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# Review On Reflection Of Ecocriticism In Selected Novels Of Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi And Kiran Desai

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## Abstract:

An interdisciplinary study of literature called ecocriticism includes topics like environmental and natural history concerns. Ecocriticism is a natural extension of cultural studies. A text is examined in cultural studies as a sphere of social, political, cultural, and semiotic acts that represent diverse discourses. Focusing on diverse modern forms of globalisation and resistance to capitalist culture, power dynamics, and hegemony is a significant development in recent cultural studies. This also contains a critique of global capitalist consumption trends. This article discussed about the review on reflection of ecocriticism in selected novels of Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi and Kiran Desai.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, Novels, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Kiran Desai.

## INTRODUCTION:

Ecocriticism is a new critical field that stands out among contemporary literary and cultural philosophies. As a literary theory, it became well-known. Ecocriticism is a one-of-a-kind argument. It investigates the connection between nature and literature. It looks into the relationship between literature and the natural world. Human beings are natural occurrences. Literature and art have an impact on people's lives. Human existence has an impact on art and literature as well. [1] Ecocriticism transforms our perspectives on the environment and literature. It pinpoints the origins of the ecological problem in both civilization's interaction with nature and society's internal structure. It also has to do with questions of social and economic justice.

## ECOCRITICISM:

An interdisciplinary study of literature called ecocriticism includes topics like environmental and natural history concerns. Ecocriticism is a natural extension of cultural studies. A text is examined in cultural studies as a sphere of social, political, cultural, and semiotic acts that represent diverse discourses. Focusing on diverse modern forms of globalisation and resistance to capitalist culture, power dynamics, and hegemony is a significant development in recent cultural studies. This also contains a

critique of global capitalist consumption trends. Marxism, Feminism, and Race made significant contributions to this discipline by criticising culture, laying the groundwork for structuralism, post-structuralism, and post-modernism. Such critical concepts were widely disseminated thanks in large part to the Frankfurt School and later the Birmingham School. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the main topics of conversation were hegemony, race, culture, gender, and other social constructs. Stuart Hall, John Clarke, Richard Dyer, Louis Althusser, Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Paul Gilroy, and many others were influential individuals in these fields. Their goals were to comprehend culture while taking into account the intricate power structures and socio-political circumstances. They criticise modern society in order to assess its ethical standing. Cultural studies also include anthropological and ethnic studies. In the late 20th century, ecocriticism arose as green cultural studies and made a contribution to cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural discourses. It examines how ecological processes are changing and how that has an impact on the world while advocating for a sustainable future for the planet. It strives to create a cultural environment that promotes a global perspective. [2]

According to Garrard, it is crucial to place an emphasis on the ecocrit's moral and political stance as well as the broad definition of the subject matter. Because of its intimate ties to the science of ecology, the study of the interaction between people and the environment, or ecocriticism, has gained more attention. According to Garrard, ecocritics need to transcend disciplinary borders and cultivate their own "ecological literacy." Ecological issues must be recognised as scientific issues. Consider the environmental discussion as rhetorical as one method of ecocritical reading. Here, Garrard provides examples of Rachel Carson's apocalyptic rhetoric from *Silent Spring* (1962). According to Garrard, constructionism is a crucial tool for cultural study, and ecocritics must concentrate on how concepts like nature are constructed culturally. Ecocritics must balance keeping one eye on the ways that "nature" is always, in some ways, culturally created with keeping the other on the reality that nature does exist and is, albeit distantly, the source of our discourse. According to Garrard, ecocriticism need not continue to be a "parasitic" influence on natural science. It might be crucial for the diagnosis and treatment of ecological issues. [3]

In postmodern culture, the binary construction of "nature" and "culture" has received more attention than the reconciliation of the concept of "human." However, according to Garrard, radical intellectuals often criticise environmental critics for making concessions to the dominant socio-economic system. Ecocriticism must therefore broaden its scope to embrace alternative paradigms in order to find solutions. Practices that can help teach ecological concepts effectively must be incorporated into ecocritics. Criticism alone will not be sufficient to address the ecological catastrophe. Therefore, this crucial field should serve as a platform for disseminating ecological principles. Garrard identifies numerous religious belief systems as the places where the idea of ecocentrism first appeared. He claims that the idea of ecocriticism emerged from ideas influenced by St. Francis of Assisi and ideas drawn from Eastern religions like Taoism and Buddhism (1182–1286). In

Eastern faiths, a human is sometimes referred to as a Savior, or someone who vanquishes demons. Therefore, an ethical dimension is particularly different in such Eastern worldviews. We can talk about a few of these ecologists who have made contributions to the field. Northern India's fifth century B.C. is when Gautam Buddha lived. Even though he was a prince, Gautama gave up his royal fortune in order to pursue wisdom and enlightenment. Buddha found much inspiration in nature, and while residing in the sacred natural world, he attained the state of Nirvana (Enlightenment). His interest in urbanisation and material philosophy appeared to be less intense, and he demonstrated an understanding of the "interconnectedness of the bio community." The concept of the karmic continuum, which was held by Buddha, genuinely stood for the notion that the karmic consequences manifest themselves in different ways in the natural world, animals, and people. He advocated kindness toward all living things. In response to anthropocentric life philosophy, Buddhist environmental philosophy advocated an ethical approach to life and culture. The Tibetan Saint and Preacher, The Dalai Lama, has just made another significant addition to ecological ideas by promoting environmental compassion and discussing global responsibility. He harshly criticised the overuse of technology, unchecked population increase, and human abuse of the environment. He thought that mankind was essential to the planet's destiny. Tagore, Rabindranath (1861–1941): The great poet Tagore received the renowned Nobel Prize for his work on Gitanjali in 1913. He wrote to share his profound love for nature and his spiritually-based environmental concerns. Mahatma Gandhi, who lived from 1869 to 1948, opposed the obsession with machinery. Gandhi's ecological philosophy clarified the interconnectedness of nature, humanity, and the environment. He expressed alarm over the West's escalating industrialization and sought an alternative, nature-based paradigm to contend with the Western model of machines. Gandhi was also against anthropocentrism in his approach to environmental ethics. Gandhi's thoughts have an impact on Green Theologians and Deep Ecologists. Gandhi's advocacy of a simple lifestyle and opposition to materialism made significant contributions to environmental philosophy. Many people in India have tried to speak out against the misuse of the environment. For instance, Sunderlal Bahuguna led the Chipko Movement, which advocated against widespread environmental degradation by state organisations. In the same vein, Gujrat saw the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Guha 165). In his seminal work on environmental history, *The Unquiet Wood*, Ramchandra Guha has recently written extensively on this subject of ecological change and peasant resistance in the Himalayan regions. In this article, Guha has discussed the sociology of dominance, resistance, and a landscape of resistance. His opinions on Eurocentrism and its logic of dominance have been made known. In this way, we could say that Gandhi's peaceful protests against wrongdoing had an effect on the environmental justice movement in the years that followed. [4]

According to Lawrence Buell's essay "The Emergence of Environmental Criticism," the language of environmental criticism has roots in antiquity. Such worldviews can be found in mediaeval supernaturalism, Judaeo-Christian thought, and the "Idea of Nature," which

has dominated academic and intellectual historian debates (Buell 2005: 2). Buell emphasises the necessity to redress the environment's marginalised discourse. According to Buell, environmental crises and disasters throughout the latter part of the 20th century increased the importance of the environmental discourse. This depicts nuclear weapons testing and the post-World War II era. The ASLE and ISLE had a significant impact on the spread of these ecological discourses and concepts. Buell discovers that a few early ecocritics' goals were to save literature from the Structuralism-proposed isolation of readers from the text and the text from the world. The term "environment" in environmental criticism has expanded from the "natural" to encompass the "built" environment, and the local and the global are becoming increasingly important. The revisionists of environmental criticism have assimilated a "socio-centric" approach (Buell 2005: 12). In their analysis of the environment, ecocritics have prioritised aesthetic, ethical, and socio-political considerations over scientific ones. The word "ecology," which derives from the Greek word "Oikos," refers to the study of biological interactions and the movement of energy inside organisms (Buell2005:13). Buell is regarded as an ecocriticism pioneer who made contributions to environmental cultural studies. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a well-known American Transcendentalist, adopted the ecological stance that people should live in harmony with nature in the nineteenth century. Emerson claims that the entire operation of the universe reveals a divine plan. He regrets that there is no longer a mutually beneficial interaction between humans and nature. Emerson's romanticism was a response to the West's overly extreme mechanisation and rationalisation. His book on nature is one of his most important contributions to environmental ideas (1844). In his writings, Emerson talks about appreciating our first connection to the universe. He asserts that this can be accomplished by resurrecting old customs rooted in religious belief in the eventual restoration of good (Emerson 33). The West, according to Emerson, has ruined this spiritual bond with nature. However, he displays optimism and believes in fresh ideas and a new man. [5]

#### **ECOCRITICISM IN INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION:**

An examination of the Indian diaspora literature reveals that the majority of the viewpoints engaged have their roots in ideas about migration, identity, ethnicity, etc. India is home to a variety of ecosystems, with the Himalayas in the north, plateaus to the south, the Sunderbans in the east, and the Great Indian Thar Desert occupying the west. In the recent phase of post-modern cult in the Indian English tradition, one becomes engrossed with complex issues fangled with globalisation like cultural conflicts, diaspora sensibility, post-feminism, cross-border migrations, ecological concerns, etc. These ecosystems have degraded throughout time as a result of human activity and overpopulation. Ancient Indian literature is where the focus on ecology, the environment, nature, and associated ideas first emerged. An ancient Indian work on statecraft and law called the Yajnavalkya Smriti proposed a ban on tree-cutting and prescribed a penalty for such behaviour. Written during the Mauryan era, Kautilya's Arthashastra emphasised the necessity of forest management. Ashoka went even further, expressing his views on environmental protection and biodiversity in his Pillar Edicts. In his "Edicts of Ashoka,"

Ashoka mentions enforcing animal preservation, demonstrating his magnanimity, magnificence, and concern for the environment. All four-legged animals that are neither useful nor edible were declared to be protected, including parrots, mainas, arunas, geese, wild ducks, nandimukhas, gelatas, bats, queen ants, terrapins, boneless fish, vedareyaka, gangapuputaka, sankiya fish, tortoises, porcupines, squirrels, deer, bulls, oka Nanny goats, ewes, and sows that are pregnant or nursing their young, as well as young animals under six months old, are all also protected. It is forbidden to caponize crows, burn husks that conceal living things, or burn forests for no reason or to kill animals, according to "The Edicts of King Ashoka." [6]

It is an ancient practise in India to analyse literature in terms of ecology and related ideas. It can be found in literature written in Tamil, Sanskrit, Marathi, and even other regional dialects of India. The Indian culture considers nature to be a goddess. Indians revere and refer to nature as "Mother." There has been a global revolution toward returning to nature or safeguarding against its extinction in our post-industrial society. Indian literature emphasises the harmony between nature and humanity and asserts that there is more than one way to survive. Many different Indian tribes from many different places preach about living in harmony with the world's abundant flora and fauna. Several diasporic authors admire the magnificence of nature and portray their ecological concerns in their fiction. [7]

In his novel *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao—the first Indian author to write in English—depicts the South Indian village way of life and surrounding landscape to demonstrate how closely connected man is to nature. Mountains and rivers are used as symbols to illustrate the connection between the environment and humankind. The mountain, adored as the giver of gifts for prosperity and dreaded for the adversity of nature, is symbolised by the Goddess Kenchamma.

The natural environment of Malgudi is described by R.K. Narayan in his book *Malgudi Days*. Each of the stories has references to the location, which is a character in and of itself. As a place becomes more important, the landscape becomes the main topic. The river and the abandoned temple have an impact on the main character Savitri in some of his other books, such as *The Dark Room*. The river Sarayu plays a significant part in *The Guide* in predicting upcoming events and developments. The ecological system is permeated with human drama. The Bengal famine of 1943, which killed many people from hunger, is the subject of Bhabani Bhattacharya's book, *So Many Hungers*. The characters show how nature can cause terrible things to happen, and only the power of nature can help or hurt people.

*Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya is another book that explores how nature affects human existence. In his novels, Ruskin Bond also expresses a deep belief in nature's ability to heal and the idea that when man acts carelessly or incongruously with nature, it always responds with aggression. His short stories, including "No Room for Leopard," "The Tree Lover," "The Cherry Tree," and "An Island of Trees," demonstrate the

interdependence of nature and humans in the ecosystem. In stories such as "Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright," "Dust on the Mountains," "The Tunnel," and "Panther's Moon," he forewarns readers of the catastrophic loss of natural equilibrium in the Garhwal Himalaya region. The terrible tragedy caused by cutting down trees in the mountains, mining for stones, building cities, the extinction of plants and animals on the verge of extinction, and careless tourism promotion. [8]

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

### **Amitav Ghosh:**

#### **Amitav Ghosh's- The Hungry Tide:**

In *The Shadow Lines*, he showed that he could write on a wide range of topics, including diaspora life and the concept of a borderless society. Science fiction works like *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace*, and *The Hungry Tide* rewrite history and cause ecological destruction. In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh issues a dire ecological crisis warning to humanity. According to Vandana Siva, who has dubbed development "maldevelopment," we will all perish as a result of global warming and other associated catastrophes. *The Hungry Tide* is a rich, exotic story that takes place in Calcutta and on the huge group of islands in the Bay of Bengal. According to an Indian tradition, the intensity of the Ganges' initial cascade was so immense that it would have devastated the earth if it weren't for the god Shiva, who harnessed the torrent by capturing it in his dreadlocks. Once it gets closer to the Bay of Bengal, it releases itself and splits into hundreds of roving strands. The result is the Sundarbans, a huge area of mangrove forest that is partly submerged where the waters of the Himalayas and the tides from the sea meet. [9]

The setting for Amitav Ghosh's latest book is this enormous archipelago of islands. In the Sundarbans, where tides may be felt more than 100 miles inland, countless hectares of forest vanish each day only to reappear several hours later. Despite how dense the mangrove forests are, from a human perspective, they are barely less desolate than a desert. Here, amidst the crocodiles, snakes, sharks, and man-eating tigers, is a dreadful, vindictive beauty. Only on this planet does man prey more than he does predator. Daniel Hamilton, a wealthy and eccentric Scotsman, strove to vanquish the power of the Sundarbans by attempting to establish a utopian community that would include people of all races and religions in this region. In January 2001, a small ship comes to this huge but little-known area to do an ecological assessment. Scientists on board start to map the migration routes of this society's children. [10]

#### **Amitav Ghosh's- The Glass Palace:**

*The Glass Palace* seems, at first glance, to be a novel unlike any other.

It is a more-or-less chronological account of three generations of three families who were linked by friendship, business, and marriage over the course of more than a century. The

story is set against the rise and fall of British imperialism in Southeast Asia and India. A masterful story about love, struggle, and familial ties is *The Glass Palace*. The author introduces readers to a cast of interesting characters that journey through the nations of Burma, Malaya, and India as well as through three generations before the door of Burma closes behind them and the shining light of that civilization appears to be extinguished. Beginning in Mandalay at the time of King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat's exile, *The Glass Palace* is a compelling historical fiction that recounts the stories of three families during a period of change for India and Indians. The reader is completely engrossed in the story of a place and its people, as politics and business are intertwined with love and war. A poor orphan named Rajkumar gets left in Mandalay after the sampan he is working on breaks down, leaving him there alone. By coincidence, he meets Saya John and her son while working as a food vendor. Rajkumar is a couple years younger than Matthew. The palace was pillaged by the locals during the instability that the King and Queen were experiencing. Rajkumar meets the most beautiful woman he has ever seen at this very moment.

He eventually finds out that she is the youngest maid to the Queen. Just as the oncoming military forces the looters to run, Rajkumar manages to learn her name. The next encounter with the child, Dolly, takes place when the Royal Family is being carried to the boat that would transport them to their exiled residence. Years later, he searches for the girl he can't stop thinking about. The economy of Mandalay, a deserted city, collapses after the King and Queen are forced to leave. As a result of the food sellers' inability to continue operating, Rajkumar is unemployed. Rajkumar decides to resume his employment with Saya John. The District Collector is in charge of the exiled Royal Family in Ratnagiri. He manages the imperialist's Indian assets as a member of the Indian Civil Service. An Indian District Collector is chosen, and his wife Uma travels with him. Around the year 1905, this happened. From that point forward, Uma and Dolly develop a strong friendship. Uma assumes the role of an activist for Indian freedom. The stories of the orphan Rajkumar, Saya John's family, Dolly, and Uma's family are intertwined with the histories of the Burmese, Indians, and Malayans. These families have been connected for generations. One group of people works within the British-run system to establish their dynasty. They employ slave labour to harvest rubber and teak. An increasing consciousness of Indian independence is brought to the following generation, and this knowledge intensifies throughout the Second World War. Indian soldiers fighting for India's independence in both the British Indian Army and the Indian National Army encounter racism. One little-known historical fact served as the basis for the plot. The last emperor of Burma was overthrown and exiled to Ratnagiri in India after Burma was conquered by the British in 1885; he passed away there. The three families highlighted in the story are Uma Dey, a middle-class Bengali widow who becomes a nationalist activist; Saya John, a traditional Chinese businessman; and Rajkumar, an impoverished orphan from East Bengal who grows up to become a successful lumber merchant in Burma. Ghosh has little interest in or knowledge of the United States, despite the fact that

he calls it home. He cares more about showing the losses, disappointments, and hopes of the people who had to leave their homes in the Indian subcontinent. [11]

### **Anita Desai's-Fire on the Mountain:**

For *Fire on the Mountain*, she won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1978. Anita Desai is the proud mother of Booker Prize-winning actor Kiran Desai, who portrayed the title character in the movie version of her book *In Custody*. The Winfred Hot by Memorial Prize for Literature went to the book *Fire on the Mountain* in 1978. The easiest way to understand this work is as an ecocritical mediation between the idea of an unmediated, pre-reflective connection with nature and postcolonial ideas of nature as an inaccessible cultural creation. Through her fictional work, Anita Desai reveals how women are capable of rejecting the reification of the female, which frequently turns her into a sexual object. For her to be shielded from the negative effects of social norms, dogma, and tradition, she requires a dynamic self-concept. Her personas serve as inspiration for others and encourage conversation about taboo subjects. Contrary to postmodernist thinkers, Desai presents a conceivable possibility that is guaranteed to materialise under the most restrictive circumstances but necessitates significant social and political transformations. [12]

### **Arun Joshi's-The Strange Case of Billy Biswas:**

His detachment is not influenced by location, nation, or culture. In his piece *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, he blends the everyday and the extraordinary; illusion and truth; resignation and longing (1971). Billy Biswas longs to learn who he really is in the most simple, innocent environment. Billy is a naturalist whose refusal to accept the dominant way of life has a severe impact on his life. Billy is incompatible with modern civilisation. This book, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, is incredibly thought-provoking. In a novel, the ordinary and the extraordinary, the false and the real, resignation and longing all live side by side. [13]

### **Kiran Desai's-The Inheritance of Loss:**

Her second book, *The Inheritance of Loss*, won both the 2006 National Book Critics Fiction Award and the Man Booker Prize (2006). Desai appeared as a guest on the biographical music discussion show *Private Passions* on BBC Radio. She was one of the featured writers at the inaugural Asia House Festival of Cold Literature in 2007. She also won the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award, the Orange Prize for Fiction, the Pacific Rim Book Prize, the Decibel Writer of the Year award from the British Book Awards, Kiriyama and the Berlin Prize Fellowship in 2013. A lot of the social, economic, political, and psychological goals of the characters in *The Inheritance of Loss* are shown and explained through the setting.

The post-colonial society that *The Inheritance of Loss* examines is one that is torn



between eastern and western influences that are often diametrically opposed. People aren't as kind to each other as they used to be because of postcolonial trends that treat people in their natural habitats in an autocratic way. [14]

The ecocritical movement, which explores all facets of the human experience through the prism of the environment, can be used to analyse *The Inheritance of Loss*. In her book, the brilliant author and astute observer of human attitudes and behavior, Kiran Desai, addresses a number of contentious issues.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Regardless of what label it goes by, most ecocritical work shares a common motivation. The eco-critic strives to trace environmental ideas and representations wherever they occur, in order to discern a debate that appears to be taking place more openly, albeit somewhat veiled, across a variety of cultural arenas. Above all, ecocriticism evaluates the coherence and application of texts and ideas as solutions to environmental challenges. Ecocriticism focuses on the connections between nature and culture, particularly the cultural artefacts of language and literature. As a critical viewpoint, it has one foot in literature and the other on the ground; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the non-human.

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