THE ECO-CRITICISM: A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF LITERARY STUDY

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Nature has been the most important term and inspirational force in the realm of literature from the primitive age till the modern times. This journey of projecting nature has been a wonderful and pleasure giving enterprise to the writing fraternity. Thus, nature’s representation making its presence felt today in the garb of new terminology called ‘eco-criticism’. Eco-criticism is relatively a newly developed literary theory as well as criticism. It is understood by the elites of the field as one of the highlighting disciplines that have emerged on the scene of the field of criticism in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the recognition and acknowledgement has not come to its way so easily. There has been wide dispute initially on the exact nature of the theory of eco-criticism among critics. They have been a bit doubtful about its potential at the blooming stage as they clung rather a negative feeling that nothing concrete could come out of it.

However, the time suddenly turned positive to spin the job of interpretation of eco-criticism in the hands of the trio of Robert Kerridge, Glotfelty, and Fromn for the concrete and logical conclusion of the theory. It is courtesy their wholesale contributions that make eco-criticism worth noting critical theory in the present day literary world. It is among those select few in new literature, which has assured long lasting value in the years to come. It has much more closeness with the present day circumstance in respect of lives of animals, humans and nature and round the corner. It is specially carries importance in the presence of the newly emerged threats of more dangerous and destructing types like of global warming, nuclear war, industrialisation, urbanisation, etc.

Eco-criticism was a term coined in the late 1970s by a combination ‘criticism’ with ‘eco’, a shortened form of ‘ecology’- the science that investigates the interrelations of all forms of plant and animal life with each other and with
their physical habitats. “Eco-criticism” (or by alternative names, environmental criticism and green studies) designates the critical writings that explore the relations between literature and biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on the environment by human activities. In the twentieth century, the two especially influential books that had played a significant role in ecological warnings were Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac*, drawing attention to the ominous degradation of the environment, and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* devoted to the devastation inflicted by newly developed chemical pesticides on wildlife, both on land and in water. Donald Worster’s *Nature’s Ecology* (1977) became a textbook for the study of ecological thought down the ages. The historian Arnold Toynbee recorded the effects of human civilisation on land and nature in his monumental *Mankind and Mother Earth* (1976). Environmental issues and landscape use were also the concern of the Annales School of historians that has also been a novel one. Eco-criticism emerged in the U.S.A. in the late 1980s and in the U.K. in early 1990s.

In America, an early instance of nature writing was William Bertram’s *Travels Through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida* (1791); leading one among its successors was a classic of this genre, Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854). By the mid-nineteenth century Thoreau and other writers in America and England were already drawing attention to the threats to the environment by urbanisation and industrialisation. Later in the century, increasing alarm at the rapidity and extent of the human exploitation of nature led to what came to be called ‘the environmental movement’ to preserve what remained of the American wilderness; the most noted advocates were the American writers John Burroughs and John Muir. There is surprising fact that the theory of eco-criticism was in existence in Tamil literature well before its coming in American literature. It was termed by Tamil writers as ‘tinai’, which could be known as eco-criticism in earlier days. This concept of ‘tinai’ has closeness with the Greek term ‘okios’ which means ‘household’. As ‘okiocriticism’ or ‘oikopoetics’ is called as the kind of eco-criticism. Thus, ‘oikos’ is synonymous to the modern day theory of eco-criticism. Eco-criticism is the result of the new consciousness: that very soon, there will be nothing beautiful (or safe) in nature to discourse about, unless we are very careful. By the 1990s it had become a recognised and rapidly growing field of literary study with its own organisation (ASLE: Association for the Study of Literature and Environment), and soon a journal, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* (ISLE) was launched in 1993. For, in the latter part of the twentieth century there was a widespread realisation that earth was in an environmental crisis, brought on by the industrial and chemical pollution of the
“biosphere” (the thin layer of earth, water, and air essential to life), the depletion of forests and of natural resources, the relentless extinction of plant and animal species. Thus started a worldwide series of numerous articles in literary and critical periodicals, and a series of conferences whose concern with the literature of the environment encompassed all continents.

There are some other definitions given here to understand the exact scope and nature of eco-criticism through the lens of eco-critics. In the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms eco-criticism has been defined as:

A new subfield of literary and cultural enquiry that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, devoted to the investigation of relations between literature and the natural world and to the rediscovery and reinterpretation of ‘nature writings’ ………. Ecocriticism is not a method of analysis or interpretation but a redefined area of research and rediscovery.\(^7\)

Robert Kerridge spells out eco-criticism in following words:
Ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis.\(^8\)

Glotfelty and Fromm ink out it as:
If the earth is a whole, land is only a part of it. But these two terms are at times used interchangeably. Eco-criticism “has one foot in literature and the other on land”.\(^9\)

While Barry Lopez’s defines it as:
The real topic of nature writing, I think, is not nature but the evolving structure of communities from which nature has been removed, often as a consequence of modern economic development. It is writing concerned, further, with the biological and spiritual fate of those communities. It also assumes that the fate of humanity and nature are inseparable. Nature writing in the United States merges here, I believe, with other sorts of post-colonial writing, particularly in Commonwealth countries.\(^10\)

Like any critical lens, eco-criticism asks its practitioners to foreground a given set of concerns and to appraise the text at hand in light of those concerns. Barry Lopez observes as:

The favourite adjective of (the environmental) movement now seems to be “planetary”. This word is used, properly enough, to refer to the interdependence of places, and to the recognition, which is desirable and growing, that no place on the earth can be completely healthy until all places are. But the word “planetary” also refers to an abstract anxiety or an abstract passion that is desperate and useful exactly to the extent that it is abstract. How, after all, can anybody- any particular body-do anything to heal a planet? The suggestion that anybody could do so is preposterous...\(^11\)
All these definitions are perfect and right in their own limitations. None of these can convey the complete and perfect meaning of the theory of eco-criticism. However, every one of them is clear enough in its own place to make worth contribution towards the ultimate comprehension of the theory. On the basis of these definitions one gathers a specific sense and a sum value that it is the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.

The theory of eco-criticism is broad, comprehensive and apt enough to lend its application to all sorts of nature writings of all ages and times. It is not a method of analysis or interpretation but a redefined area of research and rediscovery. Most of the work in the theory’s jurisdiction has been pursued in the USA, where a special emphasis has been given to Native American folklore and literature; but much eco-critical work has also been devoted to the English Romantic tradition notably by the British literary historian Jonathan Bate in his books *Romantic Ecology* and *The Song of the Earth*.

Nature may appear in one or more of its forms along with one or more other elements. These elements may incorporate social factors, religious principles or dogmas, moral lessons, economic facts, psychological discoveries, scientific details, human relationships and a host of other things from the gamut of life. Nature, in such a case, will have varying functions in a work of art. It may serve as background scenery, providing a sort of framework for a picture. It may be employed to enhance the effect of the work. It may become the very centre of the work popping up here and there in the form of flimsy, fragile details. Or, nature images may be conjured up to lend force and intensity to other elements. Indeed, the variety of these functions has, theoretically, infinite possibilities.

So, general tendency of eco-critics to ask questions needs to be understood to know the exact nature and scope of eco-criticism. The eco-critics normally undertake following procedures and requisites or raise the given below queries before advancing to taking up any text from an eco-critical angle:

The first and foremost, they re-read major literary works concerning any literary genre from an eco-central perspective, with particular attention being on the representation of the natural world.

Secondly, they try to understand the role of the physical-geographical setting in structure of the work, as they believe that human culture is related to the physical world.

Thirdly, they extend the range of literary and critical practice by placing a new emphasis on relevant ‘factual’ writing especially reflective topographical material such as essays, travel writings, memoirs, and regional literatures.
Fourthly, they give special canonical emphasis to writers, who foreground nature as a major part of their subject matter, such as the American transcendentalists, the British Romantics, etc.

Fifthly, they need to study, understand and crack the modern day riddles like-how does science functioning in the form of its scores of arms like engineering, technologies, etc. affect land? Thus, adverse effects of science on land have to be necessarily studied by the eco-critics.

Sixthly, the eco-critics must attempt to discover, the role that has been played by the discipline of literature in reflecting the socio-ecology of the human species. Lastly, they even conduct literary studies with an environmental slant that can help to understand the modes through which culture has destroyed nature.

These are the prominent questions that are brooded on and deliberated upon by the eco-critics before taking up a study of any text. At the time of taking detail understanding of the birth, use and features of eco-criticism, it is worthwhile and appropriate to take a cursory view of the treatment given to nature in English literature by some dominant nature loving writers over the centuries.

It is really from William Wordsworth the practice of loving and adorning nature in more specialised manner came in limelight. It is very prominently observed that the Renaissance view of nature was largely influential on the minds of William Shakespeare, John Milton, John Donne and many other writers of the age. The Renaissance thinkers like Copernicus (1473-1543), Bruno (1548-1600), Telesio (1508-1588), Francis Bacon (1561-1600), Kapler (1571-1630) and Galileo (1564-1642) had been the architects of a very specific view on nature during the period. They admitted that there were two elements present in the external world- motion and orderliness; they however, rejected the Greek view that nature was alive and rational. William Shakespeare’s plays produced the impression that man’s battle is with the forces of nature. Shakespeare showed external sort of strife of man against the almighty nature as seen in the famous storm scene from his world famous tragedy *King Lear*. Following Shakespeare’s suit is John Milton, another literary giant who is a nature’s lover of the first grade. He is one of the first of modern men who showed the conflict of old and new values - the old system of astronomy and new findings of science in *Paradise Lost*.

Yet another notable delineator from the Renaissance was John Donne, the most thoughtful and imaginative of the poets during the period. His poetry revealed with perfection, the clash between the older physics and metaphysics on the one hand and the new science of Copernicus and Galileo and Bacon on the other.
In the eighteenth century almost a new sort face was imparted to nature. As it was an age of John Dryden and Alexander Pope, it was also an age of Newton. It was only in the theory of Newton and writings of Dryden and Pope, nature could be seen with novelty. It was restricted to the natural scenes that owed welcome signs of man’s occupation. The preference of Dryden and Pope had ever remained to show the so-called cultivated landscapes with smoke rising from cottage chimneys and similar things. As these writers were the inhabitant of the city, there were no fresh nature-based topics and everything was decorative rather than reflecting any seriousness towards nature in their writing. So, one could conclude that the eighteenth century writers had sort of mechanical love for nature dryly displayed through prosaic words only.

In the nineteenth century under the influence of Rousseau’s preaching of ‘back to nature’ things changed drastically. The Romantics mentioned the wild exuberance of natural objects- rocks, stones, seas, rivers, trees, plains and mountains in intimately loving manner. These wind-mills of projection of natural elements starting from William Blake and Thomas Gray moved to their fastest pace limits through the writings of William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Lord Byron, P. B. Shelley and John Keats. All of them had been very religious in their delineation of nature. William Wordsworth stood tall for his devout hermit sort of worshiping of nature. He was a pantheist. He found nature as a means ensuring man’s unity with his Creator. William Blake was the poet who looked at nature through the wonderstruck eyes and innocence-filled heart of a child. His volume *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience* exemplifies at best his philosophy of nature. Blake’s approach towards nature can easily be identified with the image of Lamb.

Lord Byron had a ready comforter in the form of nature for the hurt and hammered among the humans. To him, it was society that drove man to nature. His pantheism was different from that of his contemporaries. He viewed the world of nature as a powerhouse of mysterious powers whereas P. B. Shelley loved nature for energy, vitality, vivacity, strength, positive inspiration, etc. To Shelley, nature was the perennial spirit ever ready to sympathise with and console a weary heart. His poem *Ode to the West Wind* is nothing but an attempt to accept the strength in nature to egg on the individual for action. In this constellation of Romantics, John Keats had his own unique vision of looking at nature. He didn’t drive himself to nature for energy or shelter’s sake, as done by his predecessors P. B. Shelley and William Wordsworth. He adorned nature for its beauty as reverberated in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,’- that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

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Keats valued the diversity of nature as he loved the declining, dipping and deceiving energy of his tuberculosis-infected body. Among Romantics, two pioneer poets William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge were very important from the point of view of fostering a unique bond of love, care, affection, and devotion for nature. He loved nature obsessively, therefore, he warned against idiotic neglecting tendency of human towards nature, as sounded in his sonnet *The World is Too Much with Us*:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Litt'e we see in the Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!²

As regards S. T. Coleridge nearly the same Wordsworthian concern for nature could be seen in his poetry. But, in this apparent unity he maintained a unique diversity to rule his distinct domain also. He took more fanciful flight in the world unknown like Xandu, where the Alph, the sacred river, ran and drew pleasure from there. His unique contribution, a concrete replica signifying philosophy of nature is his irresistible love for nature as seen in *Ancient Mariner* where he took voyage to the wild seas away from the real world of men.

Romantics gave a luxuriant display of natural objects. They adorned, devoted, loved, followed and accepted nature religiously. They had enjoyed various bonds, ties, and relationships with nature- it being their guide, friend, philosopher, generator, provider and many more.

The Victorian Age was such a period in the history of English literature where all earlier Romantics’ concepts of nature especially of Wordsworth were being imitated on the one hand and new scientific spirit was being adopted on the other. It was the age where individualism was more dominant. Man was stronger enough now to exploit nature with advancement of science. But, nature as usual remained out of man’s control and it assumed an independent identity of its own. The interest of the scientists and philosophers was directed towards changes occurred in nature. It was *Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin that brought paradigm shift in science during the period. So, almost all the writers of the age tried to show open strife between man and nature- the prominent among them being Lord Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, Thomas Hardy and G. M. Hopkins.

Lord Tennyson didn’t love nature as a Living Being as Wordsworth did. He invariably pushes nature in background while reflecting on human emotions, as seen in *The Lotos Eaters* which shows all the companions of Ulysses reading their own feelings in their surroundings of drowsy atmosphere of the island. Tennyson loved flowers, seas, trees, rivers, etc. Matthew Arnold is the first who
brought a wiser term we call law for ways of nature in English literature. However, there was difference of opinion on the topic of nature between Wordsworth and Arnold. The former enjoyed nature but for the latter the secret of nature was not joy but peace. It is quite clearly seen in his *Dover Beach*:

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies far
Upon the Straits- on the French coast, the light
Gleams, and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  

Though Arnold is seen invariably shifting and shuffling his attitude towards nature, at the end of the day he considers nature to be immortal to him. Robert Browning was often found to be influenced by the nature poetry of the Romantics. Generally, his landscapes were real and sometimes they were appropriately used as background for thought and emotion, as the place for Grammarian’s funeral was decided in the poem of the same title *A Grammarian’s Funeral*:

Here- here’s his place, where meteors shoot cloud form
Lightings are loosened.
Stars come and go!  

Browning has sympathetically considered the intimate relationship between nature and man, but, his was little in common with Wordsworthian philosophy of nature. He also could describe nature with some of the sensuous richness of John Keats.

Thomas Hardy is another noteworthy writer of the Victorian Age who depicted nature in his works. As a novelist he wrote on Wessex province and as a poet he turned the remaining spokes of the wheel of nature poetry to bring it to the full circle (which was set in motion with Wordsworth). The other important writer of the age after Thomas Hardy was G. M. Hopkins for him nature was the representative of a higher reality. However, he didn’t see God in nature like Wordsworth. Rather, he regarded the entire scheme of nature as multi-levelled reflections of God’s benevolence and beauty. It can be observed in such poems as *Pied Beauty*, *Spring*, *God’s Grandeur*, etc. Thus, he took nature as a symbol of the beauty of God’s plan and the world of nature to him was created in order to serve God. This is how he differs from the general Victorian attitude towards nature.

Among the Georgians some were worth noting- the first among them being Walter de la Mare who wrote nature poetry with special interest in childhood. The nature related subjects handled by them include - birds, flowers, dust, hills, etc. Another noteworthy nature poet of the time was W. H. Davies. He...
was the one who took special interest in clouds, stars, sheep, Claves, apples, leaves, lakes, pools, etc. He took keen interest in small and simple things of nature to derive joy. Nevertheless, the most interesting and substantially important nature poet among them had been Edward Thomas. He had peculiar modern sensibility in his approach to rural themes. He didn’t mention nature as a mere formality or objectivity but wedded it with his sincere mood and emotions. So, these Georgians were real bridge between the Victorian and the Modern poets so far as nature writing was concerned.

However, in the Modern Age, nature had been treated in a rather passive manner. It was not in the old forms, features and fashions of the Romantics or the Victorians hence, was not the alternative to the cruel industrial culture. It was, rather, the lurid spectacle of life force in the separate individual supposed to be under the cover of consciousness, from the all pervasive impact of the mechanical forces. Thus, in the Modern Age generally love for nature was not for nature’s sake.

It was in the writing of T. S. Eliot that the true modern sensibility manifested itself both in form and content. He could invest nature in his writing with freshness and life due to his hard earned unified sensibility. He followed the primitive principle of loving the basic elements of nature. Eliot and his Modern Age counterparts had the basic knowledge of myth and fertilising rituals from - Miss Jessie L. Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* and Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* respectively. His two noteworthy works bearing the impressions of Weston and Frazer’s books were *The Waste Land* and *The Four Quartets*. W. H. Auden was another important modern writer worth to be considered for his unique view on nature. He treated nature merely as a background to human activity. He used landscapes symbolically. Both his urban or natural landscapes were usually stark and bare. He especially liked mountainous regions. He wrote many of his poems like *In Praise of Limestone*, *The Enchafed*, *Look Stranger* with nature in background. To some extent, W. B. Yeats also falls in this category of nature writing dominated by T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden. Yeats’ *The Second Coming*, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, *The Wild Swans at Coole*, etc. stand testimony to his typical treatment to nature. He had used natural symbols more pertinently and profusely to convey his meaning and message.

To conclude, the modern writers didn’t return to nature in direct manner like William Wordsworth. They met nature through books. It happened due to the growing impact of modern, scientific and industrial civilisation.

After having given a flying glance at nature’s delineations in English literature in general a passing glance at the Indian writers’ affairs with nature is also required. The thrust inspired with a missionary idea to giving the loosing
importance back to nature or reviving nature’s past sanctity has been given in the works of Rich Grove et al’s massive *Nature and the Orient* (1998), David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha’s *Nature, Culture, Imperialism* (1995). These have been significant works in the environmental history of India and Southeast Asia. Ramachandra Guha is of course the most important environmental historian writing from India today. His *This Fissured Land* (with Madhav Gadgil, 1992), *The Unquiet Woods* (1989) and *Environmentalism: A Global History* (2000) are seminal texts in the area. Third World concerns with development and environmental problems peculiar to their conditions were studied by Vandana Shiva (especially in *Staying Alive*, 1988), and Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier (*Varieties of Environmentalism*, 1998).

However, the glory of nature writing in Indian English began with Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. He adorned and adopted nature as his primary love on the foot map of Rousseau and William Wordsworth. He was a poet of river, seasons, flowers, bees, etc. and did love both the softer-side as well as the harsher one. He borrowed almost majority of his imaginations, creations and inspirations from nature. His love for nature could be seen in his works like *Gitanjali*, *The Post Office*, and many short stories like *Subha*. Another substantial Indian writer treading in nature objects was Sarojini Naidu. Her poetry was frankly and unabashedly the poetry of nature. Her poetry is indicative of her love for flowers like lotus, gulmohar, besides her love for animals, birds, music, peace, seasons especially spring, etc. In almost all her poems nature discerns both either directly or indirectly. However, *The Bird of Time*, *The Broken Wing*, *The Features of the Dawn*, etc. are the ideal examples of her love poetry.

Nature finds its reflection in many other Indian writers’ creations, the prominent among them being Jayanta Mahapatra. His infatuation with rain rains in- *Rain Sense*, *A Rain*, *A Rain of Rites*, *Four Rain Poems*, etc. and liking for water flows through- *Games of the Sea*, *Song of the River*, *On the Bank of the Ganges*, etc. K. N. Daruwalla no doubt wrote some fine poems based on nature such as- *Death of a Bird*, *Crossing of Rivers*, *River-Silt*, etc. Besides these Indian writers in English, we see nature getting manifested in the works of many other literatures of regional, mainstream and classical languages of India, the prominent among them being- *Meghadutam* (Sanskrit) of one and only Kalidas. Arundhati Roy has true love for nature as reflected in her maiden work *The God of Small Things*. She is an artist-cum-activist. Other two India writers-cum-activists are Mahashweta Devi from West Bengal and Sara Joseph from Kerala. Both these daring dynamos delve into the eco-concerning issues with a devil-may-care attitude in their works of art and take active participation in eco-centric activities.
This glancing survey clearly shows us that while picturing nature in their creations the leading creative writers of English literature and those belonging to Indo-Anglian literature and several Indian vernacular writers were not that conscious about enhancing their readers’ sensibility and awareness towards nature. The majority of them while portraying nature in their creations weren’t very kin in using their natural stuff in direct manner towards enlightening their readers to be sensitive in their social and political actions and activities. Here in we find the major line separating the nature lovers and the nature lovers with serious intensions and inclinations towards achieving social and political justice, the genuine well-being of the humanity at large and finally its survival and substances. The latter types of writers come in closer proximity of the writers with the sentiments of higher magnitude spent expressively to demonstrate their exclusive, extraordinary and obsessive affection for eco-system and human race. Thus, the supra-sensitive sentiments of some writers for ecology find their concerns for the environment outstandingly different from the rest lot of nature lovers.

Eco-critics do not share a single theoretical perspective or procedure; instead, their engagements with environmental literature manifest a wide range of traditional, post-structural, and postcolonial points of view and modes of analysis. Despite the fact that most pieces of literature function both as mirrors and as models, eco-critical treatment of literature tend to adopt one or the other conception. One shall take them up consecutively and review the kinds of eco-criticism work being done in each camp. Critics who regard literature as a mirror of society, reflective of its values, generally scrutinise literature with a critical eye, searching for clues for where we have gone wrong.

There are various versions of environmentalism - deep ecology and eco-feminism being the two important developments among them. These new ideas question the notion of “development” and “modernity”, and argue that all Western notions in science, philosophy, and politics are “anthropocentric” (human-centred) and “andro-centric” (Man/male-centred). Technology, medical science with its animal testing, the cosmetic and fashion industry all come in for scrutiny from environmentalists under their eco-feministic arm. Deep ecology, for instance, stresses on a “bio-centric” view as seen in the name of the environmentalist group, ‘Earth First!’

A conspicuous feature in eco-criticism is the analysis of the differences in attitude that are attributed to a writer’s - race, ethnicity, social class, and gender. The writings of Annette Kolodny gave impetus to what has come to be called eco-feminism- the analysis of the role attributed to women in fantasies of the natural environment in the neglected nature writings by female authors. Eco-criticism and
eco-feminism promise to be two of the most radical and ethical of critical theories yet. Alongside Black Theory, feminism and multiculturalism, eco-criticism seeks to re-orient cultural and literary theory to address the immediate concern of contemporary life called environmental pollution.

There is however, another term, bioregionalism, which is more specific and can be used in place of eco-literature. Bioregional literature or bioregional criticism sounds to be a better term than regional literature and literature of place as it tends to incline more towards ecological literature and environmental awareness. However, bioregionalism does not have the vastness and philosophical, spiritual and emotional dimensions of eco-literature or environmental literature. It is very similar to environmental literature but in no way congruent with it. And yet as an eco-literary genre both the literature of place and bioregionalism have immense and rich possibilities.

Nature dominated primitive literature. All primitive art, while it fed on and grew in nature, was an organisation of the collective emotion experienced in such common tasks of the tribe as hunting or fishing or fruit-gathering. The differentiation of society, resulting from differentiation of functions performed for existence and survival, give rise to a different pattern of relationship between man and nature. Moreover, with these changes the treatment of nature in works undergoes a change. As society develops, the relationship between man and nature undergoes a change. It is for this reason that one has to understand the manner of the change in man-nature relationship.

Now, man like other animals, is a product of nature, a part of a great, endless whole. He can never hope to escape from nature, though he may separate himself in the form of society, with its so-called ‘laws’. Even when man appears ‘to control’ nature, he is, in fact, making use of the laws of nature for his own ends. It is obvious then that nature should dominate the whole development of society.

Prominent in eco-criticism is a critique of binaries such as man and nature or culture and nature, viewed as mutually exclusive oppositions. It is pointed out, instead, that these entities are interconnected, and mutually constitutive. Our identities, or sense of self, for example, are informed by the particular place in which we live and in which we feel that we belong and are at home. On the other side, human experience of the natural environment is never a replication of the thing itself, but always mediated by the culture of a particular time and place; and its representation in a work of literature is inescapably shaped by human feelings and the human imagination.

Thus, the detail study conducted till now brings a very substantial point out of it. It is very true that representation of the natural environment in literature
is really as ancient as the Garden of Eden in the Hebrew Bible. It is also as old as
the pastoral form inaugurated by the Greek Theocritus in the third century B.C.
The same is later imitated by the Roman poet Virgil, who depicted the simple,
peaceful, harmonious rural life in contrast of complex and urban society. The
nostalgic feeling of depicting of nature in the poetry is very much evident in the
poetry of James Thomson. He depicted unspoiled nature in the poetry so as to
remember the glorious beauty of nature. This same trend was largely initiated in
England by Gilbert White’s highly popular *Nature’s History and Antiquities of
Selborne* (1789): his close observation of wild life and nature in England.

The present development emerged in the form of the environment or eco-
friendly stream known as eco-criticism is surely one of them and hence, deserves
to be delved into in a detailed manner.

Earlier theories in literary and cultural studies focussed on the issues of
class, race, gender, and region rather they made them the very criteria and
subjects of their critical analysis. Eco-criticism has a potential to take its place
alongside, especially, such theories as feminism, post-colonialism, and cultural
studies. The second important arena for eco-criticism is activism or political
culture. The third is aesthetics. The fourth is popular culture and the fifth one
being spiritual culture.

The key problem encountering eco-writers and researchers of eco-
literature is to explore the daunting questions like: What has happened to the
civilisation of mankind? What wrong has man done that has brought about such
serious ecological crises threatening earth and all living creatures? What should
we do, in order to ease and avert eco-crisis? What changes should be brought
about for the sustainable existence of the ecosystem and all living creatures
including human beings?

The lover of creative world is blessed with the razor-sharp hyper-sensitive
heart of a poet and supra-conscious oriented intellect of a prose writer. While his
lust for delight keeps him glued to the superfine-coat of pleasure giving creative
faculty of the creative artist, his irresistible inner urge for wisdom takes him to the
dark recesses ruled by rampaging decline and ruination that melt him along with
the artist in him into the manner meant to making the misguided humanity at large
or maniac men mend their problematic ways. As in case of the present crisis of
mounting environmental problem, the sensitive readers cannot help themselves
but get sided towards those concerned to contribute to the revival and
recuperation of environmental health in our capacity as vigilant humans and
sensitive intellectuals. Collectively, the answers to this dilemma constitute the
greening of literary studies and the growth of eco-criticism. Social ecology
examines such categories like culture, political and social structure, and economy
in their relation between humans and their environment. A closer look at the nature of these disciplines shows that these are the attempts to modify the existing disciplines like sociology and other human sciences with an admixture of natural categories. Though traditional ecology does engage the humans and nature, humans do not occupy its centre stage. The new disciplines seek to keep humans in the centre and then see how they stand in relation to nature.

Earlier writers’ nature writing had largely been cathartic, spontaneous, imitative, responsive, reflective, meditative, reactionary, remedial, recuperative and recreational. Many of them turned to it or undertook it with a view to enjoying themselves or with an added objective of making their followers also enjoy it. Thus, nature was for them an aesthetic asset rather than any outward demonstrational object. Their love for nature had just been joy-centric and pleasure giving. They neither wanted to inform nor instruct their readers about nature; they wanted their readers to enjoy the brighter side of it. There were no political and social agendas to sensitize their readers to launch environmental campaigns. This stance of the writers over the years is relatively very easy to understand and empathize with as the condition of the eco-system had never been that grave and critical. But, this observation had a recess which points out that there are many such environment loving features in their writings that make one feel the integral unity between here mentioned English and Indian writers of the past and the eco-critics of the present generation. It is very easy to find and know that love for nature is the base for both the writings- of the past and that of the present lot by the eco-critics. Nature depicted in direct or indirect manner in either of the ways their creations serve nature. So, it is a clear proof of the continuation of eco-critical writings since the time immemorial. Therefore, in one form or the other, nature has appeared in the earlier English and Indian writers surveyed here. The intensity of their obsession with nature might vary but their leaning and inclining towards nature is the common link binding them in the bond of eco-friendliness. Thus, it becomes clear that eco-criticism is a theoretical garb systematically stitched out of the clothing called nature (of the olden days) or environment (of the eco-critical days) with substantial additions and alterations of points of views (styles) and approaches (fashions and trends). So, the relationship with nature has been the common minimum programme of the nature loving writers of the respective ages, with the other peripheral items of the programmes having some relative differences.

There are divergent opinions on the issue of providing solution for ecological crisis. One group of eco-critics is of the opinion that the present ecological crisis can be sorted out by the adaptation of the principle rejecting the human tendency that considers itself superior to nature and its creatures. So, it is
adoption of eco-centric religion that can provide solution to the crisis. Another group of eco-critics is of the opinion that nature is meant for enjoyment of humans and while taking pleasure sufficient care must be taken to restore or re-establish the demolished or used natural resources. It is wise to awake the humans from self-centric tendency to make them seriously conscious that if nature is not there, the human life is also not possible. The two different opinions of groups however, are unanimous on one point that merely acquiring and propagating social, political, economic and scientific knowledge can’t solve the ecological disaster. The thing that is direly needed is the application of sincere devotion and pious feeling for nature.

There is a difference between the scientist and eco-centric. The scientist deals with ‘problems in ecology’ while eco-centric with ‘ecological problems’. It means the problems occurring in the ecosystem are understood and analysed by the scientist but the eco-centric concentrates on the problems caused by the ecological changes or those caused by the changes in ecosystem or the ecological changes that hamper the smooth flow of the other activities of nature and animals. The scientist thinks on the causes behind changes in the environment but eco-critic thinks about changes in the environment causing troubles to lives of humans and animals. To say in a very precise way, the scientist wants to know reasons behind pollution and the eco-centric wants to know the effect of pollution on lives of plants, animals, humans, etc. So, eco-criticism in practice is more helpful to the environmental cause rather than a mere static scientific observations and solutions.

Today, eco-criticism is a fast growing term in the literary world. It is taught worldwide both as a full paper and also as a part of some paper like Literary Theory or Literary Criticism in some educational institutions and University Departments for undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

The basic purpose behind the design of this paper has been to digging at the roots of the theory of eco-criticism, its origin and applicability in the world of literature. Many eco-critics recommend, and themselves exemplify the extension of “green reading” (that is, the analysis of the implications of a text for environmental concerns) to all literary genres, including prose, fiction and poetry, and also to the writings in natural and social sciences. The theory has wide spectrum to redefine the earlier writings of literature in the new perspective of eco-criticism. Thus, the eco-criticism is a new perspective of literary study.
REFERENCES:

2. Ibid. p. 40.
3. Ibid. p. 115.
4. Ibid. p. 111.
11. Ibid. p. 165-166.