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## ECOCRITICISM: THE INTERACTION OF LITERATURE AND NATURE IN THE INTEREST OF ECOLOGICAL CONCERN

**\*SUSHMA, \*\* DR. SHEETAL NANDAL**

*\*Research Scholar, Department of English, Baba Mastnath University, Rohtak.*

*\*\*Department of English, Baba Mastnath University, Rohtak.*

### ABSTRACT

*Ecocriticism offers an opportunity to research how people interact with the environment. Literature inspires readers and audiences to recognize the value of natural resources for a peaceful existence. The field of literature seeks to raise awareness of the ecosystem's plight. A better connection between the human and non-human worlds can be developed by using literary works as weapons in the battle against the unjust aspects of everyday life. Literature always assists in raising awareness of both positive and negative aspects of humanity. The purpose of this study is to use literary works to spread the message of environmentalism. The paper attempts to demonstrate that English literature is the finest source for educating readers about environmental issues and issuing cautionary statements about human behavior that endangers the environment. It will provide assistance for balancing the environment at the appropriate time to make repairs, as well as offer direction for restoring ecological balance at the right time to set a limit to the human appetite for natural resources. In literature, plenty of works and phrases are employed to illustrate the relationship between the two capitals and to caution against going beyond the limit with results and suggestions.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Nature, Environment, Ecocriticism, Ecology, ecological system*

### INTRODUCTION:

Since the dawn of time, man and nature has coexisted. There has been an interaction between man and the natural world. Man is a social animal that his mother feeds and nourishes. Without nature, it is impossible to fathom human life. To put it another way, man is a creature of nature and is dependent upon it for all of his needs, including food, water, and air to breathe. As a result, it becomes crucial to be aware of the ecosystem. From the Anglo-Saxon era to the postmodern age, literary works have attempted to awaken society. The word

"Ecocriticism" in literature refers to the interaction between humans and the natural world. Ecocriticism is the study of how literature and the natural world interact. It demonstrates the relationship between the physical environment and literature as well as how the physical environment is depicted in literature. It is based on ecocriticism, a methodology that incorporates environmental studies like green studies, natural sciences, etc. It discusses how urbanization and industrialization have altered nature, causing damage to the physical makeup of the ecosystem and the extinction of several species. It talks about tampering with the environment, such as clearing forests and changing river channels.

It is also known as "Ecocriticism", Environmental Criticism, and "Green Studies" in English literature. One of the pioneers in the discipline, Cheryll Glotfelty, first used the term "ecocriticism" in her 1996 book "The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology" with these words: "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (wiki).

Association for the Study of Literature and Environment is another organization she co-founded and served as president of in order to share facts, ideas, and texts concerning the study of literature and the environment. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was established in 1992 at a special session of the Western Literature Association conference in Reno, Nevada. It aims to stimulate and advance scholarly research in the environmental humanities and arts. She also founded a peer-reviewed, worldwide journal of the association for the study of literature and environment, ISLE: an interdisciplinary study in literature and environment (ISLE), which was first published in 1993. William Rueckert used the phrase "eco criticism" for the first time in his 1978 text "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco Criticism." This article planted the seed for a brand-new field of study, bringing ecological ideas to the study of literature. (Literariness)

### **ECO-CRITICAL VIEWPOINT IN LITERATURE:**

It's not that the authors just began writing after the term "ecocriticism" was first used. Of course, the new craze encourages authors to start penning works from the viewpoint of the natural world. A significant amount of writing made it clear before the 1980s, demonstrating the signs of nature consciousness. *The Country and the City* (1973) by Raymond Williams, often referred to as green studies, was first introduced in British Romantic literature in the 1790s. The work shows complexity between city and country life. William emphasizes the importance of nature, the shifting of the seasons, rural life, and urban life. Instead of focusing on the environmental features of 18th-century literature, William aimed to show how the time coped with the concept of "nature and culture."

William Quotes: "I was born in a village, and I still live in a village. But where I was born was under the black mountains, on the Welsh border, where the meadows are bright green against the red earth of the ploughland, and the first trees, beyond the window, are oak and holly. Where I live now is in the flat country, on a headland of boulder clay, towards the edge of the dikes and sluices, the black earth of the Fens, under the high East Anglian skies." (William, 4)

Laurence Coupe's *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (2000) is a comprehensive selection of critical writings which focused the connection between literature, culture and nature. Coupe, an early adherent of the Zen school of Buddhism, presents his knowledge of nature in the general introduction part. Coupe

quotes: “Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw the mountain are not mountains, and waters are not waters. But now that I have got its very substance I am at rest. For it’s just that I see mountains once again as mountains and waters once again as waters.” (Coupe, 1)

In the nineteenth century, the Romantic poets revolted against the industrial revolution, political norms, and the aristocratic class. They express their thoughts and feelings while celebrating the beauty and mystery of nature. William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Keats, Byron, and Shelley also contributed to the natural. These poets raised their concerns against the capitalists, industrialists, and materialists to preserve the natural world. One of the prominent romantic period poets is William Wordsworth (1770–1850). He is renowned for his love of being in nature, where he discovers peace and serenity. He believes that God's presence may be perceived in the natural world. He writes poems such as "*Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways*" and "*The World is Too Much with Us*" that criticise adverse technology, mechanisms, and urbanisation. In the poem Nutting (1800)," the author expresses his state of lamentation about humans continued exploitation of nature without regard for its resources.

“I felt a sense of pain when I beheld  
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.  
Then, dearest Maiden, move alone these shades  
In gentleness of heart, with gentle hand  
Touch for there is a spirit in the woods.” (Wordsworth, 52) (Poetryfoundation)

Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) expresses the human mentality as being superior to other creatures. The poem conveys the important idea that people should appreciate all living things. All living things have value, and people should treat them with respect because God created all living things with their own significant purpose. Only the positive aspects of nature are depicted in Wordsworth's poems; the negative aspects are absent. However, the author of Coleridge's poetry has also highlighted the unfavorable aspects of the natural world in his writings. Coleridge Quotes:

“Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her skin was as white as leprosy,  
The Nightmare Life-in Death was she,” (Coleridge, 90)

According to Shelley, nature is a dynamic force that humans cannot tame. Shelley cautions against equating beauty with tranquilly since the situation might change quickly. The ability to speak with the human mind and serve as an inspiration source exists in nature. His poem "*To a Skylark*" (1820) illustrates the idea of the influence of nature on human moods. The poem "*Ozmandias*" illustrates the tension that exists between nature and art: while nature gives the artist raw materials, it also has the capacity to regain all of those materials by attempting to destroy the artist's creation.

## AMERICAN LITERATURE:

Emerson and Thoreau are regarded as naturalists in American literature. Emerson's most important book, *Nature* (1836), is divided into four sections: commodities, beauty, language, and discipline. It discusses the usefulness

of nature in human existence. Emerson asserts that man uses nature to satisfy his fundamental needs, such as his need for joy and communication, and to teach him the value of self-discipline. Emerson thinks that the only way for a person to interact with the natural world is in isolation. He advises stepping away from society.

**Emerson quotes:** “To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society” (p.5) Emerson explores the role of nature in providing for humankind through its never-ending acts of divine charity. Nature displays the life cycle, complete with action and reaction. To the advantage of man, all components contribute to one another. The wind scatters seeds, the sun dries the sea, the rain fosters the plant, and the plant sustains the animal. He quotes in second chapter “Commodity”: “The endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man.” (p.11)

The two most important books on nature and ecology are Emerson's "Nature" (1836) and Thoreau's "Walden" (1854). The founder of ecocriticism is often regarded as Henry David Thoreau. Both authors have an intense faith in the ancient Indian philosophical ideas of reality (Satya) and appearance (Maya). Thoreau is a staunch advocate of austerity and independence.

The Great Lakes area is the setting for the nonfiction novel "Summer on the Lakes in 1843" by Margaret Fuller, as Thoreau presents nature in his travelogue "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" (1849). Fuller condemns the unfair treatment of aboriginal Americans. She makes similar observations to Thoreau on the destruction of natural resources and the challenges faced by the capitalistic world. Her journey from 1837 to 1844, when there was a serious economic crisis, raised concerns about historically progressive capitalism. Fuller and many others believed that the dominant commercial attitude has seriously altered the world. However, the transcendentalist Emerson, Thoreau and Margaret Fuller noticed that the materialistic, rationalist, and instrumentalist had disconnected from the natural laws. They did what was required of them and attempted to re-connect people with nature.

## INDIAN WRITINGS:

Indian writings in English also showed a greater concern towards nature and natural capital. In India, many authors continued to possess a strong connection to and appreciation for the natural world. In order to convey their ideas on the social environment, authors like R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, and others have employed natural landscape. R.K. Narayan is a well-known Indian author who writes in English. He is likened to William Faulkner, who similarly invented a fictional town to depict the reality of everyday life, for using the fictional location as "Malgudi" in his works. *Malgudi Days* (1942), *Financial Expert* (1952), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1961), *The English Teacher* (1945), and *The Guide* (1958), among others, are some of his best-known works. Self-destruction is a subject in his work *The Man Eater of Malgudi* based on the theme of self destruction. R. K. Narayan Quotes:

“Every demon carries within him unknown to himself, as a tiny seed of self-destruction and goes up in thin air the most unexpected moment”. (205)

The *Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh explores the contradictions between the natural and human worlds. The anthropocentric mindset of humanity is the theme of the book. The tale depicts how human interference in the

Sundarbans impacts life there and how wild animals harm indigenous inhabitants.

## CONCLUSION:

Literature has the power to shake humanity from its protracted sleep. The blue planet must be saved immediately if it is to live peacefully. Humans cannot exist without nature, so protecting the natural environment is one of the most important things today. By bringing up ecological concerns in their writing, authors are upholding their obligation, and making alert about the various ecological challenges to the world. Every person has a responsibility to preserve the natural resources so that future generations can benefit and coexist happily on the planet. Not that the authors just started writing after the literary term "ecocriticism" was coined. There is no doubt that the new trends inspire writers to begin writing from the perspective of the human world. A lot of writings demonstrate how literary works are deeply rooted in the presentation of natural consciousness. A variety of literary works that concern several escalating problems like climate change and the imminent loss of many species due to technology, urbanization, and industrialization. Literature addresses problems including population growth, pollution, deforestation, and environmental degradation. It wouldn't be incorrect to state that literature is the finest arena for altering people's mindsets and lifestyles.

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