



Shared Stewardship and Ecological Resistance: Reading Ashish Kothari's Illustrated Fable *Shero to the Rescue* through Elinor Ostrom's Theory of the Commons and Rob Nixon's Slow Violence

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Abstract

Children's literature occupies a significant place within popular literature owing to its wide circulation, accessible narrative strategies, and ability to communicate complex social, ethical, and ecological concerns through engaging and comprehensible narratives. Often dismissed as naive, it nonetheless provides a meaningful space where questions of ethics, ecology, and politics converge. Ashish Kothari's *Shero to the Rescue* (2015), an illustrated fable set in the grasslands of Kachchh, Gujarat, India, exemplifies this potential through the story of Shero, a spirited hedgehog who mobilizes the animals of the grassland to defend their shared habitat against human exploitation. By foregrounding collective resistance, the text critiques dominant models of development that reduce land and water bodies to lifeless resources available for extraction. Drawing upon Elinor Ostrom's concept of the commons, this article argues that Kothari reimagines the grassland as a shared ecological space sustained through reciprocity, cooperation, and collective stewardship, thereby challenging anthropocentric approaches to environmental governance and resisting neoliberal practices of privatization. Furthermore, the gradual degradation of the grassland ecosystem and the displacement of its nonhuman inhabitants resonate with Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence, exposing the often-invisible ecological consequences of developmental interventions. Through these theoretical frameworks, the article demonstrates that *Shero to the Rescue* functions as an ecological manifesto that reimagines sovereignty, agency, and environmental justice beyond the human. In doing so, it contributes to contemporary scholarship in the environmental humanities and popular children's literature by illustrating how illustrated fables can cultivate ecological consciousness, collective responsibility, and ethical engagement among young readers.

Keywords: Children's Literature, Illustrated Fable, Shared Stewardship, Commons, Slow Violence.