

# **An Ecospiritual Approach to Clements's Play *Burning Vision*: Exploring the Intersection of Nature, Culture and Identity**

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## **Abstract :-**

*Burning Vision*, written by Marie Clements, is a classic example of the increasing popularity of eco-spirituality in modern literature and theatre. From an ecospiritual point of view, this study will look at how nature, culture, and identity connect in Clements's *Burning Vision*. Through an eco-spiritual reading of the play, this article examines how nature and culture intersect to shape one's identity. The study will focus on the idea of ecospirituality and give an overview of its most important features. The ecospiritual aspects of the play, such as mankind's position in the natural world and the repercussions of their activities on the ecosystem, will be discussed in the following section of this analysis. In addition to this, it will study the ways in which Clements explores ecospirituality through the characters and settings. This article sheds light on the significance of eco-spirituality in modern theatre as well as the contributions made by *Burning Vision*. Finally, the article emphasises the importance of an eco-spiritual viewpoint in contemporary literature and how it can be used to better understand the complex relationships between nature, culture, and identity. This article asserts that *Burning Vision* deserves to be considered a significant theatrical work attributable to the eco-spirituality it explores and its distinct perspectives on Indigenous issues, environmental injustice, and the human relationship to the natural world. It proves that the play enables readers to recognize their own perceptions of identity and consider how their actions influence their communities' environment and posterity.

**Keywords :** Ecospiritual, culture, identity, symbolism, environmental justice.

"Ecology and spirituality are fundamentally connected because deep ecological awareness ultimately, is spiritual awareness" (Capra). Eco-spirituality is a concept that has been explored in various forms and fashions throughout the centuries. It has been used to explore the interconnectedness of all living things and how humanity is an integral part of this web of life. In recent decades, the concept of eco-spirituality has been explored in different forms of art, including theatre. One example of this is Marie Clements's play *Burning Vision*, which examines the concept of ecospirituality and its relevance to indigenous communities globally. This paper will explore the ways in which eco-spirituality is explored in Clements's *Burning Vision*, and discuss the implications of its messages for our society today. It will examine how the play draws on Indigenous belief systems and traditional stories to explore the concept of eco-spirituality, and how it can be used to create a

dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about the importance of living in harmony with the environment. Furthermore, it will consider the potential implications of eco-spirituality, both in terms of environmental practices and in terms of creating an understanding of the spiritual unity of all beings.

Eco-spirituality is a growing philosophy that gives the spiritual and environmental parts of life equal weight. It is a way of thinking that sees spirituality and the environment as two sides of the same coin. As Pope Francis aptly says, "The ecological problem is essentially a spiritual problem" (Francis). It also recognises that people are deeply connected to the natural world and all of its creatures. Eco-spirituality acknowledges that the environment is our home, that we should take good care of it, and that an ethical commitment to respect and protect the Earth must guide our actions. It stresses how important it is to be aware of how we affect the environment, to use resources in a responsible way, and to act in ways that help the environment last. In Marie Clements's play, *Burning Vision*, eco-spirituality is explored through the idea of interconnectedness between humans, the land, and the spirit world. In the play, eco-spirituality is seen as a way for Indigenous communities to reclaim their relationship with the land and its connection to their identity, culture, and spirituality.

Marie Clements's play *Burning Vision* explores the intersection of Indigenous spirituality and environmentalism in the context of the exploitation of natural resources at the cost of indigenous people's lives. This paper uses eco-spirituality as a lens to critique the destructive impact of settler colonialism on the land, the people, and the spiritual traditions of Indigenous communities.

Marie Clements is a Métis playwright, artist, and filmmaker from Vancouver, British Columbia. Her work has been widely praised for its innovative and creative approach to storytelling. She is well-known for her plays that explore First Nations culture and themes, as well as for her poetic language and evocative imagery. Clements' plays are often praised for their strong characters, complex storylines, and thought-provoking themes.

Critics of Clements's work often point out the unusual way she mixes different kinds of theater, like traditional First Nations stories, modern drama, and musical theater. Her plays often combine music, dance, spoken word, and other things to make a unique theatrical experience. In addition, her plays often feature strong female characters, as well as characters from various ethnic backgrounds, creating an inclusive and diverse theatrical experience.

*Burning Vision* is set in four different places: the U.S., Canada, New Mexico, and Japan, where indigenous communities are struggling to survive in a world of environmental destruction. The play revolves around a bunch of interracial characters who strive hard to survive in the world despite the daunting damages that impact climate change. The play demonstrates the need for a spiritual connection to the land and to nature, and the power of Indigenous traditions to bring healing and understanding. It also highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between humans and the environment and how this connection can be used to create meaningful change. *Burning Vision* is a powerful reminder of the need to respect and protect the land and all its inhabitants, and to take action to protect the environment.

The significance of Indigenous knowledge and the ways in which it can be applied to preserve and revitalise traditional homelands are also highlighted in *Burning Vision*. The play shows how Indigenous spiritual traditions and knowledge may be used to preserve Indigenous communities and lessen the effects of climate change. Dene Seer is a great example in the play of foreseeing the future and warning them of the upcoming destruction of atom bombs. In the end, the play is a call to action for all Indigenous people to reclaim their spiritual power and employ it to defend their ancestral lands and cultural practices against the effects of climate change. Clements underlines the value of eco-spirituality in *Burning Vision*, emphasising how it can be used to defend Indigenous communities and their ancestral lands in the face of environmental degradation.

In *Burning Vision*, Clements uses ecospirituality to show how important it is for people and nature to be connected. The play shows how ecospirituality can help indigenous people feel more connected to their land. This leads to a better understanding of the complicated nature of Indigenous identity and the need for everyone to work together to protect the environment. Ecospirituality can help Indigenous people take back their identities and fight for environmental justice through the characters in the play. Ecospirituality is often used to stress how important it is to have a deep understanding of how all living things are connected and how important the land is to Indigenous identity. Ecospirituality is also used to show how powerful group action can be and how important it is to protect the environment for future generations. By using eco-spirituality, Clements provides an example of how Indigenous people can use their culture and spirituality to create meaningful connections with their land and to fight for environmental justice.

At the centre of the play is the idea that the land is a sacred thing that keeps all life going and helps people connect to their spiritual roots. The land is pictured as a strong force with its own will and consciousness. Through the characters of the widow and the Dene seer, the play highlights the intimate relationship between Indigenous spirituality and the land. Both are very powerful people who communicate with the land and the spirits through visions and dreams. They can feel their land as a living being that deserves respect and reverence, and they understand the interconnectedness of all things in the natural world.

The play also critiques the exploitation of natural resources by capitalist interests. The Labine brothers are the perfect example of capitalists. The miner, Dene ore carrier, and radium painter are the victim characters, representing the destructive impact of resource extraction on the land and the people. They are trapped in a cycle of poverty and exploitation that is driven by corporate greed and indifference to the environmental and human costs of resource extraction. The play highlights the urgent need to shift away from extractive industries and embrace sustainable and respectful practices that prioritise the health of the land and the well-being of all living beings.

In Clements's play *Burning Vision*, Koji, a Japanese fisherman, is a symbol of eco-spirituality. Koji's story is a good reminder of how important it is to connect with and care for nature. Koji's deep connection with nature is a source of both spiritual and emotional nourishment. He has been separated from his family and the land he loves. Koji's eco-spirituality is evident in his connection to the sea and in his attempt to protect its creatures.

Throughout *Burning Vision*, Koji's dream is to create a space where he can connect to the land and be in tune with nature, as he frequently clings to the cherry tree. He often speaks of the land in spiritual terms and also demonstrates his eco-spirituality through his actions. Koji states: "When I was a child and the winds blew and the waters rose. Separated by elements, I would make my way here to this high ground. The highest ground This cherry tree When I got separated from my small world. I always knew to come to this place" (Clements, 39).

Koji's relationship with nature is also evident in his interactions with the trout. He is able to intuit when the trout is in danger, and he rushes in to protect him. In doing so, he is demonstrating a spiritual connection to these creatures, one that is based on respect and reverence for the natural world. In fact, his actions are a reflection of his spiritual beliefs about the interconnectedness of all life. He "grabs a fish from his line. Holding onto its middle, he brings it closer and talks intimately to it" (Clements, 15). This reflects a belief in the sacredness of nature and a respect for the interconnectedness of all living things. His intuition and his deep understanding of the sea give him a sense of belonging and peace. He even prophesies to the trout, referring to all sea creatures, "You will no longer breathe water and send out the sea through your mouth. You will no longer lie beneath the world" (Clements, 16). In doing so, he is demonstrating a deep respect for the environment as well as a reverence for the spiritual power of nature. Therefore, Koji's eco-spirituality is a testament to the power of connection and respect for the natural world. His relationship with nature serves as an example of how humans can live in harmony with the environment and strive to protect it.

The Widow, who was Dene Ore Carrier's late wife, is a character in *Burning Vision* who shows what eco-spirituality is all about. Throughout the play, the Widow is portrayed as being closely connected to her land and her people, in a way that goes beyond the traditional sense of a physical connection. In the very first scene, we find her engaging in a conversation with a rubber boot. The rubber boot denotes the colonial forces invading the indigenous boundaries, "but I'm sure you are forgiven. Amen"(Clements, 12). She speaks of her connection to the land in a spiritual context and is often seen invoking spiritual forces. Most of the time in the play, she is seen chanting by the fire to connect with the spiritual realm. The Widow is also deeply in tune with nature, and her language often reflects this connection. She speaks of the land and its features in a poetic way. The widow is also a protector of the land and its people, which is another aspect of eco-spirituality. Throughout the play, she is shown to be an advocate for the protection of the land and its people, often speaking out against those who would do them harm. In this way, the widow serves as a symbol of eco-spirituality, standing up for the land and its people and protecting them from those who would do them harm.

Lastly, the widow is a source of spiritual guidance and wisdom, which is another important part of eco-spirituality. She is often seen offering advice and guidance to the other characters, and her words are often full of spiritual wisdom. Her motherly advice to Rose is commendable. This serves to emphasize her connection to the land and her people and her role as a protector and source of spiritual guidance. Thus, the Widow is a character who exemplifies eco-spirituality in *Burning Vision*. The Widow embodies all facets of eco-

spirituality due to her close relationship with the land, her function as a protector of the land and its inhabitants, and her spiritual wisdom.

*Burning Vision* by Clements is a strong critique of how settler colonialism and capitalism have hurt Indigenous communities' land, people, and spiritual traditions. The Labine brothers in the play are the perfect example of capitalist masterminds. We find Gilbert, the elder Labine brother to think only of money at the cost of indigenous people's lives. He knows very well that uranium found underground is utterly poisonous and can cause cancer deaths, but he hides the fact and deceives them into believing that uranium is used to cure cancer. As we witness in today's world, corporate companies have great support from the government, and no one is bothered about the people, similarly, we find Gilbert proudly uttering, "The government knows what it's doing, and the government is behind me" (Clements, 107). The paper highlights the importance of eco-spirituality as a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of all things and the urgent need to protect the environment for future generations. Qwatsinas from Nuxalk Nation put it, "We must protect the forests for our children, grandchildren, and children yet to be born. We must protect the forests for those who can't speak for themselves such as the birds, animals, fish, and trees" (Qwatsinas).

In recent years, ecospirituality has become more popular, and Marie Clements' play *Burning Vision* is a great example of how this idea can be explored in a creative way. The play takes place in a remote rural area of four countries, which is rich in indigenous culture and surrounded by nature. The characters in the play find spiritual solace in their interactions with nature, as they discover a connection to the land and its spiritual significance. The play itself states, "Characters begin to interact with the elements of their environment" (Clements, 31).

The playwright also explores the idea of eco-spirituality in other ways by using the animals and birds of that particular native landscape. For example, the characters often talk about the importance of listening to the environment and its inhabitants and respecting their power. This is a way of emphasizing the idea that we must all take the time to connect with nature, appreciate its beauty, and learn from its wisdom. We find reindeer in North America "Caribou herds moving across the earth space" (Clements, 31) frequently throughout the play. There are also references to Canada's national bird, the "Canadian loon in all its glory" (Clements, 34). Koji is often seen with trout, "Ernest Hemingway of course had used trout and trout streams to symbolise the hope of a new and better life after World War I" (Barth). Furthermore, the characters in the play often talk about the impact of mining and bombing, as they recognize that the land is an integral part of their spiritual connection. Rose's words mark the awaiting dangers of uranium, "The wind's blowing it everywhere. The kids are playin' in sandboxes of it, the caribou are eating it off the plants, and we're drinkin' the water where they bury it. Besides, everybody's wearin' it these days" (Clements, 94).

The research paper on eco-spirituality in Clements's play *Burning Vision* has explored the impact of eco-spirituality on the play's narrative. It has been established that eco-spirituality is a crucial theme in the play, as it forms a central part of the story and its characters' understanding of their place in the world. This research paper has shown that eco-

spirituality is woven into the play's core message of understanding one's relationship with the natural world and the power of nature. It also shows how ecospirituality can be used to challenge and question the anthropocentric view of the world, showing that humans are not the only important creatures in the world. Also, this research paper has discussed the implications of eco-spirituality in terms of environmental sustainability, as well as its potential to help bring about positive social and political change. Thus, this research paper has demonstrated that eco-spirituality is an important and relevant theme in *Burning Vision*, and its impact on the narrative is undeniable.

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