

WRITING DROUGHT, THEN AND NOW:
A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF SARAT CHANDRA
CHATTOPADHYAY'S *THE DROUGHT* AND ANITA
AGNIHOTRI'S *REMEMBERING*

PRASHANT MAURYA*, NAGENDRA KUMAR*

ABSTRACT. Drought has been one of the most drafted natural calamities, in a country like India, which has been primarily agrarian. It finds a mention in the works of many native writers since times immemorial. We can just make mention of a few well-known writers like Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, etc. who have brought out the pain and pangs of this natural calamity in the lives of drought affected people through their literary works. Drought is a theme which continues to haunt modern writers like Amitav Ghosh, Anita Agnihotri and many others, who try to pen down the overriding reality of life in India (which still is primarily an agrarian country). The present paper attempts to make a comparative assessment of two short stories, "The Drought" and "Remembering", by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and Anita Agnihotri respectively, in order to meaningfully study the impact of drought on poor people's lives and their responses to such situations. The selected stories come from two different time periods, with a gap of nearly a hundred years, yet their concerns seem similar. The paper further discusses how Anita Agnihotri, who is more of a contemporary writer differs from Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay who belongs to the classical mood of story writing in the depiction of the social milieu that continues to be the same even after a century.

KEY WORDS: drought, Agnihotri, natural calamity, hunger, exploitation, migration

Introduction

The conflicting relationship of Man and Nature is not a new phenomenon. Since ages humans have struggled for their existence on Earth and have fought to survive against the challenges thrown by Nature in the forms of "natural calamities" be it earthquake, volcanic eruptions, floods or droughts. Drought is one of the most frequent occurring disasters in India.

* PRASHANT MAURYA (PhD student, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India) is a research scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee. E-mail: prashantlinguistics@gmail.com.

* NAGENDRA KUMAR (PhD 1998, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India) is Professor of English at Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India. E-mail: naguk20@gmail.com.

Drought, in general, is an extreme hydrologic event causing acute water shortages which persist long enough to trigger detrimental effects on human, vegetation, animals and ecosystem over a considerable area (Gautam and Bana 2014: 179). Drought is a more complex issue than just shortage of water in a country like India. Being primarily an agrarian country, India is often ravaged by this natural disaster as more than half of its population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Drought has a direct bearing on the life of peasants who are primarily dependent on rainfall for agriculture. The usual impact of agricultural drought is in terms of loss of crops, malnutrition of human being and livestock, land degradation, loss of other economic activities, spread of diseases, and migration of people and livestock (NAAS 2011: 22). Many authors, from past times as well as present, from India have tried to portray the situation and experiences of rural Indian people who are affected and devastated by this natural disaster more often. In this respect we have literatures on drought written by twentieth century writers in pre-independence India as well as literary works on the same issue written by twenty first century writers in contemporary times. As it is a common assumption that no two writers write in the same way and mood, it becomes an important job as a researcher to do a comparative study of such literatures from both time periods to bring out the commonalities and the differences (if any) in the portrayal of the human condition and their experiences during drought. This type of study may subsequently help a reader in assessing the extent to which drought affects poor people as well as the extent to which two authors of different era, dissent or assent over the same issue. Thus in this paper we are seeking to make a comparative study of two short stories which have drought as their major theme, one by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and the other by Anita Agnihotri. The stories taken up for study are “The Drought” by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay written probably during the 1920s and “Remembering” by Anita Agnihotri published in 2011. The study firstly assesses the extent to which drought has affected the lives of the characters of these short stories. Secondly, it traces the concept of continuity and changes in the portrayal of drought with respect to both authors. Thirdly it compares the writing style of the authors to look for commonalities and differences in said portrayal. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay is a prominent Indian Bengali writer of novels and short stories of early twentieth century. Considered a master story teller, Sarat Chandra, has written about twenty-seven short stories of which, “The Drought”, originally written in Bengali language and later translated into English, is one of the most popular. It is the story of Gafur, his daughter Amina and his beloved pet bull Mahesh in the face of extreme hunger and poverty because of the two consecutive years of drought in the village. The story relates to the suffering, in the life of Gafur, who meets exploita-

tion and humiliation at the hands of Shibu Babu and Tarkaratna, the tyrannical zamindar and the village priest respectively. Anita Agnihotri is a contemporary Indian Bengali writer of novels and short stories. She writes in Bengali and her works are being translated into English and many other Indian as well as foreign languages. “Remembering” is a short story, from her short story collection, *Seventeen*, published in 2011 and translated by Arunava Sinha into English language from Bengali. “Remembering” is a coming of age story of Balu, the protagonist. The story starts with Balu’s mother leaving the village to go to another place to work for a contractor, leaving behind little Balu and his ailing father. The story narrates the pitiable condition of both son and father, who are left to starve in the drought stricken village. Poverty succumbs Balu’s father, and his mother never returns to the village from her contract.

Drought as Background

The nub of both stories is drought. The fictional village of Kashipur which forms the setting of Sarat Chandra’s story is stricken by meteorological drought. It is defined as the absence of “rainfall from the normal. It is the least severe form of drought and is often identified by sunny days and hot weather” (Das 2015: 4). It is one type of drought among the seven types of drought commonly seen in India. It is the village, where poor Gafur lives with his daughter and his bull. The village is already affected by two consecutive years of drought and it seems that it is going to be drought again this year. “It was nearing the middle of May, but not a patch of cloud could be seen in the sky. The rainless firmament poured fire” (Sarat 2015: 5). The extreme hot weather of May, is an alarming call, of the prospective drought in the village. Gafur suspects drought to strike the village again because of continuous hot weather, which for him is not going to change its course:

Not a trace of mercy anywhere! Today even the thought that someday this aspect of sky would change, that it would become overcast with soft, moisture-laden clouds was impossible. It seemed as though the whole blazing sky would go on burning day after day endlessly to the end of time. (Sarat 2015: 8)

Mathani, the fictional village which forms the setting of Anita Agnihotri’s story is stricken by hydrological drought, a drought that ‘often leads to reduction of natural stream flows or groundwater levels, stored water supplies. Its main impact is on water resource systems’ (Das 2015: 4). The village pond has dried up and there is dust swirling on the roads. “The monsoon had arrived. But that was in the city. The villages were roasted by the sun. The earth was cracking” (Agnihotri 2011: 123). The farmers in the village, who are dependent on rain-fed agriculture, are waiting for rainfall but there is no hint of even a single drop. Thus drought serves as the back-

ground in both stories, which is going to decide the fate of characters of the stories.

Drought as Devourer

Drought, a period of dry weather with no rainfall directly affects agricultural productions. The immediate consequence of drought is, fall in crop production, that leads to poverty and hunger among the farmers or those, whose livelihood is dependent on agriculture. In this regard Tory (1979) says, “It is the poor who often find themselves in the path of disasters and who have very few, if any, resources to lessen the impact of disaster events” (Torry 370). Gafur in Sarat Chandra’s story is dependent on agriculture. He tills four bighas of land, for his zamindar (Shibu Babu), to earn his livelihood but in previous years’ drought, the paddy in the field had dried up. As there has been no production in the agricultural field in the last two years, Gafur is left with no food, to feed his family. He consumed, whatever he had got, as his share, by the zamindar but now he is left with nothing, not even with straw to feed his bull. “They (Gafur and his daughter) had never had enough to eat even while their little store of rice lasted. It was impossible to eat three times a day” (Sarat 2015: 9). In Anita Agnihotri’s “Remembering”, there is no agricultural work, to be had in Mathani Village, as it is drought stricken. Balu’s mother, who is a daily wage earner and works in agricultural fields to earn her livelihood, has no job to do. She is the bread winner of her family, but drought has pushed her family to the brink of starvation. She has no food in her home to feed upon. In this regard, Kelker (2009) aptly writes that it has been observed that women are more vulnerable than men to negative consequences of climate change due to persistent gender inequalities in access to resource and opportunities (Kelkar 2009: 27). The characters in both stories are poor mostly dependent on agriculture, and could not arrange food for them as drought has ceased their source of income and food.

The first and foremost impact of drought is thus poverty and hunger for the characters of the stories or for anyone whose livelihood depends on agriculture or is associated with agriculture. Natural calamities like drought, do not only affect human lives but the livestock also. It is not only the human world which suffers during drought, but the animal world also. The bull in “The Drought” and the ducks in “Remembering” are shown as victims of drought, the calamity which makes no distinction between the human and the animal world. The bull in Sarat Chandra’s story is starving. It is weakened so much that its ribs may be counted. Due to drought and the subsequent fall in crop-production, Gafur’s share of straw is kept by his master Shibu Babu on account of his last year’s rent. Gafur is not even left with straw to feed the bull and is compelled to feed it straw drawn from the

roof of his hut. But how long can he feed him by ravaging the roof? And one day, “starving for a bit of hay, (the bull) died with thirst on his lips. Nobody left the tiniest bit of land for him to feed on” (Sarat 2015: 9). Ducks, who are aquatic birds, and mostly feed on aquatic plants, fish, worms etc. requires to squat on water. But due to the hydrological drought, all ponds in Mathani village have dried up and water for them has become elusive “as for actually swimming in water, they’d forgotten all that long ago” (Agnihotri 2011: 123). Describing their plight, Anita Agnihotri writes, “The ducks were suffering too. With every passing day, the grass was drying under the sun... The ducks retreated, quacking, as feet pounded the mud. Now even the mud was gone” (Agnihotri 2011: 123). The ducks couldn’t sustain so long in the drought and succumbed to human lust as one day they are stolen from Balu’s house. It is evident that the ducks will survive no long when there is nothing to eat. But can’t the ducks quench someone’s hunger? The ducks who were themselves starving, were consumed by somebody (probably the thief) to extinguish his fire of hunger. The livestock in both the stories suffered much like the human and ended up ultimately losing their lives. Dahl and Hjort (1976) remarks rightly that “livestock, are subject to both natural increases and catastrophic losses, and the accumulation of livestock wealth in pastoral society has been described as volatile where fortunes rise or fall” (Dahl and Hjort 1976: 22). Thus, the drought in the stories, is in the role of a devourer, who is ready to suck the life of the hungry and destitute human and animal characters of the stories.

Drought as Escalated Calamity

Drought in itself is a ravaging calamity, but there are other social factors that enhance the degree of devastation, caused by it in the lives of drought-affected poor people who often have no representations. In the prolonged period of misery, when a poor person, broken up by a natural calamity like this drought, seek help and support from others, there are some who instead of helping the poor and the needy, take undue advantage of the situation by exploiting them. Sarat Chandra in his story has shown Gafur meeting exploitations at the hands of many. Gafur is the victim of Indian feudal system which was very much prevalent in twentieth century India. Gafur is a tenant of Shibu Babu (the zamindar) and ploughs his field. Shibu Babu get his four bighas of land cultivated by Gafur but keeps most of the harvested product with him as rent, thus exploiting Gafur. “This year I was to have received my share of straw, but the master kept it all on account of my last year’s rent” (Sarat 2015: 3). Thus even the straw is kept by Shibu Babu as rent and Gafur is left with nothing at the end of harvest. In this regard Sharma’s observation over feudalism is noteworthy, “Feudalism appears in a predominantly agrarian economy which is characterized by a class of land-

lords and a class of servile peasantry. In this system the landlords extract surplus through social, religious or political methods, which are called extra-economic” (Sharma, 1984: 17). Gafur’s exploitation doesn’t end here rather he is exploited at several places in the course of the story. Once his bull breaks loose from his tether, it is captured by Manik Bose and handed over to the police to be kept in the police pen. Then, Gafur has to mortgage his brass plate for a rupee to be paid to the police, who otherwise will sell the bull in the cattle market. Sarat Chandra poignantly describes this episode in the story, writing that, “in the last two years he (Gafur) had lent a rupee at least five times on this security. He made no objection today either” (Sarat 2015: 7). It seems that Gafur has accepted this exploitation as an inseparable part of his life, thus every time he complies with his exploitation by the local police – who ask him for money to free the bull in their custody – without questioning this vicious cycle of exploitation. At the end of the story, when migrating to the city, Gafur leaves his drinking bowl and brass plate for the priest as a pay for the penance for the death of his bull. Gafur has to pay to the priest because the ‘sacred animal’ has died in his home. Thus, “by holding the mirror to the ignorance, superstition and degradation of humanity in the rural sector, Sarat Chandra became the first exponent of social realism shot with sympathy for those oppressed by a rigid and heartless society” (Ghosh 1969: 74). He exposes the exploitation in the name of religion done by people who have attained favourable social positions in society.

In Anita Agnihotri’s story, Balu’s mother leaves the village, to go to another place, with a contractor to work for him leaving behind, Balu and his ailing father (who has puss in his legs and has become disable), as there is no job to do in the village because of the drought. She is entitled to her wages but the contractor has arranged a local agent, named Brijan who would give one meal a day to Balu and his father living in the village, as payment of wages entitled to Balu’s mother. Balu and his father have to arrange for the other meal themselves. Nobody knows whether Balu’s mother is paid there (whichever place, the contractor has taken her to) or not or what is her condition there. But as the textual evidences shows Balu and his father are living half- starving, it can be assumed that Balu’s mother is not sending any money or her saving to him or his father. It may be the case that she is made to work on the bond that only half-meal will be given to her and her family in lieu of wages. Anita Agnihotri has shown the exploitation of a labor in the industrial sector through the character of Balu’s mother. There exist many labors who are exploited in one or the other way by their contractors who take them away from their villages to another place or cities to work for them. The drought in the stories has become an escalated calamity. So it is not only the drought but also the feudal (in case of

Gafur), capitalist (in case of Balu's mother) people who engineer the degree of devastation caused by drought in the life of poor people escalating their sorry plight during drought. There are many cases, when caught in the vicious cycle of poverty and hunger due to drought, poor people are exploited by money lenders who charge high interest rate. Many a times they are compelled to mortgage their belongings to rich landlords. Sometimes in extreme cases, the farmers and those whose livelihood is dependent on agriculture also tend to commit suicide.

Drought and Migration

When poverty, hunger and exploitation became the inseparable companion of poor people, they are forced to migrate. Farmers and daily wage earners leave their home and migrate to other parts of country in search of employment and livelihood. In both stories, drought is the main push factor which encourages the migration of the characters of the stories. Shattered by the extreme course of Nature, exploited and tortured by the rich landlord Shibu Babu, left with no food and in state of dire poverty, with a dead bull as his only source of income, Gafur along with his daughter migrate to the city to work in a jute mill; migration is the only choice for his as well as his daughter's survival. In "Remembering", when Balu's mother realizes that there is no work to be done in the village, she decides to go with the contractor to work in another land, leaving her son and her unwell husband behind. Anita Agnihotri arouses a poignant feeling in her readers when in her story she writes in respect of Balu, "With his mother gone, did they have a home anymore?" (Agnihotri 2011: 122)

Migration from one's own place to another place during drought, in search of livelihood unsettles the life of the migrators. It is their family which gets affected the most. When parents leave, probably the children and other dependents suffer the most as in the case with Balu who along with his father is left in the village after his mother has gone. Farmers and laborers who migrate to the cities with family face a number of challenges while establishing themselves and this fear is there in Gafur's mind who along with his daughter is moving to the city to work in a jute mill as he knows that there will be "No religion, no respect, no privacy for womenfolk there" (Sarat 2015: 12). In Doshi's regard (2016), "The drought migrants have no homes in the city; some have made makeshift shelters on construction sites, footpaths and park benches. The villagers have no work and no cash, and many are forced to beg" (Doshi 2016: 1). Drought badly affects the lives of disables also. Balu's father can't walk because of the puss in his legs. In such situation he can't help his family rather is dependent on it. He is unable to migrate and go for work to another place because of his temporal disability. In this context Patel (2015) has a pertinent observation:

In drought situations, especially in absence of family support, PwDs access to these basic needs for living and living healthy life gets affected to a great extent. PwDs are last to receive the Drought relief facilities; mainly due to lack of adequate and sensitized relief plans. Thus, they are the first to succumb to deteriorated health and in many cases to death. (Patel 2015: 6)

Portraying Drought: Writing Style

Authors pre-occupation with an issue like drought and its impacts makes them realistic as they are writing about a problem which is an overriding reality of life in India. Sarat Chandra is an already established and renowned short story writer known for his humane depiction of country side life. “Sarat Chandra’s stories had an objective- that is, his over-powering desire to expose the social evils and rouse readers’ conscience in this regard” (Bose 1983:58). He brought forth the process of social change—decay of feudalism, overthrow of peasants from land and their transformation to worker in his writings. Anita Agnihotri is a new voice in the area of short story writing. Anita Agnihotri’s preoccupation with social issues brings her closer to Sarat Chandra in terms of her portrayal of the explicit reality of drought affected poor people. Both writers are showing some similar trend while writing about people who are affected by drought or say affected more by the escalators of drought *i.e.* the feudalists and the capitalists. A unique feature of Anita Agnihotri’s story is the use of strong imagery in it. Like she describes the arrival of drought in the villages as: “The monsoon had arrived. But that was in the city. The villages were roasted by the sun. The earth was cracking” (Agnihotri 2011: 122). “With every passing day, the grass was drying under the sun... Now even the mud was gone. The pond had dried completely, resembling the hard bottom of a well-scrubbed bowl” (Agnihotri 2011: 123). While delineating the condition of ducks during drought she writes, “The ducks took turn to squat wherever they found the earth a little moist or a little puddle. Maybe they loved a soft wet touch on their bellies. As for actually swimming in water, they’d forgotten all that long ago” (Agnihotri 2011: 123). The word ‘roasted’, ‘cracking’, ‘well-scrubbed bowl’, etc. in the sentences enhances the sensory experiences of drought in the readers of her story. Sarat Chandra story on the other hand is less appealing as far as the use of imagery in his story is concerned. This is evident from the sentence where he is describing the arrival of drought. He writes, “Not a trace of mercy anywhere! Today even the thought that someday this aspect of sky would change, that it would become overcast with soft, moisture-laden clouds was impossible. It seemed as though the whole blazing sky would go on burning day after day endlessly, to the end of time” (Sarat 2015: 8). At many places in her story, Anita Agnihotri has used ‘dust imagery’. Her story starts as – “The dust whirled. As though it were alive” (Agnihotri 2011: 121). The recurring images of dust in her story symbolizes

the drought as well as the vagueness that drought has created in the life of the character. Both writers have employed human as well as animal suffering in their stories to appeal more and more to their readers.

Sarat Chandra has written his story in first person narrative, giving ample space to his character to open up and thus the story become more poignant and appealing, expressing Sarat Chandra's obsession with pain and grief of life. According to McClelland (2016: 1), "While literary short fiction can often get bogged down by a singular focus on beautiful language or shocking, soul-sucking sadness – or both – Agnihotri doesn't allow her stories to exist simply for the sake of art. Instead, she dives directly into political, economic and social issues." Thus writing in the twenty first century, Anita Agnihotri deploys the currents of contemporary times to give her story a more realistic touch. One such current is politics. Politics is an integral part of modern India which was probably not as pronounced, during twentieth century India when Sarat Chandra was writing his story. A large number of political parties have emerged to represent each and every citizen of this democratic republic nation (India). When Balu's father dies, people with cameras (media persons) begin to visit his home in jeeps. Two different political groups claim their own reason for his father's death. "One group claimed his father had had a knee problem. Another insisted he had starved. Nobody asked Balu anything" (Agnihotri 2011: 123).

Anita Agnihotri has subtly criticized the politics done over a poor's death by today's political parties where politics is rooted deeply in the social life of modern Indians. "Agnihotri draws inspiration for many of her stories from the have-nots of this country – the landless peasants, the migrant workers, the abandoned wives, the unemployed. Yet, she does not fall into the trap of 'reporting' – this is fiction that serves better to illuminate India UnShining than most 'factual' pieces could" (Singh 2012: 1). Thus both writers have their own unique and distinct writing style. They have used a vivid language which add depth to their work and appeals to the human senses. And finally the treatment of the poor and the oppressed in both the stories is drifted towards creating social awareness among his readers by the writers.

Conclusions

This comparative study shows the degree to which drought can affect the lives of poor people. The characters in the story suffer from hunger, poverty and meet exploitation of various kinds during drought. Drought compels them to migrate from their place. The study shows that though the social scenario has changed in between hundred years, certain aspects have not changed in rural India. Like dependence on rain-fed agriculture still continues to be there. The exploitation also, of poor has not stopped rather

has taken a different form. It was Shibu Babu (feudal lord) in twentieth century and now it is the contractor (capitalist) in twenty-first century who sequesters the laborers of their dues. The study shows that the effect of drought is escalated more when engineered by some social forces like the feudal lord in Sarat Chandra's story and the contractor in Anita Agnihotri's story. If seen in a different light from the degree of dissent or assent, Anita Agnihotri's story seems to be a furthering of Sarat Chandra's story where there is a transition from feudalism to industrialism.

Sarat Chandra's story ends in Gafur migrating to city to work in a jute mill (which signifies industrial advancement) whereas Anita Agnihotri's story starts with Balu's mother migrating to the city with a contractor to work for him. The study shows how politics has become an integral part of modern India in contemporary times. Drought, in both stories is not merely natural calamity but it is also symbolic of the hollowness of human relationships. Shiv Babu, the land lord and Tarkaratna, the priest has no emotions for starving Gafur, his daughter and his bull. Similarly, Brijan Sahukar, the person arranged by the contractor to feed Balu and his father never bothers how can Balu and his father survives on a small meal a day. Both stories befit the concept of continuity and change where farmer's dependence on rain-fed agriculture, poor's exploitation etc. remain unchanged overtime and continues to plague lives even in modern India which has changed by leaps and bounds in the past few years due to digital boom. Thus the study shows a continuity of preoccupation among the writers of different times and establishes the fact that good times or bad times are integral and universal and so are our responses to them. The study also points out the irony of human predicament, the flip side of progress, *i.e.* human's struggle for survival and their over dependence on the forces of nature despite the rapid technological strides.

References

- Agnihotri A (2011) *Seventeen*. Translated by A Sinha. New Delhi: Zubaan.
- Bose A (1983) The Bengali Short Story. *Indian Literature* 26(4): 48-65.
- Chatterjee SC (1970) *The Drought and other stories*. Translated by S. Sinha. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.
- Dahl G and Hjort A (1976) *Having Herds: Pastoral Herd Growth and Household Economy*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, Stockholm: University of Stockholm.
- Das S (2015) Droughts in India: Types of Occurrence. *Understanding Droughts in India* 127: 1-8.
- Doshi V (2016) India's drought migrants head to cities in desperate search for water. *The Gaurdian*, 27 April 2016.

- Gautam RC and Bana RS (2014) Drought in India: its impact and mitigation strategies – A review. *Indian Journal of Agronomy* 59(2): 179-190.
- Ghosh S L (1969) An Introduction to Modern Bengali Fiction. *Indian Literature* 12(3): 73-86.
- Kelkar G (2009) Climate change and vulnerability of indigenous women. *Adivasi Women Engaging with Climate Change*, 1-32.
- McClelland M (2016) Arunava Sinha's exceptional translation allows English readers to be ransported into Agnihotri's world. Review of *Seventeen*, by Anita Agnihotri. *Spectrum Culture*, <http://spectrumculture.com/2016/08/21/seventeen/anita-agnihotri>. Accessed 5 April 2019.
- NAAS (2011) Drought Preparedness and Mitigation. *Policy Paper* 50: 1-22. National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, New Delhi.
- Patel A (2015) Drought and Persons with Disabilities: What is the Connection? Exclusion or Inclusion? *Understanding Droughts in India* 127: 1-8.
- Sarat C (2015) The National Democratic Writer of the Bengali Literature. <http://www.signalfire.org/2015/01/26/sarat-chandra-the-national-democratic-writer-of-the-bengali-literature-september-1974/>. Accessed 13 April 2019.
- Singh AV (2012) Anita Agnihotri's *Seventeen*, a collection of short stories, many from India UnShining, delights with its insights into human nature. Review of *Seventeen*, by Anita Agnihotri. *Women's Web*, <http://www.womensweb.in/articles/seventeen-book-review/>. Accessed 4 April 2019.
- Sharma RS (1984) How Feudal Was Indian Feudalism? *Social Scientist* 12(2): 16-41.
- Torry WI (1979) Hazards, Hazes and Holes: A Critique of Environment as Hazard and General Reflections on Disaster Research. *Canadian Geographer* 23(4): 368-383.