



Reflection of Ecocriticism in Indian Poetry

Dr. Kiran Mani Tripathi

Professor, Department of Humanities, Lakshmi Narain College of Technology, Bhopal, MP, India

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Abstract— Literature has long expressed concern about ecology and the harm that ongoing environmental misuse poses. Even when addressing the beauty and majesty of nature, literature has always depicted the awareness of the writers about the threat that ongoing environmental abuse poses to humanity and the issue of ecology. This concern and how it is reflected in literature are what have given rise to Ecocriticism, a new subfield of literary study. Nature has been the focus of many artistic mediums and has been treated in poetry in particular. Indian poets who have celebrated diversity include Toru Dutt, Keki N. Daruwalla, Sarojini Naidu, A.K. Ramanujan, Dip Chitre, and many others. On the one hand, it assumes the form of a strength that serves as a mother goddess, a godly spirit, or a friend of humanity. Nature is a major component of both thematic and creative components in poetic expressions, regardless of the form it takes. Many natural elements, including skies, lakes, rivers, valleys, plants, animals, and creatures, frequently take on metaphorical meaning that gives poetry works depth and richness. Modern Indian English poetry is characterized by an eco-conscious outlook and mindset that speaks to our globalized society and even forewarns us of impending disasters brought on by environmental degradation. The purpose of the study is to examine a few Indian English poets who began to focus on an ecocritical perspective on humankind.



Keywords— Ecocriticism, civilization, revolution, romantic, nature, imagery.

INTRODUCTION

Literature has served as a powerful medium for exploring the intricate relationship between humanity and the natural world. While poets have often been captivated by nature's beauty and grandeur, their works also reveal a growing awareness of the environmental threats posed by human activity. This confluence of appreciation, concern and anxiety related to its environment degradation has resulted in the development of Ecocriticism, a branch of literary study that examines how literature portrays the environment and our interaction with it (Glottfelty, 1996). As per M. H. Abraham, "Ecocriticism' (or by alternative names, environmental criticism and green studies) designates the critical writings which explore the relations between the literature and biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on that environment by human activities."

Literature, especially poetry has been the main artistic medium through which nature has been depicted very in significant ways. Many poets, including S.T

Coleridge, William Wordsworth, P.B. Shelley, John Keats, Alfred Lord Tennyson Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and many more as great poets of nature and romanticism, have shown interest and honoured various facets and aspects of nature for various reasons and from various perspectives. Their portrayal of nature highlights the ways in which it takes on various meanings and interpretations and they also borrowed a lot of symbols and imagery from the natural world.

It can take on the forms of a violent force that operates as a supernatural agency to coerce or punish people for their violation of natural aspects and justice and other malpractice or wrongdoings. It can also seem as a divine spirit helpful for stress and chaos of hectic life, a holy mother to care and nourish with all its resources, and a friend of humanity in saving lives. Nature, in all its phenomena or manifestations, is a major component of both thematic and artistic components in poetry. Nature is ubiquitous; it has its own beauty and grandeur and uniqueness. Various natural elements, including rivers,

skies, meadows, trees, plants, animals, and creatures, frequently take on metaphorical meaning that lends poetry works complexity and richness. Indian English poetry is characterized by an environmentally sensitive outlook and mindset that speaks to our globalized society and even forewarns us of impending disasters brought on by environmental degradation so humanity's relationship with the natural world has long been a central theme in literature. While poets have celebrated nature's beauty and power, they have also expressed concern for its preservation. This fusion of appreciation and anxiety forms the basis of Ecocriticism, a critical lens that examines literature's engagement with environmental issues.

Ecocriticism in Indian Literature: Various aspects

India possesses a rich literary heritage, and poetry plays a particularly significant role in it. Even though a large number of Indian English writers have composed poems that deal with nature, some have shown creative acumen for preserving nature. In literature it has been in tradition that we find two ways to view nature: philosophically and mystically, or with an aesthetic appreciation.

The ecocritical themes that are reflected in Indian poetry, focusing on works written in English by prominent poets like Toru Dutt, Keki N. Daruwalla, Sarojini Naidu, A.K. Ramanujan, and Dip Chitre present their diverse perspectives. In those works we witness a spectrum of representations of nature – as a nurturing force, a sacred entity, or a companion to human existence. Regardless of the form it takes, nature remains a central component in their work, often imbued with metaphorical weight. Moreover, contemporary Indian English poetry demonstrates a growing eco-consciousness, critiquing human actions that disrupt ecological balance and advocating for sustainable practices. By analyzing these trends, we gain a deeper understanding of how Indian poets grapple with environmental issues and the evolving relationship between humankind and nature.

Nature as Nurturer and Sacred Entity

Early Indian poetry in English, exemplified by the works of Toru Dutt, often depicts nature as a nurturing and benevolent force. In "Our Casuarina Tree," Dutt evokes a sense of maternal comfort and security associated with the titular tree, describing its shade as "a verdant roof" that shields her from the harsh sun (Dutt, 1882). In this poem, Toru Dutt honors the grandeur of the casuarina tree that she used to look from her window, recalls her blissful days spent playing under it when she was a child, and recalls up memories of her missed and beloved siblings. Thus this portrayal reflects a deep-rooted cultural reverence for nature, particularly in India, where the Earth itself is often

personified as a divine mother figure, "Bhumi Devi" (Ghosh, 2000).

Similarly, Sarojini Naidu, another prominent poet of the early 20th century, celebrates nature's beauty and its power to evoke spiritual connection. In "The Gift of the Sea," she describes the vastness of the ocean as a "holy thing" and portrays waves as "priests" chanting hymns of praise (Naidu, 1910). These descriptions imbue nature with a sense of sacredness, highlighting its ability to inspire awe and spiritual contemplation.

Nature as Companion and Witness

Beyond its nurturing and sacred dimensions, nature is also portrayed as a companion and witness to human experience in Indian poetry. A.K. Ramanujan, in his poem "Lectures on Experience," explores the concept of "nature" itself, questioning its separateness from human experience. He suggests that nature is not merely an external force but rather an integral part of human existence, intertwined with our emotions and memories (Ramanujan, 1989). This perspective challenges the traditional human-nature dichotomy and emphasizes a more interconnected relationship.

Likewise, Dip Chitre, in "Looking at the Sea," creates a sense of intimacy with the ocean. He describes the waves as "friends" and the sea itself as a "mirror" reflecting the complexities of human emotions (Chitre, 1973). This portrayal suggests a sense of shared experience and vulnerability between humanity and the natural world. While humans observe and are affected by nature, they also leave their imprint on it, creating a dynamic and interwoven relationship.

Metaphors of Nature

A lot of Indian poets including Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Arun Kolatkar, and Daruwalla, have borrowed imagery and metaphors from the aspects of nature.

So the use of powerful metaphors emphasizes the significance of nature in Indian poetry. In "A Poem for A.K.," Ramanujan employs the image of a monsoon to symbolize renewal and the cyclical nature of life (Ramanujan, 1989). The monsoon, with its cleansing rains transformation and rebirth capacity, and subsequent growth, on the earth represents the natural world's resilience and the potential for human transformation.

Keki N. Daruwalla, a leading voice in contemporary ecocritical Indian poetry, utilizes metaphors to highlight the consequences of environmental degradation. In "The Desolation of Drought," he compares a parched landscape to a "corpse," drawing a stark analogy between the death of a living entity and the devastation caused by drought (Daruwalla, 1984). This image serves as

a powerful critique of human actions that disrupt ecological balance and lead to environmental destruction.

The Rise of Eco-Consciousness

Modern Indian English poetry reflects a growing eco-consciousness, with poets actively critiquing human actions that endanger the environment. Daruwalla, in "The Public Park," laments the loss of green spaces due to urbanization, depicting the park as a "concrete cage" that suffocates nature (Daruwalla, 1984). This poem serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of unchecked development and the need to prioritize the preservation of natural spaces.

Dip Chitre, in "Elegy for the Rhino," mourns the extinction of the rhinoceros due to poaching, highlighting the fragility of ecosystems and the interconnectedness of species (Chitre, 1973). This poem is a poignant call to action, urging readers to recognize the impact of human necessities and greed on the natural world and advocate for sustainable practices.

Some Prominent Poets with Ecocritical Lens

Nissim Ezekiel: Implications of Ecology

Nissim Ezekiel's poems have dealt with a wide variety of themes such as love, isolation, human foibles or flaws, superstitions and imperfections but at the same time he seems to have eco-critical and biocentric approach in some of his poems such as "Squirrel", "Sparrows", "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher".

The image of superstition in the poem 'Night of the Scorpion' in these lines is very vivid, apt, and accurate. He describes the actions of the neighbours and peasants coming to visit and as they are big in numbers as being like swarms of flies, and they "buzzed" God's name to save the life of the poet's mother and in a hope to paralyze or remove the effect of the "Evil One."

The peasants came like swarms of flies
And buzzed the Name of God a hundred
Time to paralyse the Evil one.
With candles and with lanterns
Throwing giant scorpion shadows
On the mud-baked walls
They searched for him; he was not found
They clicked their tongues.

The poem "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher" is included in the volume *The Exact Name* (1965). This aesthetic and appealing poem carries beauty but abrupt expression and analysis of human behaviour towards nature. Her language is lucid and critical of and sense within it but at the same

time it is blunt enough to criticize human behavior towards nature. The language is lucid enough and directly deals with the subject matter as a statement without any deception. "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher" brings within its purview nature as well as human and non-human entities. The poet affirms that birds and women represent nature so it is impossible to identify and value them promptly and they cannot be comprehended in compulsion or hastily.

Ecocriticism in Toru Dutt's poems : A poetic Narrative against Modern Trend

People appreciate the relevance of nature for all living beings and develop a more wide and biocentric view of the natural world. Indian English poetry shows the relationship between nature and humans and illustrates the connection and even interaction. Toru Dutt as poet of the era of pre-independence has reflected her awareness and sensibility through numerous poems. The Lotus, Sita, and Baumaree are examples of her outstanding creations that represent her love for nature. Sentimental expression in the poem "Our Casuarina Tree" by Toru Dutt is her love for the childhood memories that the tree makes her recollected.

Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, intended deep scars,
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live

— (Our Casuarina Tree by Toru Dutt — Poem Hunter).

Indian history and culture is represented with the help of the tree by Toru Dutt. Using natural resources for growth and development of society to great extent for personal gain leads people to suffer in a very pathetic way. As a result of violation of laws, Nature, like the Casuarina Tree seems to lament:

What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech

— (Our Casuarina Tree by Toru Dutt — Poem Hunter).

It is obvious that trees are very crucial for the existence of humans. Trees like Peepal and Neem are revered and worshiped, as emotions are associated with them. Toru Dutt had an intense affinity with nature from her childhood days. When she was living in the rural house at Baumaree and Rambagan in Calcutta her innate love of nature became more ardent. Her imagination got stimulated by Rambagan's beautiful surroundings that sparked her perception and lyrical tendencies. Her poems having descriptions of trees, gardens, rivers, brooks, hills, forests etc are very spontaneous. Like her 'Ballads' is full of nature

descriptions; 'Savitri' describes two forest scenes; Sindhu describes the scene of sunset; Trees Flowers in 'Buttoo' and hermitage scene in 'Sita' and others are 'The Lotus', 'Baugmaree' and 'Casuarina Tree' with remarkable descriptions with poetic sensibility presenting astute observation of nature

Nature in Keki N. Daruwalla's Poetry: Emotional and Intellectual Representation

Daruwalla's poetry features a significant amount of nature and landscapes as subjects. One remarkable aspect of his poetry is the way in which nature and human passion are united. Keki N. Daruwalla is a prolific poet who focuses on powerful locations with striking imagery. He is referred to as a landscape poet. In addition to showcasing the locations' natural beauty, Daruwalla's sense of landscape also highlights the harsh reality of the surroundings. Metaphors that the poet uses relate to nature, human corporeal and animals and fantasy. He gives his readers an emotional, intellectual, and moral translation of the sceneries in words. He asserts his obsession with landscapes by quoting the poet. "My poems are rooted in landscape, which anchors the poem. The landscape is not merely there set to the senses but to lead to an illumination, it should be the eye of the spiral, I try that poetry relates to the landscape, both on physical, and on the plane of the spirit" (Two Decades of Indian Poetry 21). "Mandwa" is a superb poem about the water and the environment. He depicts nature using a variety of pictures and symbols. The time of year in the seaside region was summertime, the heat was intense, and the scene looked like "an egg-yolk frying in the sky." Additionally, the shoreline was covered in fish scales, creating "The beach white with fish-scales." All of these elements are masterfully expressed by Daruwalla in his poem.

Mostly when I arrive at places it is winter. Here it isn't.

The sea pants, the islands smoulder,

The sun is an egg-yolk frying in the sky.

And so to this anointed strip o the beach white with fish-scales,

girdled by islands that seem to float like pieces of a broken carafe. (191)

The poem "Boat-Ride along the Ganga" explores the Ganges river's alternate existence. Ganga is a mother, a goddess, a source of life, and a river that leads to salvation for Hindus. Daruwalla, a Zoroastrian poet, has a different perspective and expresses the river's depressing reality. He discovers staleness, sickness, and death beside the riverbanks. He expresses his shame at seeing things in the river and its banks through the poem's lines as he rides a motorboat upstream with a boat rider at nightfall.

Slowly the ghat-amphitheatre unfolds

Like a diseased nocturnal flower in a dream That opens its petals only at dusk.

Palm-leaf parasols sprouting like freak-mushrooms Brood over platforms that are empty. (97)

In the line, "I listen avidly to his legend-talk/ striving to forget what I changed to see: / the sewer-mouth trained like a cannon / on the river's flank" (97). He conveys his disinterest in what he sees while rowing. His unease and disillusionment are evident in these sentences. It can be because of his ignorance, his religious upbringing, or his misinterpretation of Hindu rites and beliefs. According to Bruce King, he rarely seems at peace with Hindu culture's traditions, apathy, and fatalism (as quoted in R.A. Singh 82).

Sarojini Naidu: Innate Fervor in her Poems

Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of India having a keen sense of Nature's innate aestheticism inculcated a natural inclination toward romanticism and paradigm of the Renaissance in her conception of nature. Her best nature description is found in 'The sons of Springtime Spring is full of warmth of love, and is succulent, savory and enticing. She gets fascinated towards the majesty of trees, flowers and the whole vibrant Indian scenery....., which includes "crimson gulmohars," "champa boughs," "lotus buds," "cassia woods, and "boughs of tamarind." It also features natural forests, a variety of animals and birds, "water-lily pools," rivers, and hills. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" in her words. She enjoys nature and appears to be inspired by the sights and sounds of the lovely settings around her, just like Wordsworth did. She expresses all of this fully in her writings. She not only depicts but also recreates in her writings beautifully the characteristics of love in these natural settings, the beauty of life and environment, and the wonderful rhythm of movement and music of the natural world. The sights, sounds, colors, and smells of the magnificent and vibrant Nature captivate her. "She has a keen sense of observation and her fine sensibility responds more emotionally than intellectually to the sense impressions from nature" (Nair 99). "Village Song" is an escape from the stereotyped realities of life. She can sort of escape from the everyday grind of life by going outside. Her poetry on nature are romantic elaborations on a variety of natural themes. One such poetry is "Village Song," which offers a romanticized view of a life filled with serene surroundings and sensual displays of the magnificent natural world. In the poem, the young girl "finds peace and joys in the sanctuary of Nature" after becoming "disgusted by the false shows and boastful claims, the fever and fret of life" (Kumar 96). She tells her mother, seemingly enthralled with the magical realm of fairies and nature:

O mother mine! to the wild forest I am
going Whereupon the champa boughs, the
champa buds are blowing

To the koel-hunted river – isles where lotus lilies glisten
The voices of the fairy folk are calling me, O listen!
(Singh 49)

The allure of the woodland call outweighs all the dazzling extras of a materialistic existence for a girl youngster. Even more delightful than the real world are the realms of fairies in the forest and nature. She finds that the sounds of the natural world, specifically "the forest notes where forest streams are falling," are more delightful than bridle or cradle melodies. This poem makes us think of the escapism-focused poet W. B. Yeats and his poem "The Stolen Child," which envisions a realm where fairies are beckoning a human infant away. When she informs her mother:

"The Woods in Summer" another poem by Sarojini Naidu likewise has an escape theme. The character in the poem is not only "sick of strife and song and festivals and fame" and "tired of painted roofs and soft and silken floors," but she also yearns "to fly where cassia-woods are breaking into flame" and "for wind-blown canopies of crimson gulmohars." She expresses a strong wish to be rescued from her pain and from the "toil and weariness, the praise and prayers of men."

O let us fling all care away and
lie alone and dream 'Neath
tangled boughs of tamarind and
molsari and neem

And bind our brows with jasmine sprays to play on carren
flutes

To wake the slumbering serpent-kings among the banyan
roots. (Singh 53)

Over the entire poem, a variety of ecological characteristics of nature are vividly depicted, including trees (like cassia-woods, tamarind, molsari, neem, and banyan), flowers (like water lilies, jasmine, and scarlet gulmohars), animals (like golden panthers and serpent-kings), and birds (like koels) and of rivers and pools, like in the words that read, "And bathe in water-lily pools where golden panthers drink, and roam at fall of eventide along the river's brink" (53). The picturesque natural splendor of the twilight is captured in these sentences. This poem highlights the romantic and mystical sensations that the beauty of nature evokes in our souls. Although Naidu is not a nature mystic like Wordsworth, she did see nature as a haven from the worries of human life. Thus, in a way, Sarojini Naidu's poems honor Mother Earth by instilling in us a profound respect for India's ecological treasures. Her nature poetry evokes the moods of Keats, Wordsworth, W.B. Yeats, and

the Pre-Raphaelites with its patchwork of melodic sounds, vivid colors, and natural scents, or "vernal breezes." Her nature poems, like "The Village Song," "Summer Woods," "The Quest," and others, are characterized by two main ideas: one is her sensual admiration of the luxurious beauty of nature, and the other is her undeniable ability to portray various aspects of nature in an incredibly picturesque way by utilizing metaphors, similes, and symbols. Her poems are braided with a silken fabric of sensual nature-images, and because of the exquisite way in which she has woven different natural components together, "a network of exotic combinations of two or more sense impressions" (Nair 100) seem to materialize before our very eyes.

A.K. Ramanujan: His Empathy for Nature

A.K. Ramanujan's poems are profoundly influenced by this Indianness. His poetry reacts to nature's nuanced details. There is so much ecological insight in his poems. Ramanujan's Poems challenge the anthropocentric culture of the West since they are firmly anchored in Indian culture and tradition.

They recognize the impressions and impacts of nature and react to them delicately or subtly. The ecological sense found in Ramanujan's poems defies categorization. It displays a range of reactions to nature. The essence of his poems is nature. He understands the enigmatic relationship between the environment and humans. In poetry such as *Ecology*, we discover affinity with the realms of animals, plants, and minerals in things like a game of chess, a little sacrifice, snakes, scorpions, and the black hen, among others. Numerous poems of A.K. Ramanujan convey the idea of the unity of all creation. Indian mythology and folktales are the source of his metaphors. Hinduism views the world holistically. The sacred, humans, animals, plants, and germs are all positioned in connection to one another in Ramanujan's poetry. Poetry by Ramanujan uses a symbolic language that is full of imagery such as trees, mountains, birds, animals, and water. Ramanujan is also troubled by the destruction of the environment and animal abuse. He begs us to save the environment. He has empathy with the natural world.

Dilip Chitre: Ecological Essence in the poems

His poem "The Felling of the Banyan Tree" demonstrates his intense love of the natural world and his irrational fascination with ecology. In essence, Dilip Chitre is a creation of the modern era. He has seen environmental degradation, technical development, urbanization, scientific advancements, and their implications on humankind and the natural world.

The home of the narrator in "The felling of the Banyan Tree" is perched on a hill. His dad gives his tenants the order to leave their homes. They are all around the

narrator's home. One by one, the abandoned homes were demolished, leaving just the narrator's house and a large number of trees. There was a massive 200-year-old banyan tree that had a lengthy history connected to the house. However, the father chose to clear every tree. Interestingly, the process of destruction occurs right in the heart of natural phenomena. Second, Dilip Chitre used the word "house" rather than "home," which has a well-known meaning. Thirdly, the grandmother's statement demonstrates the extraordinary attitude of the "Old" generation. The Love of Nature has always been evoked by the grandmother. She used to remark that cutting down a tree is the worst crime since they are sacred. However, the father of the narrator has slaughtered them all. Every kind of tree, including neem, oudumber, and sheoga, was felled. However, the enormous banyan tree loomed like a problem, its roots deeper than his father's love for the property. At last, his father gave the order to cut down or remove the tree.

However, the poet's profound concern for nature is hidden under the theme's seeming simplicity. Not only were the tenants' homes demolished, but every tree that surrounded the poet's residences was chopped down one by one. The grandmother of the poet objected to this tree-cutting:

Trees are sacred my grandmother used to say

Felling them is a crime but he massacred them all (05-06)

A reading of the poet's poetry also provides insight into his religious worldview on his culture, environment, and ecology, since the poet's writing is fundamentally infused with his culture. Understanding the grandmother's cultural and religious background—that is, the Hindu concept of "sacred"—that is, sacred species, sacred grooves, and sacred landscapes—is necessary to comprehend her distaste for the felling of trees. These customs from religion and culture bind man to nature.

Nature is more powerful than humans as it has frequently demonstrated its power by using natural disasters like famine, drought, floods, earthquakes, etc. to control human resources. Human existence depends on nature and so life is inextricably linked to it, making it impossible for humans to escape its effect. Nature suffers irreversible harm or even irreparable as a result of our careless behavior. This is the way the ecosystem's chain of relationships functions, where everything is interconnected and consequently influences everything else. Therefore, the care for the environment and ecology that these poems express not only reflects our own cultural and personal attitudes toward the environment, but it also sends a message to the general public about the need of preserving the environment, ecology, and natural world.

CONCLUSION

Indian poetry offers a rich tapestry of perspectives on the relationship between humanity and nature. Early poets like Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu celebrate nature's nurturing and sacred aspects. A.K. Ramanujan and Dip Chitre portray nature as a companion and witness, fostering a sense of interconnectedness. The use of metaphors further amplifies the significance of nature, highlighting its cyclical nature and vulnerability. Notably, contemporary Indian English poetry exhibits a growing eco-consciousness, with Keki N. Daruwalla and Dip Chitre critiquing environmental degradation and advocating for sustainable practices. By examining these diverse perspectives, we gain a deeper understanding of the evolving relationship between humankind and the natural world in Indian poetry, and the potential of literature to inspire environmental awareness and action.

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