

# Foregrounding Contemporary Issue: Eco-Friendly Life Style in R. J. Sawyer's Futuristic Society of Neanderthals

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**Abstract:** *Eco-friendly is the term basically refers to the marketing of goods and services, legal guidelines and politics that cause minimum or no harm upon ecosystems or the environment. Environment friendly life means having a lifestyle that is helpful to sustain the nature in its original form. It leads to make this planet that is our mother earth, the better place for our present communities and for the future generations to come. The modern Science Fiction writer, R. J. Sawyer, also creates a new world. The writer highlights the eco-friendly lifestyle of Neanderthals contradictory to human world in The Neanderthal Parallax. It is an idealism and very difficult to apply in the human world. However, it suggests an ideal way to follow eco-friendly life to save our mother earth.*

**Keywords:** Science Fiction, Eco-friendly lifestyle, clean energy, solar energy, utopia, dystopia, New Wave Canadian Hard Science Fiction, Neanderthals, Codon Writer

## I. INTRODUCTION

Eco-friendly is the term basically refers to the marketing of goods and services, legal guidelines and politics that cause minimum or no harm upon ecosystems or the environment. Environment friendly life means having a lifestyle that is helpful to sustain the nature in its original form. It leads to make this planet that is our mother earth, the better place for our present communities and for the future generations to come.

It is expected to make society eco-friendly that we should support and encourage the options such as community playgrounds, public transportation, green construction, inventions to use less fossil fuel, use of clean energy (solar energy), better food consuming habits, avoiding junk food, rejecting drugs and alcohol addiction etc. It can be done successfully if every individual determines to behave in the favour of eco-friendly lifestyle to preserve the nature by using recycled products, avoiding all types of pollution, using less artificial energy by burning fossil fuel, coal and wood, supporting plantation and using public transport. It should not be an ideal act but a mindset of an individual, society and the administration to save the nature, to save the future generations.

Science Fiction writers create a new world using their creative genius. In creating such a new world, there is a vision of the writer other than mere entertainment of the reader. They provide an alternative world in which some of the social issues which they observe in the present world can be solved, diluted or highlighted. The modern Science Fiction writer, R. J. Sawyer, also creates a new world. Unlike the utopia or dystopia, it is a practical world with some pros and cons.

R. J. Sawyer, one of the successful New Wave Canadian Hard Science Fiction writers, is born in Ottawa, on April 29, 1960. He is felicitated by all three of the top international awards for Science Fiction such as 1995 'Nebula Award' for Hominids, 2003 'Hugo Award' for Hominids, 2006 'John W. Campbell Memorial Award' for Mindscan. He has published 13 novels, 3 trilogies and 2 books of short stories.

*The Neanderthal Parallax* trilogy deals with the two parallel worlds; one of which is the Human (Homo Sapiens Sapiens) and the other is of the Neanderthals (Homo Neanderthalensis); first of the Gliksin and the other of the Barast. While experimenting with quantum computing by the Neanderthal physicists, accidentally, the two worlds are open to each other and Neanderthal is introduced to Human world. As both the species developed separately on the two

worlds; they differ in culture, technology, political systems and religion. It is amazing that the similarities and differences between these two races evolved from the same ancestor. The trilogy includes three novels such as *Hominids* (2002), *Humans* (2003) and *Hybrids* (2003)

The eco-friendly lifestyle movement has flourished all over the world. The environmentalists are working hard to make people aware of the disaster of increase of green gas, widening the methane hole, increasing global warming, extinction of many species like bald eagles, tigers, chimpanzees, bonobos etc. R. J. Sawyer has also responded to this campaign of saving the nature in *The Neanderthal Parallax*. It is described that the Neanderthal world is in the virgin state as it was before 27000 years ago. The environment is cold, pleasant, pollution free, no destruction of forests and no species of animals are extinct. Neanderthals preserved it by their lifestyle which is portrayed in the trilogy that they are hunter gatherers and eat only cooked flesh and fresh fruits available in the forest. As there is no concept of agriculture, they are free from evils of agriculture. Human being is basically an animal and lives in groups from the ancient times. Mostly, they rely on the hunting of animals, the fruits and stems available in the forest when they are nomadic. Gradually, they are shifted from hunter gatherer to the pastoral lifestyle in which they used the domesticated herd animals to get the food in the form of flesh, milk and further cultivating the land. People started growing crops by using technology, animal labour and fertilizers over large area. Thus, human society becomes more stable, progressive, well settled and developing a particular lifestyle which leads to agriculture.

Agriculture gives the human society permanent settlement in large groups residing in the villages and cities. Human society has developed the protective groups for the crops and the life of the peasants. Thus, the feudal lords, monarchs, kings and emperors became the administrators of the large territories. The surplus food production, stable life style, security and well to do life were responsible for the scientific, technological and cultural development of human society. Along with the stability, progress and development; agriculture has spread evils like population explosion, pollution, destruction of nature, unhealthy lifestyle, drug addictions, diseases, epidemics because of pet animals such as Bird Flu, Mad Cow, Fever, Ebola, Cholera, Plague etc.

R. J. Sawyer highlights this issue in *The Neanderthal Parallax* while comparing the lifestyle of human beings with the Neanderthals. When Ponter, the Neanderthal accidentally comes in the human world, he is infected by the virus. Henry, the human being describes the evils of agriculture,

You're probably better off without farming, anyway. A lot of bad stuff goes along with agriculture. Well, I already alluded to overpopulation. And the effect of the land is obvious: forests are chopped down to make farmland. Plus, of course, there are the diseases that come from domesticated animals. And there's more to it than just physical disease; there are cultural disease. Slavery for instance: that's a direct product of agriculture's need for labor. That's right, most slaves were plantation workers. And even when you don't have literal slavery, agriculture gives rise to what amounts to the same thing: share-cropping, peonage and so on. Not to mention the class-based society, feudalism, landowners, and all that; there're all directly the products of agriculture (*Humans* 177-78).

The writer underlines different evils of agriculture but at this stage of human development, we cannot stop agriculture and shift to the hunter gatherer lifestyle of Neanderthals. At least we can reduce the evils by moderating our lifestyle by limited use of fossil oil and adapting the eco-friendly lifestyle. It also signals the excessive agriculture may cause the great loss to the future human generations.

Being a hunter gatherer, they don't store the surplus products or kill the animals in the forest unnecessarily. As they have six times better power of smelling, they avoid burning the fossil oil, coal or wood. According to Dr. Singh, They had provided the beneficial side effect of an excellent sense of smell. If it had not been for that, may be Ponter's kind would have used the same petrochemical, resulting in the same level of atmospheric pollution. The irony did not escape Ponter: the kind of humans he'd hitherto only known as fossils were poisoning their skies with what they themselves called fossil fuels (*Humans* 22).

They use hover bus run by clean energy for locomotion as public transport. The chemical luciferase is used for light to avoid production of heat. Instead of cutting the trees, they build their houses using them as the base and prepare the eco-friendly houses. As there are no roads, there is no chopping of forest and no disturbance to the wild life. As hunter gatherers, Neanderthals understand that it is very essential to keep their population strictly within limit to cope with the limited natural sources of food for their society. Ponter Boddit, the protagonist and representative of Neanderthal world discusses with Mary, the representative of human world about Neanderthal lifestyle and their

innovative measures of controlling population. Ponter informs, "Women live in the Centers of our territories; males at the Rims. But once a month, we males come into the Center and spend four days with the females; we say that 'Two become One' during this time." (*Hominids* 305-306) He further informs about the social adjustment for child begetting governed by High Gray Council,

In part. The High Gray Council – the governing body of elders – sets the dates on which we come together, and Two normally become One when the women are incapable of conceiving. But if it is time to produce a new generation, then the dates are changed, and we come together when the women are most fertile. (*Hominids* 306)

They use an artificial but socially valid and technologically possible method of controlling the population.

In this way, the problem of over population is underlined and also solved by giving alternative to it. Though it is not practical to implement in the real human world, the writer highlights and gives the alternative for this problem. It is just an ideal solution but apt in the imaginary society.

As Neanderthals are utility orientated there is no concept of Fashion. The cloths are made up of recyclable artificial fiber identical for men and women. They have developed the eco-friendly technology because they use laser cooker, vacuum storage, clean energy that is solar energy and implant which functions on the bio-energy. Ponter informs Mary, the human being,

Actually, that is a laser cooker, it uses the same rotating of frequencies we employ in the sterilizer you went through, but this time, it can cook the meat evenly inside and out. And we do not use refrigerators to store food much anymore, although we used to. That is a vacuum box" (*Humans* 229).

They don't allow the research which is against their social system and lifestyle For instance, the Codon Writer invented by Vissan, the Neanderthal scientist is banned and she is expelled from the society because it may nullify the effect of punishment of castration given to the criminals.

The writer highlights the eco-friendly lifestyle of Neanderthals contradictory to human world in *The Neanderthal Parallax*. It is an idealism and very difficult to apply in the human world. However, it suggests an ideal way to follow eco-friendly life to save our mother earth.

The talent of R. J. Sawyer as a promising Science Fiction observes, meditates and tries to recreate the social situation which has deep social relevance. It discloses the hidden aspects of writer's personality as a social thinker, social worker and visionary sensitive global citizen.

The analysis of social issue projected in select trilogy reveals R. J. Sawyer's attempt to raise the problems and their possible solutions in his alternate world. The issues which we may otherwise neglect in reality appear very dangerous in the parallel cosmos of Sawyer. Thus, in the creation of 'new world', he uses the real issues and combines it with virtual reality which allows him to create a distinct world.

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