

Ecocritical Concerns in Indian Writing in English

by

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Abstract

Ecocriticism is the study of environment and literature in different perspectives, where literary critics evaluate the texts which exemplify the environmental issues. It is the demonstration of nature and natural objects. In Ecocriticism, there is a close association between environment and literature. As a separate movement or school of literary criticism, ecocriticism started developing in the 1990s. The ecocritics showed the behavior of man with physical environment through their works. Literature became an important tool for critics in order to highlight the environmental issues. William Rueckert has been the first author who used this term in his essay *Literature and ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* in 1978. Rachel Carson is known as the one of the forerunner of environmental studies. She first time highlights the issues of environmental decay through the use of chemicals like DDT. Ecocriticism existed since the romantic period, although it came into limelight in the second half of 20th century. The environmental catastrophe did not remain confined to the natural sciences only but it made its way to social sciences and humanities too. In the contemporary era the critics focused on nature and society. So ecocriticism become a new field for research, researchers are worrying about environment because ecological balance is most important in globalize world. Indian authors did not remain passive in this particular field. They too take the issue very seriously in their respective works. Indian English authors are very conscious about the environment and environmental objects. They used nature as a background in their works very beautifully. Authors like as Amitav Ghosh, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Jayant Mahapatra, Ramanujan, Bhavani Bhattacharya. Ecological balance has become the recurrent issue of the present time in the entire universe, it has been highlighted an international level.

Key Words: Man-Nature Relationship, Indian Novels, Earth Centered and Ecocriticism.

Introduction:

Ecocriticism is a new branch of literature which defines the connection between environment and literature. It a new platform for researcher to explore this particular field and protect environment with modernity. Ecocritical movement stated in the late 19th century in the United States and spread gradually in the other parts of the world. It begins in United Kingdom in early nineties as Green Studies. Researchers and scholars' work in this field and considered them marginal till the existences of Association for the Study of Literature and Environment commonly

known as ASLE. A journal was established in 1993 gave a ray of hope to this movement. Ecocriticism was not confined to a particular subject; it covers almost all subjects like Science, Literature, Anthropology, Sociology, and Psychology. Ecocriticism is a field which evoked the interest of researchers across the globe. In different places it assumed different title like ecopoetics, green culture and environmental literary criticism. It is study in which has invoked the interest of scholars worldwide. Ecocriticism is not only the application of ecology and ecological principles but also the study of literature and theoretical approach to the interrelations of nature, culture and sometimes even supernatural elements in nature. It attempts to explore the expressions of environment in literary texts and theoretical discourse. It is also a study of language through which literature is expressed.

Indian Authors:

In Indian writing the writers also showed a great concern towards nature and natural objects. They remained very conscious about nature and depicted nature very well. The authors like Amativ Ghosh, R. K. Narayan, Manohar Malgonkar, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, and Anita Desai have invoked Nature and nature-elements for expressing their thoughts for social environment. R.K Narayan is one of the famous novelists in Indian writing in English, who created imaginative world Malgudi for the creation of his novels and short stories. R. K. Narayan is one of the most outstanding regional novelists highlight the natural village atmosphere in his works. His imaginative world Malgudi became the backdrop for his novels. His novels revolve round the Malgudi and used nature as a sitting for his works. His noted works are *Malgudi Days*, *Man Eater of Malgudi*, *The English Teacher*, and *The Guide etc.* nature and natural objects became the prime issue in English literature. Authors focused on natural objects in order to save the natural environment. Colonialism also played a key role in the destruction of environment throughout the world. Man changed his attitude towards nature and tries to protect the natural objects. In Indian Writing in English the authors also highlighted the theme of ecocriticism in their works through different ways.

Nectar in the Sieve: Representation the Elements of Rural Life:

Kamala Markandaya holds a high place in Indian writing in English. She wrote about the tradationality verse modernity. Her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* depicted the family who are deeply rooted with the rural life. Rukmani's the leading character of the novel is deeply attached with her land along with her husband Nathan. They both are working hard in their field for their survival. There is close association between the Rukmani her land and environment.

“While the sun shines on you and the fields are green and beautiful to the eye, and your husband sees beauty in you which no one has seen before, and you have a good store of grain laid away for hard times, a roof over you and a sweet stirring in your body, what more can a woman ask for?” (*Nectar in a Sieve* 8)

Nathan and Rukmani always worked together in the field and Nathan her husband admires her beauty. She was too much linked with the nature. They are poor but they never blame on nature though due to draught they did cultivate their properly. Modernity keeps away man from natural environment and ultimately destroys the natural environment. The tannery symbolizes of modernity. It transforms both, the environment and the economic conditions of the village. It also brings about a drastic change in the relationships between the villagers.

The God of Small Things and Natural Environment:

Arundhati Roy is an activist and noted novelist in Indian writing in English won Booker for her master piece *The God of Small Things*. As an activist she visited many places where she found some natural destruction by the human beings for their benefit. She exhibited the nature and natural elements in her novel. People exploited the natural objects in the name of modern technology. People who live in villages are more connect with nature but people call them tribal. To protect nature is very important in the contemporary era where technology bow there seed very deeply in order to spoil the natural environments. In her novel *The God of Small Things* she highlighted the issues of nature through the character of Velutha. She gave the description of the river Meenchal in her novel. She has used nature images not only for describing the beauty or glorious atmosphere of the region and landscape but also for exposing the polluted atmosphere of Ayemenem. After twenty-three when Rahel returned to native place Ayemenem, “greeted her with a ghastly skull’s smile, with holes where teeth had been and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed” (p. 124).

Though it was June and raining the river was no more than a swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that tapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequined with occasional silver of a dead fish. It was choked with a succulent weed, whose furred brown roots saved like thin tentacles under water. Bronze winged lily-trotters walked across it. Splay-footed cautious (p. 124). The modern technology created population in the in the area and destroy the natural environment and its greenery. Roy frankly highlighted the dark sides of modernization which creates problem in the lives of local inhabitant. She exhibited the image of Ayemenem with greenery as well as the polluted Ayemenem.

Nature description in Cry the Peacock:

The women psyche is explored through the natural elements in the novel by Desai, she used different images of botanical, zoological, meteorological and actions representing colors in order to represent the mental condition of Maya. Author depicted natural and natural environment through the character of Maya and her attachment to the natural objects. The novelist exhibited the images of animals which shows the theme of segregation and isolation which finally leads the demise as the elementary indication of Maya’s mental disturbance. The description of botanical picture is related to Maya’s bleakness, her sterility is another cause of her mental disturbance. She observed that,

“Leafless, the fine tracery on the naked Neem trees revealed unsuspected, so far carefully concealed, nests, deserted by the birds....Down the street, the silk-cotton trees were the first to flower: their huge, scarlet blooms, thick petaled, solid-podded ... then dropped to the asphalt and were squashed into soft, yellowish miasma, seemed animal rather than flowerage, so large were they, so heavy, so moist and living to the touch.” (Desai 34)

Maya was not happy with her husband she realized the schism of sensibilities between her and her husband Gautam. She is just like “the beds of petunias...sentimental irresolute flowers” while Gautama resembles the blossoms of the lemon tree ...stronger, crisper character” (Desai 21-22). Thus, Desai exploits the wreck less nature imagery to heighten the pernicious influence of Maya on Gautam.

The Hungry Tide:

In the 20th century ecological issues are main issue in Indian writing in English. Authors start thinking more about environment and project the shortcoming in their works. Amitav Ghosh

is one of the important figures in Indian writing in English. He achieved great admiration from his readers. His master piece *The Hungry Tide* is considered the first work in Indian English fiction who boldly raised the ecological issues first time in India and tried his best to protect the environment. He depicted the association between the people, the fauna and flora, and the physical environment, and in doing so this work depicted both the calamity and the duplicity that were inherent in the conservation efforts in the Sundarbans. In the novel *The Hungry Tide* the novelist revealed the tension between human beings within the same communities and their ties with natural environment. The chafing between the land and sea in the Sundarbans generate

The chafing between land and the sea in the Sundarbans generate an unvarying rasping between the plant and animal life. Mans regular infringement of the ecosystems of the Sunderbans only rationalize the chaos and strain between the natural elements. The setting of the novel *The Hungry Tide* is Sunderbans Island in Bay of Bengal, the outlook of this island is not only beautiful but also very fascinating.

Disturbances and deportation are the common threat on this place and even the attack by tigers are most common in this place. Tidal floods devastate the steadiness the common the life on the island without any admonition. Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* continuously talks about the clash between man and nature in the perspectives of the Sundarbans in India and Bangladesh. Amitav Ghosh always raised his voice against the mistreatment with nature and natural objects. "At no moment can human beings have any doubt of the terrain's hostility to their presence, of its cunning and resourcefulness, of its determination to destroy or expel them. Every year, dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles" (Ghosh 7).

Conclusion:

Thus, it is very necessary to protect the nature and natural objects. It is not the responsibility of authors who highlight the ecological issues in their works so that readers came to about these problems. It is the duty of every individual to protect so, that it will transfer generation to generations. Environment is closely associated with human life, if environment is not safe that human life is automatically in dangerous. Man is the creator and destructor of environment Ecocriticism engages with the cause of ecosystem and expressions of the theory. It seeks to query into its reach and studies the interdependence of man and nature. The study is an admonitory caution to mankind that the utilization of nature over a period of time will lead to an eruption of nature. Environmental imageries have been used by many writers to express the desires, shortcomings and emotions of their characters.

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