



**Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment**

Wolters Kluwer India Pvt. Ltd.

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Ecological Entanglements: Affect, embodiment, and ethics of care by A. Aiyadurai, A. Chattopadhyay and N. Choksi

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Source: *Conservation & Society*, 2024, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2024), pp. 139-140

Published by: Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment and Wolters Kluwer India Pvt. Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/27324025>

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Aiyadurai, A., A. Chattopadhyay, and N. Choksi. *Ecological Entanglements: Affect, embodiment, and ethics of care*. Telangana: Orient Blackswan. 2023. (Pp. 288) ISBN 9789354422591. ₹940.

Ecological Entanglements: Affect, Embodiment, and Ethics of Care

The edited volume, *Ecological Entanglements: Affect, embodiment and ethics of care* aims to “develop an expanded concept of ecology.” The 15 chapters and introduction blur the lines between human, animal, and the environment, explore assemblages woven together by experiences, skilled bodies, languages, and place, and argue for the essential yet overlooked role of care and ethics in worldly formations. Theories of embodiment, affect, and care have been highly productive for reconceptualising agency, ontology, and human-nonhuman relations in the humanities and social sciences, particularly through the new materialist and multispecies turns. In addition to bringing these already interrelated theories into new conversations, this volume’s focus on ecology allows it to be read as a valuable contribution to conservation research, speaking to emerging methodological, conceptual, and practical concerns within the field.

Ecological Entanglements distinguishes itself in three critical ways. First, foregrounding and framing the volume through ‘ecology’ is an important move that encourages and challenges readers to consider new qualities and relational vistas for the concept, the chapters canvassing an array of scales, registers, compositions, and contexts, from micro-interactions to environmental imaginaries, ambivalent emotions to contentious identities, human-elephant relations to indigenous scripts. Second, the volume delivers a predominant focus on South Asia through both its authors and subjects, increasing attention to cutting-edge scholars at different stages of their careers and delivering research that offers new perspectives on topics such as caste, colonialism, and environmental education, among others. Third, *Ecological Entanglements* enthusiastically embraces multi-disciplinarity: it is inclusive of ethnographers, linguists, ethologists, historians, and scholars of literary studies. The volume is representative of a growing and important shift towards scholarship where the definitions between disciplines are increasingly permeable, and where different yet complementary approaches are seen as essential to tackling conceptual and applied challenges.

The chapters are generally 10–15 pages—a shorter format than usual, yet appropriate in length for readers to digest the diverse subjects and perspectives on offer. The book admirably expects an openness and suppleness of its audience to move between different fields of interest. While not all contributions might interest a single reader, all are worthwhile reading. The volume is conceptually organised into three broad sections.

Section 1, entitled “Ecologies of care,” engages ethnography and text to explore and define environments through the mutually affective and ethical relations between humans and various kinds of lifeforms. Ramakrishna and colleagues (Ch.1) analyse the complex, multifaceted emotional and experiential connections between human and macaque individuals and communities in Nicobar Islands, as organised through the Aristotelian concepts of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. A similar ethnographic focus on contextually specific and shared lifeworlds is developed in Banerjee and Sinha’s (Ch. 4) insightful ethnography on human-elephant co-existence in Assam, the authors identifying a “vernacular ethology” and illustrating an alternative perspective of elephant lives as voiced through local people who live with them. Hari’s chapter (Ch. 2) is an evocative analysis of *Common Birds* by Salim Ali and Laeeq Futehally, a fresh interpretation through theorists such as Vinciane Despret and Donna Haraway, drawing attention to the ethico-political attunement to and co-shaping relation with bird lives throughout the text. Such modes of attunement are also present in Dutta’s (Ch. 3) interesting case study at a school in Mumbai, which argues the educational need for tactility and response-ability to foster emotional engagement with and care for one’s environment. Kawade (Ch. 6) raises some fascinating questions and ideas on the troubled position of corpse bearers in Zoroastrian funeral rites, and the problematic association of caste with animality through the affects of destitution and divination. Furthermore, Kumar S (Ch. 5) unpacks a memoir by Stephen Kuusisto, which highlights how the author recovers and develops a sense of self amidst this interspecies relation of co-dependency, trust, and care, where in the public eye the agency of the human is often erased.

Section 2, “Affective expression,” takes a linguistic turn, with its chapters exploring the vital role of language and how it constitutes and links memory, identity, body, and ecologies in complex ways. Comparing three language case studies in South and Southeast Asia, Badendoch and Osada (Ch. 7) offer rich examples of the expressive intimacies of linguistics that transcend simplistic dualities and bind speaker and listener, human and animal, organism and environment. Through ethnography, Choksi (Ch. 8), in a fascinating chapter, argues how the Santal indigenous script from West Bengal is not mere representation, abstractable from everyday life, but informed by and interpretable through kinetic movement, performance, and politics. Dutta (Ch. 9), drawing on plays by Beckett and Handke, deftly explores how the material forms we dialogue with can possess different voices, enable different kinds of stories, and impress upon our temporal selves in different

ways. Lastly, Ghatak (Ch.10) analyses the voice of Ferdousi Priyabhashani, and how women's bodies, experiences, and connection to the environment can defy gendered, objectified narratives of victimhood in the Bangladeshi Liberation War, and become a vital resource for alternative and transformative expressions and perspectives.

The reader is then grounded in "Embodied spaces" for section 3, a series of chapters that revolve around how body and identity are affectively and relationally constituted in certain places, periods, and ecologies. Byron (Ch. 11) begins with an analysis of the European ambivalence to the environment through the Australian novel *The Hunter*, and the troubling capacity to be moved by the natural world yet failing to empathise with and respond to its vulnerability. Bhattacharya (Ch. 12) turns to the circus in colonial Bengal to explore how skilled bodies in defined spaces are performed, a sophisticated analysis examining the fluid, evasive, and resistant ways human and nonhuman subjects grappled with imposed political identities. Engaging with British colonial texts, Mukherjee (Ch. 13) writes an affective history of Empire that articulates how place was defined through illness and disease, discomfort and nostalgia, and sensibilities and atmospheres that played a role in transforming India. Bharali (Ch. 14) traces the body as it is located, defined, and experienced in the places it inhabits, and how caste is produced through proximity and distality and segregation and violent territorialisation. Finally, Sengupta (Ch. 15), through the writings of Subimal Mishra, asks how to write narratives that can overcome humanity's alienation to their environment, and interrogates the contaminated natures that haunts our pasts and futures and our inevitable interdependence with the environment.

There are many ideas incorporated into this volume, with embodiment, affect, and care employed to varied and novel effect across the chapters. Affect is perhaps the most dominantly present theory, although amorphously and inconsistently applied at times, with care perhaps underutilised, given that one of the introduction's interesting provocations—particularly for conservation research—is the fundamental place of ethics in constituting ecological relations. Furthermore, it can be a challenge at times for the reader to coherently make sense of these many conceptual threads and chapter subjects, particularly in relation to proposed overarching concept of ecology.

The effort to expand the concept of ecology is fleetingly engaged with in the introduction. A greater appreciation of what the volume aims to do might have been better achieved if the reader began with a clearer interrogation of what ecology is, what it does, its contested meanings, and what it could become. This might include addressing how the concept is commonly understood and applied by the natural sciences and conservation research, while also offering a tentative sketch of what an integrated biological, moral, cognitive, political, representational, and emotional ecology might look like and why the sciences need such a framework. Developing a more apprehensible analytical object or defined set of problems/

questions about ecology could help readers better draw productive connections, for example, between the caring, mind-body systems of human-guide dog relations, the violent, embodied all-too-human niches of Hindu caste ideology, and the performative, kinetic, linguistic ecology of the Santal people to purposefully read with a sense of why it is important to consider these seemingly disparate subjects in relation to each other and under the umbrella of 'ecology'.

Despite challenges of crafting coherence, the editor's thoughtfulness is apparent in how they sought to group, highlight, and develop productive conceptual relations between the chapters. This care is also reflected in the form of a glossary, which offers short descriptions of different key words, a useful guide for helping the reader to navigate this eclectic book.

For readers of Conservation and Society, *Ecological Entanglements* is a lively contribution to emerging debates in the field of conservation research and drives forward recent frameworks and methodological revaluations. While coexistence studies increasingly account for local people's perspectives on wildlife, this book is a persuasive argument to better include the oft-overlooked subjective experiences of local human and nonhumans as fundamental to understanding how species negotiate living together. Challenging conservation tropes of governing relations, ecosystem management, and species protection, *Ecological Entanglements* identifies the intimate, embodied scale as a promising site for both understanding and developing the praxis, ethics, and politics of response-ability to nonhuman others. Finally, this collection speaks closely to Neera Singh's recent proposal to think conservation through affective political ecology: the volume's varied ethnographic, textual, and linguistic subjects add new dimensions to analyse co-shaping relations and enables readers to better grasp and imagine how multispecies worlds—past, present, and future—come together, are maintained, or may unravel.

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Quick Response Code:	Website: https://journals.lww.com/coas
	DOI: 10.4103/cs.cs_23_24