

Research Article

Indigenous Eco-Aesthetics in Global Folklore: Practical Uses and Theoretical Basis for Environmental Justice

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Abstract

Research into alternative paradigms for ecological ethics and justice is much needed, particularly in light of culturally ingrained views during a period of growing environmental crises. This paper presents Indigenous Eco-Aesthetics in Global Folklore as both a theoretical framework and a useful instrument for improving ecological justice. Using many indigenous traditions from Bangladesh, India, Brazil, the United States, and Australia to examine how sacred aesthetics within folklore help to create sustainable ecological worldviews and practices, the work generates and uses an original theoretical model, Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT). This paper contends that by means of songs, rituals, myths, visual arts, and holy narratives, indigenous people encode environmental knowledge, stewardship ethics, and resistance strategies, therefore establishing a dynamic ecological archive rather than only a symbolic or artistic medium. Three basic pillars support anchoring the suggested IEAFT: pragmatic stewardship, symbolic ecology, and sacred aesthetics. These components enable indigenous and folklore depictions to constitute ecological action plans as well as epistemological models. Using a qualitative and interpretive approach, the research reviews a set of worldwide case studies showing the pragmatic application of eco-aesthetic expressions in cultural activism, biodiversity protection, and ceremonial land care. Among these are Dreamtime ecological maps of Australian Aboriginal tribes, the Tree-hugging chants of the Chipko movement in India, the rain-invoking Baul melodies in Bangladesh, and holy river narratives of Amazonian and Native American cultures. These forms defend ecological wisdom, conserve knowledge, and act as tools for legal claims, protest against environmental damage, and sustainable education models, as well as the defense of information. In the end, the research offers indigenous eco-aesthetic folklore as a neglected yet effective tool in the environmental justice debate. Re-centering folklore inside ecological and political theory, the study argues a decolonized approach to environmental theory, one that recognizes and advances the spiritual, creative, and pragmatic contributions of indigenous people to the worldwide battle for environmental justice.

Keywords: Global Folklore, Indigenous Knowledge, Eco-Aesthetics, Environmental Justice, Cultural Sustainability

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1. Introduction

Environmental justice has become both a moral need and a vital area of scientific research in the face of hitherto unheard-of climate disturbances, ecological damage, and socioeconomic inequity. Although environmental science and policy have always dominated this conversation, there is increasing awareness that indigenous worldviews and folkloric traditions typically provide the most sustainable and firmly ingrained environmental ethics rather than those from current scientific paradigms. Deeply ingrained in ritual, story, music, and visual symbolism, these cultural systems provide a complex ecological sensibility that transcends simple resource management reasoning. They suggest a rather eco-aesthetic perspective in which sustainability, spirituality, and beauty are interconnected.

Starting with the idea that indigenous folklore is an active, living reservoir of ecological knowledge and environmental ethics rather than a passive collection of myths and rituals, this study examines how Folklore is the main way values that direct human interactions with land, water, woods, and animals are passed on in many different societies all around. Nature is personified, spiritualized, or symbolized in several traditions in ways that support an ethics of care and respect most of which it's the Dreamtime maps of Australia's Aboriginal societies, the fabled protectors of the Amazon rainforest, or the respect for rivers as goddesses in South Asia, such folklore codes artistic forms of environmental wisdom that are both quite symbolic and practically informative.

Theoretically, this study presents Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT) as a framework for comprehending and using these cultural expressions within the worldwide movement for environmental justice. Three main components—sacred aesthetics (rituals, chants, sacred symbols), symbolic ecology (myths, oral stories, metaphors), and practical stewardship—based on taboos and land ethics—focus IEAFT. Examining how folklore supports environmental awareness, opposition against ecological injustice, and community-driven sustainability initiatives through these lenses helps one to better understand how.

Combining engaging folklore from Bangladesh, India, Brazil, Australia, and the United States, this paper aims to combine indigenous cultural knowledge with environmental justice research. It seeks to demonstrate how re-centered eco-aesthetic folklore in global environmental philosophy is not only a necessary effort for ethical and inclusive ecological futures but also a concern of cultural preservation.

Literature Review

Though it remains under-theorized in terms of a coherent framework, the junction of indigenous knowledge, folklore, aesthetics, and environmental justice has attracted scholarly attention more and more. Four important fields are investigated in this literature review: Indigenous ecological knowledge,(2) folklore and environment,(3) eco-aesthetics, and (4) environmental justice, therefore exposing the gaps that the present study seeks to close using the Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT).

Indigenous Ecological Knowledge: IEK

Indigenous ecological knowledge (IEK) is collective knowledge, practices, and beliefs about the environment created by indigenous people via long-term interaction with their native ecosystems. Scholars such as Berkes (1999) and Gadgil et al. (1993) stress that IEK incorporates integrated perspective integration, conservation of biodiversity, and sustainable land-use practices. Crucially, this knowledge is symbolic, spiritual, performative, and empirical, that is, closely related to communal rituals, oral traditions, and aesthetics.

But much of the body of current research shows IEK in utilitarian or empirical terms, therefore neglecting the symbolic and expressive aspects. Many times, the cultural forms through which ecological ethics are expressed, such as songs, myths, dances, and ceremonies, are underappreciated or seen as secondary to "practical knowledge." This research reinterpreted these expressive forms as fundamental elements of environmental ethics and action.

Folklore and Environmental Perspectives

For millennia, folklore has been a means of sharing cultural values and natural knowledge. Thompson (1977), Dundes (1980), and more lately Bendix and Hasan-Rokem (2012) contend that oral traditions and ceremonial customs help to codify communal reactions to nature. Folkloric forms, including origin stories, proverbs, and seasonal songs, provide ecological information particular to the terrain, temperature, and history of a people.

In South Asia, for instance, songs and rain-invoking ceremonies express complicated interactions between community, weather, and heavenly forces. Still, these forms are hardly included in

popular environmental debates. This work expands on the developing area of eco-folklore, which aims to reclaim and respect these manifestations as appropriate ecological knowledge systems.

Environmental Philosophy and Eco-Aesthetics

As discussed by Carlson (2000), Brady (2003), and Saito (2007), eco-aesthetics investigates how perception and beauty fit environmental ethics. Though powerful, these works mostly function inside Western philosophical traditions. By contrast, indigenous eco-aesthetics give aesthetic experience spiritual, ethical, and environmental purposes. Scholars such as Kimmerer (2013) and Cajete (2000) underline how respect, responsibility, and relationality toward nature are produced by indigenous myths, rites, and art forms.

Still, there is a notable discrepancy in explicitly explaining how these aesthetic patterns function in folklore across the world's indigenous traditions. This study tackles this by building a structured model, IEAFT, that concentrates on aesthetics not as an abstraction but rather as a real, active component of environmental activity.

Environmental Justice: Cultural Knowledge

Originally concentrated on the unequal impact of environmental degradation on underprivileged groups, the environmental justice movement has grown to incorporate epistemic and cultural justice (Bullard, 1990). Scholars stressing the need to include indigenous viewpoints into policy-making, legal systems, and activism include Whyte (2016), Pulido (2018), and Tuck & Yang (2012).

Though environmental challenges and indigenous land rights are becoming more acknowledged, the cultural manifestations that support these worldviews, songs, stories, and ceremonial aesthetics, are often overlooked. This paper claims that environmental justice initiatives remain inadequate and culturally regressive without realizing and interacting with these symbolic networks.

Filling in the void: toward IEAFT

Though a lot of research has been done in these fields, there is clearly a missing uniting theoretical model combining environmental justice, indigenous folklore, and aesthetics. Introduced here seeks to close this gap: the Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT). It gives a culturally grounded, multidisciplinary framework combining environmental ethics, symbolic communication, and spiritual ecology, therefore highlighting folklore as a vital site of environmental action and justice.

By doing this, the study adds to a growing yet vital body of research that approaches folklore not as inert tradition but as active ecological theory and practice, one able to direct local and worldwide initiatives for environmental sustainability and justice.

Materials and Methods

Grounded in folklore studies, environmental humanities, and indigenous knowledge systems, this research uses a qualitative, multidisciplinary, and interpretive approach. The goal is to investigate how indigenous eco-aesthetic expressions included in folklore support environmental justice actions and cross-cultural understanding.

Study Strategy

The paper designed as a comparative and interpretive research spanning five countries—Bangladesh, India, Brazil, Australia, and the United States. These areas were chosen depending on the availability of easily available cultural materials for research, the depth of their indigenous folklore, and their historical connection with environmental challenges. This intentional selection makes it possible to have thematically connected but culturally varied insights on the worldwide operation of environmental aesthetic folklore.

The three fundamental foundations of Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT) guide the research:

- Sacred Aesthetics
- Symbolic Ecology
- Active Stewardship

Method of Data Gathering

Primary and secondary sources abound from which data is gathered:

Transcripts and translations of folk music, tales, ceremonial texts, oral histories, and visual artworks from indigenous traditions comprise primary data.

Secondary material comprises ethnographies, scholarly journal publications, documentary films, cultural archives, NGO, and indigenous environmental group reports.

Wherever feasible, the original aesthetic and emotive context of the material is retained by analyzing audio-visual and performative components of rituals and songs.

Analytical Framework

Over the chosen case studies, the study employs thematic analysis to find recurrent motifs, symbols, and functions of eco-aesthetic expression. Every bit of folklore is seen via three IEAFT perspectives:

- Which aesthetic form of sacred song, story, or visual symbol is used?
- Which ecological perspective or ethic of symbolic ecology does it support?
- How does this expression relate to actual methods of resistance or conservation, that is, practical stewardship?

Furthermore, drawing on the interpretive process are:

- Decolonial theory to question Eurocentric environmental models.
- Eco-critical folklore studies, to find environmental resistance and resilience carried in songs and stories.
- Emphasizing relational knowledge, storytelling, and respect for community epistemologies, indigenous research approaches stress.

Ethical issues

This study respects the spiritual and intellectual assets of indigenous people. Every item utilized is carefully referenced, giving indigenous perspectives either direct or generated with community involvement top priority. Maintaining critical distance, providing context, and respecting the sacred character of many eco-aesthetic practices help the work avoid cultural appropriation.

Theoretical Framework

This paper develops and elaborates on the Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT) to help readers understand how indigenous and folkloric practices establish a system of environmental ethics by means of aesthetic and symbolic elements. IEAFT bridges social-ecological, eco-aesthetics, and folklore studies through decolonial, culturally specific approaches to ecological knowledge systems.

Clarifying Basic Ideas Original Eco-Aesthetics.

Eco-aesthetics are most traditionally used for our enjoyment of nature through our brains and imagination. Conversely, indigenous eco-aesthetics result from spiritual, ceremonial, and cultural links to the surroundings. It shapes and is shaped by the life of humanity, not by an object of aesthetic contemplation; it sees nature as a living, holy presence. Native people usually

communicate their environmental ethics through such genres that imbue environmental action with moral, spiritual, and social relevance: music, narrative, dance, and visual symbolism.

Mythology worldwide

Folklore consists of oral histories, legends, songs, rites, visual arts, celebrations, and daily life passed down over the years. From this perspective, global folklore clarifies the different but related systems of traditional knowledge that propagate environmental awareness. From river stories in Bangladesh to forest guardians in Brazil, these stories frequently convey an integrated ecological conscience based on shared values.

Environment Justice

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful participation that every person, especially poor and indigenous groups, should have in environmental decision-making outside of legal and scientific conventions. Emphasizing the right of communities to retain, express, and practice their eco-aesthetic traditions, this study integrates environmental justice with cultural justice.

Three linked foundations comprise the IEAFT Model.

- Sacred aesthetics
- Symbolic ecology
- Conscientious Stewardship

Sacred aesthetics

The third pillar comprises the rituals of respect for natural phenomena, recitation of poetic verses, artwork, and ceremonies. These lines create a kind, empathetic relationship with the surroundings. Whereas sacred sites feature in Aboriginal dot drawings, the Bengal Baul mystic chants deify rivers and the ground. In sacred aesthetic terms, resources convert earth and water into spiritual entities and insist upon them being treated with reverence, not as something to be simply used.

Symbolic ecology

This part highlights how ecological wisdom is spoken of in lore, analogies, and legends. Plants, animals, and weather occurrences proliferate in so many indigenous traditions as symbolic leaders who are also moral agents as well as spiritual guides. These symbols, generally organized around instructive warnings, origin narratives, or cosmologies of equilibrium and reciprocity, function as pedagogical instruments for environmental values.

Conscientious Stewardship

Local mythology colours environmental practices such as water-directed rituals, planting seasons that follow lunar myth and taboos that guard sacred groves. These sanctioned behaviors function as ecologies of control. They invite the overlap of policy and belief, based on spiritual worship and cultural identity, as it relates to the sustainable use of natural resources.

The interweaving of folklore, aesthetics, and ecological theory within the paradigm privileges cultural epistemologies and may intersect with traditional ecological knowledge, though a much-needed asset already in publication for the IEAFT corpus. It not only values indigenous knowledge systems as helping to supplement but is fundamentally foundational to global environmental ethics and supplants Western and technocratic environmental paradigms. Though

critical of the privatization or tokenization of the indigenous, the framework includes decolonial theory and cultural sustainability, as well as eco-criticism.

The IEAFT paradigm offers folklore not as peripheral artistic expression but rather as an essential ethical framework, one able to drive ecological behavior, construct environmental policy, and redefine justice using culturally based aesthetics.

Constraints

Although the study covers several areas, it does not claim to reflect all indigenous groups around. Though not comprehensive, the choices are illustrative. Cultural privacy, translators' limitations, or ethical constraints could restrict access to some rites or stories. Moreover, as an interpretive study, the researcher's lens and positionality shape the analysis and are thus accepted as a component of the methodological transparency.

Results

Case Study 1: Bangladesh – Rivers, Rituals, and Rainlore

Bangladesh is a deltaic country formed by rivers and seasonal monsoons; it has a rich legacy of indigenous eco-aesthetic folklore. From Baul mysticism to Mymensingh Geetika ballads, the oral and ceremonial customs of rural Bangladesh reflect a great ecological awareness. Often personified in stories, songs, and seasonal ceremonies, nature is not a background but rather an active spiritual presence. Directly following the IEAFT paradigm, this case study investigates how Bangladeshi folk aesthetics reflect and support environmental ethics.

Sacred Aesthetics: River Spirits and Baul Songs

The syncretic spiritual movement known as the Baul tradition provides a holy aesthetic based on nature as a heavenly power by means of roaming minstrels. Often praising the Padma, Yamuna, and Meghna rivers as models for the soul's journey, baul songs. The river becomes to be a magical barrier toward liberation as well as a physical source of life.

Said another way, "O boatman, ferry me across this river wide, In your song flows the tide, The clay of this body returns to soil, In water my soul shall glide."

This sacred style encourages appreciation of natural objects. The river is communed with; it is not to be under control. These points of view challenge extractivist concepts of damming or diverting rivers without regard for cultural value or ecological balance.

Symbolic Ecology: Rain and Earth Stories

Many oral traditions from Bangladesh abound in tales connecting moral and spiritual teachings with environmental cycles. For example, the Bonbibi tale of the Sundarbans tells how the forest goddess defends the mangroves and coexists with humans and tigers. Bonbibi worship embodies a wonderful ecological balance in which ceremonial respect and legendary law control the use of forest resources.

Rural rain-invasion songs and ceremonies like "Barsha Mangoler Gaan" (Songs for Monsoon Blessings), incorporate meteorological dependency into symbolic performance. Sung together during dry spells, these songs sometimes feature calls to gods like Indra, therefore stressing the way ethics, morality, and beauty interact.

Environmental Stewardship: Folklore as Regulator

From rhymes and oral instructions and passed down over generations, a traditional farming calendar of lunar cycles and folk meteorology prevails across Bangladesh. In a looser but more powerful form, taboos and specific ritual practices, such as not harvesting some fruits before certain festive events, have the effect of regulating the ecology.

As an Illustration:

Through the exchange of local plants and seeds, "Boishakhi mela" celebrates seasonal shifts while also contributing to the local biodiversity.

"Nouka Baich" (boat race) festivals are indicators of the ecological well-being of rivers, which sustains their cultural and economic livelihood.

As such, folklore very much influences water utilization, agricultural preference, and forest type (functions occasionally overlooked in contemporary policy paradigms)

Environmental Justice in Bangladesh

Though their environmental stance rarely shapes state policy, Bangladesh's indigenous and rural communities are among the most affected by river erosion and climate change. The kind of praxis to which Bangladeshi folk exemplifies for a vernacular eco-aesthetic model of sustainable justice.

Through IEAFT, baul songs, rainlore, and forest mythologies serve as active implements of environmental justice, helping to maintain biodiversity, resist ecological exploitation, and therefore confer community resilience. By recognizing these formations as recognized ecological systems, we may decolonize environmental governance and open space for culturally appropriate climate adaptation strategies.

India's Case Study: Forest Deities, Tribal Cosmologies and Aesthetic Activism

India's diverse indigenous people—the Adivasis, the forest-dwellers, the tribal nations — have innumerable eco-aesthetic folklore to regale us with. East and South From the Bhil and Dongria Kondh in the south and east to the Gond and Santhal in the center, every group in his bookcatalogue has its artistic traditions that blend myth, land, ritual, and ecological practice. These expressions are deeply reflective of Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT) and living models of environmental stewardship, symbolic ecology, and justice, and are not simply isolated cultural objects.

The sacred aesthetics of forest spirits and ritual art

Many Indian tribal societies view forests as hallowed areas populated by gods and spirits. For the holy landscape, the Gond people, for instance, create vivid Digna and Bhittichitra (wall art) showing trees, animals, and spirits. These themes are prayers, defenders, and legends passed down through the brush, not ornamental.

The Dongria Kondh see the Niyamgiri Hills as the residence of their god Niyam Raja, defender of land, water, and harvests. The ground itself is holy; ceremonial songs and chants help one to identify every river, hill, and grove. Sometimes their rituals, which represent a holy aesthetic combining spirituality and sustainability, take place in forest clearings using flowers, leaves, and natural hues.

Symbolic Ecology: Rain Song of Soil

Indian tribes have many oral traditions full of symbolic ecosystems. Perched at agricultural festivities such as Sohrai or Baha, the Santhal songs express thanks to the land and narrate the story of the interdependence of humans, animals, and seasonal change.

"Oh Mother Earth, we wake with your breath, The seed you swallow, the harvest you birth, The heavens we depict on the drum and horn, I appreciate the corn and maize."

These songs offer more than just thankfulness since they catch cosmologies in which land is not property but family. Nestled in narrative and music, they also offer farming, cattle grazing, and forest use instructions.

Pragmatic stewardship: folk knowledge and ritual control

Many communities use their folklore to help to regulate the cycle of life. Rain dances of the Bhil people, Nag Panchami serpent worship, and seasonal fire rites comprise part of a network of oral instructions, taboos, and folk science.

As an illustration:

- Harvest festivals track astronomical observations instead of business schedules.
- Totemic beliefs prevent some holy species from being excessively hunted.
- Stories of punishment for destroying specific trees, such as the Peepal or Banyan, help to serve as moral restrictions on deforestation.

This folk wisdom not only protects biodiversity but also opposes extractive capitalist models that discount ancient customs as superstition.

Opposition and Environmental Equity

One of the most remarkable eco-aesthetic techniques accessible in India is using folklore in environmental resistance activities. Driven by political protest mixed with holy forest myths, folk songs, and chants, the Chipko Movement (1970s) in Uttarakhand saw women clutching trees to resist logging.

Rather than from property ownership, the Dongria Kondh's resistance to bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri Hills sprang from the sacred eco-aesthetic claim—that destroying the mountain would be murdering a deity. Globally well-known, their songs, dances, and ceremonial processions developed into political opposition weapons.

In these contexts, folklore is active knowledge deeply embedded in eco-aesthetics and indigenous justice systems, not merely a passive legacy.

Including IEAFT in the Indian Situation

Examining IEAFT:

- Forest art, ceremonies, and devotional hymns to nature spirits reveal sacred aesthetics.
- Seasonal folk songs and stories mapping ecological ethics into daily living feature symbolic ecology.
- Agricultural knowledge, totemism, and taboos help to retain pragmatic stewardship.

Indian indigenous eco-aesthetic folklore provides not only symbolic resistance but also practical means of environmental control. Inclusive, effective, culturally embedded environmental justice policy hinges on a recognition of these manifestations as valid epistemologies.

Third Case Study: Forest Justice—Story-singing—Brazil: Views from the Amazonian World

Many of the more than 300 Indigenous groups residing in Brazil live in the Amazon rainforest, a place not only vital for the world climate but also essential to their spiritual and cultural life. For these people, folklore is a living aesthetic practice as well as a guide for coexistence with the forest, the rivers, the spirits, and all that non-human life offers. With an eye toward sacred aesthetics, symbolic ecology, and pragmatic environmental justice, this case study investigates Brazilian Indigenous eco-aesthetic folklore using the IEAFT paradigm.

Sacred Aesthetics: Mythic Songs and Spirit-World Relations

Among the Yanomami, Kayapó, and Tukano peoples, aesthetics abound in ceremonial chanting, symbolic body painting, featherwork, and oral epics tying human societies to cosmic rhythms and forest spirits. Among the Yanomami, shamanic chanting known as xapiri songs, for example, is said to call spirit-helpers who preserve cosmic harmony, guide healing, and defend forests.

Part of spiritual talks between people and nature are the visual aesthetics: complex body paint created from natural colors, masks carved from holy trees, and feather headdresses. They are ontological assertions that the ego is part of the ecological whole, not only ornamental statements.

Symbolic Ecology: Ancestor and Archive The Forest

Mythologies from the Amazon present the forest not as a mere resource but as an ancestral being. In Tukano cosmology, the earth was sung into life. Rivers were once anacondas; mountains were revered elders; trees were celestial lovers. Transmitted through ceremonial storytelling and narrative performances, these myths establish a symbolic ecosystem in which nature is endowed with memory, meaning, and moral authority.

A Tukano folklore translation reads: *'The tree that falls before its time sings a song of mourning to the sky. Cut not the older branch; the jaguar of the rain sleeps there.'*

Such words are not metaphors but directives, defining actions and spiritual responsibilities toward maintaining environmental balance

Practical Stewardship: Resource Respect and Ritual Timing

Amazonian mythology directly guides environmental behavior. Many societies use ceremonial fishing and hunting, in which spoken guidelines ensure regeneration control the timing, technique, and scale. Hunting some species out of season is strictly forbidden, and mythological directions dictate that whole parts of the forest remain unaltered.

Song-maps facilitate the transmission of information on locations of water sources, where medicinal herbs may be found, and the locations of holy groves (see Yost 1981). As eco-cultural blueprints, these oral geographies manage forest resource use and contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. Ceremonies, parties, and lullabies can promote this knowledge, which in turn is nurturing sustainability since childhood.

Environmental Equality and Opposition

Over the past few years, Brazilian Indigenous folks have utilized folklore aesthetics in political resistance. Indigenous peoples have publicly performed their ceremonial chants and dances in protests against mining, deforestation, and illegal logging, making their traditional customs into powerful forms of being seen and resisting.

Famous Kayapó leader, Raoni Metuktire, protested the construction of dams in the Amazon with a visual and audio demonstration and his headdress and ceremonial chanting. Such acts frame indigenous aesthetics as legitimate modes of environmental discourse—an aesthetics of resistance grounded in ancestral authority.

Brazil and the IEAFT Structure

Brazilian Indigenous folklore is quite closely related to the three IEAFT pillars:

- Shamanic melodies, ceremonial performance, and ritual body art all help to reveal sacred aesthetics.
- Cosmologies that place the forest as a living archive and moral actor clearly show symbolic ecology.
- Ritual calendars, taboos, and oral geographies preserving natural systems help to define practical stewardship.

Not only symbolic, but the eco-aesthetic movement is functionally significant in shielding the Amazon from environmental devastation. Realizing these worldviews and practices as part of environmental justice discourses will help one to decolonize world ecological philosophy.

Fourth case study is: Australia: Dreamtime, country, and environmentally friendly survival

Australia's Indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have among the oldest living traditions on Earth, dating back more than 60,000 years. Their eco-aesthetic folklore transcends

oral stories or art to cover an entire life system known as the Dreaming (or Dreamtime). By methods of song, dance, painting, and narrative, they teach ecological knowledge, spiritual law, and environmental care. Within the IEAFT paradigm, Australia's story shows how environmentally friendly folklore is both cosmological and custodial—not just characterizing the surroundings but also actively forming a sustainable relationship with it.

Aesthetics: Songlines and Dreaming

Ancestral time—a spiritual dimension in which creator beings built the planet, animals, laws, and people—is known as the dreaming. Every mountain, waterhole, tree, or rock structure is thought to be part of an ancestral story carried forward through songlines, visual art, and ceremonial performance.

Songlines are oral maps found in songs that link geography with spiritual stories, therefore guiding individuals over great distances. For instance, the Rainbow Serpent Dreaming is a common narrative that uses a massive ancient entity that carved the ground to explain the beginning of rivers and rain patterns.

Often utilized in ceremonies to awaken the memory of the land, dot paintings and rock art are spiritual records of ancestral travels rather than only representations.

These aesthetic traditions regard nature as kin, ancestor, and lawgiver rather than as a resource, therefore reflecting divine stewardship.

Land as Law and Identity: Symbolic Ecology

According to Aboriginal stories, "the land owns the people"—not the other way around. Every community has a strong familial relationship to a particular country (a word covering land, sky, sea, and tale). Totemic systems—in which animals, plants, and landscape characteristics are seen as family—keep these links strong.

For instance, a specific clan might be "Wititj," the rainbow serpent clan, committed to guard marshes and waterholes. Their songs, dances, and tales confirm their responsibility for maintaining that particular ecology.

Thus, in Aboriginal tradition, identity, law, and ecological responsibility are deeply interwoven.

Practical Stewardship: Ceremonies, Fire, Seasons

Seasonal calendars, unlike Western four-season models contain Aboriginal ecological knowledge inscribed in them. These calendars are based on observations of natural signs—the bloom of a flower, the bird migration, or the presence of some constellations.

Most importantly, Aboriginal Australians have traditionally used controlled burning—firestick farming—to manage the bush, promote plant regeneration, and lower wildfire hazards. Lore guides this approach; only some people may burn, and only at specific times as determined by song and ceremony.

Ecological research has confirmed these methods, which are now being included into bushfire control plans to show how folklore-informed stewardship can support national environmental policy.

Cultural survival and environmental justice

Aboriginal spiritual-ecological systems were upset by colonisation and land dispossession. But in recent years, Indigenous-led land management movements as Firesticks Alliance and Caring for Country, have recovered the power of eco-aesthetic traditions.

Legal land claims, art advocacy, and environmental education incorporate folklore; Dreamtime stories and cultural events testify to environmental governance and ancestral sovereignty in each other.

Furthermore, environmental justice in Australia nowadays cannot be resolved without considering the cultural genocide that suppressed some environmentally friendly solutions. Revival of ancient customs is political and reparative as well as environmental.

Coordinating with the IEAFT Framework

The Indigenous eco-aesthetic folklore of Australia obviously fits the main IEAFT pillars:

- Sacred Aesthetics: Dreamtime stories animating the ground, body painting, and songlines all around.
- Symbolic Ecology: In the rules, names, and ceremonies connected to particular landscapes and totems.
- Practical Stewardship: By means of seasonal lore, fire management, and environmental ceremonial governance.

A complete, tested model of environmental balance, these knowledge systems reflect local and global environments, and their acceptance is essential to realize just ecological futures in both of them.

Fifth case study: Native American Storyways, Symbolic Landscapes, and Eco-Justice Advocacy in the United States

Reflecting their close relationships with land, wildlife, and cosmology, the Native American cultures all over the United States—including the Navajo (Diné), Lakota, Hopi, Cherokee, and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)—have rich and varied eco-aesthetic traditions. Many of these traditions endure, adapt, and even inspire modern environmental justice organizations despite centuries of colonial persecution.

Native American folklore shows within the IEAFT framework how oral tradition, ecological rituals, and symbolic cosmologies could be means of resistance, environmental healing, and legal reclaiming.

Sacred Aesthetics: Ritual Reenactment and Oral Stories

Stories in Native American traditions include ecological memories, legal systems, and holy directions rather than fictitious narratives. Stories with ecological messages abound from the Creation tales of the Diné, the White Buffalo Calf Woman of the Lakota, or the Skywoman of the Haudenosaunee.

These stories are carried out in seasonal celebrations, chants, sand drawings, and dances, therefore cementing ecological law in artistic form.

For example, the Hopi Snake Dance is a religious request for rains and ecological balance in desert environments rather than only a performance.

Using colored soil and powdered stones, the Diné sand paintings show holy cosmologies during healing ceremonies, therefore linking aesthetics to land, health, and ritual law.

These holy aesthetics educate the right behavior with nature, not by force but by narrative respect.

Symbolic Ecology: Teacher, Spirit, Land as Law

Native American traditions define the land as a living relative rather than as property. The Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace, which describes political peace in keeping with ecological reciprocity—including ritual thankfulness to rivers, animals, plants, and heavenly bodies—showcases this perspective well.

For instance, "we turn to the waters of the world," says the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address. We appreciate that the seas remain here, carrying out their role of maintaining life. One mind helps us to thank the Waters of the Earth.

In these traditions, symbolic ecology captures interdependence—that is, where humans are simply one component of the holy ecological network.

Land ethics and seasonal rhythms: practical stewardship

Folklore guides seasonal activities, including reciprocity-based gathering, hunting with regard for animal spirits, and moon phase sowing. For example, the Cherokee Green Corn Ceremony honors the first harvest with customs of rebirth and gifts to the ground.

Embedded in tale, ritual, and government, the "Seventh Generation Principle" from the Haudenosaunee demands that decisions now guarantee sustainability for seven generations ahead—a distinct eco-ethical concept.

Modern environmental movements today find this idea to be a foundation for sustainability and justice, rather appealing.

Environmental Justice Movements: Folklore as Resistance

Most famously in the Standing Rock demonstrations (2016–2017) against the Dakota Access Pipeline, Native American mythology has resurfaced as a location of action. Referring to themselves as "Water Protectors," rather than demonstrators, the Lakota and their allies evoked sacred stories and spiritual rituals to guard water.

To match folklore with practical action, the protest camps featured drumming ceremonies, storytelling circles, and prayers to the Missouri River.

Originally from a spiritual standpoint, the name "Mni Wiconi" (Water is Life) came to represent Indigenous environmental struggle globally.

The political potential of Indigenous eco-aesthetic knowledge systems is illustrated by this resurgence of folklore-based resistance.

United States and the IEAFT Structure

The Native American scenario powerfully highlights the IEAFT model foundations:

- Sacred Aesthetics: By means of ritual art, singing, and performance upholding moral law and ecological memory.
- In stories where land and non-human entities are players with legal and spiritual rights, symbolic ecology is evident.
- Practical Stewardship: By means of oral governance structures, seasonal customs, and intergenerational sustainability practices.

Combining spiritual responsibility with ecological justice, native mythology also motivates contemporary legal challenges, land-back projects, and environmental partnerships.

Comparative Analysis and Discussion

Notwithstanding great geographical and cultural distances that support the Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT), the five case studies—Bangladesh, India, Brazil, Australia, and the United States—show startling evidence of the continuous function of Indigenous eco-aesthetic folklore as a vehicle of environmental governance, cultural identity, and ecological resistance.

Common Eco-Aesthetic Guidelines across Cultures

Despite regional, language, and cultural differences, a thorough study of the five case studies—Bangladesh, India, Brazil, Australia, and the United States—showcases shockingly comparable eco-aesthetic systems in their Indigenous folklore traditions. Every society preserves a folklore system that provides a whole paradigm for environmental justice and knowledge.

First of all, in every tradition, ritualized performances, songs, symbolic art forms, and oral storytelling that tie communities to environmental systems help sacred aesthetics to surface.

Folk songs like Baul and *Bhatiyali* in Bangladesh poetically capture river consciousness and seasonal sensitivity. Rituals centered on nature gods like Aranyani or Bhoomi Devi in India mirror the holiness of trees, soil, and animals. Likewise, Brazilian Indigenous people—especially in the Amazon—use body painting, chanting, and myth-infused dances not as a form of expression but as environmental codes. Dreamtime songlines and dot paintings let Aboriginal Australians convey holy geography; Native Americans use sand drawings, ceremonial dances, and protest chants to tell and defend ecological relationships. In every one of these, aesthetics are holy tools of knowledge and survival rather than ornamental ones.

Second, all these customs maintain a symbolic ecology in which land, rivers, forests, and animals are living entities, spiritual energies, and legal subjects rather than merely passive parts of nature. Bengali mythology refers to rivers as mothers or divine figures rather often. Indian customs regard rivers like the Ganges and woods like those of Panchavati as deified and revered objects. Ancestral spirits and legendary entities abound in Brazilian forests. Native Americans cosmologies regard land and water bodies as relatives, each with their own laws, spirits, and story; Aboriginal Australians refer to the ground as an ancestor. These symbolic models place the surroundings not as an outside object but as a co-participant in moral and cultural systems.

In the end, all stories are tales of sustainable management that come from folklore.³⁷ These include moon cycle farming in Bangladesh, seed saving combined with water rituals with the Adivasi in India, hunting and fishery pathways with Brazilian indigenous populations, Aboriginal firestick cultural burning and the harvesting of seasonal crops of the Aboriginal people in Australia, and the Seventh-Generation Principle system of Native American tribes. These green rituals, too, are cultural: They are rooted in myth, re-enacted in ritual, and kept in check by a collective memory.

Therefore, such world relevances of similarities as a whole indicate a necessity of a new global environmental philosophy, based on the balance, respect, and mutual harmony of our traditional eco-aesthetic folklore.

Opposition, Resilience, and Revival

Colonialism, modern capitalism, and industrial activity everywhere altered the environmental bonds of native peoples. Yet folklore is also a means of memory, resistance, and renewal.

In Bangladesh, river songs and folk dances stand against urban erasing and industrial pollution.

In part, thanks to environmental theater and seed festivals, adivasi storytelling is flowering in India.

Tales of Brazilian Amazonia save sacred realms from being dismembered.

Dreamtime goes to Australia in the form of eco-celebrations and land-back initiatives.

Lawsuits and protest events help to reintroduce the US holy mountains and rivers in Native American mythology.

These comparative resistances demonstrate how traditional knowledge is fighting against environmental injustice and preserving cultural heritage, which acts as a spear and a shield in this global resistance of the Comeback of the indigenous.

Ecological Knowledge: Cultural Intelligence

Indigenous folklore codes deep ecological intelligence, typically more sophisticated, sustainable, and place-sensitive than Western technocratic models. This is a basic insight applicable in many contexts. These bases of knowledge consist of:

- Transmitted via performance, oral history, and ritual in several generations.
- Localized: Reactive to micro-ecologies including wetlands, monsoons, deserts, or mountains.
- Linking moral, aesthetic, and biological systems holistically

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- Adaptive: Continuously understood by contemporary instruments (e.g., documentaries, eco-activism, curricula).
 - Eco-aesthetic folklore, then, is not a static artifact of the past but rather a dynamic system of environmental management.

Concerning Environmental Justice Systems

The IEAFT model gives the discussions on global environmental justice four crucial angles:

- Restructuring "nature": From relative—personified, holy, and agentive to resource.
- By affording Indigenous people epistemic credibility, folklore questions colonial silence.
- Definitions of sustainability from technical responses to value-based, narrative-based ethics.
- Environmental justice depends on the restoration of land rights, languages, and culture, thus, cultural reparations become absolutely necessary.
- By means of polite alliances, encouragement of governments and institutions to adopt Indigenous practices—e.g., fire control, water ethics, seasonal agriculture—helps to harmonize policy. Environmental justice devoid of mythology is not whole. Justice has to be cultural, aesthetic, spiritual, and legal as well as ecological.

Difficulties and Future Routes

Though eco-aesthetic folklore is very important, certain issues still exist:

- Danger of tokenism and appropriation in popular environmental debate.
- In folklore transmission, language loss and generational rupture.
- Difficulty without distortion in integrating Indigenous ideas into legal or scientific models.
- Continuous colonial land control restricting ecological activities and ritual.

Dealing with these problems requires for ethical, participatory, interdisciplinary approaches anchored on Indigenous leadership, development of youth folklore education, and respect of ontological pluralism in environmental governance.

Recommendations

- Governments and international agencies should embrace indigenous eco-aesthetic systems as consistent ecological knowledge and incorporate them into plans for climate adaption and biodiversity protection.
- Local and national educational initiatives can help the documentation, teaching, and resurgence of Indigenous folklore traditions—especially in Indigenous languages—by means of policies so preserving its continuity and relevance.
- Legal systems should understand cultural expression—songs, stories, rituals, and holy sites—as intertwined with environmental justice, therefore offering defense against commercial exploitation and ecological damage.
- Scholars should co-develop knowledge, participate in ethical, decolonial research projects, and thereby defend intellectual sovereignty for Indigenous people.
- Encourage community-based action by means of music, visual art, narrative, and digital media embedded in Indigenous history, therefore increasing knowledge of environmental challenges.
- True environmental justice must include returning decision-making power and stewardship rights to Indigenous people, as folklore and land are basically linked.

Finally, the Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore Theory (IEAFT) presents not just a prism for seeing ancestral environmental ethics but also a necessary road forward in the search for a fair, sustainable, and grounded in culture future.

Conclusion

This paper sought to give a theoretical and practical understanding of Indigenous Eco-Aesthetic Folklore combined with its relevance to modern environmental justice. Extensive research of five distinct cultural settings—Bangladesh, India, Brazil, Australia, and the United States—clearly shows that Indigenous people all around have long ingrained their environmental ethics in very aesthetically pleasing, symbolic, and pragmatic folklore systems.

Not only peripheral cultural items, these eco-aesthetic traditions are crucial frameworks for ecological knowledge, sustainable conduct, and ethical human-nature relationships. Whether through the rhythmic river songs of Bangladesh, the forest deities in Indian rituals, the mythological guardians of the Amazon, the Dreamtime cosmologies of Australia, or the land-based ceremonies of Native American nations, indigenous people encode sophisticated environmental intelligence within cultural expressions.

Significantly, these networks also provide a counterpoint to environmental devastation, cultural erasure, and colonial control. In this sense, folklore becomes not only a method of recollection but also a survival strategy guiding cultures not only in how to maintain but also in how to defend their environment.

As the worldwide climate crisis gets more serious and environmental injustice still disproportionately impacts Indigenous and disadvantaged people, policymakers, scholars, and activists should reconsider the purpose of folklore, not as nostalgia but as living ecological philosophy. Indigenous eco-aesthetics offer a wonderful model for reevaluating sustainability as a cultural, ethical, and spiritual problem rather than merely as a technical one.

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