Ecological Entanglements in the Anthropocene:

A Study of *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* through Timothy Morton's

Dark Ecology

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of Kerala

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In

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **"Ecological Entanglements in the Anthropocene : A comparative study of *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* through Timothy Morton's Dark Ecology"** is a record of the studies carried out by MS.VEENA.S, at the department of English, T.K.M College of Arts and Science, Kollam under the guidance of MITHUN.T and submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature.

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I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **"Ecological Entanglements in the Anthropocene: A comparative study of *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* through Timothy Morton's Dark Ecology"** submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature is the original record of studies and research carried out by me during 2024-2026 under the guidance of Mithun.T, Assistant Professor (Guest) Department of English, T.K.M College of Arts and Science, Kollam and it has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, title or recognition.

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PREFACE

The twenty-first-century ecological crisis demands critical engagement from the humanities to unpack the cultural, emotional, and ethical dimensions of global environmental shifts. As an inquiry into environmental cinema's capacity to translate abstract data into deeply felt human realities, this dissertation explores ecological interconnectedness through a comparative study of Nila Madhab Panda's *Kadwi Hawa* (2017) and Damon Gameau's *2040* (2019). Framed through Timothy Morton's theoretical lens of Dark Ecology, this research moves past idealized romanticisms of nature to examine how cinema confronts the messy, uneven, and inescapable entanglements of human and non-human life within the Anthropocene.

The first chapter titled "Introduction" establishes the foundational blueprint of this investigation by outlining the systemic background of our global and regional environmental crises. defining the academic and social significance of analysing moving images, establishing how narrative film acts as a societal mirror and catalyst to force viewers to confront anthropogenic destruction.

The second chapter "From Anthropocene to Dark Ecology: An Epistemological Shift" constructs the theoretical architecture of the dissertation by mapping the profound epistemological shift from the Holocene to the Anthropocene, where human activity has become a dominant geological force. It details the principles of Morton's Dark Ecology, focusing on his core concepts bridging environmental philosophy with justice.

The third chapter "Exploring the Aesthetics of Dark Ecology in Nila Madhab Panda's Kadwi Hawa and Damon Gameau's 2040" executes a rigorous comparative

textual analysis of *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* to demonstrate how their divergent aesthetic strategies function as cinematic enactments of dark ecological consciousness.

The final chapter titled "Conclusion" synthesizes the major findings of the research, confirming that environmental cinema effectively translates abstract scientific data into ethically engaging cultural realities that challenge anthropocentric assumptions. It highlights the study's interdisciplinary contribution to the environmental humanities while transparently addressing limitations, such as the two-film corpus and the text-based focus over audience reception. Finally, it outlines pathways for subsequent scholarship in digital media and environmental justice, underscoring that resolving contemporary crises requires a radical transformation of the cultural imagination.

Chapter 1

Introduction

"The ecological thought demands that we imagine interconnectedness without domination."

— Timothy Morton

The 21st century is defined by a severe, interconnected environmental crisis driven by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and fossil fuel consumption, resulting in climate change, massive biodiversity loss, and wide spread pollution. Key crisis include record -high greenhouse gas emissions, ocean acidification, water scarcity and ecosystem destruction. These crises are often driven by unsustainable resource exploitation and in some cases, ineffective governance. The United Nations had identified 21 emerging environmental issues for this century, focusing on food ,land, water and energy, with an emphasis on the need for better governance and behavioural change. The Philippines faces critical environmental challenges, driven by its position as the most flood-vulnerable country. Key issues include the "triple planetary crisis" of severe plastic pollution (with the country as a top global contributor), accelerated climate-induced disasters like super typhoons, and ecological damage from mining. The Philippines is ranked first in the 2025 World Risk Index for vulnerability to flooding. The country faces increasing devastation from super typhoons, landslides, and, as of late 2025, severe impacts from natural disasters. The Philippines remains a major contributor to global ocean plastic, with studies projecting a 7.37% share of global plastic waste in 2025. Plastic waste, estimated at over 2.7 million metric tons, is a severe, "staggering" problem, despite the 2022 Extended Producer Responsibility Act (EPRA). Beyond standard pollution, intense heatwaves causing agricultural

vulnerability, severe groundwater depletion, and increased human-wildlife conflict due to habitat loss. Emerging issues also feature the rapid decline in minor forest produce, increased zoonotic disease risks from deforestation, and significant ecological degradation from unsustainable waste management. Rising temperatures and heat stress have emerged as major threats, reducing agricultural yields and impacting public health. Rapidly falling groundwater tables and poor water quality are major crises, especially in agricultural regions. Instances of wild animals, such as elephants, straying out of destroyed forest habitats into urban/agricultural areas have increased Inadequate, unorganized, and archaic garbage disposal methods are causing, creating significant land and water pollution. The beginning of 2021 has been exceptionally challenging for India. In January, India's capital city New Delhi was hit not only by a hailstorm, but also by the heaviest rainfall in 21 years, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Furthermore, the country was then plunged into a cold wave in the Northern regions. However, Central and South India have been particularly hot, so much so that January 2021 was the warmest in 62 years in terms of average recorded temperature. What is more, on the 7th of February 2021, a massive piece of a Himalayan glacier broke off in northern India, causing at least 26 deaths, with a further 170 people missing. In view of the increase in natural disasters in India, the national government raised awareness of global warming in various ways. For instance, in 2008, the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change (PMCCC) published India's first National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), outlining the government's initiatives and strategies on climate change When you hear the word "disaster," you likely think of powerful events outside human control. Hurricanes, earthquakes, and wildfires are a few examples of unavoidable natural disasters. But nature isn't always to blame. Throughout history, humans have caused some of the most devastating environmental

events. From air pollution to oil spills, human-caused disasters can easily become unmanageable. Sometimes, these accidents cause irreparable damage to Earth and its organisms. So, it's in our best interest to learn from the worst of them. The relationship between humans and nature is an inherently interdependent, complex, and evolving bond where humans are fundamentally part of, yet often act apart from, the natural world. While nature sustains life, providing essential resources and regulating the environment, modern, often destructive, human activities like pollution and urbanization have caused severe ecological imbalances, requiring a shift towards sustainability and renewed stewardship. Humans depend on nature for survival (food, water, air), while nature is impacted by human actions (urbanization, pollution) The relationship has moved from a more integrated, symbiotic existence to one often characterized by human dominance, industrialization, and over-exploitation of resources. Humans have an innate, often emotional, need to connect with nature, which directly enhances physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, including reduced stress and improved cognitive function. Perceptions of nature vary widely, from seeing it as a resource to be exploited, to viewing it as a sacred entity with intrinsic value requiring protection. Individuals must understand the challenges the environment is facing and how human activities are contributing to them. The main challenges include pollution, climate change, and deforestation. It is essential to understand the impact of these challenges on the environment and how they affect our lives. Individual actions, no matter how small, can make a significant impact on the environment. By taking steps such as reducing energy consumption, recycling, and using eco-friendly products, individuals can contribute to protecting the environment. It is crucial to understand that individual actions can add up and make a difference Education is a powerful tool for creating awareness about environmental issues and motivating individuals to take

action. We can educate ourselves and others about environmental challenges and the impact of our actions on the environment. Education can help create a culture of sustainability that promotes responsible environmental behaviour. The concepts of the Holocene, Anthropocene, hyperobjects, and dark ecology constitute a framework for understanding the current, profound, and often distressing shift in humanity's relationship with the Earth. The Holocene is the only state in which we know humanity can thrive with anything like the 7.5 billion humans being supported today. We have now left the Holocene and are in the transition to the Anthropocene. This new geological epoch was named to acknowledge human influence on the state of the planet. Dark Ecology, developed by philosopher Timothy Morton, argues that humans are deeply, inextricably enmeshed within a 'mesh' of ecological relationships, destroying the illusion that nature is a distant, pristine, or separate entity. It confronts the unsettling, 'dark' realities of environmental crisis—such as climate change—by embracing grief, anxiety, and the acknowledgment that humans are neither superior to nor separate from other beings and non-living objects. Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence by Timothy Morton challenges the common idea that nature exists separately from human life. Morton suggests that humans are not detached observers of the environment; instead, we are deeply connected with nonhuman beings, technology, and ecological systems. Through the concept of Eco gnosis, he explains a form of ecological awareness that helps us realise this interconnectedness and makes us confront the uncomfortable reality that human beings are also responsible for many environmental problems, including climate change and ecological destruction. Morton calls this awareness dark because it does not offer comfort or easy solutions. Ecological thinking, according to him, involves uncertainty, irony, and even a sense of sadness, as it shows that there is no clear boundary between humans and nature. Rather than encouraging a

simple idea of saving nature, Dark Ecology urges us to rethink how we coexist with the world, by accepting our place within complex ecological networks and building more ethical and responsible relationships with all forms of life in a shared and fragile environment. Timothy Morton argues that we live in the age of the Anthropocene, where human activity functions as a geological force, most visibly through phenomena like global warming. He introduces the concept of hyperobjects—entities such as climate change, nuclear radiation, and the biosphere that are massively distributed across time and space and cannot be directly perceived, even though they are real and shape our existence. Drawing on object-oriented ontology (OOO), Morton rejects human-cantered views of reality and claims that all entities, human and nonhuman, exist equally and remain partially withdrawn from complete understanding. Hyperobjects thus expose the limits of human knowledge and signal the end of the world as a stable, coherent framework. He identifies key features of hyperobjects as viscous, nonlocal, temporally distorted, phased, and interobjective, leading to a new ecological awareness in which ideas like 'Nature' and 'environment' dissolve into an interconnected mesh of strange, coexisting beings. In art, Morton suggests we have entered a fourth phase beyond Hegel's symbolic, classical, and romantic stages: the time of hyperobjects, where "art no longer centres human subjectivity but reflects the uncanny presence of nonhuman forces and ecological entanglement" (Hyperobjects,10). Movies serve as a powerful medium for creating ecological awareness, acting as a 'real-life reel' that translates complex environmental data into emotional, relatable narratives. They represent ecological issues by highlighting the consequences of human greed, industrial pollution, habitat destruction, and climate change, often forcing viewers to confront the devastation of the natural world. Mainstream cinema often uses the 'disaster' genre to highlight climate change, focusing on abrupt shifts in weather patterns and impending

environmental collapse. Movies like *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) dramatizes a sudden, cataclysmic ice age triggered by global warming, highlighting the vulnerability of human civilization to environmental shifts. *Don't Look Up* (2021) uses satire to represent the climate crisis, showcasing the indifference of politicians and the media to an impending apocalypse. *Kadwi Hawa* (2017), an Indian film portraying the severe impacts of drought and rising temperatures on farmers in Bundelkhand, leading to debt and suicide. highlights the tension between developmental, industrial progress and the protection of natural habitats. *Avatar* (2009) explores the exploitation of natural resources by corporations, championing the rights of indigenous people and the sanctity of nature (Pandora) against industrial greed. *Ferngully: The Last Rainforest* (1992) , A children's animated movie that directly addresses the destruction of rainforests by logging and pollution. *Princess Mononoke* (1997) explores the conflict between nature and expanding technology/industry, showing the destruction of forest spirits by iron-making. Movies significantly impact society by shaping cultural norms, influencing public opinion, and driving social change through storytelling. They act as a mirror reflecting societal values, or as a catalyst to question them. While they can educate, inspire empathy, and foster understanding, they can also perpetuate harmful stereotypes and glamorize negative behaviours. Portrayals of violence, substance abuse, or criminal activity can make them seem acceptable or appealing, potentially encouraging imitation. Here when we go through the movie, The 2017 National Award-winning Hindi drama film *Kadwi Hawa* was directed by Nila Madhab Panda. The film, which focuses on the theme of climate change in India, stars Sanjay Mishra, Ranvir Shorey, and Tilottama Shome. It was produced by Nila Madhab Panda, Drishyam Films, and Akshay Parija. The film is based on true stories of struggling farmers in the drought prone Bundelkhand region. With receding and erratic rainfalls many of them fall into

debt traps set out as loans offered by banks. *2040* is a 2019 Australian documentary film directed by and starring Damon Gameau. The film looks at the effects of climate change over the next 20 years and what technologies that exist today can reverse the effects. In these two movies the common thread is environment crisis and the helplessness at the onslaught of environment. They portray futile attempts to overcome those problems for rest of the generations because, like Robert Swan said - The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it. If we have the courage to take care or look after our planet only then can we save or life and can live here otherwise we want to face so may consequences. In the movie *Kadwi Hawa,* the film makers try to explain or to show the miserable life or struggles faced by the common farmers and the situations they go through without any support. And in the documentary *2040* They tried to set a better future for the upcoming generations with using the advanced technology and development. They try to create an economically friendly and less pollinated world. Father's concern about the future of his daughter can be seen in the documentary. *Kadwi Hawa* (2017) has a significant impact on Indian society by acting as a wake-up call regarding the brutal, human-level realities of climate change and agrarian crises. It shifts the narrative from abstract global warming to the daily, tangible struggles of farmers, highlighting issues like, debt, suicides, and environmental degradation, particularly in regions like Bundelkhand. The film demonstrates that climate change is not just an environmental issue but a social injustice, as marginalized, rural communities (like the farmer character played by Sanjay Mishra) suffer the most while often being the least responsible for it. By focusing on the personal plight of a blind farmer and a loan collector (Ranvir Shorey), it brings an empathetic, emotional perspective to the cold statistics of climate-related deaths and poverty. *Kadwi Hawa* brings attention to the 'dust bowl' conditions in certain regions caused by climate change, warning its viewers

of a catastrophic future if immediate action is not taken. *2040* presents a hopeful, fact-based vision of a sustainable future by the year 2040. Structured as a letter to his daughter, the film focuses on the theme of regeneration, showcasing existing technologies and agricultural practices that can restore the environment and create a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. The film highlights farming practices that restore soil health, increase water retention, and sequester carbon, moving beyond just sustainable farming to active regeneration.*2040* showcases ocean-based solutions, specifically seaweed farming, which can regenerate marine life, provide food security, and sequester carbon, aiming to heal ecosystems rather than just exploit them. *Kadwi Hawa* (2017) and the documentary *2040* (2019) both address the urgent crisis of climate change but differ significantly in their tone, focus, and geographical approach. *Kadwi Hawa* is a fictional Indian drama focused on the immediate, devastating, and localized human impact of climate change, while *2040* is an Australian documentary focused on global, scalable solutions and a proactive, optimistic future. *Kadwi Hawa* acts as a warning by showcasing the 'bitter wind' of climate change, specifically the drought-induced suicides of farmers in Bundelkhand. It highlights the human cost of ecological imbalance. In contrast, *2040* presents a 'narrative of hope' by exploring existing technologies and practices that could reverse climate change if applied at scale. *Kadwi Hawa* is a, localized, personal story focusing on a blind man and a loan collector, illustrating how climate change affects the most vulnerable populations. *2040* takes a global, futuristic, and structured approach, framing solutions around how they can benefit the filmmaker's daughter in the future.

Chapter 2

From Anthropocene to Dark Ecology: An Epistemological Shift

Today, many scholars and scientists argue that we are living in a period known as the Anthropocene, an age in which human beings have become the most powerful force shaping the Earth. Human activities have significantly contributed to global warming and have transformed land, water systems, ecosystems, and even the atmosphere itself. The Anthropocene thus represents not merely an environmental condition but a profound epistemological shift in how humanity understands its place within planetary systems. As Dipesh Chakrabarty observes, "humans have become a geological force,"(198) collapsing the distinction between natural history and human history.

The term Anthropocene is derived from the Greek words *anthropo* meaning 'human' and *cene*, meaning 'new.' Although the concept remains debated, it was first introduced in the 1980s and later popularized in 2000 by atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen and diatom researcher Eugene F. Stoermer. They proposed that human influence on the planet had become so extensive that it marked the beginning of a new geological epoch. Crutzen famously stated, "It seems appropriate to assign the term 'Anthropocene' to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch" (23), emphasizing the scale and permanence of anthropogenic transformations.

In the Anthropocene, human activities such as industrialization, excessive fossil fuel use, and environmental exploitation have intensified climate change. One major consequence is prolonged drought, which disrupts rainfall patterns, reduces

agricultural productivity, and damages ecosystems. Drought, in this context, becomes not merely a natural disaster but a socio-ecological condition shaped by human agency. As Mike Davis notes in his work on ecological crises, that disasters once perceived as acts of God are now often acts of man, highlighting the shift from natural causality to anthropogenic responsibility.

Another important feature of the Anthropocene is the collapse of the boundary between natural and human-made disasters. Floods, droughts, wildfires, and rising sea levels may appear as natural phenomena, yet many are intensified by industrial practices, deforestation, and carbon emissions. This blurring of cause and effect supports the argument that ecological crises can no longer be understood apart from human actions. Such a realization prepares the ground for dark ecology, which insists that humanity is entangled within the very systems it has damaged.

The Anthropocene has transformed not only environmental conditions but also human consciousness regarding nature and existence. As awareness of ecological crises grows, people increasingly recognize that environmental destruction not as a distant phenomenon but part of everyday life. Rising temperatures, biodiversity loss, and extreme weather events demonstrate that ecological instability is no longer theoretical but material and immediate. This awareness generates a new ecological consciousness in which humans begin to understand themselves not as masters of nature but as participants within fragile planetary systems.

The Anthropocene also reveals how environmental destruction is tied to modern ideas of progress and development. Industrial growth, technological expansion, and consumer culture have often been celebrated as signs of human advancement, yet they have produced ecological instability on a planetary scale. This contradiction

challenges the belief that progress is always beneficial and opens space for ecological philosophies like dark ecology to question dominant assumptions about civilization.

Ecological consciousness also requires rethinking progress and development. Traditional ideas of progress often celebrate industrial growth, technological expansion, and resource extraction without considering their environmental consequences. Within the Anthropocene, however, such ideas are increasingly questioned. Sustainable thinking calls for alternative models of coexistence that prioritize ecological balance over domination. In this context, ecological awareness becomes not merely scientific knowledge but also an ethical responsibility.

Within this context, Timothy Morton's dark ecology rejects the comforting fantasy that environmental crises can be solved simply by 'returning to nature'. Morton argues that nature itself has been transformed and is no longer a distant pure realm outside human history. Instead, ecological awareness begins when humans confront their complicity in pollution, extinction, and climate change. This unsettling recognition lies at the heart of dark ecological thought.

Climate instability directly affects farmers who depend on predictable weather and fertile land. Crop failure, water scarcity, and debt push many farming communities into poverty and insecurity. Their suffering reveals how environmental crises are experienced unevenly, especially by rural and economically vulnerable populations. Rob Nixon conceptualizes this as 'slow violence,' a form of environmental harm that unfolds gradually and disproportionately affects marginalized communities.

> "By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an

attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all."

(Nixon 2)

Thus, the Anthropocene is not only a geological epoch but also a deeply political and ethical condition.

The philosophy of Dark Ecology, developed by Timothy Morton, emerges as a critical response to this condition. Morton argues that humans cannot separate themselves from ecological damage; instead, they are deeply entangled within it. As he writes, 'ecology without nature' challenges the romanticized idea of nature as something pure and external. Modern lifestyles, industrial systems, and consumer culture contribute to environmental degradation, making it necessary for humanity to acknowledge responsibility rather than viewing disasters as purely natural events.

Environmental damage does not affect everyone equally. Those who contribute least to climate change—such as small farmers and marginalized communities—often suffer the most. This unequal distribution of environmental harm is known as ecological injustice, exposing ethical and social inequalities within the Anthropocene. Scholars like Naomi Klein argue that climate change is not just an environmental issue but a civilizational one, linking ecological degradation with global inequalities and capitalist structures.

The idea of interconnectedness also changes how environmental damage is understood. Pollution is no longer seen as something external to human life but as something intimately woven into everyday existence. Air, water, food systems, and technological infrastructures all reveal how ecological crises move through ordinary life.

Another significant aspect of Morton's theory is its rejection of simple optimism in environmental discourse. Rather than offering idealized solutions, dark ecology acknowledges grief, uncertainty, and ecological anxiety as part of genuine environmental awareness. This does not lead to despair; rather, it invites a more honest engagement with ecological reality. By facing discomfort rather than avoiding it, dark ecology develops an ethics grounded in responsibility.

The ecological crisis of the contemporary world cannot be understood merely as a series of isolated environmental disasters. It reflects a deeper crisis in the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Climate change, deforestation, pollution, species extinction, and resource depletion are not accidental developments but consequences of long histories of industrial growth, capitalist expansion, and anthropocentric thinking. Within the framework of the Anthropocene, these crises reveal that human beings have become a geological force capable of transforming planetary systems.

Dark ecology offers a philosophical way of understanding this condition. Rather than viewing ecological damage as something external to humanity, it emphasizes that humans are deeply implicated in the crises they face. Morton argues that ecological awareness begins when individuals recognize that they are not separate from the damaged world around them. This awareness may be unsettling because it removes the comforting illusion that humans can stand outside environmental destruction and solve it from a distance.

Dark ecology also has ethical implications because it challenges anthropocentrism, the belief that human beings occupy a superior position over all other forms of life. By questioning this hierarchy, Morton encourages a more inclusive ecological ethics

where nonhuman beings are understood as participants in shared existence. Such an approach broadens environmental thought beyond conservation toward coexistence and mutual responsibility.

In the Anthropocene, this dark ecological awareness becomes increasingly necessary because environmental crisis is no longer a distant possibility but a lived reality. Climate disruption, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion affect everyday life across the globe. Morton's theory provides a philosophical framework for understanding these realities not as separate disasters but as symptoms of deeper ecological entanglement.

Moreover, dark ecology transforms the way people imagine environmental awareness itself. Rather than presenting ecology as harmony or balance, Morton describes it as strange, uncertain, and often uncanny. This perspective resists romantic ideas of nature and instead embraces complexity. Such an approach has influenced literary criticism, cinema studies, and environmental humanities by offering new ways to interpret ecological relationships.

Human responsibility, therefore, is not simply about repairing environmental damage but about rethinking how humanity lives within ecological systems. This involves questioning ideas of domination, endless progress, and exploitation that have shaped modern civilization. Responsibility becomes an ethical commitment to coexistence rather than mastery. Through dark ecology, environmental crisis becomes not only a scientific issue but a philosophical and moral challenge.

It is now widely recognized that Homo sapiens have profoundly affected the Earth and its living systems. Human actions have created long-lasting, and in some cases irreversible, changes in environmental processes, biodiversity, and planetary systems.

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Despite the Earth being approximately 4.5 billion years, old and modern humans existing for only about 200,000 years, humanity has dramatically reshaped the physical, chemical, and biological balance of the planet. This disproportionate impact underscores the urgency of rethinking human-environment relations.

These transformations have intensified especially during the last sixty years, a phase often described as the Great Acceleration. Rapid industrialization, increasing carbon dioxide emissions, rising global temperatures, ocean acidification, habitat destruction, species extinction, and large-scale extraction of natural resources clearly demonstrate the extent of human impact on Earth. Will Steffen and colleagues describe this period as one in which the trajectory of the Earth System has sharply departed from Holocene variability, marking a critical threshold in planetary history.

However, not all scientists agree that these developments are sufficient to officially define a new geological epoch. As a result, the status of the Anthropocene continues to be actively debated among researchers worldwide. Geologists emphasize the need for stratigraphic evidence, particularly a 'golden spike,' to formally demarcate the Anthropocene from the Holocene. This debate highlights the tension between scientific classification and cultural recognition.

It is clear that our climate is no longer stable and is beginning to warm rapidly. Scientists now agree that human activity, rather than natural processes, is the primary cause of accelerated global warming. Agriculture, urbanization, deforestation, and pollution have caused extraordinary changes on Earth. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that the human influence on the climate system is clear, reinforcing the scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change.

Geologists disagree over whether humans will have a lasting and meaningful impact on the chemical composition of rocks and fossils. This is what must be proven to declare a new epoch. Humans have existed for such a short period relative to Earth's history that it may be too soon to determine whether their impact will be visible in the fossil record millions of years from now. This uncertainty reflects the complexity of defining geological time in the context of rapid human-induced change.

Dark ecology can also be connected to environmental justice. Ecological damage does not affect all communities equally. Marginalized populations, Indigenous communities, and poor farmers often face the greatest consequences of climate change despite contributing least to its causes.

This inequality reveals that ecological crisis is also a social and political issue. Drought, displacement, pollution, and resource scarcity often deepen existing structures of injustice. Dark ecology helps expose these entanglements between environmental destruction and social inequality.

Environmental justice expands ecological thought beyond abstract philosophy into questions of ethics, power, and responsibility. It asks who suffers from environmental harm and who benefits from systems causing it. Through this lens, ecological awareness includes solidarity with vulnerable communities and recognition that sustainability cannot be separated from justice.

The International Commission on Stratigraphy, the body responsible for defining geological epochs, continues to debate the Anthropocene. They are searching for a 'golden spike'—a marker in the fossil record that could demarcate the Holocene from the Anthropocene. Potential candidates include radioactive isotopes from nuclear

testing, plastic deposits, and carbon signatures from fossil fuels. These markers signify the material traces of human activity embedded within Earth's geological strata.

Some scholars suggest that the Anthropocene began with the Industrial Revolution, when fossil fuel economies emerged. Others argue for an earlier origin in the advent of agriculture, while some locate its beginning in the mid-twentieth century with nuclear proliferation. The radioactive fallout from nuclear weapons testing, detectable in rocks and sediments, is often considered a strong candidate for the golden spike. As such, the Anthropocene remains a contested and evolving concept.

Importantly, not all regions and communities have contributed equally to environmental degradation. Industrialized nations have historically produced higher emissions and consumed more resources than developing countries. This uneven contribution underscores the ethical dimension of the Anthropocene, raising questions about responsibility, accountability, and climate justice.

The Holocene, the current formally recognized epoch, provided a stable climate that enabled the rise of human civilization. In contrast, the Anthropocene represents a shift toward instability, marked by human-driven environmental changes. This transition from Holocene stability to Anthropocene uncertainty forms the conceptual foundation for the emergence of Dark Ecology.

Timothy Morton's Dark Ecology redefines how humans understand their relationship with nature. Morton introduces concepts such as the "mesh" and "hyperobjects" to describe the interconnected and complex nature of ecological systems. Hyperobjects, such as climate change and plastic pollution, are phenomena so vast that they transcend human perception. Morton writes, how hyperobjects are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans, emphasizing their incomprehensibility.

A central concept in Morton's theory is the ecological mesh, which describes the interconnected network binding all forms of existence. Humans, animals, plants, technologies, and even waste are all entangled within this mesh. Nothing exists in isolation; every action affects other beings in visible and invisible ways.

This idea challenges anthropocentric assumptions that place humans above or outside nature. Instead, it reveals a relational understanding of existence where boundaries between self and environment become unstable. The food people consume, the air they breathe, the technologies they use, and the waste they produce all connect them to larger ecological systems.

The ecological mesh also transforms how environmental problems are understood. Pollution, for instance, cannot be confined to one place because toxins move through air, water, and living bodies. Climate change likewise demonstrates interconnectedness, as actions in one region affect ecosystems across the globe. Through this perspective, ecology is not simply about protecting external nature but understanding the intricate web in which all beings participate.

Morton's concept of the mesh also has ethical implications. Since all beings are interconnected, human actions carry consequences beyond immediate human interests. Ecological ethics, therefore, involves recognizing the value of coexistence and developing modes of living that respect these entanglements.

Dark Ecology originates from the conditions created by the Anthropocene. As humans recognize themselves as a geological force, traditional distinctions between nature and culture collapse. This realization leads to a philosophical reorientation in which humans are no longer seen as separate from nature but as deeply embedded within it. Morton's work thus represents a shift from environmentalism to ecological realism.

Another major concept in dark ecology is the idea of hyperobjects. Morton uses this term to describe entities so massively distributed across time and space that they exceed ordinary human perception. Examples include global warming, radioactive waste, plastic pollution, and mass extinction.

Climate change is perhaps the clearest example of a hyperobject. It cannot be seen directly as a single object, yet its effects appear everywhere—in rising temperatures, extreme weather events, droughts, floods, and ecological instability. Because climate change operates on vast temporal and spatial scales, it resists simple understanding.

The concept of hyperobjects helps explain why environmental crises often feel abstract despite their urgency. People may experience local symptoms of climate change without fully grasping the immense systems behind them. This creates anxiety and uncertainty, which dark ecology does not attempt to remove but instead asks us to confront.

In literature, Dark Ecology rejects idealized representations of nature and instead explores themes of pollution, decay, and ecological entanglement. Writers such as J.G. Ballard and Richard Powers depict environments shaped by human intervention, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life forms. These narratives often evoke a sense of unease, reflecting the complexities of living in the Anthropocene.

In cinema, Dark Ecology provides a framework for analyzing films that depict environmental crises and dystopian futures. Films such as *Annihilation* (2018) and *Snowpiercer* (2013) portray nature as unpredictable and intertwined with human actions. These films move beyond traditional environmental narratives, presenting ecological crises as deeply embedded within human existence. As Morton suggests,

ecological awareness is 'a strange loop,' where humans confront their entanglement with the very systems they seek to control.

Environmental cinema has become an important space for representing ecological crisis in the Anthropocene. Films do not merely depict environmental damage; they also shape how audiences imagine the relationship between humans and the nonhuman world. Through the lens of dark ecology, cinema can be understood as revealing the unsettling entanglement between human life, technology, and damaged ecosystems.

Traditional representations of nature in cinema often idealized landscapes as beautiful, harmonious, and separate from human society. However, contemporary environmental films frequently challenge this perspective by presenting polluted environments, unstable climates, extinction, and ecological collapse. Such representations align with dark ecology because they reject romantic notions of untouched nature and instead foreground environmental uncertainty and coexistence within damaged worlds.

Dark ecology is particularly useful in reading cinema because film as a visual medium can represent the strange, uncanny, and often disturbing qualities of ecological reality. Through imagery, sound, silence, and atmosphere, films can evoke what Morton describes as the eerie awareness of ecological entanglement. Environmental cinema thus becomes a space where philosophical ideas about coexistence and ecological crisis are experienced aesthetically.

One important aspect of dark ecology in cinema is the presence of the uncanny. The uncanny refers to something strangely familiar yet unsettling, and Morton often

associates ecological awareness with this feeling. Nature, in dark ecology, is not comforting or distant but strange and intimate.

Many environmental films use uncanny imagery to reveal this disturbance. Mutated landscapes, altered climates, unfamiliar species behavior, and eerie soundscapes often produce a sense of ecological unease. Such representations suggest that the environment can no longer be understood through stable or comforting categories.

This uncanny dimension is significant because it disrupts anthropocentric assumptions of control. Instead of presenting humans as masters of the environment, such films often portray humanity as vulnerable within larger ecological processes.

Through dark ecology, the uncanny becomes not merely an aesthetic technique but a way of thinking ecological interconnectedness. Morton's concept of hyperobjects offers a powerful framework for environmental cinema. Hyperobjects such as global warming or mass extinction are difficult to represent because they exceed direct perception. Cinema attempts to make these vast phenomena sensible through narrative, imagery, and symbolism.

Environmental films often represent hyperobjects indirectly through drought, storms, ecological disasters, or transformed landscapes. These localized images suggest larger planetary processes operating beyond human comprehension.

Cinema can also capture the temporal scale of hyperobjects. By showing long-term ecological consequences, intergenerational impacts, and slow environmental violence, films help audiences engage with crises that often seem abstract. Dark ecology therefore helps interpret how cinema translates invisible ecological processes into emotional and visual experience.

Dark Ecology also manifests in music and art, where artists explore themes of ecological anxiety and environmental degradation. Through experimental sounds and visual representations, they capture the unsettling realities of the Anthropocene. This artistic engagement reflects a broader cultural shift toward acknowledging the complexity and uncertainty of ecological systems.

Ultimately, Dark Ecology promotes a new ethical framework for understanding human-environment relations. It encourages humility, responsibility, and coexistence, challenging anthropocentric perspectives. By recognizing the interconnectedness of all life forms, humanity can move toward more sustainable and inclusive ways of living.

Chapter 3

Exploring the Aesthetics of Dark Ecology in Nila Madhab Panda's *Kadwi Hawa* and Damon Gameau's *2040.*

The accelerating ecological crisis has compelled contemporary theory to interrogate inherited distinctions between humanity and nature, culture and environment, subject and world. Within this intellectual shift, Timothy Morton's formulation of dark ecology constitutes a radical intervention in environmental thought. Rejecting romantic conceptions of nature as a harmonious, pure and external realm. Morton reconceives ecology as an unsettling condition of coexistence structured through contamination, ambiguity and entanglement. Ecological awareness, in this sense, does not emerge through idealized visions of environmental harmony but through confronting what Morton describes as the "darkness" of ecological thought—"the disturbing recognition that human beings are implicated within the very ecological devastation they seek to resist" (Morton *Dark Ecology* 5-8). Dark ecology thus unsettles the metaphysics of separation that has long informed anthropocentric discourse. In his *The Ecological thought,* Morton states:

> "There is no transcendent human subject standing outside ecological systems; rather, existence unfolds within what Morton terms the mesh, an intricate web of relations binding human and nonhuman beings, material processes and historical forces into unstable coexistence" (28).

Such a framework becomes particularly productive in reading environmental cinema, where ecological crisis may be understood not simply as thematic content but as a condition shaping form, affect and representation. It is through this theoretical lens

that this chapter approaches *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040*. Despite their divergent formal strategies—one marked by austere realism and tragic fatalism, the other by speculative documentary optimism—both films articulate climate crisis as intimate and already-lived reality rather than distant apocalypse. If *Kadwi Hawa* renders visible the violence of drought, debt and agrarian precarity in rural India, *2040* imagines ecological futures grounded in regenerative coexistence. Together, they illuminate the dual registers of dark ecology: catastrophe and possibility, mourning and response. Rather than representing environmental degradation as mere backdrop, both texts dramatize key principles central to Morton's thought: the mesh of interdependence, climate change as hyperobject, the ethical disorientation of the strange stranger, and the collapse of human exceptionalism. They may thus be understood not merely as films about ecology but as cinematic enactments of dark ecological consciousness.

To deepen this analytical framework, it is necessary to recognize that dark ecology does not merely function as an abstract philosophical position but as a methodological shift in reading cultural texts. Morton's work fundamentally reorients ecological criticism away from representational fidelity toward ontological implication. That is, rather than asking how accurately a film represents environmental crisis, dark ecology asks how a text participates in and reveals the conditions of ecological entanglement. This distinction is crucial because it relocates meaning from surface narrative to structural relations. In this sense, both *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* do not simply depict climate change; they embody its logic through narrative form, temporality, and affective atmosphere.

Furthermore, dark ecology resists the impulse to resolve ecological crisis into moral clarity. Traditional environmental narratives often rely on binaries such as destruction versus preservation, human versus nature, or victim versus perpetrator.

However, Morton destabilizes such binaries by insisting that ecological reality is fundamentally ambiguous and contradictory. This ambiguity is not a limitation but a condition of ecological thought. When applied to cinema, it allows for a more nuanced reading of characters, spaces, and events as co-constitutive rather than oppositional. The films under study exemplify this by presenting ecological crisis as diffuse and relational, rather than as a singular event with identifiable causes and solutions.

Another important dimension of dark ecology is its attention to affect. Morton argues that ecological awareness is accompanied by unsettling emotions such as anxiety, melancholy, guilt, and even horror. These effects are not incidental but central to understanding the Anthropocene condition. Cinema, as an affective medium, becomes particularly suited to expressing this dimension of ecological thought. In *Kaḍwi Hawa*, the slow pacing and visual austerity produce a lingering sense of dread, while 2040 mobilizes cautious optimism without erasing underlying anxiety. Both films thus engage viewers not only intellectually but emotionally, drawing them into the unsettling realization of ecological entanglement.

In *Kadwi Hawa*, dark ecology emerges through the representation of climate catastrophe as lived entanglement. Drought is not treated as an isolated environmental event but as a material force saturating social relations, economic structures and existential experience. Failed monsoons, barren fields, indebted farmers and the looming spectre of death form an ecology of precarity.

> Yet this attritional violence is no less devastating, particularly for the poor, whose lives are most exposed to environmental degradation. Climate change, desertification, toxic drift, and resource depletion unfold in ways that are incremental and accretive, making them difficult to narrate and even harder to

mobilize politically. This invisibility poses representational challenges, as the devastation it causes is neither explosive nor instantaneous, but cumulative and enduring (Nixon 2).

This notion of slow violence also complicates conventional cinematic temporality. Unlike sudden disasters that lend themselves to dramatic representation, slow ecological degradation unfolds across extended periods, often exceeding the duration of narrative time. As a result, films dealing with such phenomena must adopt alternative strategies to render the imperceptible perceptible. *Kadwi Hawa* achieves this through repetition, stillness, and absence, allowing viewers to experience time as stagnant and oppressive. The lack of visible change paradoxically emphasizes the ongoing nature of ecological decline.

Moreover, slow violence reinforces the invisibility of structural inequality embedded within environmental crisis. Those most affected by climate change are often those least responsible for its causes. This asymmetry aligns closely with Morton's insistence that ecological coexistence is always uneven. The suffering depicted in Kadwi Hawa is not merely environmental but socio-political, revealing how ecological degradation intensifies pre-existing vulnerabilities. Thus, the film extends dark ecology into the realm of environmental justice, highlighting the ethical implications of living within shared but unequal ecological systems.

Such a vision resonates deeply with Morton's rejection of nature as external object. In the film's world, there is no distinction between environmental crisis and social life; both are mutually constituted. This interdependence is perhaps most powerfully illuminated through Morton's concept of the mesh. In *Kadwi Hawa*, drought produces not merely agricultural failure but a chain of entangled consequences—debt,

migration, despair and violence. Hedu's vulnerability cannot be separated from ecological instability, just as climate precarity cannot be separated from socio-economic structures. In the words of Latour:

> The modern constitution rests on a strict division between Nature and Society, between objects and subjects, between the human and the nonhuman. Yet this distinction has never truly existed in practice. What we have instead are hybrids—networks of humans and nonhumans that are constantly interacting, shaping one another, and producing effects that cannot be reduced to either domain alone. The more we attempt to purify these categories, the more entangled they become. Ecological crises reveal this entanglement most forcefully, as they expose the impossibility of separating natural processes from political, economic, and technological systems. (6)

The film thus reveals the ecological as profoundly political, exposing what dark ecology insists upon: that coexistence is always structured through uneven forms of implication. Morton's theory of hyperobjects offers another crucial framework for interpreting the film. Climate change, as Morton argues, "exceeds direct perception because of its vast spatial and temporal distribution, yet remains intimately present in everyday life" (Morton, 1-3). *Kadwi Hawa* gives this paradox cinematic form. Climate catastrophe is never represented through spectacular apocalypse; instead, it appears through absence—failed rains, exhausted soil, atmospheric hostility. Its invisibility intensifies rather than diminishes its presence. What the film captures, therefore, is not simply drought as weather but climate change as hyperobjects: diffuse, haunting and impossible to localize, yet determining lived reality. Equally significant is the film's dismantling of pastoral idealism. Morton critiques the romantic myth of pure, harmonious nature, and *Kadwi Hawa* similarly refuses any consolatory image of the

rural landscape. Its fields are not symbols of plenitude but of exhaustion; its environment does not nurture but accuses. The landscape acquires an uncanny agency, evoking not sublime transcendence but dread. Such anti-pastoral aesthetics align closely with dark ecology's insistence that ecological awareness begins where fantasies of natural innocence collapse.

The cinematic articulation of hyperobjects also raises important questions about perception and knowledge. If climate change cannot be directly seen or fully comprehended, how can it be represented at all? Morton suggests that hyperobjects are encountered through fragments, traces, and indirect effects. *Kadwi Hawa* adopts precisely this strategy by foregrounding absence rather than presence. The missing rain, the cracked earth, and the silence of the landscape all function as indicators of a larger, unseen phenomenon. This indirect representation not only aligns with hyperobject theory but also enhances the film's affective intensity, as viewers are compelled to infer the magnitude of crisis from minimal visual cues.

In this way, the film challenges the dominance of spectacle in environmental representation. Rather than relying on dramatic imagery, it cultivates a mode of attention attuned to subtle shifts and accumulative effects. This shift is significant because it encourages a different kind of ecological awareness—one that is patient, attentive, and responsive to the ordinary manifestations of crisis. Such an approach is deeply consistent with dark ecology's emphasis on intimacy and proximity, even in the face of vast and incomprehensible phenomena.

The film also embodies Morton's concept of the strange stranger through its ethical ambiguity. Coexistence in dark ecology does not imply harmonious relation but confrontation with irreducible alterity. This is evident both in the film's relation to

climate itself—intimate yet unknowable—and in the characterization of Gunu Babu, whose apparent antagonism gradually reveals his own entanglement in systems of precarity. The opposition between victim and oppressor becomes unstable. Dark ecology thus displaces moral simplification in favour of a more troubling recognition: under ecological catastrophe, all are implicated, though unequally. Moreover, the affective texture of *Kaḍwi Hawa* resonates profoundly with Morton's insistence that ecological awareness is inseparable from negativity. Melancholy, uncertainty and dread in the film are not signs of nihilism but modes of ecological perception. Its sparse dialogue, suspended temporality and austere visual composition produce what may be called an aesthetics of ecological darkness. Rather than offering redemption, the film asks viewers to remain with damaged coexistence, and therein lies its ethical force.

If *Kadwi Hawa* inhabits the melancholic register of dark ecology, *2040* extends its possibilities toward regenerative imagination. At first glance, the documentary's hopeful orientation may seem opposed to Morton's emphasis on ecological darkness. Yet such hope does not negate dark ecology; rather, it emerges through an acknowledgment of crisis. Morton's project is not reducible to pessimism but calls for an ethics grounded in confronting entanglement. In this sense, *2040* may be read as articulating what might be termed the affirmative dimension of dark ecology. One of the central principles of dark ecology manifested in *2040* is Morton's concept of the "mesh" (Morton *The Ecological Thought* 28) corresponds to the intricate network of interdependence linking human beings, technologies, nonhuman life and ecological systems.

The documentary repeatedly foregrounds this relational ontology through its emphasis on regenerative agriculture, decentralized renewable energy, ocean restoration and community-driven ecological practices. These are not represented as

isolated solutions, but as interconnected processes embedded within broader living systems. Such an approach closely reflects Morton's insistence that existence is fundamentally relational rather than autonomous. Human survival in the documentary is never imagined through domination over nature, but through participation within ecological networks from which humanity cannot be separated.

While Kadwi Hawa foregrounds the oppressive immediacy of ecological crisis, its narrative also implicitly gestures toward the limits of representation grounded solely in suffering. The absence of viable alternatives within the film underscores the necessity of imagining different ecological futures. It is at this juncture that 2040 becomes particularly significant. Rather than negating the bleak realities depicted in *Kadwi Hawa*, it builds upon them by exploring potential modes of response.

This transition from depiction to speculation marks an important shift within ecological cinema. If dark ecology demands that we confront the unsettling realities of entanglement, it also opens the possibility for rethinking modes of coexistence. 2040 operates within this expanded framework, offering not solutions in a simplistic sense but speculative scenarios grounded in existing practices. Its narrative structure, which combines documentary realism with future projection, allows it to navigate between present crisis and future possibility without collapsing one into the other.

> We are not individuals in a world of other individuals; we are assemblages of organic and technological beings, entangled in complex webs of interdependence. To be one is always to become with many. The task is not to return to some imagined pure nature, but to learn to live and die well in a world of ongoing ecological damage. This requires cultivating practices of care, response, and responsibility that acknowledge our embeddedness in

> multispecies worlds. It is in these relations that possibilities for more liveable futures emerge—not through mastery, but through collaboration and coexistence (Haraway 1).

This principle is especially visible in the documentary's treatment of regenerative farming. Soil, biodiversity, climate and human sustenance are presented not as discrete categories but as mutually constitutive processes. Such a representation resonates with dark ecology's rejection of anthropocentric environmental thinking. Ecology, in Morton's sense, is not a matter of preserving a distant environment but recognizing oneself as implicated within the mesh. *2040* makes this implication visible.

Morton's theory of hyperobjects also provides a crucial lens through which to interpret the documentary. Climate change, for Morton, is a hyperobject—an entity so massively distributed across time and space that it exceeds direct representation while shaping ordinary life (Morton *Hyperobjects* 1–3). *2040* addresses precisely this challenge. Rather than attempting to visualize climate crisis through apocalyptic imagery, it approaches the hyperobject indirectly, through interconnected systems such as carbon emissions, food infrastructures, energy networks and ocean ecologies. In doing so, the documentary renders perceptible a phenomenon that is ordinarily too diffuse to grasp. Climate change appears not as distant abstraction but as intimate and material presence. This is one of the documentary's most significant dark ecological dimensions: it translates planetary crisis into everyday entanglement. Hyperobjects in Morton are never simply "seen"; they are encountered through traces and effects. *2040* adopts precisely this logic, making visible climate change through the infrastructures and relations through which it operates. Another important principle of dark ecology evident in the documentary is its critique of human exceptionalism. Morton rejects the modern fantasy that humans stand apart from ecological processes as sovereign agents

of mastery. *2040* similarly undermines such assumptions by emphasizing dependence rather than control.

Human futures in the documentary are shown to rely upon soil microorganisms, marine ecosystems, atmospheric processes and multispecies relations. The human is radically decentered. Rather than positioning humanity as saviour of the planet, the documentary imagines survival through learning to coexist within ecological systems already exceeding human command. This decentring also resonates with Morton's concept of the strange stranger, which names the irreducible alterity of the beings and systems with which humans coexist (Morton *The Ecological Thought* 41). In *2040*, ecological systems are not represented as passive resources awaiting management but as dynamic, partially unknowable others demanding humility and reciprocity. Nature here is not object but participant. This shift from mastery to relational humility is deeply consistent with dark ecological ethics.

A further point of convergence lies in the documentary's rejection of pastoral idealism. Morton critiques environmental discourse that romanticizes a return to pure, untouched nature. *2040* resists precisely such nostalgia. Its ecological vision is not based on recovering some lost pastoral order but on imagining transformed futures within already damaged worlds. Its optimism is therefore not naïve or restorative in a romantic sense. It is grounded in the acknowledgment of ecological crisis and seeks modes of coexistence emerging from that acknowledgment. This is significant because dark ecology does not reject hope; it rejects hope detached from catastrophe.

The documentary's hopeful futurity is inseparable from its awareness of climate emergency. In this sense, *2040* may be understood through what Morton describes as an ecological sensibility capable of moving through darkness toward co-existential

possibility. Its optimism emerges not in denial of crisis but through inhabiting it. The documentary also reflects dark ecology through its treatment of ecological temporality. Morton argues that hyperobjects disrupt linear conceptions of time, producing strange temporal loops in which present and future collapse into one another (Morton *Hyperobjects* 54). *2040* formally enacts this temporal logic. Its speculative projection of the future does not treat *2040* as distant horizon but as something already shaped by present ecological choices. Future catastrophe and future possibility are folded into the present. Such temporal entanglement is distinctly Mortonian. Moreover, the documentary's critique of extractive industrial systems can be read through the political dimension of dark ecology. Morton's ecological philosophy resists reducing environmental crisis to individual ethics and instead points toward structural entanglements involving economy, infrastructure and material systems. *2040* similarly frames ecological crisis in systemic terms, linking environmental breakdown to fossil capitalism, unsustainable agriculture and industrial excess.

The emphasis on interconnected systems in 2040 also reflects a broader epistemological shift from reductionism to relational thinking. Traditional approaches to environmental problems often isolate individual factors, seeking targeted solutions. However, dark ecology insists that such isolation is fundamentally flawed, as it overlooks the complex interdependencies that define ecological systems. The documentary's focus on networks—whether ecological, technological, or social—demonstrates the necessity of thinking across scales and domains.

This relational perspective also redefines the role of human agency. Rather than positioning humans as external managers of the environment, 2040 presents them as participants within dynamic systems. Agency, in this context, is distributed rather than centralized. Change emerges not from singular actions but from collective processes

involving multiple actors, both human and nonhuman. This decentered notion of agency aligns closely with Morton's critique of anthropocentrism and his call for a more humble and responsive ecological ethics.

> Capitalism does not operate on nature; it operates through nature. The web of life is not an external backdrop to economic activity but its very condition of possibility. The accumulation of capital has always depended on appropriating unpaid work—of humans and of the rest of nature. Climate change, therefore, is not simply an environmental issue but a manifestation of the historical organization of power, production, and ecological exploitation. To address it requires not merely technological adjustment, but a rethinking of the relations between economy, ecology, and life itself. (Moore 2)

Its regenerative alternatives emerge as critiques of those structures rather than merely technological fixes. Perhaps the most compelling way in which *2040* embodies dark ecology lies in its reconfiguration of ecological ethics itself. Rather than presenting sustainability as managerial solution, it imagines ecology as shared vulnerability and collaborative coexistence. This ethical shift—from control to participation, from mastery to entanglement—is at the heart of Morton's thought. Where dark ecology is often associated only with melancholy or catastrophe, *2040* demonstrates its regenerative dimension. If *Kadwi Hawa* reveals the bitter reality of ecological precarity, *2040* explores how awareness of that precarity may generate modes of response. It embodies not a departure from dark ecology but its expansion. Thus, through the principles of the mesh, hyperobjects, strange strangers, anti-pastoral critique, ecological temporality and co-existential ethics, *2040* may be understood as a cinematic enactment of Timothy Morton's dark ecology. The documentary does not simply advocate environmental reform; it reimagines the very terms of ecological existence. In doing so,

it transforms Morton's theory into a speculative vision of life within, and beyond, planetary crisis. This becomes evident through the documentary's engagement with the mesh. Its focus on regenerative agriculture, decentralized energy, biodiversity and marine restoration foregrounds ecological interdependence not as abstraction but as lived praxis. Human survival is imagined not through mastery over nature but through participation within relational systems. Such a vision closely reflects Morton's ecological ontology, where coexistence replaces domination. Morton's theory of hyperobjects is equally significant in reading the documentary. Climate change, as hyperobject, "exceeds immediate perception because it is distributed across vast temporal and spatial scales" (Morton *Hyperobjects* 1–3).

2040 responds to this challenge not by attempting to represent climate catastrophe through apocalyptic imagery, but by making the hyperobject legible through local practices and global systems. Renewable energy, atmospheric carbon, ocean health and food systems are presented as interconnected manifestations of planetary processes too large to grasp in their totality. The documentary thus translates the abstraction of climate change into visible networks of relation, making hyperobject theory cinematically tangible.

The documentary also renders climate change through the hyperobject logic. Rather than representing global warming through catastrophic spectacle, it approaches planetary crisis through interconnected systems—energy, food, oceans, atmosphere—thereby translating the abstraction of the hyperobject into concrete ecological relations. In doing so, *2040* makes perceptible what ordinarily exceeds perception. Importantly, the film resists environmental nostalgia. It does not seek return to an untouched natural order but imagines futures emerging through transformation within already damaged worlds. This refusal of pastoral innocence aligns it with dark ecology, which rejects

fantasies of ecological purity in favour of coexistence amid contamination. Through its emphasis on relational ethics, distributed agency and speculative futurity, *2040* expands rather than abandons Morton's thought. Where *Kadwi Hawa* reveals the violence of ecological precarity, *2040* explores forms of response grounded in the same recognition of entanglement. Together, the films articulate a dialectic central to dark ecology itself: that ecological thought emerges through darkness, yet may open onto fragile forms of co-existential possibility. Read through Morton, these films do not merely depict climate crisis; they think it. They transform ecological catastrophe into cinematic philosophy, revealing the Anthropocene not as abstract concept but as lived condition.

In doing so, they affirm dark ecology as an indispensable framework for understanding environmental cinema in an age of planetary instability. Both *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* dramatize Dark Ecology's core insight: we are immersed in nature, not detached from it. In *Kadwi Hawa*, nature (wind, rain, drought) is a relentless presence dictating human fate, making the film almost anti-anthropocentric. The villagers' identities and daily lives have dissolved into the larger climate system. The film's bleak tone corresponds to Morton's idea of the 'dark' in Dark Ecology — a world in which the familiar turns uncanny and where solace is rare. In *2040*, by contrast, humans are shown collaborating with nonhumans. The climate hyperobject is acknowledged, but the emphasis is on building co-evolving loops (technology and ecosystem, economy and equity). The optimism here echoes Morton's subtitle: it's a vision of future coexistence. Ultimately, applying Dark Ecology to these films reveals how cinematic narratives must grapple with entanglement and scale.

Kadwi Hawa shows the hyperobject of climate intruding into the village, collapsing boundaries and evoking horror. *2040* shows communities deliberately entwining with ecological processes to foster resilience, embodying a logic of

coexistence. Morton would observe that in both films "we are not separate from the catastrophe; we are in it"(*Dark Ecology* 6). By using scenes of extreme weather and hopeful innovation alike, the films invite viewers to reconceive their place in the mesh. In their very differences — one mournful, one celebratory — they underscore that the only coherent response to Dark Ecology is to think with complexity, ambiguity, and other beings.

As Morton writes, real coexistence includes nonhumans and even history as nested series of catastrophe. *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040*, each in its way, immerse us in that idea and help us imagine what a future shared with nature might mean. Although differing radically in aesthetic mode, *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* converge in their articulation of what Timothy Morton conceptualizes as ecological entanglement. If *Ḳadwi Hawa* foregrounds the devastating immediacy of climate precarity through drought, agrarian despair and ecological loss, *2040* imagines regenerative futures grounded in the same recognition that humans exist within, rather than outside, ecological systems. Together, the films dramatize Morton's concept of the mesh, revealing coexistence as a network of vulnerable interdependence rather than harmonious unity (Morton, *The Ecological Thought* 28). One inhabits the melancholic register of dark ecology, while the other extends its ethical possibilities toward renewal, yet both insist that ecological crisis is not external catastrophe but lived condition. Both films also illuminate Morton's theory of hyperobjects, particularly climate change as a phenomenon too vast to be perceived in totality yet intimate in its effects (Morton *Hyperobejcts* 1–3).

Bringing *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* into dialogue also reveals the importance of narrative form in shaping ecological understanding. While the former relies on minimalism and restraint, the latter employs a more expansive and didactic mode. These

differences are not merely stylistic but epistemological, reflecting distinct approaches to representing and engaging with ecological crisis. Yet, despite these differences, both films converge in their commitment to disrupting conventional ways of seeing and thinking about the environment.

Their combined analysis demonstrates that ecological cinema must operate across multiple registers—affective, conceptual, and speculative—in order to adequately address the complexities of the Anthropocene. Dark ecology provides a unifying framework for this endeavor, as it accommodates both the negativity of crisis and the possibility of transformation. By holding these dimensions together, it enables a more comprehensive understanding of ecological existence as simultaneously precarious and generative.

In *Kadwi Hawa*, the hyperobject manifests through drought, failed harvests and atmospheric hostility; in *2040*, it emerges through interconnected planetary systems involving energy, food and climate futures. Despite their generic differences, both films make visible what ordinarily exceeds representation. One renders the violence of living inside the hyperobject, while the other imagines modes of responding to it. Together they transform abstract ecological theory into cinematic experience. A particularly significant convergence between the two films lies in their dismantling of anthropocentric exceptionalism. In both narratives, human beings do not appear as sovereign agents mastering environment but as vulnerable participants within ecological systems exceeding their control. This directly reflects Morton's critique of human separateness and his insistence upon "coexistence as the basis of ecological thought" (Morton *The Ecological Thought* 41). While *Kadwi Hawa* reveals this through exposure to drought and agrarian suffering, *2040* imagines it through collaborative ecological futures. Both films, therefore, challenge the fantasy of

domination and replace it with an ethics of implication. Taken together, *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* may be seen as articulating the twofold movement of dark ecology itself: catastrophe and coexistence. If the former inhabits what may be called the bitter realism of ecological darkness, the latter gestures toward what Morton describes as "an ecological awareness capable of moving through darkness toward responsibility" (Morton *Hyperobjects*15–18). Their contrast is therefore not oppositional but dialectical. One confronts damaged worlds; the other imagines how those worlds may yet be inhabited otherwise.

Both films also radically disrupt linear notions of progressive history through what Morton identifies as ecological temporality—a breakdown of the traditional past-present-future continuum forced upon us by the climate crisis. In *Kadwi Hawa*, the future appears entirely foreclosed, trapped under the cyclical, suffocating repetition of drought, debt, and systemic precarity. Here, time does not march forward toward a horizon of development; instead, it collapses into an agonizing, repeating loop of survival. Conversely, Damon Gameau's *2040* employs a prospective structure, yet it strategically folds future possibility back into present ethical action. Rather than treating the year 2040 as a distant, abstract destination, the film insists that the utopian future is a latent reality that must be actively excavated through choices made in the immediate, micro-moments of the present.

Despite their contrasting cinematic registers—one a stark social realist tragedy, the other an optimistic, speculative documentary—both texts aggressively challenge the comforting ideological assumption that climate crisis belongs safely to a detached future. Instead, they reveal anthropogenic damage as something that is, in Morton's words, "already operative in the present" (*The Ecological Thought* 54). This shared temporal dislocation further situates both films within the framework of dark ecological

thought. By wrenching the viewer out of the illusion of distance, they force an encounter with the climate crisis not as an impending threat, but as an inescapable, ambient reality.

Read together, *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* demonstrate that dark ecology is not a defeatist capitulation to pessimism, but a complex emotional and philosophical terrain that simultaneously encompasses both deep mourning and radical possibility. Through their depictions of climate catastrophe, inescapable material entanglement, and the haunting presence of hyperobjects—such as shifting global monsoons or invisible carbon tables that dwarf human scales of time and space—the films collectively suggest that true ecological awareness begins not in romantic, idealized fantasies of a pristine, untouched nature, but in a vulnerable acknowledgment of our shared complicity within damaged planetary systems. Ultimately, they function not simply as conventional environmental films that lecture their audience, but as complementary, deeply felt cinematic enactments of Morton's ecology, proving that realizing we are stuck in the mesh of a broken world is the exact point from which new forms of coexistence must be imagined.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

The present study has attempted to explore the ecological implications of contemporary environmental cinema through the theoretical lens of Timothy Morton's Dark Ecology. By undertaking a comparative analysis of *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040*, the research has examined how environmental narratives challenge conventional understandings of nature and encourage a deeper recognition of the interconnected relationship between human and non-human existence. The study was undertaken in response to the increasing urgency of environmental crises in the Anthropocene, a period characterized by unprecedented human influence on the planet's ecological systems. At a time when climate change, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and ecological instability have become defining features of global existence, literary and cinematic representations of these concerns have gained considerable academic significance.

The research began with the assumption that environmental crises cannot be understood merely as scientific phenomena but must also be examined as cultural and philosophical realities that shape human experiences, emotions, and social structures. In this context, Timothy Morton's Dark Ecology emerged as a particularly relevant theoretical framework because it rejects idealized notions of nature and instead encourages an acknowledgment of the complex, often uncomfortable entanglements that bind humans to the ecological world. Unlike traditional environmental perspectives that seek a return to a pure or untouched nature, Dark Ecology emphasizes coexistence within damaged ecosystems and invites individuals to confront ecological realities without denial or romanticism. Through the analysis of *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040*, the

study has demonstrated that contemporary environmental cinema serves as a powerful medium for representing ecological interconnectedness. Although the two films differ significantly in tone, narrative strategy, and geographical context, both contribute to a deeper understanding of humanity's place within an increasingly unstable ecological landscape.

Together, they reveal that environmental issues are not distant concerns but immediate realities that shape everyday life, social relationships, economic structures, and future possibilities. The analysis of *Kadwi Hawa* revealed the devastating human consequences of ecological disruption. Set against the backdrop of drought, poverty, and environmental uncertainty, the film illustrates how climate change functions as what Morton describes as a hyperobject—an entity so vast in temporal and spatial scale that it exceeds direct human perception while profoundly influencing everyday existence. The characters in the film experience the effects of climate change not as an abstract scientific concept but as a lived reality manifested through crop failure, indebtedness, migration, and social vulnerability. The film therefore demonstrates that ecological crises cannot be separated from questions of class, livelihood, and survival. Environmental degradation emerges as a force that reshapes human relationships and exposes the fragility of socio-economic systems that depend upon ecological stability.

The detailed examination of *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* has revealed that environmental cinema possesses the ability to communicate ecological realities in ways that extend beyond scientific discourse. While scientific reports often present climate change through statistics and data, films translate environmental concerns into narratives that audiences can emotionally and ethically engage with. The two selected films demonstrate different cinematic responses to ecological crises and together offer a comprehensive understanding of humanity's relationship with the environment. One

of the most significant findings of this study is that both films challenge anthropocentric perspectives that place human beings at the center of existence. Instead, they reveal a world in which humans are deeply dependent upon ecological systems and cannot separate themselves from environmental processes. This insight closely aligns with Morton's concept of the Mesh, which describes the interconnected network that links all forms of existence.

Throughout both films, human lives are shown as inseparable from climatic conditions, natural resources, technological systems, and non-human entities. The analysis of *Kadwi Hawa* particularly highlights the social dimensions of climate change. The film illustrates how environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized communities that possess limited resources to adapt to ecological changes. Drought, failed harvests, debt, migration, and economic insecurity become recurring consequences of environmental instability. The study found that the film effectively portrays climate change not merely as an environmental problem but also as a social, economic, and ethical issue. The experiences of the characters reveal that ecological crises often intensify existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the film demonstrates the invisibility of climate change as a hyperobject.

Although climate change influences every aspect of the characters' lives, it never appears as a directly visible entity. Instead, its presence is experienced through environmental transformations and human suffering. This observation strongly supports Morton's argument that hyperobjects operate beyond immediate human perception while shaping everyday reality. In contrast, *2040* offers a forward-looking perspective that focuses on ecological possibilities rather than ecological despair. Rather than emphasizing environmental collapse, the documentary explores practical solutions that may contribute to a sustainable future. The study found that this

optimistic approach does not contradict Dark Ecology. Instead, it complements Morton's theory by demonstrating that acknowledging ecological interconnectedness can inspire constructive action. The documentary's emphasis on renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, community participation, and technological innovation reflects a recognition that environmental sustainability depends upon collective responsibility. A comparative analysis of the two films reveals that they represent different stages of ecological awareness. *Kadwi Hawa* emphasizes the consequences of environmental neglect, whereas *2040* explores potential responses to ecological challenges. Together, they provide a balanced representation of environmental realities by combining awareness of ecological damage with hope for ecological transformation.

A major achievement of this study lies in its application of Timothy Morton's Dark Ecology to contemporary environmental cinema. While traditional ecocritical approaches often celebrate harmony between humans and nature, Dark Ecology offers a more complex understanding of ecological existence. The theory acknowledges that ecological relationships are often uncomfortable, uncertain, and deeply entangled. This perspective proved particularly useful for interpreting both films. The concept of the Mesh emerged as one of the most valuable analytical tools in this research. Both films demonstrate that ecological systems consist of countless interconnected relationships that transcend conventional boundaries. Human actions influence environmental conditions, while environmental conditions shape human experiences. The films repeatedly challenge the assumption that humans can control or dominate nature. Instead, they emphasize mutual dependence and interconnectedness. Similarly, the concept of hyperobjects provided significant insight into the representation of climate change. Climate change functions as a global phenomenon that exceeds individual

perception while simultaneously affecting local realities. In *Kadwi Hawa*, climate change manifests through drought and economic hardship.

In *2040*, it appears as a motivating force behind sustainable innovation. In both cases, the hyperobject remains difficult to fully comprehend, yet its influence is undeniable. Another important contribution of Dark Ecology is its rejection of idealized conceptions of nature. Neither film portrays nature as a pristine or untouched space existing separately from human society. Rather, both depict environments that have already been transformed by human activities. This observation reinforces Morton's argument that humanity can no longer imagine itself as separate from ecological systems. The environmental challenges presented in the films emerge from complex interactions between human actions, technological developments, economic structures, and natural processes. The study therefore demonstrates that Dark Ecology provides an effective framework for understanding environmental narratives in the Anthropocene. Its emphasis on coexistence, uncertainty, and ecological entanglement allows for a nuanced interpretation of environmental cinema that avoids simplistic distinctions between humans and nature.

The present research contributes to the growing body of scholarship concerned with environmental humanities and ecocritical studies. As environmental crises continue to intensify across the globe, there is an increasing need for theoretical approaches capable of addressing the complexity of ecological realities. By applying Dark Ecology to environmental cinema, the study expands existing discussions regarding the cultural representation of climate change and ecological degradation. The research also contributes to studies of Indian environmental cinema. While environmental themes have received considerable attention within global ecocritical scholarship, Indian cinematic representations of ecological issues remain relatively

underexplored. The analysis of *Kadwi Hawa* therefore highlights the importance of examining regional experiences of climate change and environmental vulnerability. Moreover, the inclusion of *2040* broadens the scope of environmental film studies by demonstrating how documentary cinema can participate in ecological discourse. The documentary format enables filmmakers to communicate environmental concerns while simultaneously proposing practical solutions. This combination of awareness and action makes documentary cinema a particularly valuable medium for environmental communication.

The study further demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of environmental humanities. Ecological issues cannot be fully understood through scientific analysis alone. They also require philosophical, cultural, ethical, and artistic perspectives. By integrating film studies, ecocriticism, and environmental philosophy, the research illustrates the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to contemporary ecological challenges.

Despite its contributions, the present study acknowledges certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The first limitation concerns the selection of texts. The research focuses exclusively on two films, *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040*. Although these films provide valuable insights into environmental issues, they cannot represent the full diversity of environmental cinema. A larger corpus of films might reveal additional perspectives and thematic variations. A second limitation involves the theoretical framework. The analysis is conducted primarily through the lens of Dark Ecology. While this framework offers significant interpretive possibilities, other ecocritical approaches may produce different insights. The application of multiple theoretical perspectives could generate a more comprehensive understanding of environmental narratives. The study also concentrates on textual analysis rather than

audience reception. Consequently, it does not examine how viewers interpret ecological messages or how environmental films influence public attitudes toward climate change. Audience-based research could provide important information regarding the social impact of environmental cinema. Furthermore, the research does not incorporate extensive scientific or policy-based analysis of environmental issues. Its primary focus remains literary and cultural interpretation. Future interdisciplinary studies may benefit from combining ecocritical analysis with environmental science, sociology, geography, or political ecology.

The limitations identified above open several promising avenues for future research. Subsequent scholars may expand the present study in multiple directions. Future researchers may undertake comparative analyses involving a broader range of environmental films from different cultural and geographical contexts. Such studies could explore how ecological concerns are represented across diverse cinematic traditions. Another important area for future investigation involves the relationship between Dark Ecology and other ecocritical frameworks. Comparative studies involving Ecofeminism, Posthumanism, Deep Ecology, Material Ecocriticism, and Environmental Justice theories may reveal new dimensions of environmental narratives. Researchers may also apply Dark Ecology to literary texts, including novels, poetry, drama, and climate fiction. Such investigations could contribute to a deeper understanding of ecological representation across multiple forms of cultural production.

The emerging field of digital environmental media likewise offers exciting possibilities for future scholarship. Social media campaigns, environmental documentaries, virtual reality experiences, and digital storytelling platforms increasingly shape public perceptions of ecological issues. Examining these forms through the lens of Dark Ecology may generate valuable insights into contemporary

environmental communication. Another significant direction involves the study of indigenous ecological knowledge and traditional environmental practices. Such research could explore alternative approaches to ecological coexistence and sustainability that challenge dominant anthropocentric models of development. Future scholars may also investigate environmental narratives through the lens of environmental justice.

Climate change affects communities unevenly, often placing disproportionate burdens upon economically and socially marginalized populations. Research that combines Dark Ecology with environmental justice perspectives may provide a richer understanding of ecological inequality. In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that environmental cinema plays a crucial role in shaping ecological awareness within the Anthropocene. Through a comparative analysis of *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040*, the research has revealed how cinematic narratives can illuminate the complex relationships that connect humans, environments, technologies, and non-human life forms. Both films challenge anthropocentric assumptions and encourage viewers to recognize their participation within broader ecological networks.

Timothy Morton's Dark Ecology has proven to be an effective framework for understanding these representations because it moves beyond simplistic ideas of environmental harmony and instead embraces the complexity, uncertainty, and interconnectedness that characterize contemporary ecological existence. The theory encourages a deeper engagement with environmental realities by acknowledging that humans are neither separate from nor superior to the ecological systems within which they exist.

Ultimately, the study argues that addressing contemporary environmental challenges requires not only technological innovation and political action but also a transformation in cultural imagination and ethical consciousness. Environmental narratives such as *Kadwi Hawa* and *2040* contribute to this transformation by encouraging audiences to confront ecological realities and reconsider their relationship with the natural world. In an era defined by climate uncertainty and environmental change, such reflections are not merely academic exercises but essential components of a more sustainable and responsible future.

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