

## **CHAPTER - I**

### **An Introduction to the World of Ecocriticism**

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Literature, since all epochs, by all and sundry has been hailed as a branch of study which is a perfect reflection of the society which presents it in all its hues and shades. Whatever happens in the society gets automatically mirrored by the men of letters in their works. And if one defines society in its broader terms, it includes everything under its umbrella, i.e. our tradition, culture, place, people, flora and fauna, religion and environment too. Literature, thus becomes a befitting medium for the reflection of all sorts of environment, be it physical, social, political, religious, economical and so on. Literary scholars and critics have more often dwelled upon the social, political, economical, religious and racial environments of society. And, that is the reason why we have host of theories and 'isms' like Marxism, Deconstruction, Structuralism, Post-colonialism, Feminism and what not. Physical environment somehow remained a pristine territory for men of letters as late as 1980s and that is when the problem of environment is looming large over the whole world like a ghost. The newspapers, journals, magazines are flooded with news related to degradation of environment and consequent retaliation of nature in the form of natural disasters. Uncontrolled use of pesticides, ozone hole, rivers turning into poison emitting drains, pollution alerts, health risks relating to pollution, all such headlines hog the limelight in the leading dailies across the world. Earth summits are being held every year to address the ecological problems of the world.

In such a scenario, it comes as a big surprise that literature which is otherwise quite quick in responding to contemporary issues has been silent over the

environmental crisis till the late twentieth century. This alien attitude towards the physical environment in literary world hints at two possibilities. The first possibility which emerges is that literature is segregated from environment, though it is not so. Secondly, if a society is not segregated from literature, then we as literary scholars, critics and readers have failed to comprehend or we can say direct our retinas to the environmental creativity. And this lack of intelligibility is a clear sign that we have turned a blind eye to this green non-human world in the whole gamut of human emotions showcased in the world of letters. First option is a big no as the case is not so because the literature is inextricably intertwined with environment, though the layers and extent to which they are linked varies from text to text. The second option, however, sounds convincing and intelligible as the host of theories which mushroomed till 1980s, i.e. the sunset of twentieth century, clearly illustrates that no need has been paid to this quintessential aspect of ecology of which human is an integral part.

These two options however clearly elucidate that literature is not devoid of ecological issues. It is indeed painted green in all its shades explicitly or implicitly. The only thing that is missing is the 'green eye' of the readers and critics which fails to look beyond the human sagas. And, since, for so long this eye is missing, so an 'artificial green eye' becomes indispensable to bridge the gap between these two aforestated options. This gap has been bridged by 'ecocriticism' which makes both parallel and intersecting study of literature and environment in both fictional and non-fictional works with an aim to preserve and conserve our ecological inheritance. The preceding line carries very heavy words like 'aim', 'inheritance' which irks one's mind that how a literary critic is involved in preserving environment. His job is merely to study a literary text from varied angles and come to certain conclusions and

interpretations. He may also keep it open- ended or close- ended as per his own choice. Even if one is an ecocritic, his job is to study a text from ecocritical point of view, to see how nature and environment are linked and how environment helps in evolving human character.

But this is merely a superficial connotation of the term ecocriticism. An ecocritic is much more than a literary scholar. In fact when in newspapers, news channels and other sorts of media, we hear, read or see the global environmental crisis which has engulfed the whole world; we as people from the world of literature often sit at the defensive side of helpless attitude. Literati and critics often raise this query – What can we do? What is our role in conservation of environment? Such people are often seen posing this problem – We are not environmentalists. We are not an NGO. Only government is to be blamed. One theory can never make the difference to the problem. We cannot take part in Environment Summits. They are not doing their job properly. This should be done. That should not be done. We are always full of all such grievances without taking any onus on our shoulders. In fact when environmentalists say that every individual can contribute in saving the ecology, we wonder how being in the field of literature one can make the essential difference.

And, ecocriticism is an answer which puts rest to all these queries. By analyzing the texts ecocritically for our students and readers, we can discover various aspects of nature and environmental problems associated with them. It also helps the readers to realize the significant role of environment in our lives. Moreover, it portrays the current state of environment and also guides us in the preservation and conservation of environment by developing environmental ethos in the readers. Thus by offering an ecocritical study, one can sensitize and agitate the minds of common people and readers towards environment and make them more sensitive towards

ecological balance. And as everyone knows, sensitization and agitation of minds towards a problem is the first step to the solution of any problem because until and unless we are not sensitive to the problem we can never figure it out, and to think of its solution is then for sure a remote possibility. Ecocriticism, thus has a bigger role to play in the world of literature as just by sitting in one room one can initiate a change in the attitude and mindset of masses towards nature. As the saying goes, ‘Many a little makes a mickle.’ So, all these small ecocritical studies will ultimately play a bigger and significant role in preserving the endangered environment.

The second significant and deep word is ‘inheritance’ as stated earlier in the definition that aim of ecocriticism is to preserve our ecological inheritance. The word ‘inheritance’ also assumes great significance as both literature and environment have a history as well as inheritance. In both the fields, each and every generation gives something to the succeeding generations and has lessons to learn from the earlier. By making a conjoined study of literature and environment, one can see through the lens of literature (it being the reflection of the age it represents) that in every epoch what was the state of environment and what was its relationship with human beings. Apart from that, many more questions can be answered by the conflated study such as – How nature came to be deteriorated? How its relationship gets reverted all through the decades and centuries? What is the current status? What lessons can be learnt from the past? How the bonhomie between nature and literature can be restored through this nexus? This study of ecological inheritance, thus becomes very crucial as it not only traces the entire ecological history through literary texts but also gives a proper direction to somewhat directionless literature to foray into an environment-friendly territory and thereby preventing an arid future of ‘greenless’ texts.

And this present study is a small step in this direction. While making a study of Toni Morrison's fictional works, it traces the ecological inheritance portrayed in her novels all through the decades with an aim of creating an eco-sensitive reader. But, before the research moves to the works of Toni Morrison, it is important to fathom the concept and scope of the term 'ecocriticism'.

Ecocriticism is a word which encompasses two words 'eco' and 'criticism'. 'Eco' here refers to the 'ecology' which inhabits in its nest the entire ecosystem be it sky, stars, planets, earth, moon, flora, fauna, humans and everything that is visible to us through naked eyes. In short, anything and everything under the sun contributes to the ecosystem. The second part of the term is 'criticism' which refers to the literary evaluation of literary texts from different critical approaches and delineates various implications of a particular work. When these two words come together to form one term, i.e. ecocriticism, it refers to the evaluation of the texts, both from fictional and non-fictional worlds from an environmental perspective and uncovers the various levels at which nature as well as literature is linked in any proposed study. An ecocritic thus wears green spectacles on his eyes and tries to tinge the entire text with a paint brush dipped in green colour. But that should be done with understanding, coherence and logic because an ecocritic is a man sailing in two boats, viz. one of nature and the other one is of literature, and he has to strike a balance between the two as to defy the old age adage of a man drowning who was sailing in two boats simultaneously.

But ecocriticism is a wider term and hence cannot be limited to just one simplistic definition or interpretation. Different critics have variously defined this term. Greg Garrard defines the term as "the study of the relationship of the human and non-human throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the

term 'human' itself" (5). Then, we have the definition by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm who are considered as the spearheads of this movement and who for the first time came up with a compiled work of ecocritical inclination all through the world thereby giving it an essential theoretical foothold which was much required by the movement at that time. In his book *The Ecocriticism Reader*, he gives a succinct definition of ecocriticism by drawing an analogy with feminist criticism, "Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective...ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (xviii). It was only after this book that ecocriticism came forward as an important branch of literary criticism to analyse literary works from an environmental perspective. But ecocriticism has not merely restricted itself to the representation of nature in literary works; rather it encourages the readers to think more and more regarding environmental crisis and shows them how through the power of words ecological ethics can be transmitted among others. Moreover, it is not only a depicter of aesthetic beauties of nature but also demonstrates the destruction caused by nature as well. He locates the reasons of this destruction to the lack of reverence paid by modern man to nature who is indulging in such activities which are playing with the health of this entire ecosystem.

Richard Kerridge is another important critic who was willing to broaden the horizons of ecocriticism by advocating a broad cultural ecocriticism. According to him an ecocritic is a person who is willing to trace ecologically inclined representations everywhere in the text. Lorett A Johnson defines and explains the term ecocriticism by posing various questions which can be answered only by making an interdisciplinary study of environmental studies, cultural studies and by the study of natural sciences.

Thomas K. Dean too clarifies several connotations associated with this term. He too widens the scope of ecocriticism by including culture under its umbrella. Besides that, Carin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer in their book throw light on various directions in which the study of ecocriticism can move thereby signifying the importance of ecocriticism in socio-political sphere. Apart from the socio-political sphere, Gersdorf and Mayer have highlighted many directions in which ecocriticism can venture. One such territory is the cultural anthropological direction. Such studies can highlight how because of the anthropological mindset, human beings have gone so far in the mad rat race of progress that they have completely forgotten their roots and association with the natural world. This lack of association makes them feel alienated.

Ethical dimension is another area of exploration for ecocritics. Environmental ethics believe in cooperation among all the inhabitants of the universe rather than the domination of one over the other. It examines the relationships from an environmental perspective and talks about epistemological and aesthetic approach of ecocriticism which widened the scope of ecocriticism even more as it located myriad spheres where nature correlates with human beings. This, in turn, gives an opportunity to ecocritics to create environmental awareness at several levels in human beings.

Robert Kern is another important figure in this field who considers ecocriticism as an important tool to orient the minds of people towards environment. Equally significant are the inputs of Lawrence Buell who delineated that how an environmentally oriented work should function. He prescribes that in any environment related work, the non-human world should not function as mere background. Rather, the non-human world should be seen as having a living presence of its own which intersects with the human world and thus contribute to the overall

significance of that particular work. Secondly, for him in such a work, the selfish nature of homo sapiens when they consider their own interest should completely vanish as it will be a disaster from ecocritical point of view. He also talks about the importance of human's accountability to the environment in literary texts. Such accountability, according to him, will gradually seep in the unconscious mind of the readers and will help them in getting closer to the natural world. Glen Love too dwells upon the importance of ecocriticism in the modern world which is surrounded by so many environmental problems. Ecocriticism for Glen Love is an important device in evoking "human consciousness" (18) towards environment.

From these afore stated definitions, it becomes crystal clear that ecocriticism uses various tools and techniques to study the relationship between natural environment and human beings. The practitioners of this branch of criticism describe the attitude of human beings towards their natural surroundings. Moreover, they establish a link between the three poles, viz. writers, the work, and the physical world presented in the world of literature. The world referred to here doesn't merely restrict itself to the environmental background; rather it includes the entire ecosystem in its lap. Rather than taking a human-centered approach of most of the literary criticisms like Marxism, Feminism, Post-colonialism, etc., ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary criticism. Moreover, over the years ecocriticism has emerged as a genre, which includes all possible relations that exist between man and nature, and has surfaced out in the form of various terms like eco-politics, environmental literary criticism, nature writing, green cultural studies, eco-literature and environment literature.

Ecology, in fact, in itself is a very broad term with even wider connotations. It includes everything, which is there in the world. Plants, animals, human beings,



water, sky, fire, land, houses, rivers mountains, natural phenomenon all are indispensable part of our ecosystem. The Earth, which till now has been established as the only habitable planet in the universe is merely a small part of this entire universe. This whole universe works according to a particular order in which all its constituents play a predetermined role which helps in maintaining the overall 'rhythm' of the universe. The word 'rhythm' is basically derived from Sanskrit word 'rtha' which means 'order'. Everything in the universe works to maintain the rhythm of universe. Nature has to play a pivotal role in the synchronization of this rhythm which is the basic principle of this universe. Apart from this rhythm, the symbiotic relationship which exists between various forms of 'biodiversity' creates a system around which the whole universe functions. Everything on the earth, whether it is living or non-living has to work according to this phenomenon of 'rhythm' which makes him an active participant in the entire cosmic creation of the universe. It is this correlation and interaction between these infinite constituents of ecosystem that the rhythm of the ecosystem and, in turn, of the universe functions properly in order.

And the branch of science which studies this interaction and correlation between this biodiversity and environment is termed as ecology. The word ecology is first of all derived from the Greek word 'oikos' which means 'household' and 'logos' which means study. The term ecology refers to the study of the household. Since earth is the home of millions of species including human beings, ecology by that logic refers to the study of the entire ecosystem of the earth in relation to its environment. German zoologist, Ernst Haeckel was the first who used this term 'ecology' in 1866 to describe the study of flora, fauna and other organisms which form a complex network at different scales of organization of the ecosphere.

All organisms are important in the ecosystem. It is the interaction between the living and non- living environments which creates order and rhythm in this ecosystem. All living as well non living beings stand at an equal pedestal in the ecosystem. Over a period of time, homosapiens have assumed a commanding and authoritative position in the ecosystem. But they have forgotten that everything on this earth has an ‘inherent’ or intrinsic value and an ‘ecological value’ which is also known as extrinsic value. This intrinsic value of an organism is different from its ecological value. If human beings are measured on the scale of ecological value, they have zero extrinsic value in comparison to other organisms. If bacteria, fungus, water, trees vanish from the world; the whole ecosystem will disintegrate and collapse. But this is not the situation with human beings because extinction of human beings from the earth is hardly going to make any difference to the functioning of ecosystem. Humans thus have negligible extrinsic value.

But, as far as intrinsic value is concerned, humans fair far better than all other organisms of the ecosystem. Such an intrinsic value is possible only for those organisms who have the capability to ‘feel’ or we can say experience, because it is a value dependent on how a particular living being feels from within. Human beings have got this ability to feel from within in great degree. Human beings have and feel more emotions and feelings in comparison to their other counterparts in the ecosystem. They have greater capacity to love, hate, to be sad and happy, to suffer and to enjoy. The intrinsic value thus places human beings on a higher pedestal than other organisms of the ecosystem. But this intrinsic value doesn’t give prerogative to man to consider himself superior in this ecosystem.

Moreover, the ability to experience no doubt gives them the power to contribute more to this ecosystem, but it nowhere gives them the authority to divide

this ecosystem into two halves, i.e. human and non human world where human world is holding a dominant position over the entire ecosystem. Apart from this, human world has to realize that in the conservation of ecology, intrinsic value will not be that important. Ecology works on the extrinsic value or we can say ecological value of its inhabitants. The ecological value thus becomes an important yardstick in conversation of environment which places all living beings at an equal level. For the ecologists who repose their faith in this ecological value, the whole existence of the ecosphere has an inherent significance and all of them are related and dependent on each other for their survival. Ecocriticism here plays an important role as it stresses on the equality of ecological value of all beings. It re-orientes the minds of readers towards the oneness of the universe and develops environmental ethics in them by making them realize the significance of interconnection which exists among all inhabitants of the universe.

But over the past many years, we have failed to acknowledge the contribution which other beings make in the lives of human beings and for that matter the contribution they make in the survival and existence of entire ecosystem. However, if one traces the history of ancient civilizations, one comes to know that ancient religions have played a key role in keeping their people environmentally conscious. Eco-ethics were deep-rooted in their religion, lifestyle, traditions, perceptions and culture. The Bible, the Quran, the Geeta, the Upanishads develop them as moral beings and at the same time contribute in making them ethical from nature's perspective. If we take the case of Indian culture and Hindu mythology, India had been eco-sensitive right from the beginning. Communion with nature is the basic principle of human life in Hindu mythological texts. According to Samkhya tradition, the five elements, viz. earth, fire, water, sky and air are considered as Gods and are

worshipped by God. Not only these five elements, geographical forms like mountains, rivers, oceans, seas are worshipped in Indian tradition.

Indeed, India is truly a land where nature is being worshipped since ages. The Govardhan episode in Bhagwat Geeta where Lord Krishna worshipped a mountain, invocation of sea-god by Rama in Ramayana, worshipping of cow and Tulsi plant in common households, importance given to Ganga river in Shiv Mahapuran, all establish the rich historical past of Indian religious texts which consider and treat all animate and inanimate things equally. In fact, in Indian tradition even the smallest life form is respected. Giving grain food to ants in the morning, chappatis to cows and pouring water and grains for birds in broken pitchers, all symbolize the kindness and love, which is shown by man towards the minutest fellow creatures in the ecosystem. Even snakes, which are considered as poisonous, are worshipped as Nag Devta. The idols of Ganesha and Hanuman also hints at the reverence paid to animals as these idols are animalistic incarnations of God. Trees are also believed to have souls and, therefore, not to be disturbed at night because it is believed that trees sleep at night and any kind of shaking will disturb their sleep. Apart from that, the belief of the ancient Indian scripture that there exists 84 million species in the world and all of them carry inside themselves only one immortal soul also hints that Indian mythological structures from earliest times are aware of the equal ecological value of all beings.

The concept of 'Vasudheve Kutumbhkam' which considers the whole world as one big family and advocates the idea of oneness of life also develops a consideration and respect for other forms of life. Worshipping of trees and plants like peepal , tulsi and banana too speaks volumes about the reverence which Hindus have in them since the time of Vedas. In the Atharva Veda (12.1.15) earth is condiseder as

a mother to be worshipped. Mother has always played a special role in human's life. She gives birth to the baby, nurture and cares for him and finally educates him. Human beings have huge regard and love for their mother. The Earth is, therefore, compared to a mother as Mother Nature through her vast resources in her lap nourishes and takes care of human beings in their struggle for survival. Rig Veda also stresses the importance of trees, which are important life-sustaining forms for humans because of their medicinal value. Even cutting of trees is considered as sin in Hindu mythology. According to the oldest Hindu text Manusmṛti, if one cuts a tree then he has to compensate by reciting 100 Gayatri Mantras.

Science and religion are both correlated in ancient Indian texts to ingrain environmental ethics among people. Trees are often compared to Lord Shiva. Just as Lord Shiva drank poison for the welfare of others, in the same way trees inhale carbon-dioxide and exhale oxygen for the survival of human beings. Moreover, trees also give shelter to many birds who build their nests on their branches. So, trees need to be protected to ensure the safety of these birds and their eggs. Even in the Ramayana when Ram along with his brother Laxman was in exile in a forest for fourteen years, they had great respect for all the trees in the forest. If they have to cut a tree, they used to seek permission from the spirit of the tree. Not only this, when Rama has to construct a bridge on the sea, he invokes the Sea-God before encroaching upon the territory of the sea. Even Tulsidas who penned Ramayana considers Ganga as a holy river which purifies a person of his sins.

Indian scriptures and ancient mythology have shown ecological consciousness much earlier than the west. They believe in the oneness of the natural world. By clubbing religion and ecological wisdom, they even tried to make it a part and parcel of people's lives, "Hinduism holds India's mountains, rivers, and trees sacred,

regarding them to be infused with individual spirits...Its religious metaphors speak of continuity and reciprocity” (C.K. Chapple 113).

Vandana Shiva has also quoted the Isha Upanishad which recognizes all life forms as equal and urges human beings to show reverence towards various species. Moreover, any encroachment on the rights of other species by man is considered as a selfish act to be reprimanded by God. Even, according to Rig Veda, nature is a beautiful creation of God and He has bestowed the responsibility to keep this beauty intact on human beings. If man wants to please God, he has to take proper care of nature. If nature will smile, God will also smile.

The Holy Quran, the Muslim holy book reiterates the view that nature is the special gift of Almighty to man and man should love and respect His gift. Nature in Holy Quran is sacred and human beings have no right to exploit nature or to encroach upon the right to survival of other life forms. The presence of God is also located in the minutest life forms of nature and all are loved equally by man. The ecological balance which God has created is also described in Quran. According to this holy book, the proper functioning of the ecosystem and existence of all living forms depend upon this balance between human and the non-human worlds. God has the only right on this ecological balance. So, any attempt to disturb this balance is bound to evoke the wrath of God who is the creator of this universe.

Jainism is another religion in India which pays a lot of regard to nature. Jainism belief in ‘Ahimsa’ prohibits them to kill any kind of creature big or small. They also consider the earth as their mother and believe that it is the responsibility of human beings to protect and safeguard their motherland. According to Jainism, the earth is heaven in itself and there is no other heaven other than that. In fact, they are

believers of 'live and let live' philosophy and strives towards ecological peace and harmony.

Buddhism, another religion from East talks about the role of nature in human lives. Gautam Buddha had great respect for trees. He even attained enlightenment under the Peepal tree. Buddhism, in fact, has described a lot about how human ego is responsible for the deterioration of environment which needs to be controlled to keep intact the heavenly beauty of the earth. According to the Buddhist philosophy, the false notion of human beings because of which they consider themselves supreme and higher than all other life forms needs to be erased and replaced by a more eco-sensitive attitude towards nature. For Buddhists, the distinction between human and the non-human worlds is the reason for most of the sorrows of the world.

Chinese religion too shows a tradition which believes in the harmony between nature and man. Taoism and Confucianism are two different branches of Chinese religion. Both these religions accept the equality of all natural forms. The two, however, differ in their approaches towards man's relation to nature. Taoism sees human as playing a passive role in the process of evolution and values nature for its own sake. Taoism doesn't harbor respect for nature because of the utilitarian benefits which one can draw from nature. On the other hand, Confucianism states that human involvement is must in the process of evolution. The entire cosmos and relation of all members of the ecosystem initiate from human beings. The Confucians insist on human connections and thus becomes anthropocosmic.

Christianity which has shaped the perception of the West is very anthropocentric in its approach to nature. It establishes the dominion of man on the earth where everything is created for the utility of human beings. According to

Christian mythology, the Almighty created this beautiful earth and gave Adam and Eve the sole right to enjoy and use it for his own happiness and survival. Lynn White Jr. also supports this argument. According to him, Christianity is responsible for creating dualism of man and nature. Moreover, he also stressed that it is only because of Christian belief that people in the West thought that it is God's will that man should tame and exploit nature for his own utilitarian motives. The Christian dogma of creation becomes detrimental to the ecological health of the world as it makes man as the only living form which is an incarnation of God's dominance. In the words of Lynn White Jr., "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen" (9).

And this feeling of domination increased during the Middle Ages and took an ugly turn during modern era because of the increase in human knowledge which becomes synonymous to distancing from nature. The dichotomy between human and non-human world increased by leaps and bounds during the Middle Ages. This negative and step-motherly attitude towards nature was a direct result of newly gained knowledge. Displacement of masses towards cities also played a key role in this shift towards anti-environmental ethos. Renaissance too paved the way for this non-harmonious attitude. The scientific discoveries and revolutions turned the minds of people towards scientific attitude and make them skeptical towards God. The whole religious structure which formed the basis of equality of all life forms was shattered because of the loss of faith. Galileo's discoveries related to astronomical bodies resulted in detachment from the real world which is created by God. Major changes, however, came with Issac Newton who gave a mechanical model of nature and created a lifeless environment that can be reduced to numbers and can be quantified.



Medical science discoveries also increased the power of man and started giving him a feeling that with the help of science one can overcome all kinds of sorrows given by God. Man becomes a master and developed an anthropocentric attitude towards the non-human world. The environmental ethics came to an all time low in the Middle Ages and paved the way for irrational exploitation of nature by man. In the name of progress, humans started replacing tree jungles with concrete jungles. They tampered and played with nature to such an extent that it completely disturbs the ecological balance of the world. Global warming, forest fires, floods and famines, extinction of many species from earth, ozone layer depletion, life-threatening diseases shows the far reaching impact of environmental degradation. Excessive use of fossil fuels and non- renewable sources of energy like coal and petroleum have made even normal breathing an unhealthy task for human beings. Lifestyle changes too have contributed a lot in environmental degradation. People have become obsessed with air conditioners, cars, unwanted display of wealth, madness towards clothes, and gadgets and mindless acquisition of property which has fragmented and fractured humans' relationship with environment. In summers, people can't survive without air conditioners which are responsible for global warming. Media has also played an important role in depicting earth as merely a physical entity devoid of any kinds of feelings.

If such continuous exploitation of nature will continue for a long time, then it is sure that the time is not far away when humans have to face the curse of extinction. The need of the hour is to promote an ecological paradigm in place of mechanistic paradigm. Values, beliefs, cultures and tradition needs to be thoroughly revived to evoke ecological consciousness in humans. Humans have to give up their swollen ego which makes them believe that they are at the epicenter of the entire creation and are

thus very important. They have to realize that they are not unique in this universe. Rather they are similar to all other millions species of the ecosystem. In the words of Christopher Manes, human beings are “one species among millions” (20). From anthropocentric vision, human have to move towards bio-centric vision. Humans should shed their ego and accept the equality of ecosystem and their humility should become the watchword of modern environmental ethos.

But the question arises - How this change of attitude can be brought about in human beings? How, being from the field of literature writers and critics can bring a turnaround in environmental ethos of modern age? The answer perhaps lies in realizing what literature should not do at the first place and secondly, what literature should do to churn out eco-sensitive human beings in the form of its readers. According to many ecologists and ecocritics, literature should stop using nature as a mere mechanical background bereft of any kind of soul and life in it. Moreover, literati have to realize that literature has a power to move human soul, as it works both through mind and heart. Other mediums be it warnings, laws, media, seminars have so far failed in turning man’s inclination towards ecology. Warning from scientists and all other environmental organizations have failed to alter the mindset of people. Coercive measures are also of no use as laws and rules are not implemented properly. Moreover, the procedure is so complex that in the end these measures seem to be futile. Cultures and traditions are also getting fragmented and distorted because of the cosmopolitan global culture. Even if one looks up to religion as hope, then as discussed earlier, many religions of the world are anthropocentric and are already inclined towards the domination of man. Literature thus emerges as sole savior because of the power of words which always had a deep impact upon on the psyche of people since times immemorial.

Literature, in fact, for such critics is a powerhouse of energy which disseminates itself in all directions. The energy of literature is ever evolving because like all other energies, it neither gets created nor destroyed. Literature is like a potter which moulds the mind of readers through the power of its words. All revolutions of the world have their origins somehow in literature in one way or the other. William Rueckert too in his essay “Literature and Ecology” stressed the importance of literature in the preservation of ecosystem, “We need to make some connections between literature and the sun, between teaching literature and the health of the biosphere” (109). Literature has to offer its services to environment and disseminate ecological sensitivity and consciousness through its flow of energy. Eco-criticism with all its offshoots is a viable solution to this problem which can establish a harmonious relationship between nature and man through the power of words.

Ecocriticism gained its ground during the late twentieth century when ecological crisis was at its peak. The term is derived from the term ecology which was coined by Ernst Haeckel in 1869. Then, it was John Mecker who in 1972 introduced the term ‘literary ecology’ in his book *The Comedy of Survival*. Six years later came the term which becomes the official term for all who were willing to collaborate literature and nature to come out of the ecological crisis. In 1972, in his essay *Literature and Ecology : An Experiment in Eco-criticism*, William Rucekert talks for the first time about ‘ecocriticism’ and defined it as a meeting ground for both literature and environment. Another effort in this direction was made by Alicia Nitecki in 1989 who founded *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*. This newsletter helped a lot in the interaction of so many people on a common ground which talks about literature’s role in saving environment. Even in India, Professor Nirmal Selvamony introduced his own term of ‘Oikopoetics’ and founded OSLE –

India. He also introduced its courses in Tamil literature and over the years several theoretical and critical work forms the corpus of study related to oikopoetics. Later on, in order to match and club it with the Western eco-criticism, he renamed it as Eco-literature. In order to generate more ideas and studies related to eco-literature, a conference was held on Eco-criticism by OSLE – India. Parallel attempts have also been made in the west by Cheryll Glotfelty in 1982. Along with Harold Fromm, she founded ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) and also edited a book titled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* which completely changed the face of ecocriticism as a theory in the world. This book gave sound theoretical foundation to the movement and presented an organized form of all the rich works done till date in the field of ecocriticism. It was because of this landmark contribution that this book is regarded as the Bible of ecocriticism.

However, when critics all over the world were busy in giving a theoretical foundation to ecocriticism, a much bigger challenge surfaced in front of them. Ecocritics were confused regarding what kind of work or works should come under this umbrella term of ecocriticism as literature is a cornucopia of works which offer ecological dimensions and inclination. Cheryll Glotfelty has made an endeavour in this direction. In Introduction to her book she has codified three different phases of ecocriticism which produced three different types of works which can be studied and analysed from an ecocritical point of view. The first field of ecocriticism lies in studying works that represent nature. Ecocriticism makes a study how nature is presented in a particular work. Absences and presences of nature become the focus of such a study. And if absences are there, it tries to locate reason for such absences. And if nature is the main focus of such a work, it tries to figure out the purpose of the writer who gives such a presentation. The writings of Homer, Virgil and Dante show

this awareness of nature. British literature is also full of such instances which share an ecological vision. Right from Chaucer to the modern writers, we have innumerable instances of literary works that increases our knowledge of nature and inspire us to be more sensitive to this non-human world. *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* though on the surface level seems to be a delineation of human characters, but when studied from an ecological bent of mind offers itself for ecocritical evaluation. The month of April is shown to be period of rich harvest and thus brings hope and happiness for humans. Shakespeare's Forest of Arden is a living character in his drama *As You Like it* which brings happiness in the lives of other characters. Alexander's Pope's depiction of Eden's Garden in his poem *Windsor Forest* is a prime example that a realistic and satirical poet like Pope could not keep himself away from the beauties of Nature. The peace and harmony which nature brings, even after its original vigour, is lost is presented very beautifully by many more writers.

And what to say about the romantic poets like Wordsworth, Shelly, Keats, Southey, Coleridge, who looked for paganism and pantheism in nature. For Wordsworth , nature is a teacher and a continuous source of joy. The first phase of ecocriticism doesn't restrict itself merely to singing paeans of praise for nature. Writers also present the absences of nature. The environmental degradation and pollution find ample space in the works of modern writers like T.S. Eliot, Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster. Their writings portray how rural landscape and wilderness is completely annihilated by the demon of industrialization and urbanization. T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* exhibits the horrors of destruction caused to nature by modern man.

After this initial phase of depiction of nature in its various hues and forms came the phase of nature writing. Nature writing has often been used synonymously

with environmental literature. But there is a slight difference between the two. Nature writing is usually non-fictional prose. On the other hand, nature writing is done in all kinds of literary forms like poetry, drama, novel, short stories, fiction and non-fiction, etc. But the purpose of both the writings was more or less similar as they rediscover, reissue and reconsider literature which is related to nature. Gilbert White's *A Natural History of Selbourne* which came out in England in 1789 is the pioneering work in the field of nature writing. Then came the wave of American writers whose works show ecocritical inclination. Such writers are also known by the name of transcendentalists and include many writers from America like Emerson, Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Margaret Fuller, John Mier, Edward Abbey. Nature writing played a pivotal role in the field of ecocriticism as it reestablishes relationship between man and nature. The first claim regarding the nomenclature of the word 'nature writing' was laid by Don Scheese. According to him, Dallas Lore Sharp was the first one who used the term 'nature writing' in relation to the works of John Burroughs and Earnest Thompson Seton who described the natural history of the world in their works with an aim to make humans more kind and sensitive towards nature. Such kinds of works deal in detail how nature functions. It makes a scientific as well as philosophical study of nature in the form of essay and tries to study anatomy and behaviour of living forms, the location and habitat of plants and how they adapt themselves to the changing forces of nature.

*The Norton Book of Nature Writing* which is co-edited by Robert Finch and John Elder is perhaps the first major work of nature writing. This work is in the form of anthology and includes various works from British and American traditions. ASLE emerges as an important organization which propagated the cause of nature writing.

John Elder's definition of 'nature writing' which he offered in the first conference of ASLE in 1995 is proper reflection of the aim and scope of nature writing

Aldo Leopold holds a special place in the field of nature writing. Being a renowned scientist and philosopher, he combined the ethics of both to create a new environmental ethics. His book *Game Management* which talks about biology, flora and fauna, agriculture, wilderness, ecology, forestry and education became a landmark in the field of nature writing as it connects all these forms in such a way that the whole mechanism of nature and community becomes clear to its readers. *A Sand Country Almanac* is another important book which talks about the biotic right of all species and defines ethics as a restraint on freedom in human's struggle for survival. He traces three stages of environmental ethics. The first stage of this ethics speaks about individual involvement with ethics and relationship among various individuals. The second stage correlates individual ethics with community and, then the final stage connects human beings with the land they belong to. These essays and books further describe the loopholes in the process related to conservation of ecological and ethical system which are completely governed by mercenary motives. His warnings and suggestions regarding environmental ethics resonates his love for nature.

Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* which gives a voice to his experiences as a park ranger celebrates the harsh beauty of desert and a moving plea to conserve the wilderness that resides in this beautiful desert. Not only this, he converts this dream and desire for the conservation of this desert into a fictional work in the form of his novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Moreover, in the world of letters he suggested an altogether different method of using violence to solve ecological crisis. He cites Tagore's play *Mukthadhara* and Alan Sealey's novel *The Everest Hotel* in this regard where characters sacrificed their own lives to protect nature.

Nature writing, however, loses its significance in the modern world as there comes a realization that the scope of nature writing is limited and even the number of readers who read and appreciate it are only a handful. In order to increase the scope of its readership, ecocriticism has to find a space in the mainstream fictional and poetry writing, otherwise the whole purpose and ambition of saving environment through literature would be defeated. The ecocritics thus start searching for environmentally enlightened works which show ample awareness of the importance of ecological balance and its various manifestations on relationship between man and nature. Fictional writings all across the world have shown ample awareness of environment. Unlike nature writing, its scope is suggestively open and opens a vast arena for ecocritics to explore.

Creative writers too give a lot of emphasis on environmental degradation that is affecting the entire planet. The writers like Arundhati Roy, Margaret Atwood, Amitav Ghosh, Alice Walker, Seamus Heaney, Gita Mehta, Ted Hughes and Toni Morrison are but a few examples. These writers plead on behalf of nature and take man to task for his avarice. These writers take the nature writing of Thoreau, Edward Albee and Aldo Leopold as their models. All these writers chant in unison that nature has enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed.

The third and the final phase is the theoretical phase which raises fundamental questions about the symbolic construction of ecocritical ideas within literary discourse. It looks for reasons related to dualism that has penetrated deep into the ecological psyche of humans. Moreover, it makes an interdisciplinary study and analysis of ecological concepts to enhance the ambit of the field of ecocriticism. The emergence of the terms like deep ecology, ecosophy, ecotheology, eco-feminism, environmental literature, eco-poetics, green studies are a product of this third phase of



ecocriticism which study ecological issues and concepts from myriad angles to trace its root causes and possible solutions embedded within.

Ecocriticism, thus as has been explained in the above analysis has gained in scope as well as stature and has become one of the innovative and yet to be explored area of literature. Modern world is grappling with environmental degradation. Global environmental crisis is one of the hotly debated issues in modern scenario. The root cause of this crisis stems from human beings' failure to acknowledge that they are part of nature rather than being separate from her. In the age of GDP's and economic fluctuations, no account is taken for the loss of biodiversity or ecosystem services that nature provides. To address these ecological concerns every discipline today including history, sociology, religion, philosophy, etc. has started greening itself. However, literature has been slow to react in this respect. With global environmental crisis echoing at an alarming rate, it is high time for environmentalism to occupy centre stage in literature as literature can effectively create awareness about the environment.

The proposed research intends to explore the ecocritical implications of Morrison's fiction. Besides this, the study will also unravel how the influences of her race and gender are inextricably linked with the influences of nature, and at the same time to trace her growth as a literary environmentalist. Regarded as the vanguard of Afro-American literature, Toni Morrison occupies an unassailable place in the world of letters with her novels like *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1974), *Song of Solomon* (1978), *Paradise* (1998) and many others. She is an Afro-American by birth but a pure African by her race. Her novels clearly depict the environmental degradation along with the suffering of Africans in America. While going through her novels, readers could easily make out that how she has deliberately intermingled the issues of

race and environment in them. Her green pen scatters its green hues in the form of her green vision on various pages of her novels. She must have heard from her ancestors the horrible tales of slavery and slave trade when capitalism started discrediting nature and the Africans. The very fact that she had received Nobel Prize for Literature corroborates to the view that her writings are universal and global in their approach rather than being regional or race bound. And, along with these issues of race and gender, she has dexterously addressed the issue of environment in her novels which stimulates her readers to put her novels under an ecocritical scanner.

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