays a substantial role in concocting solutions for the looming jeopardy. Having explored and offered illusory ways out, these novels foster readers to envisage latent real-life solutions. Some of the prominent works of Cli-fi are Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, *Madd Addam*, Daniel Quinn's *Ishamel*, Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, Sherri L. Smith's *Orlenas*, Helen Philips's *Some Possible Solutions*, Omar El Akkad's *American War*, *Factory Air*, James Bradley's *Clade* and Lauren Groff's *Florida*.

These books differ in place and style, but they share one method: they turn science into human experience. An increase of two degrees in world temperature is only a number; a family running from a flooded city is a story. By turning numbers into people, climate fiction makes the crisis something the reader can feel, and scholars of literature and the environment argue that this feeling matters, because facts alone rarely change how people act. Climate fiction also lets readers try out possible futures in their minds. The best climate stories balance fear with hope, showing not only what may be lost but also what can still be saved.

Within this wide field, there is a clear difference between climate fiction for adults and climate fiction for children. Adult books often dwell on collapse, guilt and the failure of governments. Children's books must walk a softer path. They must tell the truth about the planet without breaking the child's sense of safety and wonder. So, they prefer small settings, close friendships, touches of fantasy, and endings that leave room for action. Bijal Vachharajani's *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* belongs to this second kind, and this article studies how the novel keeps the balance between climate awareness and childhood innocence.

Climate Fiction in India

As climate predicament unfolds, Indian writers ruminate that the fiction should be the absolute place of residence. Amitav Ghosh is endorsed as the first Indian English-language writer ventured into the genre of Climate Change with his non-fiction work *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. The non-fiction provides a stable stream to progressively sentient and snooping onlookers. Waning Monsoons, Urbanization, Famines, noxious air, and adulterated water are the upshots of climate change spotlighted in the many Indian narratives. The narratives evolved as a result of laxity and gaffes that drastically change the sense of our nation. Every writers felt an urgency to picturize the post-climate change world owing to the mess caused by natural calamities.

In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh argues that contemporary literary fiction has largely failed to engage meaningfully with climate change, often treating it as an improbable or unsuitable subject for realist narratives. He characterizes this omission as a form of 'derangement', suggesting that future generations may find it difficult to understand why one of the most significant crises of the modern era received so little attention in the literature of its time. In response to this challenge, a growing number of Indian writers have begun incorporating environmental

concerns into their works, reflecting the country's particular vulnerability to climate-related disruptions. India's agricultural systems remain heavily dependent on monsoon patterns, its major river networks rely on Himalayan glaciers, and its extensive coastlines face increasing threats from rising sea levels and intensified cyclonic activity. Urban centres such as Delhi continue to grapple with severe air pollution, while cities like Chennai have experienced both devastating floods and acute water scarcity. Similarly, many coastal communities are already confronting the loss of land and livelihoods due to coastal erosion and rising seas. Within this context, climate change is not a distant or speculative concern but an immediate social and environmental reality, lending Indian climate fiction a distinctive urgency and relevance within the broader global tradition of climate literature.

Indian climate narratives are further distinguished by their engagement with long-standing cultural traditions that view nature as a living and meaningful presence rather than a passive backdrop. Indigenous ecological knowledge, sacred groves, river deities, tree worship, and folktales featuring communicative animals reflect a worldview in which humans and the natural world are deeply interconnected. Contemporary Indian climate fiction frequently combines these cultural traditions with modern environmental science, creating narratives that are both culturally rooted and ecologically informed. This synthesis is particularly evident in children's literature, where imaginative devices such as talking trees and animal companions provide accessible ways of communicating complex environmental concerns to younger readers. *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* exemplifies this literary tradition. The novel's central figure, the talking tree, evokes the sacred and symbolic trees of Indian folklore while simultaneously addressing contemporary environmental issues such as deforestation, urban expansion, and land reclamation. Through this fusion of traditional storytelling and ecological awareness, the novel bridges cultural memory and environmental responsibility, making climate change both intelligible and emotionally resonant for young audiences.

Children's Literature and the Environment

Ecologist and wildlife activist Akshay Manwani desires to instil inquisitiveness and a sense of miracle amidst progenies through Climate writings. "Children's literature is one of the devices to compose the social repertoire and collaborate with children's identity formation" (Fernandes et al. 5). According to him, Children's minds are sponges, and the book that depicts the poaching of flora, fauna, and ecosystem encumbers fledgling minds with the impulse of life and nature. Climate fiction in juvenile literature does not intuitively entail adverse climate discourse, instead, these fictions should be crafted with subliminal messages of upholding the poise in ecosystem by looking after with reverence the way they have treated humans. Apart from familiarizing with our country's flagship species to the children, these narratives enrich and enthrall them with the rich vastness of India's biodiversity. Hence children's literature plays an edifying role by mutually

catechizing and elevating the young minds by leavening their minds with environmental alertness. “The 21st century is a time when high technologies are widely used, life is increasingly intertwined with technology, and digital life grows more important day by day, compelling people to adapt. These rapid developments and changes are reflected not only in every field of life but also in literature. The impact of digital technologies is particularly profound in children’s literature. Through these technologies, children learn educational content and values in a fun, interactive way” (Gizi 4).

The pedagogical significance of children’s climate fiction warrants particular attention. Educational research has consistently demonstrated that attitudes toward nature are shaped during childhood and that early experiences of connection with the natural world often influence environmental responsibility in later life. When children develop emotional attachments to natural elements through stories, they are more likely to empathize with environmental loss in reality. Such emotional engagement can gradually evolve into ecological awareness and responsible action. Consequently, children’s literature serves not only as a medium for imparting knowledge about the environment but also as a means of cultivating emotional and ethical relationships with it.

At the same time, authors of children’s climate fiction must carefully navigate the challenge of eco-anxiety, the growing sense of fear and uncertainty about environmental degradation experienced by many young people. Narratives that focus solely on catastrophe risk overwhelming their readers, whereas those that balance concern with resilience and agency can inspire constructive engagement. The most effective climate stories for children therefore move beyond depictions of environmental crisis and conclude with possibilities for action, hope, cooperation, or renewed relationships with the natural world. In doing so, they empower young readers to imagine themselves as participants in environmental stewardship rather than passive witnesses to ecological decline.

Bijal Vachharajani and Her Works

Indian writers have the privilege to facet the imperilled birds in our country like the peregrine falcon, the sarus crane, the Indian grey wolf and the silver-breasted broadbill. Because, countless writers emphasize on our country’s flagship species like tiger, which has colossal schemes for its conservation in the Indian subcontinent. Thus, Indian writers have to focus on the continuum of dying out species. Hence, the genre Climate fiction not only highlights the malleability of climate crisis but also on its hostile influence on the native flora and fauna. Owing to the desolation wrought upon the planet by incessant urbanization in the name of advancement, Children writings are teeming with ecological concerns and unmatched relationship between humans and non-humans. “Rethinking the history of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and what it means for understanding the past and present of atrocity, the essay attends to key concerns with the logics of the abyss and the nihilism of technologically enabled destruction. These will be

addressed through a number of films that will highlight our main concerns with the violence of disappearance, desolation and the impossibility of memory” (Evans and Rugo 25).

One such children’s writer who drafts about sustainable environment development is Bijal Vachharajani. She is the author of many planet-friendly narratives like *Saavi: The Memory Keeper*, *The Cloud called Bhura* and *When Fairyland lost its magic*. She has her masters in Environment Security and Peace with specialization in Climate Change and Security at the UN-Mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. Being a certified climate worrier, her writings focus on the changing global climate and its havoc on humans.

Vachharajani occupies a distinctive position in contemporary Indian children’s literature due to her unique combination of academic expertise and literary craftsmanship. Prior to establishing herself as a fiction writer, she worked as a journalist and editor of children’s books, experiences that enriched her storytelling with both factual depth and narrative accessibility. Her strong engagement with environmental issues enables her to ground imaginative narratives in ecological realities, a quality that distinguishes her work from many conventional fantasy texts. In *A Cloud Called Bhura*, she personifies air pollution through the image of a giant brown cloud hovering over Mumbai, transforming an abstract environmental problem into a tangible and relatable character for young readers. Across her writings, Vachharajani acknowledges the gravity of contemporary ecological crises while simultaneously emphasizing the agency and resilience of children in responding to them. Published in 2023, *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* represents the most comprehensive expression of this approach, weaving together themes of loss, humour, fantasy, and environmental consciousness within an engaging and accessible narrative framework.

Magic Realism as a Narrative Strategy

Magic realism is a literary technique that integrates extraordinary or supernatural elements into an otherwise realistic setting, with such occurrences being accepted as normal by the characters. This mode of storytelling is particularly effective in environmental narratives because it enables nature to emerge as an active presence rather than a passive backdrop. Through magic realism, elements of the natural world are endowed with voice, memory, and agency, thereby challenging anthropocentric assumptions that regard nature as silent or inert.

In *Saavi: The Memory Keeper*, the talking tree of Sharjapur is presented not as an illusion or fantasy to be rationally explained, but as an accepted reality within the narrative world. Its voice functions as that of a witness, bearing testimony to ecological transformations and environmental loss. This imaginative device gives tangible form to scientific insights about the interconnectedness of plant life. Contemporary ecological research has demonstrated that trees communicate through underground fungal networks, exchange nutrients, and emit chemical

signals in response to threats. The novel's magical elements, therefore, do not represent a departure from reality but rather an imaginative extension of ecological truths.

The use of magic realism mitigates the emotional intensity of environmental crises for younger readers. Issues such as deforestation, habitat destruction, and ecological degradation can appear overwhelming when presented through factual or documentary modes. By filtering these realities through the voice of a compassionate and memorable tree, the narrative makes complex environmental concerns more accessible and emotionally engaging. In this context, magic realism functions not as a means of obscuring ecological realities but as a narrative bridge that introduces young readers to difficult truths in a manner that is both imaginative and empathetic.

Saavi's World: Loss, Moving and the Perfect City

In the novel *Saavi: The Memory Keeper*, the protagonist Savitri Abhay Kumar is a thirteen-year-old girl who had just relocated to a fictional town named Sharjapur. Bijal Vachharajani chooses a fictional setting for her plot as she could not locate a city with flawless climate in today's scenario. After the demise of her lovable father, Saavi moved along with her mother and sister to Sharjapur. She was exasperated by the adulterated air and infested drinking water in Delhi. She illustrates the condition of Delhi, "It had reached properly muddy brown and foul-smelling proportions. But at least in smoggy Delhi everyone was equally gloomy" (1). Though she is a novice to Sharjapur, she gets mesmerized by the lushness of its climate, as every person in the city relentlessly swaggered about the seamless weather. She calls it a blissful climate because it has just the right amount of summer, winter, monsoon, and spring. She adds that everywhere else in the world have water and food scarcity, constant hurricanes and cyclones.

The opening of the novel establishes two interconnected forms of loss: the personal bereavement experienced by Saavi following her father's death and the broader ecological loss associated with a deteriorating climate. Saavi's mourning parallels the Earth's own suffering as forests disappear and environmental degradation intensifies, creating a symbolic relationship in which personal and ecological grief illuminate one another. This parallel underscores the novel's central concern with the interconnectedness of human and environmental well-being.

The author's acknowledgement that Sharjapur had to be imagined because no real city today possesses an ideal climate functions as a subtle critique of contemporary environmental conditions. The notion of a perfectly balanced and healthy city exists only within the realm of fiction, and even there its stability depends upon a fragile and diminishing form of magic. As an imagined space, Sharjapur operates as a thought experiment, inviting readers to envision a world in which a favourable climate is an ordinary aspect of daily life. Through this imaginative exercise, the novel encourages reflection on the extent to which people take environmental stability for granted.

The contrast between Sharjapur and Delhi further reinforces this critique. While Sharjapur represents an ecological ideal, Delhi's polluted air and contaminated water are grounded in recognizable environmental realities. By juxtaposing a fictional city characterized by environmental harmony with a real urban space marked by ecological degradation, the novel highlights the disparity between existing conditions and the possibilities of a more sustainable future. In doing so, it prompts readers to reconsider their relationship with the environment and to imagine alternative modes of coexistence with the natural world.

Saavi parallels the climate of Delhi with Sharjapur. She elucidates the climate of Sharjapur as pearly fresh rose just plucked from a Mughal Garden. She remarks on the city of Sharjapur, "Happiness was a low electricity bill. It was a matter of pride that nobody needed to own an air conditioner" (3). People in the city rarely fell sick and doctors were leading a miserable life on account of minuscule incomes. Even the school prospectus in this city was a slightly different from other cities because besides teaching about climate changes, they also expound about the other living species on the planet. In the newspaper, weather report section proclaimed the city's weather as 'The Happiness Report'. Being her husband's native city, her mother migrated from smoggy Delhi to Sharjapur. As her father was an ardent lover of plants, she took all her father's forty-two plants with her, without leaving them alone in Delhi. The whole family after the unanticipated demise of Abhay Kumar, desired to restart their life with a new job and new beginnings in a place where air was miraculously clean with an impeccable weather unscathed by climate change.

The seemingly ordinary domestic details in the novel carry significant ecological and symbolic implications. The references to low electricity bills, the absence of air conditioners, and the lack of demand for medical professionals are presented with a touch of humour, yet they convey a serious environmental message. These details suggest that many of the expenses associated with modern life, including cooling systems, healthcare, and the purification of air and water are indirect costs generated by environmental degradation. Through this portrayal, the novel advances the idea that a healthy climate constitutes one of the most valuable and equitable forms of wealth, benefiting all members of society without discrimination.

Equally significant are the forty-two plants that accompany Saavi and her family from Delhi to Sharjapur. More than simple household possessions, these plants function as a living legacy left behind by her father. Saavi's commitment to nurturing them illustrates how personal affection and remembrance can evolve into a deeper sense of ecological care. The plants serve as tangible repositories of memory, preserving emotional connections between the living and the deceased. In this sense, they foreshadow the novel's broader thematic concern with the relationship between memory and the natural world, particularly the notion that trees retain and transmit the histories of people and places.

Throughout the narrative, grief and ecology remain closely intertwined. Acts of mourning are expressed through acts of environmental care, while remembrance becomes inseparable from engagement with the natural world. By watering her father's plants and later listening to the stories of trees, Saavi transforms personal loss into a meaningful relationship with nature. The novel thus presents ecological stewardship not merely as an environmental responsibility but also as an extension of memory, love, and emotional continuity.

The talking tree: memory, magic and the father

As soon as they moved to his hereditary apartment, Saavi sorted all his dad's plants in her room. Among them, Jasmine plant is his esteemed one and so she moves that plant with utmost care closer to the windowsill. While touching a smooth, shiny leaf of the plant, she sinks into deep and lush green moss. The Jasmine plant takes her over to another world where she sees a little boy jumped down from the lowest branch of the tree. She describes that, "His frown disappeared for a second as he touched the gigantic tree's trunk" (19). Saavi is baffled as she did not understand what the plant tried to show her. She feels surreal yet the perfect weather makes her feel less alone. She correlates the climate of Sharjapur with Delhi. She delineates, "It had been so long since I had inhaled fresh air that I had forgotten what it felt like" (23). When she inhales those sterilized air, it actually hurts her like a Knife scraping over a piece of carbonized toast. Being a newbie in her school, she did not have any companions with her.

One of the novel's most powerful images is the portrayal of clean air as a source of discomfort. Having grown accustomed to the polluted atmosphere of Delhi, Saavi experiences the pure air of Sharjapur as physically painful. This striking inversion underscores a significant environmental critique: pollution has become so deeply normalized in contemporary urban life that conditions of genuine health and ecological well-being appear unfamiliar. For many children living in polluted cities, where air quality often determines everyday activities, this representation resonates with lived experience and highlights the extent to which environmental degradation has been internalized as a normal condition.

The episode involving the jasmine leaf introduces the novel's magical realist framework in a subtle yet meaningful manner. Through a simple act of touch, Saavi is transported into a vision of a young boy standing beneath a magnificent tree, a figure whom the reader gradually recognizes as her father during his childhood. This moment establishes one of the novel's central imaginative premises: that memories are preserved within the natural world. The plant functions as a living archive, retaining traces of the individual who cared for it and transmitting those memories to his grieving daughter. Through this symbolic relationship, the narrative presents nature not merely as a physical environment but as a repository of human experience, emotion, and history.

By linking memory to plant life, the novel develops a profound ecological ethic. Trees and plants become custodians of personal and collective histories, suggesting

that the destruction of the natural world entails not only ecological loss but also the erasure of cultural and emotional memory. In this sense, the narrative conveys a powerful message: every tree embodies stories, relationships, and lived experiences, and its destruction represents the loss of an irreplaceable chapter of human and environmental history.

During the lunch break, she grabbed her lunch box and departed to the field behind the school ground. There was an outlandish voice calling her Savitri. She was incensed at first, finally she realizes that a tree was calling her and it was the same tree that the jasmine plant has shown to her. She epitomizes the tree as “I stared at the ginormous tree in front of me. Its branches spread out like a peacock dancing in the rain, proud and magnificent” (31). Having never seen a tree like this in her entire life, she professed that it was the palatial tree that the jasmine plant has exposed to her and the small boy she has dappled was none other than her father. She apprehended that her dad communicates with her through trees. Hence, she acknowledged that tree as big friendly giant and a soulful companion to her loneliest school life. She leaned back against the tree trunk and sealed her eyes. Tree enunciated her that it was their magic that controlled the climate of Sharjapur.

The revelation that the trees themselves are responsible for maintaining Sharjapur’s ideal climate transforms the narrative from a simple fantasy into an urgent ecological commentary. The city’s favourable weather is not portrayed as a matter of chance but as the result of the sustained presence and agency of living ecosystems. This realization underscores a central environmental message: the benefits provided by nature are neither permanent nor guaranteed and can be lost through human neglect and exploitation. Beneath its fantastical framework, the novel communicates a scientifically grounded truth. Forests play a crucial role in regulating climate by moderating temperatures, facilitating rainfall, preventing soil erosion, mitigating floods, and sequestering carbon that would otherwise contribute to global warming. Consequently, the “magic” attributed to the trees of Sharjapur can be understood as a metaphorical representation of the ecological functions performed by real forests. The gradual weakening of this magic through deforestation mirrors the environmental crises currently affecting ecosystems across the globe.

The developing friendship between Saavi and the tree also serves an important emotional and thematic function. Having recently lost her father and struggling to adapt to a new environment, Saavi experiences profound loneliness and displacement. Her first meaningful connection is formed not with another human being but with a tree, suggesting the possibility of companionship and healing through relationships with the natural world. This bond is reciprocal, as the tree itself has suffered loss through the destruction of its fellow trees. Both Saavi and the tree are united by experiences of grief, and their conversations create a shared space of mourning and understanding.

Through this relationship, the novel challenges conventional distinctions between human and non-human life. By presenting emotional suffering as a condition shared across species, it encourages readers to recognize the interconnectedness of human and ecological experiences. The friendship between Saavi and the tree thus becomes a powerful expression of ecological empathy, dissolving boundaries between personal and environmental loss and fostering a deeper sense of connection with the natural world.

Cutting trees in the name of progress

Tree divulges its agony with Saavi. It has revealed that “The Laburnum tree fell next, As did the amaltas, So did the neem tree, And the gulmohar” (37). It endorsed that humans used a strange word for chopping up the trees. They ratified this as reclamation. They reclaimed the tree that belonged to the mudskippers, the corals, the crabs, the lapwings but receded it as theirs. It specified that its magic weakened owing to the shrink of its fellow tribes. It also painfully publicized the void left by the fallen trees. “Grew a forest anew, Canopies of glass, Roots of Cement, Barks of steel and not a forest of concrete” (37). It disclosed the narrow mindedness of Sharjapurians as they have been desiring buildings, malls and parking lots over trees, beaches and mangroves. It enumerated how birds, wasps, flew crested serpents, eagles and black kites were enraptured surrounded by assortment of trees. Saavi deduced that she is going to live in a weird climate worser than the Delhi’s Climate. She surmised if there is something good, people will end up take it for granted. She was spooked and astonished when she espied that the trees conferred her and pontificated its reverberation with her. She was pleased that she got a weird superpower in a weird weather city.

The tree’s lament serves as the ethical and emotional centre of the novel, articulating its most profound environmental concerns. By naming familiar species such as laburnum, amaltas, neem, and gulmohar trees deeply embedded in the cultural and ecological landscapes of India. The narrative transforms environmental loss into a personal experience. The disappearance of these trees is not presented as an abstract ecological statistic but as the loss of cherished members of a shared community. As a result, the catalogue of vanished trees evokes a sense of bereavement that resonates with readers on both emotional and ecological levels.

Particularly significant is the tree’s critique of the term “reclamation.” In contemporary developmental discourse, reclamation often refers to the conversion of wetlands, coastal regions, and other natural landscapes into land suitable for construction and urban expansion. The novel exposes the anthropocentric assumptions embedded within this terminology by questioning the notion that such spaces were ever unoccupied or awaiting human use. Through the tree’s perspective, readers are reminded that these ecosystems were already inhabited by diverse forms of life, including mudskippers, crabs, and lapwings. What is officially described as reclamation is thus revealed as a process of dispossession

and ecological destruction. By encouraging young readers to critically examine a seemingly neutral administrative term, the novel offers an important lesson in environmental literacy and demonstrates how language can obscure the realities of ecological harm.

The novel further develops this critique through its striking image of a modern ‘forest’ composed of glass roofs, cement roots, and steel bark. This metaphor underscores the paradox of urban development, which often imitates the appearance of natural structures while simultaneously eradicating the living ecosystems upon which human survival depends. Unlike real forests, these artificial environments provide neither shade nor biodiversity, neither rainfall regulation nor breathable air. Through this vivid contrast, Vachharajani challenges the dominant assumption that construction and urban expansion are synonymous with progress. Importantly, she conveys this complex environmental critique through imagery that remains accessible and memorable for younger readers, thereby combining literary simplicity with ecological depth.

As days passed, Saavi began to witness the unthinkable climate in Sharjapur. People were running behind the AC fitting crew as they could not able to withstand the bizarre climate. Once the people had been so exultant and proud of their perfect weather, had failed to notice the slowly changing climate. In the fair weather Sharjapur, weather apps are displaying a hovering temperature of 30 degree Celsius. Looking after and confronting the tree became a part of her everyday life. She perceived that being around the tree did not stop the hurt, instead her presence eases them as they had someone to bespeak their fretfulness. When she touched the trunk, it begins to speak with her. It discerned that the people of Sharjapur began to forget about the outside green world. The tree revealed its gripe, “Each time a group complained-those green, eco, citizen of friends-saplings were planted, and photos were taken alongside tons of back-slapping” (51). It whimpers that people just had clicked on a signature petition and getting distracted by a social media post or an advertisement about popular brands.

The gradual rise in temperature experienced by Sharjapur serves as a condensed representation of the long-term environmental transformations documented by climate scientists. Through a relatively brief narrative progression, the novel illustrates how subtle ecological disruptions can accumulate into significant climatic changes. Residents who once took pride in living without air conditioners increasingly depend on them as temperatures rise. This shift highlights a critical paradox of contemporary environmental practices: technological solutions adopted to mitigate the effects of warming often contribute to the problem itself. The widespread use of cooling systems, which release additional heat and consume energy, becomes a microcosm of the interconnected cycles of cause and consequence that characterize global climate change.

Equally significant is the novel's critique of performative environmentalism. Through the observations of the tree, the narrative exposes the limitations of symbolic gestures that substitute meaningful action. Public demonstrations of environmental concern are depicted through activities such as ceremonial tree-planting events, petition campaigns, and highly visible expressions of activism that quickly fade from public attention. These actions, while seemingly well-intentioned, are portrayed as insufficient when they are not accompanied by sustained commitment and responsibility. In this regard, the novel offers a thoughtful critique of what is often described as 'click activism' or superficial environmental engagement.

What makes this critique particularly compelling is that it does not identify a single villain or malicious force responsible for ecological decline. Instead, the narrative locates the roots of environmental degradation within everyday habits of indifference and complacency. The people of Sharjapur do not actively oppose or dislike trees; rather, they fail to recognize their value and importance. By presenting environmental harm as the consequence of neglect rather than deliberate cruelty, the novel advances a nuanced ecological argument. It suggests that one of the greatest threats to the natural world is the tendency to take its benefits for granted. In this way, the text encourages readers to move beyond symbolic expressions of concern and develop a deeper, more enduring sense of environmental responsibility.

Every time Saavi clasps the tree, it laments its angsts and frustrations without any hesitation. It also notifies how people would distract from any news about trees being chopped or mangroves being reclaimed for land. By dint of undesirable weather her plants are declining increasingly. She confronts that, "The line of definitely dead plants was increasing and the rows of definitely alive plants dwindling, like a horrendous question in a maths exam with the most dreadful of calculations" (53). She admits that being talked to plants actually result in the healthy growth of plants. This fiction apprehends that trees communicate with each other, share nutrients and even it sends distress signals.

The image of the dying plants on the windowsill translates a vast global environmental crisis into an intimate and relatable domestic experience. While large-scale ecological issues such as deforestation, mangrove destruction, and rising global temperatures may appear distant and abstract to a child, the gradual decline of the plants allows Saavi to witness environmental loss within the familiar space of her home. By measuring this deterioration through the everyday act of counting her father's plants, the novel renders climate change tangible and comprehensible. The childlike comparison of the plants' decline to a difficult mathematics problem effectively transforms an overwhelming planetary phenomenon into a concrete and emotionally accessible reality.

This motif also enriches the novel's exploration of grief and memory. The plants function as living reminders of Saavi's father, and their gradual death symbolizes a

repeated experience of loss. Each withering plant represents not only ecological deterioration but also the fading presence of a loved one, thereby intertwining personal bereavement with environmental decline. Through this connection, the narrative suggests that the loss of nature and the loss of human relationships are emotionally interconnected experiences.

Furthermore, the novel's portrayal of communication among plants is grounded in contemporary ecological science. Research in forest ecology has demonstrated that trees are interconnected through underground fungal networks that facilitate the exchange of nutrients, information, and chemical warning signals. By extending these scientific findings into the realm of imaginative storytelling, Vachharajani transforms biological communication into literal dialogue. This narrative strategy enables young readers to engage with complex ecological concepts in an accessible manner while introducing them to a modern understanding of forests as interconnected, cooperative communities rather than collections of isolated organisms. In doing so, the novel combines scientific knowledge with literary imagination to foster ecological awareness and empathy.

Climate Awareness and Childhood Innocence

The central premise of this study is that climate awareness and childhood innocence are not mutually exclusive but can coexist in productive and meaningful ways. *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* carefully maintains this balance by reimagining the conventional understanding of innocence in children's literature. Traditionally, childhood innocence has been associated with protection from difficult realities and the preservation of ignorance regarding social and environmental crises. Consequently, many adults continue to believe that children should be shielded from the complexities of climate change. Vachharajani's novel challenges this assumption by presenting knowledge not as a threat to innocence but as an opportunity for growth, empathy, and responsibility.

Throughout the narrative, Saavi is not excluded from environmental knowledge; rather, she becomes one of the first individuals in Sharjapur to perceive the ecological crisis unfolding around her. Through her conversations with the trees, she gains access to truths that remain unnoticed by the adults in her community. Importantly, this knowledge does not diminish her innocence. Instead, the novel redefines innocence as a quality of openness, curiosity, and emotional receptivity. Saavi's willingness to listen to the trees, trust their stories, share in their suffering, and act upon their warnings reflects a form of innocence rooted in attentiveness rather than ignorance.

In contrast, the adults of Sharjapur possess information about environmental issues but lack the sensitivity required to respond meaningfully. They read reports, participate in symbolic acts of concern, and engage in public discussions, yet they fail to recognize the gradual destruction occurring around them. By juxtaposing Saavi's awareness with adult indifference, the novel reverses conventional assumptions about knowledge and maturity. The supposedly innocent child

emerges as the most perceptive observer, while the experienced adults remain constrained by habit, convenience, and complacency.

Saavi's ability to hear the voices of trees, described as her unusual 'superpower', ultimately symbolizes a capacity for attention. Within the context of the novel, attention becomes the foundation of environmental consciousness. It is through careful observation and empathetic listening that ecological relationships become visible and meaningful. This message is particularly significant for young readers, as it suggests that meaningful environmental action begins not with extraordinary abilities but with the willingness to notice and care.

The novel further links environmental awareness to the emotional experience of grief. Saavi's mourning for her father deepens her sensitivity to other forms of loss, including the destruction of trees and ecosystems. Through this connection, the narrative proposes that the capacity to grieve is closely related to the capacity to care. Personal sorrow becomes a pathway to ecological empathy, enabling the protagonist to recognize the value and vulnerability of the natural world. Consequently, innocence and awareness are not presented as opposing forces but as complementary qualities that emerge from the same foundation of emotional openness and compassion.

Conclusion

Jerry Pinto acclaimed this novel as a book of magic. He added that when we have finished the reading, we would go out and hug a tree. The novel *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* summarizes creativity and awareness. Apart from entertaining, though there are appealing narratives and relatable characters, Bijal Vacchrajanai fosters a sense of accountability and empowerment in the minds of young readers. She acmes not only the individual actions but also the collective responsibility in battling environmental challenges. Through the character Saavi, she equips the next generation with the ecological understanding and stimulus to make a big difference in the unprecedented climate crisis. The fictitious Sharjapur spark a nous of responsibility and awe where young voices lead the charge in making a greener and more viable future.

Viewed through the dual frameworks of climate awareness and childhood innocence, *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* emerges as a compelling example of the possibilities of contemporary children's climate fiction. The novel presents environmental concerns with remarkable clarity and specificity, addressing issues such as deforestation, land reclamation, urban heat, air pollution, and the gradual ecological consequences of human indifference. Rather than treating these concerns as abstract concepts, the narrative illustrates their effects through vivid experiences and accessible imagery, enabling young readers to engage meaningfully with complex environmental realities.

At the same time, the novel remains deeply respectful of childhood as a stage of imagination, wonder, and emotional growth. Its environmental message is conveyed through the engaging narrative elements of friendship, humour,

adventure, and magic, ensuring that ecological awareness does not become a source of despair. Instead, the story culminates in solidarity, hope, and a renewed sense of responsibility. The magical realist motif of the talking tree is particularly significant in this regard, as it allows scientific understanding and emotional engagement to coexist within the same narrative framework. Through this device, readers acquire knowledge about ecological systems while simultaneously developing empathy for the natural world.

The novel can also be read as a response to concerns raised by literary scholars such as regarding the limited representation of climate change within mainstream literature. By placing environmental concerns at the centre of a children's narrative, Vachharajani gives voice to ecological issues in a manner specifically directed toward the generation that will inherit their consequences. As this study has argued, climate awareness is no longer a peripheral concern within contemporary children's literature but an increasingly central thematic focus. *Saavi: The Memory Keeper* demonstrates how this focus can be approached with intellectual honesty, emotional sensitivity, and literary sophistication.

The significance of the title extends beyond its immediate characters. The role of the "memory keeper" is not confined to the tree that preserves ecological histories or to Saavi who learns to listen to them. It is also embodied by the child reader, who is entrusted with the memory of a more sustainable world and encouraged to carry that memory into the future. In this way, the novel transforms reading into an act of environmental remembrance and responsibility, inspiring young audiences to become both witnesses to ecological change and participants in the preservation of the natural world.

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