

Ecological Consciousness in Disney Movies

Jayneeta Rai

Student, English and Modern European Language, University

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to explore the attitude of humans towards nature. There are two Disney movies taken into account, i.e., Moana and Wall-E, to examine the greed and carelessness of humans towards nature and thus its impact. These movies are fiction, but the issues they bring up are not far from reality. These movies also show the negligence of humans in taking pro-active actions to save nature. Wall-E and Moana both reflect contemporary environmental issues and, in a way, foreground the future if appropriate actions are not taken.

Keywords: Ecological consciousness, Disney, Nature

Introduction

The idea of this dissertation is to examine the exploitation of nature by humans for their greed and its impact, as featured in the eco-criticism of two Disney movies, Moana and Wall-E. These movies also show human attitudes towards nature and how we humans take reactionary actions instead of pro-active actions. I am treating movies like text here. The comparison of the movie to a written text implies that we can "read" the story in both the book and the movie, both in terms of taking it in as it progresses and of being able to keep "all" of it in our minds in order to evaluate, analyse, and enjoy it. In academic terms, a text is anything that conveys a set of meanings to the person who examines it. You may have assumed that texts only referred to written materials such as books, magazines, and newspapers. Text can be found in movies, paintings, television shows, songs, political cartoons, online materials, advertisements, maps, works of art, and even rooms full of people. When we can look at something, explore it, find layers of meaning in it, and draw information and conclusions from it, we are looking at a text. Many texts are multimodal, with meaning conveyed via two or more modes. Modes include written language, spoken language, and visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial meaning patterns. Digital multimodal texts that convey meaning through a combination of written and spoken language, visual (still and moving image), audio, gestural, and spatial modes include film, animation, slide shows, e-posters, digital stories, and web pages. Literacy can no longer be considered solely as a linguistic achievement, as information and multimedia technologies have increasingly shaped communication practises. Film can be used to teach a variety of literacy-related topics, such as story comprehension, character analysis, plot analysis, moral principles, cultural diversity, and grammar. Math, modern languages, science, art, and technology are just a few of the subjects that could benefit from its use. For a long time, Tamil Nadu, the state of India, has been facing a water crisis. In 2003, the Tamil Nadu government passed a law stating that all new buildings should be provided with a rainwater harvesting system (RWH System). In July 2019, Chennai became the first city to run out of groundwater. In a 2015 survey, the Rain Centre found that 52% of the structures didn't have rainwater harvesting structures, and the structures that had RWH weren't maintained properly. The government is now planning to restore some temple tanks and build a hundred new ones with green slopes

to absorb rainwater and recharge the groundwater. This demonstrates the government's or humans' reactionary attitude: instead of taking measures to save water when they could, they are taking measures after the ground water has been completely depleted. Similarly, in Moana, everyone ignores the fact that after the heart of Te Fiti is stolen by Maui, darkness is taking over island after island until their crops start to get destroyed and no fish are found in the reef. Still, they are looking for temporary solutions instead of finding and returning the heart that will solve all their problems. In Wall-E, the Earth has become uninhabitable due to an excess of toxins and garbage, and all humans have been transported to a space shuttle. They were then assured that the earth would be cleaned and made habitable, and everyone could return, but the mission failed because the amount of toxin was more than it could handle. The Auto, the robot that controls the shuttle, is ordered to never return. A plant is discovered on Earth 700 years later. The movie shows humans' carelessness that led to the apocalypse and then how utopia has disconnected them even from the memory of earth so that they forget where they came from and where they belonged. In the following chapters, I will discuss climate change over the years, the alarming rate of global warming, and its effects. I will also discuss, through Disney movies, the need to take pro-active action and what can happen if we close our eyes to the environment. Chapter one, discusses global warming and climate change. Climate change is the result of global warming. I have used graphs and charts to discuss the cause and effect of global warming over the years. I have also discussed the need for ecological consciousness and the mitigation techniques through which we can reduce pollution and curb global warming. In chapter two, I have discussed the brief history of Disney and Pixar. Pixar initially started as a partner of Disney, and they collaborated to make animated movies. Later, Pixar was bought by Disney, and now Pixar makes all the animated movies produced by Disney. In this chapter, I have also discussed how nature has been one of the important themes in Disney movies since its inception and how that tradition is still followed. Along with that, the significance of the theme and why it is important to introduce nature to young children are discussed in this chapter. Chapters three and four focus on the movies Wall-E and Moana. The greed of humans, their unconsciousness towards the environment, and its impact are discussed in these movies. I have also presented recent data to show the relevance of these movies to reality. Wall-E shows that overconsumption can lead to garbage accumulation, making Earth inhabitable. Today, we are producing waste at an exponential rate, and we aren't able to manage it at the same rate. If things continue the same way, the doomed Earth in the movie will be our reality. Similarly, in Moana, the impact of climate change on indigenous people has been shown. The worst-affected community due to climate change is that of indigenous people. They highly depend on nature for their survival, and changes in natural patterns affect them the most. These movies also teach us about a sustainable lifestyle. Lastly, in conclusion, I have presented a survey that I conducted to find out how many people are making conscious choices and choosing sustainable lifestyles to contribute to saving our planet. Although it is true that these small changes on an individual level are nothing in comparison to the damage done or the damage we are still doing. If we want to bring about noticeable change, we need our government and world leaders to bring about policy changes and work on environmental issues.

Global Warming, Climate Change and Ecological Consciousness

Global warming is the increase in the earth's temperature, and it causes climate change. All the sunlight that is received by the earth is not reflected back. A portion of sunlight is trapped by greenhouse gases (GHG)—carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), water vapor, nitrous oxide (N₂O), etc.—to keep the earth warm and habitable. If this phenomenon is not available, then the earth's temperature will be 33°C lower

(IPCC). After the industrial revolution, the human emission of GHG has increased, and due to the removal of natural sinks of these gases, such as deforestation, the amount of these GHG has increased in the environment, which is causing global warming. GHG emissions increased by 45% between 1990 and 2019, with fossil fuel combustion accounting for approximately 30% of the increase. Since solar energy is the driving force behind the earth’s weather pattern as it controls the wind, ocean current, humidity, etc., over a period of time, climate changes. The change in climate intensifies the effects of natural disasters like flooding, storms, landslides, land degradation, agricultural loss, droughts, etc. During the Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction event—the extinction of dinosaurs and other species 65.5 million years ago—the level of CO₂ was greater than 1000 ppm and the average atmospheric temperature was about 22°C, whereas today’s global average temperature is 13.9 °C (Lindsey, Dahlman). It is projected that if the same level of emissions continues, the level of CO₂ will reach 1000 ppm by 2100. The increase in average global temperature and atmospheric carbon dioxide are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively.

Figure 1: Global Temperature Trends Over Time (Source: Lindsey and Dahlman)

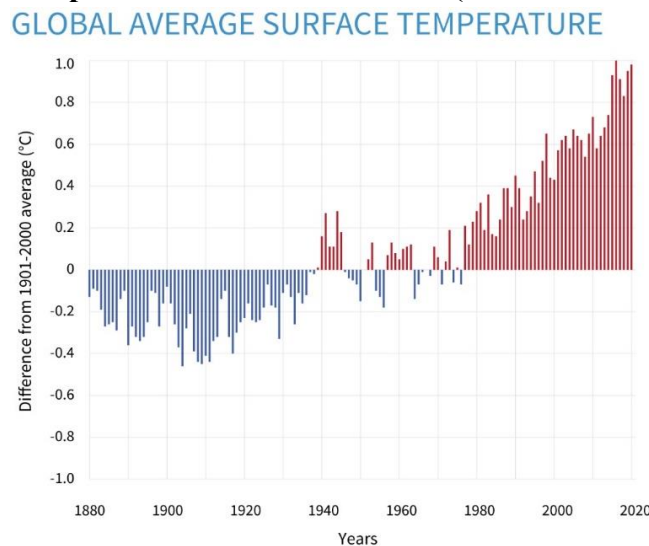
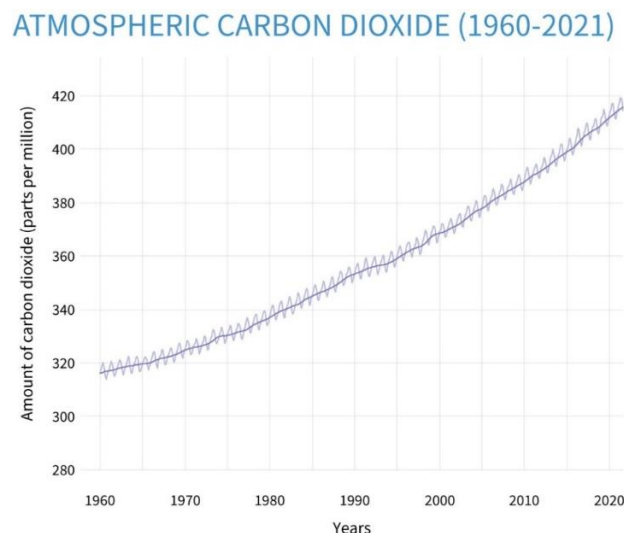


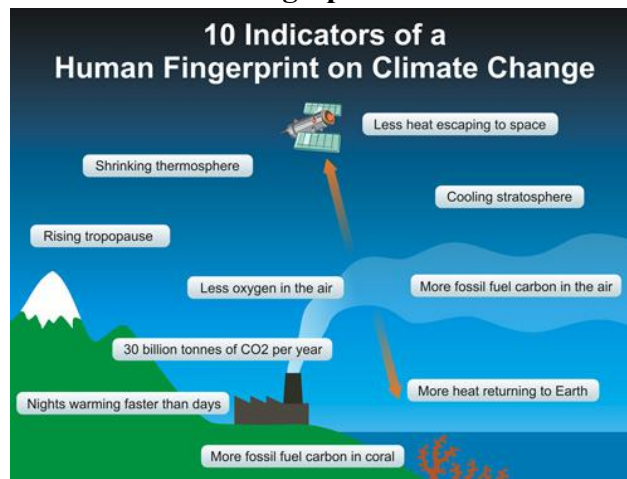
Figure 2: Annual Atmospheric Temperature (Source: Lindsey, Dahlman)



The Causes of Global Warming and Climate Change:

There are various events that result in the emission of GHGs, like volcanic eruptions, forest fires, the release of methane from cattle, etc., but the rate of warming can't be explained by these natural causes. Human activities have contributed substantially to global warming and climate change. Over the last century, the burning of fossil fuels due to rapid industrialization and its by-product, rapid deforestation for agriculture, industry, or other human activities, has contributed to an increase in GHG in the atmosphere. As shown in figure 3, John Cook observed ten indicators of human fingerprints on climate change: shrinking thermosphere, rising tropopause, less oxygen in the air, annual CO2 release of 30 billion metric tonnes, nights warming faster than days, more fossil fuel carbon in the air, more fossil fuel carbon in coral, more heat return to earth, cooling of the stratosphere, and less heat escape to space.

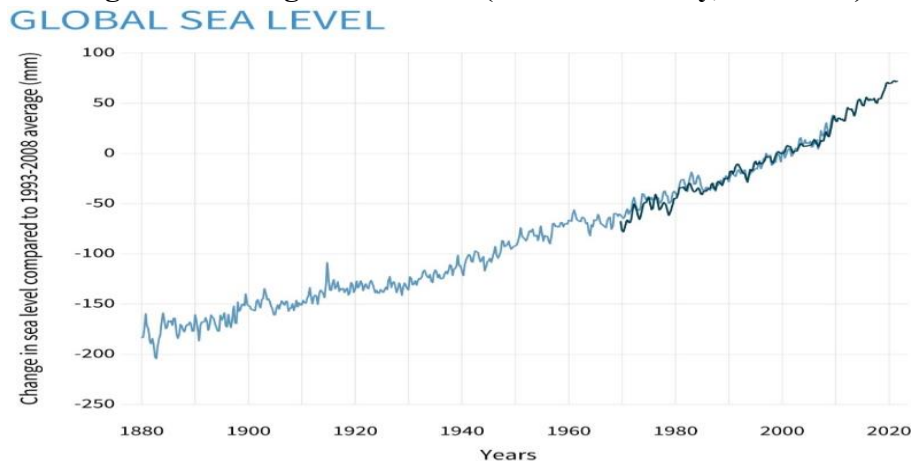
Figure 3: 10 Indicators of Human Fingerprint on Climate Change (Source: Cook)



Effects of Global Warming:

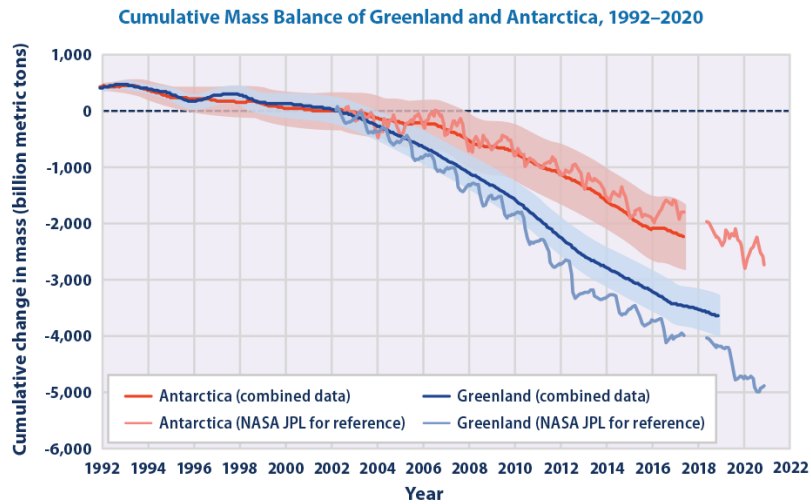
Sea level rise: Due to global warming, the ice caps are melting, and the warming of sea water causes its expansion. These factors result in a rise in sea level. The rise in sea level results in the submergence of island states in the Indian and Pacific Oceans; they might completely disappear. It also results in the loss of valuable habitats such as beaches, which are the nesting places of sea turtles. In 2020, the global mean sea level was 91.3 mm above the 1993 average. (See figure 4)

Figure 4: Change in Sea level (Source: Lindsey, Dahlman)



Shrinking ice sheaths: Greenland and Antarctica both have been losing ice since 1992, at a rate of more than 100 billion metric tonnes of ice per year on average. (See fig. 5)

Figure 5: Cumulative Mass Balance of Greenland and Antarctica, 1992–2020 (Source: EPA)



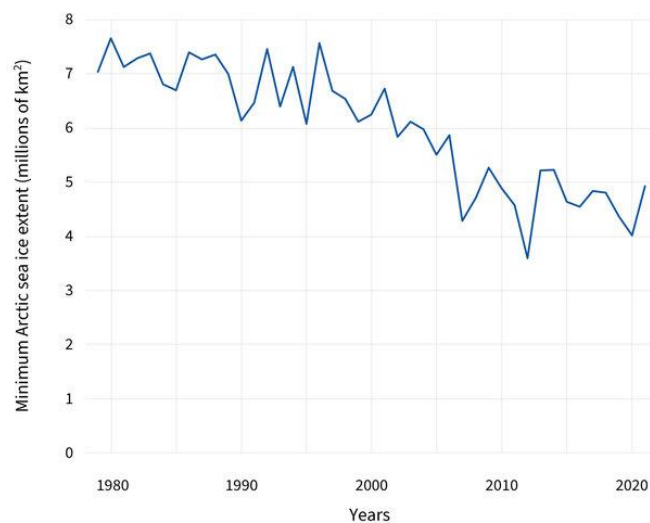
Data sources:
 • IMBIE (Ice sheet Mass Balance Inter-comparison Exercise team). 2018. Mass balance of the Antarctic ice sheet from 1992 to 2017. Nature 558:219–222. doi:10.1038/s41586-018-0179-y
 • IMBIE (Ice sheet Mass Balance Inter-comparison Exercise team). 2020. Mass balance of the Greenland ice sheet from 1992 to 2018. Nature in press. doi:10.1038/s41586-019-1855-2
 • NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). 2021. Vital signs: Land ice. Antarctica and Greenland mass variation since 2002. Accessed March 2021. <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/land-ice>.

For more information, visit U.S. EPA's "Climate Change Indicators in the United States" at www.epa.gov/climate-indicators.

Declining Arctic Sea ice: Snow is very vital for the environment as it reflects sunlight, which helps in reducing warming. 15% of the Arctic Ocean was covered in ice. Each September from 1979-2020, it has been observed that since 1980, the amount of ice that has survived the summer has been 13.1% less than the previous decade. (See figure 6).

Figure 6: Arctic Sea Ice Annually (Source: Lindsey, Dahlman)

ARCTIC SEA ICE YEARLY MINIMUM



Extreme Events-

- **Floods and landslides:** Floods and landslides are threatening to life. Both cause injury and death on a large scale. Climate change plays a major role in the occurrence of these events as it leads to extreme weather changes. India is one of the countries that has observed major changes in its monsoon and had incidents of frequent floods and landslides.
- **Hurricanes and typhoons:** An increase in ocean temperature due to global warming subsequently increases the wind speed. When the maximum wind speed exceeds 74 miles per hour, it is called a hurricane in the Atlantic and a typhoon in the Pacific. Recently, these events of hurricanes and typhoons have become very frequent and cause mass destruction.
- **Droughts:** Global warming has increased the risk of drought. Due to warmer weather, water evaporates quickly, leaving soil and vegetation dry, and due to low precipitation, ground-level drying increases.
- **Forest fires:** Global warming led to the drying of organic matter in forests, which then led to forest fires. India has reported 3,45,989 forest fires from November 2020 to June 2021, according to the State of Forest Report, 2021 (SoFR, 2021). The highest record in the country so far.
- **Heat Waves-** Extreme heat waves have affected India. On May 15, 2022, the India Meteorological Department noted the daytime temperature to be between 45°C and 50°C.

Ecological Consciousness Towards Nature

Ecological consciousness is seen as a reflection of how people feel about their relationship with nature and how that affects how they act in the "natural world." Climate change is a complex phenomenon that is influenced over time by social development. Climate change risks are intertwined with the fundamental structures of our civilizations. These structures are shaped by our attitudes as individuals who are a part of these civilizations. However, we continue to act as though climate change is something that affects us but is independent of our actions. Each of us is responsible for this change and should bear the responsibility to undo what is done- questioning how we travel, eat, breathe, produce, and consume and how this will affect our environment.

Mitigation Approaches for Global Warming

- **Energy-**
 - Increasing engine and boiler efficiency.
 - Switching to low carbon fossil fuels.
 - Increasing use of nuclear energy.
 - Increasing use of renewable energy.
- **Industry-**
 - Reducing the emission of greenhouse gases.
 - Switching to energy efficiency technology.
 - Recycling
- **Transport:**
 - Using energy efficient vehicles.
 - Reducing vehicle emissions.
 - Promoting public transport.
 - Promoting green vehicles such as electric vehicles.

- **Agriculture:**
 - Recycling of crop residues.
 - Restoration of wetlands.
 - Reduce biomass burning.
 - Check and control the use of fertiliser to reduce nitrous oxide.
- **Government-**
 - Promoting an industrial land use plan to minimise energy consumption.
 - Planning disposal of waste material Providing an
 - Incentive for the development and usage of low-carbon fossil fuels.
 - Recycling and proper waste disposal.

Disney, Pixar and Nature

The Walt Disney Company was started by Walt and R.O. Disney in October 1923 in Burbank, California. It was started to produce a series of cartoons called Alice Comedies, but it has expanded into many media areas, like live-action movies, radio, television, and online streaming. The company has its own theme parks and resorts too, and sells a wide range of merchandise products. In 1928, the first Mickey Mouse cartoon, Steamboat Willie, was released. In December 1937, Disney released its first full-length animated movie, Snow White. And in 1950, it released its first full-length live-action film, Treasure Island. Pixar originated in the 1970s at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), where Ed Catmull and his team of scientists contributed to the emerging field of computer graphics. In 1979, Lucasfilm Ltd., a California-based production company, hired Catmull to lead its computer division. The computer division aimed to produce high-resolution, three-dimensional colour images. The name "Pixar" was given as a faux-Spanish word meaning "to make pictures." In 1984, John Lasseter was hired. He was an animator at Disney. He took advantage of the company's technology and created short films. In 1986, the computer division of Lucas was acquired by Steve Jobs. Catmull became the CEO, and the new company was called Pixar. Pixar started making animated commercials for television. Later, it came to an agreement with Disney to jointly develop, produce, and distribute three feature-length animated films, and thus Toy Story opened in theatres in 1995 as the first entirely computer-animated feature film. The huge success of Toy Story continued the partnership between Pixar and Disney, and they produced other hits like A Bug's Life, Toy Story 2, Finding Nemo, and The Incredibles. In 2006, Pixar was sold by Steve Jobs to Disney, and Catmull became the president of both Walt Disney Animation Studio and Pixar Animation Studio, and Lasseter became the studio's chief creative officer. Walt Disney spent his formative years of his childhood in the small-town farming community of Marceline, and this has been his inspiration for graphic arts, which is evident in the Disney movies. Nature has been a part of Disney movies since their inception. Although nature is not a central theme in all the movies, it is an important part. This can be seen in the very first feature film by Disney, Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. The movie barely spends five minutes in the palace. Snow White is mainly depicted in the outside environment with plants, trees, flowers, and blossoms (Whitley, 20), and the enhancement of life and its natural energies is reflected in her positive attitude. Whereas the Queen is depicted indoors, in the dark, away from nature. The portrayal of animals being friends with Snow White shows the co-existence of human as well as non-human organisations. The animal helps her with her chores and saves her from the evil queen. Nature is not just a decorative feature. The depiction of the forest becoming her home as a child "establishes a satisfying and independent relationship with nature." The core value is a modernised pastoral vision of sympathetic nature. Bambi

(1942), the movie, brings the audience into the deep forest from the world outside and shows life inside the forest. It carefully depicts animal habitats and behaviours. Children who watch *Bambi* are exposed to different aspects of animal behaviour. They learn that skunks hibernate during the winter while other small animals, such as rabbits, do not; that male deer develop antlers as they mature and use them in contests of strength with other males as they compete for the right to mate with female deer; and so on. By the end of the movie, children get a brief introduction to life in the country. The diverse forms of trees, the sensitivity to patterns and light, and the diversity in terrain, even within the forest, from grassland to deciduous woodland mixed with largely coniferous areas, to open spaces created by a river running through the forest valley, carving vistas that open onto the cliffs and mountains beyond, are perhaps most striking in this regard. It also shows the relationship between humans and nature and how man does not belong in the forest. The man not only hunts *Bambi* and his friends, but his carelessness also causes a forest fire. *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) presents a rich set of connections and contrasts between man and nature. It's fascinating that the strongest portrayal of human views toward nature in *Beauty and the Beast* is negative. Gaston's hunting trophies, which protrude grotesquely from every part of the interior design of the village, manifestly represent a manner of vulgar excess. This assortment of stuffed animals exemplifies an extravagant exhibition of poor taste. Gaston simply debunks the value he attributes to his "mastery" of the surrounding world. On the other hand, Belle, unlike Snow White, is not shown sympathetic towards animals, nor does she indulge in any choral interplay with them; she is just comfortable around them, and they are merely a part of her world, and she treats them equally kindly. Belle's sensitivity towards the Beast is a symbol of "otherness." Belle's sensitivity towards him demonstrates compassion, courtesy, and acceptance towards the "other." The distinctions between the categories "animal" and "human" lose their shape and rigidity. *The Lion King* (1994) utilises nature to teach important lessons like "Cycle of Life," the use and misuse of natural resources, and the plight of greed. Through the pride of the lion, it not only teaches about forest life but also the importance of sustainability and the balance of nature (Pina).

Significance of the theme- Nature in Disney movies:

The answer to this can be found in Marina Warner's analysis of the emergence of cuddly animal toys within the culture of modern childhood. Warner says that the rise of the teddy bear mirrors the decline of real bears in the wild, and today's soft toys look like rare wild species. Some of these animals don't have much fur in the wild, but stuffed killer whales, cheetahs, gorillas, snails, spiders, snakes, and, of course, dinosaurs are made with the softest plush. They act as a kind of totem, linking the person to the imagined abilities and worth of the animal. Anthropomorphism belittles the animals themselves; their cuteness is exaggerated for emotional reasons just as their cruelty used to get in the way of empirical investigation. Soft toys wear clothes and do human things, like going deep sea diving. There is no longer a clear line between humans and animals. By giving a wild animal-shaped toy, the giver encourages the good in both men and women that comes from the wild. Fantasies protect values that society as a whole can't afford to live by. Using the animal's power no longer seems dangerous or even bad. Instead, it seems like a necessary part of healing. Warner says that giving soft animal toys may become a "necessary part of the healing" if we try to bring out the "goodness of the wild in human nature." Disney's animal characters are part of this healing process.

The question thus arises whether popular art, which simplifies problematic issues and relies on narrative patterns that focus attention on the personalities of the characters and their immediate actions but not on

more reflective or complex responses, could influence our consciousness in ways that go beyond the relatively straightforward transmission of social ideologies. If we accept this as a possibility, then the strong role of emotion in dramatic stories like Disney animation could provide audiences, especially young audiences, with a cultural arena in which strong emotions and humor, instead of getting in the way of thought and critical engagement, could provide a relatively safe space where important issues could be practised and even explored in light ways.

This is a particularly important issue at our current historical juncture because so much of our mainstream political rhetoric on environmental issues in the world is directed towards 'rationalist goals of sustainability', designed to accommodate relatively minor changes in outlook and lifestyle to the underlying norms of economic growth and productivity, with technology viewed as the primary resource that must be employed to avert global crisis.

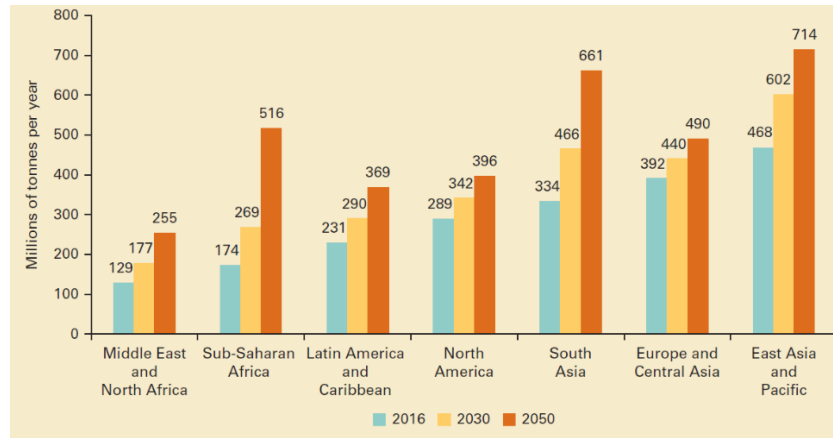
Wall-E: A Dusky Dawn

Wall-E is written and directed by Andrew Stanton and produced by Pixar Animation Studios. It was released in 2008 and became one of the most successful and critically acclaimed movies. It grossed nearly \$500 million at the box office. Wall-E is a science fiction film, as opposed to the typically associated Disney, fantasy, and romance genres. According to Ian Shaw, Wall-E is Pixar's darkest and most mature movie (Shaw 392). David Denby, from *The New Yorker*, writes, "Wall-E blends two kinds of science fiction—the post-apocalyptic disaster scenario and the dystopian fantasy derived from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, in which people are controlled not by coercion but by pleasure" (Apud. Shaw 392). The "ecological" message of Wall-E is centred on the stark warning that unrestricted consumption will lead to a global environmental disaster. The premise of Wall-E is a future where overconsumption has made the Earth an uninhabitable wasteland. There is too much toxicity in the air, and there is a mountain of trash on the ground. Daily dust storms wash away any trace of organic life. The humans migrated to space in a luxury spaceship. Around 700 years from now, the Earth is overrun with garbage and devoid of plant and animal life, the result of years of environmental degradation and mindless consumerism. After leaving Earth centuries ago, the surviving humans are now living on the spaceship *Axiom*. The *Axiom* is run by a large corporation called Buy N Large, whose BnL logo can be seen even from the ship's main concourse. The original plan was for humans to spend 5 years in space while cleaning robots, WALL-E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter-Earth Class), prepared Earth for recolonization. However, after 700 years, only one WALL-E remains. WALL-E spends his days compacting debris into solid blocks and using them to construct structures. He also collects some of the more interesting artefacts and keeps them in the garage he shares with his only friend, a cockroach. In the evenings, he watches *Hello Dolly* on VHS and fantasises about having a hand to hold. The majority of his discoveries are spare parts and electronics, but one day he comes across a lonely plant. He doesn't know what it is, but recognising that it requires soil and care, he picks it up and places it in an old, dirt-filled shoe. The following day, an enormous spaceship arrives and drops off another robot, the EVE (Extraterrestrial Vegetation Evaluator). WALL-E is instantly smitten and wishes to take her hand in his, but EVE is quick to use her plasma cannon, which can pierce through anything. EVE flies around Earth looking for vegetation, but becomes dissatisfied when she doesn't find any. WALL-E is finally able to approach her and takes her to his garage, where he displays his collection of human artefacts. She still refuses to hold his hand, so he shows her the plant he discovered. This activates her primary directive: she places the plant in a special containment capsule within her body,

transmits a signal to the mother ship, and enters hibernation mode. WALL-E, befuddled, tries to keep her safe and comfortable. He shields her from thunderstorms and takes her to a park to watch the sunset with her. The mother ship returns several days later to collect EVE. WALL-E joins the ship as it returns to the Axiom, which is several light years away from Earth. In the landing bay, EVE and WALL-E are examined. EVE is taken away from the ship's commander while still in hibernation mode. WALL-E chases her down, followed by M-O, a cleaning robot determined to scrub the filthy WALL-E clean of foreign contaminants (i.e., dirt or earth). On the way, WALL-E sees humans for the first time. Obese and unable to move on their own, they are transported around the Axiom in hover chairs equipped with video screens that allow them to communicate with one another and view advertisements for drinkable food products. When WALL-E accidentally knocks one of the humans, John, out of his hover chair, he helps him back in and introduces himself. In return, John introduces himself, befuddled but grateful. WALL-E follows EVE to Captain McCrea's chambers, where he finds her just as inert and catered to as the other humans. McCrea is perplexed but enthusiastic about Operation Recolonize, which is triggered by EVE's discovery. However, when McCrea reactivates EVE and instructs her to create the plant, it is missing. McCrea orders EVE and WALL-E to be repaired, but after they leave, he decides to learn more about Earth. In the repair bay, WALL-E believes the repair crew is harming EVE and uses her plasma cannon to save her, inadvertently releasing other robots who had been taken in for service. Security robots photograph them during the breakout, and the ship's computer informs humans that EVE and WALL-E are renegade robots. Angry, EVE transports WALL-E to an escape pod and returns him to Earth. They see Gopher putting the plant in the escape pod before she can put him in. WALL-E goes to save the plant after Gopher leaves, but is blasted into space. WALL-E uses the emergency escape hatch and a fire extinguisher to exit the pod with the plant before it self-destructs. EVE enjoys playing in space with WALL-E and even gives him a grateful electric kiss. EVE and WALL-E sneak into McCrea's cabin, using the garbage chute to give him the plant. However, Auto, the ship's autopilot system, reveals who stole the plant earlier. It has no plans to allow a return to Earth due to a centuries-old directive issued when the Earth was thought to be permanently uninhabitable. WALL-E, EVE, and the plant are thrown back down the garbage chute, and McCrea is confined to his cabin. WALL-E and EVE narrowly avoid being shot into space with the rest of the garbage, but WALL-E is severely damaged. Meanwhile, McCrea has hacked into the ship's communication system and directed EVE and WALL-E to the ship's central deck, where a special machine will return the ship to Earth once the plant is placed inside it. WALL-E and EVE make it to the central deck, where the special machine has risen from a platform, with the help of the robots they liberated earlier. WALL-E stops Auto from forcing the machine back into the platform. McCrea stands up on his own and switches off AUTO. EVE places the plant in the special machine that transports the Axiom back to Earth. WALL-E was severely injured while preventing Auto from collapsing the platform. When they arrive on Earth, EVE rushes back to WALL-E's garage and repairs him. WALL-E does not recognise her and starts compacting garbage. EVE, distraught, takes WALL-E's hand and gives him another electric kiss. This restarts WALL-E properly. McCrea instructs the other humans on how to care for the plant and heal the planet. It will become much easier than they think because plants have already begun to flourish just outside the city. The apocalyptic landscape left by the humans in the film confirms what I consider to be Bill McKibben's hasty assertion that we have "killed off nature—that world entirely independent of us, which was here before we arrived and which encircled and supported our human society." It is evident from the movie that rampant consumerism and unchecked consumption will lead us to dystopia. It emphasises the risks that consumer behaviour poses to the environment through the production of waste.

The series of billboard advertisements that still existed on earth shows the height of consumer culture. One of the advertisements says, "Too much garbage in your face? There's plenty of space in space! BnL Starliners leave each day. "We'll clean up the mess while you're away." This advertisement itself shows the negligence of humans towards the environment and how they believe in finding an alternative instead of fixing the problem. As I have already mentioned, when it comes to the environment, we take reactionary actions and not pro-active ones. The trash heap shown in the movies is clearly the amount of non-biodegradable garbage produced over centuries, not something that happened in a day, year, or decade. When the garbage started to pile up on Earth, instead of trying to reduce it and making plans to manage it, they chose to migrate to space. The dystopian space of a bleak, post-apocalyptic Earth is different from the anti-utopian space station, which is more colourful and sterile. But humans there are not living, merely surviving. The extent to which consumerism can block your consciousness can be seen there. Axiom is a luxury spaceship where humans are provided with everything—they don't walk but float on a chair that has a path of its own, they don't have to chew but sip liquid food from a sipper, and they even don't have to turn their heads to talk. The screen on their chair can let them video chat with anyone they want. They have become obese and can't move on their own. They have forgotten who they were, where they came from, and what their home was. They have no realisation of things around them. It is only after the monitor of two humans, John and Mary, is switched off that they realise that there is a swimming pool in the ship and also a window that gives a beautiful view of outer space. McCrea, the ship's captain, also has an epiphany after seeing the plant and researching Earth, leading him to fight the Auto, save the plant, and land back on Earth, where humans begin civilization all over again. The antagonist of the movie is considered to be Auto, who tries to destroy the plant and prevent humans from returning to Earth, but the real villain is Shelby Forthright, CEO of BnL. He is the one who programmes Auto to never let humans return. He also keeps humans in the dark. From the short video of him we see, he first assures all humans in Axiom that the mission of cleaning Earth is going well and they will return in no time, and later he is seen ordering Auto to never return because the mission failed. There is too much toxin, which is beyond his control. Although it is not explicitly shown in the movie, BnL is blamed for the degradation of the environment. The ending of the movie, however, gives a hopeful message that humans have the capability to save and rebuild the environment if they realise their responsibility towards it. McCrea, Mary, and John are examples of what humans can do if they get conscious about the environment, but it is also worrisome that it took 700 years for humans to get this conscious. The movie was released in 2008, fourteen years ago, but it is still relevant today. Looking at current trends in solid waste production, it is estimated that 2.01 billion metric tonnes of municipal solid waste are produced globally each year. Out of these 2.01 billion metric tonnes, 33% of the waste is not handled in an environmentally safe manner. The average amount of waste produced per person worldwide is around 0.74 kilogrammes. Looking ahead, it is anticipated that global waste will increase to 3.40 billion metric tonnes by 2050, more than double the population growth during that time. The anticipated increase in waste in different regions can be seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Projected waste generation, by region (millions of tonnes/years) (Source: “Trends in Solid Waste Management”)



It is estimated that 1.6 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent greenhouse gas emissions, or 5% of global emissions, were produced from the treatment and disposal of solid waste in 2016. This figure is based on the volume of waste produced, its composition, and how it is managed. Waste disposal in open dumps and landfills without landfill gas collection systems is the main cause of this. If no changes are made in the sector, solid waste-related emissions are predicted to rise to 2.38 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent annually by 2050.

If the current trend is followed, it won't be a surprise that Earth becomes a big pile of trash with an atmosphere too toxic to breathe as shown in the movie.

Moana: Restoring Heart

Moana is a tale of humankind's deep greed and exploitation of nature for the personal gain of humankind. The relationship between humans and nature creates both positive and negative impacts on each other. To achieve harmonious living in this world, the relationship between man and nature should be balanced. Although some people believe that they have a dominant role above nature, they perceive that they can control the environment as they want. If this relationship is not balanced, it can cause disturbances in the ecosystem. This problem is shown in Moana (2016), which was made by Walt Disney Animation Studio and was directed by John Musker and Ron Clements. The movie starts with Gramma Tala teaching young children about Te Fiti with a tapa cloth. Te Fiti's heart builds islands. All creatures wanted her heart for its great power, but it took courage to do it. Maui, a demigod, forms a shift to steal Te Fiti's heart, a spiral-shaped green jewel. Without Te Fiti's heart, her island diminishes. Te Ka, a lava-and-fire demon, erupts from the water like a volcano. Maui fought Te Ka and lost his hook and Te Fiti's heart. Gramma Tala concludes her story by stating that Te Ka and other monsters continue to hunt for the heart and that darkness will one day swallow their island. Most kids weep or faint, but Moana was mesmerized. Gramma Tala hopes someone will discover the heart, travel to Maui, and save everyone. Chief Tui, the chief of the island and Moana's father, intervenes, guaranteeing no darkness or creatures within the reef. Moana escapes the mayhem and swims away. She goes to retrieve a seashell when she observes a sea turtle being endangered by frigate birds. Moana helps the turtle into the water. Once it's safe, the water recedes, revealing a trail of seashells. In the underwater canyon, a wave forms above Moana's head. Her hair is splashed and braided. Moana sees a dazzling object in the water. She traces a spiral on a sea-green stone.

Moana is returned to shore by the waves on driftwood, but she drops the stone. Chief Tui and Sina pick her up before she knows it. Moana lives on Motonui but is drawn to the ocean. Her parents tell her that she belongs in the world of duty and people, not in the water. Tala tells Moana to follow her heart and listen to her "voice inside." Despite wanting to sail, Moana becomes a chief-in-training. She fixes leaking roofs, helps men get tattoos, and teaches hula to kids. An elderly man watches Heihei pecking at a rock and asks if he should be eaten. Moana says strength is sometimes hidden. Moana's parents saw rotting, black coconuts. Moana finds a new spot to plant a grove, but the fishermen show the chief they've caught nothing. When Moana suggests fishing beyond the reef, it enrages the chief. Moana, torn between her village duties and her desire to sail, takes Pua with her on a canoe trip to find fish beyond the reef. A wave flips Pua's canoe, pushing her overboard. Another wave capsizes Moana's canoe. Moana frees her stuck foot with a rock. She finds Pua exhausted but alive. Gramma Tala jokes about the pig. Despite her efforts, Tala discovers Moana's injured ankle but promises not to tell her father about it. Tala tells Moana about her ancestors; they were voyagers. They crossed the ocean and colonised new islands, but they quit sailing because boats stopped returning when Maui took Te Fiti's heart and released darkness. Moana's ancestors hid on Motonui. Tala shows Moana as a decaying island. Moana believes in her stories that someone will save everyone. She offers Moana a green stone from her necklace to show she was there when the ocean chose her to rebuild the heart. She gives Moana a love necklace and pledges to be there for her always. Moana takes a spiral-sailed boat from the grotto and starts sailing in search of Maui. She follows the hook constellation, but she meets a storm, and her canoe capsizes, stranding her on a rocky island. Moana is angry at the ocean because it didn't help her, but she recognises Maui by the hook-shaped rocks on the island. Maui ducks behind her canoe as he approaches. Maui uses his Mini-Maui tattoo to flaunt off his tattoos in "You're Welcome." Despite Mini's objections, Maui confines Moana in his cave to steal her canoe. Moana jumps into the ocean as Maui sails away. Moana catches up when the ocean puts her on her canoe. Moana is flung overboard repeatedly, yet the water retrieves her. Maui had to agree to fix her heart. The ocean prevents his escape. He thinks the heart is cursed and that bad things are always hunting for it. For example, coconut creatures and their ship, Kakamora, begin chasing them after discovering that they have hearts. Maui tries to avoid the Kakamora when he discovers Moana can't sail, but they board her canoe with spears. After a great struggle, they somehow save themselves and their hearts. Moana promises Maui he'll be a hero if he returns the heart; right now, he is someone who stole the heart and caused trouble, but first they have to find Maui's hook because Maui can't shapeshift without his hook. So they sail to Lalotai. Maui and Moana enter the portal. They approached Tamatoa's lair, where Maui said he would have his hook. Maui lures Tamatoa with Moana. Tamatoa liked shiny things, and Tamatoa brags about them to Moana. Moana uses a fake Te Fiti heart to distract Tamatoa while she and Maui escape with the hook. When they reach Te Fiti, as a hawk, Te Ka confronts him near the island. Maui crashes and escapes by canoe. Maui opposes Moana overtaking Te Ka. Maui deflects Te Ka's lunge with his hook, but the power sinks their boat. Maui mourns his broken hook when Moana awakens. Maui blames Moana for not listening; he becomes a hawk and leaves. Moana is heartbroken and asks the water why it brought her here. As she sobs, a manta ray ghost swims near the canoe. Moana's grandmother promises to take her home. Moana realises she must do this. She summons her ancestors to save the heart. She prepares the canoe and travels to Te Fiti. She deceives Te Ka at the Barrier Islands and uses the ocean against him. Te Ka knocks Moana's canoe over and is about to burn her, but Maui saves her and gives her time to reach Te Fiti. Moana finds Te Fiti's island gone; only her statue remains. Te Ka's spiral sign reveals the truth to her; Te Ka is Te Fiti; after her heart was stolen, Te Fiti became Te Fa. She attracts Te Ka with her heart

and asks the ocean to clear the path for Te Ka. Moana asks Te Ka to realise who she is and calm her down. Moana places Te Ka's heart back in the spiral. This removes the lava rock, and Te Fiti turns green. The goddess forgives Maui for capturing Te Fiti's heart and grants him a new hook and Moana new canoes. Moana sails back to Motonui, where flowers and fruit are sprouting anew. Human attitudes toward nature can affect nature itself. According to Moana, it is human greed that is at the root of all the problems. Maui is initially portrayed as a villain who stole Te Fiti's heart and brought the curse, but later in the movie, it is revealed that Maui did all that for humans. He reveals that whatever he ever did was to get the approval of humans and to be loved and respected by them, but nothing was ever enough for them. Even though this corruption results from a demigod's actions, it was made possible to serve human needs. So, it is people who stir up violence against Te Fiti and the natural world, and it is people who must face the "darkness" in the end. On the other hand, Moana's attitude towards nature can be seen in the initial scenes only when she is collecting seashells and sees a baby turtle being attacked by seagulls. She throws shells and goes to help the turtle. This shows that even as a child, she prioritises nature over her desires. Also, turtles are associated with ocean pollution and degradation. This could be one of the reasons why the ocean chose her. The movie shows oceanic life; when it makes way for baby Moana, we can see a baby turtle swimming with its mother and, along with that, different other species. This familiarises the audience with the ocean. The scene of the ocean playing with Moana, laughing and tilting its head, shows the connection between them. The ocean cared for Moana; it guided her and protected her. Later, she places a seashell on the tower of the past chief rock as a symbol of including the ocean. The film not only familiarises the audience with nature, oceanic life, and human greed and its negative impact on them, but it also shows how indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to this impact. The people of Motonui were voyagers, but when darkness fell (a metaphor for climate change in the film), the ships stopped returning, and thus they stopped voyaging. The reason for the ship's failure to return could be a change in the temperature of the water current caused by climate change, as water temperature is critical for direction in wayfinding. They settled on Motonui with the thought that the island would provide them with whatever they needed. But because of the darkness, they started to face food insecurity and instability. Their crops started to decay, and there were no fish in the reef. Indigenous people are most vulnerable to climate change because they are most dependent on nature for their livelihood. They live in regions and ecosystems that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and they have a complex cultural relationship with these ecosystems. About 70 million indigenous people depend on forests for their livelihoods worldwide. Despite making up only about 5% of the global population, indigenous peoples are responsible for maintaining and protecting nearly 22% of the planet's surface and 80% of its remaining biodiversity. Indigenous populations typically live in ecosystems and geographical areas that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as polar regions, humid tropical forests, high mountains, remote islands, coastal areas, and arid and semi-arid lands. The effects on underdeveloped communities that rely on ecosystem-based livelihoods could be severe, reducing their ability to provide for themselves and removing one of their safety nets. One of the industries most vulnerable to climate change is agriculture, which is a source of food security and a means of subsistence for many indigenous peoples. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has noted that the Pacific region, which includes small island developing states and contains within them the traditional lands and territories of many indigenous peoples, will be particularly affected by rising sea levels worldwide. The threat of rising sea levels brought on by climate change threatens many territories' very existence. Other dangers include landslides, which can cause many indigenous groups to lose their lands, soil erosion brought on by destructive wave activity,

and frequent storm surges. The indigenous peoples of the Pacific region, who are located in high-risk geographic areas, face serious risks to not only their livelihoods but also to their cultures and ways of life, as these are inextricably linked to their traditional lands and territories. These dangers and the effects of climate change are already being felt throughout the area. For instance, recent problems in the Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, and low-lying islands of Papua New Guinea have been brought on by high tides and stormy seas. Similar to plantations, livestock is vulnerable to diseases and pests brought on by flooding and other climatic changes. Livestock and plantations are significant sources of subsistence for many indigenous groups. In this movie, it is evident that humans tend to make temporary fixes in the environment, and that too, when it starts affecting them, they ignore the warning signs given to them. The Heart of Te Fiti was stolen thousands of years ago, and its effects started immediately, but nobody tried to find the heart and fix the problem. Later, people started to believe that it was a myth. The Chief himself didn't believe in it, and, as world leaders today think that climate change is a myth, he thought that too. Even after the crops started to decay and there were no fish in the reef, he was against the idea of fixing the real issue and was looking for an alternative. The ocean chose Moana and no one else because she believed in Grandma Tala's tale and prioritised nature over her desire. She, unlike others, went to fix the real issue and did not find a temporary fix. Her realisation that Te Ka is actually Te Fiti and humans have done more harm to her. Recognizing Te Fiti's true form—fertile, blooming, and green—by knowing her name is the first step in reversing the damage caused by humans to the islands. Moana tells Te Fiti, "This is not who you are." Her lack of fear in approaching and accepting Te Ka's lava form serves as a reminder to audiences not to fear nature, but rather to work in harmonious partnership with it.

Conclusion

Throughout the entirety of the dissertation, I have operated under the assumption that humans and nature are two separate things, which is a fairly standard assumption. The situation raises the question of what characteristics distinguish humans from natural environments like forests. The natural state of humans is comparable to that of a tree or a chipmunk. Our culture tends to have a very binary understanding of nature, which suggests that there are biological forms and physical portions of the world that are unrelated to humans or human activities. As a result, it would appear that our comprehension of nature is based on a number of assumptions. Furthermore, it's possible that this assumption is contributing to the issue. We don't care about nature because we believe it to be distinct from us and independent, despite the fact that neither of these things is true. Both WALL-E and Moana disbelieved in the dichotomy; they had compassion for the natural world and did not see it as a separate entity from themselves. The manner in which WALL-E ensured the plant's safety and the manner in which Moana connected with both the ocean and her pets both serve as examples of this fact. In addition to addressing concerns related to the environment, the films also teach viewers valuable lessons on how to live more sustainably. Making choices that aim to reduce our individual and collective environmental impact by adopting positive changes to combat climate change and lessen environmental harm is the way to achieve sustainable living. These decisions can be made by deciding to live in a way that is sustainable. It is a technique to lessen the impact that our way of life has on the environment by cutting down on our carbon footprint and making more efficient use of the resources of the earth, thereby reducing the amount of harm that may be done. Making choices in the present that will, in the long run, be beneficial to the natural world is essential to achieving sustainability. It entails giving thought to the requirements of subsequent generations by making certain that they will bequeath to themselves a secure and healthy world in which to live and flourish.

Human greed and an unsatisfactory nature are the root causes of conflict in both films and in real life. Imagine this: you are strolling through a shopping centre when you come upon a wallet that is full of cash. You are free to keep it, but considering that your decision could have an impact on someone else right now, it would be more ethical for you to return the wallet. In a similar vein, the carbon footprint we leave behind today is going to have an effect on the generations to come, and it is not only our moral obligation but also our job to watch what we do to ensure that it does not have a negative impact on those generations. There have been a few proactive actions taken by people to assist in the recovery of the ecosystem, but these steps are not adequate. It is true that these changes at the individual level are very small in comparison to the damage done or the damage still going on; these changes are important not from the perspective of change but from the perspective of ethics. If we truly want to have a significant impact, our government and world leaders need to develop more effective policies and think beyond finding short-term solutions. On one hand, a ban is imposed on single-use plastic, which includes straws, cutlery, earbuds, etc.; on the other hand, the rich and elite are using their private jets to travel even for a short distance. To be in a position to question them, we need to incorporate these small changes in our lives and do our part for the planet we live on.

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