



ECO CRITICISM IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Unprecedented and unexpected natural calamities have made people aware of environmental degradation. Ecology, the relation between environment and people has become the major concern of the humanity. Ecocriticism has now become an integral part of literary study and research. Many writers have become environment conscious. Literature always used Nature as landscape. Ecocriticism in the works of writers like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandey, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Jayant Mahapatra, Ramanujan, Bhabani Bhattacharya is being explored in this paper.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Environment, Indian writing in English, Landscape, Eco Balance, Pollution.

From time immemorial, Nature has been an integral part of literature. Today because of the environmental degradation, Ecocriticism has become an important part of Literary Criticism. The Literary Critic studies how ecology has been textualized by the writers in their work. India is a country with variety of ecosystems. These ecosystems have been adversely affected by man's apathy towards environment. This paper tries to investigate some Indian writers work through the prism of Ecocriticism.

The word "Ecocriticism" first appeared in William Rueckert's essay "Literature and Ecology in Ecocriticism" in 1978. In 1989 Western Literary Association meeting, Cheryl Glotfelty revived the term which in its broadest sense means study of nature writing. Association for the study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was established along with the interdisciplinary studies in Literature and Environment (ISLE) in 1993 the two seminal works in Ecocriticism are "The Ecocriticism Reader,

Edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold From and The Environmental Imagination by Lawrence Buell".

We can find nature in the works of writers such R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandey, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Jayant Mahapatra, Ramanujan, Bhabani Bhattacharya. R.K. Narayan is fundamentally called a regional novelist. He is well known for his imaginary creation Malgudi. In all his writings Malgudi remains as a backdrop through this imaginary place, he describes social, psychological and regional atmosphere. He has used Nature as the setting in his novels and short stories. It can be observed in Malgudi Days, Man Eater of Malgudi, The English Teacher & the Guide. Nature is portrayed both as constructive and destructive. Sarayu river and the ruined temples affect Raju, the guide and changed him into a saint in the novel.

Raja Rao portrayed nature in his novels. He showed nature through prism of mythological, regional and social aspects. His famous novel, Kanthapura is a perfect example of this, he described the co-relation between mankind and

nature. His novel reveals the role and importance of nature in the human life. Mythological aspects are introduced to reflect this cooperation. Kenchamma is regarded as the great goddess.

Kamala Markandaya is one of the greatest Indian Novelists in English. She has used nature in her novels. The duality of nature is described beautifully in her fiction. Her well known novel, *nectar in a sieve*, is a perfect example of nature imagery. Environmental Degradation and its effect on mankind is described.

Bhabani Bhattacharya has depicted the natural calamity realistically in his famous novel, *So Many Hungers*. The Real Bengal famine of 1943 is described in the novel. How the famine affected people is realistically portrayed Bhattacharya used various nature symbols. The characters Laxminathan and Samerandra Bose are compared with Jackals and Vultures because of their Greed.

In Anita Desai's fiction, nature has a strong presence. She is famous for introducing psychological novel in Indian – English Fiction she uses external landscapes to portray interior state of mind. In *Cry, the Peacock*, The complexities of Maya's inner life is effectively brought out through the landscape as her resentment against her husband for his inability to communicate with her. Maya compares herself with the peacock in the jungle. The peacocks are said to fight before they mate, living they are aware of death and dying when they are in love with life. This is reflected towards the end in the novel, during a dust storm. Both husband and wife go up to the roof of their house. She pushes him off the parapet and he dies. In *Voice in the City*, monalisa is repeatedly compared to the caged bird in her house who wants to be free. Her condition reflects the plight of the imprisoned bird whose need is no one's concern and its life is for the pleasure of the others. She finally takes her own life to free herself.

Arundhati Roy's breakthrough novel, *The God of Small Things*, deals with the topics of nature and environment. Environmental pollution is reflected in change in condition of Ayemenem and the river Meenachal. The river has become deformed and repulsive due to environmental pollution. The harmful effect of urbanization on

Environment and the resultant degenerated human beings is elaborated in the novel.

Amitav Ghose in his novel, *The Hungry Tide*, Shows the value of ecobalance. It deals with the geographical areas of the Sunderban Islands in the Bay of Bengal. Ghose describes the complicated ecosystem and the environment. The visit of a marine biologist Piyali in Sunderbans for the research study of a special species of dolphin in a tide pool is delineated. A negative effect of fundamental environment protectionism is explored in the novel. He reveals the myopic attitude of the national and international environmentalists who think animal protection is more important than the saving of human life.

In Modern Age, Ecology, Ecobalance, Environmental Concerns have attained paramount importance. Eventhough nature is represented in literature from ancient times, Environmental awareness has become the modern literature concern. Indian writing in English followed this trend and incorporated these issues in fiction. The literature has become a mode of expression about environment and its importance in human life. The need of the hour is the eco friendly atmosphere for the proper growth, development, sustainability and prosperity. All these concerns have been projected by Indian writers writing in English.

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