



## Historical Perspective on Emergence of Eco-Critical Theory: A Review

**Saurabh Kumar**

Assistant Professor, Department of English,  
Career Point University, Hamirpur (Himachal Pradesh), India.

(Corresponding author: Saurabh Kumar)

(Received 10 September, 2017, Accepted 27 November, 2017)

(Published by Research Trend, Website: [www.researchtrend.net](http://www.researchtrend.net))

**ABSTRACT:** Many novels in English literature revolve around a plot in where Nature plays an important and dominant role. As far as ecocritical belief is concerned, the existence of humans is confined within the periphery of natural world. This is the reason why man remains a life-long wanderer. This fact raises the ecocritical notion that answers the question: “Why we are always acknowledged with the acquainted physical and cultural atmosphere?” In such novels, the novelists have approached their themes in a variety of ways and various methods. In current scenario, we look at nature for our personal identity and to discover our ancestries. All this is in jeopardy, as the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century has clearly showcased that we all have to do something if we want to help the earth survive. The last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century has made the entire humanity aware of the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be in the midst of the grave danger pertaining to the survival of the earth. Thus, in the course of this research paper, the following notions of ecocriticism are studied: “How is nature symbolized in the novels?”, “What role does physical background play in these works?”, “Does these novels yielding to the values consistent with ecological understanding?”, “How the metaphors are used to amalgamate with Nature?” and “How the idea of wild has have changed the course of narrative?”.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, Nature Writing, Difference between Ecocriticism and other literary theories, Relationship between Nature and Culture, Important Notion in Ecocriticism.

### I. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, it has been suggested by critics from all genres that the biosphere in which we humans are living currently is the only suitable place for the factual survival of human race. One among them is Arnold Toynbee, who is regarded as a legendary English historian. In his chronicle of the world “Mankind and Mother Earth”, Toynbee has supported this notion. He has further reinforced that human race, in its greedy endeavours, is causing the atmosphere to be inhabited and if humans fail to realize the results of their actions, the whole of the civilization will parish together [1].

In present context, we all are aware that the human civilization is constantly facing a number of actual and potential horrors which are a threat to entire human race. To name a few we can talk about the threats of nuclear power, wars based on chemical and germ battles, dangerous increase in world’s population, sudden boom of global warming and resulting destruction of planet’s ozone layer, acid rain, excessive cutting of the great forests and resulting calamities, the life-threatening loss of top layer of earth’s crust and groundwater, discharge of chemical waste and resulting poisoning along with overfishing in the oceans, and extinct of beneficial plants/herbs and animal species at an aggregate amount. On the contrary, rather than meditating upon these ecological threats, we have kept our rational soul busy on other things with which we have centered ourselves. Rather than facing these threats, we are contented because we focus on our own life- troubles, we celebrate our arrogance as we are the victims of it and always pay heed to our self welfare rather than worrying about the matters which pose a threat to our continued existence [2].

To address this life-threatening problem, the realm of English literature would have to respond appropriately by focusing its attention upon ecological cataclysm. However, our society as macrocosm and our profession as microcosm have, as Cheryl Glotfelty points out, been faced with three crises in the last thirty years: human rights, women’s deliverance, and environmental ruin [3]. All three of these problematic areas have attracted intense social concern and have become, to a greater or lesser extent, world issues. In this regard, the field of English literature has significantly raised its voice in the matters of civil rights, equality for all, and women’s liberation. Although, the field of English literature has tried to answer many problems prevailing in social hierarchy but still our profession has not sufficiently answered to the issues pertaining to environment as this is the problem which will decide our future survival.

It is quite recent that the realm of English literature has considered this problem by heart and thus taking appropriate and necessary steps in this direction. Accordingly, literary critics have devised an all-embracing term "Ecocriticism" to address and to respond to the environmental problems. Now, one could ask, "What is ecocriticism?" Ecocriticism as a term was coined in the late 1970's by uniting "criticism" with "eco" which is a basically small version of "ecology." Ecology is a branch of science that examines the correlation of all types of plant and animal life with each other as well as with the physical environments. Ecocriticism is slightly different from ecology as it deals with the critical writings that have depicted the intrinsic relationship between literature and the biological along with physical environment, and is conducted with a serious consciousness of the destruction being imposed on environment by human activities.

Joseph W. Meeker in his *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* had coined 'literary ecology' as an idiom. By this, he suggested a combined study of natural themes and the depiction of human relationships with it. By doing this, Meeker was basically interested to find out that up to what extent literature is responsible or plays what role in moulding the human attitude towards the environment [4]. In addition, the whole ecological concern was given a name *ecocriticism* for the very first time in 1972 by William Rueckert through his legendary essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". By ecocriticism Rueckert projected the idea of "using ecology and ecological concepts to the examination and reevaluation of literature." [5]. What Rueckert projected is a wide term and includes science of ecology along with all feasible relations between human and the physical world depicted in literature.

Since its inception, Ecocriticism has paved way for many scholars to study human relationship with nature. In the past thirty years, ecocriticism has seized the thoughtfulness of scholars and has demonstrated itself to be a fascinating field of research in literature. Therefore, at this point, it becomes important to understand form where the term Ecocriticism is being formulated. As a term, it is taken from Greek words *Oikos* and *Kritis*. *Oikos*, in English, stands for "household," and encompasses humans, nature and the life-force. *Kritis* stands for "to judge", "and denotes the arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order in all regards." [6].

As being an emerging field, different thinkers and critics have considered the approach and mode diversely, and, thus, enriched the term "ecocriticism" with many definitions. But as a matter of fact, all their definitions emphasized upon the relationship between humans and environment. Ecocriticism represents the analysis of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary perspective where all sciences join their hands together to investigate the environment and to reach at potential resolutions for the improvement of the present-day environmental condition.

As far as interdisciplinary studies are concerned, ecocriticism has contributed a lot to the fields of sciences and humanities. Ecocriticism, as a genre, was established with groundbreaking publication of *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) penned by Lawrence Buell followed by *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) which was edited collectively by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Cheryl Glotfelty is another contributor in this field and is hailed as the initiator of Ecocritics in the United States. Regarding its explanation, she says:

In simple words, ecocriticism focuses its attention upon the study of various relationships between literature and the physical surroundings. In its comparison with feminist and Marxist criticism, ecocriticism uses an approach which centers on Mother Earth for consideration and analysis [7].

Glotfelty raises simple questions like how is nature embodied in literature; how the concept of wild has been altered over time and how science itself is open to literary investigation. When compared to Feminism and Marxism, ecocriticism seems more a political mode of analysis. Ecocritics normally link their cultural analyses plainly to a 'green' moral and political program. In this regard, ecocriticism is closely associated to the environmentally-oriented developments which are taking place in philosophy and political theory.

Laurence Buell, as another forerunner in this field, has conducted a thorough study upon pastoralism in American literature and criticism. He has deeply studied the experiences of American rustic life and the relation of people with their environment in many and varied contexts of human interests. In addition, he has also warned us about the ecological destruction which is very near and thus insisted upon the significance of maintaining balance between nature and human race. For achieving this end, Buell has maintained that ecocriticism must study the life-threatening concerns with practical implications so that they could be used for sustaining environment [8]. Buell's work is further supplemented by Timothy Morton's in his work "*Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*" (1998) through pursuing the 'nature of nature' in ecocriticism [9]. Morton details the ever-changing definition of the word 'nature' and, reaffirming Buell to a certain degree, proposes that nature can be anything. In this context, Richard Kerridge's definition in his work *Writing the Environment* (1998), similar to Glotfelty's broad cultural ecocriticism is quite suggestive:

The main occupation of ecocritics is to identify ideas and illustrations pertaining to environmental no matter where they appear, to reinforce the ecological debate which is taking place worldwide, in many cultures and many nations. For achieving this end, ecocritics evaluate literary texts and the ideas depicted in them which can be useful in our responses to the environmental degradation [10].

Ecocriticism focuses its attention upon nature writing and ecological themes in all forms of literature. The protection and worshiping of nature have remained an important concern and is in currency since the time of Greeks and Vedic era in India. But as a theoretical field it drew serious attention in 1990's although its roots go back to the late 1970's, when at the meetings of the 'Western Literature Association', a group, whose particular domain of interest is the literature of the American West, evolved the concept of ecocriticism and what ecocriticism implies. With the appearance of environmental literary studies as an academic genre in the later part of 1980's, there was no address to ecocriticism. It was regarded as a general subject of nature writing. The early traces of ecocriticism were prompted only by environmentalism itself in an indirect manner.

The chief concern of the entire discourse is what and how one can contribute to environmental re-establishment, within our limitations and potentials as being teachers of literature. The answer is present in our realization that existing environmental problems are actually the side effects of culture. Regarding this observed fact, Donald Worster has laid his opinion:

We are in the midst of global crisis today and for this the failure of our ethical system is responsible as we are not able to realize the impact of our actions through which we have harmed the environment. We have failed to understand the ethical system along with the ways to reform it. Therefore, I am of the opinion that for saving environment we must restructure the practices of all cultures [11].

Similar to historians, anthropologists too are trying to manage the ground between culture and geography. Their specific work on primitive cultures can help the rest of us not just by providing us a basis to respect people's right to survive, but also in thinking about the implications of value systems, rituals and ceremonies that have helped these cultures to sustain.

Psychology has overlooked the significance of nature in its theories of the human mind for a long period of time. But there are a few contemporary psychologists, however, who are exploring the associations between environmental conditions and mental health, some have even started regarding the modern breakup from nature on the ongoing terms of our social and psychological ills.

In the field of philosophy, numerous subfields like environmental ethics, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and social ecology have developed in order to understand and evaluate the core reasons of environmental dreadful conditions and are formulating an all-embracing view of existence that will provide us with a virtuous and conceptual foundation for accurate relations with the Mother Earth.

Similarly, the field of Theology is no exception as even the theologians have started to realize the seriousness of the situation which is clearly illustrated in one of their books "The Environment Is a Religious Issue." [12]. To address the environmental issues, Judeo-Christian theologians have laid forward the concept of managing Earth honestly and realistically. There are some who have a different opinion as they relate Earth as a creation of God. But whatever their believes are, they all end at the same point, i.e., sustaining the environment.

Literary scholars concentrate on questions pertaining to significance and implication of things, numerous and diverse tradition, people's varying perceptions, and language differences, and these are the exclusive areas in which they are making a significant contribution to alter environmental thinking. Considering that the environmental crisis has been aggravated by our shattered, compartmentalized, and overly specified way of perceiving the world, humanities scholars are progressively making an effort to train themselves in the sciences and to embrace interdisciplinary approaches.

Ecocriticism is basically the reproach of the "house", the environment, as exemplified in literature. The word 'environment' denotes the entire physical surroundings and conditions upon earth which are altered by human activity whereas 'ecosystem' is the interacting organisms of biological community and their effect upon physical environment. According to *Collins Dictionary of Environmental Science* "physical surroundings" is in fact a unique mix-up of external conditions that are responsible significantly to alter individual organism. The fundamental concept of ecology is that 'everything is related with each other and nothing is separate'. Ecological concerns have

been a profound area of interest of literary scholars even without having a common name of it for a long time. However, the ecological drive has gained considerable impetus in the last few decades and has successfully grabbed the serious consideration of the intellectuals, academics, writers, and scientists to the crucial matter of man-land (nature) relationship.

#### *A. Difference between Ecocriticism and other Literary Approaches*

In a common literary-critical analysis, the literary critic generally lays main focus upon presenting the external characters and objects as the internal elements of the subconscious. In comparison to this generality, ecocritical reading remains purely centered upon the outside, the house and its habitats, rather than the inside i.e., author and his psychology. Further, ecocriticism relies heavily upon the notions of energy, entropy (a measure of the disorder present in a system), and mutual relationships (living together, reciprocally nourishing, contemporaneous systems). From the above description, it is reinforced that literary theory observes the associations emerging and illustrated between writers, texts, and the world. In most of literary theories “the world” is considered as equal with society—the social realm. On the contrary, ecocriticism magnifies the conception of “the world” to comprise the entire ecological community. In the light of above stated facts, an ecocritical reading of a literary text comprises the unique way through which one can contribute to the kind of issues that have been discussed above. In other words, a study that progressively moves from “Inside” to “Outside” is designated as Ecocriticism.

#### *B. Ecocritical Insight about the Relation between Nature and Culture*

Ecocritics discards the belief that everything in this world is constructed on the basic of social or linguistic implications. For ecocritics, nature is an entity in itself which is always out there beyond our social or mental periphery. On this issue, there remained many heated arguments on its explanation and one of the most heated wars of words on this issue was held among American Wordsworthian critic named Alan Liu and the ecocritics of great repute named Jonathan Bate and Terry Gifford. Their main disagreement was on the issue of the social and linguistic paradigm of reality that has caused confusion.

Glotfelty, in the Introduction of the *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks to Literary Ecology* has tried to gap the distance between culture and environment from the lens of ecocriticism. She has suggested that:

Irrespective of all the conflicts and differences, ecocriticism frames common grounds that physical world and human culture are inter-connected and these connections are of prime importance to the ecocritics as for them to understand how nature and culture work together becomes main points of attractions. As far as its stance as a critical theory is concerned, it tries to collaborate human with non-human entities [13].

In the light the above discussion, it is evident that an ecocriticism which consider humans primarily a part of nature will representation the human cultures in all their sundry connections with nature. Thus, ecocriticism is different from those approaches which are focusing upon the texts that narrates humans either observing or experiencing nature in its wild or rustic setting.

In this connection, Peter Barry in his essay “Ecocriticism” in *Beginning Theory* (2002), he made a major breakthrough and has suggested “outdoor environment” as the perfect model of our neighborhood and overlapping areas which are transcending over nature and culture [14]. According to Barry, the following factors determine the entire process by playing a major role:

- The wilderness (e.g., seas, wastelands, unpopulated regions)
- The scenic beauty (e.g., woods, ponds, highlands, cliffs, cascades)
- The countryside (e.g., peaks, meadows, forests)
- The domestic picturesque (e.g., parks, gardens, lanes)

As we scan these areas, it will become clear that in the first instance we in the midst of what may be called “pure” nature which gradually shifts to the examples of “culture” in the last instance. The remaining two middle areas contain in itself the building blocks of both culture and nature. As a theoretical discourse, “Nature writing” focuses its attention upon these two middle areas. On the other hand, 19<sup>th</sup> century American transcendentalist writing was principally concerned with area one. Other genres such as domestic fiction and lyric poetry concentrated upon the last two areas and depicted the relationship between humans and the natural elements in as their setting. The first two areas are the favourite settings for epic and saga as they depict the close association between humans and the celestial agencies.

In the realm of “nature writing” there has been a new start which has replaced it by another profound title “environmental/ecological literature”. This practice, greatly widespread in America almost since the Europeans possessed their land and flourished since 1950’s, focuses its attention upon the correlation between human culture and the flora and fauna of nature—the ecosphere.

## II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The analysis of literature’s relationship with nature i.e., physical world has fairly a long history which is manifested in the domain of countryside traditions. But the emergence of the word “ecology” from the subfield of biology was only towards the end of 1960’s and has addressed many root conflicts. Since its inception, ecocriticism has broadened its range and has bloomed from the study of American nature writing into a varied and interdisciplinary genre and is covering a wide array of literary fields, cultural and literary theories, along with social and natural sciences. In the present scenario, ecocritics are working on many projects for the safety of ecosystem and are employing various new approaches encompassing ecophilosophy, environmental ethics, eco-psychology, ecology and other related fields.

In 1970’s, the co-relation amid literature and environment developed as a matter of significant and extensive notice among literary scholars and writers. Among the main contributors, the writing of Joseph Meeker, William Rueckert, and Neil Evernden are worth noticing. The ideas and texts that were procured during this period successively got merged into a new field which further emerged as ecocriticism. This period is quite notable as various individual literary and cultural scholars were contributing to the realm of ecologically concerned criticism and theories, but they failed to organize their works under a common head. Therefore, every critic was sort of inventing his/her own environmental approach to literature but that was in isolation as each one of them were making experiments with this genre in their own peculiar ways.

Afterwards, in the mid 1980’s and in the early 1990’s, the growth in Environmental literary studies witnessed new heights. With the publication of “*Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources*” edited by Frederick O. Waage in 1985 and the establishment of *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* by Alicia Nitecki in 1989, ecocriticism received a new acclaim as both mentioned titles were publishing short essays and book reviews encompassing nature and environment. Afterwards, some of the universities in America initiated to incorporate literature courses in their environmental studies syllabi, a few introduced new institutes or programs in the realm of nature and culture, and some English departments proposed a minor in environmental literature.

Thereafter the Western Literature Association germinated the seeds of “Association for the Study of Literature and Environment” (ASLE) at its annual meeting held in 1992 and elected Scott Slovic as its president. Since its inception, ASLE has remained successful which is evident that in its initial phase it attracted more than 300 members in a single year and the number increased to 750 by 1995.

ASLE is a vital and essential common ground for all the ecocritical ideology. In the present context, it has around 1004 members from different parts of the globe. Founded in 1992, ASLE works for promoting the interchange of new and creative ideas and exchange of existing information that map the gap between nature, literature and human beings. To achieve this end, ASLE promotes nature writing encompassing traditional and scholarly approaches infused with inter disciplinary environmental research towards the study of environment. At the time of its inception, ecocriticism was a domain meant for those American critics who were dwelling solely upon American literature only. Subsequently, as the theory grew into prominence, ecocritics founded their profound journal ISLE ‘Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment’. ASLE provides a common meeting ground to the interdisciplinary and innovative approaches for the collaborative study of nature and culture by centering upon various forms of literature whereas ISLE pursues to investigate the correlation between humans and the natural realm. The ASLE was formed at the gathering of Western Literature Association and, in present, some of the most influential departments dealing in ecocriticism are from the University of Oregon and California.

Ecocritical scholars have interpreted the term ecocriticism differently and some of the definitions are quite unclear and perhaps confusing. To cite an example, Stephanie Sarver has admitted of using various approaches other than ecocriticism for the study of human and non-human relationship.” [15]. Similarly, David Taylor has suggested that ecocriticism, as being a broad term, encompass various other forms of criticism. For him, ecocriticism is a confusing term as it examines the influence of culture upon environment [16].

In the similar vein, Harry Crockett has favored that ecocriticism clears out the concept of unique relationship of human and nature which is the soul of the profession of this privileged form of literature [17]. As a whole, ecocriticism is an examination of human relationship to the natural world as well as it is our response to the necessity of our humane understanding of the natural ecosphere in this age of environmental destruction. In support of this notion, Thomas K. Dean has remarked that although ecocriticism covers many forms of literary discourse but, at the end, it always comes back to its key conception that human culture is ultimately connected with nature [18].

The above incorporated definitions of ecocriticism are based upon Western Literature. But, in some ways, ecocriticism still hasn’t quite unfolded itself as per the main stream. As a whole, ecocritical concern can be justified in the following two ways:

- The existence of humans is confined within the periphery of natural world. This is the reason why man remains a life-long wanderer. This fact well explains why we are always acknowledged with the acquainted physical and cultural atmosphere. The reason of our waywardness is that we look at nature for our personal identity and to discover our ancestries. All this is in jeopardy, as the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century has clearly showcased that we all have to do something if we want to help the earth survive.
- The last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century has made the entire humanity aware of the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be in the midst of the grave danger pertaining to the survival of the earth.

The rare combination of physical and spiritual entities has received a thoughtful address in a few of the varying terms used in ecology as well as ecocriticism, although both have the same implication. Ecocriticism, as an academic practice, surveys language as a mean to examine the co-evolutionary progression of the earth. In other words, it verbalizes the interdependent relationship between land and the countryside, text and landscape, and establishes a unique notion that language itself is a part the natural world. From ecocritical perspective, each human being is integral part of the ecosystem in its microcosm form. We humans have lived, for thousands of years, in a close proximity to nature which is justified by many ancient literatures dwelling upon archetypal nature of ecological understanding.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### *A. Important Notion in Ecocriticism*

Ecocriticism emerges interdisciplinary in nature as it comprehends the relationship between nature and man through multi-colored means and focus on this relationship from various viewing platforms such as psychological, sociological, anthropological, scientific and philosophical. Adhering to the stated fact, Greg Garrad has listed the various concerns of ecocriticism in his *Ecocriticism* (2004) [19].

- Pollution
- Wilderness
- Apocalypse
- Dwellings
- Animals
- The Earth

**Pollution:** Ecocriticism is capable to outline, discover, and even answer ecological problems in its wider sense. The etymological root of the word *pollution* lies back in Latin and means ‘to defile or to make impure’. Till the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it signified the moral pollution of a person, or the acts which were responsible to promote such uncleanness. With due course of time, this subjective and internal definition gave way to a more external or objective definition. Nowadays, “pollution” has numerous layers of representations and is covering implied as well as categorical environmental concerns. Environmental problems, today, requires a deep exploration in cultural as well as scientific domains as these problems have resulted due to the ill-treated connections between ecological understanding of nature and its culturally varied explanation. As such, environmentalists are those people who are conscious about environmental issues/threats such as pollution and global warming. These people do not worry themselves with fundamental social changes rather they cherish rustic ways of life i.e., camping or hiking as they are merely concerned with nature’s lack or with the pollution of nature.

**Wilderness:** Ecocritics contemplates on another thought-provoking opinion: Whether the analysis of “place” should be embarked as separate category such as class, gender, and race. Ecocritics examine human’s opinion of wilderness whereas ecocriticism apprehends the concept of wilderness in several ways. If we focus on the meaning of wilderness, it will become clear that it refers to the absolute absence of humanity, yet “wilderness” has no connotation outside the setting of the civilization which enriches it with a definition. Wilderness is often considered as a sacred/pious place, a place of asylum, or even as a challenge to prove our worth. But in its real sense, wilderness is nothing more than a landscape infused with ultimate reality and everlasting beauty. It fits in the entire territory into an ecological community, which is highly symbolic. For example, a person perceives the forest in differing ways such as primitive object, as an abode or even as a teacher.

The conception of wilderness, in comparison to pastoral, came into cultural consideration in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the so-called “wilderness texts” of the ecocritics of that time actually more inclined towards the writings which were of non-fictional in character. In fact, these wilderness plots actually concentrated upon the themes of escape and return by using the classic rustic storyline, but the way they represented nature is fundamentally different. This is because the rustic/pastoral describes nature as based upon the idea of the old world which is well-matched to long-settled and domestic/cultivated landscapes, whereas wilderness encompasses the colonizer’s experiences of the new world. In this regard, Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854) is worth of mentioning and can be described as the last stop of giving voice to the old world pastoral. This work as a whole symbolizes both the central aspects of the young public: technology and independent cultural confidence. Thoreau’s work unveils moral articulations and honest comprehensions of wilderness as he believed that the accurate affirmation of the pureness of our inner self

can only be gained by “going back to nature”, by constructing a hut in the forest. It is only in the adobe of nature that one can discover his/her true self.

Man remains, by character, a lifelong traveller and is always recognized with the acquainted physical and cultural environment. This statistic results from the piece of evidence that we feel extremely endangered in the ecologically ruined world. The inherent threats to the wilderness form shelter, hydroelectric projects, wars, and commercial tourism impels one to enter into a state of alienation and fear. All these human activities are imposing a question to the survival of both man and earth as we are continuously polluting air, water and soil which are vital for our persistence. Awareness to this terror further leads to a discussion of apocalypse which is right in front of us if we don't take righteous measures to prevent it.

**Apocalypse:** The reference to apocalypse can be found in almost every religion of the world. As per Bible, it is the final devastation of the world. The narratives focusing on apocalypse started around 1200 BCE which was initiated in the form of futuristic insights by Iranian clairvoyant Zoroaster or Zarathustra. Whatever the way of describing it, all the apocalyptic expressions demonstrate it as an essential part of environmental discourse. In this context, Rachel Carson's classic *Silent Spring* (1962) highlights the various factors responsible for the nearing end such as the dangers of pesticides. There are some other clearly evident factors mentioned in the long list such as nuclear war, bio-engineering, global warming, tidal waves (tsunami) or all the man-made or natural objects yielding to a complete disaster. Lawrence Buell's in his work *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) has aptly remarked, “Apocalypse is the single most powerful metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal” [20].

There are some organizations which are actively spreading awareness among people about this manifested phenomenon. Among these, “Earth First!” is such an organization which has embraced the basic conventions of apocalyptic environmentalism and is beholding the extinction of species as inescapable. Their main resistance—humans verses the wilderness—has placed the entire humanity on the evil side. In the similar vein, most of the works reflecting the dangers of apocalypse have meditated that there is very little hope for the earth's survival. Therefore, the ecocritics think about the possible ways very seriously by which they can protect the earth along with what role they can play for the reconstruction of nature in case of destruction.

**Dwelling:** In 16<sup>th</sup> century and henceforth, “primitive” people have been portrayed to reside in the adobe of nature with a proper synchronization. This notion of native environmental virtue is a foundation belief for deep ecologists and many ecocritics. As a matter of fact, dwelling is not a temporary state; rather, it signifies the long-term sedimentary deposition of humans in a landscape having its roots in their recollections, ancestry and passing away, as well as in their ceremonial life and day-to-day work. To reinforce this fact, the remarks of historian Shepard Krech III are quite suggestive in which he has suggested a cultural stereotype ‘Ecological Indians’ which is the oldest tribe in the Euro-American culture. To reinforce this, Krech has opined that ranging from book covers to movie screens and gallery exhibitions, “the dominant image is of the Indian in nature who understands the systematic consequences of his actions, feels deep sympathy with all living forms, and takes steps to converse so that earth's harmonies are never in imbalance and resources never in doubt.” [21].

The difference between pastoral, wilderness, dwelling and apocalypse lies in their particular approaches to nature. Pastoral and wilderness, on one hand, supports the perspective of visiting the beautiful attractions, whereas apocalypse centers upon the prophecies of a forewarning imagination, on the other hand. But “dwelling” is entirely different from all these as it embodies a long term friendship of humans with the surroundings.

**Animals:** In our biosphere, “animals” too have an equal role to play akin to countryside and wild. In this context, the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) has advocated the fact that our cruelty towards animals was equivalent to slavery. He has further claimed that it is there capacity to feel pain, not the capability to ask for the reasons of pain, which has enabled us to our ethical concern. Bentham is added an extra weight by the “norm of equality” which clearly testifies that everyone is authorized to receive the equal honorable considerations, regardless of their family background, race, gender, nation, caste or species. Mary Midgley's *Animals and Why They Matter* (1983) has a thought-provoking reference to animal “welfarism” [22].

Another attempt has been made to sabotage the moral and legal differences between humans and animals by the liberationist criticism, but it has established the distinction between wild and tamed animals. According to liberationist belief, wild animals represent masculine liberty, whereas domestic animals are deprived of this liberal state as they are belittled as womanlike servants of human plunder.

On the other hand, we have some of the animal life stories which centers upon the extinction of particular species of animals and these documentaries clearly beholds humans responsible for this act. The favourite locations for such documentaries are everywhere around the globe which is capable to sustains the intensity of the danger. Ecocriticism, therefore, focuses its attention upon this life-threatening aspect of the disturbed edges between the human and other creatures *i.e.*, animals.

**The Earth:** There have been two types of ecocritics who are taking into consideration different types of notions: popular culture and literary culture. Amongst the ecocritics working upon popular culture, the remarks of Andrew Ross are worth of giving a thought. Ross, in his “images of ecology” weighs a photograph of Earth clicked by Apollo rocketeers:

We have adjusted ourselves after seeing the continuous images of a dying Earth for which we humans are responsible as form space the difference between the images of Green Planet and the planet we created are clearly visible [23].

Ross has clearly indicated that US military is responsible for the ruin of environment, as it has over all avoided the environmental law especially while the army is getting ready to go for a war in a foreign land which ultimately results in unexpected ecological damage. Further, the above discussed picture reinforces the fact that we are returning to pastoral setting on a virtually universal scale. He has emphasized that it is equally necessary to consider “the social and industrial organization of images” and the “ecological arguments to be made about these processes.” [24].

Therefore, the image of the earth is disputed as it has been manipulated by the various organizations and procedures that are responsible for this. Therefore, as a matter of fact, ecocritics have started to give detailed thought to the change in the prevailing meaning of the word “earth”: from the most necessary ground of existence, the soil, to life’s largest necessary aspect, the environment as the earth itself is a living entity.

#### *B. Responsibilities of ecocritics*

Ecocritics basically analyse the fundamental ecological standards such as what does the word nature mean, what are the implications, and whether the investigation of “place” should be held as a distinct category, just like class, gender, and race are held worldwide. Ecocritics centers upon human’s understanding of the wild along with tracing how our perception towards environment has changed through history. Whether the current environmental threats are given an accurate representation or even cited in prevalent culture and contemporary literature.

Ecocritics raise questions into contemplation such as

- How is nature symbolized in the work of literature?
- What is the role of physical background in the work?
- Is the work yielding to the values consistent with ecological understanding?
- How the metaphors of land influence our methods to treat it differently?
- How nature writing can be established as a genre?
- Should place be considered as a new critical category apart from gender, class, and race.
- Is there any difference between men and women nature writing?
- Has the education altered civilization’s relationship with the natural world?
- How the idea of wild has changed with due course of time?
- To what extent the environmental crisis making their way into modern literature and widespread culture?
- How the science of ecology is making its impact upon literary studies?

#### *C. How ecocritics contribute*

- Ecocritics reevaluates the texts from the glasses of ecocriticism to find out how the intrinsic relationship of human with natural world is described by authors.
- They, on the other hand, make use of an array of ecocentric notions and treat them as things which has their own identity apart from nature which include examples like equilibrium and unevenness, development and vigor, and maintainable or unmaintainable use of resources.
- They highlight and impart official weight to those writers who center upon nature in the chief part of their literary creation.
- They enlarge the scope of literary and critical practice by adding a new topographical dimension in the works of literature.
- They shift our critical attention from ‘social concerns’ and ‘linguistic doctrines’ towards ecocentric standards which contains a moral accountability at our hand.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

If we focus on history, we will find that various authors have always ascribed values to nature and described nature as an entity which is evident by their particular depictions ranging from past to the modern times. These writers have not shown any preference towards mythical descriptions of the past whereas modern writers have devised their own methodology of using nature as a medium to put across their intricate ideas.

As discussed earlier, all ecocritics beholds the basic principle that human culture and physical world are interconnected, affecting and getting affected each other. Ecocriticism deliberates the cultural products of literature and language as its main subject and, thus, magnifies the conception of “the world” to embrace the complete ecosphere.

The domain of ecologically centered criticism is a well-intentional endeavor mainly because it directs our consideration upon those matters of which we are in a grave need of thinking. Ecocriticism basically raise our



consciousness towards ecological threats as it beholds the notion that how one can solve ecological problems until or unless he/she start thinking about them?

Ecocriticism as a literary practice has attracted a popular interest worldwide which is justified by its popularity in China as many Chinese literary critics have started working on ecocriticism. Ecocritics have identified the dominant role played by nature in Thomas Hardy's writing. Another well-known literary artist, D.H Lawrence has used nature as a vehicle to carry his literary meaning. In the modern literature, nature is regarded as something that enhances the thought process and feelings which in turn helps to set up the ethical core of literary creations.

If we ponder upon the ecological utility of art so that would be to link humans with their biosphere and this fact is further reinforced by the first law of ecology which states that everything is connected to each other. All lives are entwined and reliant on each other. From another perspective, whatever we have in the genres of poetry, fiction, music, dance, painting etc. are actually portraying the biosphere rejoicing itself because the creation of art is an integration process which mingles microcosm of life with the macrocosm of life.

As a whole, a literary text infused with ecocritical spark examines the co-relations among the holy, the mortal, and the Mother Nature in an *oikos*. From this standpoint, ecocriticism provides humans a better insight to understand nature as it establishes the fact that we need to go beyond from the traditional practice to study nature as represented in literature.

In spite of all advancements since its inception, ecocriticism has not established a methodology. It has emphasized on interdisciplinary studies as it beholds that the particular domains of science and humanities should be in discourse and their arguments should be communicated by critical and creative endeavor in an equal manner. Ecocriticism takes into consideration the literature penned throughout history and examines its relation with environment, but on the periphery most ecocritical scholarship has focused upon American and British literature from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century only.

One of the many reasons why ecocriticism is attracting critical attention and emerging as literary discipline is the continued global catastrophe. Ecocriticism, as a whole, concentrates upon the works of those writers who are concerned about environmental threats and aims to show how these works can be helpful in solving real and persistent ecological concerns. Nowadays, many ecocritics are working upon the works of writers who have given voice to this relation between human and nature and have studies human reactions very minutely as per *oikos*. Amitav Ghosh and Anita Desai are one of the major Indian writers in English language and their works well reflect this ecological relationship between man and landscape, human and animal and living and nonliving.

The future of ecocriticism is very bright due to the persisting ecological catastrophes and we can expect to see ecocritical scholarship developing even more interdisciplinary, multicultural, and international. In this regard, the interdisciplinary work is currently ongoing in the present time which could be further accelerated by inviting experts from various domains of academic scholarships as the key note speakers at literary conferences on environmental issues. For now, ecocriticism is just a white movement but it will emerge as a multi-ethnic crusade when environment and issue of social justice will make its associations with each other, and when a multiplicity of voices will join together to contribute to the discussion.

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